

immediately and 250,000 might die over a longer period. The point is not questioned in the economic and political aspects. Estimates of the electricity it yields will cost nearly three times as much as coal-fired electricity.

30,000 men from the Pakistani army who are now sent to guard up throes of installations and key military sites. It is a lucrative assignment. According to one presidential aide, "The president, in

New Aids alarm over blood link

by John Barnes
Los Angeles

DOCTORS now have conclusive proof that the mysterious and generally fatal ailment known as Aids has been passed to a hospital patient through a blood transfusion. American health officials fear that this news will heighten the already widespread alarm about the risk of Aids-tainted blood banks.

The proof has come through a feat of medical detection. It began with a man suffering from Aids - acquired immune deficiency syndrome - being admitted to a Los Angeles university medical centre. He told health officials that before he knew he was an Aids victim, he had given blood at one of the city's leading hospitals, Cedars-Sinai medical centre. There they learned that his blood had been given to two women patients.

That was more than a year ago. Tests on the women showed the dangerous abnormality that is evidence of Aids: a failing of certain white blood cells that trigger the body's fight against infection. The women had to be told they were living with a time-bomb. Sooner or later they would become vulnerable in particular to certain forms of pneumonia and cancer.

In December one of the two, a 38-year-old Los Angeles woman who was given the blood during a hysterectomy operation, went down with pneumonia. Doctors managed to save her, but her outlook is grim. The other woman is still waiting for the first onslaught. So far in America, of 3,650 known Aids sufferers, 1,750 have died, and doctors have little reason to think that the others will survive.

Most of the victims are homosexual men who contracted Aids through sexual contact. But at least 70 are people who had blood transfusions - either haemophiliacs or hospital patients, some of them babies. The suspicion that the blood was to blame has now become proof.

The odds against getting Aids from blood transfusions are of course astronomical. But as the alarm has spread, blood banks

have begun a vigorous screening of donors. Volunteers are given cards that request them to leave if they lead lives that make them potential Aids victims. In New York and Miami, blood banks even list a phone number that closet homosexuals can call if they have given blood.

A growing number of hospital patients are refusing transfusions out of fear of Aids. People are postponing operations until they have saved up enough blood from donations by family members and friends. Some hospitals are now advising prospective surgery patients to recruit their own private blood donors. In Long Island, New York, the Roslyn Country Club has established a list of 60 donors who can be called on by members in an emergency.

Only the wealthiest private hospitals and higher-income groups have side-stepped the traditional voluntary blood collection agencies and this has led to a dispute with the three largest blood-banking agencies - the American Red Cross, the Council of Community Blood Centres and the American Association of Blood Banks. They fear that the nation's blood supply will become "segregated."

In Britain efforts to achieve self-sufficiency in blood products - and particularly Factor VIII, the blood-clotting agent vital to 4,500 haemophiliacs - have been stepped up to avoid the risk of importing Aids-contaminated supplies from the US, writes Harry Coen. A £21m extension to the Central Blood Products Laboratory at Elstree is under way and will be finished next year. "We are already self-sufficient in blood supply," said a health department official last week. "We hope to be fully self-sufficient in products such as Factor VIII in the near future."

David Watters of the Haemophilia Society believes the risk to British haemophiliacs has been averted. Rigorous screening of American blood donors seems to be working.

Although the number of Aids sufferers in Britain has doubled over the past six months to 40 (with 22 deaths), none of them is known to have been a blood donor.

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