

INTERVIEW

Union Exports - Where quality matters.

The only company in Karachi offering disperse textile printing in wider widths - Yousuf Agha, Union Exports.



Yousuf Agha, GM (pretreatment, printing, dyeing and finishing unit), Union Exports.

Union Exports based in Karachi, Pakistan is a quality conscious company; it has a well defined policy towards quality. To better serve its global customers, Union has recently established a new printing and dyeing facility fully equipped with state of art technology and new machinery. This editorial article by Amina Baqai, editor-in-chief highlights the new printing and dyeing facility of Union Exports and an interview of Yousuf Agha, General Manager of pretreatment, printing, dyeing and finishing unit at Union Exports.

Union Exports (Pvt.) Ltd. was established in 1981 and started operations with exports of basic bed linen qualities to Europe. Presently, Union Exports offers a wide range of home textile products to retailers and importers in USA, Europe, Middle East and Russia. Union Exports is a network of composite mills, which manufacture fabrics to finished products. In order to maintain high quality standards and focus on specialization, the manufacturing operations have been divided into weaving, knitting, printing, dyeing, stitching, quilting, wadding and quality control units.

With strict focus on operational excellence and strong policies on Social, Environmental, Health and Safety issues at all of Union's manufacturing facilities, the company is able to offer compliance with all major International agencies like BVQI, SGS and Intertek. Other certifications include: ISO 9001:2000 Certification, SA-8000:2001 Certification and Fair Trade Cotton Certified.

According to Union Exports, our commitment to perfection, high quality standards and through support of our business customers has made our company as one of the leading manufacturers and exporters of Bed and Bath Linen. The manufacturing processes are certified on ISO 9002 standards.

Pretreatment, Printing, Dyeing and Finishing

Union Exports is equipped with a newly established printing and dyeing unit which has most modern and sophisticated pretreatment, printing, dyeing and finishing equipment. The printing unit is equipped with modern rotary machine capable of printing in 15 colors on fabrics as wide as 320 cm by Zimmer. The machines offer repeats from 64R to 101R.

The finishing section is equipped with two modern stenters capable of achieving perfect finish. The company is also able to offer final finishing touches to the fabric on different calendars as per the require-

ments of the buyers. The finishing section also offers different finishes to suit customer requirements like easy care, anti-bacterial, stain free, water repellent, fragrance and Aloe Vera both in knits and woven fabrics.

The list of equipment at this new facility includes Menzel singeing and de-sizing range, E+L de-twisting and slitting range, Salvade steaming and curing machine, calendar, CAD/CAM System, dyeing range, film plotter, digital engraver, mercerizing machine by Menzel and Zimmer rotary printing machine (15 colors upto 120 inch width), two stenters, washing and drying range by Menzel and winches and tumbler (for both knits and towels) supported by state of the art laboratory facility.

The most recent product range by Union includes **Photo Real printing of wider widths** using both reactive and pigment colors. The scope of work on wider width includes the following:

- ❖ Reactive printing on both jersey and woven fabrics.



Open width washing machine by Menzel shown at the premises of Union Exports.

- ❖ Reactive dyeing (on woven, knits and towels)
- ❖ Soft pigment printing.
- ❖ Disperse printing, on micro fabric and 100% polyester.
- ❖ Disperse dyeing.
- ❖ Whites for Institutional (with special handle, feels and finishes)
- ❖ Multiple finishes are offered. Examples include: PU Coating, stain and water resistant coatings, Dimout Coating, anti bacterial finishes and peach effects.

The company offers printed or dyed fabrics in running meters or packed fabrics as per customer's specific requirements from 120 thread count to 600 thread count in Cotton/Poly cotton compositions with Plain, Sateen, Twill, Dobby and Jacquard weaves.

Union Exports have acquired, VPM Continuous Steaming Machine from Salvade, Italy in 2006.

Salvade steaming machine is the result of the operating suggestions from customers including the recent customers such as Union Exports and Yunus Textile Mills. The important performance parameters and requirements of a steaming machine have been taken into consideration, when designing this machine. The machine offers following advantages and features.

- ❖ Less steam consumption.
- ❖ Immediate and uniform moistening at the slightest change in temperature, resulting in consequent higher dye yield and brightness.
- ❖ Even temperature throughout the steaming chamber.



Union offers Photo Real printing of wider widths fabrics using both reactive and pigment colors.

- ❖ Fast heating from 0-180°C.
- ❖ Continuous fabric transport through the machine to avoid rubbing. The pneumatically controlled chain drive ensures smooth motion and fabric carrying rods rotate smoothly, as smooth forward drive and rotations are necessary to avoid fabric rubbing.
- ❖ Easy running with least possible lubrication and maintenance.

Steam which fed into the machine comes directly from the plant steam supply source, through a special steam super heater into water. Steam consumption is automatically controlled by special instruments.

Automatic moistening from both sides of the chamber through 16 spray nozzles is guaranteed and electronic temperature control adjusts moisturizing to a tenth of a degree change in temperature. The water injection pump starts working at the slightest change in temperature to atomize the water into the circulating steam.

While talking to PTJ, Yousuf Agha, General Manager of pretreatment, printing, dyeing and finishing unit of Union Exports stated, our company believes in value addition, everyone is doing run of the mill work, and we are adding value to textiles processing by doing reactive and disperse printing other than the usual normal pigment printing, therefore, Salvade and Menzel are ideal for partners for Union Export - where quality matters with high value added printing and finishing.

"We are very happy with our latest Salvade steamer, as it offers better color development, temperature and moisture evenness and stability which is very important for reactive and disperse printing and processing and with little maintenance"

Yousuf Agha - a mechanical engineer from NED University of Engineering and DAE Textile processing Diploma from National Textile College started his career in processing industry in 1997. He has worked with other prestigious mills, such as Zarak Textiles (now Popular Textiles), Mustaqaim Dyeing and Printing Industries and Afroze Textile Mills (entire plant of Afroze has been installed by him).



VPM continuous steaming machine from Salvade, Italy shown at Union Exports.

Agha elaborated, "When I joined Union Exports, it was just a plot and entire plant was installed under my supervision, starting from planning, installation and finally running of this facility, I am responsible for dye and print house and all of us take certain pride that our machines are from reputable manufacturers from Germany, Austria and Italy."

While talking about the plant capacity Yousuf Agha elaborated: "Approximately, we process 1.4 million meters of fabric per month. We print roughly one million meters of fabrics, of which 150,000 – 200,000 meters entails reactive printing and around 50,000 to 60,000 meters is disperse printing of wider width fabrics, and the rest is attributed to pigment printing. A small portion of pigment and reactive printing is also done on commercial basis 200,000 to 300,000 meters of fabrics depending on availability. In fact, Union is the only company in Karachi, which is actively doing disperse printing in wider width. Also in wider width reactive printing, there may be 2-3 companies in SITE area and 6 to 7 mills in Landhi who are doing reactive wider width printing, In a city of 200 mills, less than 15 are doing value added reactive printing."

"The strength of our company is reactive and disperse printing of fabrics in wider width using rotary screen printing machinery from Zimmer, entire back process from Menzel (singeing & desizing range, mercerizing and washing and drying range) and steamer from

Salvade, Italy." Agha also added that, "Salvade and their representative Mustex Corporation helped us in product development and ran trials of our fabrics at Salvade plant in Como, Italy."

While talking about problems of textile finishing industry, Agha said, "we are buying greige fabrics from Punjab (Faisalabad and Lahore), along with some fabric sourced from Karachi. Last winter the spinning and weaving industry was facing problems in Punjab, due to limited availability of gas and now, due to heavy load shedding the weaving industry is suffering and the fabric supply chain is almost on the verge of collapse."

Agha explained, "The value added industry is crippled due to the un-harnessed yarn and fabric export. In these tough times when utility costs are sky high, fabric availability is scarce, mills are facing almost a shut down situation. The value added sector is facing near closure scenario, which can cause severe unemployment and add to the woes of this already troubled sector."

While talking about Menzel, also represented by Mustex Corporation in Pakistan, Agha said, "Union is the show room for Menzel machinery in Pakistan –



E+L weft straightener.

we have the first brand new plant from Menzel and I am quite amazed at the performance parameters of Menzel washing range - Menzel offers such versatility, when it comes to bleaching and washing, and we have been taking the machine to its threshold limit. For example we are washing reactive and disperse prints on our washing range with satisfactory results."

"Mercerizing range from Menzel ensures even mercerizing throughout the width and length of the fabric and also ensures batch to batch uniformity- we do not have continuous bleaching line, and are using the cold bleach method, yet we have consistent batch to batch bleaching, regardless of the kind or type of fabrics. In reactive application (dyeing and printing) mercerizing should be even to produce quality product on a consistent basis and we are satisfied with Menzel mercerizing machine. Different applications in reactive and disperse were made possible, when we had installed Menzel in 2007."

Yousuf Agha also demonstrated that all machines including Zimmer, Artos, Menzel and Salvade etc. are kept in original condition, "We have not changed anything with local parts, and we strive to keep our plant at optimum working conditions, without compromising on processing techniques. We also value our plant management team and as you can see that we hire qualified textile graduates from prestigious universities in Pakistan."

He further expressed, "Our partners in pigment, reactive and disperse are renowned companies like Clariant and Huntsman; which not only help us achieve desired results repeatedly but also make us compliant to all international testing standards besides being environmental friendly". ♦



E+L de-twisting and slitting range.