

Competitive horizons

Brexit raises fears within UK auto industry

Record production, sales and revenues combined with strong job creation are current features of the UK car industry, a report published by www.theguardian.com notes. Moves to consolidate growth include plans to invest substantially in employment, machinery and product development over the next three years. However, the recent vote for Britain to leave the European Union (EU) has spawned considerable doubt and uncertainty across the sector. Carmakers and trade union body Unite alike firmly believe that reciprocal trading with EU countries is imperative if robust growth is to continue. According to the report, being able to freely access the single market and contribute to EU legislation are key factors in recent industry performance. It is likewise suggested that auto manufacturers will face a considerable skills shortage if deals emerging in the wake of Brexit prevent them recruiting talent from abroad. The EU is their largest export market and possible changes to the trading relationship are giving rise to various concerns including those relating to cost and ease of doing business.

Pakistan e-commerce set to grow

According to a report published by www.dawn.com, e-commerce in Pakistan is set to reach \$1bn by 2020. The country's broadband penetration rate and growth in the number of consumers using mobile banking provide the foundation for this claim. Strong financial and telecom sectors are likewise seen as a major plus. Intense government efforts to create an appropriate regulatory framework provide additional cause for optimism. Activities are being focused on laws pertaining to electronic transactions, cybercrime and consumer protection. The latter is recognized as being especially important for e-commerce to thrive. Pakistan's government also believes that the E-trade for all initiative launched by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development can provide valuable assistance to developing nations aiming to strengthen their e-commerce sector.

Expansion predicted for global bioplastics industry

A report from BCC Research claims that the bioplastics industry could reach around 6.1 billion metric tons worldwide by the end of the current decade. The market in the US is expected to account for 3.4 million metric tons, whereas a five-year compound annual growth rate of 29.7 per cent will see the market in Asia reach 1.4 million metric tons. In 2015, the entire global market for bioplastics was measured at 1.6 million metric tons. It is the view of the US-based research body that enhancements in technology are set to drive the sizeable growth anticipated. The report, as published by www.prw.com, points toward a growing trend of using technology to combine bioplastics with more traditional plastics that are oil-based. The resulting hybrid plastic is said to be considerably more resilient and thus able to be used in durable products such as cell phones and cars.

Cybersecurity risk fears for 3D printing

Concerns have been raised within the scientific community about potential security risks in the 3D printing industry. At present, 3D printing is worth \$4bn, and its value is projected to reach around \$16bn by 2020. Manufacturers will have scope to print goods as diverse as medicine, and cars and the industry has the potential to massively disrupt many traditional production techniques. According to a report published by www.financialexpress.com, printing orientation is one potential area for a cyberattack. Analysts believe that attackers could alter the printer head process and thus considerably weaken the strength of the printed product. In addition, the study claims that saboteurs could hack into a computer and introduce minute defects that normal monitoring processes are unable to identify. Eventual failure is likely because these defects will typically build up over time as the material becomes exposed to such as light, heat and humidity.