Press Review n°240. By Gilberte Jacaret

ISRAEL

... Middle East oil... By Zafrir Rinat. Haaretz, 11.07.11

... JNF warns shale oil project could cause Israel major ecological damage. Demands impact study before pilot operation.

The closer you get to the experimental drill site east of Kibbutz Beit Guvrin, where Israel Energy Initiatives is testing for the production of fuel from oil shale, the more the air smells of oil.

For IEI, the experimental drill site is bringing the company one step closer to commercial production that will change Israel's energy economy. But according to a report by the Jewish National Fund, the project may have serious environmental repercussions and must be opposed until an environmental impact study is completed.

The Jerusalem Planning and Building Council is to decide in the coming months whether to allow IEI to establish a pilot underground mining project in the area of the Judean lowlands. The results of the pilot, which will operate on a larger scale than the experimental drilling, will reveal whether production of oil shale is economically feasible.
If so, IEI believes commercial production of fuel from oil shale can meet a good deal of Israel's energy needs.

Oil shale are the remnants of fossils that have been converted into organic material in rock hundreds of meters underground. When heated, the rock can produce oil.

The JNF, which is responsible for large areas in the Judean lowlands, was asked by the Planning and Building Council for its position on the matter, and the organization established a subcommittee of planners and environmental officials, headed by Dr. Or Karsin, a member of the JNF board of directors. The committee, none of whose members were experts on energy or oil shale, submitted its conclusion last week to the JNF board.

The committee recommended further research before approving the project.
"There are only four countries in the world that produce oil shale commercially in underground mining, although oil shale is more plentiful than liquid oil," the report states.

One effect, albeit an unlikely one, about which the report warns is the creation of fissures in the ground through which oxygen would penetrate and thus cause the shale to ignite. Another concern is that oil will penetrate ground water through fissures, with "catastrophic implications," the report says.
Other threats cited include the release of toxic gases and severe damage to the landscape due to the construction related to the facilities….

Shani-Kadmiel said pollutants released underground would be dealt with so that no environmental pollution would occur….

Offshore exploration rights: Israel painted as bad guy to speed Lebanese drilling... Jerusalem Post, July 11, 2011

Beirut lays claim to offshore exploration rights already granted to companies by J’lem; expert says move a Lebanese ploy.

Following the cabinet’s decision on Sunday to approve a demarcation of the country’s northern maritime borders for UN submission, an energy policy expert said that Lebanese claims to Israeli exploratory territory may be fueled by a need to position Israel as the “bad guy” in order to get its own laws on the matter passed faster.

EUROPE

Six centuries after their forcible conversion, a leading Israeli rabbi rules that the Chuetas of Mallorca are Jews... European Jewish Press. July 13, 2011

Palm de Majorca: A leading Israeli rabbinical authority has officially recognized as Jewish the small Chueta community on Spain's island of Majorca, six centuries after their ancestors were forced to convert to Roman Catholicism.

The Chuetas are the descendants of Mallorca’s Jews, who were forcibly baptized in the 14th and 15th centuries and then barred from intermarrying or assimilating with the island’s Catholic population until the modern era.

The clear and unequivocal recognition was issued by Rabbi Nissim Karelitz, the head of the Beit Din Tzedek , a High Rabbinical Court, in the Israeli city of Bnei Brak, who is considered to be one of Israel’s foremost arbiters of Jewish law.
It came after years of campaigning by Shavei Israel, an Israeli organization that seeks to strengthen ties with the

descendants of Jews around the world..