

# 'Clean Production is Possible'

## 清潔生產定可行



As Project Clean Air moves into Phase II, the Chamber led a 40-member delegation to the PRD to learn how one company is proving that clean production is not just good for the environment, but essential for the company's long-term growth strategy

Robots glide along rails vacuuming the floor, machines, shelves and air around the thousands of looms weaving miles of cotton that will be turned into designer garments.

John Cheh, Vice Chairman and Chief Operating Officer of the Esquel Group, a Hong Kong-based cotton garment manufacturer, runs his finger along a shelf beside a loom. "Spotless!" he shouted over the din of the high-tech looms.

Built at a cost of US\$150 million, the 150,000 square meter weaving mill in Gaoming town, Foshan, Guangdong, can produce up to 3.5 million yards of fabric every month.

The facility is just one of the key investments that Esquel Group has made to turn what is generally considered a low-tech, polluting industry into a state-of-the-art benchmark for others to follow.

The looms are powered by a low emission thermo-power plant that the company built at a cost of US\$29 million, and steam generated by the power plant is used in its fabric mills as a by-product of power generation.

Mr Cheh told members during the Chamber's site visit to the factory on March 21 that the power plant was built to provide a steady supply of electricity and steam to its production facilities. "The power generated is both cost effective and lower in emissions than the local power grid," he said.

The 40-member delegation, including business and media representatives, visited the company's Guangdong operations to see how it is reducing its impact on the



- ▲ Power plant emissions are continually monitored at the site.  
發電廠的廢氣排放持續受到監察。
- ◀ Members visit the control room of Esquel's power station.  
團員參觀溢達發電廠的控制室。

environment and to spread the message that “Clean production is possible!”

“We want to understand how factories in the PRD use clean technologies to manage and control air emissions during production,” mission leader Cheng Yiu-tong, Convenor of the GPRDBC’s subgroup said. “Esquel’s example shows that it is possible, even profitable, to care for the environment at the same time as we do business.”

The visit was part of the Project Clean Air through which PRD enterprises are encouraged to emulate the example of factories employing successful clean production facilities.

“We are now taking the project into its next phase – to move from a sign-up campaign to real action,” Chamber CEO Alex Fong said. “We are already making use of the network of Charter endorsers to build up a platform to disseminate information on best practices and clean-technology solutions, to encourage

companies to learn from each other and to enable the community to understand more about what businesses are doing. This visit is a prime example of how we harness this business network. In addition, we are initiating an audit and certification scheme to give recognition to Charter-compliant companies.”

Esquel may seem to be in an enviable position of having the finance to invest almost US\$200 million in high-tech production facilities, power plants and even a waste-water treatment works, but according to Mr Cheh, investing in preserving the environment is not an option, it is an “essential strategy” to ensure long-term sustainable development.

Consumers want to buy products manufactured in an environmentally friendly way. Some brands like Tommy Hilfiger will only do business with suppliers who minimise their environmental footprint, he said.

“Our customers tell me they can sleep better at night not having to worry about emissions and

pollution, so of course they are happy to give us their business,” he said. “So this is not only good for the environment but also good for business.”

Environment preservation is not limited to the company’s manufacturing process. Esquel’s philosophy involves the entire production process, from the company’s organic cotton farms in Xinjiang Province to the treatment of waste water.

Mr Cheh said the decision to generate its own power was a prudent business decision. With its mills running at near full capacity, any power shortage on the government grid would spell disaster for production and shipping deadlines, which would also force customers to seek more reliable suppliers. Moreover, power generated by its own plant is cheaper than the public grid, so it really is a long-term advantage.

But how long would it take to recover the US\$29 million investment in the 30,000KW power plant? Mr Cheh said it was difficult to calculate the ROI in black and white, and many factors, such as lost production and customers resulting from blackouts on the public grid, would have to be taken into consideration.

Waste water produced in the textile production process is treated at the company’s treatment plant before being discharged.

紡織過程中所生產的污水會經由污水系統處理，然後才進行排放。



Mr Cheng pointed out that while it would be difficult for SMEs to invest in power plants and wastewater treatment works, companies could pool their resources with government assistance to build central processing plants based on a polluter-pays basis.

But that will only happen if local and provincial governments get serious about monitoring pollution and implement legislation against non-compliance, he said.

Mr Cheh said some governments were getting serious about protecting the environment, but pointed out that as regulations and standards differ from city to city, it was difficult for businesses to comply.

Moreover, many SMEs have their sights fixed on a quick profit and see investments in environmentally friendly production as a waste of money, which highlights the importance of education.

The Chamber, in cooperation with the sustainable development subgroup of the Greater Pearl River Delta Business Council, will co-organize more tours and awareness-raising programmes for enterprises in the PRD to visit environmentally friendly companies.

“Many local and international companies in Hong Kong have a shared common goal to foster economic growth and protect our environment at the same time,” said Mr Fong. “Esquel is a showcase of companies going beyond signing the Clean Air Charter and putting the commitments into practice.” 🌸

For more details on Project Clean Air, or to find out about upcoming factory tours, visit [www.cleanair.hk](http://www.cleanair.hk)



隨著「清新空氣計劃」進入第二階段，香港總商會率領一個40人代表團，前往珠三角一家公司進行考察，以瞭解清潔生產為何不僅有利環境，而對於公司的長遠發展來說，更是關鍵的策略。

數千台織布機隆隆作響，織出一匹匹用以製作華衣美服的棉布，機械人吸塵機沿著路軌慢慢滑動，吸走在地板、機器、架子和空氣中的塵埃。

溢達集團副主席兼營運總裁車克燾用手指一掃高科技織布機旁邊的架子，在一片雜聲中扯高嗓子嚷道：「簡直是一塵不染！」

溢達集團以香港為基地，從事棉衣生產業務。其織造廠位於廣東佛山高明市，斥資1.5億美元建成，總樓面面積達150,000平方米，每月的布料產量可高達350萬碼。

除了這項設施，溢達集團還作出多項重大投資，在一門普遍被視為低科技、高污染的行業內，建設一個成為清潔生產楷模的先進項目，讓同業效法。

織布機的能源來自公司斥資2,900萬美元興建的低廢氣排放熱電廠，織造廠還善用發電廠產生的蒸汽，以提升能源效益。

本會代表團於3月21日前往廠房進行實地考察時，車克燾向團員表示，集團興建發電廠是要確保其生產設施有穩定的電力和蒸汽供應。他說：「集團電廠所生產的電力具成本效益，而且排放的廢氣亦較本地電網少。」

由商界及傳媒代表組成的40人考察團，參觀了該公司在廣東省的生產業務，考察其廠房如何減少有關運作對環境的影響，藉此宣傳「清潔生產定可行」的訊息。

考察團團長、大珠三角商務委員會可持續發展工作小組召集人鄭耀棠表示：「我們希望瞭解珠三角廠商如



何利用清潔科技，以管理及控制生產過程中的廢氣排放。溢達就是一個實例，顯示廠商在營商之餘亦可同時兼顧環保，做法不但切實可行，而且更能帶來利潤。」

是次參觀活動是「清新空氣計劃」的拓展項目之一，旨在鼓勵珠三角企業仿效業界的成功例子，引入清潔生產設施。

總商會總裁方志偉表示：「我們現正推展『清新空氣計劃』至另一階段，由簽名運動發展為實際行動。透過《約章》內的企業網絡，我們已建立一個溝通平台，以便向外發放最佳的環保方案及清潔科技資訊，鼓勵企業互相仿效，並讓大眾瞭解商界所推行的環保措施，而今天的考察活動正反映這個商界網絡的重要功能。此外，我們亦準備推出審核和認證計劃，以認同《約章》的簽署公司在推動環保方面的努力。」

溢達斥資近2億美元興建高科技生產設施、發電廠，甚至污水處理廠，其財力實在令人羨慕。但車氏指出，環保已不再被視為可有可無的投資，而是不可或缺的策略，確保業務得以可持續發展。

他續說：「消費者希望購買以環保方式生產的貨品。某些品牌如Tommy Hilfiger等，只會與環保的供應商合作。」

The company has invested in the latest high technology at its production plant to reduce labour, increase capacity and minimize its impact on the environment.

溢達於其廠房作高科技投資，以節省人力、提升生產力，並減少對環境的影響。



Members check a sample of woven cloth straight off the loom.  
會員檢視織布機剛織出的棉布。



Cheng Yiu-tong (left), Convenor of the GPRDBC's subgroup, and Chamber CEO Alex Fong (right) present John Cheh, Vice Chairman and Chief Operating Officer, Esquel Group, with a small memento to thank him for showing members around his operations.

大珠三角商務委員會可持續發展工作小組召集人鄭耀棠(左)及本會總裁方志偉(右)向溢達集團副董事長兼總裁車克憲致送紀念品，感謝他帶領會員進行參觀。



他表示：「客戶告訴我，他們晚上可以更安心入睡，因為不用再擔心廢氣排放及污染問題，所以，他們當然樂於與我們合作。由此可見，我們的措施不僅有利環境，也對生意有幫助。」

溢達的環保理念並不只限於生產環節，而是貫徹整個生產流程，包括在新疆省開闢有機棉田以至污水處理等。

車氏說，自設電廠發電是一個審慎的商業決定。由於織造廠的生產力已接近見頂，若政府電網出現任何電力故障，便會令公司無法趕上付貨期及船期，更會使客戶轉投更可靠的供應商。此外，自行發電的成本比使用公共電網更低，為該公司帶來了長遠的成本優勢。

然而，這間 30,000 千瓦的發電廠，到底需時多久才可收回 2,900 萬美元的投資成本？車氏說，很難確實計算投資回報，因為當中要考慮很多因素，例如公共電網停電導致的產能下降及客戶流失等。

鄭耀棠指出，雖然中小企難有財力興建電廠及污水處理系統，但他們可集合資源，在政府協助下興建以污者自付模式運作的中央處理廠。

他說：「只有地方及省政府認真監管污染問題，並嚴格執法對付違規者，廠商才會願意為清潔生產作出投資。」

車氏說，有些政府正認真考慮推出環保措施，但由於各市的規例及標準並不一致，令企業無所適從。

此外，很多中小企急功近利，認為投資於環保生產只是浪費金錢，這反映了教育的重要性。

總商會將與大珠三角商務委員會可持續發展工作小組合作，為珠三角企業舉辦更多考察及推廣活動，包括參觀環保企業等。

方氏說：「許多本地及國際企業均有一個共同目標，就是在推動經濟發展之餘，同時致力推行環保。溢達的例子，正好顯示眾多企業在支持《清新空氣約章》之餘，更能身體力行，實踐環保承諾。」

有關「清新空氣計劃」或日後舉辦的廠房考察活動之詳情，請瀏覽 [www.cleanair.hk](http://www.cleanair.hk)。