

## Indian garment expo evokes interest in South Africa

A two-city expo of Indian garments in South Africa by the Apparel Export Promotion Council (AEPC) last week was a success with almost every major store chain here expressing interest in buying the wares, according to Vijay Mathur who led the delegation.

Thirteen garment manufacturers from across India exhibited their products in Cape Town (April 7-8) and here (April 11-12), some of them for the second time following on the success of an inaugural expo by the AEPC last year.

In 2006, South Africa imported clothing worth \$52.43 million from India, with the AEPC seeking a larger slice of the total South African imports in this sector of \$1.123 billion.

'Our members have been regularly in touch with South African designers and buyers to ensure that what they presented here met local demands and needs,' Mathur told IANS.

'We are not targeting the (huge) South African Indian market with traditional Indian garments, but rather the rest of the market here with international styles.'

Buyers from the largest clothing groups in the country showed keen interest in the wide range of products, with most exhibitors confident that they will conclude deals in the months to follow.

Indian Consul-General Navdeep Suri said at the opening of the exhibition here that Indian businesses also saw South Africa as the gateway to the rest of the African continent, opening up even more opportunities for them.

'At the same time, there are also opportunities for South African business to benefit from the market potential in India, where the economy is growing at nine percent annually,' Suri added.

Mathur said there was no serious concern on the part of the Indian manufacturers about China's advent into this territory, as Indian's quality and pricing was still very competitive in the international arena.

Negotiations have also started with South African authorities about the training of people from here in garment industry centres in India.

'We believe that South Africa could benefit from such training because the people that we propose to take to India could come back to train others here, thereby expanding capacity in this country,' Mathur added.

*Fakir Hassen* ( © IANS / India eNews)