

NEWS IN BRIEF

China issues new titles for engineers

CHINA'S State Council has issued temporary provisions for titles for the country's 21.5 million engineers and technicians. Issued on 28 December, the council's recommendations call for the titles, senior engineer, engineer, assistant engineer, senior technician, and experienced worker or technician to be granted according to previous contributions, vocational proficiency, previous schooling and seniority. The senior technician or experienced worker designations will be granted to those who have special skills, can solve key technical problems and have distinguished themselves in work. An editorial in the *Beijing Workers Daily* says the provisions "will help overcome the egalitarianist tendency that calls those who work more and better and those who work less and worse the same". Assessment will be done by special groups consisting mainly of experts. Party committees should guide the groups instead of interfering with their remit, the editorial says.

French unions refuse reactor safety report

FRENCH trade unions representing nuclear reactor workers have refused to accept the conclusions drawn in a safety report issued by the French electricity board. Released to the unions last week by the Director of Equipment, the 43 page report concludes that the cracks found in the tubular heat exchanger plates in the reactors, Tricastin I, Gravelines I and Dampierre I "do not constitute a risk to the workers or the population" and that "all the faults will be able to be monitored during the reactor's operation." The Communist trade union, the CGT, has demanded increased safeguards in the functioning of the safety valves in the primary cooling circuit. The socialist trade union, the CFDT, has objected to "numerous uncertainties in the security and safety of the installations" and the unaligned Force Ouvriere protested a lack of completeness in the report. "The politics of nuclear information is a reality and we cannot tolerate withholding information of any sort".

French Academy elects first woman to full membership

THE French Academy of Sciences has, for the first time in its 300 year history, elected a woman as a full member. She is Mme

Yvonne Choquet-Bruhat, a leading figure in the field of general relativity for 30 years, who has pioneered work on the Cauchy problem and the mathematical structure of Einstein's equations. The Academy, which admitted Pierre Curie and closed its doors to Marie Curie, has thus finally, if belatedly, recognised the contributions of women to knowledge. Speaking at the time of her election Mme Choquet-Bruhat said that she hoped she would not be the sole woman member of the Academy for long. Now that the breach has finally been made, it is expected that many more of France's talented women scientists will follow.

Jim Ritter

British nuclear reactors closed for cracks

TWO Magnox gas cooled reactors at Dungeness near Dover, have been closed for an indefinite period because of cracks in the expansion bellows of their primary cooling circuits. The cracks, up to a meter long, are located in the welds of the expansion units inserted into the 4 ft diameter cooling pipes. Originally discovered during the biennial routine inspection of reactor 1 in August 1978, the cracks were ruled to have been present during manufacture and not to have grown during the lifetime of the reactor. But a more detailed ultrasonic search on reactor 2 during its biennial inspection in April 1979, showed meter long cracks in many of the 24 bellows mountings. Reactor 2 is still shut down. The Central Electricity Generating Board, in conjunction with the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate then decided to close down reactor 1 for further tests last weekend. The CEBG will prepare a detailed safety report on the situation which must be passed by the NII before either reactor is restarted. According to the *Guardian*, engineers are reported as saying that the 16 year old reactors are unlikely to ever be used again.

British groups organise against transport of nuclear waste

THE London Regional Anti-Nuclear Alliance has announced a campaign to prevent the weekly shipment of three tons of nuclear waste from Dungeness to the Windscale reprocessing plant from passing through London. Citing US legislation which bans nuclear waste transport through New York City as a precedent, the Alliance says that the three previous derailments of trains carrying radioactive waste means that "it is only a matter of time before a serious accident occurs". According to the Alliance an accident damaging the flasks could cause

contamination within a 12 mile radius producing 8000 additional cancers and would render the area within a 3 mile radius uninhabitable for 70 years. The Alliance says that the flasks have not been tested to withstand impacts in excess of 30 miles per hour or fires lasting longer than 30 minutes and it calls for a rerouting of trains around London and other densely populated areas as well as the release of the government's evacuation plans in case of an accident.

Piperno still held without evidence

THE case of Italian physicist Franco Piperno, extradited to Italy from Paris last summer for "actions against the State" has entered a new phase. After 22 months of hearings and 20,000 pages of documents on the assassination of Aldo Moro, seven magistrates have recently published a 186 page report in Rome. The magistrates could find no evidence linking Piperno and his two colleagues in the Workers' Autonomy Movement, Antonio Negri and Lanfranco Pace, with the assassination and have called for an additional inquiry. The report says that it "is extremely difficult to furnish proof, and because of the complexity of the accusation against them, the case of the three Autonomy leaders ought to be separated from that of the Red Brigades and a supplementary inquiry be effectuated". According to *Le Monde*, the prosecution believes it may find the evidence it needs from the recent testimony of an informer, Carlo Fioroni.

Bangladesh LANDSAT programme enters second phase

A THREE day international workshop on disaster preparation and remote sensing inaugurated the installation of an advanced ground station in Bangladesh for receiving satellite data on flood indications and major meteorological disturbances. Automatic data collection platforms will also be set up along the major rivers in Bangladesh to assist in water management and planning. Chaired by Dr B.M. Padya, Chief Technical Advisor of the World Meteorological Organisation, the conference was attended by representatives from Bangladesh, India and Thailand.

Satellite data has already been used in Bangladesh for land accretion and land use studies, changes in water reservoir levels and siltation surveys. Remote sensing has revealed desertification in northern districts and LANDSAT information has been used for afforestation projects, crop distribution studies, estimation of crop yields and salinity intrusion studies.

M. Kabir