



PROPHETIC TIMES

WEEKLY WORLD NEWS UPDATE

OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA

FEBRUARY 21 2009

WORLD BANK CALLS FOR EASTERN EUROPE BAIL-OUT

February 19, 2009 EU Observer reported: "The World Bank called for intervention in central and eastern Europe on Wednesday (18 February) as the region struggles to deal with the financial crisis and economic downturn.

World Bank president Robert Zoellick said the bank was attempting to help the region along with the International Monetary Fund but needed more backing from Brussels, he admitted in an interview with the Financial Times on Wednesday. "It's got to have support from the European governments," he said. "It's 20 years after Europe was united in 1989. What a tragedy if you allow Europe to split again."

Mr Zoellick hopes to announce a €20 billion (\$25bn) trade finance plan before the G20 summit in London on 2 April.

Speaking at meeting on budget deficits on Wednesday, economy commissioner Joaquin Almunia appeared to pour cold water on a co-ordinated Brussels action for central and eastern Europe. Listing countries such as EU member Romania, candidate country Croatia, and Ukraine, Mr Almunia said their different relationships with the EU executive meant that a single initiative for the region was not feasible.

"We think a lot of authorities should be involved in the coordination of the situation ... but from our point of view, what we can not do is to use the same instruments to help these countries," he said.

However Lithuanian Prime Minister Andrius Kubilius echoed recent Austrian calls for an EU support plan for the region, saying that the root cause of the region's troubles was the banking crisis in the west. He also warned of the possibility of a collapse in Ukraine's or Russia's economy and said such an event would have dire consequences for eastern Europe.

European interconnectivity has been highlighted in recent weeks. While central and eastern economies have been harmed by the economic slowdown that resulted from the financial crisis in the west, several western European states now fear contagion in the other direction.

Austria in particular has been calling for a support package for eastern countries, fearing an economic collapse in the region could devastate the Alpine country's banking sector. Vienna's financial institutions are particularly exposed to the region, being owed €220 billion - equivalent to around three quarters of the country's GDP."...

Austria is not alone in its concern. On Wednesday, Hungarian Prime Minister Ferenc Gyurcsany called for a €100 billion rescue plan from the EU for troubled banks in central and eastern Europe"..."

NETANYAHU WINS KEY BACKING IN ISRAELI PM CONTEST

February 19, 2009 The Voice of America reported: "Israeli President Shimon Peres is wrapping up consultations with political parties before he announces his decision on who will be Israel's next Prime Minister. Benjamin Netanyahu and his hawkish Likud Party got a boost in his bid to be the new Prime Minister Thursday by winning the backing of far-right politician Avigdor Lieberman.

Avigdor Lieberman's Yisrael Beiteinu party came in third in the February 10 general elections, showing how much strength the right has gained in Israel. On Thursday, Lieberman threw his party's new strength, which now includes the 15 seats that Mr. Netanyahu would need to form a coalition government, behind Likud. He said that coalition should include the participation of Tzipi Livni's Kadima party.

"Our main target today [is] to establish a unity government of three biggest parties," he said. "We give a recommendation for Benjamin Netanyahu as Prime Minister, but it must be a unity government of three parties, Likud, Kadima, and Israel Beiteinu. I don't believe in any other possibility."



The right's strong showing was fueled by voters' concerns over security at a time when Palestinian militants continue to strike from Gaza and Iran plows ahead with plans to develop its nuclear capabilities.

In last week's election, Netanyahu's Likud Party came in second - just one parliamentary seat behind Livni's Kadima. The race was too close to call. The candidate whose party has a better chance of forming a coalition government with smaller parties is usually the one picked to be Prime Minister. That decision will be made by President Peres. He is expected to announce his pick soon.

Mr. Peres began consultations on Wednesday after receiving official, final election results. His meetings continued into Thursday.

"It is now the time to open a new chapter because there is a new chapter in world politics. And I wouldn't be prejudiced about any elected Israeli," he said. "Whoever was elected by the people will not be free from facing the call of the time."..."

EMBOLDENED HUGO CHAVEZ TO SPEED UP HIS BOLIVARIAN REVOLUTION

February 17, 2009 TimesOnline.co.uk reported: "An emboldened Hugo Chávez vowed to speed up "the construction of true socialism" in Venezuela after winning the right to stand for reelection indefinitely - a measure that opponents say puts the country on the path to dictatorship. The President told ecstatic supporters that his decisive victory in a referendum on removing term limits had smashed the

barriers to a permanent socialist revolution in Venezuela, one of the world's largest oil producers.

To chants of "Chávez will not go" from a crowd gathered outside Miraflores Palace in Caracas, the President vowed to stand in the next elections in 2013 and beyond. "Unless God decides otherwise, unless the people decide otherwise, this soldier is already a candidate," Mr Chávez declared.

The President has said that he needs to stay in power until at least 2019 to complete his Bolivarian Revolution, a process whereby the State has taken control of the country's vast oil wealth, expropriated private land-holdings and businesses and instituted a programme of social reforms. First elected in 1998, he has on occasions suggested that he might hold on to power until 2049, when he will be 95."..."

DEADLY BACTERIA DEFY DRUGS, ALARMING DOCTORS

February 17, 2009 The Los Angeles Times reported: "When Ruth Burns had surgery to relieve a pinched nerve in her back, the operation was supposed to be an "in-and-out thing," recalled her daughter, Kacia Warren. But Burns developed pneumonia and was put on a ventilator. Five days later, she was discharged -- only to be rushed by her daughter to the hospital hours later, disoriented and in alarming pain. Seventeen days after the surgery, the 67-year-old nurse was dead.

Burns had developed meningitis -- an infection of the fluid that surrounds the spinal cord and brain. The culprit was *Acinetobacter baumannii*, a bug that preys on the weak in hospitals. Worse, it was a multi-drug-resistant strain.

Acinetobacter doesn't garner as many headlines as methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*, the dangerous superbug better known as MRSA. But a January report by the Infectious Diseases Society of America warned that drug-resistant strains of *Acinetobacter baumannii* and two other microbes -- *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* and *Klebsiella pneumoniae* -- could soon produce a toll to rival MRSA's.

The three bugs belong to a large category of bacteria called "gram-negative" that are especially hard to fight because they are wrapped in a double membrane and harbor enzymes that chew up many antibiotics. As dangerous as MRSA is, some antibiotics can still treat it, and more are in development, experts say.

But the drugs once used to treat gram-negative bacteria are becoming ineffective, and finding effective new ones is especially challenging.

"We're literally running out of drugs to treat gram-negatives," said Dr. Brad Spellberg, an infectious disease specialist at Harbor-UCLA Medical Center. "And there is nothing in the pipeline right now."

Exact numbers are hard to come by..."... But using 2002 data voluntarily reported to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention from about 300 large, mostly urban hospitals, the Infectious Diseases Society of America identified about 104,000 gram-negative infections that were resistant to at least some antibiotics, roughly the same as the 102,000 MRSA infections found that year."..."

ECUADOR EXPELS US EMBASSY OFFICIAL FOR 'MEDDLING'

February 18, 2009 The Associated Press reported: "Ecuador's government said Wednesday it will expel a U.S. Embassy official who allegedly disputed the transfer of a senior police investigator amid a growing diplomatic spat over Washington's aid to the South American nation. It is the second expulsion order against a U.S. Embassy official this month by President Rafael Correa, who has accused American officials of "insolence" for conditioning aid on the right to veto personnel choices.

Mark Sullivan, the Embassy's first secretary, must leave the country within 48 hours because of his "unacceptable meddling," Foreign Minister Fander Falconi said. Falconi said Sullivan, in a meeting with police in early February, questioned a decision by Ecuadorean Police Chief Jaime Hurtado to transfer the head of the Special Investigations Unit to another police post.

Interior Minister Gustavo Jalk said Sullivan threatened to cut off "logistical and economic" aid to the unit, which investigates high-profile cases including drug trafficking."..."

On Feb. 7, Correa ordered the expulsion of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement attache Armando Astorga for allegedly suspending \$340,000 in annual aid because Ecuador would not allow the U.S. to veto appointments to the anti-smuggling police. U.S. Embassy officials said Astorga had completed his assignment and was already out of the country when Correa ordered the expulsion."..."

IRAN HOLDS ENOUGH URANIUM FOR BOMB

February 19, 2009 The Financial Times reported: "Iran has built up a stockpile of enough enriched uranium for one nuclear bomb, United Nations officials acknowledged on Thursday.

In a development that comes as the Obama administration is drawing up its policy on negotiations with Tehran over its nuclear programme, UN officials said Iran had produced more nuclear material than previously thought. They said Iran had accumulated more than one tonne of low enriched uranium hexafluoride at a facility in Natanz.



If such a quantity were further enriched it could produce more than 20kg of fissile material – enough for a bomb."..."The new figures come in a report from the International Atomic Energy Agency, the UN's nuclear watchdog, released on Thursday. This revealed that Iran's production of low enriched uranium had previously been underestimated."..."

*Compiled by L. Jim Tuck, Pastor
UCGIA Oakland, San Jose, and Santa Rosa
ljt5053@sbcglobal.net*