

# Business Briefs

## Medical Research

### Radiotherapy offers new relief to cancer victims

Medical researchers at Brookhaven National Laboratory have developed a radioisotope-labeled compound that significantly relieves pain in advanced cancer patients whose cancer has spread to the bone, the *Brookhaven Bulletin* of Sept. 22 reported. The radiotherapeutic compound, Tin-117m DPTA, has none of the side-effects of the currently used narcotic pain relievers, is not toxic to the bone marrow, and does not require hospitalization. So far, in the two groups of patients treated, about 80% had substantial pain relief and 60% were able to "lead comparatively normal lives." Of this group, 20% were completely pain-free for follow-up periods lasting from one month to one year.

Work on the Tin-117m compound grew out of basic research at the lab on how tin is deposited in the body as an ingredient in blood-labeling testing kits. Researchers already knew that certain radioisotopes could relieve bone cancer pain without sedative effects, but these compounds (such as phosphorus-32) had potentially toxic effects on the sensitive bone marrow. With tin, the researchers looked for a form that would rapidly go to the bone and not to the spleen, liver, and bone marrow. After four years, they were successful in using a more stable form of tin.

## Asia-Pacific Region

### Australian calls for central bankers' bank

Complaining that the Bank of International Settlements was dominated by Europe, and alternatives such as the Asian Development Bank and the International Monetary Fund did not meet Asian central bank demands, the governor of the Reserve Bank of Australia has called for "a new regional institution." Bernie Fraser said recent international banking crises, such as the Mexican crisis, had highlighted the need for more cooperation in international banking.

His proposal, covered in *The Australian* on Sept. 27, is for the central banks of Australia, China, Hongkong, Indonesia, Korea, Malaysia, Japan, New Zealand, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand to form an Asia-Pacific version of the BIS in Basel, Switzerland.

Fraser is in the tradition of a former governor of the Reserve Bank of Australia, H.C. "Nugget" Coombs, who in the 1950s and 1960s, was responsible for setting up many of the Bank of England-modeled central banks in Asia. Coombs, who described himself as part of the "international freemasonry of central bankers," now heads up Australia's aboriginal land rights movement.

## Biological Holocaust

### AIDS crisis grows acute in Russia and Thailand

Russia's leading expert on AIDS warns that the country could face an "AIDS explosion," with up to 100,000 cases in the next five years.

Vadim Pokrovsky, head of the Russia AIDS Center, is quoted in the London *Guardian* on Sept. 30: "I am pessimistic about the future. On current trends, we could have up to 100,000 AIDS patients in five years. This would be a huge burden for our health service."

Last year, the number of reported cases rose by 80% in Moscow alone.

Aside from the usual discussion about "sexual practices" and lack of use of condoms, the *Guardian* article mentions a significant cause of the spread of the disease: that hospitals themselves are to blame, because of use of dirty needles or untested blood. Of 279 HIV-positive children, some 200 were infected in this way.

Life expectancy in Thailand will plummet by 30 years by 2010, if AIDS infection rates are not curbed, former Thai Prime Minister Anand Panyarachun told the closing session of the Third International Conference on AIDS in Asia and the Pacific in Chiang Mai, Thailand.

The effect in Thailand alone, experts say, would be to wipe out the equivalent of 10 years of development, with a possible drop in average life expectancy by 2010 from 74 to 44

years, approximately the same level as in the 1930s.

This was reported in *Asian Age*, on Sept. 22. Panyarachun told the conference the battle against AIDS must be tackled as a national development problem, not merely a health problem. He criticized Asian leaders for not taking AIDS seriously enough.

## Meteorology

### Links between lightning and tornados confirmed

A new NASA instrument has confirmed the links between lightning and tornados, reopening the scientific debate over whether tornados are actually an electromagnetic phenomenon. The instrument, the Optical Transient Detector (OTD), was launched on April 3 aboard a Pegasus rocket to build a global picture of the role of lightning in the atmosphere and in large storms.

On April 17, as the OTD passed over a severe storm in Oklahoma, it detected an extraordinary rate of lightning, peaking at more than 60 lightning bolts per second and then suddenly rapidly decreasing. Approximately one minute after the pass, observers saw a tornado touch the ground. Such an event coheres with the theory postulated by meteorologist Bernard Vonnegut, who has been arguing for decades that tornados are a self-organized electromagnetic vortex created to efficiently transmit atmospheric electricity to the ground.

The NASA instrument detected more than 20 times the number of lightning discharges than the ground-based National Lightning Network, the most sensitive lightning measuring network to date. While the satellite detected almost 200 lightning flashes during its three-minute pass, the Network only detected nine. This indicates that most of the electrical discharges in a tornadic storm take place as cloud-to-cloud lightning. It also demonstrates that the number of atmospheric electric discharges is magnitudes greater than previously estimated from ground-based instruments.

Hugh Christian, Principal Investigator of the OTD at the Marshall Space Center's Global Hydrology and Climate Center, said that

## Briefly

they "saw much more intense lightning activity produced by these clouds than was observed on the ground, both before and during tornado formation." He added that "further research and the experience gained with this lightning instrument could help develop sensors for real-time severe weather warnings and assist with identification of the formation of tornados."

### Public Finance

#### France said in state of 'national danger'

France is in a state of "national danger," because of the deficit in public finances and the fact that tax revenues were lower than expected, Prime Minister Alain Juppé told an association of mayors of large towns on Sept. 28. He declared that "tough corrective measures must be taken. The reduction of the public deficit is a national priority, and the government will stand its ground on this."

Juppé insisted that "tax revenue is in a truly disastrous situation," with shortfalls in receipts from sales tax and corporate taxation. "To deal with this situation of national danger, I have been forced to make savings," Juppé said.

The French daily *Le Figaro* ran three articles Sept. 29, headlining Juppé's statements about "national danger," and outlining numerous flashpoints for major strike actions in October.

### Infrastructure

#### Propose Europe ally with Asia to build big projects

A strategic Euro-Asian alliance for the development of infrastructure in Asia has been proposed in discussions at the recent World Economic Forum conference in Singapore, the *Berlin Morgenpost* reported Sept. 27. The giant financial requirements for planned power, telecommunications, and other projects are \$1.5 trillion in the coming 10 years, according to a World Bank estimate men-

tioned in this report.

South Korea alone wants to build 30 nuclear power plants in the next five years, with investments of an estimated \$50 billion. Indonesia's telecom program, which plans 5 million new phone lines, requires \$7.5 billion. The *Asian Wall Street Journal* recently had a somewhat alarmist report warning that "Asia's economic dynamic is certain to collapse, should the giant infrastructural gaps not be removed."

The Singapore event also discussed the need especially for the more developed Asian nations like South Korea, Taiwan, Hongkong, Singapore, and Malaysia to stop counting on cheap labor as being their main "advantage." An increasing trend of western investors to outsource production to mainland China and Vietnam is reducing this "advantage." This implies that Asia's developed economies have to become more capital-intensive.

### Food and Agriculture

#### Massive collapse in Russian food processing

*Agra-Europe*, for the week of Sept. 25, reports that the collapse of the Russian food-processing industry is continuing in all areas except vodka and liquor, where production went up by 29% in the first half of 1995, over the same period in 1994. Also the production of noodles and fish did not shrink further. But in all other areas essential for human consumption, the downward spiral continues.

Some figures: Meat dropped 23% 1993-4, and 29% in 1994-5; sausages rose 1% in 1993-4, but dropped 18% in 1994-5; milk products dropped 18% in 1993-4 and 23% in 1994-5; butter was down 34% for 1993-4 and down 21% for 1994-5; edible oil dropped 29% in 1993-4 and another 31% in 1994-5; flour was down 15% for 1993-4 and 8% in 1994-5; noodles, which had dropped 29% in 1993-4, increased by a mere 2% in 1994-5; and bread, which fell 16% in 1993-4, fell another 12% between 1994 and 1995. Finally, fish, which fell by a calamitous 80% in the 1993-4 period, rose by 0.4% between 1994 and 1995.

● **THE CALDERA** government of Venezuela is attacking the "autonomous" central bank. Upon leaving the President's residence Sept. 27, Planning Minister Edgar Paredes Pisani blasted the Central Bank for raising interest rates on the TEM government bonds, despite an explicit "recommendation" from President Caldera and his cabinet that the bank lower interest rates.

● **THE GERMAN** income tax base in 1995 will be DM 20 billion (about \$13.5 billion) less than expected, according to figures presented Sept. 29 by German Finance Minister Theo Waigel in Bonn. The announcements came very late; usually the income tax figures would have been presented in mid-September.

● **SUDAN'S** President, Omar Hassan el-Bashir, before leaving Khartoum for China, attacked the International Monetary Fund for "becoming a tool in the hands of certain Western powers and especially the U.S." He added that the "IMF cooperates only with the developing countries that submit to the policies of the Western powers," according to an article in *Al Arab* of Sept. 25.

● **RABBIT** birth control technology should be used to stop human population, was the outrageous message of Dr. Jim Peacock of the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization (CSIRO) to the Australian and New Zealand Association for the Advancement of Science on Sept. 25. He proposed using a new technique, called immunosterilization, "to confront the most important issue in the world today—population increase."

● **COCAINE** abuse is zooming in City of London derivatives-trading circles, according to a Sept. 27 article in the *Independent*, reporting on the search by police and sniffer dogs for drugs the day before, at the London International Financial Futures and Options Exchange, after a futures dealer was found carrying cannabis.