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GLOBAL NEWS TODAY

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Wednesday February 11, 2009

Google taking a step into power metering

By Matthew Wald and Miguel Helft Published: February 10, 2009

SAN FRANCISCO: Google will announce its entry Tuesday into the small but growing business of "smart grid," digital technologies that seek to both keep the electrical system on an even keel and reduce electrical energy consumption.

Google is one of a number of companies devising ways to control the demand for electric power as an alternative to building more power plants. The company has developed a free Web service called PowerMeter that consumers can use to track energy use in their house or business as it is consumed.

Google is counting on others to build devices to feed data into PowerMeter technology. While it hopes to begin introducing the service in the next few months, it has not yet lined up hardware manufacturers.

"We can't build this product all by ourselves," said Kirsten Olsen Cahill, a program manager at Google.org, the company's corporate philanthropy arm. "We depend on a whole ecosystem of utilities, device makers and policies that would allow consumers to have detailed access to their home energy use and make smarter energy decisions."

"Smart grid" is the new buzz phrase in the electric business, encompassing a variety of approaches that involve more communication between utility operators and components of the grid, including transformers, power lines, customer meters and even home appliances like dishwashers.

"They've been putting a chip in your dishwasher for a long time that would allow you to run it any time you want," said Rick Sergel, chief executive of the North American Electric Reliability Corporation, an industry group that sets operating standards for the grid.

If the utility could "talk" to the dishwasher, it might tell the machine to run at 2 a.m. and not 2 p.m., or it might tell the homeowner how much money would be saved by running the dishwasher at a different hour.

"It provides an opportunity to create dancing partners that will help the system balance itself," he said.

It also might be useful for plug-in hybrid cars, which will draw significant amounts of energy, perhaps doubling the electric demand of a small household. A smart grid would recognize the car wherever it was plugged in, the way a cellphone network recognizes a mobile phone when it is turned on.

The grid could bill the owner of the car for recharging the battery no matter where the car was plugged in. It would charge the owner a rate based on the time of day or night. If the car were left plugged in, the grid could decide when to charge it at the lowest rate.

The stimulus bill now going to a House-Senate conference committee has allocated \$4.4 billion for "smart" technologies, including four million of these next-generation monitors, called smart meters. Proponents say that could make more effective use of existing power lines and generate employment.

"You can hire a lot of people to install smart meters," said James Hoecker, a former chairman of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, which has some jurisdiction over transmission lines.

What is the type A personality?

What is the definition of a Type A Personality that a Psychologist or the field of Psychology might give?

What is the type A personality, fundamentally?

Two personality types were developed by the psychological profession in order to define people's behaviors. Each of these two types has a set of cri-

teria by which those who belong to one type or the other are discovered. These types are type A, the strict and rigid, perfectionistic type and type B, the relaxed individual's personality type. The type A personality is a very flat personality, very strict. Fundamentally this personality grows out of having had to earn acceptance rather than being bestowed with it unconditionally. This person as a child was probably given conditional love, had a role model who was raised on conditional love or both. There was a standard to be met and if it was met there was acceptance and reward; if the standard wasn't met then there was neither reward nor acceptance.

Let's look at type A people in more detail.

Type A folks have major issues around three key areas: time, money and dirt.

Type A's and Issues surrounding time.

Type A people have limitless problems with time. Type A's need to be on time, they need to avoid running out of time, they need to have a watch or clock handy so they can measure time, they invest time, measure the value of time spent and time left available. These folks have issues with deadlines, as they are restricting, yet they feel they must have them and they must be met. Time is a tool for measuring and a means of limiting, confining and defining. As such, time is important to someone who has always had to meet standards and deadlines for acceptance.

Issues with money.

Type A people have esteem issues, as they don't base their value on solid ground but rather on meeting standards. As such, rather than by their inherent value as people, they value themselves and what they do by money. What's it worth, what did it cost, how much do they earn, have and spend? They spend or give money as a way of showing love or affection. It is their empowerment and security. In relationships there is a medium of exchange and of acceptance with others and it is money.

Issues with dirt.



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As the type A individual is perfectionist and of low self esteem they don't want to have any association with dirt. Getting dirty makes them feel cheap and worthless. They need neat surroundings.

Remission.

Something like remission or over compensation can occur in which the type A personality may swing to the extreme opposite to cope. They may give away money to show they can, get dirty or do dirty jobs to confront their fears and may throw

caution about time to the wind to set themselves free. Still you can see that they still are tied heavily to these issues.

Emotions.

Type A personalities may deny emotion or not know they have any. They may feel guilty for having or showing emotions as this would take them away from the source of real value for them which is to meet standards like a perfectly performing machine.



Mexico mass grave may be Aztec resistance fighters

MARK STEVENSON, Associated Press

MEXICO CITY – Archaeologists digging in a ruined pyramid in downtown Mexico City said Tuesday they found a mass grave that may hold the skeletal remains of the Aztec holdouts who fought conquistador Hernan Cortes.

The unusual burial holds the carefully arrayed skeletons of at least 49 adult Indians who were buried in the remains of a pyramid razed by the Spaniards during the 1521 conquest of the Aztec capital.

The pyramid complex, in the city's Tlatelolco square, was the site of the last Indian resistance to the Spaniards during the monthslong battle for the city.

Archaeologist Salvador Guilliem, the leader of the excavation for Mexico's National Institute of Anthropology and History, said the Indians might have been killed during Cortes' war or during one of the uprisings that continued after the conquest.

Guilliem said many burials have been found at the site with the remains of Indians who died during epidemics that swept the Aztec capital in the years after the conquest and killed off much of the Indian population.

But those burials were mostly hurried, haphazard affairs in which remains were jumbled together in pits regardless of age or gender.

The burial reported Tuesday is different. The dead had many of the characteristics of warriors: All but four were young men, most were tall and several showed broken bones that had mended.

The men also were carefully buried Christian-style, lying on their backs with arms crossed over their chests, though many appear to have been wrapped up in large maguey cactus leaves, rather than placed in European coffins.

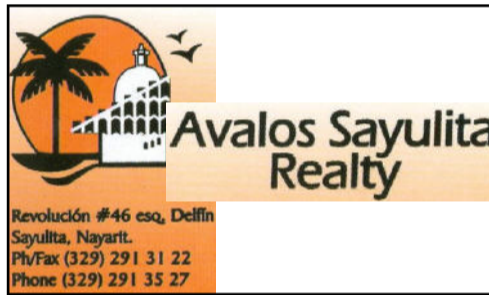
The mass grave contained evidence of an Aztec-like ritual in which offerings such as incense and animals were set alight in an incense burner, but

MEXICO

Spanish elements including buttons and a bit of glass also were present.

Susan Gillespie, an archaeologist at the University of Florida, said the grave was unusual, both because it was unlikely the Spanish would have bothered with such careful burial of Aztec warriors, and because the Indians themselves would have been more likely to cremate any honored dead.

But Gillespie, who was not involved in the excavation, also noted that little is known about the period immediately following the fall of the city, when



Cortes razed most pyramids and temples, then abandoned the largely destroyed metropolis. He lived on the city's outskirts before returning to rebuild a Spanish-style city on the ruins.

It may have been in that interim period after Cortes left that the Aztecs returned to bury their dead, Guilliem said.

Gillespie agreed the burials could be those of disease victims or rebellious Indians from later years, rather than warriors who fell in the 1521 battle, and said more research was needed, such as a skeletal analysis to show cause of death.

Another possibility, she said, was that the men could have been held by the Spanish for some time and killed later. That was the fate that befell the leader of the Aztec resistance, emperor Cuauhtemoc.

Mexico's Telmex may reduce telephone investments

Mexico's Telmex conditions 2009 investments on regulatory openings, economy

MEXICO CITY (AP) -- Telefonos de Mexico SA is considering cutting its capital expenditures this year by \$280 million, its chief financial officer said Tuesday. Telmex chief financial officer Adolfo Cerezo said the company is monitoring Mexico's regulatory and economic conditions and may cut its planned investments of 12 billion pesos (\$839 million) by a third.

Mexico sends 80 percent of its exports to the United States and is expected to head into a recession.

Cerezo also criticized recently published rules governing telephone interconnection, which have required Telmex to make investments that would benefit other companies, a situation he called "expropriatory in nature."

"Now what we have to take into account is how the economic outlook is, how the regulatory environment is, and based on that we have to be conservative, and we'll probably have to reduce" capital expenditures by one third, Cerezo said in a conference call.

Telmex also has been pressing for regulatory approval for so-called convergence services that would allow it to venture beyond voice and data transmission into television.

Telmex CEO Hector Slim said there has been no progress on that front, and said "this situation is delaying the technological development of the country."

Disagreements with President Felipe Calderon's administration have come to a head recently.

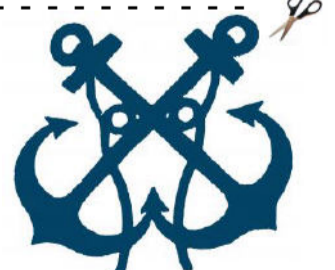
On Monday, Telmex tycoon Carlos Slim warned that Mexico would see unprecedented unemployment this year as businesses collapse due to the global economic crisis. The billionaire said falling oil prices and faltering exports will undoubtedly lead to an economic contraction this year.

Hours later, Labor Secretary Javier Lozano accused Slim of charging excessive service rates and not doing enough to help the country in troubled times. Lozano kept up the criticism Tuesday, saying Slim's predictions were exaggerated.



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"He's says we'll have the worst unemployment in 80 years, the most powerful man in our country says that. And then he says he's not a doomsayer -- well, he's hiding it well," Lozano said in an interview with Televisa station. "I think it's alarmist."

While the company reported it was in good financial shape regarding debt and currency positions, but reported a 55 percent plunge in fourth quarter profits Monday.

Profits were 2.98 billion pesos (\$218 million) in the fourth quarter of 2008, down from 6.6 billion

pesos from the same period of 2007, the company said in an earnings report. Profits per common share fell 53 percent to 0.16 pesos and 59 percent to \$0.26 per ADR.

Telmex lost 83,000 subscribers to rival companies during the fourth quarter and ended the year with 17.5 million lines, the report said.

The company gained broadband Internet clients to reach 5 million subscribers in 2008, 175 percent more than in 2007.

Revenue fell 2.7 percent to 31 billion pesos, as both local and long distance sales dropped and Internet access costs increased.

Earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortization fell 2.7 percent to 13.8 billion pesos.

The company said it planned to lower service rates for the ninth year in a row in 2009.

USA+CANADA

Eight arrested in Michael Phelps case

COLUMBIA, SC (WIS) - New details have emerged about a party where Olympic champion Michael Phelps was spotted.

On Feb. 2, a British tabloid published a picture of the 14-time Olympic gold medalist using a water pipe to smoke marijuana. The picture was taken at a party in Columbia back in November when Phelps was here for a visit.

The Richland County Sheriff's Department has been taking a lot of heat from people in this country and all over the world.

They want to know why Sheriff Leon Lott is going after Michael Phelps.

Many are saying the sheriff should concentrate on more serious crimes, or at the very least, not focus solely on the Olympic champion when there were others at the party who were also breaking the law.

Now it appears the case has expanded beyond Phelps' activities.

The party took place in November at a house on Blossom Street near Five Points.

It was at that house where someone snapped the photo of Phelps taking a hit on a marijuana pipe called a bong.

Lott says the picture indicated a law was being broken in his jurisdiction. He said he couldn't ignore the violation just because Phelps is rich and famous.

We've now learned that since investigators began trying to build a case, they've made eight arrests: seven for drug possession and one for distribution. These are arrests that resulted as the sheriff's department served search warrants.

We've also learned that the department has located and confiscated that bong.

Sources say the owner of the bong was trying to sell it on eBay for as much as \$100,000.

The owner, who wasn't even at the party, is one of the eight now charged.

Phelps is not one of those charged at this point, but the sheriff's department has strong evidence that matches the photo to the house on Blossom Street.

That house is in the city, but the Columbia Police Department decided not to initiate or take an active role in the investigation.

Governor Mark Sanford is also weighing in on the sheriff's actions.

On the FOX News Channel Sunday night, Geraldo Rivera asked Sanford whether Phelps should be prosecuted.

"I don't see what it gets at this point," said Sanford.

His spokesman told us Monday night Sanford is letting that quote stand.

Medical society probes octuplet fertility doctor

SHAYA TAYEFE MOHAJER, Associated Press

LOS ANGELES – A national medical society is investigating whether a fertility doctor followed its guidelines when he implanted six embryos into a Southern California woman who gave birth to octuplets last month.

The American Society for Reproductive Medicine confirmed Tuesday that it's investigating because Nadya Suleman says she received in-vitro fertilization for all 14 of her children at the same Beverly Hills fertility clinic.

Suleman, 33, told NBC's "Today" show that she was implanted with six embryos in each of her six pregnancies, resulting in four single births, a set of twins and the octuplets. No more than three embryos are considered the norm for a woman her age, and fertility experts and medical ethicists have been critical of the Jan. 26 birth of the octuplets.

The society has contacted Suleman and her doctor, and is prepared to assist the Medical Board of California, which is also looking into the pregnancy, the society's president, Dr. R. Dale McClure, said in a statement.

"Our guidelines provide the flexibility to give each patient treatment individualized to her needs, and her best chance to become pregnant without risking high-order multiple pregnancy," said McClure. "However, it seems that the guidelines may not have been followed in Ms. Suleman's case."

Neither the society or the medical board identified Suleman's physician, Dr. Michael Kamrava.

Kamrava, a specialist who pioneered a method of implantation, was identified Monday as a result of an NBC interview with Suleman, who said she went to the West Coast IVF Clinic in Beverly Hills and that all 14 of her children were conceived with help from the same doctor. In 2006, Los Angeles TV station KTLA ran a story on infertility that showed Kamrava, the center's director, treating Suleman and discussing embryo implantation.

Kamrava, 57, did not return calls seeking comment Monday or Tuesday. When confronted by reporters outside his clinic Monday, he said he had granted a television interview but would not give details.

In an NBC "Dateline" interview that aired Tuesday night, Suleman said the octuplets were a sign from God that she should stop having children. She also said she still intends to go back to school and finish her master's degree.

The state medical board said last week it was looking into the Suleman case to see if there was a "violation of the standard of care." The medical board said it had not taken any previous disciplinary action against Kamrava.

Kamrava's clinic is a member of the Society for Assisted Reproductive Technology, a sister organization of the American Society for Reproductive Medicine.

Clinics that clearly violate guidelines can be kicked out of SART. Neither group is a regulatory agency so a removed doctor could still practice medicine.

The state medical board cannot close the clinic if it is found at fault, but it can censure the doctor, putting the violation on his record.

Kamrava's clinic performed 52 in-vitro procedures in 2006, according to the most recent national report compiled by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Of those, five resulted in pregnancies and two in births. One of the births were Suleman's twins.

Kamrava's pregnancy rate that year was among the lowest in the country. Experts say many factors affect a clinic's success rate, including a patient's health and types of procedures done.

According to court records, Kamrava has been named in at least five medical malpractice lawsuits since 1991. He also has been involved in other cases against him or his clinic, including at least one alleging fraudulent conveyance.

In one case, a former employee accused him and his wife of hiding income to avoid taxes and defrauding insurance companies. Former office administrator Shirin Afshar sued Kamrava in 1998, claiming discrimination, harassment, wrongful termination and infliction of emotional distress.

Over a seven-year period, Afshar said, Kamrava and his wife didn't report about \$400,000 in income to the state and the Internal Revenue Service. Afshar claims Kamrava made patients who had no insurance pay in cash and that money was turned over to Kamrava's wife. The transactions were neither entered into an office computer nor deposited in a bank, the lawsuit said.

She said she was fired when she complained to Kamrava about what was going on.

Afshar also claimed she had an abortion in 1992 because she feared she would lose her job. When she told Kamrava she was pregnant, she claims her boss chastised her.

GLOBAL NEWS TODAY

"How can you take care of this baby with no job, no family and no money?" Afshar claimed Kamrava said.

The lawsuit was settled in 1999 for an undisclosed amount.

The IRS did not immediately have any information about Afshar's tax claims.

Associated Press Television News videographer John Mone and Associated Press Writers Alicia Chang, Thomas Watkins and Greg Risling contributed to this report.

Unions call for 'Buy Canadian' policy

CBC News

Two major unions added their voices Tuesday to a call by NDP Leader Jack Layton that governments adopt a "Buy Canadian" policy to save jobs.

Canadian Auto Workers president Ken Lewenza and Ken Neumann of the United Steelworkers say tax dollars spent on infrastructure projects should go to Canadian workers.

They spoke in Ottawa on Tuesday after General Motors announced it was cutting 10,000 white-collar jobs.

Their calls to for a "Buy Canadian" policy come after the federal government lobbied hard against efforts in Washington to attach a "Buy American" policy to a multibillion-dollar bailout program. Lewenza said the federal and provincial governments are ready to spend billions without any guarantees the money will keep Canadians working. He said it's not protectionism, but common sense.

Neumann, national director of the United Steelworkers, said an economy can't prosper without a steel industry.

"This is not about fear-mongering ... this is not about protectionism," said Neumann. "It's time this government stood up ... we have just lost, as Ken [Lewenza] says, 129,000 jobs last month.

"This is the time we need to do something. We need to do something serious."

Last Tuesday, Layton urged that Canada should adopt a "Buy Canadian" strategy in response to the "Buy American" clause included in the proposed U.S. stimulus package.

During question period in the House of Commons, Layton said that there's a "golden opportunity" to boost slumping domestic sales with a "perfectly legal and appropriately designed 'Buy Canadian' strategy."

EUROPE

Grating cheese 'cuts risk of heart disease' says Food Standards Agency

Grating cheese rather than slicing it could cut your risk of dying from heart disease, according to the Food Standards Agency.

By Matthew Moore C/O Joel Butler

The agency is urging consumers to make small changes to their diet to lower their intake of saturated fat, which increases cholesterol levels in the blood.

The public should opt for low fat milk instead of semi-skimmed, select leaner cuts of meat and try to cut down on unhealthy snacks, the FSA advises.

Substituting butter for margarine and frying food in vegetable oil are also encouraged.

Tim Smith, the agency's chief executive, said that many people were unaware that they could prolong their lives by switching to easy alternatives to their favourite foods.

"It's important to find ways to cut down, not give up. I learned to cut down cheese by grating it or using stronger flavour and I have cut down to 1 per cent milk rather than semi-skimmed," he said. People tend to use less cheese in a meal if they have grated it.

Britons currently eat 20 per cent more than the recommended levels of saturated fat, according to the FSA, helping make heart disease the country's most common cause of death, claiming 198,000 lives a year.

Cutting the amount of energy we get from saturated fat from a national average of 13.3 per cent to 11 per cent would save 3,500 lives a year, the agency says.

The awareness campaign, involving a hard-hitting television advert and posters, is particularly targeted at slim people who may not realise the risks posed to their long term health by a fatty diet.

Heart surgeon Shyam Kolvekar, who is based at The London Heart Hospital, said: "I'm increasingly seeing patients as young as 40 in my surgery who

do not realise the effect of the saturated fatty foods on their hearts such as butter, biscuits and snacks until it is too late."

Research from the food company Unilever has shown that Britons are prone to overindulge in fatty foods at weekends, as they have more time to prepare cooked breakfasts and milky coffees.

A fry-up with buttered toast and a cappuccino contains 33.7g of saturated fats, more than men (30g) and women (20g) are supposed to consume in a day.

Pound at lowest level since 1985

Sterling's slide has continued, with the pound touching \$1.3622, as concerns about the UK economy and the banking sector intensified.

Sterling fell to its weakest level against the dollar since September 1985, before rising to \$1.4015.

The pound remains weak against the euro, with the single currency now worth more than 93.3 pence.

Shares in Barclays took a further hit on Wednesday, sliding more than 9% in London trade.

But HSBC and Lloyds Banking Group finished ahead, up 30.5p to 515.5p, and 0.3p to 45.1p, respectively. And RBS shares were ahead by 21%, or 2.2p, at 12.5p.

Pound at 1985 levels against the dollar However concern remains about the health of the global banking system.

Pounding

Last summer the pound was trading at more than \$2.

The pound's slide this week followed RBS signalling it would make a record loss in 2008 and further government measures to encourage UK banks to lend.

"Fresh concerns about the key banking sector have fed through into broader concerns about the outlook for the economy," said Simon Derrick, a currency strategist at Bank of New York Mellon.

Economic data released on Wednesday exacerbated these fears.

UK mortgage lending fell by 30% in 2008 to the lowest level since 2002, while unemployment rose by 131,000 to 1.92 million between September and November.

Council advises ecstasy downgrade

The body that advises the government on illegal drugs is to recommend ecstasy be downgraded to a Class B drug

(BBC) Ecstasy is currently grouped with heroin, cocaine, crack and LSD in Class A. Suppliers of such drugs can face a life sentence in prison.

The Home Office has made it clear it will reject the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs' recommendation.

Earlier, a row broke out after the council's head Prof David Nutt likened the dangers of ecstasy to horse riding.

Home Secretary Jacqui Smith responded by accusing him of trivialising the dangers of the drug. He later apologised for any offence and said the views were not those of his colleagues on the council.

Memory loss

The advisory council reviewed the latest evidence on ecstasy last year and held a secret ballot of its 31 members on the issue of re-classification.

It is understood the result was not unanimous, but a majority voted to recommend moving the drug to Class B.

The council's view is that ecstasy is not as harmful as other Class A drugs and causes far fewer deaths.

It says ecstasy use had no significant impact on short-term memory loss and found little evidence to link ecstasy to criminal behaviour.

But it will call for further research into the effects of taking ecstasy, particularly on younger users.

hotline@globalnews2day.com

GLOBAL NEWS TODAY

Last month, the Home Office restored cannabis from Class C to Class B, against the wishes of the advisory council.

Ministers are now set to resist the council's recommendation on ecstasy.

BBC home affairs correspondent Danny Shaw said this latest move raises real doubts about how long the council can continue in its present form if its experts continue to be ignored.

Shadow home secretary Chris Grayling said it called into question the government's choice of advisers.

But Liberal Democrat home affairs spokesman Chris Huhne accused the Home Secretary of a "ludicrous overreaction".

£1bn 'spy jets' join RAF squadron

By Peter Jackson
BBC News

"Spy planes" that could help detect roadside bombs from seven-and-a-half miles above the ground have just entered squadron service after successful trials in Afghanistan. How effective would they be in fighting the Taliban and saving lives?

(BBC)At almost £1bn for five, the Sentinel R1 jet does not come cheap, but the Ministry of Defence (MoD) hopes its latest "eye in the sky" will have a real impact.

The twin-engined plane carries some of the world's most sophisticated radar equipment, allowing it to detect and track enemy movement over huge areas.

'Vital platform'

The Army hopes the Royal Air Force jets will provide a clearer picture of insurgents' positions as well as pinpoint static and fixed targets.

The number of UK troops killed on operations in Afghanistan since 2001 stands at 143.

The Airborne Stand-Off Radar (Astor) can cover thousands of square miles, looking deep into valleys, picking out well-used enemy routes and mapping vehicle activity.

Information is relayed to ground stations within seconds of the images being captured, allowing troops below to react at speed to tactical planning.

Intelligence Corps detachment commander, Major Will Tosh, told the BBC: "The system is unique in terms of its search capability, because it looks at such a large area.

"It can pick up a lot of data and see what's happening on the ground, saving time and effort. Commanders can see where activity is and what it is, and move forces into that area."

He said the planes could be used as a "tool" in the battle against insurgency, including roadside bomb attacks, but only in conjunction with other systems.

He added that because the plane flew so high it would be outside the engagement zone and away from the threat of surface to air missiles.

He added that her "savaging" of Prof Nutt was "a poor precedent for academic freedom".

Organ failure

The row over the dangers of ecstasy erupted followed the publication of an article by Prof Nutt in the Journal of Psychopharmacology last week.

In it, he wrote: "Drug harm can be equal to harms in other parts of life. There is not much difference between horse-riding and ecstasy."

He said horse-riding accounted for more than 100 deaths a year, and went on: "This attitude raises the critical question of why society tolerates - indeed encourages - certain forms of potentially harmful behaviour but not others such as drug use."

Ecstasy use is linked to around 30 deaths a year, up from 10 a year in the early 1990s.

WORLD NEWS

Sentinel R1's are operated by a crew of five - two pilots, two imagery analysts and a commander - and can fly for more than nine hours at a time.

The radar works by looking down to the ground while the aircraft flies in a straight line.

It transmits pulses and receives target information as it moves, building up a picture of the target area. Powerful computers and software then allow rapid processing of the information.

It is also compatible with joint coalition systems such as the US JStars radar programme.

Maj Tosh said the Sentinel's would work alongside existing Nimrods to "compliment" but not replace any of their functions.

"The Nimrod has a full motion video sensor, our system doesn't. We have a radar platform and can work day and night through bad weather, the Nimrod can't," he said.

The Sentinel was successfully tested in Afghanistan in November and December last year by 3 Commando Brigade.

The MoD has spent £954m on five aircraft plus eight ground stations to be operated by 5 (Army Co-operation) Squadron, based at RAF Waddington in Lincolnshire.

The fifth and final Sentinel R1 has just been delivered to the base.

Group Captain Harry Kemsley said: "This system is about answering the questions the customer on the ground needs answering - getting the information soldiers need to the soldiers.

"The ability to look beyond the range of the eye, binoculars and rifle sight is now available with our system."

Peter Felstead, editor of Jane's Defence Weekly, agreed, saying it was a vital platform for surveillance which would bring "significant capability" to forces in the field.

Maj Tosh said he hoped the jets would be deployed in Afghanistan as quickly as possible so they could "do it for real".

"The system is introducing a new capability into the British arsenal that we don't currently have, it's

Jacqui Smith said she was "surprised" and "disappointed" by his comments and told him he had gone beyond his role as head of the advisory council.

But later in a statement, the professor said: "I am sorry to those who may have been offended by my article.

"I would like to apologise to those who have lost friends and family due to ecstasy use.

"I would like to assure those who have read my article that I had no intention of trivialising the dangers of ecstasy."

Fatalities from ecstasy are caused by massive organ failure from overheating or the effects of drinking too much water.

cutting-edge technology which will only get better in the future," he said.

"The system is that flexible, it can fit into any scenario, and is not just contained by the current Afghan situation."

The RAF said Astor would become the most advanced long-range, airborne surveillance system of its kind in the world.

Israeli rivals claim election win

The leaders of Israel's two main parties have claimed victory in an early general election.

With almost all the votes counted, the governing centrist Kadima has 28 seats and the right-wing Likud opposition 27, election officials said.

Kadima's Tzipi Livni told supporters she was ready to lead the country. But Likud's Benjamin Netanyahu said the "nationalist camp" had won.

Both need coalition partners. Ultra-nationalist Yisrael Beiteinu came third.

The results - if confirmed - push the Labour party led by Defence Minister Ehud Barack into an unprecedented fourth place.

Livni: "We won the confidence of the people" Final results will come within days.

Likud had held a solid lead in opinion polls prior to the election, but Kadima closed the gap in the final days.

Cheers erupted at Kadima's headquarters as the exit polls were announced on Israeli TV.

"Today the people chose Kadima," Ms Livni later told crowds of ecstatic supporters.

"The land of Israel does not belong to the right, just as peace does not belong to the left."

Ms Livni appealed to Mr Netanyahu to join a national unity government that she would lead.

Kingmaker

The strong showing by right-wing rivals will make it difficult for Ms Livni to form a coalition government, analysts say.

Several smaller parties, whose support Ms Livni would need, are opposed to some of her policies, especially her pledge to exchange land for peace with the Palestinians.

Mr Netanyahu claimed victory, saying a Likud-led coalition would lead Israel.

"With God's help I will lead the next government," he told cheering crowds at Likud's Tel Aviv headquarters.

On the basis of the exit polls, analysts predict that Likud and various nationalist parties will between them control 65 of 120 seats in the Knesset.

BBC diplomatic correspondent Jonathan Marcus says the closeness of the forecasted result is in many ways the worst outcome for Israeli democra-

cy, as it sets the scene for days and probably weeks of fractious political horse-trading.

Likud looks to have already sown up a deal with the strongest of the orthodox Jewish religious parties - Shas - ahead of the election, our correspondent adds.

Corruption probe

Once the final results are in, President Shimon Peres will consult with party leaders to determine who among them stands the best chance of forming a coalition government, but he does not have to choose the leader of the largest party.

The chosen party leader has then up to 42 days to form a coalition. If the attempt fails, Mr Peres can ask another leader to assume the task.

Much will depend upon what the Yisrael Beitenu leader Avigdor Lieberman tells the president, and which way he leans may be decisive in determining

who is the first to be asked to try to form a coalition government, our correspondent says.

Elections were called early after Ms Livni failed to form a new government following Prime Minister Ehud Olmert's decision to step down last year amid a corruption probe against him.

Mr Olmert will stay on as caretaker prime minister until a new government is formed.

The election has been dominated by security issues following Israel's offensive in the Hamas-ruled Gaza Strip.

Although the Palestinian Authority has not expressed preference for any candidate, its senior negotiator, Saeb Erakat, expressed dismay that right-wing parties had performed so well.

"It is obvious the Israelis have voted to paralyse the peace process," he said.

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CAD	11.6649 / 0.08601
EUR	18.484 / 0.05426
GBP	21.1243 / 0.04749
NZD	7.6209/ 0.1317
AUD	9.5496/ 0.1051

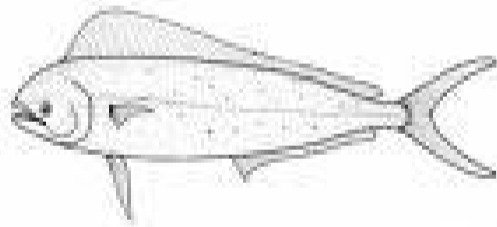
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