

Business Briefs

Biological Holocaust

AIDS Takes Toll in South Africa, Kenya

An estimated 35,000 of South Africa's nurses are HIV-positive, and AIDS is making alarming inroads into the ranks of student nurses, the South African *Star* reported on Sept. 5. Even though the provincial Gauteng Health Department says that no HIV surveys have been undertaken in provincial nursing colleges, statistics released by members of the profession show that half of the first-year nursing students at one of Gauteng's four state nursing colleges are HIV-positive, and that one Gauteng nursing student a month dies of AIDS-related complications. The Forum for Professional Nurses Leaders was told at a conference in Midrand on Sept. 4, that an estimated 25,000 (20%) of nearly 174,000 registered nurses are HIV positive.

Thousands of nurses are leaving South Africa for greener pastures. Hospital Association of South Africa executive director Dr. Annette van der Merwe said that AIDS started to hit the profession at a time when staffing levels were at an all-time low.

In Kenya, at least 10,000 teachers have died of HIV/AIDS over the last five years, with 1,400 succumbing to the disease in the last year, according to Dr. Sobbie Mulindi, a consultant with the Kenya Institute of Education and a lecturer at the University of Nairobi's Medical School. In a recent address to the staff of the Kenya Institute of Education, Dr. Mulindi talked about how the disease had impacted staffing and distribution of teachers nationwide. He called for urgent development of a policy on treating orphans and home-based care for the infected, and said that the number of orphans, currently 1 million, will top 1.6 million by 2005.

Petroleum

Kazaks Invite Malaysia To Develop Oil Fields

Kazakhstan's Ambassador to Malaysia Bolatkan Taizhan said on Sept. 4 that his government has invited Petronas, Malaysia's

state-owned oil company, to help Kazakhstan tap its newly detected vast oil fields, the Malaysian *Business Times* reported on Sept. 4. The Kazaks plan to use these new finds to increase their annual oil output from 30 million tons to 100 million tons, within the next three or four years.

The project comes in the context of Kazakhstan's building of three new pipelines, to Turkey, China, and Iran. The role of Petronas brings a new aspect into Kazak oil policy, which has been largely dependent on contracts with Western oil companies such as Royal Dutch Shell, British Petroleum, and Chevron.

For the Kazaks, the envisaged cooperation with Malaysia officially moves along the policy of "diversification." But the new overture to Malaysia (a "rogue nation" for Wall Street and the City of London) is certain to enrage Anglo-American geopoliticians (such as Zbigniew Brzezinski), who are getting nervous about Kazakhstan's exclusive new oil and gas contracts with Russia, at the expense of their own interests.

Argentina

Foreign Debt Threatens Existence as a Nation

"A harsh epitaph threatens to fall on us, burying our purpose, and our duty, to effectively constitute a free, just, and sovereign nation. You can guess what that epitaph would be: Here lies the Argentine Republic. She lived paying, and died owing," said Msgr. Hector Aguer, Archbishop of La Plata, in his address concluding a 12-hour hearing on Argentina's foreign debt, held by the congressional Bicameral Jubilee 2000 Commission, on Aug. 22. Monsignor Aguer noted that debt forgiveness was offered to many very poor countries, only at the point they could no longer pay.

If creditors don't stop their usury and looting, Aguer warned, "they won't find in the debtors even that classic pound of human flesh, which the, until now, most famous of usurers [Shylock] has demanded." The 500 people in the audience jumped to their feet in a standing ovation, and then, led by Hugo Moyano, the leader of the "rebel" CGT labor

federation, gave one of several spontaneous renditions of the national anthem, with its opening line, "Hear, O Mortals, the sacred cry: freedom, freedom, freedom. . . ."

Five panels during the hearing addressed different aspects of the debt problem. Among the speakers were Moyano, former Peronist Presidential candidate Eduardo Duhalde, Deputy Mario Cafiero (the head of the Jubilee 2000 committee), representatives of the World Bank and Inter-American Development Bank, as well as several other deputies, former government officials, human rights activists, and political leaders. Italian Ambassador Giovanni Januzzi referenced the Italian Senate's recent action to forgive \$6 billion in foreign debt.

The hearings took place in the midst of a dire economic crisis, and at a moment when federal Judge Jorge Ballesterro has ruled that the Argentine Congress must take up the case begun in 1982, to investigate former Finance Minister and Trilateral Commission member José Martínez de Hoz for causing the extraordinary growth of "illegitimate" debt under the 1976-83 military regime.

Health

China Facing Rapid Spread of AIDS Epidemic

China could have as many as 600,000 to 1 million AIDS victims this year, and the AIDS epidemic will cost China 460-770 billion yuan (\$50-90 billion) annually, according to an official report released in *China News Monthly*. Zeng Yi, an AIDS researcher at the Chinese Academy of Sciences, said, "If measures are not taken immediately, China will have the most AIDS victims in the world and the spread of AIDS will become a national disaster." An unchecked epidemic will destroy the hard-earned results of China's economic reforms, he said.

AIDS was virtually unheard of in China 15 years ago, but now, conservative estimates are that there are at least 500,000 people infected with HIV, and that number is increasing at an annual rate of 30%. Official figures are much smaller. The Ministry

THE ORGANIZATION of Petroleum Exporting Countries agreed to raise oil output by 800,000 barrels daily, just over 3%, effective Oct. 1. The decision is supposed to stop crude oil prices hikes, but as *EIR* has reported, oil price rises have nothing to do with supply shortages, but rather, a general trend toward hyperinflation in the speculative economy.

TAJIKISTAN is facing a serious food shortage as a result of drought. This year's wheat harvest is 236,000 tons, only half that harvested in 1999. If action is not taken immediately to set a up a food distribution system, the harsh winter will take a serious toll, one relief worker estimates.

QUEST, the telecommunications giant, announced on Sept. 8 that it will lay off 16% of its workforce, or 11,000 workers.

ESTONIA'S ports could be used for shipment of Chinese exports to western Europe, a prospect Chinese legislative head Li Peng discussed during his visit to Estonia, part of a five-nation tour of the Baltics, Belarus, and Russia, on Sept. 8. "China sees good prospects for its EU-bound trade going through Baltic ports," said Mart Helme, a former Estonian Foreign Ministry official.

INDIAN Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee outlined a new economic incentive package in August, at the National Conference on Small-Scale Industries, whereby loans up to 2.5 million rupees (roughly \$75,000) will be made available. Small-scale industries employ about 70% of India's workforce and generate 65% of the nation's exports.

CHINESE "dot-com" Internet firms are crashing, the *China Daily Business Weekly* reported on Sept. 3. These firms had not gone on the stock markets, and have no way to raise cash. With foreign "venture capital" pulling out, "It's not exaggerating to say 90% of Chinese dot-coms will go bankrupt by the end of this year," said Zhi Tan, CEO with 8848.net.

of Health's figure, of 15,088 reported AIDS victims in China since 1985, does not accurately describe the danger posed by the spread of the AIDS virus, according to the *China News Monthly* report. The official figure, a researcher said, "has little significance in relation to the size of the epidemic; it will only mislead policymakers and cause them to miss the excellent opportunity to fight AIDS."

Before 1994, most of China's AIDS victims were drug users in Yunnan province, but a June 1998 report by Qinghai province reported that, in only four years, AIDS had spread to 31 provinces and cities of China. In 1993, there were 10,000 AIDS victims in China. The figure rose to 30,000 in 1994, 100,000 in 1995, and 300,000 in 1998. By 1999, a conservative estimates put the figure at 500,000. The rapidity of the spread of AIDS, is greater than in Africa, the report states.

Economic Policy

ASEAN on Globalization: 'We're Losing Ground'

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) has released a report, blaming globalization for the region's sudden downturn, according to the Sept. 7 *New York Times*. ASEAN General Secretary Rodolfo Severino wrote in the report, "Continent-sized economies and trade partnerships . . . pose a serious challenge to the ASEAN in the global competition for markets and investments." The statement is in contrast to a report issued last July, which expressed confidence in ASEAN's ability to meet the "challenges" of globalization.

An ASEAN spokesman admitted that it was a "mistake" that the report was not released at the end of the foreign ministers' meeting in late July, but premature leaking of the report led to its recall in order to omit references that cast doubt on member countries' commitment to economic reform.

The *New York Times* uses the pretext of the report's release to bash ASEAN's "lack of commitment to reform" as the main cause of the group's "failure to compete"

and "dwindling share of exports to the U.S." ASEAN is taken to task for its slow transition to the "new economy." Only in passing does the *Times* note that "Asia lacks much of the physical infrastructure required for electronic commerce to take off."

Nuclear Energy

Russia Plans To Sell Power to Far East

Russia plans to build a nuclear power plant in its Far Eastern region between 2010 and 2020 and hopes to supply Japan with electricity from the facility, Russia's Acting Minister for Atomic Energy Yevgeny Adamov said at a press conference in Tokyo on Sept. 6. Commenting on possible purchases of power by Japanese companies, Adamov said, "Japan would not have to worry about the problem of treating nuclear waste. Besides, it will be able to obtain power at a much lower cost than if it built a nuclear power plant of a similar size in Japan." Russia would build transmission lines to export power to Japan and other Northeast Asian countries, Adamov said.

Japan's Marubeni Corp. and UES, Russia's electric power monopoly, also agreed on Sept. 5 that the Japanese trading company will begin a feasibility study on supplying electricity to Japan from Russia's Sakhalin Island, company officials said. The 1 trillion yen (\$10 billion) project calls for building a large power plant in central Sakhalin and for the electricity to be carried via an underwater cable to Japan. To fuel the 4,000 megawatt plant, natural gas produced under the Sakhalin 1 and 2 natural gas development plans will be used. Marubeni and other Japanese companies are participating in the plans, with Marubeni and UES aiming to begin supplying power in 2010.

Russian President Vladimir Putin proposed the arrangement as the centerpiece of Japan-Russia economic cooperation, during his visit to Japan on Sept. 3-5. Marubeni plans to invite other Japanese firms, including trading houses, power utilities, and electric wire manufacturers, to join the project and seek financial aid from the Japanese government.