

January 11, 2005

Mitsui Chemicals to Expand Cycloolefin Copolymer (APEL™) Capacity

Japan's leading chemical company Mitsui Chemicals, Inc. (MCI) has decided to expand the production capacity of its proprietary "APEL™" cycloolefin copolymer in response to the significantly increasing demand for the polymer in the main application areas comprising IT & electronics and high-performance packaging, the company announced today.

A part of MCI's Functional Polymers product line-up, the amorphous polymer APEL™ is endowed with superior optical characteristics.

Expansion of APEL™ capacity by 600 ton/yr will be achieved by a modification of the existing commercial plant at MCI's Iwakuni-Ohtake Works in western Japan, raising the total capacity to 3,400 ton/yr. Construction work will begin in October, 2005, with completion scheduled for November of the same year.

Applications of APEL™ range widely, centered at its use as an IT & electronics material going into pickup lenses for DVD drives taking advantage of the polymer's excellent optical characteristics. As for applications in the high-performance packaging materials area, the polymer's moisture-barrier characteristics is being exploited to make "press through packaging" (PTP) of medical pills, while the material's shrinkability is utilized in shrink films.

In the background of MCI's decision to boost capacity this time is the expected remarkable growth of APEL™ demand in the future at over 20 % per year, owing to the expansion of those markets.

And with a further rise in demand being projected based on an entire pipeline of newly developed applications, MCI is eyeing another significant capacity expansion for APEL™ by 2008.

In its current medium-term business plan, the company is aiming for expansion and growth in the Performance Materials Sector consisting of Functional Polymers, IT & Electronic Materials and Healthcare Materials businesses. Through the series of APEL™ capacity increases going forward, MCI is intent on expanding and growing APEL™ business as one of the mainstays of the Functional Polymers business.

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