

Business Briefs

Western Asia

Chinese experts study bridge project in Iran

An eight-member Chinese team of experts on April 26 inspected the proposed construction site of the Persian Gulf bridge in the Qeshm Island port of Loft, the *Tehran Times* reported. The deputy director of Qeshm Free Trade Zone Development and Expansion Organization, Nikokar-Isfahani, said that the Chinese experts are in Qeshm for a feasibility study on the bridge. He added that it is the second time in the past month that this group, which is affiliated with the city of Shanghai's Municipality, has visited the area.

Nikokar-Isfahani said that the bridge will be 2,500 meters long, and has been designed in a way that water pipelines, electricity, and telephone cables will pass through it. He further said that, once constructed, the Persian Gulf bridge will connect the Central Asian states to other countries, and will have a favorable impact on transit of goods in the region.

Russia

Professor Muranivsky attacks speculators

Prof. Taras Muranivsky attacked financial speculators for creating "zones of instability," in an article analyzing the results of the mid-April world financial meetings in Washington, in the May 7 Russian weekly *Ekonomicheskaya Gazeta*. Concerning the Group of 22 session of April 16 in Washington, convened to look at a "new architecture" for the world financial system, Muranivsky wrote that the most useful outcome was the acknowledgment of the global, systemic nature of the "Asian" financial crisis. At the same time, he added, the meeting came up short of providing the "weighty recommendations," prescribed by economist Lyndon LaRouche.

Muranivsky wrote about the growing attention to "social aspects of the Asia crisis," highlighted by Malaysian Finance Minister Anwar Ibrahim in his remarks after the Inter-

national Monetary Fund-World Bank Development Committee meeting on April 17. The growing poverty and instability, said Ibrahim, is caused by the failure to curb short-term capital flows. The Malaysian minister's analysis illustrated Muranivsky's main theme, that "'zones of instability' are created by speculative games on the currency markets, and other unscrupulous manipulations," while the "heavy artillery" of the IMF and World Bank is used to enforce "all the rules of usury, parasitizing on the economic and financial difficulties of countries in need." This is also the case in Russia, Muranivsky said, where "around 30,000 foreign consultants are working, earning an average [monthly] wage of \$10,000; not knowing the language, history, or economy of our country, they draft models and scenarios for Russia."

While the Washington meetings failed to produce adequate results, Muranivsky concluded, "the world financial crisis is about to take its next turns."

Nuclear Energy

Russia helps China's plant construction

The construction of the Lianyungang nuclear power plant, in Jiangsu province, China, was inaugurated with a "powerful, directed explosion," the Russian news agency Itar-Tass reported on April 25. Russia is to provide the first two reactors, and the plant is being built with Russia's assistance.

The managing director of the Beijing office of the Russian firm Atomenergoexport, Valeriy Kurochkin, said that the project's start is a "landmark event in the construction of the nuclear power plant," and that the project is now entering "the plane of practical implementation."

Chinese partners have started installation of communications at the construction site, and an additional road leading to the site is being built, as well as an 11 kilometer water pipeline, which will pump 7,000 cubic meters of water daily to the project.

The plant's first reactor is to be launched in 2004 and the second in 2005. Under an inter-governmental accord, Russia will export two light-water VVER-1000 reactors,

each with a 1 million kilowatt capacity. Sources told Itar-Tass that the construction site is laid out for four reactors. "Russia hopes to get an order for two more reactors and in the future for the fifth and sixth power units," one source said. "However, as specialists reckon, this will depend on the quality of work of the first two units and China's plans of developing its nuclear energy sector."

For more on the Lianyungang project, see the *EIR Special Report*, "The Eurasian Land-Bridge."

Economic Policy

Asian bishops in Rome attack globalization

Eleven working groups at the Special Assembly of the Synod of Bishops for Asia, from nations including the Philippines, India, Vietnam, Indonesia, and China, addressed in their documents the effects of globalization, and called on the church in the West to join the Asian church in the fight for debt cancellation and economic solidarity. The reports were given on May 1 in Rome "in the presence of the Holy Father," according to Bulletin No. 20, posted on the Internet. Discussion themes also included evangelization efforts, and "the Church's works in the domain of teaching and education, of health care, and social services."

"Globalization erodes the culture and economic values of the poor countries. Money makers and multinational companies destroy the values of family. As a pastoral response, the Church should appeal that the debts of the Third World countries be cancelled or lightened in the Jubilee Year," reported Msgr. Peter Remigius, Bishop of Kumbakonam, India.

"The group asks the Synod to call for a discernment in Asia of the phenomenon of globalization. It asks the Synod to call upon sister churches in the First World to join the churches in Asia to appeal to international bodies for justice and equity," reported Msgr. Leonardo Legaspi, Archbishop of Caceres, the Philippines.

Monsignor Bastes, Bishop of Romblon, the Philippines, attacked globalization,

AVVENIRE, the Milan-based daily tied to the Italian Bishops conference, on May 5 carried an article entitled "LaRouche: a New Bretton Woods." It reported on Lyndon LaRouche's meetings with parliamentarians in Rome in April, which concerned the need for a New Bretton Woods system to deal with the global financial crisis.

IRAN has announced that it will build a 300 kilometer oil pipeline from Neka, its port on the Caspian Sea, to Tehran, the daily *Jomhuri Es-lami* reported on May 4. The project would cost \$400 million, take 30 months to complete, and would transport 380,000 barrels per day from the Caspian to Europe, via Iran.

GERMANY'S young Christian Democrats in the state of North Rhine-Westphalia called for new nuclear power plants, in an energy policy platform presented on May 7. The paper warned that because of the take-down of nuclear technology, Germany is on the verge of losing its high-tech nuclear engineering know-how.

FASTSHIP Inc. has received preliminary approval from Den Norske Veritas (one of four organizations which certify oceangoing ships) for its water-jet-propelled design, which will allow the company to seek financing for an initial order of four ships. The ships will carry 10,000 tons of cargo across the Atlantic in less than four days, twice as fast as conventional ships.

U.S. LAYOFFS in April were up 220% over April 1997, according to a report by Challenger, Gray & Christmas, Inc. The April 1998 figure is more than double the layoffs during March 1998. Layoffs during the past six months are 36% higher than comparable figures for 1996-97.

NATIONSBANK'S securities division agreed on May 4 to pay \$6.75 million in fines resulting from charges that it misled customers on whether certain investments in derivatives were insured by the U.S. government.

"which certainly brought misery to many Asians because of its economic policies. As the church, we Asians should denounce the evils coming from globalization, and we are appealing to our sister churches of the First World to join us in our crusade for justice and solidarity among nations. A concrete issue is the cancellation of the Third World's staggering external debt, a suggestion of the Holy Father himself in his [1994] letter, 'As the Third Millennium Draws Near.'"

Agriculture

New food-control weapon is patented

A new genetic technique that prevents second-generation tobacco seeds from germinating, has been patented by Delta & Pine Land Co. and the Agricultural Research Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. This technique, nicknamed the "seed terminator," will make it impossible for farmers to harvest seed to replant from crops that have been genetically engineered. This means the farmer will have to buy seed every year from the cartels, at cartel-controlled prices.

There is ongoing research to see if the new technique will work for other crops, including wheat, rice, and sorghum, which are not easily hybridized. The cartels have been demanding intellectual-property-rights protection of crop seeds from developing nations, which have so far refused to grant them. This new technique, if it becomes more widely applicable, will give the cartels another way of enforcing their control over food production.

Labor

'British model' yields lower productivity

A survey compiled by the British Department of Trade and Industry has found that Britons are working more hours than their colleagues on the continent, simply because most of them have to, the German weekly *Wirtschaftswoche* reported on May 7. The

British work nine hours per week more than Germans, and five more than the French. On average, British productivity was found to be 20-30% lower than that of workers in continental Europe, and as much as 40% lower than in the United States.

British productivity is low because of poor professional training levels, general education skills, and undersupply of companies with modern machines. The CBI, Britain's industrial association, has calculated that in order to earn as much as their colleagues on the continent, British workers would each have to be paid £3,000 more per year.

"The comparably good British economic conjuncture can be traced back to more working hours, rather than more efficient work, predominantly," said Trade and Minister Margaret Beckett.

Health

Dengue fever epidemic hits Southeast Asia

Thailand, Indonesia, and the Philippines are likely to be the nations hardest hit by an epidemic of dengue fever sweeping Southeast Asia. The epidemic is expected to be worse than in previous years, because of the impact of the ongoing financial crisis throughout Asia.

Current rates of infection are at least three times last year's. Indonesia tops the list, with 32,665 people infected as of May 5, and 777 deaths. In 1997, total deaths for the year were 707. Jakarta has been particularly hard hit, with severe shortages of blood supplies and medical equipment. Total dengue cases in the capital are 8,702, with 72 reported deaths. The tourist island of Bali has 680 cases, and 8 dead.

Thai health officials expect 300,000 cases this year, and already in the first three months they have recorded 10,197 cases and 31 deaths. Last year's total was 3,280 cases and 8 deaths. Thai health officials also report that 75% of the cases are children between 5 and 14 years of age. Younger children have usually been the hardest hit age group; in older children, the symptoms don't show until the patient is near critical condition.