Business Week
13th February - 19th February 06

Record attendance expected at CMAI conference

14 February 2006

Chemical Market Associates, Inc. (CMAI) will host its 21st Annual World Petrochemical Conference and Workshop in Houston, Texas, USA on March 21-23 and is expecting a record attendance at the event.

Registered participants are at record levels and expectations are that total participation will be well over 800 attendees.

The conference will highlight keynote speaker Peter Huntsman, president & CEO of Huntsman Corporation.

The topics covered will include the critical macro issues for the chemicals, plastics, and fibre industries - defining the outlook for major chemical industry sectors; and Aromatics & Fibre Intermediates, Olefins & Derivatives, Chlor-Alkali & Related Products and Thermoplastics.

CMAI is a global petrochemical, plastics and fibres consulting firm that serves a range of companies all over the world, with offices in Houston, New York, London, Dubai, Singapore and Shanghai.

BASF plans turnaround of key plants in 2006

14 February 2006

BASF has announced that it will carry out turnarounds of key world-scale plants as part of maintenance processes for regulatory and routine inspections in 2006. The aim of the turnarounds is to carry out technical inspections, maintain equipment, perform cleaning work and exchange used catalysts. In addition, the opportunity will be used to further improve the performance and reliability of the plants. At the same time, a number of downstream plants will also undergo scheduled inspections.

The turnarounds are expected to reduce the Chemicals segment's EBIT by approximately €100 million in 2006. A large share of this amount will be booked in the first half of the year and in the Petrochemicals division. Comparable turnarounds of world-scale plants were not carried out within the Chemicals segment in 2005.

Major turnarounds in 2006 include the propane dehydrogenation (PDH) plant in Tarragona, Spain, in January and February. The steam cracker and the butadiene extraction facility in Port Arthur, Texas, will be overhauled in March and April. The steam cracker is a joint venture between BASF and Total, and the butadiene extraction facility is a joint venture between BASF, Total and Shell. The syngas and oxo-alcohols plants in Nanjing, China, will be shut down in March and April, while one of BASF's two crackers in Ludwigshafen, including downstream plants, will also undergo inspections in April and May.

BASF has confirmed that it will continue to provide its customers with secure supplies of its chemicals during the turnaround process.

DuPont awarded patent for Polysaccharide fibres

14 February 2006

The Department of Commerce's United States Patent & Trademark Office (USPTO) has awarded US Patent 7,000,000 to DuPont senior researcher Dr. John P. O'Brien for his "Polysaccharide Fibres."

Polysaccharide fibres are "cotton-like" fibres derived from biologically based renewable resources. They are biodegradable and suitable for use in textiles. The patent issued for "Polysaccharide Fibers" is the 33,801st US patent awarded to DuPont since company founder E.I. du Pont was granted US Patent #590 in 1804 for a "machine for granulating gunpowder." DuPont and its affiliates ranked second worldwide with the most biotechnology patents approved by the USPTO in 2004, according to the publication Nature Biotechnology.

Dr O'Brien has been a polymer chemist with DuPont since 1978. He holds 15 patents, including the one issued today, for his research in the areas of advanced composites; high-performance fibres, including developmental work on DuPont(TM) Kevlar(R); and bio-based materials.

Dow Corning to unveil new impact protection technology

14 February 2006

US-based supplier of silicone solutions for the textile industry Dow Corning Corporation, will introduce its new patented impact protection technology – the Dow Corning Active Protection System – at the Techtextil-Symposium North America in March in Atlanta, Georgia, USA.

The presentation, entitled Defense and Comfort: New Advances in Impact Protection Textiles, will be given by Graham Budden, a senior technical service chemist.

For years, manufacturers of high-performance apparel have struggled to develop systems that protect against

high-energy impacts without sacrificing flexibility, breathability or ease of use," says Budden. Now, they can meet this challenge with the superior defense and comfort provided by the Dow Corning Active Protection System."

Mr Budden's presentation will review the development and testing of the Active Protection System as well as its potential for wide-ranging applications within the textile industry. In addition, he will share performance data comparing the Active Protection System with other protective apparel armour systems.

The Dow Corning Active Protection System marks a revolutionary advancement in impact protection," says Budden. We believe it is the most effective and versatile protective technology available today. The possible applications are virtually unlimited," he added.

Hemptown names new VP of sales

14 February 2006

Vancouver based eco-friendly apparel company Hemptown Clothing Inc., has named Stephanie Knight as vice president, Strategic Sales of its HT Naturals clothing division.

Ms Knight was most recently senior key account manager on the Foot Locker

Europe business at adidas International in Amsterdam, The Netherlands, where she led all facets of account management for the pan-European retailer from

2003. Prior to that, she was apparel category manager for national key accounts at adidas in Portland, USA, for four years.

Hemptown Clothing Inc. was founded in 1995 in response to the growing demand for environmentally friendly, socially responsible clothing. Hemptown is currently developing a biotech enzyme fibre process named Crailar - an enzyme process that transforms raw hemp fibre into strong and soft apparel-quality fabric, resulting in a fabric with the economic potential of cotton at an environmentally sustainable level.

Children's shoe sizing to take centre stage at GDS

14 February 2006

Children's footwear will be highlighted in a Kid's Special covering nearly 600m² Kids' exhibit at GDS in Düsseldorf on March 5-7, with the focus on shoe size measuring systems.

According to the organisers of GDS, the children's footwear market is a highly contested one – and the target group is shrinking due to demographic changes. Nevertheless, this segment is one of the growth markets promising major sales potential for both manufacturers and retailers alike. Consumer behaviour is clearly polarised. Some consumers save on their childrens' shoes in economically challenging times disregarding quality due to the shoes' relatively short life span. On the other hand, there are demanding consumers who attach great importance to brand value, wear properties and, above all, perfect fit when it comes to children's shoes.

An increasing number of lifestyle and system suppliers are now gaining a foothold" and making money in the kids' segment alongside such established kids' brands as Ricosta and Richter. This is also shown in the collections developed by such brand icons as s.Oliver or Timberland, all of which will exhibit at GDS. They are representative of a great number of producers that are continuously expanding their children's shoe lines. Another indication of the appeal of this market is the rising number of newcomers it is attracting.

Measuring systems designed for children's feet are therefore a highly topical issue addressed by experts and medical publications.

In Germany alone approximately 60% of all children are reportedly wearing incorrectly sized, ill-fitting shoes (in terms of length, width and/or circumference) as a result of inadequate measuring facilities. This is also said to have a direct impact on freedom of movement and therefore on the healthy growth of children's feet. Correct shoe sizing is therefore one of the most important topics in the field of health promotion and one the childrens' shoe market urgently needs to address.

Lenzing Fibers exhibits at ispo for the first time

14 February 2006

Lenzing Fibers exhibited its products for the very first time at the recent ispo Winter06 in Munich with the spotlight on its Tencel fibre. The natural functions of Tencel offer a range of perfect solutions for the activewear sector.

The nanofibrils of Tencel fibre guarantee optimum moisture transportation and excellent temperature regulating properties, thus optimising the body's performance and regulating the skin temperature. Tencel absorbs moisture quite naturally and then releases this again quickly into the environment whereas synthetic fibres absorb no moisture at all. With synthetic fibres the moisture stays on the fibre in the form of a film on the surface.

Tencel is said to be particularly soft on the skin thanks to a combination of moisture absorption and a smooth fibre surface. Particularly in peak sporting performances, sports clothing has to be functional and pleasant next to the skin. Rough fibre surfaces can lead to skin irritations and can impair performance as a result of rubbing

against the skin.

It also nips the formation of bacteria in the bud since the moisture on the skin is immediately spirited away to the inside of the fibre. Thus no water film can form on the fibre on which the bacteria can grow. Tests have demonstrated that Tencel has the lowest bacterial growth. It also prevents an increase in the number of bacteria without the use of chemical additives. According to the company, the risk of bacterial growth is 2,000 times higher with synthetic fibres than with Tencel.

It that were not sufficient, Tencel also prevents electrostatic charges thanks to the natural moisture content of the fibre. The moisture level of Tencel is 13% whilst in polyester it is only 1%.

Outdoor 2006 focuses on women

14 February 2006

As has been evident at Outdoor Retailer and ispo, the outdoor industry is focusing on women, and women and outdoor activities will also be the focus at OutDoor 2006 to be held July 23-26 in Friedrichshafen, Germany.

According to Rolf G. Schmid, president of the European Outdoor Group (EOG) and head of the Mammut Sports Group AG in Switzerland, Many of our member companies are already generating significantly higher revenues with their women's collections. We have to ensure that this growing market trend is reflected at the trade fair."

The trade fair will feature women and the outdoors as a key theme in a variety of ways with The OutDoor Women". According to trade fair officials, the OutDoor fashion show will place even greater emphasis on women's collections.

With 450 direct exhibitors registered (previous year: 360) and a net total of 23,000 square metres of space rented (previous year: 17,000 sqm), the trade fair team has reported strong interest for this year's event– particularly from companies outside of Germany – and significant gains six months before the start of the event. The share of international exhibitors has already reached 76%.

US sales of winter sports apparel and accessories rise 13%

14 February 2006

Overall sales for the entire winter sport market (including specialty and chain stores), were up 13% in dollar terms to $1.5 billion for the August to December period of 2005, compared with $1.3 billion reported last year, according to the SnowSports Industries America (SIA) Retail Audit. Unit sales were up 14%.

Sales at specialty ski and snowboard shops rose 12% to $1.2 billion compared with $1 billion last season. Unit sales were up 13% from last season. Consumer confidence surged in December to its highest level since August due in part to economic strength, falling gas prices and job growth. Specialty stores benefited from this lift as consumers purchased apparel and accessories during the holiday season, contributing to dollar sales increases of 14% and 15%, respectively, over last season," said Christine Martinez, market research manager for SIA, a not-for-profit industry trade group that represents manufacturers and distributors of snow sports products.

The SIA Retail Audit tracks and reports sales in all snow sports product categories. This is the third report of six that look at sales through March 31, 2006, the end of the winter season.

Amer Sport exceeds targets

14 February 2006

Finnish sports brand Amer Sports has reported a 32% increase in net sales to €1,363.7 million for 2005 compared with €1,035.9 million in 2004. Salomon, which was recently acquired by Amer Sports, increased net sales by 25%.

According to CEO Roger Talermo, The Fitness Equipment Division had another successful year. Net sales rose by 20% to €252.1 million. Net sales growth was fuelled primarily by direct sales to major commercial customers, and the company's increased ability to deliver a 'Total Product' that addresses commercial facilities' business needs. Growth significantly outpaced that of the industry."

Team Sports performed well and posted record earnings. Net sales rose by 10% to €203.8 million. Of the product groups, sales growth was seen particularly in baseball and softball bats. Racquet Sports also broke all its previous earnings records. Its net sales rose by 7% to €225.4 million. Wilson's sales of tennis rackets were up 9%. Wilson's share of the global tennis racket market was 37%.

In the Golf Division, net sales declined by 4% as tough competition on the global golf equipment market continued.

Atomic's net sales rose by 4% to €214 million. A total of 873,000 pairs of alpine skis were delivered in 2005. Atomic's share of the world's alpine ski market was about 19%. Sports Instruments' net sales were down 7% to €72 million. Suunto implemented an organisational change and new management stepped in.

Salomon's Q4 net sales amounted to €255.2 million. The bicycle component manufacturer Mavic, which is part of Salomon, continued to enjoy good sales, rising 10% in 2005.

PolyOne names new CEO

15 February 2006

US polymer compounding and North American distribution company PolyOne Corporation has appointed Stephen Newlin as chairman, president and chief executive officer (CEO), effective February 21.

Prior to his appointment, Mr Newlin was president of the Industrial Sector of Ecolab Inc., a specialty chemical company. Before this post he spent more than two decades with Nalco Chemical Company (now Nalco Holding Company), where he ultimately served as president, chief operating officer and a director.

PolyOne Corporation has operations in thermoplastic compounds, specialty polymer formulations, colour and additive systems, and thermoplastic resin distribution.

Haojey Technofibre acquired by eVision

15 February 2006

US-based eVision International, Inc. has entered into an agreement with Chen Chi-Cheng, the executive director, CEO and majority shareholder of Taiwan-based Haojey Technofibre Limited, to acquire approximately 71% of Haojey—a manufacturer and distributor of high-tech performance fibres. eVision will purchase Haojey for $20 million to be satisfied by the issuance of 43,250,000 common shares at an issue price of $0.12 per share and the issuance of a promissory note in the amount of $14,810,000.

Haojey manufactures and sells high-performance fibre products under its house brands Texcare, Elastel and Dexlon, as well as the brand of its major supplier Asahi Kasei. The key properties of these fibres are lightweight, swift moisture absorption, anti-bacterial, rapid drying, UV light blocking, low temperature dyeability, high absorbency, high elasticity, heat insulation, heat resistance, and water resistance. These properties are particularly suitable for the manufacture of textiles and clothing apparel. Haojey is constantly innovating new products, with the latest development involving the use of nanotechnology in the manufacture of new fibres.

Haojey was established in Taiwan in 1979 and has approximately 170 employees. All manufacturing activities are currently carried out at Douliu Plant in Taiwan.

Sports Illustrated to feature $30 million bikini

15 February 2006

The most expensive piece of diamond apparel ever made is making its debut in the 2006 Sports Illustrated Swimsuit issue. The $30 million Diamond Bikini was designed by Susan Rosen who worked with Steinmetz Diamonds to create the bikini, which was a special commission.

The bikini is made up of over 150 carats of D Flawless diamonds, some of the rarest in the world including a 51ct D Flawless Pear Shape, a 30ct D Flawless Emerald Cut, a pair of 15ct D Flawless Rounds and a pair of 8ct D Flawless Pear Shapes. All of the diamonds are free of inclusions or nature's birthmarks and are set in platinum.

Report: Fashion to help drive golf equipment sales

17 February 2006

According to The US Market for Golf Equipment, a new report from market research publisher Packaged Facts, high-tech golfwear, whether it's the latest haute-tailored wetness- and wind-resistant outfit or trend-setting footwear and gloves, is redeeming an otherwise sluggish golf equipment market. And it is forecast that such innovation will drive sales of golf equipment to $6.7 billion by 2010.

Packaged Facts projects that while sales of golf clubs, balls, and bags-once seen as major sales drivers-will continue to decline as the popularity of the sport wanes, golfwear, particularly apparel, will continue to grow steadily as changing demographics within the golf circuit cause a shift in fashion expectations. Apparel, footwear, and gloves reached $2 billion in 2005 and are expected to continue to climb to $2.4 billion by 2010. With the rising costs of club memberships and an industry shift toward high-priced, high-tech clubs and balls, the costliness of the sport has caused significant fallout of both core and occasional players. However, marketers have not lost their focus on the potential expansion of the market through innovative cross-selling into less traditional demographic sectors.

EU research into smart textiles for emergency workers launched

17 February 2006

With the help of wearable systems, developed by EU-supported researchers, emergency workers, disaster crews and maybe even extreme sports fans could one day be receiving timely, life-saving instructions from their clothes. This is how the European integrated project ProeTEX (Protection e-Textiles: Micro-Nano-Structured Fibre Systems for Emergency-Disaster Wear) sees the future.

Launched earlier this month, ProeTEX aims to develop a set of integrated garments for emergency disaster personnel. The clothing will be capable of monitoring physiological and environmental parameters, while improving worker safety, coordination and efficiency, they say.

Wearable systems developed by ProeTEX will monitor the users' health – i.e. vital signs, biochemical parameters, activity and posture – and even generate

and store power. Outer layers of the garments, for example, could measure what the team call environmental insults", such as high temperatures and toxic gases. The smart textiles will also be capable of communicating data to the central control unit of a rescue operation.

Led by the Italian National Research Centre (through its S3 nanoStructures and bioSystems at Surfaces), the four-year, €12-million project has assembled 23 European partners from universities, research institutions, and the textiles and healthcare sectors. This Sixth Framework Programme (FP6) funded consortium will also include three partners representing the end users who will test and validate the applications.

ProeTEX's coordinator, Annalisa Bonfiglio of the University of Cagliary, Italy, says the resulting smart garments will have significant societal benefits and will help drive a wide range of key technology developments", particularly in textile-based micro-nano-technologies.

Massimo Donda re-elected as president of Confcommercio

17 February 2006

President of the Italian Shoe Trade Federation, Federcalzature, Massimo Donda has been re-elected as president of Confcommercio, the Italian Trade Confederation. This is the third time in succession that he has held the position.

Lanxess reorganises small-scale business

17 February 2006

In 2005, the Fine Chemicals business unit of Lanxess Deutschland GmbH, which from the second quarter of 2006 will be managed as a standalone, wholly owned Lanxess subsidiary under the name Saltigo, was reorganised and the production facilities for small volumes at the Leverkusen site were extensively modernised.

"We have invested some €1.5 million in merging our small-volume capabilities from various facilities into two completely modernised buildings, a process which had virtually no effect on our day-to-day business and which has gone virtually unnoticed by customers. This smooth transition was important to us, as reliability in production and supply is a top priority in this business," explained Dr. Andreas Sattler, Head of the Pilot Plants of the Production & Technology department.

The small-volume centre will enable the new service-provider Saltigo GmbH, specialised in custom manufacturing, to secure favourable startup conditions in this field. Currently, around 5,000 reactions are carried out and some 300 small-volume orders are processed each year. "At the moment, we're working at more than full capacity. And we're already well booked up a long way into 2006," explained Dr. Sattler.

North Face founder, Hap Klopp joins d3o lab

17 February 2006

d3o, the materials technology company responsible for the new impact protection technology which is soft and flexible but instantaneously stiffens on impact, has appointed founder of the North Face Hap Klopp as chairman.

Mr Klopp grew the North Face from a 14-person operation to an enterprise employing more than 1,000 people involved in manufacturing, licensing, retailing and distribution in over 45 countries.

According to d3o, in the same way as the North Face fought to revolutionise the outdoor retail market, d3o is on its way to establishing a completely new kind of impact protection that will revolutionise this market.

The outdoor market has stagnated, there's nothing new or revolutionary to convince the consumer to trade up, which is why I believe it is perfect timing for d3o to make a huge impact (no pun intended). Having been around in the days when Gore-Tex was new, I can see d3o revolutionising the market in the same way," commented Mr Klopp.

d3o is already used by some of the most well known brands such as Spyder, Schoeffel, Kjus, Globe, Sells, and Ribcap.

Board member retires at Russell Corporation

17 February 2006

Branded athletic and sporting goods company Russell Corporation has announced that Margaret M. Porter will retire as a member of its board of directors at the company's annual meeting in April 2006. Ms Porter, who currently chairs the Corporate Responsibility Committee of the Board, has been a director since 1997.

As the first woman to serve on Russell's board, she is well-known in the Birmingham, Alabama community for her public service. A past chairman of the board of Trustees of the Children's Health System of Alabama, she currently serves on the board of The National Association of Children's Hospitals and Related Institutions. A former mayor of Mountain Brook, Alabama, Ms Porter was also a founding chairman of the McWane Science Center in Birmingham, a non-profit organisation promoting public understanding of science, technology and the environment.

Lotto becomes official supplier of Chinese premiership team

17 February 2006

Following the announcement last month that Lotto has expanded into the Chinese market through the establishment of a joint venture, Lotto China Ltd., in partnership with Scienward International Holdings, from January 1, 2006 to 31 December 2008 Lotto will be the Official Supplier and Technical Sponsor", of Chinese Super League soccer team Shenyang Jinde, acting as exclusive supplier of footwear, clothing and accessories used in the matches, training and at functions and events.

A delegation from the club recently visited Lotto's headquarters in Italy, where Lotto president Andrea Tomat presented the first pair of Zhero Gravity, the world's first laceless football boots, which will be supplied to the team in the coming season and worn by some of the key players.

11th Golf Show to be held in Prague

17 February 2006

On March 19-20 the largest Czech golf exhibition, Golf Show 2006, will be held for the 11th time at Prague's Trade Fair Palace. Companies dealing in golf equipment, clothing, footwear, lawn machines, simulators and other products have already registered as exhibitors, and the event is set to attract over 2,000 visitors.

AF&Y and Avondale team up on new high-performance denim

17 February 2006

Solution dyed filament yarns supplier American Fibers and Yarns Company (AF&Y) has teamed with Avondale Mills to develop a new high-performance denim targeted for active lifestyles. Featuring a 24% blend of AF&Y's Innova yarns, the denim is said to be lightweight, durable and moisture-wicking.

"For active lifestyles, consumers will find this denim much more comfortable than traditional cotton denim," said Mike Brown, director of denim product development at Avondale Mills. "During warm weather or vigorous activity, traditional cotton denim can feel heavy and uncomfortable under the weight of absorbed perspiration. The Innova yarns eliminate the problem by wicking moisture away from the body, making this denim ideal for active youth and adults, for sports and other outdoor activities, and for work."

Mr Brown added the new denim is also stronger and more durable than traditional cotton fabric, with cotton/Innova tensile and tear strengths approximately 50% greater when comparing the same fabric construction.