**Business Week**
**11 June - 17 June**

## Indian textile industry thrives with government support

11 June 2007

Indian Prime Minister, Dr Manmohan Singh, has released a report on the country's textile ministry, entitled 'Report to the People 2004-07'. The report is available in full on the Press Information Bureau website.

It reveals that the textile industry has generated a considerable number of new jobs and has boosted export figures. Basic customs duty on various textile machinery and spare parts has been reduced, an additional capital subsidy for processing has been provided, duties on specified textile machinery items, raw materials and spare parts has been lowered, and excise duty on polyester filament yarn has been reduced.

The scope of schemes such as the Technology Upgradation Fund Scheme and the Technology Mission on Cotton has been augmented to help with modernisation and to ensure the availability of quality raw material at competitive prices. The Scheme for Integrated Textiles Parks has been launched to strengthen infrastructure and has proposed the construction of 30 integrated textiles parks by 2008, with an investment of over Rs13,000 crore ($3.2 billion). These parks should generate annual production of over Rs20,000 crore, as well as creating over half a million new jobs.

It is expected that by 2011/12 the textiles sector will have more than doubled to $115 billion. The estimated investment during this period will be approximately Rs1,50,000 crore, generating employment for approximately 17 million workers.

Weavers have also been helped through an increase in the number of cluster development centres and yarn depots, technology upgrades, health and life insurance cover and a new 'Handloom Mark' for branding handloom products.

A National Jute Policy has also been introduced for the first time to boost demand for jute and to protect the interests of jute growers. Steps are being taken to implement a Jute Technology Mission to develop the jute sector at an estimated cost of Rs355 crore. The National Jute Board Bill was introduced in 2006 to help improve the situation of the jute sector.

## P2i awarded BS EN ISO 9001 accreditation

11 June 2007

Plasma enhancement technology company P2i Ltd. has received BS EN ISO 9001:2000 accreditation, based on eight quality management principles, for the design and manufacture of plasma polymerised coatings.

"Attaining BS EN ISO 9001:2000 will bring numerous advantages for us, not least in assuring prospective customers that we are delivering a high quality product which has been independently verified," explained business development director Dr Ian Robins.

Its Ion mask is a process that provides a nanotechnology surface enhancement that is just nanometres thick, over the entire surface of a product by means of an ionised gas (cold plasma). This layer is molecularly bound to the surface and cannot be removed by solvents, chemicals or common environmental conditions. This alters the surface of the product to display ultra low surface energy values, displaying water and oil shedding properties, whilst leaving the other properties of the product unchanged. The process enhances both the inside and outside surfaces of any object and, for porous items, can even enhance the surfaces within the porous structure, minimising liquid and vapour adsorption or penetration. It is initially being applied within the performance textiles/footwear, bio-consumables and filtration markets.

## Revenues improve at Quiksilver

11 June 2007

Outdoor equipment, apparel and accessories company Quiksilver, Inc. has posted a 17% increase in net revenues for the second quarter ended April 30. Revenues were $603.8 million compared with $516.9 million in the second quarter of 2006. However, net loss was $4.8 million compared with net income of $3.7 million the year before.

Net revenues in the Americas increased 12% during the second quarter to $279.8 million from $250 million in the prior-year period. In US dollars, European revenues increased 24% to $268.8 million from $217.1 million. In euros, European net revenues increased 13%. Asia-Pacific net revenues increased 12% to $54 million in the second quarter from $48.2 million in the second quarter of 2006. In Australian dollars, Asia-Pacific net revenues increased 3%.

## Brazilian textile companies eye opportunities in Argentina

11 June 2007

A number of Brazilian textile companies are looking to

move to or expand their presence in Argentina.

As Argentina's main international trade partner, Brazil is currently the largest investor in Argentina's textile sector and over the last four years numerous textile and apparel factories have been either bought or built by Brazilian producers in the country. A recent study revealed that Brazil exports 47.8% of its goods to Argentina and imports 29% of Argentina's total exports.

Brazilian textile and garment manufacturer Vicunha Têxtil established its first international branch, Brastex, in Buenos Aires in 1992 and is now looking to buy an existing factory, or set up a new unit in the country. Managing director Marcel Imaizumi said, "The overvaluation of the real has had a devastating effect on the industry, increasing Brazilian prices by 7%-8% and the loss of competitiveness has generated a product surplus in the Brazilian market."

Director of the Brazilian Association of the Textile Industry (Abit) Fernando Pimentel said that the overvalued real is not the only motive behind the move to Argentina. "The other reasons are more attractive fiscal incentives, lower tax loads and electricity rates, better infrastructure and cheaper labour compared with Brazil," he said. The incentives offered by Argentina include land, credit lines, and fixed and annual interest rates in pesos.

Fabric producer Camargo Corrêa's recent purchase of Alpargatas Argentina has resulted in 60% of the company's Argentinean textile production and 70% of its jeans production being under Brazilian control.

Meanwhile, Ceara-based Santana Têxtil, which specialises in natural fibre fabrics and denim, is in the process of setting up a factory in Puerto Tirol, in the Chaco province. The factory's capacity is expected to be 18 million tons of denim in the first year and 36 million tons in the second year. Depending on market conditions, 20-50% of production will be exported.

## Puma names new board member

11 June 2007

German sportswear and footwear brand Puma has named Melody Harris-Jensbach, as a member of the company's board of management, effective January 1.

Previously International Product director Women at Esprit, she will take responsibility for the areas of Product, Product development, Design, Business Unit Management and Worldwide Sourcing for the Puma Retail Business, replacing Martin Gentler, who will retire later this year.

## New Wave completes acquisition of Cutter & Buck

11 June 2007

New Wave Group AB has completed the previously announced acquisition of US sportswear designer Cutter & Buck Inc.

Following shareholder approval, Newport Acquisition Corporation, a wholly-owned subsidiary of New Wave, was merged with and into Cutter & Buck, and Cutter & Buck became a wholly-owned subsidiary of New Wave.

Commenting on the deal, Ernest Johnson, Cutter & Buck's CEO, said, "By completing the merger, we have put Cutter & Buck into position to move forward with a strong partner and the potential for a substantial market presence in Europe."

Cutter & Buck's brands include Cutter & Buck, Annika and CBUK.

## PGI to close German plant

11 June 2007

US-based producer of nonwovens, Polymer Group, Inc. (PGI) is to close its plant in Neunkirchen, Germany, and transfer portions of the business to the company's plant in Cuijk, The Netherlands. Operations at the German plant are expected to be phased out by the end of the year.

Commenting on the decision to consolidate its European operations, CEO Veronica Hagen said, "PGI is focused on ensuring we have the right cost structure to effectively compete in each of our markets. Our operation in Germany is not of sufficient size to support a stand-alone site but the business will remain viable when combined with our existing operation in The Netherlands." She added, "While difficult, these actions are necessary to ensure our long-term competitiveness and ability to position our company for further growth and investment in the region."

## Polo Ralph Lauren signs Boris Becker as ambassador for Wimbledon

11 June 2007

Former Wimbledon tennis champion Boris Becker will partner with the Polo Ralph Lauren as the apparel company's brand ambassador at the Wimbledon tennis championships later this month.

Under the agreement Becker will wear Ralph Lauren throughout the duration of the tournament.

Polo Ralph Lauren is celebrating its second year as official outfitter of Wimbledon, providing apparel for all on-court officials including chair umpires, line judges and ball boys and girls.

## Schoeller's c_change wins Avantex Innovation Prize

12 June 2007

Switzerland-based Schoeller's water and windproof membrane technology c_change, which is capable of independent flexible adaptation of its moisture vapour permeability, has been awarded an Innovation Prize at this year's Avantex technical textiles show in Frankfurt, Germany.

Commenting on the jury's choice, Jan Laperre, deputy director-general Centexbel and one of the jury members said, "This flexible adaptability based on a clever use of material properties has made it possible to improve the comfort of wear of membrane clothing in changing climates." He added, "The clothing sector wants to and indeed needs to offer the consumer interesting new products through innovative materials and technologies. This is certainly the case here at Schoeller with the c_change membrane and the bi-elastic membrane fabrics."

## Smart textiles take centre stage at Avantex

12 June 2007

Smart Textiles, wearable electronics and e-fashion have proved major selling points at Avantex in Frankfurt.

20 companies have been selected to take part in the smartTextiles show at the trade fair, featuring products such as jackets with MP3 players, dirt repellent nanotextiles and solar cells.

Highlights include Germany-based men's fashion brand Bäumler is presenting its Traveller 06P, six-pocket traveller suit offering eBlocker, which is crease resistant and provides natural stretch for flexibility; US snowboarding company Burton is showcasing its Audex collection, a multimedia range which combines technological elements with apparel items and backpacks and is available with Motorola bluetooth technology, iPod compatible funk technology or MP3 for both jackets and backpacks; European lifestyle brand Daniel Hechter is highlighting its nanosphere jackets collection which allows water and dirt to drip off the surface of textiles, mimicking the so-called lotus flower effect; and together with the Eleksen Group, subsidiary of men's luxury apparel and leather wear brand The Ermenegildo Zegna, Zegna Sport, has created the bluetooth iJacket, which allows the wearer to control an iPod and make telephone calls simultaneously.

Other innovations include Lodenfrey's mosquito repellent GPS jackets and protective trousers, special gesture gloves which allow hands-free IT data input from The Mobile Research Center, and Zimmermann's Novonic yarns that can transfer heat, electritcity and data, or protect from radiation. O'Neill is showcasing jackets, backpacks and gloves from its h4 collection with features such as an integrated camera, MP3 control and hands-free mobile communication, whilst Outlast Technologies is presenting its temperature regulating technology. Schoeller Textil, smartfiber AG, TITV, warmX and Xybermind will also present smart textiles at the show.

In addition, the recently founded smartTextiles community will also be launched at the show. The community represents the communication interests of producers and developers from the fashion, sports, work wear and healthcare fields. It is a new forum for all members of the textile value chain, from textile yarn and fabric innovations to wearable electronics and e-fashion.

## BASF raises prices in Europe

12 June 2007

German chemicals manufacturer BASF has raised the prices for its carboxylic acids 2-ethylhexanoic acid, formic acid and mixtures based on formic acid and propionic acid in Europe, effective immediately.

The prices for 2-ethylhexanoic acid and formic acid, 85% will increase by €40 per metric ton; formic acid, 99% will rise €60 per metric ton, Lupro-Cid will be increased €50 per metric ton, and prices for Lupro-Mix will be raised €30 per metric ton.

2-ethylhexanoic acid is used in many applications including the manufacture of plasticisers, PVC stabilisers, lubricants and drying additives for coatings.

## Higher exhibitor numbers at OutDoor

12 June 2007

700 exhibitors from 40 countries will participate at OutDoor 2007 in Friedrichshafen, Germany, on July 19-22, up from 685 at last year's event.

Products on show will include clothing, camping, climbing and mountaineering equipment, backpacks, sleeping bags, tents and shoes.

## Sales slip at Kellwood

12 June 2007

US apparel and consumer soft goods company Kellwood

Company has reported lower net sales of $484.4 million for the first quarter, down from $493.8 million in the corresponding quarter last year. However, net earnings from continuing operations improved to $5.9 million versus $1.1 million, although total net earnings slipped to $7.4 million from $9.2 million.

In the company's Women's Sportswear division, net sales decreased 3% to $272.5 million, whilst sales fell 4% in the Men's Sportswear sector.

## Pacific Sunwear reorganises management

13 June 2007

US apparel, accessories and footwear retailer Pacific Sunwear of California, Inc. has announced several organisational changes in an attempt to streamline the company's operations.

Under the new structure, division president of PacSun Tom Kennedy will take over responsibility for PacSun's store operations, while senior vice president and chief financial officer Gerald Chaney will become responsible for the company's distribution centre and the global logistics and trade compliance departments.

As part of the realignment strategy, the position of chief operating officer has been eliminated and former chief operating officer Wendy Burden will leave the company.

## Umbro CEO leaves to join Americana

13 June 2007

Peter McGuigan is leaving his post as CEO of UK sports brand Umbro to take up the same role at Americana, owner of lifestyle brands Hooch and Bench. He has spent the last eight years at Umbro, prior to which he founded PMG International Limited, a company set up to acquire and develop licences for sports, lifestyle and fashion brands. During his career he has also served as president of Reebok International.

He is expected to take up his new role in September.

## Concept III moves into Merino

13 June 2007

US-based textile resource and garment production service Concept III is developing new outdoor products for its customers using ultra-fine, soft merino wool knits and wovens from Melba Industries of Australia. Commenting on the company's use of Merino, founder and president David Parkes said that Merino's aesthetic, comfort and easy care attributes are well suited to use in activewear and also highlighted the importance of its eco-friendly qualities.

Melba Industries is a privately-owned textile manufacturer and has been in operation in Melbourne, Australia, for nearly 75 years. It has its own knitted and woven textile development and manufacturing, printing and lamination facilities and supplies fabrics to a range of specialty markets ranging from automotive to defence and emergency services.

Known for its Merino and Merino/wool blends, Melba has been focusing on developing refined Merino knits specifically for the performance markets over the past year. Whilst Merino wool is generally 24.5 micrometres (mc) in diameter or less, Melba uses 17.5mc to 18.5mc for next-to-skin products, 18.5mc to19.5mc for mid-layer apparel and to 21.5mc for outerwear. Viewed as an organically grown renewable resource, it is inherently soft, breathable, temperature regulating?, water repellent, fire resistant, elastic and resistant to dirt and bacteria.

Concept III will showcase the new ranges available at the Outdoor Retailer Summer Market in Salt Lake City, USA, in August.

## Student designs hit DMU catwalk

13 June 2007

Student designers from De Montfort University (DMU), UK, are presenting their fashion creations on the University's catwalk this week. Students graduating from the university's BA (Hons) Contour Fashion, said to be the only specialist lingerie, body and swimwear degree course in the world, and joint honours Fashion and Contour Design students will take part in the shows.

## New Lectra cutting solution launched at Techtextil

13 June 2007

France-based developer of software and CAD/CAM equipment Lectra has launched its VectorTechTex automated cutting system at Techtextil in Frankfurt.

Offering cutting precision and traceability, the VectorTechTexFX piloting software is said to allow for a reduction of material consumption and optimises markers and cutting quality. It is said to be user-friendly as well as providing process security and featuring an integrated smart maintenance system. It provides warning alerts to prompt maintenance actions before failures can occur and offers performance and activity reports that make the cutting system's integration within the production site more efficient and reliable.

## Milliken showcases protective fabrics

13 June 2007

US textile and chemical manufacturer Milliken & Company has launched a new anti-microbial-charged fabric technology BioSmart at the 2007 CLEAN Show, currently taking place in Las Vegas. The new fabric is said to contain the sanitising effect of chlorine bleach to help reduce the spread of infection-causing bacteria and viruses, including emerging antibiotic-resistant microbes.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Staph bacteria are one of the most common causes of skin infection in the United States and are a common cause of hospital-acquired infections such as pneumonia, surgical wound infections and bloodstream infections. While the majority of MRSA infections occur among patients in healthcare settings, it is also becoming more common among competitive sports participants and people within community settings including schools, daycare facilities, health clubs and prisons.

BioSmart can be applied to synthetics, cotton and poly/cotton fabrics and is said to be ideal for industries where bacterial contamination is a concern, such as sports apparel, activewear and healthcare.

The fabrics, which have passed the ISO skin irritation and skin sensitivity tests, dry quickly and wick moisture away.

## Eleksen presents new technology at Avantex

13 June 2007

UK-based producer of touch-sensitive smart fabrics for consumer electronics in apparel and accessories Eleksen Group plc. has released new dry cleanable, programmable sensor technology at the current Avantex show in Frankfurt, which is said to be particularly suitable for everyday clothing with high cleaning frequency such as board shorts, shirts, jeans, suits and evening wear. The ElekTex smart fabric transforms labels and jacket sleeves into controls for mobile entertainment and communications devices. The sensors are lightweight and durable and this new version of its textile touchpads can be dry cleaned.

## Bayer showcases new polyurethane dispersions at Techtextil

13 June 2007

German chemicals company Bayer MaterialScience has unveiled its latest generation of polyurethane dispersions for the coating of textiles at Techtextil in Frankfurt, Germany.

With a solids content of 60%, the new dispersions are said to be close to the 64% theoretical maximum packing density for flowable materials, making it possible to achieve high add-ons in a single pass.

The highlight of the products on show is Impranil DLU which, according to one of Bayer's textiles coatings experts, Thomas Michaelis, "is an aliphatic, high-performance polyurethane dispersion characterised by extremely good foamability, flexibility and hydrolytic stability", developed for high-quality coating of sporting goods, upholstery, automobile seats and other technical goods.

The range also includes three other products. Impranil LP RSC 1554 is said to give textiles more volume and body and can be used to formulate cost-effective coatings for items such as outerwear fabrics and nonwovens, Impranil LP RSC 1380 is used in similar applications primarily to improve the haptic properties of fabrics, and Impranil LP RSC 1537 is a specialist product developed for the transfer process.

In addition to the high-solids products, Bayer MaterialScience is also showing a new aliphatic polyurethane dispersion for the top layer, Impranil LP RSC 1997, which is said to add abrasion and age resistant properties to the surface of synthetic leather.

## La Griffe expands US presence

13 June 2007

In response to increased demand for its products, Tunisian manufacturer and supplier of garment labels La Griffe Internationale has announced that it is expanding its presence in the US market.

Commenting on the move, president & founder, Slahedine Ktari, said, “We've grown at an exceptional rate in the past two years. We feel this an excellent time to continue that growth by providing our high quality and price competitive labels to marketers of US-based brands.”

The company supplies a wide line of labels—including forgery-proof, woven, printed and cardboard labels and hangtags, leather and synthetic labels for jeans and accessories, custom woven tapes, rubber labels, barcode, and price labels—to brands such as adidas, Gap, Levi's, Chic, Lee Cooper, Wrangler, and Dickies.

## Jones Apparel Group names new president

14 June 2007

US-based branded apparel, footwear and accessories company Jones Apparel Group, Inc. has promoted Jay Friedman to president, Company-Owned Retail Footwear and Apparel, with immediate effect. He will report to

Andrew Cohen, chief executive officer, Wholesale Footwear and Accessories.

Mr Friedman joined the company in April 2006 as president and has more than 36 years experience in the footwear and apparel industry. Companies he has worked for prior to joining the group include Aigner Group Inc. and Foot Locker.

## Dow Corning wins Techtextil award

14 June 2007

US supplier of silicone solutions for the textile industry Dow Corning was presented with the New Applications award for its Active Protection System at Techtextil on June 11.

First introduced in March 2006 at Techtextil in Atlanta, Georgia, the patented system consists of a three-dimensional textile treated with a special coating, which remains soft and flexible under normal conditions but hardens instantly upon impact. When the impact force is removed, the material immediately returns to a flexible state. It is also breathable and flexible, offering comfort and freedom of movement, and can be stitched directly into garments. The system is less bulky than hard armour and can be layered so that the garment can provide increased levels of protection for specific areas.

Applications include protective sports and work apparel and industrial and geo fabrics.

## New manager at Warnaco’s swimwear business

14 June 2007

New York-based apparel company The Warnaco Group, Inc. has added its swimwear brands to the responsibilities of Helen McCluskey, group president Intimate Apparel.

The company designs and sells intimate apparel, menswear, jeanswear, swimwear, sportswear and accessories.

## Innovation to take centre stage at Innov_ex 07

14 June 2007

The fifth annual innovation conference for the outdoor sports industry Innov_ex 07 will take place at Lancaster University Management School, UK, on September 26. The theme for the event will be ‘What is Innovation?’ Topics for discussion include ‘What are the implications of new technologies for the trade?’ and ‘What knowledge is being lost and why does it matter?’

The keynote address will be delivered by chairman of North West Development Agency Bryan Gray, while other speakers will include Mark Taylor (Performance Clothing Research Group, University of Leeds), David Smith (innovationworks), Terry Love (Curtin University, Australia) and Mike Parsons (OMM Ltd and IEED, Lancaster University).

The expert panels will include Mike Redwood (WSA), Dave Brook (Performance Clothing Research Group, University of Leeds) Dave Wrigglesworth (West Coast Outdoor Leisure) and Mick Farnworth (Mammut).

## Coolmax team completes Adventure Racing World Championships

14 June 2007

The Coolmax Extreme Team, comprising Emma Roca, Arnau Julia, Fran López and Benjamin Midena, competed in the 2007 Adventure Racing World Championships, held in Fort William, Scotland, on May 27 to June 3, during which the team kayaked, trekked, mountain biked, Nordic walked and completed both rope and water jump sections, finishing the race in fourth place.

It took the team five days, nine hours and 40 minutes to finish the 500-mile course, and was one of only five of the 49 teams to complete the gruelling race.

## New apparel range to be launched at The Athlete's Foot

14 June 2007

Under the leadership of new parent company, NexCen Brands, Inc., The Athlete's Foot will launch its own line of branded apparel. The line, which is currently being developed, is expected to be available to franchise owners in the first quarter of 2008.

## Clariant names new head of Textile, Leather and Paper division

14 June 2007

Swiss chemicals producer Clariant has made several new senior management appointments, including new heads at its Textile, Leather & Paper Chemicals and Pigments & Additives divisions.

Philippe Royer has been named as the new leader of the company’s Textile, Leather & Paper Chemicals division, effective July 1, whilst Okke Koo will lead the Pigments & Additives division as of August 1.

A French national Mr Royer joins Clariant from the global aluminium group Alcoa, whilst Mr Koo, a Dutch national, was until recently the chief executive of Avebe, a Netherlands-based starch manufacturer.

They will replace the current head of the Textile, Leather & Paper Chemicals Division, Peter Piringer, and the current head of the Pigments & Additives Division, Uwe Nickel, who are leaving the company.

Meanwhile, the head of the company's Group Technology, Hartmut Wiezer, will retire at the end of the year.

## Swiss Masai US names new CEO

14 June 2007

Footwear developer Swiss Masai US, LLC, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Switzerland's Masai Group International, Ltd, has named Sheri Poe as chief executive officer, effective June 4. She replaces Conrad Casser.

Founder and former CEO of women's athletic footwear brand Ryka, in her new role Ms Poe will oversee all US operations, distribution and branding for the company's patented MBT Physiological Footwear brand and technology.

Inspired by the way the Masai of Kenya walk, MBT stands for Masai Barefoot Technology, which is said to enable the body to stand and walk in the way intended by nature.

## More Japanese buyers expected at BIFF&BIL

14 June 2007

In the wake of the recently introduced Japan-Thailand Economic Partnership Agreement (JTEPA), the number of Japanese buyers attending BIFF&BIL2007, the Bangkok International Fashion Fair & Bangkok International Leather Fair, is expected to be higher than last year.

Under the agreement, Japan will cut tariffs on textiles and garments from 12% to zero starting from October this year. And, as Japan imports Thai garments worth $20 million each year, 0% tariffs should trigger rapid growth for textile exports, which currently total $260 million per year. Textile companies supplying the Japanese market are expected to see sales increases of between 20% and 30%, which will positively impact Thailand's trade figures by the fourth quarter.

Chairman of the Federation of Thai Textile Industries, Chen Namchaisiri, said that the JTEPA will encourage Japanese investors to set up new factories and joint ventures selling duty-free products, which will reduce production costs. He added that delegates from the Japan Textile Federation have been invited to attend the fair—which will take place in Bangkok on August 22-26—and that the number of Japanese buyers attending is expected to increase by 30%.

Director general of the Department of Export Promotion, Rachane Potjanasutorn, also spoke positively of the new agreement. "This is good news, particularly under the prevailing investment climate where domestic and foreign businesses need a confidence boost with regard to the Thai economy and potential joint ventures. As a result of the JTEPA, I believe Japanese investors will return to Thailand," he said.

To qualify for 0% tariffs, garment exporters must import fabrics from Thailand, Japan or other ASEAN countries and the fabrics must be cut and sewn in Thailand.

## US army chooses Lenzing FR

15 June 2007

The American Army has substituted its old uniforms, usually made from cotton and nylon, for new uniforms incorporating Lenzing FR fibres. Benefits offered by the fibre, which are extracted from beech wood, are said to include protection from sources of heat, inherent flame resistance which does not wash out and good dyeability. The fibre is also breathable and has advanced moisture transportation properties, making it more comfortable to wear.

## China remains USA's largest textile and clothing supplier

15 June 2007

A new report 'Trends in US Textile and Clothing Imports, 2007 Edition' has been released by Dublin-based research company Research and Markets, covering US import growth, average import prices and the influence of the US economy on imports.

The report states that US textile and clothing imports grew just 2.3% in 2006, following an increase of 8.3% in 2005 and double-digit growth in six of the seven years between 1997 and 2004. Within the 2006 total, imports of made-up textiles rose by 9.1% and their share of all imports increased for the ninth consecutive year, from 16.8% in 1997 to 32.8% in 2006. Apparel, however, continued to hold the highest share, at 43.2%, while, fabric imports fell 6.8%.

Cotton dominates US imports of MFA (Multi-Fibre Arrangement) clothing, with a share of 60%. However, its share of imports of all MFA products stood at 42.9% in 2006, behind that of man-made fibres at 54.5%.

China strengthened its lead as the USA's largest supplier, in terms of both value and volume, but growth slowed significantly in 2006. In volume terms, imports from China rose by only 11%. This was the first year that growth fell below 40% since China joined the World Trade Organization (WTO) in late 2001.

US imports from Mexico, its second largest supplier, fell in both value and volume in 2006. The drop in value was the fifth in succession, while, in terms of volume, imports fell for the second year in a row. Imports from Caribbean Basin Initiative (CBI) countries also fell in value and in volume.

Among Asean countries, imports from Indonesia grew by 27% in value terms—the fastest rate in the top ten—and 18% in volume terms, slightly lower than the 21% rise in imports from Vietnam. Imports from the 'big three'—Hong Kong, South Korea and Taiwan—rose by 2.4% in volume and, in so doing, maintained their 7.5% share of the market. In terms of value, however, imports from the three fell by as much as 15%, indicating large price drops. Despite this, overall US import prices rose in 2006, led by increases in China, Indonesia and Bangladesh.

## Lectra opens new offices

15 June 2007

France-based developer of software and CAD/CAM equipment has officially opened its new headquarters in Munich, Germany, and a new office in Greengates, near Leeds, UK.

The new German premises include training rooms and an area for demonstrating solutions and machines to customers and will be used to host presentations, topical seminars and workshops.

The new office near Leeds is designed to serve customers from northern England. Companies such as George Clothing, Laura Ashley and Vivienne Westwood attended its inauguration.

## Snugpak signs supply agreement with Latvian army

15 June 2007

UK-based sleeping bag manufacturer Snugpak has signed a £1.8 million deal with the Latvian Army to supply insulated jackets and trousers to its 6,000 troops. The contract also includes clothing for an additional 1,500 reserves each year for the next five years. The six-year deal was signed at a formal ceremony in Riga following two years of discussions with the company.

It initially supplied 40 kits for the winter 2005/2006 period to be tested and a further 300 sets were trialled by Latvian special forces personnel last winter.

## Former Vans CEO named president at Global Brands

15 June 2007

Gary Schoenfeld has been named co-CEO and president of Singapore-based international brand management, retail and licensing company Global Brands Group.

Prior to joining the company in 2006, he was president and CEO of Vans, Inc., until it was acquired by VF Corporation in 2004, during which time he achieved four-fold growth at the athletic footwear brand.

In his new role Mr Schoenfeld will be primarily responsible for the company's retail, merchandising, and food and beverage initiatives as well as finance, human resources and information technology.

Global Brands' portfolio includes the Federation Internationale de Football Association (FIFA), the PGA Tour Licensed Properties, Inc., the International Basketball Association (FIBA) and Warner Bros.

## Gap expands into Saudi Arabia and Turkey

15 June 2007

US-based apparel retailer Gap Inc. has signed franchise agreements with retailers in Saudi Arabia and Turkey to introduce the Gap and Banana Republic brands into these new markets. Over the next five years, Gap's franchise partners—Fawaz Alhokair Group in Saudi Arabia and Fiba Holding A.S. in Turkey—plan to open a combined total of approximately 90 Gap stores and 20 Banana Republic stores throughout the two countries.

The first Gap stores will open by the end of this year, and the first Banana Republic stores are expected to open by spring 2008, with all stores expected to be open by 2012.