

ical research program proposed by former Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone at the 1987 Venice summit, be launched soon, even if initially on a small scale.

After the final meeting of the international feasibility study group, the spokesman announced that Japan will launch a domestic version of the program this year, possibly opening an international office in 1989.

The project, to study the workings of the human brain and other molecular-biological functions, was originally proposed as a 20-year, \$6 billion project.

A final report by 27 scientists from the summit nations and the European Community nations, will be completed by April, and Japanese officials will then visit the seven industrial nations to seek support.

Japan will probably make "a significant contribution" toward the financing, Arimoto said. The full program, he said, would consist of an international board of scientists, making 30-50 grants per year of \$400,000-\$500,000 for research, and offering 100-200 fellowships to young scientists.

Markets

Brady, others warn of new crash

Testifying before the Senate Agriculture Committee, which oversees the Commodity Futures Trading Commission, Nicholas Brady called for giving one agency the authority of a super regulator, since all markets are closely tied together.

In February, Brady, who headed the presidential commission that studied why the stock markets crashed in October, and earlier this year delivered recommendations on how to prevent another crash, told the Senate Banking Committee, "We are looking down the barrel, and the gun is still loaded."

In his testimony March 18, he added, "If action is not taken, the structural factors that contributed to the October decline will come together again in the form of a different mousetrap. Next time, it could be the currency markets, the clearing and settlement system, or any one of a number of other factors."

AIDS

Contaminated blood shipped to Washington

Twenty-four units of blood contaminated with AIDS and hepatitis B were accidentally sent from Red Cross centers to hospitals in Washington, D.C. and Nashville, Tennessee, the *Washington Post* reported March 19. Federal officials denied that any of the infected blood had been transfused and said they were "virtually certain" it had been destroyed or quarantined.

Two senior Red Cross officials have been suspended for 30 days because of the incident, pending an investigation. The error involved blood that had tested positive for the diseases and should have been discarded. "An ongoing investigation by FDA at the two blood centers has revealed that standard operating procedures were not following in handling these blood products," the Public Health Service said March 18.

Labor

Supreme Court: no food stamps for strikers

The U.S. Supreme Court has ruled that labor strikers have no right to food stamps—although all other persons whose incomes fall to specified levels to qualify.

By a vote of 5 to 3, Justices Rehnquist, O'Connor, Scalia, White, and Stevens delivered their opinion: "Exercising the right to strike inevitably risks economic hardship, but we are not inclined to hold that the right to association requires the government to minimize that result by qualifying the striker for food stamps."

Justices Marshall, Brennan, and Blackmun, in their dissenting opinion, wrote that the Supreme Court was intentionally giving employers a weapon to use against trade unions. "No other purpose can adequately explain the especially harsh treatment reserved for strikers and their families," wrote Marshall.

Briefly

● **THE FEDERAL** Home Loan Bank Board announced March 19 that it will guarantee all the depositors and general creditors of the California-based American Savings and Loan Association, the nation's second largest savings bank. American Savings had filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission at the end of 1987, saying that its net worth was a negative \$106 million. One day earlier, the FDIC had announced an emergency \$1 billion bailout for Dallas's First Republic Bank.

● **THE RHINEHAUSEN** steel plant in West Germany's Ruhr industrial heartland may be sold to China at 20-30% of its value, the daily *Die Welt* reported March 19. It is one of the most modern steel plants in the world, making steel coils and specialty products. Chinese representatives are touring Rhinehausen and other bankrupt Ruhr plants, with the intention of buying them and transporting them back to China. At the end of 1987, the Chinese bought an entire motor-bike factory in Bavaria, took it back to China, and reassembled it.

● **MAGNETBAHN** Transrapid of West Germany has set a new world record for passenger train speed, 412.6 km/hour. A decision is expected in June on the location and construction of Transrapid's pilot application stretch.

● **JAPAN** now has the lowest infant mortality rate in the world, the *Japan Times* reported March 15. The rate of 4.9 per 1,000 is far lower than even Sweden and Finland, with 6 deaths per 1,000. Japan also, however, has one of the highest rates of abortion in the world, which eliminates many high-risk infants. Its Eugenic Protection Law allows abortions as late as the second trimester to "prevent the increase of inferior descendants and to protect the life of the mother."