

# Business Briefs

## Underdevelopment

### **Study reveals child malnutrition in China**

Children in the People's Republic of China are suffering from malnutrition, roundworms, and underdevelopment, the *China Daily* reported Nov. 30. In two provinces, Heilongjiang in the northeast and Hunan in the southeast, schoolchildren were severely affected by diseases due to malnutrition and dirt, studies by the health departments of both provinces disclosed.

Children are suffering from anemia due to malnutrition are prone to heart and lung diseases and high blood pressure, and most are nearsighted.

In the impoverished northern province of Heilongjiang, 75% of schoolchildren have no oral hygiene, and 50% suffer from roundworms. In one school in the city of Shanghai, 56% of boy students suffer from underdeveloped genitalia, most because of physical underdevelopment, but some also due to lack of personal cleanliness.

## Food

### **East Germans facing shortage of basics**

The East German people are faced with a shortage of basic foodstuffs, like bread and milk products, according to a report East German leader Erich Honecker gave to the SED party politburo Dec. 2. He reported that of 205 target goals in the state plan for consumer goods, 95 have not been reached.

Supplies with meat and meat products, fruit and vegetables of all sorts are insufficient, and even more so after the bad grain harvest in East Germany this summer. Western estimates are that East Germany suffered a drop in its grain harvest of 10-12%.

In past months, East Germany has frequently contacted Western grain and feed-grain dealers, as well as food exporters, to improve the supply for its people. Under

state policy, however, communist party members come first.

## East Bloc

### **'Customs war' erupts over Christmas shopping**

What one economist characterized as a "full-scale customs war" has erupted between Soviet satellite states, after Czechoslovakia slapped strict curbs and stiff penalties on Christmas shoppers from several "fraternal socialist states," including Poland, East Germany, Hungary, and the Soviet Union itself. Czech authorities feared that shops would otherwise be stripped of limited consumer goods before Christmas.

Under the Czech measures, a long list of goods cannot be taken out of the country, including clothes, shoes, household appliances, and many basic foodstuffs. Other goods will now require export licenses. And even then, the worth of goods a person may take out of the country has been cut from the equivalent of \$100 to \$50.

The move prompted quick retaliation from neighboring states. East Germany, Poland, and Hungary responded to Prague's new restrictions by extending existing curbs on what tourists may take from the country. The Soviet Union has not yet followed suit. In Warsaw, a Czech diplomat was called to the foreign ministry to be given a formal protest against the measures.

Meanwhile, in Austria, retailers are reporting increased sales as liberalized travel rules permit large numbers of Hungarians to cross the border to shop in Vienna.

## AIDS

### **Costs of care to rise dramatically**

"State expenditures on AIDS in the United States are estimated at U.S. \$1.467 billion for the current year by the U.S. Office of Management and Budget. By 1992, it is estimated that 172,000 AIDS patients will need

medical care and that costs will be in the region of U.S. \$5 billion to \$13 billion," the magazine of the Swiss Reinsurance Company stated in December.

"According to an estimate by the Public Health Service, in 1992 alone, 66,000 people will die of AIDS. . . . It should be noted, that AIDS patients are often not registered at such . . . so that the number of AIDS-related deaths given in the statistics could be just the tip of the iceberg.

"Estimates for the cumulative medical costs of treatment for the period up to 1991, for example, range between U.S. \$6.3 billion and \$45.4 billion. One of the reasons for these differences is that the studies assume varying lengths of hospital stay. The estimated total outlay per patient ranges from U.S. \$50,000 to \$80,000. In Great Britain, the National Health Service estimates that the total cost of treatment per patient amounts to U.S. \$48,000.

"Losses caused by premature death corresponded to over 90% of the estimated earnings per patient of U.S. \$541,000 to \$623,000. Estimated AIDS cases for the years 1981-1991 give an estimated loss of earnings of U.S. \$146 billion to \$168 billion."

## Technology

### **Japanese introduce new supercomputer**

Japan's Fujitsu, Ltd. has introduced a new supercomputer which it says is even faster than the latest product of its chief competitor in the field, Cray Research of Minneapolis. Cray had introduced a powerful machine last February, the Y-MP.

Supercomputers are an essential tool of engineers, auto and aircraft designers, molecular physicists, A-bomb makers, code-breakers, and intelligence analysts. The machines can graphically simulate enormously complex phenomena, and quickly perform calculations that would otherwise take days, months, or even years. Only the United States and Japan have built them, and in the competition, they have frequently leapfrogged one another for the "fastest machine" title.