

Business Briefs

Rail Transport

Maglev train through G.D.R. proposed

The project for a magnetically levitated rapid-transit train route on East German territory was proposed by a group of Christian Democrat (CDU) deputies in Bonn on April 10. The Ministry of Research and Technology, long in favor of this project, is expected to put the proposal on the government's agenda for June-July.

"In addition to the political and economic changes on the territory of the German Democratic Republic, there is also a chance of a new start in the application of modern technology," the CDU deputies report. "The realization of a rapid transit route from Hanover to Berlin, with a stop in Magdeburg and a connection to the industrial fair city of Leipzig, would demonstrate to the entire world what the potential capacity of German-German cooperation in the area of high technology is."

Concrete plans for other railroad projects would not be affected, the authors declare, endorsing the "restoration and extension of the rail grid of the G.D.R. for the urgently required transport of goods."

used to take care of "essential parts of passenger transport" and thereby relieve congestion.

Agriculture

Japan, Taiwan, South Korea farmers unite

Leaders of agricultural cooperatives from South Korea, Japan, and Taiwan formed a united front on April 4 and inaugurated a forum called the Far Eastern Agricultural Cooperatives Collaboration Council (FEACC), to coordinate the fight against import liberalization, promote technical and economic cooperation, and to develop an international cooperative movement to battle imports of farm products.

Korea's Han Ho-sun, chairman of the National Agricultural Cooperative Federation (NACF), Japan's Mitsugu Horiuchi, president of the Central Union of Agricultural Cooperatives and Taiwan's Wu Ming-chin, president

of the Farmers' Association, signed the agreement to form the group in Seoul.

An international rice symposium also opened on April 4 at NACF headquarters in Seoul to discuss the "present situation and future direction of the policy on demand, supply, and price of rice."

Transportation

Airport delays see rapid increase

Delayed flights at U.S. airports are rapidly increasing and topped 400 per day in the New York area, according to the April 13 *New York Times*.

Flight delays rose 111% at La Guardia airport, 52% at Kennedy International, and 17% at Newark International last year, while nationally delays rose 13%. Total flights delayed rose to over 400 in the 10-mile radius which encompasses the New York area airports.

Federal Aviation Administration officials have attributed the increase in delays to various factors, the most pervasive being the shortage of fully trained air traffic controllers. The number of controllers is now lower than in 1981 when President Reagan fired the striking members of the air traffic controllers union, although the number of flights has increased 58%.

Basic Industry

Japanese investment continues to grow

Japanese high-technology investment in basic industry continues to grow and be profitable, an April 11 *New York Times* article reported.

Japan now leads all nations in capital investment in absolute terms. Even though Japan's economy is only about 60% the size of America's, the Japanese now invest \$750 billion a year in new plant and equipment—a staggering 24% of national output—compared to \$500 billion by the U.S., about 10% of GNP.

While U.S. companies most often invest to expand output, Japan tends to concentrate on new products and on new, productivity-boosting technologies. "It's a bit scary," said Kenneth S. Courtis of Deutsche Bank in Tokyo. "What we are seeing is Japan becoming the new product laboratory for the world."

The *Times* reported that Japan's industrial leadership made a conscious decision after the Plaza Hotel accord in 1985, which aimed at undercutting its international trade dominance, to compensate for the shift in exchange rates by plowing money into cost-reducing investments. While the country has pioneered high-tech areas like microchips and electronics, investment in traditional heavy manufacturing like steel and shipbuilding remains high.

Poverty

Poorest in U.S. are the youngest

The United States' "poorest citizens are its youngest. The 23% poverty rate for children under six is more than double the rate for adults," according to a report issued by the Columbia University National Center for Children in Poverty, the April 15 *Washington Post* reported.

"A higher proportion of the nation's youngest children lives in poverty now than in 1969 or 1979. Five million young children live in families with incomes below the poverty line. . . . Half of black children and 40% of Hispanic children in this age group are in families who live in poverty," the report said.

"Poor children are more likely than non-poor children to be low achievers in school and to eventually drop out. They are more likely to engage in delinquent and criminal behavior, to become unmarried teen parents and to be welfare-dependent," it said.

James Weill, general counsel of the Children's Defense Fund, told the *Post*: "President Bush and the governors have set education goals for the year 2000. But we can't accomplish any meaningful national goals nor can we enter the 21st century as a strong and competitive nation unless we drastically reduce the child-poverty rate."

Briefly

Waste Technology

New method promises to rid toxic waste

A new waste-processing method, known as supercritical water oxidation (SCWO), promises a high degree of effectiveness in eliminating toxic wastes.

The process uses water heated to 705°F and under pressure of 3,200 pounds per square inch to convert 99% of a liquid waste into a stable residue in seconds. Such materials as dioxins, pesticides, PCBs, pathological wastes, and nitro organic compounds have been successfully destroyed, the *Houston Chronicle* reported April 4.

A research team at the University of Texas at Austin recently completed successful testing of the process in pilot projects. Dr. Ernest F. Gloyna, who headed the research, said the pilot scale reactors used at the Balcones Research Center could provide the basic design for industrial reactors "to meet the ultimate EPA [Environmental Protection Agency] goals of virtually zero discharge of unwanted wastes into the environment." Gloyna believes the process could handle almost any toxic waste or sludge in industrial plants or municipal sewage systems.

MODAR Waste Systems Inc. of Houston and Lummus Crest Inc. have joined in an agreement to market the SCWO process. They are now designing their first 20,000 gallon-per-day plant.

Water Transport

Elbe River waterway revival considered

Reviving the waterway of the Elbe River between Hamburg, West Germany, and Prague is a project being considered by industries and trading companies in Hamburg. In one internal discussion paper, "The Economy of Hamburg in a Unified Germany," the authors endorse several projects.

The report endorses rebuilding the Elbe River into the main central waterway for the transport of goods between Prague and Ham-

burg, becoming the Central and south East European "gateway to the world."

It suggests that modern, computer-controlled container transport by ship be organized from three coordination centers—likely Hamburg and Prague, with a third to be built in the southern German Democratic Republic. Restoration, modernization, and extension of traditional rail routes from Hamburg to Berlin and the other centers of industrial production of the G.D.R. and Czechoslovakia like Magdeburg, Dessau, Leipzig, Dresden, and Prague, is also suggested.

A connection from this main grid to the Baltic port of Rostock is envisioned, and a division of labor between Hamburg, and Kiel, Lübeck, and Rostock as central ports on the German coast for the Baltic trade, is endorsed. A future role for the shipbuilding center of East Germany at Wismar is included in the proposal.

The Senate of Hamburg, the municipal authority, is expected to decide on the projects and their funding before summer.

Health

Measles epidemic in Mexico still raging

The measles epidemic in Mexico continues to grow. With 18,517 cases reported in the first 12 weeks of 1990, the rate of infection is 80% higher than in the previous 12 weeks.

"There is no more information beyond what has already been released," a government official said when asked for more information. The official said, "There are instructions from above that officials cannot speak on this matter." UNICEF also responded that they couldn't provide any figures, because they were all coming from the Ministry of Health, and "the question of measles in Mexico is very delicate."

So far in 1990, there have been 300 deaths, mostly children. In Chiapas state, there have been several cases where entire families have become ill and died. In general, the susceptibility of the population, and high mortality rate, are due to the greatly reduced diet which the Mexican population has been forced to live on in recent years.

● **GLASS-STEAGALL**, a Depression-era act to curb speculative banking operations, was further eroded April 10 when a U.S. Court of Appeals rejected a request from the Securities Industry Association to review a Federal Reserve Board order allowing banks to underwrite and market corporate debt and equity securities.

● **JAPANESE** machine tool builders received \$10.48 billion in orders for February from a year ago, a 29.4% increase. This is almost ten times greater than the \$194.55 million in orders placed with U.S. machine tool builders, since the Japanese economy is one-half the size of the U.S. economy.

● **JOHN CHAMBERLAIN** said the world has experienced an abortion, not a population, explosion with "10 or so per woman in China, 7 in Soviet Russia," in a review of *New World, New Mind*, by "population bomb" guru Paul Ehrlich in the April 10 *Richmond Times-Dispatch*. Ehrlich is "ignoring the figures that show we are faced in the long term with a declining world population," he said.

● **OF PROSTITUTES** in New York City, one of three is carrying the AIDS virus, according to a study financed by the Atlanta Centers for Disease Control and the New York State Health Department. Prior New York City studies had shown infection rates ranging from 9 to 21%.

● **COLORADO** health officials reported that a rare form of streptococcus related to that which causes strep throat has killed 11 Denver-area people. Three years ago, Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association eliminated coverage for throat cultures which could diagnose strep throat.

● **SOUTH KOREA** will attend a meeting of the Mekong Committee, a body encouraging economic development of war-torn areas along the Mekong River, and comprised of Vietnam, Laos, and Thailand.