

Business Briefs

Asia

Taiwan pulled into Dope, Inc. sphere

Senior Taiwanese government officials have endorsed a package of proposals to increase contact with China, Taiwan's Central News Agency reported Sept. 20. As a result, the island's trade with, and investment in, China is expected to soar.

A two-day conference in Taiwan on investment in the mainland ended Sept. 19 by endorsing a wide range of proposals including allowing Taiwanese banks to deal directly with overseas branches of Chinese banks and foreign banks in China, which are the backbone of Dope, Inc. in Asia. Taipei also decided to permit Taiwanese businessmen to remit money to the island from China and expand the list of legal imports from China.

Two-way trade could soar to more than \$10 billion in one to two years, the agency quoted an Economics Ministry report saying. "There is no stopping business conglomerates from investing on the mainland in the future," the agency said.

Indirect trade through Hong Kong surged to \$5.8 billion last year from \$4 billion in 1990. Small Taiwanese companies have invested well over \$3 billion in China, although major corporations have been officially forbidden to invest in China by the Taipei government.

Energy

France drops control over state oil companies

The French government dropped its monopoly over its oil companies on Sept. 23, offering them up for investment to the Anglo-American-dominated "Seven Sisters."

The Council of Ministers decided to "adapt" the 1928 protectionist law on French oil companies to the European single market, a law which was even extended to oil distribution networks by Charles de Gaulle during his presidency. Industry and Commerce Minister Dominique Strauss-Kahn argued that since the oil trade has become worldwide, and since it "is the object of market speculation, it is not

the appendage of a tiny circle of countries anymore," therefore it is "logical" that this trade be adapted to the free market economy.

The Sept. 24 French daily *Le Monde* commented that the 1928 law had helped to protect the two major French oil companies, Elf and Total, "in a world dominated by the Anglo-Saxons"—clearly underlining this as a new way to offer French companies to British interests. Since these companies are heavily involved in African countries like Gabon, the decision ultimately means the dropping of French-African interests on behalf of British-dominated raw materials cartels.

Monetarism

Attali: Europe has wrong policy toward the East

Jacques Attali, president of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, said that Europe has the wrong economic policy toward the East, in an interview with the French magazine *Le Point*.

The European Community was naive in believing that democracy would automatically bring about growth, and that price liberalization would create a market economy, Attali said. "Democracy without institutions is anarchy. The market economy without institutions, is the mafia. We now have anarchy, and the mafia instead of democracy and a market."

Health

Cancer trials in England risked lives to cut costs

The leading cancer hospital in England, Christie Institute in Manchester, carried out clinical trials on women suffering from cervical cancer throughout the 1980s, designed to see whether multiplying the recommended dosage of radiation by three, could cut government health costs. Some 400 women a year are treated there for cervical cancer. The women in the trial, which was stopped in 1991, were never told that conventional, reliable treatment was available as an alternative, the Sept. 23 *The*

Scotsman reported.

Although much remains secret, the program is believed to have killed dozens, perhaps hundreds of women; of the survivors, virtually all have had their intestines and bladder removed, while others had all their internal organs from the waist down removed. The idea was to use a new instrument called the selector, to bombard the patient with cesium pellets, and then to so increase the dosage of radiation, that the patient could be treated in 24 hours rather than three or more days.

No claims for compensation are expected, because all potential expert witnesses are expected to testify that the treatment never fell below what "any competent" doctor would have provided.

Transportation

Bus manufacturers in U.S. at one-quarter capacity

Manufacturers of buses in the United States are operating at 25% of capacity, Edward N. Kravitz, president and chief executive officer of the Flexible Corp., one of the leading bus manufacturers, told the September-October issue of *Metro Magazine*. Kravitz said that the bus manufacturing industry "will experience a third consecutive year of bids 50-60% below previous averages, and at a level that is one-quarter of the industry capacity."

Asked what bus manufacturers could do to keep assembly lines open, Kravitz replied, "Some manufacturers are going to have to close down." Discussing the dearth of orders, Kravitz mentioned that the Clean Air Act and the Disabilities Access Act "have much larger impacts as a whole than any congressman or bureaucrat anticipated." Transit agencies are still undecided as to how to meet the legal requirements of those acts, and are deferring the placing of new orders, even though some budget authorizations for new vehicles are being left unused.

Kravitz argued that the market in the United States is so poor that he has little worry about foreign competition, especially "after the experiences MAN, Scania, and Volvo had." However, Kravitz attacked the North American Free Trade Agreement as possibly giving foreign manufacturers the incentive to estab-

lish operations in Mexico, using cheap labor. "The problem I have with this," Kravitz explained, "is that the buses purchased in this country are purchased with the tax dollars provided by the citizens of this country, including the people who work in the manufacturing plants. Put them out of work, and where are your [tax] dollars going to come from? The 'free traders' don't like to hear that, but they never have a good answer to the question."

Ecological Holocaust

Migratory locust outbreak threatening Madagascar

A serious outbreak of migratory locusts is threatening crops in southwestern Madagascar, according to a United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) report in mid-September. The area is already suffering from famine after two years of drought devastated the 1992-93 crops.

The FAO reestablished the organization's Emergency Center for Locust Operations (ECLLO), which it calls a "rapid crisis-prevention unit," to combat an infestation that could affect 1 million hectares.

ECLLO was first set up to lead the campaign against the 1986 locust plagues, which lingered and destroyed crops in Africa for two years because pressure from environmentalists censured that ECLLO would not use the widespread aerial pesticide spraying necessary to stop the locusts from spreading.

In late June, it was estimated that about 50 swarms of locusts covered 25,000 hectares in Madagascar. Seasonal rains in October and November will spur a new generation of locust breeding.

Space Exploration

'Mars Observer' the first trip to Mars in 15 years

The Mars Observer spacecraft was launched Sept. 25 to continue exploration of the planet Mars, the first probe in more than 15 years. The technology aboard the Mars Observer, which will orbit the red planet for a full Martian year

of 687 days, is comparable in sophistication to the arrays of instruments used for Earth remote sensing.

Unlike the two orbiters sent in 1976 on the Viking mission, rather than orbiting the planet around its equator, Mars Observer will be in a polar, Sun-synchronous orbit. In this way, the entire planet rotates underneath the satellite each day, as it orbits from pole to pole, north to south and back. Its mission includes mapping the gravitational and very weak magnetic field of Mars, the geology and atmosphere, and weather forecasts of the planet. This more detailed knowledge is a prerequisite for manned missions in the next century. NASA plans to follow Mars Observer with a 1996 launch of small landers on the surface of Mars.

The spacecraft is being propelled onto its trajectory to Mars by an upper-stage rocket, built by the Orbital Sciences Corp. On the side of the rocket is Tom Paine's name. Paine, who died in August, was on the board of OSC and fought continuously for the United States to make a commitment for future manned Mars missions.

Privatization

Polish government targets 600 enterprises

Six hundred state enterprises have been targeted for privatization by the Polish government, according to a new bill, entitled "Program for General Privatization," which was presented for parliamentary debate in late September. A month ago, only 400 enterprises were targeted.

The government proposes that employees get 10% of shares, 30% stay in the state treasury, and the rest be sold to private investors. So far, only one party has fully approved of the plan, the Liberal-Democratic Coalition (KLD).

Other political parties are either opposed, or undecided for fear of splits. The parliamentary group of the liberal-conservative UD party already lost six deputies in mid-September, and new alliances are shaping up in the Parliament. Taking into consideration a further split-up of parties which have seats in the Parliament, there is a good chance that this bill will never be passed.

Briefly

● **AIDS** is now the number-one killer of young men in many U.S. cities, the Atlanta, Georgia Centers for Disease Control (CDC) reported Sept. 24. Among men aged 25-44, deaths due to AIDS surpass heart disease, cancer, and homicide in such major cities as San Francisco, Los Angeles, New York, and Baltimore. The CDC now estimates that 1 million Americans are infected with HIV.

● **CHEMICAL EXPORTS** of the pesticide trimethyl phosphite by India were halted after U.S. intervention, on grounds that it is also used to make nerve gas. The move is the latest effort of the U.S. to impose "technological apartheid" on developing nations.

● **THE INTERNATIONAL** Monetary Fund spent \$12 million for its conference in Washington in September, including providing caviar and chauffeured limos for participants. The IMF's total direct aid to the six poorest Third World countries is \$8 million.

● **DYSENTERY** is up by 40% in England in 1990-91, the latest report of the Institute of Environmental Health Officers said. Grants to upgrade unfit premises have dropped from 200,000 in the mid-1980s to 10,039 in 1990-91. There were 1,400 confirmed cases of meningitis, 5,500 cases of infective jaundice, and 17% of all drinking water samples failed basic tests.

● **RUSSIA** will have 15 million more unemployed workers by year's end, due to the shock therapy and privatization program of the present Moscow government, according to an International Labor Organization forecast presented at a press conference in Washington, D.C. Sept. 21. The rate of new unemployment is second only to Africa, the report said.

● **INDIA** has sought Israeli assistance for the conversion of 6 to 10 of its C-130 transport aircraft to inflight refueling tankers, according to the *Far Eastern Economic Review*. The inflight refueling tankers will "augment India's military reach," it said.