Business Week

11th April 05 – 17th 05

RadiciFibres and Nylstar to form joint venture

11 April 2005

RadiciGroup has signed a letter of intent with Rhodia and Snia, who have an equal share in the co-enterprise Nylstar, with a view to establishing a strategic alliance between their respective businesses - Nylstar for Rhodia and Snia, RadiciFibres for RadiciGroup - in the sector of the synthetic fibres destined to textile uses (polyamide, polyester, elastane and acrylic).

The alliance is set to put RadiciFibres and Nylstar in a stronger position to face the growing impact of imported goods from Asia , thanks to a wider and more complete product range. This will lead to an improved response to the current and future needs of RadiciFibres and Nylstar customers. Such alliance, under the control of RadiciFibres, should produce a turnover of around 800 million Euros and total a workforce of 4,000 employees.

The letter of intent is the first step in an agreement that should be formalised over the next few months, once the legal and financial aspects of the deal have been determined.

RadiciGroup, a multinational group present in 15 countries around the globe, is one of the most active leading Italian operators at an international level. Its production focuses on the chemicals sector, plastics, and the synthetic fibres chain. The Group, with 45 production units and around 5,100 employees worldwide, closed its 2004 operations with a consolidated turnover of €1,068 million.

Nylstar employs around 2,700 people, and reported a turnover of around €428 million in 2004.

Increase in exports leads to one million jobs in India

11 April 2005

Shri Kamal Nath, India's Union Minister of Commerce & Industry, has said that exports have generated an incremental direct employment of one million jobs in the year 2004-05, over the previous year. The announcement was made at the release this year's Annual Supplement to the Foreign Trade Policy (FTP) 2004-09.

Quoting a study commissioned by the Commerce Ministry, the Minister said that exports reached $78 billion in 2004 and this has led to one million direct and indirect jobs being created. "The study further reveals that we shall be adding a further one million jobs if we achieve the target of $150 billion over the next four years," he said.
Shri Kamal Nath said that apart from doubling India's share of global merchandise trade in five years, the major objective of the FTP was generation of employment in rural and semi-urban areas.

"With this in view, the FTP announced special focus initiatives in the employment intensive areas of agriculture, handicrafts, handlooms, gems & jewellery and leather & footwear sectors. The employment generation has been encouraging not only in these sectors, but in other sectors across the board," he said.

Weather and Easter rains misery on US retail in March

11 April 2005

A cold March and an early Easter led to disappointment for retailers in the USA according to statistics released by Planalytics and Michael Niemira, chief economist and staff vice president at the International Council of Shopping Centers. Unfortunately, many retailers have affirmed that message – citing poor weather as a main cause of lower-than-anticipated results.

Paul Walsh, vice president of Planalytics, stated, "The earliest Easter in 15 years combined with the coldest March since 2001 left retailers cold this year as, across a large part of the US, Spring Break happened before spring actually broke. As consumers continue to buy closer to need, spring merchandise purchases were delayed until the onset of favourable weather."

The Planalytics Retail Weather Index for March was -15%, making it the most unfavourable shopping environment for spring apparel since 2001. The Retail Weather Index is a measure of

the impact of the weather on consumer buying behaviour.

"Weather is important this month because at this time of year, it drives both traffic and activity. It influences both when and where people spend their time and money. As we move through spring, from March to May, it has more impact for this same reason. Although there is always a weather factor, it will taper off in the summer and then strengthen again in the autumn transitional months," explained Frederic Fox, president and CEO.

HK retail sales value rises 16.5%

11 April 2005

The value of Hong Kong's total retail sales in February has risen 16.5% over the same month in 2004. After considering the effect of price changes, the overall volume of retail sales rose 16% in February compared with the same period in 2004. The revised estimate of the value of total retail sales in January, at $19 billion, rose 4.1% in value or 3.1% in volume over January 2004.

For the first two months of 2005, total retail sales rose 9.6% in value or 8.8% in volume over a year earlier.

The Census and Statistics Department said the growth in retail sales remained broad-based in the first two months, reflecting sustained upbeat consumer sentiment.

Sales of electrical goods and photographic equipment increased the most, by 24.5% in volume. This was followed by sales of jewellery, watches and clocks, and valuable gifts (14.1%); footwear, allied products and other clothing accessories (12.5%); apparel (11.8%); miscellaneous consumer goods (7.9%); commodities in department stores (6.6%); commodities in supermarkets (5.7%); motor vehicles and parts (3.6%); fuel (2.8%); food, alcohol and tobacco (2.1%); and miscellaneous consumer durable goods (0.7%). Sales of furniture and fixtures dropped 5.9% in volume.

Tommy Hilfiger chairman to retire

11 April 2005

Tommy Hilfiger Corporation has announced that Joel Horowitz will retire from the company following the company's Annual Meeting of Shareholders, scheduled for October 31, 2005. Until such time, Mr. Horowitz will serve as non-executive chairman of the company's board of directors.

Mr. Horowitz was one of the founders of the company, and during his tenure he has held many positions, including executive chairman and CEO.

David F. Dyer, president and CEO, said, "Joel's contributions over the past years have been invaluable. His leadership, wisdom and foresight have been key to building the Tommy Hilfiger name into a globally recognised brand. I extend our sincere appreciation for his hard work, and have been grateful for his partnership as we position the company for its next phase of growth."

Tommy Hilfiger Corporation designs, sources and markets men's and women's sportswear, jeanswear and childrenswear under the Tommy Hilfiger trademarks. The company also offers a broad array of related apparel, accessories, and footwear, fragrance and home furnishings around the world.

New Era opens showroom in London

11 April 2005

New Era Cap Europe, a division of New Era Cap Co., Inc., a global headwear designer, developer and manufacturer, based in the USA, has officially opened its London showroom on Mayfair's Berkley Square.

The new location will serve as a hub to exhibit the very latest styles of New Era headwear being brought to market by the company, presenting a spectrum of sports styles, high-end urban fashion pieces and exclusive styles.

The showroom will service the Southern and Midland areas of the UK, complementing existing New Era European showrooms in Manchester, England and Cologne, Germany. Headquartered in Derby, NY, New Era also has offices in Tokyo and Canada.

New Era Cap Europe, launched in 2003, is a division of New Era Cap Co., Inc., a global sports head wear designer, developer and manufacturer, making more than 20 million licensed and non-licensed, performance and fashion units per year. The company exclusively manufactures and markets Major League Baseball's official uniform caps, worn on the field of play by Major and Minor League players. Its other licenses include National Basketball Association, National Hockey League, Arena Football, NCAA Champions, College - Bowl Games and National Championships and Little League. Founded in 1920, New Era is a privately-owned company.

Paxar launches innovative care label printer

11 April 2005

Paxar EMEA, part of the Paxar Corporation, a provider of fully integrated labelling, merchandising and identification solutions for apparel manufacturers and retailers, has launched its new, SNAP 500 care label printer, a brand new, high-performance in-plant fabric label printer which delivers high quality fabric labels on demand, and is said to be economical.

The SNAP 500 printer comes with many innovative new features including remote diagnostics and operating system upgrades via the Internet, voice prompts, and a virtual control/display panel on your PC. With the software, customers can move information all over the world, manage their fabric label data on their PC and transmit to the printer in seconds, or interface the printer with their mainframe computer. All of which is said to ease pressures in managing the supply chain.

The benefits of this new product are said to be:

• Ease of use – this printer is simple to set up and run and brand new voice prompts help the operator further;
• High print speeds – enabling high productivity label production;
• Innovative new features – remote diagnostics and upgrades via the Internet;
• Continuity – robust design and build, ensuring ongoing reliability for continuity of production; and
•Cost effectiveness – affordable pricing means the printer is suitable for garment manufacturers and contractors the world over.

Stain protection seen as area of growth in apparel industry

11 April 2005

According to a report on Performance Apparel Markets, published by Textiles Intelligence, demand for apparel with stain protective properties is surging as consumers increasingly rely on clothes which offer easy-care and convenience.

Stain protection is one of the fastest growing categories in performance enhancing treatments. It is set to become a standard performance feature of garments for everyday wear, such as shirts and trousers, because of the convenience it provides for consumers with busy lifestyles. Like wrinkle resistance, stain protection is no longer considered a novelty, and it has been predicted that consumers will choose stain protection in their clothing as routinely as they now choose fabrics, colours and styles.

Although stain protection technologies have been around for around 40 years, it is only in the past five years that they have made a significant impact in the marketplace. The latest additions to such care technologies are dual-action products which offer stain repellency and stain release, and such products are proving to be highly popular.

A number of big apparel names, including Eddie Bauer, Lee Jeans and Dockers, have been offering casual trousers which are stain repellent. Sales of these trousers, which have been heavily promoted through television advertisements, are reported to be doing extremely well. This has prompted a growing number of apparel suppliers to add stain repellent items to their clothing lines. Those already offering stain repellent items have been incorporating a greater number of such clothes to their ranges.

Textile researchers have been exploring ways of creating the ultimate in stain protective apparel: self-cleaning clothes. These would benefit the environment as well as the consumer. Because they would not require conventional laundering, they would avoid the problem of river pollution caused by waste water from washing machines. However, it is likely to take some years before self-cleaning clothes reach the mass consumer market.

In the meantime, according to the report, research in the field of stain protection in apparel is likely to focus on ways of developing environmentally friendly alternatives to the chemicals used in many stain protection technologies today.

AATCC announces Textile Technician Certification Program

11 April 2005

AATCC has announced the dates for its Textile Technician Program that is to take place this summer. Modules 1 and 2 of the Textile Technician Certification Program will be taught together at the Department of Textiles, University of Rhode Island, Kingston, R.I., June 8-10, 2005. Module 3 of the Textile Technician Certification Program will be conducted at North Carolina State University College of Textiles, Raleigh, N.C., June 21-22, 2005.

The course is described by the organisers as a rigorous hands-on training program that seeks to ensure the proper execution of AATCC Test Methods and Evaluation Procedures. The course covers three modules which are:

• Module 1 covers Gray Scales for Color Change and Staining and the 9-Step Chromatic Transference Scale.
• Module 2 covers Test Method 8, Colorfastness to Crocking; and Test Method 61, Colorfastness to Laundering, Home and Commercial: Accelerated.
• Module 3 covers the test methods:
Test Method 88B, Smoothness of Seams in Fabrics after Repeated Home Laundering
Test Method 88C, Retention of Creases in Fabrics after Repeated Home Laundering
Test Method 124, Appearance of Fabrics after Repeated Home Laundering
Test Method 135, Dimensional Changes in Automatic Home Laundering of Woven and Knit Fabrics

AATCC offers education, technology transfer, and test method development for the textile design and wet processing industry. It is dedicated to education, technical applications and research, and communication.

United Retail Group announces sales increase

11 April 2005

They say big is beautiful and according to United Retail Group Inc's results for March 2005, it seems that big is also profitable. The specialty retailer of large-size women's fashion apparel, footwear and accessories has reported an increase of 7% in net sales to $40.0 million during March 2005, up from $37.3 million in March 2004.

For the fiscal quarter to date, net sales increased 9% to $69.9 million from $64.2 million in the same period last year.

Taiwan to push for total textile solution strategy

11 April 2005

Taiwan Textile Research Institute (TTRI) has announced it will push its total strategy to the textile vendors in 2005 by providing them with technological solutions for product commercialisation and financial information.

The strategy is designed to help them achieve international recognition, improve business performance and bridge the gap between vendors and buyers. The strategy also aims to enhance marketing cooperation with Taiwan External Trade Development Council (TAITRA). TAITRA also plans to expand its overseas branches in order to familiarise overseas buyers with Taiwan's technology and vendors.

All these efforts are designed to bring the different elements of the industry together to increase its efficiency. There are calls for the government to get more involved in the industry's efforts and for the transformation of its production from apparel-based textiles to non-apparel textiles.

The country's textile industry has recently been affected by the rising value of the New Taiwan dollar, by the abolition of quotas by the USA in January and by the rising competition from neighbouring countries.

Rocky Shoes selects New Generation's e-SPS for streamlining global production

11 April 2005

Rocky Shoes and Boots Inc., manufacturer and retailer of outdoor and occupational footwear, has selected Web-based sourcing and production system e-SPS from New Generation Computing Inc., software developer for the apparel and sewn products industries and the subsidiary of American Software Inc., to help streamline its global production of footwear.

The company has installed the software at its Nelsonville, Ohio, headquarters, where it will enable its sourcing team to complete steps in the production lifecycle in real time via the Internet.

"NGC's e-SPS will provide us with end-to-end visibility of our entire global sourcing functions," said David Sharp, COO of Rocky Shoes and Boots. "We conducted extensive research and found that NGC's software products are recognised as the industry standard by leading apparel and footwear manufacturers."

Current e-SPS users include VF Corporation, Maidenform Inc., Wilsons Leather, Dick's Sporting Goods Inc., Kellwood Company, Russell Corp., Gold Toe Brands Inc. and S. Schwab Company.

Terra Nova enjoys a successful year

12 April 2005

Terra Nova Equipment has scooped three highly prestigious 2005 awards - and it's still only April!

In March, Terra Nova was awarded the Go Outdoors Tent of the Year prize for its Laser tent, as voted for by retailers within the outdoor industry. And this month sees the company's Wild Country Homestead 5 tent named as a 'best buy' in an assessment of 15 family tents carried out by a leading consumer magazine.

And let's not forget that in February, Terra Nova was declared the winner of Best Tent Brand for 2004 in the outdoorsmagic readers' awards.

Terra Nova marketing director Carolyn Budding said: "This is an excellent start to the year for us and shows a great deal of confidence in Terra Nova products from retailers and consumers alike."

Gander Mountain revises full year results

12 April 2005

American Gander Mountain Company, a specialty retailer with particular focus on products and services for hunting, fishing, camping and boating, has revised its fiscal 2004 financial results reported on March 11, 2005.

The revised results show that net income for fiscal 2004 increased to $1.6 million from $0.8 million as previously reported, and net income for fiscal 2003 increased to $1.5 million from $0.7 million as previously reported.

This revision has come as a result of a clarification issued by the SEC on February 7, 2005, that has affected many retail companies with regards to the method of accounting for leases.

World Footwear Congress set to step out in style

12 April 2005

More than 24 countries - including Argentina, Brazil, China, Japan, USA, and Mexico, EC - have confirmed their presence at the World Footwear Congress (WFC) that will take place April 14-15 in Brussels, Belgium.

The event, which was organised by the European Confederation of the Footwear Industry (CEC) for the first time in April 2003 hopes to attract a worldwide dialogue of those involved in the footwear sector.

Veltex Apparel opens distribution base in Canada

12 April 2005

Veltex Corporation, a manufacturing, import and distribution company for apparel and accessories, has established new operations in Canada, setting up a satellite office based in London, Ontario, to take advantage of the growing business relationships in Canada. Veltex Apparel specialises in caps, apparel and apparel accessories for the promotional products industry and distribution of merchandise. It is thought to be well positioned to gain market share from the over 4,000 distributors of promotional products in Canada which represents over a $1 billion marketing industry.

Jordan Ross, vice president sales and marketing of Veltex Corp., commented, "We are very excited to have entered the Canadian market. We expect that this move will produce strong revenues and profitability for Veltex. Furthermore, we are looking forward to joining the Promotional Products Association of Canada."

Vice president of the company's Canadian division, James Burke commented, "Since the Canadian government has allowed any apparel imports from Bangladesh to be duty free, Veltex will enjoy about a 20% savings which will be applied to our bottom line."

Steven Madden to sponsor Miss USA

12 April 2005

Steven Madden, Ltd was the official footwear sponsor for the 54th annual Miss USA pageant which took place in Baltimore's Hippodrome Theatre on April 11th. }

The company created a shoe specially designed to be worn by each of the 51 contestants. This year's winner received a $3,000 cash prize and a shoe wardrobe courtesy of Steve Madden.

February carryover sales strong in specialty stores

12 April 2005

Overall sales for the entire US winter sport market (including specialty and chain stores) were flat, up 0.5% in dollars to $2.06 billion for the August 2004 through February 2005 period, compared to $2.05 billion reported for the same period last year, according to the SnowSports Industries America (SIA) Retail Audit.

Unit sales were down 9.4%. Sales at specialty ski and snowboard shops were also flat, down 0.4% compared with last season. In dollars, that translates to $1.59 billion in sales compared to $1.6 billion for the same period last season. Unit sales were down from last season 5.7%.

Christine Martinez, market research manager for SIA, the not-for-profit industry trade group that

represents manufacturers and distributors of snow sports products, said: “US consumer confidence rose only 0.5% in February as inflation ticked up and oil prices started to soar. Equipment felt the effects of shrinking consumer budgets while apparel was able to gain respectable dollar increases”.

The SIA Retail Audit tracks and reports sales in all snow sports product categories. This is the fifth report of six that look at sales through March 31, 2005, the end of the winter season.

Overall equipment sales (alpine, snowboard, Nordic, Telemark and Randonee/AT) were down 4% in dollars as compared to last season with season-to-date sales reaching $581.4 million through February 2005. In specialty stores, alpine equipment (including skis, ski systems, boots, bindings and poles) sales decreased 2% in dollars this season over last.

Good turnout at Footwear London

13 April 2005

Organisers of Footwear London at Olympia have reported a good turnout at the April 2005 show, with a steady flow of visitors throughout the event.

Show director David Wilkins said that positive feedback had surpassed his expectations, representing an increasing confidence in the late-season buying event in London. Since its launch last year, the show has grown by 24% in terms of the number of exhibitors.

“While the idea of a late-season buying show isn’t going to be right for everybody, having a good range of brands and wholesalers sharing the same space makes it an inviting showcase and it has clearly started to prove itself after only two seasons. As always, meeting the needs of buyers is a prime focus and a late fixture in the capital suits a lot of people. Our plans for Footwear London are to continue to develop it as comprehensively as possible to make life easy for buyers, just as we did at the NEC with our earlier mainstream launch show, Footwear UK”.

The next Footwear London show takes place at Olympia, on October 2-4, 2005.

Mexico, IDB sign loan contracts

13 April 2005

Mexico and the Inter-American Development Bank have signed contracts for two loans for a total $400.4 million destined to fund programmes to raise living conditions in poor urban settlements and improve job training services.

A $350 million loan will support Mexico’s Programa Habitat. The programme improves basic infrastructure, urban facilities and public services in poor neighbourhoods at the same time as it expands residents’ access to social services. A $50.4 million loan will help finance a programme that will improve job training and technical and vocational education. The overall goal is to help workers and graduates develop skills that will allow them to find employment and remain active in the labour market.

The IDB loan will support the first phase of a six-year programme with a total cost of $204 million. The programme, which will be executed by Mexico’s Department of Public Education, is expected to boost worker productivity and the employment prospects of young graduates of the technical education system.

One component of the programme will support the development of occupational skills standards for key sectors of the Mexican economy, including the auto industry, electronics, chemicals, construction, textiles and apparel, leather and footwear, aircrafts, software, tourism, agriculture, and retailing.

India’s Industrial production up 5% in February

13 April 2005

The Quick Estimates of Index of Industrial Production (IIP) for the month of February 2005 released by India’s Central Statistical Organisation, Ministry of Statistics and Program Implementation, stands at 206.9 for February 2005, 4.9% higher than to the level in February 2004.

The Indices of Industrial Production for the Mining, Manufacturing and Electricity sectors for February 2005 stand at 151.5, 218.9, and 170.5 respectively, with growth of (-)2.3%, 6.2% and (-)0.9% compared with the same period in 2004. The cumulative growth for April-February, 2004-05 over the corresponding period of 2003-04 in the three sectors have been 4.0%, 8.7% and 5.3% respectively, with the overall growth in the General Index being 8.1%.

Fifteen of the 17 two-digit industry groups showed positive growth during February 2005 as compared with the same month in the previous year. 'Textile Products (including Wearing Apparel)’ showed the highest growth of 23.4%, followed by 18.3% in ‘Paper & Paper Products and Printing, Publishing & Allied Industries and 17.8% in 'Beverages, Tobacco and Related

products'. On the other hand, 'Wool, Silk and Man-Made Fibre Textiles' showed negative growth of 7.8% followed by a decline of 0.6% in 'Food Products'.

Tefron's CFO resigns

13 April 2005

Israeli producer of seamless intimate apparel and active-wear, Tefron Ltd., has announced that the company's chief financial officer (CFO), Gil Rozen will resign effective May 31, 2005 following his decision to pursue private business opportunities. Asaf Alperovitz will be appointed as his replacement effective June 1, 2005.

Mr. Alperovitz is currently CFO of Corigin Ltd., a private company engaged in developing, marketing and selling computer software products.

"We are pleased that Asaf Alperowitz will join us," commented Yos Shiran, Tefron's CEO. "His management and accounting experience will be of great value to the company".

"I would like to thank Gil for his contributions to Tefron during the last three and half years," Mr. Shiran continued. "Gil helped us navigate through a changing, and often challenging, business environment and to strengthen the financial state of the company."

The company recently reported a loss of $4.1 million for the fourth quarter of 2004, compared with a loss of $2.2 million in the fourth quarter of 2003. Sales for the fourth quarter of 2004 were $44.6 million, compared to sales of $40.4 million in the fourth quarter of 2003.

Tefron manufactures seamless intimate apparel, active wear and swimwear sold throughout the world by name-brand marketers such as Victoria's Secret, The Gap, Banana Republic, Target, Nike, and J.C. Penney. The company's product line includes knitted briefs, bras, tank tops, loungewear, nightwear, t-shirts, bodysuits, swim wear, beach wear and active wear.

Zensah to display seamless compression apparel at cycling event

13 April 2005

Zensah Performance Apparel, a designer and manufacturer of seamless sports apparel, will display its high-tech performance apparel at The Sea Otter Classic, one of the most celebrated cycling festivals in North America. Known throughout the cycling world as the grand season opener, the 15th annual Sea Otter Classic will be held April 14-17, 2005 at the Laguna Seca Recreation Area, Monterey, California. Zensah will have a booth at the event where the company will exhibit its seamless compression apparel.

Nearly 10,000 professional and amateur athletes and over 50,000 spectators are expected to attend the festival.

Marks and Spencer reports another drop in sales

13 April 2005

British retailer Marks & Spencer has seen a fall in sales for the sixth consecutive quarter, reporting a 6.7% fall in clothing and homeware sales in the final quarter of 2004, ended April 2, 2005 and a fall of 5.1% for the full year.

Although the rate of decline has been stemmed slightly compared with the previous quarter when sales fell some 8.5%, it was hoped that the company would have had more positive results to report. Results for the full year showed a 7% drop in sales.Food, which has been the retailers shining light, also failed to perform as well as hoped, with sales falling by 3%, with a 2.8% decrease reported for the full year.The company now expects profit before tax and exceptional items for 20/20 to be in the range of £610-625 million, although analysts are forecasting that it could be lower than this.

Stuart Rose, chief executive said: "The trading environment continues to be difficult. The company is going through substantial change and we believe we are making progress tackling the underlying issues that we face."

Kuraray acquires Vectran High-performance fibres business

13 April 2005

Japan's Kuraray has announced the decision to acquire the Vectran high-performance polyarylate fibre business from the Celanese Advanced Materials Inc., an affiliate of Celanese Corporation, USA. A contract covering the purchase of all of the company's assets related to its Vectran business was signed on April 1, 2005. The acquisition is expected to take place by the end of April 2005.

The business, headquartered in Fort Mill, South Carolina, is engaged in the development and sale of Vectran fibre throughout the Americas and in Europe. After the acquisition, this business will

become a division of Kuraray America Inc., the US subsidiary of Kuraray Co. Ltd, and will make the Kuraray Group the world's sole source of Vectran fibre.

Vectran fibre was used for the special airbags used on NASA's 1997 Mars Pathfinder landing vehicle, and then again in 2004 on the Spirit and the Opportunity Mars rovers.

Made of polyarylate polymer which is a liquid crystal polymer, the fibre has ultra-high strength and high Young's modulus. It has low creep, no moisture absorption, high strength retention at extremely low temperatures, and high abrasion resistance in wet conditions. In Japan, Vectran has now expanded the applications including earphone cables, ropes for tennis and volleyball nets and marine research.
In the American and European markets Vectran is used in ropes for marine exploration and development, high-pressure inflatables, protective gloves, in the fields of civil engineering and construction, and optical cable.

Tesco breaks retailer profit record as apparel drives sales

13 April 2005

Retail giant Tesco has posted record results for the full year 2004 that show a profit rise of 20.5% to £2.029 billion ($3.839 billion) and sales of £37.1 billion ($70.213 billion), up by 12.4% for 2003.

The chain's sales have almost doubled in the past five years as the company wrested market share from J. Sainsbury and others, adopted a successful low-price strategy and moved into the non-food lines that offer the best growth in the sector. International operations in Asia and central and Eastern Europe posted a 13.1% rise, to £7.6 billion ($14.4 billion).

UK sales increased 11.9% to 29.5 billion ($55,844 billion) driven largely by non-food items at 17% and the value of £6 billion ($11.358 billion). Clothes sales of the brands Cherokee and Florence & Fred proved particularly strong and recorded a 28% rise.
"These results again demonstrate the broad appeal of the Tesco brand. They also show that our new growth businesses – in international, in non-food and services – have contributed as much profit as the entire business was making in 1997," said chief executive Terry Leahy.

The retailer, which already has exclusive rights to sell the highly successful US casualwear brand Cherokee, is currently considering its buy-out. Tesco is already its second largest customer and sells £200 million-worth of its clothes a year.

Pakistan and China remove duty on 1,253 items

13 April 2005

Following talks held during the Chinese Prime Minister's recent visit to Pakistan the two countries have agreed to remove customs duty on 1,253 products by January 1, 2008. This decision was reached as part of the Early Harvest Programme (EHP) agreement designed to increase the volume of bilateral trade between China and Pakistan. As part of the deal duty on leather goods will be removed, thus opening up the Chinese market to Pakistan.

Pakistan's Commerce Minister Humayun Akhtar Khan told a press conference that Pakistan will remove the duty on 486 tariff products by January 1, 2008 whilst China will cease duty charges on 767 products under the EHP agreement. Mr Khan said that the agreement included two main lists - a common list of items on which both countries will remove duty charges and a separate list for each country relating to items of specific export interest to each country.

Under the agreement, China will remove duty on industrial alcohol, bedlinen, table linen and other home textiles, towels, cotton and blended fabrics, synthetic yarn, synthetic fabrics, tarpaulins and marble articles, surgical goods, sports goods, cutlery, certain dyes, guar gum, medicines, leather articles, leather garments, curtains, iron windows and doors. Pakistan will remove the duty on some organic chemicals, leather machinery, textile machinery, parts, industrial washing machines, dying machines, and pressing and grinding machinery.

Rossignol chooses Eschler softshell laminates for fashion line

14 April 2005

France's Rossignol has chosen Swiss knitwear and laminates specialist, Christian Eschler AG to supply its softshell laminates for all of the company's three collections for the winter season 05/06, including the RossignolEmilio Pucci ski fashion line of Christian Lacroix. Eschler already supplies softshell laminates for the "Rossignol" collection and the Rossignol line of fashion designer JeanCharles de Castelbajac.

The softshell laminates chosen are not only transferprintable but are also available in

meterware rolls with continuous transfer printing, this means that there are no restrictions on the printing creativity of fashion designers JeanCharles de Castelbajac and Christian Lacroix.

Eschler, based in Bühler, Switzerland, is an international fabric supplier of active, leisure and outdoor sportswear.

Nanotechnology centre to open in Nottingham, UK

14 April 2005

Nottingham has received a £3.5 million grant to set up a new state-of-the-art nanotechnology research centre in the city. The Nottingham Micro Nano Technology (MNT) Centre will be an advanced manufacturing facility to help companies develop revolutionary new products and services at a scale of thousandths of a millimetre.

The grant will provide companies with open access to cutting-edge facilities designed to help bring nanotechnology products and services to the market. The world-leading expertise and facilities of five UK universities will also be available through the centre, which has the provisional title MNT@Biocity.

It will be led by The University of Nottingham and Nottingham Trent University, in partnership with the East Midlands Development Agency and BioCity Nottingham. The initiative is supported by a growing list of innovative companies active in nanotechnology, as well as the universities of Leicester, Lincoln and Loughborough. It is estimated that the global market for nanotechnology could be worth £1 trillion by 2013.

Nike publishes list of factories

14 April 2005

In an attempt to create greater industry transparency and collaboration, Nike, Inc. has voluntarily disclosed, in conjunction with the release of its new corporate responsibility report, the names and locations of the more than 700 active contract factories currently making Nike-branded products worldwide.

Nike is the first major company in the global footwear and apparel industries to publicly disclose its contract supplier base, something trade unions and non-governmental organisations have been seeking to bring greater visibility to industry-wide conditions in support of their efforts to halt labour, health and safety challenges.

"We hope that full disclosure, if also followed by other companies, will lead to more sharing of industry monitoring and resources for factory monitoring and remediation, where legal," said Hannah Jones, Nike's vice president of corporate responsibility. "The current system has to evolve fundamentally to create broad, sustainable change for factory workers. The goal is for greater transparency and collaboration to help everyone devote more time to promoting the remediation of compliance issues by factories rather than just uncovering them."

Both the contract factory list and the report are publicly available on the company's website.

Oil and textile imports push US trade deficit to $61 billion

14 April 2005

The US Department of Commerce has announced that the country’s trade deficit in February reached a new record high, reaching $61.04 billion, an increase of 4.3%. This record level is seen as a result of a surge in imports of textiles and oil, whilst US exports only increased slightly. Imports for the month amounted to
$161.5 billion whilst exports totalled a modest $100.5 billion.

This latest piece of news has once again ignited disquiet in the USA and increased the pressure placed on the government to apply protectionist measures on goods such as textiles.

Analysts are now predicting that the trade deficit could reach $717.2 billion by the end of 2005.

Australia set to start FTA negotiations with China

14 April 2005

Australian Trade Minister Mark Vaile has predicted that Australia will achieve its highest export figure on record this financial year, and claims this is predominantly due to the emergence of China as a major industrialised power.

Speaking at the launch of the 2005 Trade Statement, Mr Vaile said that Australia must look at strengthening its trading relationship with China further.
“I believe the time is right for Australia to move into free trade negotiations with China,” he said.

“Australia must be at the front of the queue in this market. The Chinese economy grows stronger by the day and Australia simply cannot afford to be left behind.
“Regardless of the outcome of any negotiation, our robust and healthy relationship will continue to grow.”

Mr Vaile said that the government’s forward-looking agenda on free trade agreements also ensured that Australia would not miss out on opportunities created by its major trading partners pursuing FTAs with other countries. “In 2004, Australia’s exports reached $152.5 billion, one of the highest levels on record,” he said.

“Trade is a crucial means through which we will secure our future prosperity. Around 70 per cent of our agricultural produce and around 80 per cent of our resources are exported. One in every five Australian jobs is linked to exports.”

National Design Museum presents “Extreme Textiles”

14 April 2005

The Cooper-Hewitt is currently presenting: “Extreme Textiles: Designing for High Performance,” the first museum exhibition devoted to the subject of technical textiles. The exhibition includes 150 extreme textile applications from a wide range of areas, including architecture, apparel, medicine, transportation, aerospace, and the environment. The display that will run until October 30, 2005, is said to examine the broad spectrum of contemporary design through the lens of textile fibres and structures.

The objects featured are displayed in terms of their high-performance characteristics—stronger, lighter, faster, smarter, safer—and displayed throughout the museum campus. It aims to explore the recent advancements in technical textiles and reference the museum’s own textile collection in order to illustrate historical examples of textile structures and techniques—such as weaving, knitting, braiding and embroidery—that continue to be used in the most pioneering textiles today.

These age-old techniques, in combination with the tremendous advances in the fields of science and engineering, have contributed to the production of textiles that are more dynamic and versatile than ever before. Developments in polymer technology have resulted in fibres that are stronger than steel, but retain textiles’ traditional advantage of flexibility. For example, the strongest rope ever fabricated, the Marlow SuperLine, which features a break load of 2,000 tons; woven shipping containers which transport millions of tons of raw materials, pharmaceuticals and food stuffs around the world; and soft polyester slings, capable of lifting 50 tons, that are replacing steel chains for heavy lifting.

The emergence of smart textiles, which incorporate computers and telecommunications technologies, allow for a wealth of new responsive devices, especially in the apparel and home furnishings industries. Examples of smart textiles on display will include touch-on light switches made out of pom-poms, tassels or fur, and an interactive, playful musical rope.

Buyers sought for lightweight fabrics producer

14 April 2005

Perseverance Mills, a manufacturer of specialist lightweight fabrics for the parachute, leisure and outdoor sports industries, has appointed Philip Long and Ian Schofield of PKF accountants and business advisers as administrative receivers. The directors are trying to sell the business and have been in talks with a number of interested parties.

Seventy per cent of Perseverance Mills' business comes from exporting goods and the company has found it increasingly difficult to deal with fierce price competition from abroad. The company, based in Burnley and Padiham, UK, has 205 employees and has an average annual turnover of £15million (€22 million).

Philip Long said: 'As administrative receivers we are looking to trade the business as a going concern. PKF has been very successful in achieving going concern sales and we hope to do the same for Perseverance Mills who, after many profitable years, has faced an increasingly tough marketplace.'

Perseverance Mills, which was founded in 1901, developed a unique outdoor fabric called Pertex, which is 50% lighter and packs 50% smaller than other available fabrics. Mountaineers and climbers around the world benefit from this fabric used in clothing and equipment such as sleeping bags and jackets.

EU under pressure from textile industry

14 April 2005

The European Union has been heavily criticised by its home textile and clothing industry for allowing cheap Chinese textile imports into its

market. Trade unions and industry representatives have blamed the EU for huge job losses in the sector and have urged for the introduction of safeguard measures to curb the growing imports.

The Union has been attacked by the angry industry for doing too little and too late. In 2004 the industry lost 65,000 and approximately 11,500 companies. Further large lay-offs and closures are expected if no measures are taken to prevent imports.

The EU may investigate options to stem the surge at the end of April and is currently studying the demand for safeguards. Eurotex, the industry's umbrella body, has called for the EU to slap limits on Chinese textiles.

Rebel Sports' sales hindered by patchy trading

14 April 2005

Rebel Sports' group sales rose by 5% to $238.4 million, but only a 0.2% rise on a same store basis, for the nine months ended April 2, 2005, in line with the company's expectations and due to an irregular trade pattern. The group has also reported a 6.4% rise in sales revenue in the third quarter but only 0.7% on a same store basis.

The group attributed poor third quarter sales to the Easter break falling in March and also admitted its footwear category continues to struggle due to an increased offer of non-sport categories.

Currently comprising 55 Rebel Sport stores and eight Glue stores, the group plans the opening of two more stores before June 2005.

CPSC and Zebco recall children's fishing poles

14 April 2005

The US Consumer Product Safety Commission, in cooperation with Zebco, has announced a voluntary recall of the company's fishing poles. Consumers should stop using the 1.5 million products immediately unless otherwise instructed and are advised to contact Zebco for information on receiving a free replacement fishing pole.

The recall is due to the paint used on the rods which contains lead. Lead is toxic if ingested by young children and can cause adverse health effects but there have been no reports of injuries or illness associated with these poles. The poles, manufactured in China, are currently available in discount department, sporting good and toy stores nationwide for between $9 and $13.

The recalled fishing poles are brightly coloured and feature pictures of the following cartoon characters on the reels: from Nickelodeon's SpongeBob Squarepants are SpongeBob, Patrick Star and Sandy Cheeks; Nick Jr.'s Dora the Explorer; Disney's Tigger; and the cast of Nickelodeon's Rocket Power. "ZEBCO" and "Floating Catch 'Em Kit" are written on the handles of these poles with the exception of the Rocket Power poles. The Rocket Power poles have a two-piece rod, were sold with sunglasses and "Rocket Power" is written on the rod. Newer fishing poles with a date code on the rod (near the handle) are not included in the recall.

BP International's sales revenue up 43% on last year

14 April 2005

BP International, Inc., a leading manufacturer of fabric architecture shade structures and tennis and athletic field equipment, announced today that year-to-date sales revenue exceed those for the same time period last year by 43%. Total billings for January 1 - April 11, 2005 are $2,072,799.27 compared with $1,444,995.02 for the same period in 2004.

Larry Ball, BP International CEO, said: "Our year-to-date numbers reflect what has been a trend within our company for the last eight months. Every month so far this year, company-wide billings, including all four product divisions, have shown a steady increase over previous years: January, always our slowest month, was up 11%, February was up 69% and March was a record-breaking month for us at 53% over 2004. April is shaping up to be another record breaking month with billings from April 1-11, 2005 already at $242,056, which is a 49% increase over the same time period in 2004."

The company has put the increase down to a number of factors including building an additional manufacturing plant, restructuring its physical plant in Florida, restructuring and expanding its management team, taking the company public, and developing a comprehensive marketing plan for each division and for the company as a whole.

IFAI announces Certification & Recognition programmes

15 April 2005

To be held October 27-29, 2005 at the Henry B. Gonzalez Convention Center in San Antonio, USA, the IFAI Expo 2005 will serve as a testing site for IFAI Professional Certification as well as a showcase for the 2005 International Achievement Awards competition.

IFAI Expo 2005 presents an opportunity for specialty fabrics industry professionals to test their skills and knowledge in order to achieve an IFAI Professional Certification. The application deadline for testing at IFAI Expo 2005 is August 22, 2005.

IFAI offers four professional certifications: Industrial Fabrics Manager (IFM); Master Fabric Craftsman (MFC); Certified Craftsman (CC); and Certified Project Planner (CPP) all of which test expertise in applicable specialty areas. Candidates who successfully pass two or three testing phases are awarded a professional designation that acknowledges their skills, knowledge and commitment to the industry.

The IFM professional certification identifies superior knowledge of the principles and practices of business and organizational management. Candidates demonstrate excellence in two of four specialty areas including marketing, production, finance or personnel with a minimum of five years of experience.

The two manufacturing certifications, MFC and CC, are designed to test skill and knowledge levels of all components of design, construction and installation applicable to any of the following product areas: Awnings/Canopies, Banners/Flags, Marine Interior, Marine Exterior, and Truck Covers and Tarps. To become certified as a MFC or CC, candidates must have a minimum of five years of experience.The CPP professional certification identifies excellence in the design, salesmanship and product planning of awnings/canopies and banners/flags as well as general knowledge of the manufacturing stages.

Research and Markets adds report on apparel in new EU members

15 April 2005

Research and Markets has announced the addition of “The Apparel Industry in the Ten EU Accession States” to their offering. It can be obtained through the following link: http://www.researchandmarkets.com/reports/c1547.

Relatively little has been written about the 10 countries that joined the EU on 1 May 2004, several of which have an important textile and clothing industry, and European textile and clothing groups seem more interested in opportunities in Asia - particularly in importing textile products after 2004, outsourcing production and even developing markets – rather than in the Pan Euro Med region.

The main advantages of the new member states include relatively low production costs, fast growing economies, proximity to the EU15 market, knowledge of the east European and CIS markets. Yet the impression remains that over the last 15 years neither the European companies nor their governments or the EU Commission have really pushed to develop synergies with the textile and clothing sectors in the accession countries.

The briefing reviews all the key points for each of the 10 accession states listed below:
- The 10 accession countries offer new opportunities
- Poland has become a net importer of textile products
- The Czech Republic has the most sophisticated textile industry of the 10
- Hungarian industry is losing its competitiveness
- Slovak textile and clothing industry stands up to scrutiny
- Lithuanian clothing industry more optimistic than textile industry
- Latvia is dropping low added value activities
- Estonia is optimistic about the accession
- Slovenia has the same worries as the EU15
- Cyprus is focusing on the European fashion market
- Malta is losing its status as an important jeans producer

Berghaus ‘bugs’ infest London Underground

15 April 2005

Berghaus specialist press advert featuring a number of nasty creepy-crawlies has been developed for poster sites on the London underground. The advertisement promotes Berghaus adventure travel clothing which features insect repellent.
The display advert will feature on 15 London Underground stations, including high traffic shopping stations such as South Kensington, Covent Garden, Oxford Circus and Knightsbridge.

Commenting on the move, Caroline McMinn, senior marketing manager at Berghaus, said: “The creative execution of this ad was extremely

successful in the specialist travel press. It's very eye catching and also has an element of humour. Seeing the ads on a large scale will really brings Berghaus to the masses and commuters are a very captive audience. I've seen the ads in-situ and they look fantastic."

The same creative execution has been placed in some national press including Observer, Guardian and the Independent on Sunday.

US sales of sporting goods rise 2.8% in January

15 April 2005

The Monthly Retail Trade Survey, prepared by the US Census Bureau, has reported sales in sporting goods stores of $2.01 billion (preliminary) for January, up by 2.8% from the $1.96 billion in January 2004. The increase follows a 4.9% rise in December.

The survey, issuing final sales for December with revisions of some earlier months, reported sales in sporting goods stores of $3.91 billion, up by 4.9% from the $3.72 billion in December 2003.

Total sales for calendar year 2004 were $29.74 billion, up 8.6% for the 12 months of 2003 versus the 7.5% previously reported. Sporting goods store sales for all of 2003 were $27.38 billion, a 3.8% increase versus 2002.

Among the 28 retail categories in the survey, sporting goods stores' growth ranked in the top third and exceeded the 7.6% growth rate for all retail sales. The overall retail growth represented the strongest increase since 1999's 8.4% gain.

The US Census Bureau estimates are based on data from the Monthly Retail Trade Survey, Annual Retail Trade Survey and administrative records.

Martin Miller presents Hardflex and Hardflex Gold

15 April 2005

Reacting to new customer demands Martin Miller has produced Viking Flex Gold, a new type of clicking die steel to the market, Hardflex and Hardflex Gold.The new product is a clicking die steel with an increased body hardness of about 44 HRC and is designed for large dies or dies with predominantly straight sections.

Hardflex is said to offer a much better stability of straight die sections and shows considerably less residual curvature when cut from the coil. The primary field of application for this new product are dies for leather-goods, but also sole dies and dies for upholstery will benefit from the increased stability.

Thanks to its high body hardness Hardflex does not necessarily need an extra edge hardening. The hardness of the body structure lends satisfying resistance to the edge, even for demanding applications. For extra long tool life and for applications which require very high cutting pressure Martin Miller additionally offers Hardflex Gold which features a high frequency (HF) hardened cutting edge with about 49 HRC on a Hardflex and Hardflex Gold, despite their high body hardness, easily allow bending angles up to 95°, using a standard size bending tool.