

# Business Briefs

## Industry

### China seeks joint U.S. auto venture

Beijing plans to set up a joint venture with a major American car manufacturer, China's vice minister of the State Economic Commission, Zhu Rongji, said in Beijing Nov. 25. He said that he would leave for the United States at the end of November for talks with General Motors, Ford, and Chrysler on the possibility of setting up a joint venture to manufacture sedan cars in China.

"I think there is a very good possibility of success," Zhu said. He noted that China already has a joint venture with Chrysler producing American Motors Cherokee Jeeps in Beijing.

Zhu was speaking at a press conference to announce the setting up of a company to provide consultancy services to foreign businesses investing in China.

He noted that one-third of the more than 4,000 joint ventures with foreign companies in China was now turning a profit, but that "another one-third, although operating well," was having problems balancing their foreign currency earnings, while the final one-third was registering a loss.

## Medicine

### Nuclear filter said to isolate AIDS virus

Scientists at the Joint Institute for Nuclear Research in Dubna near Moscow have developed nuclear filters to isolate the AIDS virus, according to reports the Soviet magazine, *Nauka i Zhizn*. The report was carried in a TASS wire Nov. 11.

The filter is manufactured using a bundle of charged elementary particles, directed at a polymer film, in which thin channels are burned out. This enables the required structure of the filter to be predicted in advance and created.

"Nuclear filters have been used in a prototype system devised in the U.S.S.R. to determine the presence of antibodies to the

AIDS virus," said the report, "with the aid of which carriers of the disease are revealed. The pores in the filters have been selected in such a way that they do not miss the virus, the size of which is about one-tenth of a micron. It is not possible to isolate the AIDS virus by the traditional reticular membranes obtained by chemical means, as it becomes interactive with the membrane material and is impossible to 'tear away.'" But, it added, "the AIDS virus doesn't stick in nuclear filters, and so it can be isolated."

## Science

### SDI laser means cancer breakthrough

The inventor of the free electron laser, a central technology under development as part of the Strategic Defense Initiative, has told an interviewer that he is certain the very powerful laser will become a standard piece of medical equipment in the treatment of cancerous tumors.

Dr. John Madey, who arranged to address 34,000 participants at a Nov. 27 Chicago conference of radiologists, told a UPI interviewer by phone that the free electron laser, designed to knock nuclear missiles out of the sky, will also be used a few years down the road to destroy cancerous tumors in the human body.

Madey, based at Stanford University, where he oversees FEL development for the Defense Department, said that the laser has already been shown in animal studies to vaporize diseased tissue with pinpoint accuracy, leaving surrounding flesh unharmed.

"We probably have some months or years to go before we start limited clinical trials, but I have every reason to believe this could become a standard piece of medical equipment."

"Therapeutic radiologists and laser physicists might consider it a new way of removing diseased tissue, while military experts hope the laser might knife through the heat shield and armor of enemy missiles approaching the United States from outer space."

He described one animal study, in which the laser drilled a perfect hole about 1/100th

of an inch in diameter through a mouse's liver, without damaging surrounding tissue. "During the ablation process, diseased tissue cells were converted into a puff of smoke," he reported.

## Austerity

### Germany feels the depression of the '80s

West Germany is currently threatened with massive layoffs in the public transportation, steel, and coal sectors, say representatives of both management and labor in those sectors. Government plans to cut state subsidies in those sectors will lead to 60,000 unemployed in coal and steel over the next two years. Some 90,000 in the feeder industries will also be laid off.

The government in Bonn announced Nov. 19 that not only the 32,000 railway workers who were originally projected to lose their jobs by 1990, but another 90,000 will also have to be fired. The state-run German railway system currently employs 260,000 workers.

Other reports indicating early layoffs in West Germany's export-dependent economy abound. Orders for agricultural machinery are down 22% in the past 12 months, according to a new study. Orders for new machinery by German farmers also declined by 4.3%. After the Black Monday crash, even lower sales are expected in that sector, because highly indebted farmers won't take "the risk of new investment."

As for Third World customers, soaring debts are cited as the main reason for reduced investment in agricultural machinery.

## Agriculture

### Argentine planting contracts sharply

Agriculture in Argentina, traditionally a world leader in food production, is undergoing sharp contraction thanks to the austerity