

Business Briefs

Food Supply

Tajikistan, Uzbekistan Face Emergencies

International Red Cross and Red Crescent Society representatives have sounded the alarm on food shortages in two Central Asian republics, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

In Tajikistan, the Red Cross estimates that 1 million people are in dire straits for food, following a two-year drought, compounded by a decrepit irrigation system and increased dependence on unsafe water sources, that has led to a severe collapse in grain production. Last year, people had already begun to sell whatever they could to purchase food, including the doors, windows, and roofs of their homes.

The Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies have requested \$4 million for food through the Winter and for clothing for 65,000 schoolchildren, and \$602,000 for Uzbekistan, also suffering drought and food shortages.

Health

Brazil Will Break AIDS Patent To Meet Crisis

Brazilian Health Minister José Serra announced on Aug. 22 that the government will declare AIDS a national emergency, and under that emergency, start production at the national laboratory of nelfinavir, an anti-retroviral drug for which Hoffman-La Roche holds the patent.

Serra told reporters in Brasilia, "This is an emergency situation. I'm not going to stop giving this medication to 25,000 people, but the only way we can continue . . . is if we can lower prices." He told the Aug. 23 *Washington Post*, "We will still pay some royalties, but we must insist that lives come before profits. On that, there can be no compromise."

Brazil had warned two pharmaceutical firms more than six months ago that they must lower prices on specific anti-retroviral drugs, or Brazil would act. Merck & Co.

agreed last March to cut prices on two drugs, by 65% and 59%, but Hoffman-La Roche apparently offered a measly 13% cut. One-fourth of Brazil's AIDS budget currently is spent on importing nelfinavir.

The mechanism used will be that of "compulsory licensing," under which the Brazilian government grants another company the license to produce, but pays royalties to the patent holder. The plan is to have a generic version of the medication available by February 2002. The state laboratory, Farmanguinhos, has reportedly successfully copied the drug, and has only to carry out a few more tests before production gets under way.

The *Washington Post* commented, "Although India, South Africa, and other nations are also developing generic AIDS drugs, Brazil is emerging as the world leader in the crusade to break down what Serra called 'the AIDS monopolies' held by large, foreign pharmaceutical companies."

Israel

Health Minister Warns, Hospitals Lack Medicine

The long-drawn-out conflict with the Palestinians has had devastating effects on the Israeli economy, including its public hospital system. Israel's Minister of Health Nissim Dahan, a member of the Shas party, issued a dramatic alarm in an interview on Israel Radio, the daily *Ha'aretz* reported on Aug. 24. Dahan called on Israelis to avoid checking into hospitals, because they are about to run out of medicine. "I gave the warning several months ago, but nobody wanted to listen to us . . . like the country's second water crisis. We said that there would not be any water, but the Treasury took no notice. Crises are only solved in Israel at the last minute," he said.

Most responsible for the crisis, Dahan said, are Finance Minister Silvan Shalom and other senior Treasury officials: "The Treasury boys do not understand a whit about health issues, they are not ready to understand and do not want to listen. . . . The only thing that interests them is how much

money they can save the government. This is on the backs of people who will start to die. . . . They will die, because there is no money for medicine, no money for dialysis. This is the reality, I personally checked up on the situation."

Dahan said, "Twice I have arranged to meet Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, but to my dismay, he hasn't found the time for the Health Ministry. I think he should end his vacation, and I hope that with one phone call to the Finance Ministry he will be able to solve the problem. . . . Let there be no misunderstandings: This is a catastrophe. This is the reality."

Fusion Energy

New Laser Approach Demonstrated in Japan

Recent experimental work using the "Gekko 12" laser system at Japan's Osaka University Institute for Laser Engineering, has achieved a doubling in the efficiency for "igniting" fusion plasma by ultra-short laser pulses. This work, done in cooperation with Britain's Rutherford-Appleton Laboratory, is reported in Britain's *Nature* magazine and featured widely in the British press in late August. It will be a major subject at an international fusion conference, to be held in Japan in September.

The Osaka experiment is directed toward realizing the so-called "fast ignitor" approach to laser fusion. In this approach, two successive laser pulses are used to compress, and then ignite, the fusion fuel contained in a spherical pellet, initially the size of a grain of sand. First, the pellet is hit from all sides by a relatively long (one-billionth of a second, or nanosecond) pulse, delivered by the multiple-beam Gekko 12 laser, resulting in an implosion to high densities. Next, a single, ultra-short (less than a trillionth of a second, or picosecond) laser pulse is directed at the center of the pellet, to achieve "ignition" of fusion reactions.

The method used to generate such ultra-short pulses, known as "chirped pulse amplification," was pioneered in the United States by the University of Rochester in the 1980s

THE JAPANESE chip manufacturer Toshiba on Aug. 25 announced plans to cut 20,000 jobs, including 10,000 jobs inside Japan, following just days after rival Fujitsu announced 16,400 job cuts. Toshiba is also planning to scale back its manufacturing of its dynamic random access memory chip by 25%.

DEATH RATES for adults in some areas of Asia will rise 40% in the next decade because of AIDS, a new report from the World Health Organization warns. The hardest-hit countries will include Cambodia, Myanmar, Thailand, and a few states in India. India alone could see one-third of a million deaths due to AIDS in 2005, the WHO forecasts.

GERMAN Free Democrats from the East Westphalia-Lippe section of the party recommended a national maglev rail grid among all big German cities, according to news wire reports on Aug. 21. Gudrun Koppe, a member of the Bundestag (parliament) in Berlin, said that this could replace domestic air travel, because passengers would be able to travel to any city in Germany in about the same time. "This technology should be realized as soon as possible," she said.

10,000 AUSTRALIAN cancer patients a year die prematurely, or suffer inadequate pain and symptom control or a reduced quality of life from lack of radiotherapy because of budget cuts, the Aug. 21 *The Age* reported. The report was based on the "National Strategic Plan for Radiation Oncology," a study prepared by the College of Radiologists, the Institute of Radiography, and College of Medical Scientists and Engineers. The report forecasts that the number of such patients will double by 2005.

SOUTH KOREA has been threatened with retaliation by the United States if it proceeds with plans to save its largest chip producer, Hynix. The firm is facing collapse if it doesn't get a \$4 billion loan from government-linked banks and a \$1.25 billion debt-for-equity swap.

and perfected for fusion and other applications at the Lawrence Livermore Laboratory in the 1990s. It permits an increase of 10,000 or more times in the energy flux-density of the laser pulse, by a corresponding "time-compression" of the pulse.

However, the efficiency of igniting a pre-compressed fusion pellet by such an ultra-short pulse, has been limited by the effects of dissipation or "defocussing" of the pulse in traversing the outer layers of the imploded pellet. In the recent experiments, this difficulty was overcome in the following way: First, a tiny, hollow cone of gold is produced, using high-precision machining techniques. The narrow end of the gold cone, with a tiny opening in it, is inserted into a hole made in the side of the fusion pellet. When the pellet, thus mounted on the cone, is hit by the first pulse, the sharp end of the cone, given its much higher mass-density, implodes much more slowly than the pellet material. Before that happens, the second, ultra-short pulse is sent in along the axis of the cone, passing via the cone directly to the center of the compressed pellet. The cone acts as a channel for the pulse, while screening away evaporated pellet material from getting in the way of the ignition pulse.

High Technology

Hong Kong Studying Maglev Link to Mainland

"The Hong Kong Transport Authority is currently in discussion with mainland railroad bureaus, to study the feasibility of exploiting the magnetic levitation train technology to connect Hong Kong with Guangzhou [Canton], Beijing, Shanghai, and other points," China News Service reported on Aug. 16.

"The Hong Kong government has just recently inquired into the possibilities of the European as well as Japanese maglev systems, which are considered to be the development trend for passenger transportation in the new century. The present maglev technologies are most suited for long-distance lines. The longer the distance, the larger the population using the line and the more stable the passenger load, the more effective they are," the news commentary said.

China News Service continued: "Experts note, that conventional wheel-based trains need about 31 hours to traverse the more than 2,000 kilometer-long line from Hong Kong to Beijing. If the magnetic levitation train, with speeds up to 400 km per hour, is used, then the travel time is shortened to five hours. Provided the price of the ticket is reasonable, the maglev system can attract many passengers who now travel by air. Besides this, the first domestic-built maglev train has just left the factory, making China the third country, after Germany and Japan, to master this technology."

Serbia

'LaRouche Represents The Real America'

The director of the Yugoslav Institute of International Politics and Economics, Prof. Blagoje Babic, in the Aug. 22 Serbian daily *Glas Javnosti*, introduced the Serbian public to Lyndon LaRouche. According to the author, he wanted "to save the readers from the simplified view, that all Americans have the same view of the world as the 'BAC [British-American-Commonwealth] empire.'"

Professor Babic elaborated the distinction between the two American traditions—the "Southern Strategy" versus the "American System of political economy," which defends the republic, fosters industry, and recognizes the sovereignty of all states. He underlined that LaRouche is today the heir of this latter American tradition, from Alexander Hamilton, Abraham Lincoln, Franklin Roosevelt, and John F. Kennedy.

The author wrote, "I suggested indirectly, that with the [Presidential election] victory of Mr. LaRouche we should have another America and another world."

In 1990, shortly before the Balkans war broke out, the institute had organized an infrastructure conference of all the Balkan and southern European countries, reflecting LaRouche's Productive Triangle approach. In June of this year, a Schiller Institute delegation visited Belgrade for the first time to present LaRouche's analysis of the breakdown crisis, and his proposals for a New Bretton Woods and a Eurasian Land-Bridge.