Business Week
25 Sept - 01 Oct

New The North Face flagship store in Antwerp

25 Sept 2006

US-based outdoor apparel and equipment brand The North Face is to open its first urban flagship store in Belgium, marking the company's twentieth retail store in Europe. The store will offer a complete selection of innovative and technically advanced exploration clothing, footwear, equipment and accessories for men, women and children.

It will feature The North Face Summit Series, expedition-proven clothing and equipment from base camp to summit, and Prodigy collection, designed for progressive snowsports athletes.

Customers will find product highlights combining the lightest materials and latest technologies, such as Polartec Power Shield and Gore DryLoft technology in outerwear, HyVent materials in Prodigy, X-Static textile fibres in Tekware, BOA lacing system in footwear, and E-VAP technology in backpacks.

Athletic shoes study released

25 Sept 2006

According to a national syndicated study on American leisure time by Leisure Trends Group, athletic shoes have become as commonplace as blue jeans in Americans wardrobes.

The study found that 96% of Americans aged 16 and over own at least one pair of athletic shoes, although just 58% of the population participates in sports and recreation in any three-month period.

The analysis also found that 75% of Americans assert that fashion comes before comfort, performance and durability when determining which athletic shoe to buy. 'Athleisure' footwear is starting to encroach on the street shoes market and the study found that a quarter of all Americans now own four or more different types of athletic shoes for a combination of fashion and sport functions.

On average, those earning less than $40,000 per year spent $122 annually on athletic shoes while those making more than $80,000 spend nearly twice as much, $211 annually. This wealthier segment tends to buy new trends and sports sandals, mainly for fashion purposes rather than as practical footwear. Males aged 16 to 24 spent the most on athletic footwear, $220 per year.

Anteprima presents 'Classical Preciousness'

25 Sept 2006

The theme for winter 2007 fashion trends at Anteprima, Milan (September 12-13) was 'classical preciousness'. The show attracted 137 exhibitors from six countries, the majority of which came from Italy.

The season's leather will be shiny, refined but with a soft hand and greater use of fur was introduced. Demand confirmed sport vintage as a focus for style.

Over 2,300 visitors attended from 37 countries with large numbers from France and the UK.

LAC area textile industry responds to Asian growth

25 Sept 2006

According to a report entitled 'Latin America and the Caribbean's Response to the Growth of China and India: Overview of Research Findings and Policy Implications', concerns that the two Asian countries are displacing Latin America in world markets for goods, services, foreign direct investment, and innovation are misleading. World Bank chief economist for the Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), and one the authors of the report, Guillermo Perry, stated, "The overall regional effects of the larger presence of the two Asian economies have been positive, but our countries have not taken full advantage of the rapidly growing markets in China and India, nor of the global opportunities generated by cheap intermediate inputs and new production networks."

China and India's share of world exports is 50% larger than that of LAC, while in 1990 the opposite was true. However, contrary to what many believe, LAC's exports of services to the United States—its main market—are seven times larger than China's and India's combined.

The report also acknowledged that some industries, firms and sub-regions are being negatively affected by the rapid growth of China and India, particularly in Mexico and Central America. These industries include textiles, industrial and electrical machinery and transport equipment.

Some countries are responding by changing their specialisation pattern in favour of natural resource and scientific-knowledge-intensive industries. In the case of the apparel industry, Costa Rica and the Dominican Republic are shifting to higher quality, higher price

textiles and clothing, while others such as Haiti and Nicaragua are moving towards lower-wage, unskilled-labour intensive products.

The report states that governments in LAC need to support policies that facilitate rural development and natural resource-based industries to help the economies respond well to higher demand and prices for commodities. The study also recommends the strengthening of export and investment promotion, in coordination with the business sector, in the two Asian markets, and helping LAC companies to better integrate into global production chains.

Nike+iPod exceeds a million miles

25 Sept 2006

It has been reported that runners using the new Nike+iPod system have already clocked up over a million miles in the new footwear in the first ten weeks since the technology was launched.

The Nike+iPod Sport Kit is a wireless system that allows Nike+ enabled footwear to coordinate with the iPod nano to record data on time, distance, calories burned and pace which can then be downloaded through iTunes to nikeplus.com, a personal service site where runners can track their own progress and challenge other runners.

Nike currently offers twelve styles of Nike+ enabled footwear, with more planned for the future.

Golf shoes missing out on the market

25 Sept 2006

According to a recent study on athletic footwear conducted by Leisure Trends Group, golf footwear manufacturers are not reaching their potential in the market.

The study found that, whilst more competitive golfers and those aged 64 and above often own specific golf footwear, only one in four active golfers aged 16 or above actually owns golf shoes. It appears that manufacturers are not catering for the style requirements of the younger golfer.

President of Leisure Trends Group Jim Spring said, “Styling in golf shoes, compared with most other categories of athletic footwear, is decades old. A more fashion-forward look could inspire recreational and younger golfers to purchase golf shoes.”

New CEO named at Oakley

25 Sept 2006

Performance apparel, footwear and accessories company Oakley, Inc. has reported that Link Newcomb has resigned as chief operating officer and from the company's board of directors, and will take on the newly created role of senior advisor to the chief executive officer. Mr Newcomb joined Oakley in June 1994 as vice president of international sales and has served in a number of different capacities over his twelve-year tenure, including chief operating officer since 1999.

Gerber Scientific elects new directors

25 Sept 2006

US-based supplier of automated manufacturing systems for sign making and specialty graphics, apparel and flexible materials Gerber Scientific, Inc.’s shareholders have elected Donald Aiken, Marc Giles, Edward Jepsen, Randall Ledford, John Lord, Carole St. Mark, A Robert Towbin and W Jerry Vereen as directors to serve until the 2007 Annual Meeting next September.

18,780 visitors at Texworld

25 Sept 2006

With 18,780 professional trade visitors from 108 different countries attending the four days of the fair, held in Paris on September 18-21, a 1% increase compared with September 2005.

60% of the visitors were from Europe, with a rising number from Eastern European countries, and in particular Poland, the Czech Republic and Russia represented. 15% of visitors came from Asia and 10% from the United States.

677 exhibitors from 40 different countries presented their latest products at the event with the trend towards natural materials such as wool, silk, cotton and linen still very prominent.

Clariant increases prices globally

26 Sept 2006

Swiss specialty chemicals company Clariant has announced global price increases of 4% to 6% across all its product lines and services.

According to the company, these adjustments have been necessary in order to address increased costs for raw materials as well as energy and logistics. The company

stated that customers will be contacted individually regarding the specifics of the price increases.

Clariant, which is represented on five continents with over 100 group companies, employs around 22,500 people. Its businesses are organised in five divisions: Textile, Leather & Paper Chemicals, Pigments & Additives, Functional Chemicals, Life Science Chemicals and Masterbatches.

Philips Lumalive textiles take to the catwalk

26 Sept 2006

German fashion designer Anke Loh incorporated Philips' light-emitting fabric, Lumalive, into her latest fashion collection. Lumalive textiles contain LEDs that display full colour moving images on clothing.

Said to have been inspired by her move to Chicago from Antwerp, and the contrasting light and atmosphere between the two places, Ms Loh has harnessed new technologies to create fashions that reflect and also emit light.

"I spent a long time looking for the right technology to bring into my fashion. I tried optical fibres - even weaving them together with black cotton. But when I approached Philips and they showed me their Lumalive textiles I found something special," explained Ms Loh.

Lumalive textiles contain an array of LEDs (light emitting diodes) that can display text, graphics and animations.

"The Lumalive technology is completely unique," explained Bas Zeper, managing director of Photonic Textiles, Philips Research. "Thin, soft, flexible, light... you hardly notice you're wearing it unless it's switched on. It's like a second skin. The electronics and batteries are completely hidden and you can easily remove them from the garment for washing."

This is said to be the first time that a fashion designer has used the textiles.

VP of Antigua Group to retire

26 Sept 2006

The Antigua Group, Inc., a wholly-owned subsidiary of sports apparel company Antigua Enterprises, has announced that the company's vice president (VP) of Finance and chief financial officer, Gerald K Whitley, is to retire.

Mr Whitley has worked at the company for 21 years, joining the firm in 1985 after a successful career in public accounting.

Mike Olges, who has been with Antigua for nine years serving as the company's controller, will replace Mr Whitley as director of Finance.

Headquartered in Peoria, Arizona, The Antigua Group supplies men's and women's logoed apparel and outerwear to golf, licensed sports and specialty retailers including the PGA of America, NHL, MLB, MLS, Arena Football, Minor League Baseball, colleges and universities.

Russell Athletic names new president

26 Sept 2006

Doug Kelly has been named president of sports apparel brand Russell Athletic where he will be responsible for the company's retail, team sports, college bookstore and licensed products businesses, as well as the Bike and Discus Athletic Brands.

Mr Kelly began his career in 1974 with Converse, Inc. and then in 1980 moved to Curley-Bates Co., the organisation that marketed and distributed Mizuno and Easton sport brands throughout North America. In 1986, he was named president and CEO of Easton Sports, Inc. when Easton Inc. purchased Curley-Bates. From 1994 until 2000, he was president and chief operating officer of Pro Player Sports Apparel. Over the past six years, he has served as president and CEO of Imperial Home Decor Group, Inc., Unibic North America Inc.

EU decision on anti-dumping proposal delayed

28 Sept 2006

The European Commission has delayed its decision on imposing a proposal for longer term anti-dumping duties on Chinese and Vietnamese footwear as Member States have failed to agree on the proposal.

According to Peter Power, spokesperson for EU trade commissioner Peter Mandelson, "We have sought, while closely adhering to the rules, to balance the different economic interests of businesses, consumers and countries. Our first proposal was rejected by the shoe producing Member States as insufficient. Our revised proposal has clearly struck the middle ground of opinion in Europe with Member States evenly divided they will need further time to reach a conclusion."

Puma and Marcel Wanders to launch collection

28 Sept 2006

German sportswear brand Puma has announced a collaboration with Dutch designer Marcel Wanders to produce a new design-led accessories collection for Spring 2007.

“Puma has a strong connection to changing culture and wants to stay close to cultural trends by being a leader at the same time,” said Wanders, who designs for manufacturers such as Cappellini, Bisazza, B&B Italia, Poliform, Moroso, Flos, Boffi, Droog Design and Moooi.

The collection will be unveiled during Tokyo Design Week on October 31, and then in New York and Amsterdam in November.

BASF and Dow launch environmentally-friendly facility

28 Sept 2006

German specialty chemicals company BASF Aktiengesellschaft and The Dow Chemical Company have launched a long-term venture to produce propylene oxide (PO) at what is said to be the world’s first commercial-scale hydrogen peroxide propylene oxide (HPPO) plant at BASF’s site in Antwerp, Belgium. The plant uses a new technology developed jointly by BASF and Dow. PO is a core ingredient for the $21 billion a year polyurethane industry. Solvay S.A. (Solvay) will be a key supplier to the new facility.

The new process technology is said to offer a number of benefits over conventional routes to PO, including better economics, environmental improvements and flexibility for locating new plants.

The HPPO plant will be fed with hydrogen peroxide (HP) from a second new plant at the Antwerp site. The HP plant will have a capacity of 230,000 metric tons per year and will be constructed by Solvay, BASF and Dow. The 300,000 metric tons per year HPPO plant, which is being built jointly by BASF and Dow, is scheduled to start up in early 2008.

The new PO plants built using the HPPO technology are said to be more economical because they require up to 25% less capital to build; they avoid the need for additional infrastructure or markets for co-products, as the process produces only PO and water; and they require simpler raw material integration-just hydrogen peroxide and propylene are needed as raw materials.

From an environmental standpoint the plant is said to reduce wastewater by 70% to 80% compared with existing PO technology; they reduce energy usage by 35%; and reduce the infrastructure and physical footprint with simpler raw material integration and avoidance of co-products.

South Africa and China fight against counterfeits

29 Sept 2006

SA Revenue Services' (SARS) commissioner Pravin Gordhan and the Chinese minister general for the Administration of Customs (GACC) Xinsheng Mu, have signed an agreement to strengthen bilateral cooperation between the two countries' customs administrations. Mr Gordhan said the agreement, which has been endorsed by South African deputy finance minister Jabu Moleketi and China's ambassador to South Africa Guijin Liu, was a legal basis for the two administrations to combat smuggling.

Mr Mu indicated that South Africa was his country's largest trading partner in Africa, adding that the Chinese government would continue to strengthen relations with African countries, and South Africa in particular.

According to SARS, China is currently the eighth largest destination for South Africa's export market. South Africa mainly exports raw material such as aluminium, platinum and chrome to China and it imports processed goods such as machinery, clothing, textiles and footwear.

The two countries have also agreed to a pilot project to manage the trade between them. This will entail the advanced electronic submission of customs data and will allow for the joint detection of high risk.

The agreement also supports the MoU signed by Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao and President Thabo Mbeki in June to restrict clothing and textile imports from China into South Africa in a bid to remedy the trade imbalance between the two countries. The South African government has since announced that the quota system to cut down on the amount of imported clothing and textile from China would be implemented at the beginning of next year.

The move will affect around 31 product categories in the clothing and textile industry.

Lanxess increases prices for TMP

29 Sept 2006

With immediate effect, German chemical company Lanxess has increased its prices for trimethylolpropane (TMP) in Europe by €150 per metric ton and in the overseas markets by $200 per metric ton. According to marketing manager for Polyols and Oxidation Products in the Basic Chemicals business unit Wolfgang Schäfer, the reasons for this measure are increased raw material, energy and logistics costs.

TMP is used in the chemical industry in the manufacture of coatings, plastics, polyurethanes and pigments as well as in the production of lubricants and oils.

Schoeller welcomes Worldwide Textile to sales team

29 Sept 2006

Tom Rush with Worldwide Textile, Inc. of Illinois has been named the sales representative for Schoeller Textil USA for the Midwest states. Effective immediately, Worldwide will be responsible for the sales efforts for Schoeller Textil AG and the joint venture SFTC fabrics. The territory encompasses Illinois, Michigan, Indiana, Wisconsin, Ohio, Kansas, Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, Oklahoma, Texas, Missouri, Nebraska and Iowa. With the addition of Worldwide Textile, Schoeller is now able to increase service to their customers and provide better representation in the Midwest marketplace.

Schoeller Textil USA, Inc. in Seattle, Washington, is a subsidiary of Schoeller Textil AG.

Footwear and textiles boost Brazil's retail sector

29 Sept 2006

The 'non-food retail industry' is said to be growing rapidly in Brazil. Electronics, textiles and footwear are included in this sector and in 2005, the retail industry revenues reached $237.66 billion, out of which some 46% was non-food retail sales.

The World Cup was partially responsible for the increase as many retailers launched products related to the event.

A report recently published by market research group RNCOS, entitled 'Brazil Retail Industry Forecast (2006-2010)' states that retail sales of clothing is worth $22.4 billion, sales of footwear is worth $9.6 billion and furniture worth $5.5 billion.

New SmartKnit Diabetic Socks

29 Sept 2006

176 million people around the world have diabetes and often the feet and legs are at high risk of loss of sensation (neuropathy), reduced circulation, foot ulcers, delayed wound healing, and infection.

For this reason, The Diabetic Sock Store has released SmartKnit Seamless Diabetic Socks. These seamless socks reduce pressure and irritation on the toes, while the form-fitting design helps to prevent wrinkling or bunching. The patented Halo Top design removes the need for elastic in the top of the sock to prevent the sock from cutting into the leg, causing painful indentations and reduced circulation.

The sock incorporates high-tech CoolMax or X-Static silver fibres. CoolMax fibres are said to wick moisture away to keep feet dry and comfortable. An antibacterial finish on the sock also helps prevent bacteria growth and odour. X-Static silver fibres act as a natural antimicrobial and antifungal, which is hygienic and reduces odour. The socks are available in a variety of styles, including mini-crew, crew, over-the-calf and wide.

Light Techno Swim from Maglificio Ripa

29 Sept 2006

Italian circular knit fabric producer for swimwear, underwear, outerwear, fashion and sportswear Maglificio Ripa, has added Light Techno Swim to its Light Power Sport range.

Light Techno Swim is a 200 gram polyamide fabric containing 25% Dow XLA Chlorine Proof elastic fibre. Like the rest of the Light range, this fabric is knitted on 44 gauge circular looms, has constant elasticity, is breathable, thermo-regulating and anti-pilling, and has an ultra-soft hand. It is available in black and white, navy blue, ultramarine, cornflower blue, titanium and red.

Due to its 100% chlorine resistance, Speedo and Nike are currently carrying out tests to determine the advantages it can bring to the performance of athletes.