

Business Briefs

Asia

Malaysian firm may build express highway in India

Renong Overseas Corp. of Malaysia has offered to build the 700-kilometer Calcutta to Siliguri express highway on a build-operate-transfer basis, and the West Bengal state government has accepted the offer in principle. The state government will arrange for the 7,000 acres of land required to construct the highway, commented West Bengal Chief Minister Jyoti Basu, following the presentation of the plan by the Malaysian company in early February.

"Renong Overseas will soon sign a memorandum of understanding with the state government to take out a feasibility study of the highway project," Somenath Chatterjee, chairman of West Bengal Industrial Development Corp., told reporters on Feb. 7. The costs of the survey will be borne by the Malaysian company. The Peerless General Finance and Investment Company-Titaghur Steel combine has already appointed a New Delhi-based consultancy firm, Consulting Engineering Services India Private Ltd, to do a pre-feasibility study of the project.

Eurasia

New Berlin hub mooted for air travel to Asia

Berlin needs a new airport to serve as a hub for air travel to Asia, said Thomas Hertz, director of the Berlin Chamber of Commerce, and Hartmann Kleinert, managing director of the Association of Entrepreneurial Organizations in Berlin and Brandenburg. Hertz and Kleinert were presenting a document that calls for the construction of a new international airport south of the German capital, preferably at Sperenberg, where a former military air base already exists.

Many so-called experts oppose the project on the grounds that, with major airports in Frankfurt and Munich, Germany doesn't need a third major airport. Hertz and Kleinert said, however, that it makes a lot of sense to build

it in the Berlin region. Airliners would need at least one hour less flight-time to the Far East, as compared with Frankfurt or Munich. Unlike other airports which cannot be expanded much more, the capacity to transfer large numbers of passengers could be built into a new one, Hertz explained.

A new Berlin airport, because it would be located outside the urban area, could operate 24 hours a day, and would create incentives for economic growth in the Berlin-Brandenburg region of DM 20 billion (\$12.5 billion) a year, Hertz said. He added that a precondition of this prognosis is that the airport be accessible by high-speed trains, either the ICE or the Transrapid. The Berlin Chamber of Commerce has already come out for the Transrapid, a maglev rail system, as an extension of the Hamburg to Berlin rail line.

Health

Vitamin A deficiency tied to AIDS transmission

A new study shows a link between vitamin A deficiency in an HIV-infected mother, and transmission of the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV, which causes AIDS) to her infant, Dr. Richard Semba of a Johns Hopkins medical team reported on Feb. 2, according to the *New York Times*. The report coheres with a theory that HIV transmission is linked to the overall status of the immune system of the individual, and corroborates the findings of a biological task force commissioned by Lyndon LaRouche in 1975.

Several studies have shown that, when deprived of vitamin A, T cells and B cells—two types of immune cells—fail to function properly. T and B cells are critical to helping the body fight HIV. The Semba study, carried out in Malawi, showed that HIV-infected women who also suffered from vitamin A deficiencies died at twice the rates of other HIV-infected women, and their infants were at nearly five times greater risk of becoming HIV-infected.

"One puzzle of the AIDS epidemic is why the disease has spread so much more extensively in many countries in Africa than in the U.S. and Europe. Dr. Semba said he believed that vitamin A deficiency could be an impor-

tant factor in explaining the differences," the paper commented.

Political Economy

LaRouche's 'Christian Economy' reviewed in Italy

The Italian-language edition of American economist Lyndon LaRouche's *The Science of Christian Economics*, published last October, was reviewed in mid-February by ARI, a Catholic news agency. The book has met with much interest among Catholic economists and people who have contributed to the so-called "social doctrine of the Church," which was the basis for the industrial reconstruction in Italy after World War II.

"There is no book in the world which does not give insight into its author; the book we are reviewing reveals him immediately, in his full intellectual scope of an enlightened economist, standardbearer of freedom and justice, a man of unbreakable faith, which was not reduced by the dramatic events he had to undergo. He reveals this with the clarity and sharpness of his thoughts, which he had to dictate by phone from the jail in Minnesota in which he was kept prisoner, although innocent, for five years," the review read, referring to LaRouche's unjust imprisonment.

"The thesis which he develops, in order to demonstrate that social and economic policies must be inspired by principles of the Good, are mainly scientific. . . . They are also philosophical, historical, sociological, and literary, because they involve man: the sacredness of his life, his spiritual activity, his modes of behavior in history.

"Humanity, he writes, has to free itself from the evil which enslaved it, from all-consuming usury which, even if it changed colors, as the encyclical letter *Rerum Novarum* expressed in the 19th century, is still being practiced. As indicated by Thomas Aquinas, he continues, man has to react to the iniquity of laws which tend to make him miserable and oppress him because they do not conform themselves to True Reason; he has to oppose all attempts made day after day by speculators and oligarchs in order to mortify life, reject faith, and spoil consciences. . . .

"The scientist which predominates in him makes no statements which are not proven true by evidence; he gives no explanations which are not confirmed by certainties, such as the ones reached by the scholars Nicolaus of Cusa and Gottfried Leibniz, by the philosophers Plato and Socrates, by mathematicians Abel and Kepler, by economists Hamilton and List, by physicists Galilei and Pascal, by astronomers Torricelli and Gauss, and by Leonardo da Vinci, the Apostle Paul and Christ himself.

"LaRouche's book is therefore an illuminating book, which analyzes and criticizes the most important social and economic realities in the world; a book which is able to give the reader new certainties and to inspire in him an extraordinary strength, which can make him react and free himself. It is also a compassionate, disquieting book, since it supplies evidence of the many wrongdoings and crimes perpetrated in the name of gain and power in all parts of the world, by evil gangsters who hide behind masks."

Trade

Britain, Cuba toast better trade ties

Conservative Party parliamentarian Baroness Young met Fidel Castro twice during her visit to Cuba in early February as head of a 40-man British trade delegation. Young called Cuba a "very important market in the Caribbean," and praised the Cubans for having "undertaken a number of major changes in the economy," many of which she said she had discussed with Cuban officials during her last visit to the country 18 months ago. Castro told Reuters that he, too, was encouraged at prospects for improved ties.

The visit followed the signing in London of an Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement between Cuba and Britain, to build investor "confidence." The baroness heads up a newly formed "Cuba Initiative," described as a British private sector drive to increase business with Cuba. Cuba's trade minister has been named by Castro's regime to represent Cuba's side of the Cuban Initiative.

A British "business" offensive also contin-

ues toward other Ibero-American countries: The Foreign Office's minister for Latin America, Davis David, arrived for a four-day visit to Brazil on Jan. 30, as head of a business delegation. He said that Britain had a lot to teach Brazil about privatizing its steel, oil, and electricity industries. Four British ministers are scheduled to visit Brazil in 1995, he reported. Likewise, Britain's new ambassador to Colombia, Leycester Coltman, announced that he wants to double trade with Colombia. Britain is the second-largest and fastest-growing investor in Colombia.

Population

39 million at risk because of civil unrest

Over 39 million people are in danger of dying of starvation or disease this year, because of civil unrest or other emergencies, according to a CIA report. Much of the danger is concentrated in Africa, but the threat is severe also in other parts of the world, including Afghanistan, Bosnia, Haiti, Iraq, and several former Soviet republics. The estimate was completed last December and does not address the toll in Chechnya.

The CIA estimates that 4.3 million people are at risk in Ethiopia, which is beset with civil strife, scarce water, and lack of infrastructure to support large-scale relief operations. Those at risk elsewhere in Africa include: Angola, 3.7 million; Rwanda, 4 million, 59% of the population; Sudan, 3 million; Liberia, 2.1 million, 74% of the population; Sierra Leone, 1.5 million, where less than half the population has access to safe water; and Somalia, 1.1 million, in a country which has not had a central government since 1991, and where the U.N. humanitarian relief effort that began in 1993 is set to end in March.

The CIA estimates that in Haiti, where at least 2 million people receive health and water assistance, about 1.3 million will require food assistance in 1995. Others at risk include: Afghanistan, 4.2 million; Bosnia, 2.5 million; 1 million each in the former Soviet republics of Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Tajikistan; and Iraq, 1.3 million.

Briefly

● **CHINA** will not dismantle its state-sector industries, and western-style "privatization" policies will not be adopted, Yuan Mu, head of the Chinese State Council's Research Office, the leading think-tank advising the cabinet, told *Economics Daily* in early February.

● **WORLD FOREIGN DEBT** reached \$1.945 trillion at the end of 1993, compared to "only" \$658 billion at the end of 1980, the decade of the "big debt crisis" for developing sector nations, Danilo Taino wrote in the Feb. 7 Italian daily *Corriere della Sera*.

● **TURKEY AND INDIA** agreed that trade could be increased several-fold, and the potential for joint efforts in Central Asian republics could be tapped as part of trilateral arrangements, during Turkish President Suleyman Demirel's visit to India in early February.

● **FERTILIZER** prices are at an all-time high in the United States, and the chairman of the House Agriculture Committee in Minnesota has called for a government investigation. Prices have increased 20-50% in recent weeks, and wholesale nitrogen fertilizer prices have climbed 50-60% since last spring.

● **SOUTH KOREA** is studying ways to improve farm production in North Korea, the Rural Development Administration said on Feb. 10. "Agricultural cooperation with North Korea is necessary to prepare for an eventual reunification," a spokesman said. North Korea's grain harvest last year totalled 4.13 million tons, against an estimated 1995 consumption of 6.72 million tons.

● **FRANCE** is heading for a "social explosion" because of the belief of the circle around Prime Minister Edouard Balladur that the working-class simply no longer exists, and that one can have a utopian worker-free society dominated by "services," the Feb. 8 German daily *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* commented.