

Business Briefs

Health

'Mad cow' disease haunts Great Britain

Fear of humans catching "mad cow" disease is growing in Britain following the death from a brain disorder of a dairy farmer whose herd was infected with the animal virus, Reuters reported on March 13.

Scientists writing in the British medical journal the *Lancet* said that the case was the first fatality involving direct occupational contact with mad cow disease. His death "raised the possibility of a causal link," they said.

Many British health authorities are strongly recommending that the policy of "benign neglect," advocated by Prince Philip, which has been taken toward the AIDS virus, not be repeated in this instance.

Finance

IMF tries to shed 'satanic' image

Complaining that "manipulations of information" have "satanized" the International Monetary Fund as responsible for failed economic policies, Miguel Bonangelino, adviser to IMF Managing Director Michel Camdessus, announced on March 11 at an international seminar in Cartagena, Colombia that the IMF has decided to launch a public relations campaign to clean up its "black image," which on several occasions "has endangered the success of reform policies."

As an example of this satanization, Bonangelino told of how, when he had visited Bogotá during Belisario Betancur's administration, the walls of the city were painted with the slogan, "Long Live the Christ Child; Down with the IMF," *El Nuevo Siglo* reported.

The actual slogans painted on the wall read: "The IMF Stabbed the Christ Child; Andean Labor Party." The Andean Labor Party is part of the international political movement associated with U.S. statesman and economist Lyndon LaRouche.

Roberto Brauning, head of the IMF's In-

formation Office, also told the seminar on "The Current National and International Economic Situation" that very soon "the epoch in which the Fund is considered as Satan and the officials of the institution as his bailiffs will be overcome." Why? Because Camdessus has given orders that national governments must take responsibility for the failure or success of their economic policies "and not simply blame the international organizations," which only "recommends" or "persuades" on policies, Brauning whined.

Brazil

Health conditions rival last century

"In all of Brazil, we have the epidemiological profile of the last century," Roberto Chabo, Brazil's Public Vigilance Secretary, told *O Globo* on March 8 in discussing the alarming spread of cholera in the country, and particularly in the state of Rio de Janeiro. Chabo emphasized that the country's precarious health infrastructure will cause the disease to become endemic. In poor areas of Rio state, such as Baixada Fluminense and São Gonçalo, only 30% of the population has access to health infrastructure. In metropolitan Rio, 40% of the population (4 million people) has no potable water.

In April 1991, the Health Ministry allocated 400 million cruzeiros for the anti-cholera campaign, but those funds only began to be released sometime in 1992. During the eight months he occupied the post, the ministry's former superintendent of collective health, Luciano Toledo, was not able to spend 1¢ of the anti-cholera budget, apparently because it was invested in financial markets. This prevented the creation of a strategic reserve of equipment, medicine, and chlorine pills available for municipalities.

Today, Toledo, a professor at the National Endemic Center, warns that "cholera is not a passing thing. It won't go away with the March rains." He calculates that 400,000 residents of Rio could be infected, 10,000 seriously, and 100 could die.

Chabo said that "we can't blame people's

habits for the spread of cholera." He said that an investment of \$20 billion could provide the country with efficient sanitation infrastructure, but "that money doesn't exist." He added that "the [cholera] epidemic is a strong denunciation of the authorities' historic omission at all levels, in terms of implementing basic health programs. Is there a solution? Yes. Is it expensive? Yes." Chabo noted that the \$100 million spent on building a road which links southern Rio with the island on which the international airport is located, could have been better spent on improving Rio's health infrastructure. "It's just a question of political will," he said.

Asia

Taiwan, India business leaders to expand trade

Business leaders from Taiwan and India meeting at a conference in Taipei, Taiwan on March 9, expressed interest in expanding trade, investments and technical cooperation between their two nations, UPI reported. The conference was the first of its kind since India severed diplomatic relations with Taiwan's Nationalist government in 1949.

Some 60 business leaders, members of the Chinese National Association of Industry and India-Taiwan Economic Cooperation Committee, explained current trade policies and discussed ways of boosting bilateral commercial ties. "There's not much two-way commerce at present," said Yang Shih-chien, Taiwan's vice economics minister, during an address to the group, "but if we cooperate in areas like technology and investment, it will increase very quickly.

"India is very strong in high-tech fields like aerospace, petrochemicals, and defense," he added, "and we are very competitive in basic commodities and construction material."

R.P. Goenka, leader of the Indian delegation, said economic reforms recently adopted by New Delhi offer improved opportunities for Taiwanese investors. Plans to set up an Indian tourism office in Taipei in April will simplify visa procedures for Taiwanese, he added.

Taiwan's desire for investment guarantees

from India and plans to establish a trade office in Bombay were also discussed at the conference. Two-way trade between India and Taiwan totaled \$392 million in 1992, according to official statistics.

Disease

Unknown germ causing cholera-like epidemic

An unknown germ is causing a cholera-like epidemic in Bangladesh. Doctors have been unable to identify the germ which has caused 3,000 deaths in March in Bangladesh, due to diarrhoeal infection.

"An unknown germ as deadly as cholera is causing the epidemic, but this is certainly not cholera," said Mohammad Abdus Salam, chief physician at Dhaka's International Center for Diarrhoeal Disease and Research. "We are trying to find out what the new germ is and why it is so deadly."

The phenomenon of new killer diseases is further evidence of the veracity of the 1975 report commissioned by Lyndon LaRouche which predicted epidemics of new, unknown diseases because of the collapse in levels of physical output of the world economy, caused in large part by the austerity "conditionalities" policy of international financial institutions such as the International Monetary Fund.

Medicine

New York revives quarantine for TB

New York City has revived its 19th-century quarantine laws for tuberculosis patients, following similar moves in Boston and Denver, because of the spread of drug-resistant strains of TB, especially among the homeless population, the London *Guardian* reported on March 11.

The decision is the result of an emergency meeting on public health last year by the federal Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta, Georgia, which declared that detention and mandatory treatment, at least for TB, are "ethi-

cally and legally justified."

There are some 3,700 cases of TB in New York, and at least one-third are resistant to at least one drug, an alarming situation in a city crowded with homeless people. Some 79% of the TB patients are drug abusers, and 52% are homeless. Last year, because many of these patients do not willingly continue their course of treatment until they are no longer infectious, 50 patients were detained at New York public hospitals until they were considered no longer infectious. The revived laws mean that patients could be detained for over a year until they are cured.

Agriculture

Farmers in Spain demand debt cancellation

Tens of thousands of Spanish farmers called for debt cancellation and a new agricultural credit policy, including a significant lowering of the banking sector's interest rates, in a national protest rally in Madrid on March 5. The European Commission agricultural policy, the Maastricht Treaty for European union, and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) also came under harsh attacks.

The rally, described as the biggest in Spain's history of farmers' protests, had been built by a mobilization over the previous two weeks, featuring tractorcades from all parts of the country coming into the capital.

Measured against the background of the mostly unprogrammatic and radicalized protests of farmers in other European states, the demands of Spain's farmers are much more politically and economically precise, in terms of getting at the root of the collapse of agricultural production.

In Germany, meanwhile, leaders of the young farmers associations in Bavaria and Baden-Württemberg called in early March for a boycott of U.S. feed grains, in retaliation against American trade sanctions and the "injustice of the GATT agreements." The initiative criticized the European Commission in Brussels for its willingness to give concessions on European exports into the states, but not touch U.S. exports of feed grains to the European Community.

Briefly

● **POLISH** unemployed in Slupsk in northern Poland are on a hunger strike to protest the dramatic loss of jobs in the region. The protest started about a month ago with the occupation of the State Council, when protestors were removed by police.

● **SWITZERLAND'S** voters on March 7 rejected a proposal by an animal rights group that would have banned all medical experiments on animals, Reuters reported. The proposal was rejected by some 72%.

● **THE AGE OF SUPERSONIC** astronomy was launched on March 9 when an SR-71 Blackbird reconnaissance aircraft lifted off from Edwards Air Force Base in California equipped with an ultra-violet camera to study stars and comets, Reuters reported. At 85,000 feet, near the upper limits of the Earth's atmosphere, the mission gave scientists a view of space denied to ground-based astronomers.

● **THE SWEDISH** government has announced plans to spend \$1.3 billion a year over the next 10 years to develop transport infrastructure, but it intends to pay the full debt service for old debt, which implies annual expenses 10 times as high. The severe economic crisis has already led to threats by Prime Minister Carl Bildt to call early elections.

● **FINLAND** is being forced into virtual bankruptcy by the foreign debt, Tauno Matomeaki, the president of the Finnish Industrialist Association, said in Helsinki on March 10. Foreign debt has reached 46% of the nation's gross domestic product, and a credit cutoff for Finland is imminent, he warned.

● **THE FOREIGN DEBT** of eastern Europe and Russia increased by 43% in only three years, a new report of the Vienna-based Austrian Institute for Economic Research has revealed. The net foreign debt which was at \$120 billion at the end of 1989, reached \$172 billion at the end of 1992.