

Business Briefs

International Credit

Former Nigerian leader calls for debtors' cartel

Nigeria and other debtor nations should form a debtors' cartel, former military leader Olu-segun Obsanjo told a conference in the capital city of Lagos on July 6. Debt rescheduling does not help solve the problem. With parliamentary elections now out of the way, with the Social Democrat Party winning, Nigerians are now focusing on the debt and the onerous demands of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), he said.

Democracy, which has been demanded by the United States and other creditors, will not survive in Nigeria unless there is substantial debt relief and new funds are pumped into the country, Nigerian bankers concurred at the conference. As Reuters pointed out, "The new government will find it virtually impossible to meet debt servicing obligations and at the same time carry out domestic social and economic programs."

The total foreign debt of the 156 developing sector countries to banks and non-banks in the 20 OECD countries was \$790.4 billion at the end of 1991, compared to \$777.3 billion at the end of 1990, the Bank for International Settlements reported July 9. These figures do not cover the total foreign indebtedness of countries and territories, but represent a very substantial portion of their foreign debt, the BIS said.

Space

NASA creates post for Russian programs

NASA Administrator Daniel Goldin announced July 7 that Samuel Keller, with NASA since 1960, has been appointed Associate Administrator for Russian Programs. Said Goldin, "NASA is actively pursuing opportunities for expanded cooperation in space activities with Russia. This area of international co-

operation is critical and warrants creation of this new position. Sam Keller has the kind of experience necessary to ensure that our relationship with the Russian space program is beneficial to both sides."

Keller has worked on international programs for NASA and has supervised various space science projects. He will work out of the Office of the Administrator. The agreement reached in June between President Bush and Russian President Boris Yeltsin, to fly astronauts on the Mir and cosmonauts on the Space Shuttle, will require high-level coordination between the two programs.

On July 9, the U.S. space agency announced that Goldin and the new National Space Council head, Brian Dailey, have left for Darmstadt, Germany where they will take part in a ceremony to mark the expected encounter of the European Giotto spacecraft with comet Grigg-Skjellerup.

On July 11, the delegation will travel to Moscow for several days of meetings with Russian space officials. They will tour facilities involved in both manned and robotic systems, including Star City where the cosmonauts are trained. "The primary importance of the trip to Moscow," Goldin stated, "is to get a first hand look at the Russian space program and to begin the process of building a long-term relationship."

Climate

Earth growing cooler, say scientists

The huge volcanic eruption in the Philippines last year and Third World slash-and-burn agriculture are cooling the Earth, scientists now report. The Earth is being significantly cooled by both the effects of the eruption of Mount Pinatubo, the largest in centuries, and of smoke generated by Third World burning of 5 billion tons of plant matter annually in tropical forests and grasslands.

Ellsworth Dutton of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) told the Associated Press that the planet's aver-

age temperature dropped about 1° between June 16, 1991 and May of this year: "It is a tremendous amount of cooling." The northern hemisphere has been cooled by 1.5°.

The Philippines volcano spewed out as much as 20 million tons of sulfur dioxide, which then formed a layer of sulfuric acid droplets in the stratosphere about 12-14 miles above sea level. This layer has been measured with laser radar instruments and is shading the Earth from a significant amount of sunlight, which has led to the atmospheric cooling. The cooling effects of Mount Pinatubo are projected to continue for about five years.

Separate reports from the University of Arizona and Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory in California project that burning of plant matter in the Third World is also having significant cooling effects.

Economic Policy

Chevènement outlines 'Growth Initiative'

In a point-by-point denunciation of the Maastricht Treaty as an attack on national sovereignty, former French Defense Minister Jean-Pierre Chevènement also outlined a proposal for European economic growth in the July 8 French daily *Le Monde*. The aim of this initiative, he wrote, would be to "solve both unemployment in the West, and stabilize the new democracies in the East and in the South. It would be the locomotive to a world economic upswing."

He stressed, "Such an initiative should favor a new model of development based on concrete projects: high-speed rail networks, nuclear security, environment, rehabilitation of old cities and railway networks in eastern Europe, pollution cleanup of the Mediterranean, industrial policy promoting sensitive sectors (automobile, electronics, aeronautics), preservation of a European defense industry, space projects, infrastructural projects. . . [and] social policies."

Such a policy, which needs financing on the order of several hundred billion francs per

Briefly

year, said Chevènement, "needs a break with the Maastricht criteria, and with the monetarist thinking modes: submission to financial markets and selection of projects only on the basis of short- or medium-term profitability."

He called for the state to insure investments in eastern Europe and in the Maghreb, in order to encourage companies to invest in risky countries.

Environmentalism

Appeals court bans farm pesticides

A U.S. appeals court decided July 8 to ban agricultural pesticides found to cause cancer in laboratory animals, even though the residues on processed foods are tiny and the cancer risk to humans is negligible. The ruling, which has no scientific basis, will increase the price of foods, especially fruits and vegetables. Some of the most common of the pesticides named in the ruling are fungicides, including benomyl and mancozeb.

The far-reaching decision reverses 34 years of U.S. practice and is a victory for the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC), which brought the lawsuit in 1989. The Environmental Protection Agency had defended the use of the four particular pesticides in question, and may appeal the case.

The NRDC, which brought the nation the Alar apple scare a few years ago, has recently targeted chlorination of water systems as a cause of cancer.

In making its decision, the three-judge panel of the Ninth Circuit in San Francisco reinterpreted the 1958 Delaney Clause, part of a congressional amendment that regulates food additives. The Delaney Clause prohibits food additives that are "found to induce cancer when ingested by man or animals," but had never included under its jurisdiction pesticide residues, which are unintentional food additives.

In a comment to *21st Century Science & Technology* magazine, Dr. Thomas Jukes of the University of California at Berkeley said,

"The decision shows scientific illiteracy. Practically all natural foods, and most processed foods, contain carcinogens either of natural origin or produced by heat. It has been repeatedly pointed out that the protective effect of fruits and vegetables against cancer is far greater than that of any possible effect of pesticides that are used according to regulations."

Russia

More attacks on IMF conditionalities

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) conditionalities demanded by the Group of Seven (G-7) industrial countries for Russia are wrongly conceived, since they have an "almost exclusively financial and monetary character," warned the lead editorial of France's *Le Monde* daily on July 10.

The French daily criticized the G-7 summit for acting in a completely inadequate way toward Russia despite all the claims of a success in Munich, especially as Russian President Boris Yeltsin's presence was the only thing that prevented the summit overall from being one grand "non-event."

The essential problem is not that conditions were imposed on aid to Russia, the daily wrote, since there must be conditions, but these conditions must not be primarily in the financial-monetary domain. By so insisting, the G-7 is "suppressing almost any chance of resolving" such problems as the Russian budget deficit. To insist on a drastic decrease in the budget deficit, as an essential condition, "makes no sense in the case of Russia," since it is impossible to put an end to the financial debacle unless "first and foremost, the economic problems are solved."

Le Monde said that what must be done first, is to return agricultural land to the producers, to adopt measures that help create a network of small and medium-sized enterprises, and to allow for these enterprises to import necessary goods, so that they can generate the revenues from which they can help build up the state's coffers.

● **MAZDA**, Japan's fourth largest auto maker, has successfully tested a hydrogen-fueled rotary engine, achieving continuous running at 150 kilometers per hour for 200 kilometers. Mazda says that it is more easily adapted to hydrogen fuel than piston engines, and a car can be equipped with it "for about the cost of air conditioning and audio equipment," said a company official.

● **'MOSCOW'S DOCTORS** are reporting an alarming rise in the number of abandoned babies and infants left to die on the streets," reported London's *Financial Times*. "Although cases are recorded year round, the problem is accentuated every spring when the thaw uncovers the frozen bodies of babies hidden by the winter snows."

● **CHILD POVERTY** in 33 U.S. states from 1979 to 1989 increased by 1.1 million (to a total of 11.2 million) between the censuses of 1980 and 1990, reports the Children's Defense Fund. CDF program director Olivia Goldin blamed declines in wages, a less effective safety net, and an increase of children with one parent.

● **JAPAN'S NEC Corp.** has developed a new technique for the detection of microbes in activated sludge used for treating industrial waste, according to a press release issued July 6. A solution of fluorescently labeled DNA is added to activated sludge and then selectively sticks to the RNA of specific target bacteria, which may be observed with a fluorescent detection microscope. This makes detection possible for some species in only four hours as opposed to weeks or months with existing technology.

● **THE MHD Development Corp.** will submit a proposal to retrofit the Corette coal plant in Montana with a magnetohydrodynamic (MHD) topping cycle. MHD has the potential to double the energy-to-electric conversion of power plants from today's average of about 30%, to near 60%.