

Gulf crisis

China, North America to be affected by fallout

Oil fires to plunge earth into unnatural winter

SYDNEY, January 27: Soot from burning Kuwaiti oilfields, some of which were set ablaze this week by Iraqi troops...

bombardment huge amounts of soot from fires would be thrown into the air, darkening the sky and plunging the earth into an unnatural winter.

Richard Turo of the University of California, regarded as a pioneer of theoretical computer models, told the "New Scientist" magazine last week that oil fires burning for a month could release three billion tonnes of black smoke into the upper atmosphere...

CSIRO Atmospheric Research chief Dr Brian Tucker said his group's global climate prediction did not take account of rainfall, common in Africa and other areas in January...

Some atmospheric scientists have said a huge conflagration, igniting major oilfields in Kuwait and Iraq, could give rise to conditions approaching those created by the volcanic explosion of Krakatoa in 1883...

But Tucker disagrees: "In my opinion is quite a different problem. If the soot does get up (into the stratosphere) there could be some localised, short-term climatic effects. But I don't think that will happen."

A U.S. military spokesman on Tuesday said aerial photographs showed Iraq had blown up some oil wells and storage tanks at Al-Wafra field in the Kuwaiti portion of the neutral zone shared with Saudi Arabia on Kuwait's southern border.

Already some soot may have washed away, Iran's news agency IRNA said black, greasy rain caused by the burning oilfield had poured for 10 minutes on the Iranian coastal Bushhr Province, about 250 km (160 miles) east of Kuwait.

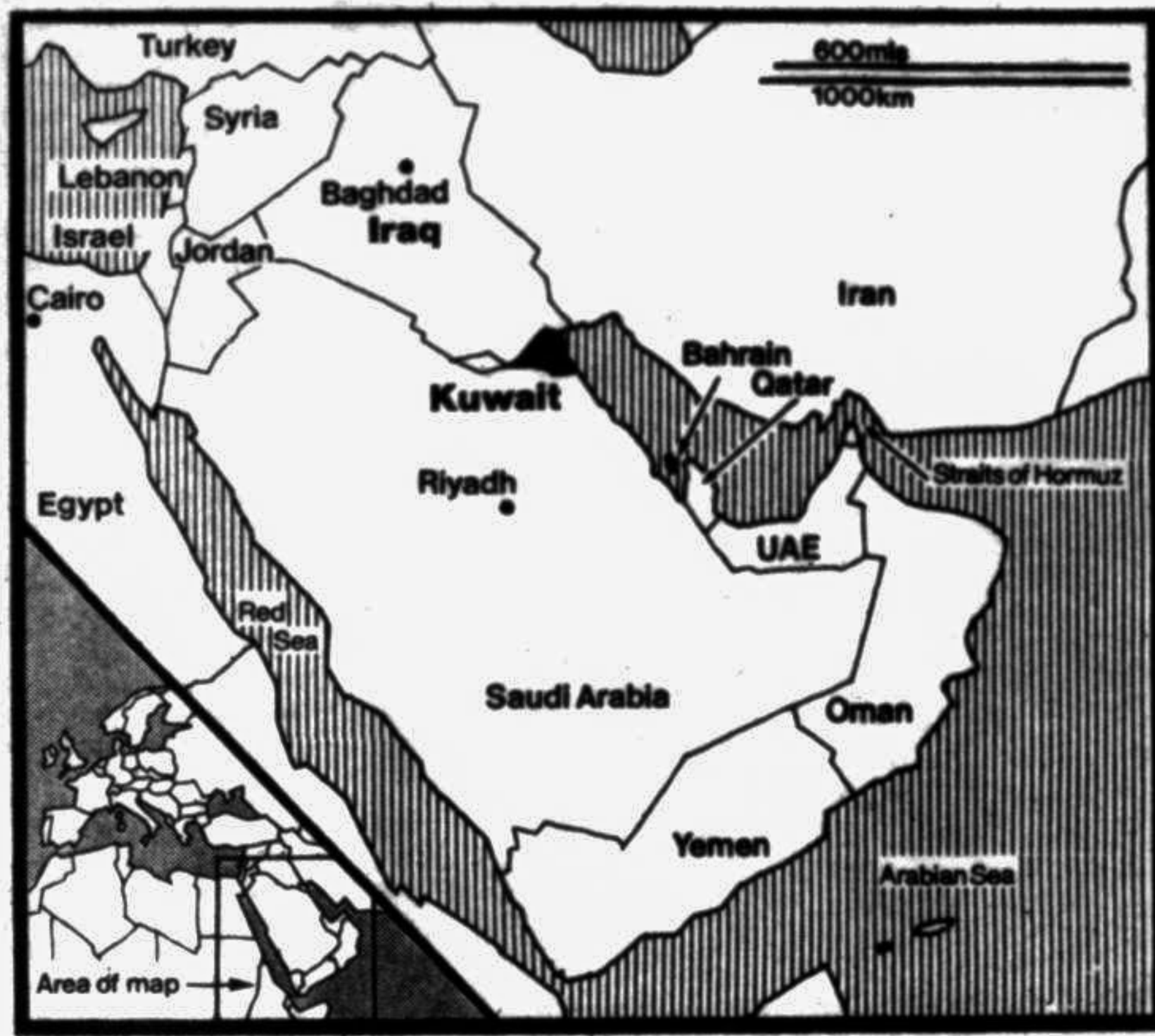
Washington, Jan 27: Saudi Arabia is to contribute 13.5 billion dollars to help the United States defray military costs in the Gulf war Secretary of State James Baker announced last night, report Xinhua.

Baker announced the contribution underscored the strength and determination of the U.S. led multinational forces.

\$ 13.5b more Saudi aid to meet US military costs

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An Eye-witness Account

I went crazy, says a Baghdad housewife

TORONTO, Jan 27: A housewife in beleaguered Baghdad told a Canadian Press reporter how her family's breakfast time turned into a chaos of noise and destruction when Desert Storm warplanes stormed the Iraqi capital, reports AP.

"We heard no siren," Maria Daoud was quoted as saying (7:45 CP report). "There was no air raid warning. We heard something hitting the house, and we all rushed outside. The second missile hit the house, and it crumpled before our eyes."

She and her family were not injured, she said, but now "we have nowhere to go".

The CP correspondent, Leila Deeb, a Jordanian, was taken to the Daoud house and other damaged areas of Baghdad on Thursday by Iraqi officials.

Canadian Press said it was not known whether the dispatch had been subjected to Iraqi censorship.

Correspondent Peter Arnett of the Cable News Network, one of the other remaining foreign correspondents in Baghdad, has said their movements are limited and their work overseen by Iraqi authorities, but few changes are made in their reports.

The Iraqi contend many attacks by U.S. and allied warplanes have damaged residential and other non-military locations in Iraq. The command of Operation Desert Storm, the anti-Iraq coalition, says it has

targeted only military and other strategic sites, although officers acknowledge that civilians inevitably will suffer in such widespread bombing.

Mrs. Daoud was asked what happened when her rented house was hit. "I went crazy", the CP report quoted her as saying. "I didn't know where to go, where to look for my daughters, my sons. I couldn't see the light."

She said she is worried now that her soldier son may return of the attack and try to return to the family. "We'd have to stay here 24 hours a day" waiting for him, she was quoted as saying pointing to the pile of rubble.

Iraqi officials said two other houses were destroyed in the same raid.

Other buildings on the government-guided tour had less damage, Deeb reported.

Some rooms of Khatoun Mosque were destroyed at a clinic near the al-Mukhtar rehabilitation and psychiatric hospital, the CP report said. No one was reported hurt there, it said, but authorities reported that two civil defense officers were killed at the Baghdad-area civil defense headquarters, responsible for helping civilians.

Despite the bombing raids, some shops were still providing food and other necessities, Deeb reported. She said houses and hotels were still without electricity, and Al-Ishaid Hotel, where she was staying,

WASHINGTON, Jan 27: Now that the war for the liberation of Kuwait has begun, the prospect of returning to their homeland is coming alive for the thousands of Kuwaitis in exile since August 2. This is especially true for a group of Kuwaitis in Washington who are planning for the rebuilding of a free Kuwait, reports USIS.

Task Force planning rebuilding of Kuwait

Kuwait, from sewers to airport communications system.

The task force is staffed with about 50 Kuwaitis, who represent a wide range of sectors - communications, oil, electricity, water, transportation, education, health and food, airports and ports, public works, information and legal and judicial sectors. The task force is also drawing on assistance from the United States Army Corps of Engineers and Civil Affairs Corps, the Commerce and State Departments, the Federal Emergency Management Agency and members of the American business community.

The Kuwaitis are working on a short-term emergency plan and a long-term recovery plan. The emergency plan covers the first 90 days from the day the Kuwaitis are able to reenter Kuwait. The long-term recovery period is expected to last two to five years, depending on the severity of damage

to the country, according to Ibrahim Al-Shaheen, director of the task force and former director of Kuwait's Housing Authority.

The emergency plan focuses on meeting the minimum level of services required by the Kuwaiti population, Al-Shaheen said. This will include providing bottled water, electricity, food, medical treatment, communications linkups, transportation and sewage.

Some of the equipment needed during the emergency stage has been shipped to arcas in eastern Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and elsewhere, to be available as soon as the multinational forces free Kuwait, Al-Shaheen said.

Beyond the immediate essentials, the list of what must be replaced or fixed in Kuwait is a long one. Eyewitness accounts of the damage and looting done by the Iraqi occupying forces make it clear

that everything from school desks and blackboards, hospital supplies, office files and furniture, street lamp posts, park benches, sewer pipes, telephone lines, office computers, public buses and police cars, to oil refinery equipment and tankers will have to be replaced or fixed.

Taking Saddam Hussein's repeated threats to destroy Kuwaiti oil facilities seriously, the task force has made preparations to rebuild Kuwait's oil

industry from top to bottom. Kuwait Oil Company's group manager for production and development, Abdul Karim Rabah, said his first goal is to restore Kuwait's capacity to export oil and meet the country's internal demands for electricity and water desalination. Production facilities for both sectors run on oil.

At present, the planners can only guess at when they will be able to return to Kuwait and what they may be facing

when the war is over. This poses a unique challenge to the planners.

"We are planning from scratch. We do not know when we are going (back) in, and do not know what we will find," Al-Shaheen stressed.

Exiles were able to smuggle out finger print records and information on computer disks from Kuwait. Most property and banking records and census data were contained on these computer disks. Finger-print records will be used to reissue individual identification cards confiscated by Iraqi troops.

Feature

MORE children will be born during the Nineties than in any other decade in history. The kind of life those children will lead - if they live to lead one at all - depends on the determination of the world's leaders to carry through a sweeping series of promises to improve the welfare of this planet's next generation.

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has set a goal: to end mass child deaths and child malnutrition by the year 2000. Some 250,000 children in developing countries die every week from common illnesses and one child in three is stunted by malnutrition.

At an unprecedented gathering of world leaders last September in New York, 71 presidents and prime ministers put their signatures to a document agreeing to carry out UNICEF's goals - and more.

The result of the summit was a checklist of challenges for the decade ahead, highlighted by six basic goals: cut deaths among children under five by one-third, halve maternal mortality, halve malnutrition among the world's under-fives, provide safe water and sanitation for all families, provide basic education and see to the protection of children with the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Cynics saw the promises as so much hot air. Even UNICEF executive director James Grant warned: "A great promise has been made to the children of the 1990s. Whether the promise will be kept is a question which will be answered not by the declarations of a day but by the deeds of a decade."

But the latest UNICEF report on the state of the world's children heralds the success of a goal of similar scope set in 1980 - to immunise 80 per cent of the developing world's children by the end of 1990. That success has given new credence to the idea that the world can set goals and meet them.

Six Targets for 2000 to Save the Children

In 1980 the World Health Organisation set a target for 1990: the immunisation of 80 per cent of the children in developing countries. Figures to be released soon are expected to show that the target was achieved and as a result 12 million young lives were saved. Now UNICEF has set an equally ambitious target for the year 2000: to end mass child deaths and child malnutrition. What happened in the Eighties, reports Gemini News Service, provides every reason to hope that the new target, too, will be achieved. by Alan Thompson

sation goal set in 1980 will have been reached.

Says UNICEF: "That extraordinary achievement has not only saved 12 million young lives, it has also given the world new hope by showing what can be achieved when the international community commits itself to a great endeavour."

The State of the World's Children report also documents the tentative success of

other efforts to promote the welfare of children, such as the concept of providing corridors of safety to protect children caught up in warfare.

Since 1985, fighting in the El Salvador civil war has stopped for three days every year to allow all children to be immunised. Corridors of peace have been established in Sudan so essential supplies can reach civilians and children. The policy has been recommended

to all members of the Organisation of African Unity and may be applied in Angola and Ethiopia.

But despite those successes, the UNICEF report outlines in detail the huge task ahead. And it condemns the irony that simple solutions already exist to most of the problems targeted.

The question at the centre of the World Summit was therefore whether morality would keep step with capacity, whether what could not be done would now be done," the report says.

The \$20 billion that would be required each year to bring about all the proposed changes is about one-eighth of one per cent of the world's annual income, half as much as Germany will spend in 1991 on unification and as much as the world spends each 10 days on the military.

The task is to make today's low-cost technologies - vaccines, oral rehydration salts, antibiotics, growth charts, iron tablets, family planning and blindness-preventing vitamin A tablets - available to all.

Today only about three per cent of the industrialised world's aid is devoted to such basics as rural water supply, primary education and health care.

The report says the current spending priorities simply do not make sense.

Point by point, the report describes what would have to be done to fulfill the World Summit's six basic goals.

1 - Cut by one-third death rates among children under five.

Right now 14 million children under five die each year in the developing world; the main causes: diarrhoea, measles, tetanus, whooping cough and pneumonia - all of which can now be treated at very low cost.

2 - Cut by half maternal mortality rates.

Right now, some 500,000 women die in pregnancy or childbirth. Half the deaths could be prevented with low-cost help.

3 - Cut by half severe and moderate malnutrition among children under five.

At present, one child in three is stunted by malnutrition; the most frequent cause being lack of knowledge of the special feeding needs of a young child.

4 - Provide safe water and sanitation for all families.

One-third of families in rural areas of the developing world do not have access to clean water and half do not have safe sanitation. The average initial investment needed to provide both is less than \$30 per person. The system could be kept up for about \$2 per person, per year.

5 - Provide basic education for all children and completion of primary education by 80 per cent.

Right now only 55 per cent of children in the developing world complete four years of primary education and boys fare twice as well as girls. Low-cost remedies exist.

6 - Ensure observance of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, particularly regarding protection of children in situations of armed conflict.

Some 80 million children are exploited in the workplace and 30 million live on the streets.

Implementing the Children's Summit goals will cost money. UNICEF suggests several straightforward methods of covering some of the cost.

The report concludes that developing nations as a whole are now spending more on the military than on education and health combined. A five per cent cut in military spending would provide half the money needed annually to meet the year 2000 goals.

It also recommends spending shifts from high per capita cost services, which generally serve the better off, to low per capita strategies for the poor.

The World Summit also urged debt-swapping arrangements through which debt relief schemes could be formulated in such a way so that debt could be swapped for investment in social development programmes.

Health

Faulty protein holds clue to Alzheimer's disease

Phyllida Brown

A COMMON protein in the blood may help to explain why some people develop Alzheimer's disease, a fatal form of dementia. In particular, the protein may explain why people suffering from this disease have abnormally high levels of aluminium in their brains.

Researchers have found that people with Alzheimer's have a defective form of the protein, which is normally responsible for binding aluminium and removing it from the bloodstream. Because of this defect, the researchers believe, increased amounts of the metal are free to circulate in a form that can enter the brain.

The discovery, announced by a British team, has two important implications: first, it opens up the possibilities in future for a simple blood test, and even a treatment, for people with the defective protein, who may be susceptible to Alzheimer's disease. Secondly, it offers the first explanation of why some people seem to be much more vulnerable to aluminium poisoning than others.

Paul Altmann at The Lonson Hospital, Gillian Farrar and John Blair at the University of Aston in Birmingham, and their colleagues, say there is a lot more research to be done. "Now we may be able to open an important door into the study of Alzheimer's," says Altmann.

Scientists have been hampered by their lack of knowledge about the causes of Alzheimer's disease, for which there is currently no cure. The disease is also difficult to diagnose. Certainly, aluminium is involved; but the link between the metal and the disease has remained unclear.

The incidence of Alzheimer's disease appears to be higher in areas where the concentration of aluminium in drinking water is high. In addition, several studies have shown that the brains of people with Alzheimer's contain large amounts of the metal.

More recently, work by Altmann and Blair has shown that aluminium affects certain neurotransmitters - the chemical messengers between nerve cells in the brain, causing specific changes in the nerve signals. These changes are similar in people with aluminium poisoning and

Alzheimer's. But if the metal had a direct, causal relationship with the disease, scientists would expect to find a higher rate of Alzheimer's in certain groups exposed to very large amounts of aluminium, such as kidney patients and others who have to take drugs containing the metal. But these groups are no more likely to develop Alzheimer's disease.

Now, the team has compared blood samples from various groups of people to see how well the protein transferin in their blood binds the metal. Aluminium is difficult to observe in biological experiments, so the team substituted another metal that behaves in a very similar way, gallium.

Transferin's normal function is to bind iron and other metals and transport them to specific transferrin receptors on cells. Once bound, the complex of protein and metal is very large - too big to cross the blood-brain barrier. The transferrin-metal complex "docks" on the cell receptor, to be taken into a compartment inside the cell where conditions are acid enough to detach the metal.

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No more Fear of the Dentist's Drill

A drill which causes almost no pain - this secret fantasy of all dental patients will perhaps soon be a reality. The new "miracle instrument" developed at the University of Ulm is now being clinically tested

nerve tissue. For the laser flash lasted far too long up to now and heated up the tooth being treated too severely. This problem was solved by Dr. Raimund Hibst of the Institute for Laser Technologies in Medicine and Dr. Ulrich Deller

also necessary as the carious substance is evaporated by the heat. At the same time an overheating pressure is produced in the tooth substance, which discharges in tiny explosions - a portion of the caries is thus "blown away". As

A laser system which can be used carefully and painlessly in dental treatment has been developed by researchers lately

there; laser technology has made it all possible.

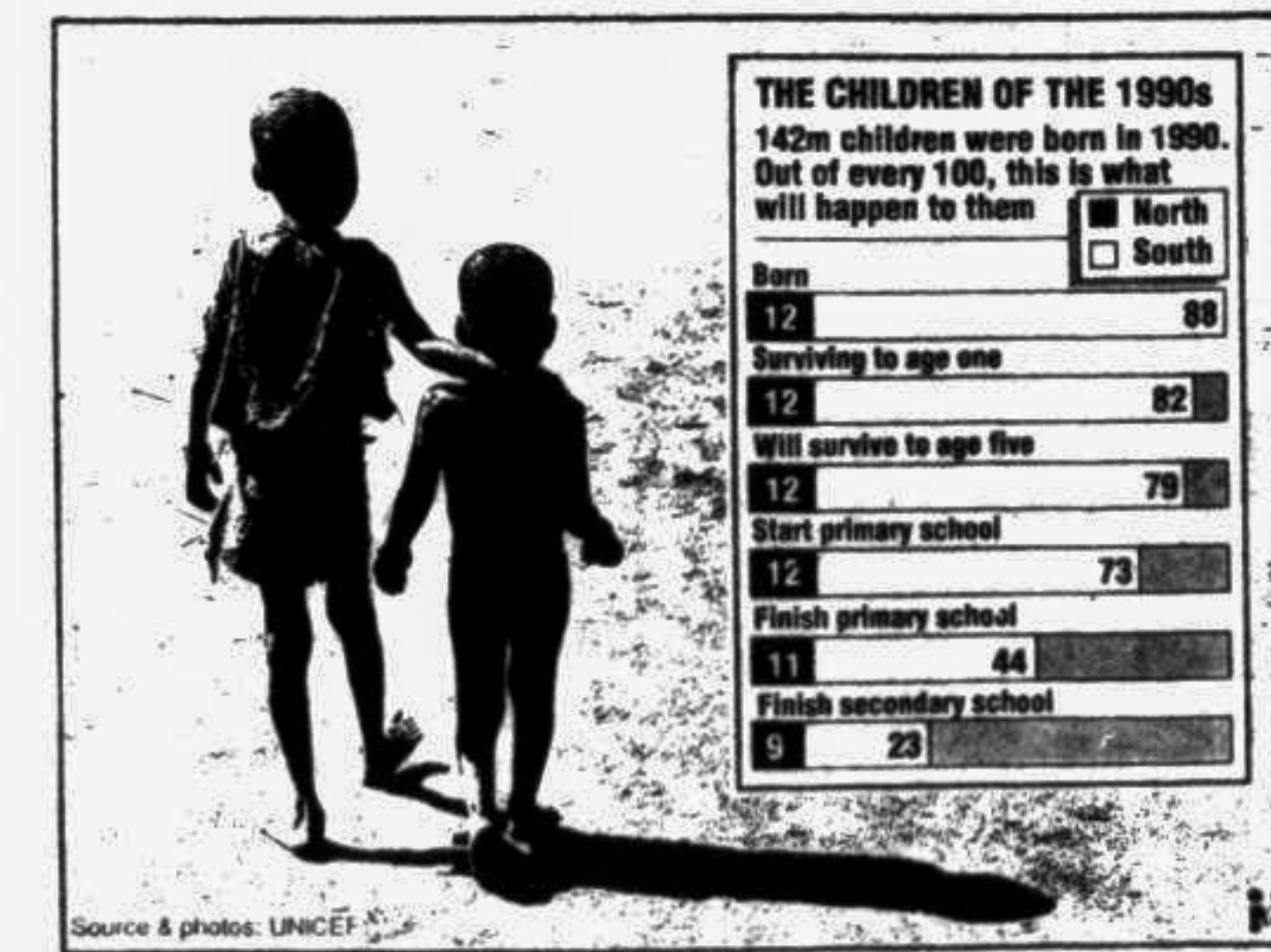
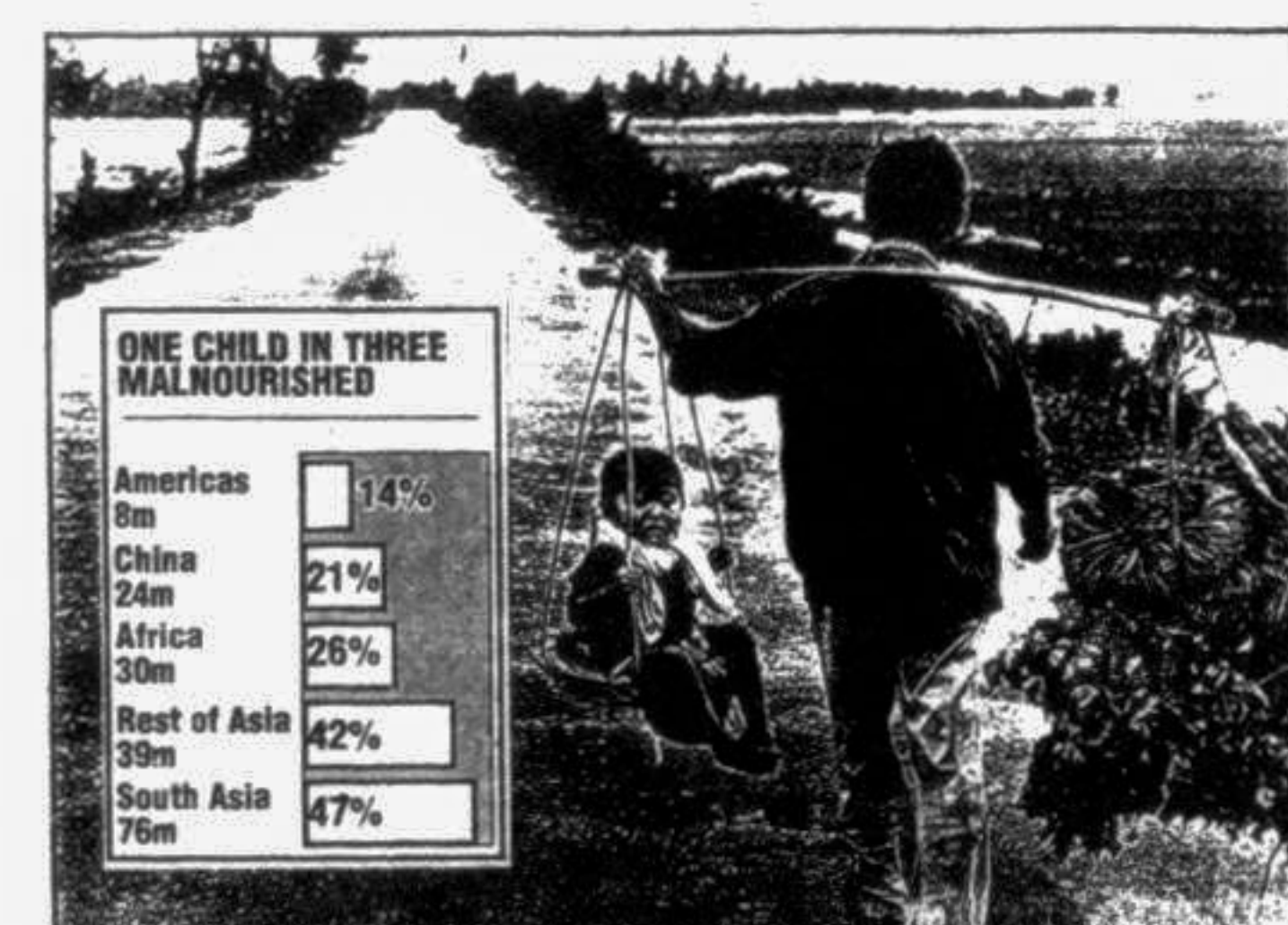
For a quarter of a century attempts have been made to realize the dream of a laser drill which causes less pain. But they have always failed up to now on account of the existing devices. The unpleasant side-effects of their laser beams were cracks and fractures in the tooth enamel and irreversible damage to the

of the Keller in Clinic for Dental Surgery and Radiology at the University of Ulm through the development of a new laser drill, which operates with pulses of only 250 millionths of a second duration, and which are emitted at intervals of one second.

Of course the tooth warms up in this process too, because the energy is transformed immediately after impact; this is

teeth conduct heat only poorly. The temperature of not quite 100 degrees Celsius measured at the point of treatment does not represent a danger to the tooth's nerve.

Hibst and Keller are now treating patients in clinical tests. If the laser drill proves to be a success, a rapid marketing of the product can be anticipated. - Dieter Schwab (GRS)



Source & photo: UNICEF