SMI Genzyme Carries Out Japan’s First Transgenic Trial

SMI Genzyme (Tokyo), a subsidiary of Sumitomo Metal Industries (Osaka) will carry out a clinical trial of recombinant human antithrombin III (rhATIII) produced from transgenic goats’ milk in a plan to replace plasma-derived antithrombin III with rhATIII.

rhATIII, developed by Genzyme Transgenics, will be administered to patients with disseminated intravascular coagulation resulting from complications with malignant tumors, some infectious diseases and hepatitis.

US phase II trial results — carried out last year by Genzyme Transgenics — demonstrated the safety and efficiency of the treatment in 30 patients who had undergone coronary artery bypass surgery. SMI Genzyme is currently negotiating with several Japanese pharmaceutical companies regarding partnerships for carrying out the first phase of clinical trials.

According to SMI Genzyme, this is the first trial in Japan of a transgenically produced recombinant human protein.

Shanxi Province Restructures Drug Industry

Last year, the total output value of Shanxi Province’s pharmaceutical industry reached 4.33 billion yuan (US$521.6 million) with net profits at 510 million yuan (US$61.5 million), respectively 26.8% and 37.8% more than in 1996.

To further boost the industry — which is one of China’s most promising economic sectors — Shanxi Province will establish ten large pharmaceutical companies producing high-tech products by the year 2000.

According to Zhao Dequan, governor of Shanxi, this is an important part of the province’s restructuring plan for its pharmaceutical industry. In addition, large pharmaceutical companies have to establish a modern corporate mechanism before next year, and companies now in the red should stop losing money.

The local government is also encouraging state-owned or collective medicine enterprises to adopt the share-holding system and introduce different ownership forms in small enterprises to propel development.

US Manufacturer Buys Swiss Drug Producer

AlliedSignal Inc. of New Jersey, USA has agreed to buy the Swiss drug manufacturer Pharmaceutical Fine Chemicals SA for an undisclosed amount. The Swiss company, which is the world’s second largest producer of the analgesic naproxen, achieved sales of US$110 million in 1997. AlliedSignal said that the acquisition was in line with its plan to increase its presence in the global pharmaceutical chemicals business.

Israeli Firm Sets Up Potash Plant in China

Israeli chemicals manufacturer Dead Sea Works (DSW) has announced a US$450 million joint venture with Chinese company Mingda, its first ever overseas joint venture. The two firms will construct a potash plant on a salt lake desert in Qinghai Province, with the capacity to produce 800 000 tonnes of potash annually and to employ 1400 workers. The annual demand for potash in China is expected to grow from 3.5 million tonnes to 5 million tonnes by the year 2000, but at present, officials estimate that 60% of potash used in China is imported. DSW signed a memorandum of understanding with the Chinese Ministry of Mining on 13 May 1998.