

Perspective

World Contracting News, Views & Comments

Submit your news for publication to Denise Anderson at danderson@bscai.org

ARGENTINA-BUENOS AIRES

Price Freezes Still In Effect

Prices frozen under accords signed with companies, business associations and chambers of industry to contain inflation, will remain in effect until the end of 2006 according to the Argentine Economy Ministry. There had been some speculation rising costs would lead businesses to seek changes to the accords but this probably will not happen.

BRAZIL-RIO DE JANEIRO

Brazil Tile Exports Up

Brazil has become the number two volume supplier of tile to the US, a position long held by Italy and Spain. According to the US International Trade Commission (ITC), the US imported 395 million square feet of tile from Brazil in 2004 and in 2005, 452 million square feet. Anfacer, the Brazilian association of ceramic tile manufacturers, estimates that tile exports to the US in 2005 represented 43.3 percent of all Brazilian exports. Factors in the growth include quality and design at competitive prices, a well-structured distribution system, a qualified labor pool and variety of product finishes, colors, and textures. Production is centered on floor tile with over three percent dedicated to porcelain. Brazil aims to be the second largest tile producer in the world, second only to China, within the next two years.

AUSTRALIA-MELBOURNE

Wallaby Milk-A Cure For MRSA?

During a clinical investigation using DNA testing aimed at improving the health benefits and efficacy of cows' milk, Australian researchers investigated milk from the Tamar wallaby, which they knew contained a lot of

protein, and discovered protein AGG01, which contains a wide spectrum of antimicrobial activity. The protein not only stopped bacteria from growing, like many other antimicrobials, but also killed 99% of it. It was found to be effective against E coli, streptococci, salmonella, candida and a relative of MRSA. Currently, scientists are attempting to create a synthetic compound of the protein. Estimates for the product to come to market are six years.

AUSTRALIA-MELBOURNE

Fungus Led To Deaths In ICU

Aspergillus fungus, which can be fatal to those with compromised immune systems, was discovered in Australia's leading cancer hospital, the Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre. Three patients being treated in the intensive care unit at the hospital were found to have died of the fungal infection. The unit was cleaned and tested after a patient died in May and the hospital checked against records of other patients treated in ICU this year and found two more patients also died while being treated there. Testing conducted after the cleaning has not revealed any sign of the fungus and the hospital claims that no link between the fungus and the deaths has been established. In the meantime, the hospital has also found traces of legionella bacteria in one of the building's three cooling towers.

AUSTRALIA-PERTH

Green Stamp Program Discussed

At the recent National Australian Buying Green Conference held in Perth, two speakers were invited to present papers on the Green Stamp program. In the following photo they are seen talking to Professor Yamamoto from Japan. The Green Stamp program was started about six years ago with MTA and after this quickly proved to be a big success, new Green Stamp programs were developed

for the cleaning and printing industries approximately three years ago. Developing a Green Stamp program is seen as a chance to work hand in hand with the Department of Environment and an opportunity to do the right thing internally—to stay ahead of regulations and not have legislation based on incorrect assumptions imposed upon industry—to be more proactive and in control. The program is based around helping businesses meet a number of industry specific, environmental criteria and when they do, they become Green Stamp accredited or certified and gain the right to promote themselves as such. Businesses are assessed on an annual basis against these criteria and are encouraged to not just meet the minimal standard required for accreditation but to embark on a journey of continuous improvement. The accreditation and verification process is seen as an important tool to provide assurance to the green buyer that a minimum standard of environmental management is being incorporated into the day-to-day practices of a business. The program is voluntary.



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Professor Ryoichi Yamamoto, President - International Green Purchasing Network, Japan
Clinton Scott - Green Stamp Coordinator
Peter Mulder - Leader Cleaning - a Green Stamp Certified Business.

point of GDP; (ii) reform of early retirement, by raising the eligibility age from 58 to 60 years and the minimum career length to 35 years; (iii) tightening job search requirements for older workers; (iv) strengthening training; and (v) a better accompaniment of laid-off workers, including bonuses for a rapid return to work. People working beyond age 60 will see their pensions topped up. The public sector will help lower youth unemployment by allowing more of its vacancies to be filled with first-time jobs. Taxes on labor are being reduced, and awareness is being built that wage moderation will be essential to preserve competitiveness. During 2002–10, the tax burden on labor is expected to be lowered by the equivalent of nearly 3 percentage points of GDP. With limited budgetary room, revenue is being raised from other sources. To ensure an effective decline in labor costs and import the wage moderation ongoing in trading partners, further tax cuts are to be made contingent on equivalent wage moderation. The staff and authorities agreed that the current level of competitiveness was adequate but should not be allowed to deteriorate. Social partners have been asked to discuss ways to claw back some of the expected competitiveness losses as a result of the implementation of the 2005–06 wage agreement. Labor unions agree with the need for structural reforms to boost competitiveness but anticipate difficulties in convincing their membership to moderate wage demands so soon after reforms of the early retirement regime, unless additional job creation can be guaranteed.

BELGIUM-BRUSSELS

Labor Reforms Help Economy

A recent IMF country report projects GDP growth for the Belgian economy to increase from 1.5 percent in 2005 to about 2.1 percent in 2006, marginally (0.1 percentage point) less than assumed in the 2006 budget. According to the report, the business environment is being made more attractive. To promote investment, a notional interest rate deduction has been introduced for equity capital and the associated costs of doing business in Belgium have declined from 3.4 percent of GDP in 2002 to 2.6 percent of GDP in 2004. The backlog of adopting EU directives has been eliminated. On overall product market regulation, Belgium is ahead of its neighbors and at the EU average following recent progress. As noted by the OECD, a further reduction in state control and barriers to entrepreneurship would be desirable. The country still struggles with the aging factor facing many European nations. Several measures have been put into place. A “Generation Pact” to boost employment of the young, low skilled, and older workers is one. The Pact, whose implementation starts in 2006, includes: (i) additional cuts in employers’ social security contributions targeted at young and older workers and shift and night work, for up to about a 0.4 percentage

CANADA-ONTARIO

Canada’s Outlook Favorable

A n IMF country report states Canada’s macroeconomic and policy performance has continued to exceed most other industrial countries and its outlook remains favorable. Employment continues to expand at a solid pace and the boom in energy prices has provided considerable support to domestic incomes, while taking the external current account surplus to a record high. Fiscal and monetary policy implementation in recent years has been enviable, underpinned by firm commitments to avoiding fiscal deficits and to an inflation target. Although the economy continues to face risks, including those related to the low household saving rate and a possible disorderly unwinding of global imbalances, growth is expected to remain at around its underlying potential of 3 percent through 2007, with inflation returning to the 2 percent target. The favorable domestic and external environment provides the new government an important opportunity to boost the economy’s long-term growth potential. Despite a robust expansion in recent years and unemployment dropping to a 31-year low, productivity growth has been less impressive. In addition to maintaining prudent fiscal and monetary policies and especially in the face of the coming retirement of the baby boom generation and global competition—there remains a

need to further improve the economy's flexibility. Although Canada has been among the fastest growing industrial countries in recent years, its productivity performance has been less stellar. Looking ahead, economic potential could be boosted by placing priority on the following areas: • Labor markets. There is a need for continuing to place priority on reducing welfare walls to improve labor participation among low income groups, amending immigration systems to help address skills shortages, and simplifying the recognition of occupational qualifications across provinces. Consideration could also be given to funding the Employment Insurance system's parental and other social benefits through general revenues, rather than the payroll tax, and to curbing extended regional benefits, in order to reduce the system's adverse effects on employment and economic efficiency. • Product markets. Sector-specific constraints and thresholds for review under the Investment Canada Act seem outmoded and may discourage foreign direct investment. Regulatory reform is also needed in the electricity sector, where productivity growth has been lower and markups higher than in many other industrial countries.

FRANCE-LASCAUX

Working To Save History

Workers at the famous Lascaux cave in southwestern France with its 17,000-year-old cave paintings, are battling mold, which threatens to destroy the ancient works of art. The mold, a fungus called *Fusarium solani*, appeared after a \$28,000 air conditioning system was installed in the cave 5 years ago to regulate the cave's climate. The fungus appeared to invade overnight. Much of the interior was covered with white filaments in mere days. Cleaners at first attempted to spray the mold with an alcohol solution of Vitalub, a common ammonium disinfectant, but this did not work. Restorers then tried to get rid of the mold by plastering bandages soaked in antibiotics to the walls of the cave and spreading tons of quicklime, on the cave floor. This appeared to bring the infestation under control. Chemicals are no longer used and workers dressed in biohazard suits, now enter the cave every two weeks and carefully pluck the filaments from the wall by hand. Authorities are still unsure if the treatments will be a permanent solution.

GERMANY-BERLIN

Settlement Reached With Verdi

Verdi, the German services union, reached a settlement with the German government regarding working hours and bargaining guarantees for 780,000 regional state workers. The settlement will address work weeks

of 38.5 to 40 hours and cuts in holiday and Christmas bonuses in exchange for acceptance of wage deals.

JAPAN-TOKYO

Economic Recovery Real This Time

According to bankers, economists and investors, the economic recovery experienced by Japan is here to stay. The only thing that can derail it is a collapse of the US economy. Japanese stock markets, real estate, consumer spending, corporate profits and economic growth are all trending upwards. Even a bit of inflation is seen as beneficial as it will stimulate the deflation the country has experienced over the past 15 years. GDP growth will be above normal at 1.5-2 percent through at least 2007. However, despite the rosy picture, there are some pressing issues such as tax reform, an overhaul of the pension and health care systems and the fastest aging population in the world, to address for Japan to stay the course.

NEW ZEALAND-WELLINGTON

Police Dump Security Firm After Breach

Wellington Police for years have used private security firm staff to monitor high-risk prisoners in order to free up police officers to deal with emergency calls. However, police have suspended a six month old contract with Specialised Guard Services Ltd (formerly First Contact Security), after it was discovered the firm supplied two staff with criminal convictions to monitor a prisoner. One of the security guards who was a gang member with a record, which included serious offenses against women, had been hired by the police to watch over a suicidal female inmate. The other had been convicted of dishonesty offenses. Police Minister Annette King said it was "totally inappropriate" for the Wellington company to provide guards who had not been properly vetted and is concerned that a reputable security firm sent two unlicensed male officers to monitor a high risk female prisoner. Police also employ temporary jailers to work in the cellblock during busy periods but full background checks and training is required.

SOUTH KOREA-SEOUL

Congress Just Four Months Away!

The Korea Association of Sanitary Maintenance (KASM) has changed its name to the Korea Association of Building Maintenance (KABM) as of the first of May. KABM is reminding everyone that the 16th WFBSC

2006 Seoul Congress is only four months away. The Congress will be held October 16-19th, 2006. KABM is requesting participation in the following: 1. Young Executive Award: US\$10,000 award- applications are still open with a simple submission of a paper less than 3,500 words. 2. Case Study for New & Niche market session: At least one case per country for introducing the successful New & Niche market development case to share among the Congress participants. 3. A company profile and CEO photo of a leading or large company per country to feature in a special edition of the biggest Korean Economic Newspaper, named "Mae Kyeong" in order to introduce the industry and WFBSC Congress. All the organizing committee members in Korea look forward to seeing all of you and your colleagues during the Seoul Congress.

SOUTH KOREA-SEOUL

Hospitals Show High Levels Of Contamination

Centrally-controlled ventilation, a method used in most of Korea's large hospitals, is likely to make the buildings more vulnerable to indoor air pollutants such as bacteria, molds and other biological contaminants as research conducted at two general hospitals in Seoul, both with over 500 beds, revealed. In a report released by Song Joo-hee, a researcher at the graduate school of public health at Seoul National University, the hospitals' wards showed an average of 1043.8 colony forming units (CFU), a measure of viable bacterial numbers per cubic meter of air of aerobic bacteria with particles smaller than 8 micrometers, between 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., when the facilities were most crowded. The acceptable threshold, set by the Ministry of Environment is 800 CFU. There was also a high level of mold contamination, ranging between 211 CFU and 288 CFU. The maximum allowable level established by the World Health Organization (WHO) for indoor mold contamination is 150 CFU.

SWEDEN-STOCKHOLM

Cutting Payroll Tax Proposed

The Alliance comprised of The Moderate Party, The Liberal Party, the Centre Party and the Christian Democrats, unveiled its budget proposal as a counter to the government's budget. The proposal aims to cut payroll taxes on service sector jobs, such as hotels, restaurants, garages, and cleaning companies, which will cost an estimated 3.5 billion kronor. The Alliance plans to meet the cost by reducing spending to 8 billion versus the 12 billion in the government budget. Also proposed are measures to tackle unemployment, measures to stimulate older people to stay at work for longer, measures to stimulate small and medium business growth and an end to the wealth tax. National elections are September 17.

TAIWAN-TAIPEI

Taiwan's Aging Problem

By 2014, those 65 years of age and older would account for 13 percent of the total population and would accelerate even faster after 2019, when the population as a whole is expected to decline. The rate of population growth would drop from 0.3 percent in 2006 to 0.03 percent in 2018. The working population (ages 15-64) is predicted to fall to 55 percent of the total population by 2051, resulting in 3.3 working-age people supporting one senior in 2026, and 1.5 supporting one senior by 2051. Currently the figure is 7.2 working age people supporting one senior. Officials are proposing several measures such as, creating a knowledge-based economy, raising the mandatory retirement age and developing incentives for parents to have children, to counter the problem.

THE NETHERLANDS-AMSTERDAM

Most Feel Unable To Work Until 65

According to Statistics Netherlands, about four in ten employees felt able to continue their current job until they reach the age of 65 in 2005 and only two in ten employees actually want to continue working until that age. Employees working in construction and in hotels and restaurants feel least able to continue their current job until the age of 65. In hotels and restaurants only two in ten employees feel they can continue work until they are 65. Four in ten employees regularly work under great time pressure. This is reported most by people working in the branches transport and communication, hotels and restaurants, and in financial and business services such as engineering, real estate sales, ICT, security, temporary employment agencies etc. Half of all employees also indicated that they almost always have too much work to do. This is mentioned more often in education, financial services, government and the manufacturing industry than in the branches.

UK-BIRMINGHAM

MRSA Free Clinical Unit Unveiled

In a trial to make a medical unit MRSA free, every surface, from door handles and cubicle curtains to light switches and hand rails, has been built with an anti-microbial powder containing silver ions, which will prevent the spread of infectious diseases. Bacteria is unable to grow and reproduce after a chemical reaction with the silver, and the powder has been

proven to be 99.9 per cent effective in beating MRSA, ecoli and salmonella. The unit, comprised of five consulting rooms, a lab, kitchen, meeting room, patient lounge and a nurses' office, cost 130,000 pounds and if successful, could be introduced across the Heart of England NHS Foundation Trust.

UK-LIVERPOOL

Second Buy-Out For Outsourcing Firm

One of the UK's biggest independent outsourcing companies for facility and property management has been restructured a second time. Integral Services, headquartered in Bristol, originally owned by Guinness Peat Group, was purchased by Barclays Ventures. Now a second MBO for 13 million by Lloyds TSB has paid off, doubling Barclay's investment. The company, which employs more than 2,000 staff in 12 locations, has a 900-vehicle mobile maintenance fleet, around 400 clients and offers customers a two-hour response time anywhere on the UK mainland. Turnover is set to exceed pounds 130m this year.

UK-LONDON

Celebrating 20 Years of Success

Cannon Hygiene, the UK's leading washroom and environmental specialists, is celebrating after its wholly owned subsidiary, Cannon Portugal, reached its 20th anniversary of trading.

Cannon's Portuguese operation began on 18th March 1986 when its first customer signed up to Cannon's innovative sanitary unit rental service. Heralding from Cascais, just outside of Lisbon, the customer – who today still has a sanitary unit from Cannon – received a commemorative plate from Chris Cracknell, OCS chief executive, at a formal dinner on 18th March 2006 at the Estoril Eden hotel. Beginning with a solitary employee, Cannon Portugal now employs over 100 staff operating from



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OCS Chief Executive Chris Cracknell,
Cannon Portugal MD Henrique
Vasconcellos Dias
Cannon MD Oliver Weisflog

a national branch network, servicing over 5,000 customers across Portugal, as well as customers in the Azores islands in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean. Cannon Portugal's size and delivery has grown alongside Cannon Hygiene as a whole, who celebrated their 50th anniversary in the UK earlier last year. Cannon Hygiene managing director, Oliver Weisflog welcomed the anniversary, saying: "I am very happy to see the continued success of Cannon Portugal. Reaching this landmark is a great achievement, and credit must be paid to Cannon Portugal managing director Henrique Vasconcellos Dias and all those at Cannon Portugal, whose efforts have made this success possible." "The success of Cannon across the world is something we all can be proud of and it is further testament to the universal standards of quality that Cannon sets itself. I look forward to further years of success for Cannon - in Portugal and across the world as a whole."

UK-LONDON

Rentokil Sells Last Security Unit

RENTOKIL Initial has left the security industry with the sale of its US manned guarding business for GBP 40million. The company wants to concentrate on pest control and office services.

UK-LONDON

Many Companies Affected By Water Crisis

The water crisis in the UK is not only affecting residences and companies offering water related cleaning services such as car washes, but those companies offering equipment for sale to the affected companies as well.

Omnipole, a manufacturer of long-reach telescopic poles for window cleaners, has seen a 15 percent drop in turnover when previously, turnover had been doubling every year.

US-ARKANSAS

Wal-Mart Settlement Has Repercussions For Employers

The settlement between Wal-Mart Stores, Inc., the world's largest retailer, and the federal government represents a significant change from past business practices when it comes to hiring independent contractors and subcontractors.

tors. The \$11 million civil settlement with Wal-Mart and the \$4 million in criminal fines paid by the 12 contractors who supplied janitorial services to the retailer, are the most significant enforcement actions taken by the U.S. in the field of immigration employment sanctions since the enactment of The Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 (IRCA), which prohibits the hiring of illegal aliens. In addition, Wal-Mart will provide training to store managers on hiring practices and will also be required to verify that any independent contractors it uses are complying with immigration laws in their employment practices. This is significant in that employers will no longer be allowed to 'hide behind' subcontractors but instead will be held responsible for immigration law violations of those contractors they use to conduct their business. The case establishes greater responsibility on the part of the employer and the need to be more vigilant about complying with immigration laws.

US-ILLINOIS

Record Number Of M&A Transactions

Robert W. Baird & Co. reports that 2005 saw a \$20 billion in global M&A transactions in the facility services industry, of which \$9.4 billion occurred in the US. Over the past ten years, over 3,000 global Mergers and Acquisitions in the sector took place. The trend for consolidation will continue in 2006, fueled by a growing market (\$200 for facility services in the US alone) and outsourcing.

US-WASHINGTON, DC

The Number Of Undocumented Workers Is Increasing

A study released by the Pew Hispanic Center shows that illegal immigrants make up 5 percent of the US labor force. Of the 7.2 million employed, more than 2.5 million, or 35 percent, have been in the country five years or less. And the numbers of undocumented immigrants keep on growing – by over 400,000 last year – to between 11.5 and 12 million. Most of the immigrants come from Mexico (56 percent) and Latin America (22 percent) although the numbers of immigrants from South and East Asia are steadily increasing. Those employed are mainly in the construction and service industries with approximately 17 percent holding jobs in the cleaning sector.

CORPORATE MEMBER NEWS

Ecolab

Ecolab Inc. announced that it has purchased Shield Medicare Ltd. Shield, based in Farnham, United Kingdom, is a leading European developer, manufacturer and marketer of contamination control products used in pharmaceutical, medical device and hospital clean rooms. It has sales of approximately \$19 million. No further details regarding the transaction were announced.

JohnsonDiversey

JohnsonDiversey Inc. announced it will stop formulating and manufacturing products with alkylphenol ethoxydates (APEOs), which been associated with harmful effects in the environment and may have harmful effects on humans, after December 31, 2006. JohnsonDiversey began phasing APEOs out of products several years ago and currently, uses APEOs in limited quantities in laundry, warewashing, hard-surface cleaners and floor-care products. The announcement was made in conjunction with the launch of the EPA's Safer Detergents Stewardship Initiative. SDSI is designed to protect aquatic life, according to Clive Davies, director of EPA's Design for the Environment (DfE) program, which organized the initiative.

UPCOMING EVENTS

16th Congress of the World Federation of Building Service Contractors

Seoul, Korea
October 16-19, 2006

Visit the WFBCS website at www.wfbc.org and the website at www.wfbc2006.org for more information.

BSCAI Annual Convention and Trade Show

Chicago, IL
April 13-17, 2007

Visit the BSCAI website at www.bscai.org for more information or call 703-359-7090.



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www.huskyces.com

Intersoft Software Solutions-
Amsterdam, The Netherlands
+31 20 5811977
www.intersoftsoftware.com

Johnson Diversey -
Sturtevant, WI
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Karcher Canada, Inc. -
Mississauga, ON
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Wood Wyant, Inc.-Laval, QC
450-680-9731
www.woodwyant.ca

WFBC MEMBER ASSOCIATIONS

Algemene Belgische
Schoomaakunie-Union
Generale Belge du Nettoyage
Brussels, Belgium
Hilde Engels-ABSU.UGBN@skynet.be

Fise
Roma, Italy
Francesco Tiriolo

Association de Empresas de Limpieza
Buenos Aires, Argentina
Norberto Peluso-correo@limpiolux.com.ar

Associacao de Empress de Prestacao de Servicos de Limpeza
E Activades Similares
Lisboa, Portugal
Jose De Moura-aepsilas@mail.telepac.pt

Building Service Contractors Association of Australia
Crows Nest, NSW, Australia
Rick MacKenzie-rmackenzie@bscaa.asn.au

Quebec Building Service Contractors Association, Inc.
Montreal, Quebec, Canada
Roger Gauthier-fortier.gauthier@sympatico.ca

Building Service Contractors Association International
Fairfax, Virginia, USA
Carol Dean-cdean@bscai.org

Association of Housekeeping Agencies
Nocia, U.P., India
Anil Sethi-anirupa@del2.vsnl.net.in

Building Service Contractors of New Zealand, Inc.
Auckland, New Zealand
Marja Verkerk-info@bsc.org.nz

Bundesinnungsverband des Gebaedereiniger-Handwerks
Bonn, Germany
Johannes Bungart RA-biv@gebaeudereiniger.de

Cleaning and Support Services Association
London, United Kingdom
Martyn Vesey-mvesey@cleaningassoc.org

Febrac
Brasilia, Distrito Federal, Brazil
Silvio Gaspar-silviojgaspar@upsbeneficios.com.br

Building Managers Association of the Republic of China
Taipei, Taiwan
Kenneth Kao-pacifico@ms37.binet.net

Federation des Entreprises de Proprete
Paris, France
Carol Sintes-csintes@federation-proprete.com

Japan Building Maintenance Association
Tokyo, Japan
Keizo Kozen-kozen@j-bma.or.jp

Korean Association of Sanitary Maintenance
Seoul, Korea
Young Hoi,Um-kasm@kasm.or.kr

OSB
Hertogenbosch, The Netherlands
info@osb.nl

Sveriges Stadentrepenores Forbund
Stockholm, Sweden
Lars Friberg-ivy.bermanson@almega.se