

Business Briefs

Health

Laboratory worker contracts AIDS

Scientists have reported the first instance of a laboratory worker who became infected with AIDS on the job—despite taking all recommended precautions. The finding, reported in the Dec. 31 issue of *Science* magazine, is the first officially recognized case in which a researcher handling highly concentrated AIDS virus was infected, even though he wore gloves, a mask, and other protective clothing, and apparently had no accidents with the virus.

The researcher worked in a lab affiliated with the National Cancer Institute. NCI's Dr. William Blattner, who headed up a research team which investigated the incident, told UPI that "the most plausible source of exposure was contact of the individual's gloved hand" with a concentrated AIDS solution. He did not discuss the possibility that the worker may have been infected via aerosol transmission.

International Trade

U.S. wants concessions from South Korea

In the first week of January, South Korean Deputy Prime Minister Chung In Yong is scheduled to visit the United States to try to ward off a major new round of "Korea-bashing" on trade and tariff issues. Immediately after the Dec. 16 victory of ruling party candidate Roh Tae Woo, the United States announced plans to force South Korea, its fifth-largest trading partner, to open its economy to more U.S. imports, beginning with beef, cigarettes, and insurance. The United States will also push for a major appreciation of the South Korean currency, the won, to cut South Korea's exports.

South Korea's strong economy (12.2% growth in 1987) has provided a decisive margin of stability in the country, and was a chief factor in Roh's election victory. U.S. trade war against the country will fuel the opposition forces, and particularly hurt the

ruling party's strongest base, among farmers.

Two of the rumored chief beneficiaries of the proposed changes, are among the government's most dangerous adversaries: the R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Co. and the C.V. Starr-American International Group insurance empire of Maurice Greenberg.

R.J. Reynolds set up the Washington, D.C.-based ARCA Foundation, which funds the Korean opposition and its international support base, including the International Human Rights Law Group and the North American Coalition for Human Rights in Korea.

C.V. Starr-AIG chief executive "Hank" Greenberg, an associate of the late CIA chief Bill Casey, played a key role in the overthrow of Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos. Through his Philippine-American Life, the single largest liquidity pool in the Philippines, Greenberg controlled the figures who wrecked the Philippine economy, including former Finance Minister Jaime Ongpin, Central Bank Chief Jose Fernandez, and Development Bank head Cesar Zalamea. Greenberg maintains joint-venture insurance companies with Poland, Romania, and Hungary, and was to insure the 1980 Moscow Olympics, before the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.

Commodities

Japan to cut Iranian oil imports

Japan's Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI) asked the nation's six major trading companies and four oil companies to cut oil imports from Iran to no more than 200,000 barrels per day, Tokyo's leading business newspaper, *Nihon Kezai Shimbun*, reported Dec. 26. The measure is in retaliation for Iran's bombing of ships in the Persian Gulf. In the previous six months, the companies bought about 300,000 barrels per day from Iran.

Although spokesmen for MITI and the foreign ministry refused to comment on the report, the newspaper quoted a MITI source saying, "This decision was made in consideration of Japanese Prime Minister Noboru

Takeshita's visit to the United States in January." Takeshita is scheduled to return to the United States on Jan. 12 to discuss several additional trade issues.

Domestic Credit

FDIC may show first loss ever

The Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, the U.S. government agency that insures almost \$2 trillion in deposits of the country's commercial banks, could very well post its first annual loss in its 54 years of existence.

Its chairman, L. William Seidman, said Dec. 27 that the cost of handling close to 200 bank failures in 1987 meant that the FDIC would "be hard pressed to break even this year." Even though the losses were played down as small, only 2% of the agency's fund (between \$200 and \$300 million), it nonetheless was perceived as one more indication of the shaky state of the country's finances.

Last summer, Congress passed a bailout program for the Federal Savings and Loan Insurance Corporation (FSLIC), the saving industry's insurance fund, and in December, Congress approved a \$4 billion bailout of the Farm Credit System.

International Credit

German banker expects new world depression

"Few have stopped to realize that the architects of the Louvre Accord of 1987 are the architects of the crash of 1987, and that the great crash of 1929 was ushered in by a similar agreement to stabilize the ailing British pound." So said former Dresdner Bank chief economist Kurt Richebächer, now an independent consultant, in an interview with financial correspondent Leonard Silk, reported in the *International Herald Tribune* Dec. 27, under the heading, "Amid Upbeat Forecasts, A Lone Voice of Warning."