

TITLE OF THE INVENTION

PROCESS FOR PREPARING DIALKYLNAPHTHALENE

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

This invention relates to a process for preparing alkylnaphthalene, and particularly to a method for preparing 2,6-dimethylnaphthalene (DMN) from naphthalene with an alkylating agent by using catalysts in both transalkylation and isomerization of DMN, as well as in alkylation of monomethylnaphthalene (MMN). This process is hereinafter described specifically by the preparation of 2,6-DMN, however, this process can be extensible to any dialkylnaphthalene.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

The compound 2,6-DMN is used as a precursor of 2,6-naphthalenedicarboxylic acid in the manufacture of polyethylenenaphthalate resins, because 2,6-DMN is easily oxidized to 2,6-naphthalenedicarboxylic acid compared with other precursors such as 2,6-diisopropylnaphthalene or 2-methyl-6-isobutyrylnaphthalenes.

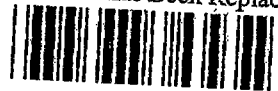
There are a lot of proposal concerning the process for preparing the 2,6-DMN.

U.S. Pat. No. 4,795,847 (Weitkamp et al.) describes a process for the preparation of 2,6-dialkylnaphthalene by alkylating naphthalene or 2-alkyl-naphthalene with an alkylating agent in the presence of a zeolite (specifically ZSM-5) as a catalyst.

U.S. Pat. No. 5,001,295 (Angevine et al.) describes a process for preparing DMN by using 2-MMN and naphthalene as a feedstock and a synthetic zeolite (MCM-22) as a catalyst, and it shows MCM-22 is more effective than ZSM-5 in alkylation of 2-MMN and naphthalene.

However these conventional arts provide only unit operation for alkylation of 2-MMN, which is an expensive feedstock and is not available in a large amount commercially. In addition, there is no description concerning how to use the DMN mixture (2,6-poor-DMN) after separation of 2,6-DMN, and the productivity of 2,6-DMN is not sufficient for mass production.

REPLACED SHEETS		SG
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To increase the productivity of 2,6-DMN, it is preferable to utilize and isomerize 2,6-poor-DMN to enrich 2,6-DMN in DMN isomers.

In order to utilize the 2,6-poor-DMN isomers effectively, Japanese Patent Laid-Open No.4-1142 shows a process to recycle the 2,6-poor-DMN isomers for isomerization, and combines transalkylation between the 2,6-poor-DMN isomers with naphthalene to produce MMN. Produced MMN is alkylated with an alkylating agent to produce DMN.

This process consists of 5 steps (1) ~ (5) ;

- (1) 1st step (transalkylation and isomerization based on a modified ZSM-5 as a catalyst)
 - $\text{DMN} + \text{NL} \rightarrow \text{MMN}$
 - $\text{DMN filtrate} \rightarrow \text{2,6-rich-DMN isomers}$
- (2) 2nd step (separation of the product of the 1st step into naphthalene, MMN and DMN by distillation)
- (3) 3rd step (methylation of MMN using methylating agent to produce DMN)
 - $\text{MMN} + \text{methyl unit} \rightarrow \text{DMN}$
- (4) 4th step (separation of the product of the 3rd step into MMN and DMN by distillation)
- (5) 5th step (separation of 2,6-DMN from the DMN mixture of the second step and the 4th step by cooling crystallization)

According to the process, 2,6-poor-DMN isomers can be enriched to 2,6-DMN at least to some extent. However yield of 2,6-DMN is still low.

The reasons of low yield of 2,6-DMN in the conventional process is considered to be based on the following two difficulties.

* difficulty of the effective isomerization

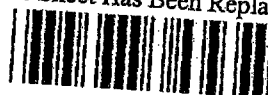
Ten isomers of DMN can be categorized into the following four groups (i) ~ (iv).

(i) $1,4\text{-DMN} \Leftrightarrow 1,3\text{-DMN} \Leftrightarrow 2,3\text{-DMN}$

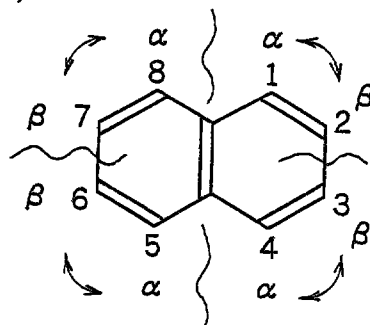
(ii) $1,5\text{-DMN} \Leftrightarrow 1,6\text{-DMN} \Leftrightarrow 2,6\text{-DMN}$

(iii) $1,8\text{-DMN} \Leftrightarrow 1,7\text{-DMN} \Leftrightarrow 2,7\text{-DMN}$

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(iv) 1,2-DMN



Isomerization within each groups is easily proceeded, however the isomerization beyond three groups is very difficult to be carried out. Specifically, the polarity of the naphthalene molecule allows the methyl-transition between α -position and β -position (e.g. 1,5-DMN $\leftrightarrow$ 1,6-DMN), however transition between β -position and β -position (e.g. 2,6-DMN $\leftrightarrow$ 2,7-DMN) within the ring is not easily allowed. Therefore, isomerization of 2,6-poor-DMN isomers is not effective to enrich 2,6-DMN. In the above-mentioned Japanese Patent Laid-Open No. 4-1142, low catalyst performance in the transalkylation and the alkylation causes the low separation yield of 2,6-DMN from DMN isomers.

Therefore, it is very important to use a catalyst which has high selectivity of 2,6-DMN in isomerization.

*difficulty in separation of 2,6-DMN from DMN isomers

Furthermore it is very difficult to separate 2,6-DMN from other isomers by conventional separation methods such as distillation or cooling crystallization owing to the presense of 2,7-DMN.

In distillation, 2,6-DMN and 2,7-DMN can not be separated from each other because the difference in boiling point between 2,6-DMN and 2,7-DMN is only 0.3 °C.

As for the cooling crystallization, since 2,6-DMN and 2,7-DMN form an eutectic crystal at the weight ratio of 0.7(= 2,6- DMN / 2,7-DMN) only a low yield of 2,6-DMN is achieved. For example, according to the above-mentioned Japanese Patent Laid-Open No. 4-1142, the ratio of 2,6-DMN/2,7-DMN is 1.0. Therefore, the yield of 2,6-DMN is not high.

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Consequently it is very important to increase the ratio of 2,6-DMN/2,7-DMN for a higher yeild of 2,6-DMN.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention has been made in view of the foregoing situation and it intends to provide a process for preparing useful alkylnahthalene such as 2,6-DMN at a high yield.

Provided herein is a process for producing alkylnaphthalene from a feedstock comprising isomers of dialkylnaphthalene and naphthalene by contacting said feedstock with a catalyst composition, said process consisting essentially of transalkylation between isomers of dialkylnaphthalene and naphthalene to produce monoalkylnaphthalene, and isomerization of dialkylnaphthalene, wherein said catalyst composition comprising a synthetic zeolite characterized by an X-ray diffraction pattern including interplanar d-spacing as set forth in Table A.

[Table A]

interplanar d-spacing (Å)	relative intensity $I/I_0 \times 100$
12.36 $\pm$ 0.4	M-VS
11.03 $\pm$ 0.2	M-S
8.83 $\pm$ 0.14	M-VS
6.18 $\pm$ 0.12	M-VS
6.00 $\pm$ 0.10	W-M
4.06 $\pm$ 0.07	W-S
3.91 $\pm$ 0.07	M-VS
3.42 $\pm$ 0.06	VS

*The relative intensities are given in terms of the symbols;
W=weak, M=medium, S=strong, VS=very strong.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DRAWING

FIG.1 is a schematic diagram to show a preferable process of the present invention.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

The present inventors have made earnest studies to increase the yield

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of 2,6-DMN, and as a result, have accomplished the present invention based on the finding that the ratio of 2,6-DMN/2,7-DMN can be increased more than 1.2 by employing a particular catalyst in reaction such as alkylation, transalkylation and isomerization to enrich 2,6-DMN in DMN isomers.

The particular catalyst is a zeolite which comprises a synthetic porous crystalline material characterized by an X-ray diffraction pattern including interplanar d-spacing can be set forth in the Table A.

The zeolite is known as MCM-22 and the entire contents of U.S. Patent No. 5,001,295 are incorporated herein by reference.

Conditions of transalkylation and isomerization in step I include a temperature of between about 0 to 500 °C, and preferably between 200 and 450 °C, and a pressure of between 0 to 250 atmospheres and preferably between 1 to 25 atmospheres. The mole ratio of naphthalene to DMN can be from about 10:1 to 1:10 and preferably can be from 5:1 to 1:5. The reaction is suitably accomplished utilizing a feed space velocity of between about 0.1 to 10.0 hr⁻¹.

In the transalkylation and isomerization of the present invention, 2,6-poor-DMN which contains less than 11 weight % of 2,6-DMN in the isomers is preferred as isomers of DMN in the feedstock, more preferably content of 2,6-DMN is less than 9 %.

As mentioned above, a high ratio of 2,6-DMN / 2,7-DMN is required to obtain high yield of 2,6-DMN. According to the present invention, the ratio of 2,6-DMN / 2,7-DMN can be more than 1.2 in step I and can be more than 1.1 in step III.

Further, the performance of catalyst in isomerization can be evaluated by a molar ratio of 2,6-DMN content in total DMN after isomerization against 2,6-DMN content in total DMN before isomerization. According to the present invention, this ratio can be more than 1.5.

By the way, the ratio between 2-MMN and 1-MMN is desired to be as high as possible because higher 2-MMN / 1-MMN ratio gives higher 2,6-DMN yield at alkylation. Theoretically the ratio is said to be around 2.2, however, it is



difficult to achieve such a high ratio in the conventional process. According to the present invention, the ratio can be more than 2.0 in the transalkylation and isomerization by using MCM-22.

The present invention also provides a process for producing DMN from a feedstock comprising MMN and an alkylating agent with the catalyst MCM-22, and MMN of the feedstock is the separated MMN of the product by the transalkylation and isomerization. In this alkylation, the molar ratio of 2,6-dialkylnaphthalene / 2,7-dialkylnaphthalene of the alkylated product can be more than 1.1.

Furthermore, the present invention provides a process for producing 2,6-DMN from a feedstock comprising isomers of DMN and naphthalene by contacting the feedstock with the catalyst MCM-22, comprising

- step I [step for transalkylation between isomers of DMN and naphthalene to produce MMN, and isomerization of DMN],
- step II [step for separation of the product in said step I into naphthalene, MMN, DMN and other components],
- step III [step for alkylation of MMN fraction from step II using alkylating agent to produce DMN],
- step IV [step for separation of the product in said step III into MMN and DMN],
- step V, [step for separation of 2,6-DMN from mixture of DMN fraction in said step II and said step IV].

In this process, as illustrated in Fig. 1, naphthalene fraction in step II is recycled to step I, MMN fraction in step IV is recycled to step III, DMN fraction after 2,6-DMN is separated therefrom in step V is recycled to step I.

As a method for separation of step II or step IV, distillation can be employed. To make this system simpler, step II and step IV can be combined as a single step by recycling the product of step III to step II.

As for separation of step V, any method for separation of isomers such as



cooling crystallization or adsorption can be used. However, to obtain high yield of 2,6-DMN, High Pressure Crystallization is preferable.

Preferred alkylating agents include alcohols, olefins, aldehydes, halides, and ethers, such as methanol, dimethylether, polyalkylbenzene. Especially preferred is methanol.

The alkylation can be carried out in any of the known reactors usually employed for alkylation. For example, a tubular reactor with a downflow of reactants over a fixed bed of catalyst can be employed.

The present invention will now be explained referring to examples.

Example 1 (transalkylation and isomerization)

30 grams of MCM-22 (1/4"D x 3/8"L, cylindrical pellet) are charged in a tubular reactor (volume: 122cc). The reactor was heated from room temperature to 400°C at the rate of 100 °C/hr over introducing nitrogen gas into the reactor at atmospheric pressure.

As a feedstock for transalkylation and isomerization, isomers of DMN and naphthalene were used for mixing DMN and naphthalene by 1:1 at molar ratio. Weight % of isomers of DMN is shown in Table 1.

[Table 1] (feedstock)

component	weight %
dimethylnaphthalene	99.70
2, 6 - DMN	6.21
2, 7 - DMN	8.63
other isomers	84.86
monomethylnaphthalene	0.30
2 - MMN	0.17
1 - MMN	0.13

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The feedstock was introduced into the reactor at the rate of 30g/hr for 8 hours, and obtained product was analyzed by gas chromatography. The result of the product is shown in Table 2 with the component of the reactant.

[Table 2] (transalkylation and isomerization)

component (wt %)		before reaction	after reaction
*	dimethylnaphthalene	53.19	39.41
	2, 6 - DMN	3.30	6.65
	2, 7 - DMN	4.59	4.59
	other isomers	45.30	28.17
*	monomethylnaphthalene	0.10	17.59
	2 - MMN	0.01	12.16
	1 - MMN	0.09	5.43
*	naphthalene	46.71	38.15
*	other component	0	4.85
evaluation		before reaction	after reaction
2,6-DMN / total DMN (%)		6.2 ---①	16.9 ---②
2,6-DMN / 2,7-DMN		0.72	1.45
content of 2,6-DMN (after/before) : @1		—	2.73
NL conversion (%)		—	18.3
DMN conversion (%)		—	25.9
produced MMN / (converted DMN × 2) : @2		—	0.70
2-MMN / 1-MMN		—	2.23

(note) @1 in the table means a ratio of ②/① in 2,6-DMN / total DMN.
 @2 is calculated on molar basis.

As can be seen from Table 2, the ratio of 2,6-DMN / 2,7-DMN is over 1.2 and the ratio of 2-MMN/ 1-MMN is over 2.0.

Example 2 (transalkylation and isomerization)

The same experiment with Example 1 except the molar ratio between DMN and naphthalene is 5:1 was carried out. The result of the product is shown in Table 3 with the component of the reactant.

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[Table 3] (transalkylation and isomerization)

component (wt %)		before reaction	after reaction
*	dimethylnaphthalene	84.37	65.91
	2, 6-DMN	5.22	11.39
	2, 7-DMN	7.28	7.42
	other isomers	71.87	47.10
*	monomethylnaphthalene	0.17	13.81
	2-MMN	0.02	9.54
	1-MMN	0.15	4.27
*	naphthalene	15.46	12.65
*	other component	0	7.63
evaluation		before reaction	after reaction
2,6-DMN / total DMN (%)		6.2 ---①	17.3 ---②
2,6-DMN / 2,7-DMN		0.72	1.53
content of 2,6-DMN (after/before) : @1		—	2.79
NL conversion (%)		—	18.2
DMN conversion (%)		—	21.9
produced MMN / (converted DMN × 2) : @2		—	0.41
2-MMN / 1-MMN		—	2.23

(note) @1 in the table means a ratio of ②/① in 2,6-DMN / total DMN.
 @2 is calculated on molar basis.

As can be seen from Table 3, the ratio of 2,6-DMN / 2,7-DMN is over 1.2 and the ratio of 2-MMN / 1-MMN is over 2.0.

Example 3 (alkylation)

153 grams of MCM-22 were charged in the tubular reactor (volume:370cc).

As a feedstock for alkylation, 1-MMN (purity 95.5%) and 2-MMN (purity 96.6%) were used, and mixed at the molar ratio of 2.2 of 2-MMN/1-MMN. Feedstock was supplied in the reactor (350°C) at the rate of 76.7g/hr for 4 hours. Thereafter, methanol was started to be supplied in the reactor at the rate of 17.3g/hr and the reaction was proceeded for 20 hours. The obtained product was analyzed by gas chromatography, and the result is summarized in Table 4.

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[Table 4] (alkylation)

component (wt %)		before reaction	after reaction
*	dimethylnaphthalene	0	35.45
	2, 6-DMN	0	5.12
	2, 7-DMN	0	4.44
	other isomers	0	25.89
*	monomethylnaphthalene	98.66	41.16
	2-MMN	67.61	28.84
	1-MMN	31.05	12.32
*	naphthalene	0	0.19
*	other component	1.53	23.20
evaluation		before reaction	after reaction
2-MMN/ 1-MMN		2.2	2.3
MN conversion (%)		—	58.28
2,6-DMN / total DMN (%)		—	14.45
2,6-DMN / 2,7-DMN		—	1.16

As can be seen from Table 4, the ratio of 2,6-DMN / 2,7-DMN is over 1.1 and the ratio of 2-MMN/ 1-MMN is over 2.0.

Example 4 (alkylation)

153 grams of MCM-22 were charged in the tubular reactor (volume:370cc). The same feedstock as in Example 3 was used. Feedstock was supplied in the reactor (400 °C) at the rate of 153.4 g/hr for 4 hours. Thereafter, methanol was started to be supplied in the reactor at the rate of 17.3g/hr and the reaction proceeded for 20 hours. The obtained product was analyzed by gas chromatography, and the result is summarized in Table 5.

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[Table 5] (alkylation)

component (wt %)		before reaction	after reaction
*	dimethylnaphthalene	0	5.05
	2, 6 - DMN	0	0.52
	2, 7 - DMN	0	0.37
	other isomers	0	4.16
*	monomethylnaphthalene	98.66	89.01
	2 - MMN	67.61	59.84
	1 - MMN	31.05	29.17
*	naphthalene	0	0
*	other component	1.53	6.93
evaluation		before reaction	after reaction
2-MMN/ 1-MMN		2.2	2.1
MN conversion (%)		—	9.78
2,6-DMN / total DMN (%)		—	10.37
2,6-DMN / 2,7-DMN		—	1.42

As can be seen from Table 5, the ratio of 2,6-DMN / 2,7-DMN is over 1.1 and the ratio of 2-MMN/ 1-MMN is over 2.0.

Example 5 (separation)

(1) high pressure crystallization

2,636 grams of DMN isomers were supplied into the high pressure crystallizer (KOBELCO 3L type), and separated 396 grams of 2,6-DMN crystals (purity 92%) at the condition of 2000 kgf/cm² and 45°C.

(2) cooling crystallization

Using vessel for crystallization (3 litter), 1,980g of DMN isomers was cooled quickly from 50°C to 40°C over stirring slowly. Then, 0.5 grams of seed crystal was charged and kept the temperature at 40°C for an hour. Thereupon, the feedstock was cooled to 10 °C at 2 °C/min. 29.7 grams of 2,6-DMN crystals (purity 80%) was separated by filtration under pressure.

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The results of separation by both of high pressure crystallization and cooling crystallization were summarized in Table 6.

[Table 6] (separation)

HIGH PRESSURE CRYSTALLIZATION				
component (grams)		before crystallization	crystal	filtrate
	2, 6 - DMN	528	364	164
	2, 7 - DMN	405	32	373
	other DMN	1,703	0	1,703
	TOTAL	2,636	396	2,240
2,6-DMN / 2,7-DMN		1.3		0.4
2,6-DMN / total DMN		20.0		7.3
purity of crystal		—	92%	—
recovery of 2,6-DMN		—	69%	—
yield of 2,6-DMN		—	13.8%	—
COOLING CRYSTALLIZATION				
component (grams)		before reaction crystallization	crystal	filtrate
	2, 6 - DMN	396	237.6	158.4
	2, 7 - DMN	305	59.4	245.6
	other DMN	1,286		1,286
	TOTAL	1,987	297	1,690
2,6-DMN / 2,7-DMN		1.3		0.6
2,6-DMN / total DMN		19.9		9.4
purity of crystal		—	80%	—
recovery of 2,6-DMN		—	60%	—
yield of 2,6-DMN		—	11.9%	—

(note) - "recovery of 2,6-DMN" means the rate of 2,6-DMN content in crystal against of 2,6-DMN content in feedstock.

- "yield of 2,6-DMN" means the rate of 2,6-DMN content in crystal against of total weight of feedstock.

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As shown in Table 6, yield of 2,6-DMN by high pressure crystallization is much higher than by cooling crystallization. Further, 2,6-DMN / total-DMN of the filtrate by high pressure crystallization is less than 8%. Therefore, the filtrate is more effective as a feedstock for trasalkylation and isomerization of 2,6-poor-DMN. Furthermore, when the purity of crystal was tried to increase in cooling crystallization, the yield of 2,6-DMN was lowered drastically.

As described above, according to the present invention, the yield of 2,6-DMN can be increased compared with conventional processes. An obtained 2,6-DMN can be used in a process of preparing a polyethylenenaphthalate polymer by steps of oxidizing 2,6-DMN to form 2,6-naphthalene-dicarboxylic acid, or oxidizing and esterifying 2,6-DMN to form ester of 2,6-naphthalene-dicarboxylic acid, and condensing said 2,6-naphthalene-dicarboxylic acid or ester thereof with ethyleneglycol to form the polyethylenenaphthalate polymer.

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What is claimed is:

1. A process for producing alkylnaphthalene from a feedstock comprising isomers of dialkylnaphthalene and naphthalene by contacting said feedstock with a catalyst composition, said process comprising

transalkylation between isomers of dialkylnaphthalene and naphthalene to produce monoalkylnaphthalene, and

isomerization of dialkylnaphthalene,

wherein said catalyst composition comprising a synthetic zeolite characterized by an X-ray diffraction pattern including interplanar d-spacing as set forth in Table A of the specification.

2. A process for producing alkylnaphthalene as defined in claim 1,

wherein said isomers of dialkylnaphthalene in the feedstock is 2,6-poor-dialkylnaphthalene which contains less than 11 weight % of 2,6-dialkylnaphthalene in said isomers.

3. A process for producing alkylnaphthalene as defined in claim 1 or 2,

wherein a molar ratio of 2-monoalkylnaphthalene / 1-monoalkylnaphthalene of the product is more than 2.0.

4. A process for producing alkylnaphthalene as defined in claim 1 or 2,

wherein a molar ratio of 2,6-dialkylnaphthalene / 2,7-dialkylnaphthalene of the product is more than 1.2.

5. A process for producing alkylnaphthalene as defined in claim 1 or 2, wherein a molar ratio of 2,6-dialkylnaphthalene content in total dialkylnaphthalene after isomerization against 2,6-dialkylnaphthalene content in total dialkylnaphthalene before isomerization is more than 1.5.



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6. A process for producing dialkylnaphthalene from a feedstock comprising monoalkylnaphthalene and an alkylating agent, said process consisting essentially of

contacting said feedstock with a catalyst composition under alkylation condition to produce an alkylate containing 2,6-dialkylnaphthalene,

said catalyst composition comprising a synthetic zeolite characterized by an X-ray diffraction pattern including interplanar d-spacing as set forth in Table A of the specification,

and monoalkylnaphthalene of the feedstock is the separated monoalkylnaphthalene of the product by the process as defined in claim 1 or 2.

7. A process for producing dialkylnaphthalene as defined in claim 6,

wherein a molar ratio of 2,6-dialkylnaphthalene / 2,7-dialkylnaphthalene of the product is more than 1.1.

8. A process for producing 2,6-dialkylnaphthalene from a feedstock comprising isomers of dialkylnaphthalene and naphthalene comprising the following steps:

I. transalkylation between isomers of dialkylnaphthalene and naphthalene to produce monoalkylnaphthalene, and isomerization of dialkylnaphthalene,

II. separation of the product from said step I into naphthalene, monoalkylnaphthalene and dialkylnaphthalene,

III. alkylation of monoalkylnaphthalene fraction from step II with an alkylating agent to produce dialkylnaphthalene,

IV. separation of the product from said step III into monoalkylnaphthalene and dialkylnaphthalene, and

V. separation of 2,6-dialkylnaphthalene from mixture of dialkylnaphthalene fraction in said step II and said step IV,

wherein steps I and III are conducted in the presence of a catalyst composition comprising a synthetic zeolite characterized by an X-ray diffraction pattern



including interplanar d-spacing as set forth in Table A of the specification.

9. A process for producing 2,6-dialkylnaphthalene as defined in claim 8, wherein naphthalene fraction in step II is recycled to step I, monoalkylnaphthalene fraction in step IV is recycled to step III, dialkylnaphthalene fraction after separated 2,6-dialkylnaphthalene therefrom in step V is recycled to step I.

10. A process for producing 2,6-dialkylnaphthalene as defined in claim 8 or 9,

wherein 2,6-dialkylnaphthalene is separated from dialkylnaphthalene fraction by High Pressure Crystallization.

11. A process for producing 2,6-dialkylnaphthalene as defined in claim 8 and 9, wherein dialkylnaphthalene is dimethylnaphthalene, monoalkylnaphthalene is monomethylnaphthalene.

12. A process of preparing a polyethylenenaphthalate polymer comprising:

A) oxidizing 2,6-dialkylnaphthalene to form 2,6-naphthalene-dicarboxylic acid, or oxidizing and esterifying 2,6-DMN to form ester of 2,6-naphthalene-dicarboxylic acid; and

B) condensing said 2,6-naphthalene-dicarboxylic acid or ester thereof with ethyleneglycol to form a polyethylenenaphthalate polymer

wherein said 2,6-dialkylnaphthalene is produced by the process as defined in claim 8 or 9.



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