

Steel to Cover Chernobyl Nuclear Site

The Ukraine government has hired Novarka, a French firm, to build a steel sarcophagus to surround the radioactive site of the world's worst nuclear disaster in Chernobyl.

"The construction of the new 'shelter' facility and a storage for spent nuclear fuel at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant is a global project, which Ukraine and the president (Viktor Yushchenko) view as very important," said Oleksandr Chalyi, deputy chief of staff of the secretariat of the president.

Novarka is a consortium between VINCI Construction and Bouygues Travaux Publics, two French firms that have experience building and dismantling nuclear power plants. Novarka will perform the design and construction duties; a team consisting of representatives of Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant and a consortium comprised of Bechtel, EDF, and Battelle Memorial Institute will provide project management.

According to Novarka, the prime purpose of the arch-shaped shelter "is to contain the radioactive material, to protect against weather damage to the existing sarcophagus built in 1986, just after the accident, and to allow work to begin on deconstruction of Unit 4 of the Chernobyl power plant."

The structure will weigh 18,000 metric tons and will be 105 m high, 150 m long, and have a span of 257 m. The arch will stand on two concrete beams and will be assembled to the west of the damaged reactor, then slid into place above the existing structure. The existing concrete structure was hastily built following the accident; exposure to weather and poor construction have left it weakened. The reactor still contains 95% of its original nuclear material.

The casing project will take five years to complete at a construction cost of approximately \$505 million. The money has come from international donors and the fund is administered by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development.

A separate deal has also been signed with U.S. firm Holtec to build a storage facility for nuclear waste that has been produced at Chernobyl.

Welding School Launched in Philippines

The JIB Welders Academy recently opened in Davao City, according to the Philippine Information Agency. Joji Iligan Bian, head of the school, said there is a great demand for welders, especially for Philippine welders wanting to work abroad.

The academy is offering a competency-based curriculum. Currently, two courses related to shielded metal arc welding are being offered. Bian said 70 students reserved space in the classes prior to the school's opening. She said that was a good sign that area residents are looking at vocational skills as a good means of becoming employed.

Dutch Welding Company Opens Danish Subsidiary

Valk Welding, Alblasterdam, The Netherlands, plans to open a subsidiary, Valk Welding Danmark, this month to sell automated welding equipment to the Danish market.

The company has been selling robot-based welding equipment in Denmark for seven years.

"Although only a few persons cover the Danish market, sales have been very good," said Marcel Dingemans, project man-

ager, Valk Welding. "It is therefore with great confidence that we increase our efforts by setting up a subsidiary."

Alstom to Supply High-Speed Trains for Route Linking Helsinki to St. Petersburg

Alstom, Levallois-Perret, France, was recently awarded a contract to supply four high-speed Pendolino trains for the Helsinki, Finland, to St. Petersburg, Russia, rail link. The contract is worth 120 million euros and includes an option for two additional trains.

The trains will be built for Karelian Trains, a joint venture between Russian Railways and Finnish Railways, which will co-manage the trains.

The trains are scheduled for delivery in early 2009. They will be based on the 18 Pendolinos that already operate in Finland. They will feature the same front-end and interior fittings and will be adapted to extreme winter conditions. They will be built at Alstom's Savigliano site in Italy.

The new trains will operate on a 450-km, high-speed line at speeds of up to 220 kilometers per hour. The trains will be comprised of seven cars.

Sri Lanka to Establish First Technical University

The first technical educational university in Sri Lanka will be set up under the Ministry of Vocational and Technical Training this year in Ratmalana, according to H. L. Obeyesekera, director general, Dept. of Technical Education and Training.

Previously, technical colleges in the country conducted six-month to one-year certificate courses, but these were inadequate for students to seek good employment, Obeyesekera told the *Sunday Observer*, Sri Lanka's English-language newspaper.

The new university will offer three-year and two-year degrees. Programs will include mechatronics (combining mechanical and electrical engineering), metal technology for all types of welding, boat repairing, manufacturing technology, and food technology.

In addition, the department also plans to set up a construction technology unit to upgrade the existing courses offered at the nation's technical colleges.

Stork Materials Technology Acquires Sheffield Testing Laboratories

Stork Materials Technology recently acquired Sheffield Testing Laboratories, Ltd. (STL). The company will continue to operate from its current facility in Sheffield, England, under the direction of Dr. John Oldfield and David Tame.

Sheffield Testing Laboratories provides materials testing, mechanical testing, corrosion testing, and calibration services to industries through the UK and Europe. The company was established 127 years ago under the name Sheffield Testing & Experimenting Works and its early work consisted of testing for iron, metal, steel, and steel and hemp ropes.

Stork operates laboratories throughout the United States and Europe, conducting materials testing, failure analysis, consulting, product development, and qualification testing for industries such as aerospace and defense, automotive and transportation, construction and architecture, power generation, manufacturing, primary metals, oil, gas, and chemical.