Fair wind for renewable energy in Germany and beyond

Munich. Angela Merkel, Germany's environment minister, last week told an international solar energy conference in Freiburg that the contribution of renewable resources to Germany's energy balance should double from 2.5 to 5.0 per cent of the total by the year 2005. This would enable solar energy, as well as wind, water and biomass energy, to contribute to the 25 per cent fall in total carbon dioxide emissions to which Germany is committed by that date, she said.

Meanwhile, a report from the Worldwatch Institute in Washington says that wind power is growing more rapidly than any other source of energy. It estimates that, at the end of 1995, the world's 25,000 wind turbines were generating 4,900 MW of electricity per year. The global capacity represents a 30 per cent increase on 1994. □

Planning for the APE1000

Munich. Germany's national research centre for particle physics, DESY, and Italy's National Institute for Nuclear Physics, last week signed an agreement to build a next-generation massively parallel computer by the year 2000. To be called the APE1000 (Array Processor Experiment, 1000 gigaflop per second), the computer will be ten times faster than the current APE100. It will be installed at DESY's Institute for High Energy Physics in Brandenburg. □

Los Alamos director to quit

San Diego. Siegfried S. Hecker announced last week that he is to resign as director of the Los Alamos National Laboratory in New Mexico, a post he has held for almost 12 years, with effect from October 1997. According to officials at the laboratory, Hecker is leaving to pursue new professional challenges, but will remain a senior fellow at the laboratory. He has also been asked to advise officials at the University of California, which runs the laboratory. According to Richard C. Atkinson, president of the University of California, the laboratory has achieved under Hecker's stewardship "great acclaim as one of the world's premier research institutions". □

Production for 'herbal' petrol

New Delhi. Ramar Pillai, who claims to have invented a 'herbal' petrol (see *Nature* **383**, 112; 1996), is going into business. The state government of Tamil Nadu has given him 20 acres of land to grow the herb, and permission to produce the fuel in his basement factory, which has been given security protection.

Pillai will produce 50 litres a day, increasing to 300 litres a day after six months. The so-called Western Ghats Oil, named after the hills where the herb was found, will be sold at 10 rupees (30 US cents) a litre, about half the price of conventional petrol. Meanwhile, India's Department of Science and Technology is hoping to have patented the invention by the end of next month. Tests at the Indian Institute of Petroleum in Dehra Dun are reported to have confirmed earlier findings that the herbal fuel can act as a petrol substitute. □

Growth for UK universities

London. The number of British entrants to full-time undergraduate courses in UK universities is likely to grow by about 5 per cent a year until 2000, with continued growth in part-time, international, postgraduate and non-degree students, according to a report published this week by the Institute for Employment Studies.

The report, *University Challenge: Student Choices in the 21st Century*, was commissioned by the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals. It points out that the 1.6 million students in 115 universities and 68 higher education colleges represents a doubling