



Milkweed Fiber

Why in News?

Recently, the [Ministry of Textiles](#) has strengthened collaboration in developing [India's textile industry](#) by extending its **research and development efforts** into new [natural fibers](#), including **milkweed fiber**.

Key Points

- **Strategic Engagement:**
 - The Minister of Textiles, in a meeting facilitated by Invest India, engaged with Uniqlo's senior officials to **reaffirm the commitment to strengthening India's textile sector**.
 - This also focuses on improving cotton production capabilities, productivity, and quality in India.
- **Uniqlo's Contribution to India's Textile Ecosystem:**
 - Uniqlo operates **15 stores across India**, achieving a **retail revenue of Rs 814 crore as of 31st March 2024**, with a growth rate of 30%.
- **Alignment with India's Textile Growth Goals:**
 - India targets a textile market size of USD 350 billion and USD 100 billion in exports by 2030.
 - The Ministry has invited Uniqlo to invest in the [Prime Minister's Mega Integrated Textile Region and Apparel \(PM MITRA\) Parks](#), offering a ready-to-perform ecosystem with sustainable operations.
- **Upcoming Collaboration Opportunities:**
 - Uniqlo will participate in the ["Bharat Tex" Global Textile Expo](#) in February 2025 highlighting innovation, sustainability, and traceability.
- **Milkweed Fiber:**
 - **About:**
 - It is the **seed fiber obtained from milkweed plants**.
 - Milkweed (*Asclepias syriaca L*) plant **belongs to the genus Asclepias of the family Asclepiadaceae** and is **also known as stubborn weed**.
 - In India, it is found as a wild plant in the states of **Rajasthan, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu**.
 - Milkweed contains an **abundance of milk sap in its leaves, stems and pods**.
 - **Properties:**
 - It contains **oily material and lignin, a woody plant substance**, which makes them too brittle for spinning.
 - It has a **hydrophobic-oleophobic surface due to the natural waxes** found on the surface of the fiber.
 - **Applications:**
 - It is used in **paper industries**.
 - In addition, it is also used as an **insulative filling material**.
 - It is used in such **water-safety equipment as life jackets and belts**.
 - Researchers discovered that it **readily absorbs oil while simultaneously repelling water**, thus making it an effective fiber to help clean up oil spills.

PM MITRA Scheme

- PM MITRA Park will be developed by a **Special Purpose Vehicle** which will be owned by the Central and State Government and in a **Public Private Partnership (PPP) Mode.**
- Each MITRA Park will have an **incubation centre, common processing house and a common effluent treatment plant** and other textile related facilities such as design centres and testing centres.

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