

LETTER

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India ITME 2026 Takes the Technology Message Across Tamil Nadu's Textile Heartland

The promotional journey for India ITME 2026, the 12th edition of India's premier textile machinery and technology exhibition, has received an enthusiastic response from the textile industry across Tamil Nadu. The campaign, which commenced with a curtain-raiser in Coimbatore, travelled through Tirupur, Erode and Salem before concluding in Madurai, bringing the message of technology, innovation and modernisation directly to some of the country's most important textile clusters.

Scheduled to be held from December 4–9, 2026, at The India Expo Centre & Mart, Greater Noida, India ITME 2026 is expected to be the largest edition in the history of the India ITME series. The exhibition is expected to feature 1,800-plus exhibitors from more than 95 countries, attract over 1,50,000 visitors and occupy approximately 2,40,000 sq. m. across 18 exhibition halls.

The exhibition will focus on advanced textile machinery, sustainable manufacturing and next-generation textile technologies. It will also highlight developments aligned with initiatives such as Make in India, PM MITRA Parks and the National Technical Textiles Mission, with emphasis on resource efficiency, circular economy models, productivity and competitiveness.

The roadshow across Tamil Nadu provided an opportunity for the India ITME Society to engage directly with textile entrepreneurs, exporters, industry associations and other stakeholders and underline the importance of technology adoption as the Indian textile industry prepares for its next phase of growth.

Coimbatore: Setting the Stage for INDIA ITME 2026

The road show formally commenced with a preview event at **Coimbatore**, bringing together prominent stakeholders from the South Indian textile industry.

Welcoming the gathering and Elaborating on the scale and significance of the upcoming exhibition, Ketan Sanghvi, Chairman, India ITME Society, said the 2026 edition would be the largest in the history of the India ITME series.

"The 12th edition of India ITME will bring the global textile industry together on an unprecedented scale, with 1,800-plus exhibitors, participation from more than 95 countries and over 1,50,000 expected visitors. Spread across approximately 2,40,000 sq. m. and 18

exhibition halls, ITME 2026 will be a strategic destination for the textile machinery and engineering industry,” he said.

The Coimbatore event also brought a strong industry perspective. Prabhu Dhamodharan, Convenor, Indian Texpreneurs Federation (ITF), said the Indian textile industry was currently in a favourable position following several years of turbulence.

“India is in a sweet spot today. The FTAs, GST reforms, supply chain resilience, and the growing importance of nearshoring are creating a favourable environment for Indian textiles. With 95 per cent of the textile value chain supported domestically, India has a unique advantage in an increasingly uncertain global environment,” he said.

He added that the opportunities created by FTAs would need to be supported by investments in technology, innovation and product development.

“The opportunities are substantial, but to capitalise on them, we need to build capabilities. Exhibitions like ITME provide the ideal platform for the industry to discover technologies, forge partnerships and accelerate this transformation,” he added.

The event also highlighted the additional attractions planned alongside the exhibition, including ‘Textile Horizons’, a two-day international conference scheduled for December 5–6, the ‘CEO Conclave’ and the ‘ITME Technical Awards’.

Those registering at the Coimbatore curtain-raiser event would also be eligible for discounted registration for India ITME 2026.

Tirupur: Technology to Drive the Next Phase of Growth

From Coimbatore, the campaign moved to Tirupur, one of India’s most important knitwear and apparel manufacturing clusters. The preview event at the Tiruppur Exporters’ Association (TEA) focused strongly on productivity, modernisation and technology adoption.

K.M. Subramaniam, President, TEA, said the textile industry was witnessing positive trends and that recently signed FTAs had provided a much-needed boost to the sector.

“The new FTAs signed have come as a shot in the arm for the industry. Now is the time to take steps towards improving productivity. We need to aim for modernisation and expansion. India ITME 2026 has come at the right time,” he said.

He emphasised the significance of having access to the latest technologies within India. “The latest technologies will be showcased at the exhibition. Moreover, we no longer need to go abroad, as we did earlier, to see the latest textile machinery and technologies. They are now being showcased right at our doorstep. I am sure this will be one of the best fairs globally,” he said.

N. Thirukkumaran, General Secretary, TEA, highlighted the importance of technology in determining Tirupur's next phase of growth.

Tirupur already possesses a strong and integrated ecosystem encompassing knitting, dyeing, processing, garmenting, embroidery, finishing, logistics and exports. However, he stressed that the cluster's future competitiveness cannot depend merely on increasing production capacity.

"Our competitiveness will increasingly depend on quality, productivity, automation, energy efficiency, sustainability, speed to market and innovation," he said.

He also pointed to the increasing role of automation, artificial intelligence, IoT, digital monitoring and preventive maintenance in textile manufacturing.

With Tirupur predominantly comprising MSMEs, technology adoption becomes particularly important in improving productivity and competitiveness.

"With FTAs opening up new markets, we cannot afford to lag in productivity. That is why ITME 2026 assumes considerable importance. I encourage entrepreneurs from Tirupur to visit the exhibition and explore the latest machinery and technologies," he added.

Erode: Creating a Regional Hub for Innovation

The next stop was Erode, where the promotional event was held at Texvalley. The event highlighted the strategic importance of the region and the role that technology can play in strengthening its textile ecosystem.

E.P. Kumar, Director, Texvalley, pointed out that Erode, Namakkal, Tirupur, Salem and Karur are all located within an hour's drive of Texvalley, positioning the facility as a potential hub for textile entrepreneurs and stakeholders across these important centres.

"We are working towards positioning Texvalley as a hub for innovation, R&D and new product development. We also aim to provide support in devising marketing strategies for the textile entrepreneurs of this region, thereby strengthening the entire textile ecosystem," he said.

The importance of India ITME 2026 for Erode's textile industry was also underlined by **V.P. Subramaniam, President, Textile and Garments Exporters Association, Erode**.

"Manufacturers will get to know about the latest textile machinery and technologies, which can help them improve efficiency, enhance productivity and strengthen their competitiveness," he said.

The Erode roadshow thus reinforced the broader objective of the campaign—to ensure that technology and machinery developments showcased at India ITME 2026 reach textile businesses across regional clusters.

Salem: Technology and Exports as Growth Imperatives

The promotional campaign subsequently moved to Salem, another important textile centre in Tamil Nadu. Addressing the gathering at Hotel Radisson, Salem, Ganesan, President, Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Salem Chapter, highlighted the city's longstanding importance as a textile hub.

He emphasised that technology adoption and export growth would be critical for the region to strengthen its position in the global textile market.

"If the industry here is to grow further and strengthen its position in the global market, it needs to embrace new technologies and focus on increasing exports," he said.

He also urged textile entrepreneurs in the region to use India ITME 2026 as an opportunity to gain first-hand exposure to the latest developments in textile machinery and technology.

Madurai: Staying Ahead Through Technology

The final leg of the Tamil Nadu promotional campaign was held in Madurai, where the preview event took place at Hotel Royal Court.

Addressing the gathering, Dr. N. Jagadeesan, President, Tamil Nadu Chamber of Commerce and Industries, Madurai Chapter, highlighted India's emergence as a major global textile exporter and stressed the importance of technological advancement in sustaining this position.

According to him, India ITME 2026 would provide an important platform for textile industry stakeholders to understand emerging technologies and developments shaping the sector.

"Technology upgradation and adoption are what will help give the industry its competitive edge and is a key reason why every textile industrialist should visit India ITME 2026," he said.

His message reflected a common theme that emerged across all five locations: technology adoption will be central to India's ability to strengthen its position in global textile and apparel markets.

Strong Industry Response Across the Roadshow

Reflecting on the response to the campaign, S. Senthil Kumar, Honorary Treasurer, India ITME Society, expressed satisfaction with the participation across all five locations.

"We are extremely happy with the response the road show has received. The participation from textile entrepreneurs and industry stakeholders in every city has been very encouraging and reflects the strong interest in India ITME 2026," he said.

He also acknowledged the support extended by industry associations and organisations across the various locations in making the events successful.

“The response has given us tremendous confidence, and we look forward to welcoming the industry to what promises to be a highly successful edition of India ITME,” he added.

Building Momentum Towards India ITME 2026

The Tamil Nadu roadshow has provided a strong beginning to the promotional campaign for India ITME 2026. More importantly, the discussions across Coimbatore, Tirupur, Erode, Salem and Madurai highlighted a common industry priority: the next phase of textile growth will need to be driven by technology, productivity, efficiency, automation, sustainability, innovation and value addition.

Dr.Seema Srivastava, Executive Director, India ITME Society, expressed her appreciation for the continued support extended by the industry. “The presence of the who’s who of the South Indian and national textile industry is extremely encouraging. Your support motivates us to work harder and make India ITME 2026 a truly meaningful platform for the industry,” she said.

For a textile industry seeking to capitalise on new FTAs, diversify exports, strengthen domestic manufacturing and compete more effectively in global markets, access to advanced machinery and technology will become increasingly important.

Against this backdrop, India ITME 2026 and its ‘ITME Next’ theme assume particular significance. By bringing global machinery manufacturers, technology providers, textile producers, exporters and industry stakeholders together on one platform, the exhibition aims to create opportunities for technology discovery, business partnerships and knowledge exchange.

The enthusiastic response across Tamil Nadu suggests that the industry is already preparing for this next phase. As the countdown to December 2026 gathers momentum, India ITME Society will continue its outreach to textile clusters and industry stakeholders, building anticipation for what is positioned as the largest India ITME edition to date.

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India-EU trade pact clears legal scrub, signing likely this year

Read more at : <https://m.economictimes.com/news/economy/foreign-trade/india-eu-trade-pact-clears-legal-scrub-signing-likely-this-year/articleshow/133377015.cms>

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India-Singapore ties move beyond trade as manufacturing, fintech and digital economy take centre stage

India and Singapore are looking to take their economic relationship beyond traditional trade and investment, with advanced manufacturing, fintech, digitalisation, healthcare and sustainability emerging as key areas of cooperation.

The focus came at the fourth India-Singapore Ministerial Roundtable, where senior Indian ministers held discussions with their Singaporean counterparts on strengthening the countries' Comprehensive Strategic Partnership.

Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said the discussions focused on "deepening the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership" across advanced manufacturing, fintech, digitalisation, healthcare and sustainability. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and Minister of State for Electronics and Information Technology Jitin Prasada were also part of the Indian delegation.

Singapore's growing importance for India

The significance of the talks extends beyond the latest ministerial meeting. Singapore has become one of India's most important economic partners and a major gateway for foreign capital into the country.

According to data cited by the Commerce Ministry, Singapore was India's largest source of FDI in FY2025-26, with investments worth \$19.8 billion during the year.

The cumulative FDI inflow from Singapore stood at \$194.68 billion between April 2000 and March 2026, underscoring the city-state's long-standing role in India's investment landscape.

The relationship has also expanded substantially on the trade front. Bilateral trade increased from \$6.7 billion in FY2004-05 to \$36.1 billion in FY2025-26.

That expansion provides the foundation for the next phase of the partnership, which is increasingly centred on technology, manufacturing capabilities and services rather than simply the movement of goods and capital.

Why advanced manufacturing and fintech matter

The emphasis on advanced manufacturing comes as India seeks to strengthen domestic production, integrate more deeply into global supply chains and attract investment into technology-intensive industries.

Singapore, meanwhile, has developed into a major financial, logistics and technology hub in Asia. Greater cooperation could therefore connect India's large domestic market and manufacturing ambitions with Singapore's capital, financial expertise and regional business networks.

Fintech and digitalisation represent another natural area for collaboration. India's digital public infrastructure and rapidly expanding digital payments ecosystem offer potential avenues for partnerships with Singapore's sophisticated financial sector.

Healthcare and sustainability also broaden the relationship into sectors where technology, investment and cross-border expertise are becoming increasingly important.

From ministerial dialogue to implementation

The fourth India-Singapore Ministerial Roundtable is also significant because it is intended to review progress since the third roundtable, held in New Delhi in August 2025.

The two sides are expected to explore new areas for accelerating implementation of the roadmap for their Comprehensive Strategic Partnership.

Alongside the government-level discussions, the fourth India-Singapore Business Roundtable is bringing businesses from both countries into the conversation.

That combination is important. The challenge for the India-Singapore relationship is no longer simply identifying areas of cooperation, but converting agreements and policy discussions into investment, manufacturing projects, technology partnerships and greater business-to-business engagement.

Singapore's position as India's largest FDI source in FY26 suggests that the investment relationship is already deep. The next phase will determine whether that capital can increasingly support India's ambitions in high-value manufacturing, digital services, healthcare and emerging technologies.

For India, Singapore offers access to capital, technology and Southeast Asian markets. For Singapore, India's scale, growing consumer market and manufacturing ambitions provide an increasingly important long-term economic opportunity.

The latest roundtable therefore reflects a broader evolution in bilateral ties: from a relationship built heavily around trade and investment towards one increasingly shaped by technology, supply chains, digitalisation and strategic economic cooperation.

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Swiss and Chinese reach agreement on updated free trade deal

Switzerland and China have completed negotiations on an updated free trade deal which will increase Swiss access to its third biggest trading partner, Swiss officials said on Thursday.

Swiss president Guy Parmelin and China's Commerce Minister Wang Wentao announced the conclusion of the talks after a meeting in Bern.

Under the agreement, 99.8% of Swiss exports can enter the Chinese market duty free, upgrading an existing deal where the terms applied to only around half of Swiss shipments.

Almost all Chinese exports to Switzerland are duty free under the existing 2014 free trade agreement between the two countries, Beijing's first such deal with an economy in continental Europe.

Other areas covered in the new agreement include rules of origin and trade facilitation, trade in services, digital trade, competition, and economic and technical cooperation.

China is Switzerland's third biggest trade partner after Germany and the United States, with bilateral trade amounting to 46 billion Swiss francs (\$57.6 billion) so far in 2026.

Trade between the two countries has expanded from 31.7 billion francs in 2015 to 51.2 billion francs last year, according to figures from the Swiss customs office, with China a big market for Swiss chemicals, pharmaceuticals, precision instruments and watches.

Once the legal review has been completed, a signing of the deal is expected later this year, before the domestic approval processes in each country take place.

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Africa urged to leverage China tariff cuts for industrial growth

African countries have been urged to use China's zero-tariff treatment for products from 53 African countries to expand exports, strengthen domestic production and move up global value chains, rather than relying primarily on shipments of unprocessed raw materials. The policy took effect on May 1, 2026, providing duty-free access to one of the world's largest consumer markets.

The call was made at a seminar in Abuja on China's zero-tariff treatment and its implications for Africa's structural economic transformation. Participants said the policy could create opportunities for African economies to increase exports, attract investment and support industrialisation, but stressed that countries need stronger productive capacity to fully benefit, as per media reports.

China's Ambassador to Nigeria, Yu Dunhai, said the policy was already contributing to stronger trade flows. China-Africa trade reached a record \$207 billion in the first half of 2026, while Chinese imports from Africa between May and June rose to \$29 billion, up 24 per cent year on year. Overall African exports to China were estimated to have increased by around 6 per cent following the implementation of the zero-tariff regime.

Nigeria has recorded particularly strong growth. Bilateral trade between Nigeria and China reached \$18 billion in the first half of 2026, up 35 per cent, while Chinese imports from Nigeria rose 80 per cent to \$2.3 billion. Monthly growth in Chinese imports from Nigeria exceeded 40 per cent in both May and June.

For Nigerian exporters, the removal of tariffs has already generated savings on certain commodities. However, stakeholders stressed that tariff-free access alone will not guarantee sustained export growth.

African countries need to increase processing capacity, improve product quality, harmonise standards, strengthen customs procedures and improve logistics and export infrastructure to convert market access into long-term industrial gains.

The emphasis on value addition is particularly important because Africa's exports to China remain heavily concentrated in primary commodities. Moving into semi-processed and finished products could allow African manufacturers and exporters to capture more value while creating jobs and strengthening domestic industrial ecosystems.

For textile and apparel supply chains, the development could create opportunities for African countries to expand exports of processed fibres, yarns, fabrics, garments and other manufactured goods, provided producers can meet Chinese market requirements on quality, certification, consistency and scale.

Stakeholders therefore see China's zero-tariff regime as a potential catalyst for export diversification and industrial transformation but argue that African economies must build the production and processing capabilities needed to take full advantage of the preferential market access.

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Switch to ethical sourcing rises global demand for Tanzania's organic cotton

The Simiyu region in northern Tanzania is famed not only for the Serengeti National Park and its annual wildebeest migration, but also for its growing reputation as a hub for sustainable agriculture. The region has become the epicentre of organic cotton farming in Tanzania, helping cement the country's status as Africa's leading producer of certified organic cotton.

According to Anamringi Macha, Simiyu's Regional Commissioner, organic cotton output has grown from 10,300 tonnes in 2021/22 to 12,285 tonnes in 2022/23. This, he says, places Tanzania among the top global producers, alongside market leaders such as China, India, Turkey and Tajikistan.

Organic cotton differs fundamentally from conventional cotton in that it is cultivated exclusively from non-genetically modified seeds and without synthetic pesticides,

herbicides, or fertilisers. Farmers rely instead on natural processes – like crop rotation, composting, and biological pest control – to maintain soil fertility and protect local ecosystems. They typically operate through cooperatives, whilst certification is handled by independent auditors under international organic standards.

By contrast, conventional cotton often relies on monoculture – planting cotton on the same land year after year – supported by heavy use of synthetic fertilisers and pesticides. Over time, this degrades the soil and adversely impacts its ability to retain water.

The steep environmental toll of conventional cotton farming has prompted a shift among some global fashion and retail brands towards sustainable sourcing. As a result, demand for organic cotton has grown steadily over the years, with Tanzania emerging as a key supplier to international buyers seeking ethically produced fibre.

Rapid Rise

Tanzania's organic cotton journey began in the mid 1990s, when NGOs and local cooperatives launched pilot projects in Simiyu and neighbouring regions to test pesticide-free cultivation. The model gained traction in the 2000s, and by the mid 2010s, Tanzania had become Africa's largest certified organic producer, with thousands of smallholder farmers trained in ecological farming techniques.

Analysts expect Tanzania's organic cotton farming sector to benefit from a continued rise in demand for ethically sourced fibre in the years ahead. According to 6Wresearch, Tanzania's organic cotton market was estimated at \$1.44bn in 2025 and is projected to reach \$2.05bn by 2032, growing at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 5.1% during this period.

"This growth trajectory is fuelled by increasing global consumer demand for sustainable and eco-friendly textiles. As awareness of sustainable farming practices rises, more smallholder farmers in Tanzania are adopting organic methods, further enhancing the country's capacity to meet this burgeoning demand," the research firm notes.

The promise of more inclusive growth

One of the more uncomfortable truths about cotton farming – whether conventional or organic – is the precarious socioeconomic position most smallholder farms find themselves in

In Tanzania and across much of Africa, these farmers often remain trapped in poverty despite years of toil. High input costs, barriers to market access, limited access to formal

financial services, volatile global commodity prices, and mounting climate-related losses combine to erode their incomes and keep them poor.

Experts argue that given the premium that buyers are willing to pay for certified fibre, organic cotton offers an opportunity for more inclusive growth. Certification also typically comes with added support to the farmer to help them through the transition from conventional cotton to organic varieties.

In Tanzania, schemes such as Cotton made in Africa (CmiA Organic) connect smallholders directly to international textile buyers committed to ethical sourcing. Through these partnerships, farmers gain access to stable contracts and better prices, shielding them from the volatility that plagues conventional cotton markets.

Under the CmiA Organic framework, certified farmers receive a premium of 10 to 20% above the standard farmgate price. This premium is paid through cooperatives and distributed as both cash bonuses and community investments, helping to fund village schools, water wells, and training centres. The model ensures that the benefits of sustainability reach beyond individual households to strengthen entire farming communities.

Moving from conventional to organic cotton is not instantaneous. Farmers must undergo a three-year transition period during which their fields are monitored to ensure that all synthetic inputs are phased out, and soil health is restored. During this time, yields may temporarily dip, and cotton cannot yet be sold as organic, posing a serious income challenge for families who depend on cotton as their sole cash crop.

To bridge this gap, NGOs and buyers working under the CmiA Organic umbrella in Tanzania provide technical and financial support. Farmers receive training in composting, pest management, and crop diversification, along with access to microcredit and guaranteed purchase agreements. Extension officers visit regularly to guide them through compliance requirements and record-keeping.

By the end of the transition, farmers emerge with healthier soils, lower input costs, and access to a lucrative export market that rewards sustainability. Certification thus becomes both a shield against poverty and a lever for empowerment. The Aid by Trade Foundation, which handles CmiA standards, reports that it has certified 9,000 tonnes of Tanzania's organic cotton,

According to the Organic Cotton Accelerator, a global initiative founded in 2016 to strengthen the integrity and profitability of the organic cotton sector, the success of the model boils down to economics.

“Farmers moving away from synthetic inputs often see yields drop before the soil recovers and organic practices fully take hold. Without price premiums and forward purchase commitments from brands, this period is simply too risky for most smallholders to absorb on their own,” it says.

“Income is the starting point. Everything else follows from that. If organic cotton doesn’t pay, farmers don’t stay with it. It’s that straightforward,” it adds. “The broader environmental benefits of organic farming are real. Healthier soils, less chemical runoff, lower emissions. But for a smallholder farmer in a low-income context, these don’t translate into immediate financial returns.”

Climate change poses a growing threat

All of Tanzania’s organic cotton is rain-fed, a reflection of the limited irrigation infrastructure available to smallholder farmers. While organic certification does not strictly require that cotton to depend solely on rainfall, advocates say the practice helps ease pressure on local water sources and keeps production environmentally sustainable.

Yet this dependence on rain has a darker side; it exposes farmers to increasingly erratic rainfall patterns driven by climate change.

For generations, farmers have relied on traditional knowledge of the seasons, passed down over generations, to determine when to plant. For the most part this has worked. But those rhythms are now breaking down. Rains that once arrived predictably now come weeks late or in false starts, with brief downpours that trick farmers into early planting followed by long dry spells that kill young seedlings.

The harvest season also brings its own risks. Cotton requires dry conditions for the exposed lint to be picked clean. When unseasonal, torrential rains strike late in the cycle, they can stain or rot the fibre before it reaches the gin, slashing both quality and income.

Beyond the challenge posed by erratic rainfall, rising temperatures combined with sudden droughts deplete moisture in the soil, preventing the development of healthy cotton bolls. Cotton requires stable moisture, particularly during its flowering phase. This yet again illustrates the mounting challenges posed by climate change and the corresponding need to scale up adaptation efforts to cushion smallholder farmers who rely on the crop for their livelihoods.

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