



Headline News

Profit opportunities: internet and organic food

Communication technology, services for senior citizens, electrical engineering, nanotechnology organic food and internet search are all sectors that specialists foresee as being lucrative in future. Particularly technological fields are most prominent in business incubators, which assist firms in the early phases of business. For example, biotechnology and nanotechnology are experiencing a significant boom and this trend is expected to continue in coming years.

Czech scientist reaches the world pinnacle

Only a few Czech scientists have been honoured like František Sehnal, who is the second Czech to become an honorary member of The Entomological Society of America, which associates more than 5,000 top researchers from around the world involved in the study

of insects. A maximum of ten honorary members enter their ranks each year. The organisation currently has perhaps 18 European members. Only one member for Europe is chosen each year.

Business

Honeywell expands its development centre in Brno

The American company Honeywell is building an addition to its development centre in Brno. The centre currently employs 600 people, a number which should double within four years. The new centre will integrate the company's two existing development facilities in Brno. Honeywell wants to use the centre in the neighbouring manufacturing plant in Černovická terasa from February 2009.

Bosch to employ more people in Brno

Bosch Rexroth will employ an additional 50 to 60 people in Brno within two

years. The company's Brno branch, which produces hydraulic aggregates, currently has 200 employees and will hire new workers this year following completion of the new assembly hall in Černovická terasa. Investment in the new hall is expected to exceed EUR 13.5 million (CZK 357 million).

More investors coming to Frýdek-Místek

New investors are setting their sights on the industrial zone near Frýdek-Místek. One such firm is Hanwha of Korea, which was attracted to the area by the construction of the nearby Hyundai car plant. In the long term the company wants to invest in the construction of a plant at a cost of more than CZK 4 billion and employ 100 people. Another investor is a local steel producer which will offer jobs to approximately 30 people. The Italian company ITT, which manufactures brake pads for cars and trucks, is headed for the new industrial zone in the town

of Staříč in the Frýdek-Místek area. The new plant is to create 300 jobs and to produce 18 million brake pads per year.

Czech computer-game firm acquired by Americans

Illusion Softworks Interactive Software, a Brno-based developer of computer games, has been acquired by the American firm Take-Two Interactive Software, one of the world's leading publishers of such games. The acquisition price has not been disclosed by either party. Just prior to finishing the continuation of its breakthrough game, Mafia, Illusion Softworks, with its 200 employees, thus became a subsidiary of Take-Two and will operate under the name 2K Czech.

Matsushita to be renamed Panasonic

The Japanese electronics titan Matsushita Electric Industrial will change its name to Panasonic in order to use its most well-known brand to strengthen awareness of the company beyond the borders of Japan. The announcement was made by the company's managers. The concern, which has operations in the Czech Republic, will thus lose the name given to it by Konosuke Matsushita 90 years ago. If shareholders approve, the producer of Viera flat-screen televisions and Lumix digital cameras will change its name in October. The company is also discontinuing its National brand of electric appliances. The company introduced the Panasonic brand to foreign markets in

1955. Since that time, however, the brand has gained a greater reputation than the company itself.

New firm in Hrobčice

The Chinese firm Shanghai Maling is planning to build a plant in the Hrobčice municipality in the Teplice district by the end of February and to launch production of canned meat at the site. The firm has already invested roughly CZK 400 million and will employ 130 to 140 people once it is operating at full capacity. Between 15% and 20% of the plant's output will be sold on the Czech market, while the remainder will be exported.

Solar-panel production increasing in the Czech Republic

Foreign firms are responsible for a large share of solar-panel production in the Czech Republic. Manufacturers in this field include the Kaneka Corporation of Japan, which opened a plant in Olomouc last year. The company wants to invest up to CZK 324 million in a new plant in 2008 and over two years will increase production of panels with annual capacity of 130 megawatt hours annually. The German company Schott Solar, which opened a factory in Valašské Meziříčí in 2005, is planning to open three production lines this year. The company's management wants to launch the first of these lines by the end of February, which would increase production capacity to more than 200 megawatts annually.

R&D

New business incubator opened in Prague

A new business incubator has opened on the site of a former industrial complex in the Vysočany area of Prague. The incubator has the purpose of supporting new and existing companies focusing on innovation. The entire project cost roughly CZK 168 million, of which CZK 71 million was obtained from EU structural funds. ČKD Nové Energo is the partner of the business incubator.

Engineering centre in Rakona focusing on developing new technologies

Development and introduction of new technologies in the production of household products will be the focus of the Engineering Centre at Procter & Gamble's Rakona plant in Rakovník. Over 200 specialists currently work here and in future will be involved in ecological technologies. The facility in Rakovník will be Procter & Gamble's first engineering centre in Central and Eastern Europe, joining the ranks of the company's technology centres in the United States, Belgium, China, Japan and Mexico. The company has invested nearly CZK 10 million in the engineering centre, and obtained CZK 19 million for its establishment from CzechInvest's incentives programme. Procter & Gamble is planning to commit CZK 13 million to

the centre's operation over the next five years.

Innovation from Cegelec

The Prague-based company Cegelec has developed a supercondenser, a device which in connection with top-level electronics is able to accumulate energy created when a tram brakes and subsequently use it for acceleration. The company is to begin trials of supercondensers in Ostrava at the end of January or during February. Cegelec, a part of ČKD acquired by French interests, is engaged in the production of traction equipment. Over the past ten years, the company has added to its production programme traction systems that serve to regulate engine revolutions and are used in approximately one thousand modernised trams. Cegelec's main customer is the Prague Public Transit Company, though vehicles with the new traction system are used in numerous other cities.

Education

University of Pardubice gains seventh faculty

The Institute of Electrical Engineering and Informatics at the University of Pardubice has been transformed into the new, separate Faculty of Electrical Engineering and Informatics, making it the university's seventh faculty. The new faculty is currently cultivating specialists in four fields of study and had 760 students in the last academic year. In the five-year horizon, it is expected that the faculty will have approximately one thousand

students. The Information Technologies study programme is focused on preparing specialists with the knowledge required for designing, implementing and operating information systems intended to support the research, administrative and management activities of companies and institutions.

Miscellaneous

Sky Pendolino is coming

Czech Railways and the low-cost airline Sky Europe are preparing a customer alliance called ČD Sky. Airline tickets to ten destinations in the first phase will be available at Czech Railways cash desks. Tickets have been on sale in Brno since 24 January, and will be available at 20 other stations in February. The only condition of the service is concurrent use of a rail connection when transferring to the airport. For example, on the Prague-Bratislava line it will be possible to travel in one direction on the Pendolino train and return by air. Called Sky Pendolino, the service is priced at CZK 995.

Starbucks Coffee in Prague

At the end of January, Starbucks Coffee opened its first Czech coffee shop in Prague. The owner of the Czech license, AmRest, opened the location in Grömling Palace on Malostranské Náměstí. The second Starbucks location in the Czech Republic will open at the end of February in Prague's Palladium shopping centre on Náměstí Republiky.

Exchange Rates
Averages for January 2008
EUR 1 = CZK 26.051
GBP 1 = CZK 34.865
USD 1 = CZK 17.702
Source: Czech National Bank

Sources: Czech AM by Czech Information Agency, Prague Daily Monitor, Radio Prague, dailies Hospodarske noviny, Pravo, MF Dnes and Lidove noviny

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