

# Business Briefs

## ***'Free Market'***

### **Drugs the lead income source for many nations**

"Although not traded officially on the financial markets, illegal drugs constitute one of the most profitable commodities in the world today," wrote Rachel Ehrenfeld in a commentary in the Feb. 21 *New York Times*. "They are the main source of income for many economies. Both Mexico and Canada are involved—Canada mainly in money laundering, Mexico in drug trafficking." Many of her points were first elaborated in *Dope, Inc.*, commissioned by U.S. statesman Lyndon LaRouche.

"Canada has been especially hospitable to money launderers, who rely on an elaborate infrastructure within the international banking system itself, a network that includes bank accounts, trust companies, financial institutions, dummy corporations and other 'fixers' along the way," she charged.

President Clinton said recently in Detroit that he would focus on drug money as a way to deal with the drug problem. If he is serious, Ehrenfeld said, he must "take a fresh look at this nation's policies to combat the laundering of drug money, through bank regulations or other measures."

## ***Energy***

### **Indonesia, Malaysia to begin nuclear cooperation**

Malaysia and Indonesia are to sign a memorandum of understanding to promote cooperation in nuclear technology research, it was announced in Jakarta Feb. 12 by the Malaysian news service Bernama. The decision was made following talks between Indonesian Minister for Research and Technology B.J. Habibie and Malaysian Minister of Science, Technology and Environment Law Hieng Ding. Both countries have announced intentions of becoming industrialized countries in the near-term.

Law emphasized that the nuclear cooperation was purely for peaceful uses, with empha-

sis in the fields of industry, agriculture, and medicine. He noted that nuclear technology has wide applications, and could be used for industrial product testing like detecting defects in rubber gloves as well as improving yields and products in agriculture and medicine.

Indonesia has announced plans to build nuclear energy plants, and five companies have been tendered so far to build the first one. The Indonesian atomic energy agency has announced that Indonesia needs 7,000 megawatts of electricity from nuclear power alone to help meet its needs. Law said that the government has concluded that it is urgent to keep up with developments in the nuclear field, so that if the need arises, "we will be able to rapidly enter into the nuclear era."

An editorial last fall in *Business Times*, the Malaysian business daily, titled "No Way But the Nuke Way," made clear that there is interest in nuclear fusion, "the new kind of nuclear energy which will be cheap, clean and virtually inexhaustible; this is because the main fusion fuel, deuterium, a heavy form of hydrogen, can be easily extracted from water in nearly endless quantities."

## ***Africa***

### **Cholera is spreading like wildfire**

Cholera "is spreading through southern Africa like wildfire," stated Dr. Levon Arevshatian, the World Health Organization (WHO) representative in Zimbabwe, IPS news service reported from Harare on Feb. 16.

Arevshatian described cholera as a disease of poverty and underdevelopment. "I say so because the disease is prevalent in Africa where there is widespread poverty, economic crises, heavy indebtedness, and poor living conditions." He warned that "the disease is expected to become entrenched in the region unless there are improvements in the living conditions, the provision of clean water and sanitation, and the elimination of poverty."

Zimbabwe Health Minister Timothy Stamps told IPS that improved water and sanitation facilities are the only way to control the spread of the disease: "Cholera is affecting poverty-stricken people living in squalor and

having no access to clean water and good toilet facilities." Only 40% of Africa's population has access to safe water supplies and, according to the WHO representative, about 80% of ill health on the continent is attributable to polluted water from unprotected water holes and rivers or poor sanitation.

## ***Infrastructure***

### **European industrialists call for strategic plan**

The European Roundtable of Industrialists issued a white paper in mid-February, entitled "Action Plan for Europe," which calls for a massive infrastructure investment in Europe to stimulate an economic recovery. The group emphasized a strategic commitment to integrate eastern Europe into the European infrastructure grid. The plan echoed elements of Lyndon LaRouche's "Productive Triangle" proposal for concentrating infrastructure investment in the Paris-Berlin-Vienna region to fuel a global recovery.

"European industry needs decisive action to break out of the crisis of 1992, to rebuild confidence and make Europe work again," the white paper reads. The program calls for "massive investment in new infrastructure, to build linked European networks of roads and high-speed trains, combined transport systems and fully integrated air traffic control. No other measures have such decisive effect on the competitive efficiency of European industry; no other measures can act so quickly to stimulate economic recovery."

The report adds that such a major infrastructure commitment is "essential for the integration of central and eastern Europe into the mainstream of European economy." The group distances their call from traditional Keynesian pump-priming public spending: "This is a strategic program, not an old-fashioned Keynesian reflation. It should be designed to meet genuine economic needs for trans-European communications."

The group is composed of the chairmen of 40 of Europe's largest companies including Fiat, Volvo, Krupp, Philips, Hoechst, Daimler-Benz, and others.

## Science

### Space technology allows look inside living cells

Richard B. Hoover of the Marshall Space Flight Center in Huntsville, Alabama, has been named NASA inventor of the year 1992 for developing a new X-ray microscope that will permit scientists to see living atomic-scale structures for the first time, according to a NASA press release on Feb. 8.

Hoover developed his "water-window" technology as part of the program to develop X-ray telescopes for astrophysical investigations. The Hoover Water-Window Imaging X-ray Microscope will allow researchers to see in great detail high-contrast X-ray images of proteins, chromosomes, and other tiny carbon structures inside living cells. This new tool promises to revolutionize many areas of biological and medical research, including genetics, gerontology, gene splicing, cancer, medical diagnostics, and genetic engineering. It will have major applications to AIDS research in terms of analysis of viral HIV structures and assessment of real-time interactions of drugs and antibodies.

"This instrument essentially will allow us to see through the water and into the living cell with very high resolution and high contrast, without using dyes or stains which produce limitations," Hoover said. The microscope got its name because it is designed to operate in a wavelength region where water is transparent to X-rays, while carbon atoms are still opaque. The living cell is mainly water, though it is carbon structures that researchers want to see.

## Labor

### 200 million youths at risk because of IMF

According to a U.N. report presented by Viti Muntarbhron, Special Rapporteur of the U.N. Human Rights Commission, in Geneva in mid-February, 200 million children worldwide are at risk from prostitution, exploitation at work, pornography, slavery, and murder for their organs, IPS news service reported on

Feb. 17. The austerity policies of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) were blamed by some for this result.

The World Protection for Children group estimated that in Bangkok, Thailand alone, 200,000 children are forced to work as prostitutes. According to the Bangkok Central Hospital, 60% of those involved are 12-18 years old, and 54% suffer infectious diseases.

In a television documentary called "Children in Chains," Ahmed Abdallah, an economist in Cairo, reported that 10% of the active workforce in Egypt is made up of half a million children. Abdallah said the effects of economic structural adjustment programs imposed by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank have placed intolerable burdens on working class families, who are forced to put their children to work. In India, founder of the Front for the Liberation of Slaves, Swami Agnivesh, reported that there are over 55 million working children in his country, all severely exploited. In the United States, the report adds, over 500,000 Mexican children are forced to work in agricultural enterprises in California without social or medical security.

## Austerity

### Donors withhold aid to drought-stricken Tanzania

Loans to Tanzania for the 1992-93 fiscal year fell by 42.3% by the end of January, Reuters quoted the Tanzanian Finance Ministry on Feb. 17. Diplomats cited said the aid was being withheld to press President Ali Hassan Mwinji for faster implementation of economic reforms backed by the World Bank.

Diplomats said the West wants Mwinji to devalue the Tanzanian currency by 100%, trim the civil service, and stop alleged mismanagement of project funds.

World Bank officials told Reuters that Tanzania was unlikely to receive half of the \$1.2 billion due under agreements with western donors if it did not begin to implement sound economic management. A Finance Ministry official said that Tanzania had received only \$72.9 million of an agreed \$247.5 million from the International Monetary Fund.

● **A TUBERCULOSIS** outbreak in the Harris County, Texas jail is inevitable and will likely spread to the community, a report by a federal court jail monitor warns. County TB control efforts do not meet Centers for Disease Control guidelines, and many inmates refuse to undergo voluntary tests, partly because the jail charges inmates for them.

● **A YELLOW FEVER** epidemic has killed about 500 people in Kenya in the last four months, President Daniel arap Moi said in Nairobi on Feb. 8, Reuters reported. He said that health officials had been sent to his native Baringo and neighboring Elgeyo Marakwet districts in the Rift Valley to combat the epidemic.

● **ISRAEL AND CHINA** signed an agreement on Feb. 14 to collaborate on research in space technology, electronics, medical instruments, renewable energy, and agriculture, during a visit by eight Chinese scientists. The two countries established diplomatic ties one year ago.

● **THE TAIWAN** Air Force will make its own fighter jets next year, and expects to have 250 by 1999. Because of pressure from mainland China, Taiwan has not able to buy the arms it wants from western countries.

● **FARM LEADERS** from South Korea, Japan, and Taiwan agreed at a meeting in Seoul on Feb. 12 to work together to keep their rice markets closed to foreign imports. "In the Uruguay Round [of GATT] discussions, it must be noted that rice is our staple food and the main source of income for our farmers," they said in a joint statement.

● **PERSIAN GULF** nations are making huge arms purchases. "Iran's submarine purchases have set off a flurry of interest by other Gulf states in submarines and defenses against them," said an official at the International Defense Exhibition (IDEX 93) in Abu Dhabi on Feb. 15. Gulf Arab states are planning to spend \$10 billion a year on arms purchases until the year 2000.