

Business Briefs

Science Research

Princeton sets new world fusion record

The Tokamak Fusion Test Reactor (TFTR) at the Princeton Plasma Physics Laboratory (PPPL) in New Jersey produced 10.7 megawatts of power on Nov. 2, setting a new world record. The previous record was 9 MW set last May. The fusion energy produced in a one-second burst was powered by an input of nearly 30 megawatts.

PPPL Director Ronald Davidson said that "the TFTR team has demonstrated successful use of practical fusion fuels, exceeded fusion power goals, and reached world-record temperatures," in a press release on Nov. 7.

The TFTR uses a 50-50 mixture of deuterium (D) and tritium (T), two forms for hydrogen, as fuel. Although there are other fusion fuels which have different advantages, D-T fuel releases more energy at lower temperatures than D-D or D-helium-3, for example. The TFTR was designed in 1976 to produce 10 megawatts. The test program was to have been ended in September, but the Department of Energy provided funding this year to extend the program for six months.

Middle East

Nations targeted for gambling, liberalization

Gambling is being pushed on Israel at the same time that the International Monetary Fund (IMF) is urging nations throughout the Middle East to liberalize their economies. The initiatives are directly at odds with attempts to build up the physical infrastructure in the region, e.g., canals, water and energy projects, ports.

According to William Eadington, director of the University of Nevada's Institute for the Study of Gambling, Israel could become a major gambling center for the Middle East, generating up to \$1 billion a year. "There is an absence of gambling casinos in this part of the world," Eadington said at an international business conference on Nov. 6 in Jerusalem. The conference, the third of its kind, for the

first time was attended by businessmen from Arab countries such as Tunisia, Morocco, Jordan, and Kuwait.

According to Robert Heller, a director of Salomon Brothers, Israel has attracted the attention of Donald Trump and Sol Kerzner, chairman of South Africa's Sun International. The Israeli government is discussing whether to allow gambling. "A majority of the government is in favor of allowing gambling but we have a problem with some of the religious members," Industry and Trade Minister Micha Harish told Reuters. He believes that if Israel opposes the idea, then Jordan would open up casinos in Aqaba.

IMF First Deputy Managing Director Stanley Fischer told the conference that liberalization was necessary to attract western investment. Fischer applauded Israel's moves to liberalize foreign exchange and curb inflation, and said Jordan, Egypt, Morocco, and Tunisia have taken similar steps. He said that the effects of increased investment would be felt only early in the next century.

Infrastructure

'Nordic Triangle' rail and highway links urged

European Union Finance Commissioner Henning Christophersen demanded that a "Nordic Triangle" of railroad and highway links among Copenhagen, Stockholm, and Oslo be added to the list of 11 projects that were approved at the EU summit in Corfu, in June. Christophersen spoke at the EU finance ministers meeting in Brussels in early November. He is leading the EU working group established to elaborate an extended list of priority projects.

With the upcoming December EU summit in Essen, Germany, the fight on infrastructure spending is escalating. According to the German economic daily *Handelsblatt*, the European Commission (EC) presented a package of proposals at the Brussels headquarters meeting which centers around new and not-so-new financing construction for the Trans-European nets. The effort to find additional funds for these projects without going for some form of Hamiltonian banking was, not surprisingly, rejected by the ministers.

An editorial in the French daily *Libération* characterized EC President Jacques Delors's "Union bonds" (bonds issued not by sovereign states, but by the EU) as contradicting the Maastricht Treaty. European governments are now becoming less enthusiastic on publicly financing Trans-European nets because they assume the recession is over, the paper said.

French Economics Minister Edmond Alphandéry said, "Many people thought we would go for a Roosevelt 'New Deal.' But Keynesianism, as we knew it before the war, is now out of fashion." He claimed that some of the 11 Corfu projects are lacking sufficient "profitability," singling out the TGV (the French high-speed rail) route from Lyon to Turin and the Lisbon-Valladolid highway as examples.

Mexico

Excelsior cites LaRouche oil-for-technology plan

The Mexican daily *Excelsior* on Oct. 21 cited a proposal put forward by the Fusion Energy Foundation in 1981 for a \$150 billion U.S.-Mexico oil-for-technology deal, as a model for what Mexican President-elect Ernesto Zedillo should stress with President Bill Clinton. American economist Lyndon LaRouche was a board member of the FEF, which was shut down in the mid-1980s by illegal actions of the U.S. government.

In an article entitled "Oil for 21st-Century Technology," correspondent José Neme Salum proposed that such a deal include nuclear energies especially. With U.S. oil reserve depletion and growing import needs and the Bush administration's approach of trying to force Mexico to sell more oil at low prices, Neme Salum contrasted "the Clinton factor," a willingness to carry on direct, bilateral negotiations with other countries, with the "multilateral or one-worldist [approach] of Bush."

The FEF proposal exemplifies "a different U.S. vision of relations with Mexico concerning its hydrocarbon deposits," the paper said. Zedillo, during his trip to the Miami Americas heads of state summit in December, should come with "a proposal to exchange 20th-century technology (oil) for 21st-century technol-

Briefly

ogy." Mexico should seek investment in infrastructure, such as high-speed trains. Recent investment in road construction in Mexico has more value for tourism than for trade, he argued. The priority instead should be high-speed trains, covering routes that link agricultural production with sources of supply and five-star ports. Canada, France, and Japan, all buyers of Mexican oil, are potential suppliers to Mexico of the most advanced rail technology in the world.

In addition, still on the table before the United States, Canada, and Mexico is the North American Water and Power Alliance water project drawn up by Ralph Parsons engineers in 1964, which could supply water to irrigate Mexico's northern deserts, Neme Salum wrote.

Agriculture

New European farm group backs parity pricing

At a meeting in the headquarters of the European Union in Brussels on Nov. 7, farmers from Germany, Belgium, France, Denmark, Holland, and Switzerland founded a European-wide agricultural movement called the European Country Union (ECU). Its primary goal will be to influence the agricultural policies of the EU in favor of farmers and producers. The statutes of the ECU explicitly call for a parity price system, which would guarantee farmers a fair return and thereby allow for modernizing equipment.

The president of the ECU is C. Adriaens of Belgium, and the board of directors includes members from all the founding national organizations. Georg Neudecker from Deutsche Landwirt will represent Germany, and Fritz Hermann of LFO will represent Denmark. The ECU headquarters will be in the Belgian city of Roeselare, and the organization expects to establish a permanent office in Brussels. It will file for recognition as an EU agricultural organization.

Meanwhile, Ritt Bjerregaard, a Danish Socialist International figure who has just been named EU environment minister beginning in January, gave a speech in northern Denmark on Nov. 9 in which she outlined a frontal attack

on western European farmers. "More than half the expenditures of the EU go to agriculture," she stated. "These monies should be better used instead to finance the integration of eastern and central Europe into the EU. The privileges of farmers in the EU cannot be allowed to continue. We have to take a confrontation course with agriculture and their powerful organizations to get funds for East Europe."

Bjerregaard opposed German unity, and wrote in 1992 that Europe needed the Maastricht Treaty to contain the "German giant," along the model of the 1920s Locarno Treaty in the Versailles era, rather than allow Germany to build a new "Rapallo" with Russia.

Nuclear Energy

Handelsblatt sees new 'Atoms for Peace' plan

Confidence in nuclear energy is strengthening worldwide and estimates of energy consumption in the next decades require that every option be mobilized, the German economic daily *Handelsblatt* said on Nov. 7. Otherwise, the world risks "geopolitical conflicts—especially in the Middle East."

Author Heinz Jürgen Schuermann wrote, "The 'Atoms for Peace' program, which was presented by U.S. President Dwight D. Eisenhower in his speech before the United Nations General Assembly in 1953, is now, with the end of the East-West conflict, again becoming a vision." He emphasized the necessity of nuclear power for "sustainable development," and said that rich nations have the duty to use "capital-intensive" systems in order to conserve fossil resources.

While 61 new reactors are under construction worldwide, the prospects for new reactors in Germany are not good. A new law which mandates further safety features to control a possible meltdown is not the real problem, said Schuermann, because the new generation of reactors like the French-German "European Pressurized Reactor" will fulfill these demands. The main problem is that all the top managers of German energy suppliers have said in recent years that they will build new reactors only if both major political parties give their okay.

● **CANADIAN** Prime Minister Jean Chrétien signed nuclear and aid agreements during his trip to China in November. Canada will sell China four heavy-water nuclear reactors in a deal that could be worth up to U.S.\$3.7 billion.

● **UKRAINE'S** potato harvest is expected to be almost 50% lower than year, in addition to an overall drop in grain output and beef production of 20% or more each, according to western press reports.

● **RUSSIA'S** new deputy prime minister, Alexei Bolshakov, whom President Boris Yeltsin on Nov. 9 appointed to coordinate Russian relations with the Community of Independent States, has been the manager of the engineering consortium that is in charge of the envisioned high-speed railway project from St. Petersburg to Moscow.

● **CHOLERA** killed one and infected 15 other people in the Gaza Strip, the Palestinian Health Ministry said on Nov. 8. Gaza suffers from serious water and sewage infrastructure problems. Israel has banned the import of food from Gaza to Israel and the occupied West Bank. Farmers in Gaza protested the loss of an estimated \$300,000 a day.

● **GEORGE SOROS'S** Quantum Fund reportedly lost another \$400-600 million speculating against the yen, according to unnamed traders, the Nov. 10 *Wall Street Journal* reported. Many other funds "wholeheartedly followed the Soros lead . . . and also have lost a bundle," including Julian Robertson's Tiger Fund and Steinhardt Management.

● **THE BEIJING** municipal government began its first census of the city's "floating population" on Nov. 10, to determine how many rural workers have come to the city, BBC reported. Over 1 million temporary residents are registered in the city of 10 million, but at least that many more are not registered, officials say.