LETTER

CONFEDERATION OF INDIAN TEXTILE INDUSTRY

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News Highlights

NATIONAL

India Urged To Closely Monitor Progress Of Bangladesh-Japan EPA Talks

An Indian think tank has advised New Delhi to ‘exercise caution and closely monitor’ the progress of the Bangladesh-Japan economic partnership agreement (EPA) negotiations as the pact can affect India’s exports to Bangladesh if the latter offers zero duty on all products to Japan under the pact.

"Several products in sectors such as automobiles, metals, electricals and textiles may be largely impacted by the Bangladesh-Japan FTA [free trade agreement]," according to a report by CUTS International (Consumer Unity & Trust Society).

India may need to strengthen its existing trade ties with Bangladesh, diversify its export markets, enhance its competitiveness and explore partnership opportunities to navigate the changing trade dynamics effectively, the report, a quarterly analysis, noted.

While India has a preferential trade agreement (PTA) with Bangladesh and there is the Agreement on South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA), addressing these concerns is crucial to maintaining India's export performance in this market and neutralising the shocks posed by future FTAs that Bangladesh may engage in, the report said.

The report called for a comprehensive economic cooperation agreement between India and Bangladesh, according to media outlets in Bangladesh.

India should assess the possible impact of Bangladesh's fast-growing textile-apparel and footwear sector, which is gaining a comparative advantage over time, it noted.

Though the CUTS International analysis suggests that India is unlikely to experience significant market share loss for textile and apparel products in Japan, it will be better to take some precautionary measures, the report cautions.

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India must grow at 8-10% every year to reap demographic dividend: RBI bulletin

Read more at:India GDP: India must grow at 8-10% every year to reap demographic dividend: RBI bulletin - The Economic Times (indiatimes.com)

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RBI lists 6 factors powering India's take-off to become world's 3rd largest economy

Mumbai, April 23 (IANS) While India's recent growth performance has surprised many, triggering a flurry of upgrades from financial institutions such as the IMF, the RBI bulletin released on Tuesday cites six factors that will propel the country to become the world's third-largest economy.

In purchasing power parity (PPP) terms, the Indian economy is already the third largest in the world. According to the OECD's December 2023 update, India will overtake the US by 2045 in PPP terms to become the world's second-largest economy, the RBI bulletin points out.

According to the bulletin, the "tailwinds likely to power India's take-off" are as follows:

* The demographics favour the rising profile of growth. Currently, India has the world's largest and youngest population. The median age is around 28 years; not until the mid-2050s will aging set in. Thus, India will enjoy a demographic dividend window of more than three decades, driven by rising working-age population rates and labour force participation rate. This is a striking contrast to a world widely confronted with the challenge of aging.

* India's growth performance has been historically anchored by domestic resources, with foreign savings playing a minor and supplementary role. This is also reflected in the current account deficit (CAD), which remains within a sustainable threshold of about 2.5 per cent of the GDP. Currently, the CAD averages about 1 per cent, and this is associated with various indicators of external sector resilience – illustratively, external debt is below 20 per cent of the GDP and net international investment liabilities are below 12 per cent.

* The gradualistic path of fiscal consolidation adopted after the Covid pandemic has brought the general government deficit to 8.6 per cent of the GDP and public debt to 81.6 per cent of the GDP by March 2024. Employing a dynamic stochastic general equilibrium (DSGE) model, it is estimated that reprioritising fiscal spending by targeting productive employment-generating sectors, embracing transition, and investing in digitalisation could lead to a decline in general government debt to 73.4 per cent of the GDP by 2030-31.

In contrast, the debt-GDP ratio is projected by the IMF to rise to 116.3 per cent in 2028 for advanced economies and to 75.4 per cent for emerging and middle-income countries.

* India's financial sector is predominantly bank-based. In 2015-2016, the overhang of asset impairment in the wake of the global financial crisis was addressed through an asset quality review (AQR). A massive recapitalisation was undertaken during 2017-2022. The beneficial effects started to show up from 2018 — gross and net non-performing assets ratios declined to 3.9 per cent and 1 per cent, respectively, by March 2023, with large capital buffers and liquidity coverage ratios well above 100 per cent.

The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) has created the institutional environment for addressing stress in banks' balance sheets. Macroeconomic and financial stability are providing the foundation for medium-term growth prospects.

* India is undergoing a transformative change leveraged on technology. The trinity of JAM – Jan Dhan (basic no-frills accounts); Aadhaar (universal unique identification); and Mobile phone connections — is expanding the ambit of formal finance, boosting tech startups, and enabling the targeting of direct benefit transfers. India's Unified Payments' Interface (UPI), an open-ended system that powers multiple bank accounts into a single mobile application of any participating bank, is propelling inter-bank, peer-topeer, and person-to-merchant transactions seamlessly.

* inflation in India is moderating after surging on multiple and overlapping supply shocks from the pandemic, weather-induced food price spikes, supply chain disruptions and global commodity price pressures following the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

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Now, ginning units work 3 days a week

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http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/109545452.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst

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Only 4% rely on online platforms for clothes: How Indians shop apparel

Despite a pandemic-driven online shopping surge, physical stores remain dominant A survey by Localcircles revealed that only 4 per cent rely solely on online platforms while 47 per cent of respondents prefer to shop exclusively in stores (malls, markets) for the "touch, feel, and try" experience. About 40 per cent enjoy a mix of online and offline shopping.

Discounts and ease of return are key drivers for online purchases. What the study finds is that though the pandemic led to increased adoption of buying apparel online, once again the physical stores/ markets are being preferred by people for buying clothes. 81% of respondents said the key reasons for preferring to buy clothes online is the ability to touch, feel and try them before finalizing their purchase. Other major reasons are ability to make a quick buy and take it home, ease of exchange and return or in all convenience in many respects.

They survey received over 35,000 responses from consumers located in 323 districts of India. 61% were men while 39% respondents were women. 43% respondents were from tier 1, 33% from tier 2 and 24% respondents were from tier 3, 4 & rural districts.

In community discussions, many consumers indicated that they purchase products they go online for repeat purchases of branded products as the fit and quality are already known, and they tend to make first time purchases at a store. Whether the online platforms that sell clothing online be able to deliver faster and provide a better buying and return experience will determine whether more consumers make online platforms as their primary channel to buy clothing.

With convenience fee to order online and other charges like delivery and in some cases even a return fee being levied by some platforms, there currently are barriers that work against the growth of the apparel industry online. Unless the discounts offered stay high, which they have been in the last few years, there is a high chance that online apparel buying will stagnate or see slow growth in India.

Market size and consumer preferences:

The Indian apparel market is expected to reach a staggering Rs 9.35 lakh crore (USD 105.5 billion) in 2024. Women's apparel holds the lion's share, at US$51.05 billion.

Consumers seek a balance of value, quality, fashion, and self-expression, influenced by social media trends.

Urban Gen Z shoppers are particularly drawn to fast-fashion brands that keep pace with runway styles.

"The increasing access to digital devices and internet is enabling masses to have an online shopping experience irrespective of whether they are living in urban or rural areas. The online shopping experience has started to provide a rich, immersive, and personalised shopping experience to a customer, and this is a major reason which is driving growth. However, as compared to the overall apparel sales, the online sales still continue to be a high single digit percentage," noted the study.

Why people shop clothes online

Discounts: The biggest reason (37%) people choose online shopping is to get better deals and discounts.

Easy returns and exchange: Another major advantage (29%) is the ease of exchanging or returning clothes that don't fit or aren't what they expected. This eliminates the hassle of going back to the store.

Wider selection: Online stores often offer a larger variety of choices compared to individual physical stores (26%).

Why people prefer offline stores

Trying before you Buy: The overwhelming reason (81%) for preferring physical stores is the ability to touch, feel, and try on clothes before purchasing. This ensures a better fit and avoids the risk of getting clothes that don't look good.

More selection (for some): Interestingly, 44% of those who prefer stores also mentioned a wider selection, which might indicate a perception that online stores lack variety in some categories.

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GLOBAL

Sri Lanka's Reform Drive Critical, Notes IMF Official

Gita Gopinath, the first deputy managing director of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), emphasised the challenging road ahead for Sri Lanka, stressing the critical need to maintain reform momentum.

Following discussions with minister of state for finance Shehan Semasinghe, central bank governor Nandalal Weerasinghe, and treasury secretary Mahinda Siriwardena during the IMF/World Bank Spring Meetings in Washington, Gopinath underscored the significance of sustaining economic reforms.

Acknowledging Sri Lanka's hard-won economic gains in the past year, Gopinath expressed her concerns about the formidable challenges ahead even as she highlighted the importance of continuous reform efforts to navigate through these challenges effectively.

Emphasising the criticality of reform momentum, Gopinath's remarks underscored the ongoing commitment required from Sri Lanka to drive economic progress.

Under President Ranil Wickremesinghe's leadership, Sri Lanka has undertaken significant reforms, including measures such as tax increases, as part of its IMF programme.

The decision to engage with the IMF came after Sri Lanka faced a sovereign debt default in April 2022, necessitating urgent economic stabilisation measures.

State minister for finance, Semasinghe expressed gratitude to Gopinath for recognising Sri Lanka's economic progress and described the discussions as insightful and productive. He reiterated Sri Lanka's steadfast commitment to its reform agenda and expressed eagerness for continued collaboration with the IMF to achieve shared objectives.

Sri Lanka's engagement with the IMF stems from a period of economic and political turmoil, including an unprecedented economic crisis followed by political upheaval.

The IMF programme encompasses reforms in various sectors, including state-owned enterprises, the fiscal sector, and financial sectors, aimed at ensuring long-term debt sustainability.

Furthermore, the IMF has pledged support to expedite Sri Lanka's debt restructuring process with private creditors, including sovereign bond holders, indicating the global lender's commitment to facilitating the island nation's economic recovery and stability.

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ICE Cotton Rises, Gains Momentum From Strong Demand At Lower Prices

ICE cotton bottomed out and gained for the second day in a row yesterday. Better demand at lower price levels after a steep fall was expected. The market anticipated further improvement in market sentiments as there were no major geopolitical escalations. According to market data, the ICE cotton July contract settled at 82.42 cents per pound of 0.453 kg, with gains of 140 points. The contract saw a further increase in today's session.

In the last session, the dollar index was also slightly weak, which helped cotton maintain its gains. However, crude oil prices were slightly down yesterday, which limited cotton's gains. Cheaper crude oil makes the polyester value chain cheaper, which is a negative factor for cotton.

Trade volume was low in last night's session, with a volume of just 40,454 contracts, slightly lower than Friday's 41,754 contracts. Open interest increased for the second consecutive day, with a 2-day recovery of 2,333 contracts after 11 sessions of liquidation. Open interest started at 203,754 contracts, up by 865 contracts from Friday. Certified cotton stocks began at 176,610 bales, with 791 bales added and 264 bales decertified, while 6,083 bales awaited review.

According to the USDA's US crop sowing report, around 11 per cent of the cotton crop sowing has been completed in the US, which is consistent with the five-year average and equal to last year's figure. Although, a few areas report drought conditions. Traders are now focusing on any impact on the cotton sowing area.

In today's session, ICE cotton July 2024 was traded 0.22 cent higher at 82.64 cents per pound. Meanwhile, cash cotton was traded at 78.17 cents (up 1.40 cents), May 2024 at 80.51 cents (up 0.47 cent), October (new crop) contract at 79.22 cents (up 0.65 cent), December 2024 contract at 78.60 cents (up 0.11 cent), and March 2025 at 80.18 cents per pound (up 0.13 cent).

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Ease Of Access To Istanbul Amplifies Appeal Of ITM 2024 Exhibition

Leading textile machinery manufacturers, global industry investors and professional visitors will meet at ITM 2024 to see the latest textile technologies. The fact that the textile

manufacturers of the countries that have visa problems when travelling to Europe will not have this problem when coming to Istanbul will increase the number of exhibitors and visitors of ITM 2024 Exhibition.
The countdown has started for ITM 2024 International Textile Machinery Exhibition, one of the most important organisations in the world in its field. ITM 2024 Exhibition, which will open its doors to its visitors at Tüyap Fair and Congress Center between 4-8 June 2024; will host textile technology leaders from all over the world in Istanbul for 5 days. Global sector investors and professional visitors will flush to ITM 2024 Exhibition to see the latest technologies closely.

The visa agreement between Turkey and many countries such as India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Vietnam, Egypt, Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco, Iran, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, which are the shining stars of the textile world with their great potential and production power, will be effective in increasing the number of visitors. Textile manufacturers of countries that have visa problems when travelling to Europe will be able to obtain their visas by applying to the Consulates of the Republic of Turkey in their countries.

Istanbul Offers Great Convenience to Visitors in terms of Transport and Accommodation

On the other hand; the fact that the exhibition is held in Istanbul, which is geographically the closest point connecting the countries to each other, turns ITM 2024 Exhibition into a centre of attraction for both exhibitors and visitors. Located within a 3-hour flight distance to the world's major trade centres, Istanbul provides easy access to both the surrounding provinces and neighbouring countries by air, sea and land. The fact that Turkish Airlines flies to a total of 340 different destinations in 129 countries is also effective in making Istanbul easily accessible. In addition to European countries; Investors from the Middle East, North Africa, Turkic Republics and Balkan countries will be able to reach Istanbul after a 3-hour flight and visit the ITM 2024 Exhibition.

In addition, Istanbul offers great convenience to exhibitors and visitors coming for the exhibition with its accommodation facilities. Thanks to the proximity of the hotels to the fairgrounds, visitors coming to ITM 2024 from Turkey and abroad will not have any difficulty in terms of accommodation.

Growth of the Technical Textile Sector Increased Interest in HIGHTEX 2024 Exhibition

HIGHTEX, Turkey's first and only exhibition on the subject, will be held simultaneously with ITM 2024 between 4-8 June. HIGHTEX 2024 Exhibition, where nonwoven products, raw materials used in production and the latest technologies will be exhibited; will not only provide participants with opportunities for cooperation and networking, but also provide the opportunity to learn the latest trends, develop innovative products and strategies for the future.

HIGHTEX 2024, which is expected to reach a record occupancy rate as a result of the demand from the leading manufacturers of the sector and new entrepreneurs, will accelerate the technical textile and nonwoven sector.

Technical textiles, which are used extensively in various areas of our daily lives from home to automobile, from clothing to agriculture, from highways to hospitals, are seen as a sector that is constantly growing strongly and promising for the future, unlike the traditional textile and ready-to-wear sectors. The share of technical textiles in the traditional textile sector has reached 45-50%. This situation is also reflected in the research results. According to a report by Grand View Research Inc.; the global technical textiles market size is expected to reach USD 272.33 billion by 2030, registering a CAGR of 4.7%.

HIGHTEX 2024 International Technical Textiles and Nonwovens Exhibition, which has become more important as technical textiles take up more space in all areas of our lives, attracts great interest from companies. The high demand for HIGHTEX 2024 also shows the strong growth of the sector, the future of the technical textile industry and the importance given to innovation. Indeed, technical textiles and nonwovens will be integrated into more industries and living spaces in the future. HIGHTEX 2024 Exhibition will be an important platform for those who want to accelerate this integration process and shape the future of the industry.

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Economists Advocate High-Tech Shift For Bangladesh's Economy

Economists argue that Bangladesh remained ensnared in a low-wage economic cycle despite visible development, largely driven by labourers in various sectors like agriculture, RMG, and migration even as they emphasised the need for institutional reform and a shift towards high-technology-based production to ensure sustainable development and economic prosperity.

The observations were made at a recent book launch organised by the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) even as they lamented the dysfunctional state of institutions, particularly in fiscal management.

Professor Rehman Sobhan, co-editor of the book, highlighted the absence of functional institutions critical for development and expressed concerns over the advanced deterioration in the banking system, identifying bank defaults as a serious structural crisis while Dr. Hossain Zillur Rahman emphasised Bangladesh's entrapment in the economic trap of cheap labour, urging a focus on quality education to cultivate qualified human capital and combat corruption.

Eminent economists, including Rizwanul Islam and Professor Dr. MM Akash, underscored the crucial role of labourers in economic growth while noting declining real wages and increasing inequality.

Dr. Zahid Hussain raised questions about shared prosperity amidst governance crises, particularly in the banking sector, highlighting the emergence of influential classes and their impact on governance and politics.

Looking ahead, Professor Selim Raihan warned of challenges stemming from institutional weaknesses and stressed the need for transitioning to high-technology-based production to avoid falling into a debt trap. Dr. Mustafizur Rahman echoed this sentiment, emphasising the urgency of addressing generational challenges and transitioning from labour-intensive to technology-driven industries.

He highlighted the stagnation in high-tech exports, contrasting it with Vietnam's substantial increase.

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Bangladesh Garment Makers Seek US Support For Fair Apparel Pricing

The Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) convened a crucial meeting with a visiting delegation from the United States Trade Representative (USTR) recently, aiming to secure support and cooperation from the US government. The primary agenda of the meeting was to advocate for the establishment of a fair minimum price for apparels and the implementation of a unified code of conduct for social audits within the industry.

During the meeting, the BGMEA emphasised the importance of reinstating the Generalised System of Preferences (GSP) in favour of Bangladesh and urged the inclusion of garment items in the US GSP programme.

Conversations between the USTR delegation and BGMEA representatives delved into the intricacies of a labour action plan proposed by the US government. Specifically, discussions centred on the necessary amendments to the Bangladesh Labour Act to streamline the trade union registration process and address instances of unfair labour practices.

Led by Assistant USTR for South and Central Asia Brendan Lynch, the US delegation engaged in discussions on bilateral trade policies, workers' rights, well-being, and market access.

BGMEA president SM Mannan Kochi spearheaded the discussion from the association’s side, supported by senior officials.

The BGMEA chair provided updates on advancements in workplace safety, workers’ rights, and ongoing labour law reforms within Bangladesh’s readymade garment (RMG) industry even as he reiterated both the government’s and the industry’s commitment to advancing workers’ rights and welfare.

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UPDATE 1-Cotton certifier used by Inditex, H

The allegations by Earthsight against Better Cotton had raised concerns for firms such as Inditex and H&M after the NGO said they were using some cotton from the farms, bought through suppliers in Asia, in their products.
Inditex had asked Geneva-based Better Cotton, the world's largest certifier of more sustainably farmed cotton, for clarity on its certification process and progress on its traceability practices, in response to information received from Earthsight.
Fast fashion retailers face pressure from consumers and activists to sell products with less environmental impact.
Better Cotton, which was created by companies and several non-profit groups including the World Wildlife Fund, says it aims to support improved practices in areas such as water and soil stewardship and to promote better working standards.
The group said that an independent audit by advisory firm Peterson found that three farms in the state of Bahia, which were licensed to sell Better Cotton, had not breached its standards and would not be suspended.
Inditex declined to comment on the results of the audit, which were published by Better Cotton on Tuesday.
H&M told Reuters it is in close dialogue with Better Cotton to follow the results of the investigation and gain more understanding of its action plan.
"Together with other brand members, we are engaging with Better Cotton in conversations to further improve their standard," H&M said.

Better Cotton said the audit by Peterson had concluded that a review of satellite images confirmed that the three farms had not contributed to deforestation since at least 2008.

Alan McClay, Better Cotton's chief executive, told Reuters that the audit found no evidence of non-compliance by the three farms and no legal cases involving them since 2008.

Better Cotton said it was now considering carrying out direct due diligence on large corporate owners of cotton farms given the wider impact of these businesses.

"We have an opportunity and probably an obligation now to enhance that due diligence and to strengthen it," said McClay, adding that some companies could be at risk of losing their licences if they do not keep up with evolving standards.

Better Cotton's strategic partner in Brazil gave the farms their cotton certification, which the group recognises as an equivalent standard, he said. Brazil contributes about 40% of the cotton certified by Better Cotton.

The focus of the investigation was on farms owned by SLC Agricola and Horita Group companies, Better Cotton said.

SLC Agricola told Reuters it "remains fully available to collaborate with any new verification that may be necessary".

Horita Group welcomed the result of the Peterson audit, which it said was in response to "unfounded accusations".

"We agree with the audit's conclusion and are open to implement the improvements that have been proposed. We continue to strive for transparency, the primary value of governance that we embrace in our group," Horita said in an emailed statement.

Abrapa, the Brazilian Cotton Growers Association, said in a statement it is reviewing with Better Cotton the auditor's suggestions to help make standards more robust and increase the reliability of certification. (Reporting by Corina Pons; Additional reporting by Helen Reid in London and Ana Mano in Sao Paulo; Editing by Charlie Devereux and Alexander Smith)

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China wants everyone to trade in their old cars, fridges to help save its economy

Read more at:
https://auto.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/aftermarket/china-wants-everyone-to-trade-in-their-old-cars-fridges-to-help-save-its-economy/109533361

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Meet the Woman Pioneering Sustainable Change in Fashion

For years, Maxine Bédat, the executive director of the New Standard Institute, has been leading the charge to revolutionize the fashion industry, aiming to establish sustainable and ethical practices as the norm.

A key force and co-developer behind the Fashion Sustainability and Social Accountability Act (S7428A), Bédat helped introduced this bill into the New York legislature in January 2022. Referred to as the New York "Fashion Act," the legislation would require apparel and footwear companies to not only disclose their environmental and social impacts, but also set and meet science-based targets on carbon emissions, perform human rights due diligence in their supply chain and correct water pollution issues stemming from harmful chemicals and dyes.

Currently, the majority (69%) of all clothing is crafted from synthetic fibers, notably polyester, which originates from crude oil. Collectively, the fashion industry churns out a staggering 100 billion garments annually, contributing to 4% of global greenhouse gas emissions—equivalent to the combined emissions of France, Germany and the U.K., per EarthDay.org. At this pace, projections indicate that the fashion industry's carbon footprint could surge to 26% of all emissions by 2050. In alignment with this year's Earth Day theme, "Planet vs Plastics," legislative efforts aim to enhance transparency regarding synthetic material usage and mitigate these statistics before there is irreversible damage to the environment.

For Bédat, the New York Fashion Act represents a culmination of her expansive career researching the fashion industry. While her professional journey began in law, she narrowed her focus to apparel when she founded the Bootstrap Project, a nonprofit dedicated to helping artisans in developing countries. As her interests in supply chains and textile production evolved, Bédat transformed the project into a for-profit venture, Zady, with a mission to educate consumers about the garments they purchase. She also wrote the acclaimed book, Unraveled: The Life and Death of a Garment, which follows an American wardrobe staple—blue jeans—through the entire supply chain.

The Fashion Act has been gaining momentum, with over 80 legislators supporting it, but as the legislation is in its third session at the New York State legislature, Bédat's work isn't done. After three years of effort, Bédat is still actively lobbying and rallying behind the legislation to garner greater awareness among citizens.

When I called Bédat at her office, I could hear members of the New Standard Institute buzzing like bees in the background, a reminder of the power of collective action. Below is a condensed version of our conversation.

Can you tell me about your past research and engagement with stakeholders throughout the fashion supply chain? How did this lead you to co-develop legislation?

My understanding of the issues stemmed from the research I conducted for my book. I traveled extensively across the supply chain and it became increasingly evident that voluntary sustainability initiatives alone wouldn't be sufficient to overcome market forces.

It also became clear that legislation was the only viable solution—and not just for the fashion industry; it was a broader societal reminder of the purpose of laws—to establish regulatory frameworks that guide market behaviors. The fashion industry stood out glaringly as a sector lacking these fundamental regulatory safeguards. We found ourselves trapped in a relentless race to the bottom.

What pieces of legislation helped inspire and shape the NY Fashion Act?

We looked at California in a few ways. The California Transparency Act, which sparked interest for Alessandra Biaggi (former Democratic senator for New York State in her home district of Bronx/Westchester), for instance, requires companies selling in California to disclose their modern-day slavery policies, but it hasn't shown much impact due to limited enforcement by the attorney general. It's more about disclosure than driving real change.

However, California inspired us in another way, particularly with its fuel efficiency standards legislation, which laid the groundwork for companies like Tesla and the broader electric vehicle revolution. This demonstrated the potential of state-level legislation in driving global change, given the significant market size of states like California and New York.

As one of the largest economies in the world, and a global fashion capital, New York has the opportunity to hold fashion companies that sell in our market accountable to the planet and its people, and help drive global change to the industry.

Our aim was to ensure that New York didn't chart its own course by establishing separate standards that would only increase reporting requirements without fostering real action. With the Fashion Act, it was crucial for us to increase accountability while aligning with the broader efforts in the U.S., where feasible.

Because the legislation has global implications, we reached out to various stakeholders worldwide, including cotton farmers, labor groups, manufacturers associations and brands.

We've also built a strong coalition that includes ambassadors and celebrities [Jane Fonda, Leonardo DiCaprio, Cameron Diaz and more] who are actively engaging with citizens on this topic.

Are there any provisions you think will prompt changes to purchasing behaviors?

There are environmental requirements in place, such as the mandate for companies to set and achieve science-based targets, aiming to reduce emissions within planetary boundaries. However, a single-use fashion company, for instance, will struggle to meet these targets with its current business model.

It's often argued that consumers aren't driving change. But how much marketing is promoting a disposable shopping culture? It's an unfair battle. In fact, a significant portion of Meta's growth in the last quarter came from platforms like Shein and Zara alone. These companies heavily influence consumer behavior, making it unrealistic to expect individuals to resist a system bombarding them with messages to consume disposable products.

Are there socioeconomic implications to these changes in business models?

The messaging [about keeping prices low] is often used by the industry to push back against anyone advocating for change. However, when you delve deeper into the issue, you realize that these garments are of such low quality that they can't be worn more than once. This raises questions of equity. Why are companies selling products that don't last?

There's also a problem with how sustainability is perceived and regulated. It's often used merely as a selling point to justify higher prices. I understand that sustainable brands tend to have higher price points, but implementing sustainable practices shouldn't automatically translate to exorbitant costs. It's about finding a reasonable middle ground where quality garments are accessible to everyone.

In your opinion, what responsibilities do citizens have in holding brands accountable?

Through my work, I've seen the impact of a simple email from a citizen to a legislator or of participating in advocacy activities like rallies or advocacy days.

Legislators are often inundated with information from vested interests, so it's crucial that they also hear from citizens. We need to realize that while it's our responsibility to act, we also have the power to drive change. This understanding wasn't ingrained in me while growing up, but it's something I've come to appreciate through this work.

All stakeholders, including garment workers, labor unions, environmental organizations, brands and manufacturers, must understand each other's perspectives. We need to grasp their world and their concerns. While we may not always see eye-to-eye or agree on everything, it's imperative that we acknowledge and respect each other's viewpoints.

What are your hopes and expectations for the intersection of legislation, brand accountability and consumer behavior in the next decade?

I really hope we can reach a point where we have sensible regulations in place, where consumers don't need to become experts just to make a purchase decision. We need common-sense rules that allow the industry to thrive while staying within planetary boundaries and respecting labor rights. It might seem like an ambitious goal, but it's definitely achievable if we work toward it together.

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