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Thailand uses nanotech to develop textile sector

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Singapore: Thailand's Ministry of Science and Technology has recognized the importance of the local textile industry and is looking at ways to improving its value chain in order to create economic impact. Over 50 percent percent of Thai handicrafts are textile-based and the national Thai development policy is encouraging its development from a self-supporting role into an income generating activity.

Dr Phiraphan Phalusuk, Minister of Science and Technology, Thailand, recently led a delegation to visit Swiss Federal Laboratories for Materials Science and Technology (EMPA) in Switzerland. The purpose of the visit was to observe and look at ways in which new technology such as nanotechnology is being used in EMPA for fabric functional enhancement.

EMPA has had a close working relationship with Thailand over the past few years. Professor Harald Krug, head, materials department, EMPA, who is also member of the advisory board of NANOTEC, Thailand, visited Thailand for a three-month stay earlier this year as visiting professor. He was attached to the Nano Safety and Risk Assessment Lab (SRA) and Nano Functional Textile Lab (NFT) at NANOTEC and also gave several technical lectures.

Prof Krug said that, "At EMPA our research mission is to focus on sustainable use of materials for healthy future. We believe that future materials must be safe and recycle for both environment and society benefit."

Dr Phiraphan said that, "The Thai SMEs must focus on up grading their product in order to be competitive. By being able to bring some of the technology that is available in various research facilities will greatly increase the value of our products and improve standard of living in communities."