

### current events

*This section carries events of interest to the synchrotron radiation community. Works intended for this section should be sent direct to the Current-Events Editor, whose address appears in this issue.*

#### A major step for an X-ray free-electron laser project in Europe

Basic research with large-scale equipment has been given new impetus in Germany. Federal Research Minister Edelgard Bulmahn presented her plans in Berlin recently which included the critical decision for an X-ray free-electron laser facility at the DESY research centre in Hamburg. In view of the locational advantage, Germany is prepared to cover half of the investment costs amounting to 673 million Euros. She said that talks on European cooperation will start soon so that it will be possible to make a decision on construction within about two years. The construction period will be approximately six years.

#### Changes at Photon Factory and KEK

Professor Atsushi Koma, Vice President of The University of Tokyo, has been appointed as the new Director of the Institute of Materials Structure Science (IMSS) from April 2003. The Photon Factory is part of IMSS, where the Director of the Photon Factory, Professor Tadashi Matsushita, is the Deputy Director.



Professor Yoji Totsuka.

The new Director General of KEK has also been named. Professor Yoji Totsuka (University of Tokyo, see photograph left) will become the new Director General of KEK with effect from 1 April 2003 for three years. Professor Totsuka received his PhD from the University of Tokyo. He is recipient of many prizes including the Asahi Prize (1988), the European Physical Society prize (1995) and the American Physical Society Panofsky prize (2002).

#### John Helliwell steps down from CCLRC as Director SR

John Helliwell has stepped down from the position of Director of SR Science at the CCLRC, a post he has held since January 2002, on secondment from the University of Manchester. In a short period he has made a crucial contribution to the CCLRC and SRS. Acknowledging this, Professor John Wood, Chief executive of CCLRC, said that the CCLRC will undoubtedly miss the contribution that John has made to its programme but fully understands his personal wish to return to a full-time research position at the University of Manchester, and looks forward to welcoming him back as one of the leading UK users of the CCLRC research facilities. John Helliwell said, "I came to realise that the administration-dominated role of CCLRC Director of SR Science was incompatible with progressing my laboratory's science research at the University of Manchester. I would like to record here that I felt a great sense of privilege and honour to have led the SR Department at Daresbury, and advise CCLRC on SR Science, even for the short time of 12 months. This last year had also allowed me to build on my earlier work within the European Facilities Expert Working Group, convened by the UK's Office of Science and Technology, during an exciting period of planning of facilities in the UK and in Europe as a whole."

#### King Abdullah opens the SESAME complex in Jordan

On 6 January 2003, His Majesty King Abdullah laid the cornerstone for the International Centre for Synchrotron Light for Experimental Science Applications in the Middle East (SESAME) at Princess Rahma University College.

Egypt, the Palestinian National Authority, Bahrain, Turkey, Iran, Israel, Jordan and Pakistan have joined the project as the founding members. The Director General of UNESCO, Koïchiro Matura, formally announced the establishment of the SESAME project as a UNESCO Science and Technology project, the third of its kind, the first being CERN established some 50 years ago.

Founding members of SESAME, together with several observer countries, form the SESAME Council, which, among other responsibilities, will provide the annual operating budget. Other countries are also expected to join soon.

This Council replaces the International Interim Council that has met nine times since its formation in 1999. Herwig Schopper, former Director General of CERN, was elected to continue as President of the Council with Khaled Toukan, Minister of Education of Jordan, and Dincer Ulku, Hacettepe University, continuing as Vice-Presidents.



King Abdullah II (fourth from left) is flanked by guests including Professor Schopper and Professor Matura.



An artist's impression of the SESAME building.