Higa Medical Systems to Market Cardiovascular System in Japan

Higa Medical Systems has recently obtained approval from the Japanese Ministry of Health and Welfare to import and market the HDI/PulseWave™ CR-2000 Cardiovascular Profiling System. This system will enable physicians to non-invasively screen, diagnose, monitor and treat patients with cardiovascular diseases. It can also be used by research scientists to conduct clinical studies, including evaluations of cardiovascular drugs.

Higa Medical Systems is the exclusive Japanese distributor for the US company, Hypertension Diagnostics, Inc. It is a division of Higa Industries, which is headquartered in Tokyo.

The HDI/PulseWave™ CR-2000 Cardiovascular Profiling System utilizes Hypertension Diagnostics, Inc.’s patented, proprietary and validated blood pressure waveform analysis technology. It is non-invasive, user-friendly and risk-free. The system is able to display an independent assessment of the patient’s arterial (large and small arteries, referred to as C1 and C2 parameters respectively) elasticity, as well as other hemodynamic parameters.

German Healthcare Company Sets Up Base in India

German healthcare company, Paul Hartmann, has recently set up its base in India. Hartmann, which has a global presence in wound management and incontinence products, is the market leader of such products in Germany. It commands 20 percent of the European market.

Hartmann’s wound management products include bandages, gauze, dressing pads, sponges, and adhesive wound dressings. The company produces about 50 basic types of bandages. These bandages, which not only protect the wound but also accelerate the healing process, were developed through research.

The company will be setting up a factory in Coimbatore, India, to manufacture its products. Most of its output will be exported to the Hartmann Group of companies all over the world. About 25 percent of the output will be sold in the domestic market. The company will also import products into India and sell them through its local partner, Elder Pharmaceuticals, whose sales representatives will then promote Hartmann’s products to hospitals and pharmacies.

Elder Pharmaceuticals has already started marketing some of Hartmann’s products, such as adult diapers. It will soon be marketing other products such as clinical thermometers, blood pressure monitors, and wound management products.

Australian Food Company Enters Indian Market

Australian company, Paton’s MacAdmia Plantations, is planning to introduce its range of chocolates, jams, sauces and honey to the Indian market soon. This was mentioned by an official from M B International, Paton’s exclusive distributor in India and Nepal.
According to official sources, Paton’s chocolates will be priced very competitively. The idea is to capitalize on the volume, while keeping the profit margin low. India’s chocolate market is currently dominated by products from Cadbury’s and Nestle.

Paton has approached the Indian government to seek 30 percent duty exemption. At present, the Indian government has fixed the import duty for macademia nuts at 55 percent, compared to only 20 percent for Brazilian nuts.

**First Transgenic Farm to be Set Up in China**

A former Chinese textile enterprise will be setting up a farm to produce transgenic crops, the first of its kind in China.

In collaboration with research institutes locally and abroad, Xinguang Corp. Ltd. has developed transgenic products, including medlar with a rich content of interferon and potatoes which can help protect people from hepatitis B. The company has invited some world famous biologists as special advisors to the company. The US-based Cubarin Company and the University of Michigan are two institutions which have collaborated with the company.

With the progress in transgenic research, scientists are able to impart medical protein sources to plants. Although China started transgenic research a decade ago, results from its research have so far not been used for medical applications. While transgenic products are widely accepted abroad, Xinguang Corp. feels that this quick and convenient method of administering medicine has potential for growth in the world’s most populous nation.

**Largest Medicine Chain Opens in Tianjin**

Tianjin’s largest chain of pharmacies started operations on 20 January 2001. The chain, operated by Zhongxin Pharmaceutical Corporation has a total of 248 pharmaceutical stores in the Chinese city.

The chain stores will be open 24 hours each day and will accept postal and telephone orders, and even deliver the goods to customers upon request.

According to Zhan Yuanjing, general manager of Zhongxin Pharmaceutical Corporation, the chain stores will use a common managing system, logo, accounting system, and stock and distribution structure. The company has also promised consistency in the quality of products sold in all stores.

**Monsanto Thailand Increases Efforts to Ease Concerns on GM Products**

In an effort to reduce concerns about genetically modified products, Monsanto (Thailand) Co. will be distributing relevant information to non-governmental organizations about the safety of such products. This was mentioned by the Monsanto (Thailand) manager, Mr. Sanya Bhummichitra, recently. The company is currently monitoring the second field trials of its Bacillus thuringiensis (Bt) modified cotton in Thailand. The results of the trial are expected to be ready by April this year.

Mr. Sanya said he was confident that the results of the trial will indicate that Bt cotton does not pose any risk. As to whether the experiment would have to be extended for another year, he said that this would have to be decided by the government.

Monsanto Thailand’s main business lines are chemical products, seeds and biotechnology. The company’s total sales for this year has been estimated at approximately Bht1.5 million (US$37,000), 10 percent more than last year’s. Almost 50 percent of its sales are expected from the seed business, 30 percent from herbicides and pesticides of the Round Up brand, and the remaining 20 percent from other chemical products.

Monsanto’s factory in Phitsanulok produces hybrid corn seeds for the animal-feed industry. This factory also supplies seeds for Monsanto’s other operations in Asia.

**In Brief...**

- **Ranbaxy Ends Joint Venture With Schein Pharmaceuticals**
  - India’s leading pharmaceutical company, Ranbaxy Laboratories, has ended its joint venture with the US company Schein Pharmaceuticals. The decision was made following Schein’s takeover by Watson Pharmaceuticals. According to a company representative, Ranbaxy will not lose out by ending the joint venture because it had already informed its customers and distributors of the decision. He said that the joint venture had only served as a means for Ranbaxy to establish a market for its drug, Ranitidine, in the US.

- **Dabur India Records Impressive Profits**
  - Dabur India has recorded a net profit growth of 42.3 percent for the third quarter of 2000. Net sales during the same period increased by 10.2 percent, while gross profit increased by 35.7 percent. Dabur Foods, a 100-percent subsidiary of Dabur India, recorded an impressive growth of 28.8 percent during the first nine months of 2000. According to a company spokesperson, the impressive profitability can be attributed to the company’s increased product range. At the same time, all the major brands of the company recorded significant increase in sales.
New Arthritis Drug Launched in China

Celebrex, a drug for osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis has been approved by China’s State Drug Administration (SDA). The drug is produced by Pharmacia and Pfizer.

Policies and Regulations

China to Promote Outpatient Hospital Treatment

Chinese medical experts have been encouraging patients suffering from infectious diseases not to visit hospitals but to seek treatment from neighborhood clinics, if their conditions are stable and not life-threatening.

Outpatient-hospital treatment includes administration of injections and medicine by clinic doctors and nurses, and treatment at community transfusion centers. Experts said outpatient-hospital treatment not only reduces the chances of cross infection, which is very common during hospitalization, but also cuts down on the medical expenses.

Professor Chen Minjun from the Beijing Union Medical College Hospital said, outpatient-hospital treatment expenses are within cost limits for medications, which is in line with the national medical insurance and system reform implemented recently.

According to Professor He Lixia from the Shanghai Zhongshan Hospital, outpatient-hospital treatment of infectious disease is common in developed countries and this practice has been accepted in Shanghai where the community services are well-established. He pointed out that the latest World Health Organization (WTO) statistics showed that one third of the world’s disease-related deaths are linked to infectious diseases.

Taiwan’s Healthcare Review Committee Makes New Recommendations

Taiwan’s Department of Health recently convened a Healthcare Review Committee to look into ways to help the cash-strapped National Health Insurance (NHI) program.

Earlier in May 2000, the Health Department revealed that the NHI reserves would run out by October 2000, thus Taiwanese residents have to pay higher premiums, from the previous NT$500 (US$16.10) to about NT$600 (US$19.30). However, the proposed premium hike have drawn protests from residents, leading to a review to find other possibilities of alleviating the problem.

The Review Committee has proposed to raise the NHI premium for singles and civil servants. A broad-based system would be introduced, similar to a progressive income tax system, where residents in higher income brackets have to pay higher premiums. Currently, residents whose monthly incomes are above NT$57,800 (US$1.93 million) pay a flat premium.

Yang Chi-liang, the head of the committee, said that the proposal would add an additional NT$14 billion (US$450 million) to the NHI each year.

The committee also suggested that residents under the age of 20 and above the age of 65 be exempted from health insurance. It estimated that the proposed premium hike in higher income groups would be sufficient to cover these two groups of dependents.

In anticipation of another public outcry, Mr. Yang said that a campaign would be organized to help Taiwanese understand that the proposed premium hike is necessary and inevitable.

The Director-General of the Health Department has been informed of the proposal and a complete report was submitted to him in end January.

India’s New Policy to Help Improve Food Processing Sector

A new policy to regulate the food processing industry in India is likely to be approved by the country’s parliament soon. Besides attracting foreign investments into the sector, the policy is aimed at making investments in the food processing industry more profitable.

It is also aimed at doing away with some of the constraints that the industry is currently facing, such as high taxation, and the involvement of multiple number of regulations and agencies.

The policy would help define standards, and includes provisions for the introduction of new technologies in the packaging and processing sectors. It also calls for the establishment of funds, which can be used to stabilize market prices when prices fluctuate.

Since the policy is development-oriented rather than regulatory, it is expected to play a significant role in ensuring growth of the industry as well as generate ample employment opportunities. According to India’s minister of state for food processing industries, Mr. Chaoba Singh, if the desired level of investment is achieved, the food processing sector would booming, and create more than 300,000 jobs.

Mr. Singh attributed the low processing levels to subsistence agriculture, low quality raw materials, market forces, as well as poor infrastructure. The draft policy has already been finalized. It was prepared after taking into account views expressed by state governments, farmers, cooperatives, and agricultural experts.