

Paediatrician launches bid to become Iran's next president

Paris A prominent Iranian scientist is set to stand in the nation's presidential elections in June. Mostafa Moin, who was widely respected as science minister, was chosen in late December as the candidate of the reformist party, the Islamic Iran Participation Front (IIPF).

Iran's president, Mohammad Khatami, cannot be re-elected as he has already held the two terms of office allowed under the constitution. Moin, a paediatrician and medical researcher, is president of the Immunology, Asthma and Allergy Research Institute in Tehran. He was science minister from 2000 to 2003, when he resigned, purportedly in protest at conservative policies and mass arrests of students.

Although his candidacy might yet be disqualified by the Guardians Council, a



Mostafa Moin hopes to win Iran's June election.

constitutional oversight body, Moin is already setting out some policies, saying that he favours promoting academic freedom. He also wants to develop Iran's economy through science and technology, and says he hopes to reverse the brain drain of the country's best scientists.

Inventor of blue LED sees red over settlement

Tokyo A record-breaking award of ¥20 billion (US\$195 million) made to a Japanese inventor by a Tokyo district court has been slashed in the court of appeal.

Shuji Nakamura, who is based at the University of California, Santa Barbara, reluctantly accepted a settlement of ¥840 million on 11 January from his former employer, Nichia Corporation of Shikoku. The award is for his pioneering work on technology to produce blue and green light-emitting diodes (LEDs) and blue lasers.

Nakamura said he was dissatisfied with the outcome but followed legal advice and settled during Nichia's appeal.

Last January, the Tokyo district court estimated that Nakamura was responsible for

Climate-change model becomes a class act

Washington To help take the mystery out of climate change, NASA last week released software that lets students do climate modelling in the classroom. The Educational Global Climate Model, or EdGCM, developed at the agency's Goddard Institute for Space Studies in New York, can be downloaded free from the Internet.

Letting high-school and college students play at climate modelling "exposes the model's strengths and weaknesses in a way that scientific papers and newspaper articles frequently obscure", says project leader Mark Chandler, a climatologist at Columbia University in New York.

Based on a more complex model at Goddard, the software allows students to explore the impact on climate of many variables, such as



how much sunlight is reflected by the atmosphere. And, at the click of a mouse, it lets them do something that has so far proved beyond the world's industrial nations: they can cut atmospheric carbon dioxide levels in half.

♦ www.edgcm.org

half the value of patents covering a method for making the LEDs (see *Nature* 427, 478; 2004). But during the appeal, the upper court reduced the estimate of Nakamura's contribution after it took into account the risk taken by Nichia that the research might not work, and the role of other employees.

Bioethics law restarts Korea's stem-cell work

Tokyo The Korean scientist who leapt to fame last February for deriving stem cells from cloned human embryos is back in the lab.

Despite his work being hailed as a major step towards using stem cells to treat disease, Woo Suk Hwang's research has been on hold pending approval under a new bioethics law in South Korea. That law came into effect on 1 January, and 12 days later Hwang and his team at Seoul National University received authorization from the government to continue their research.

Hwang's initial success had been clouded by questions over whether recruitment of women volunteers for egg donation followed ethical guidelines, and allegations that he had used eggs donated by his graduate student (see *Nature* 429, 3; 2004). Hwang denied any wrong-doing but said that he would suspend his research until the bioethics law came into effect. Bioethicists hope that two national and ministerial committees created under the law will keep a closer eye on ethical issues in the future.

Search is on to find a verse to best sum up the Universe

London The best equations are said to have the expressiveness of poetry. So it is perhaps fitting that a competition launched by the British Association for the Advancement of Science on 12 January offers entrants the chance to pen a poem celebrating the themes of time, space and energy.

The competition calls on "poetic physicists

and physical poets of all ages" to submit a poem on the central themes of Albert Einstein's theoretical work. The competition marks Einstein Year — the centenary of three of his most influential papers — and winners will be announced during UK National Science Week on 11–20 March.

Famous entrants include astrobiologist Paul Davies ("Einstein came down like a wolf on the fold/Determined to slaughter the theories of old"), novelist Terry Pratchett ("Away beyond the speed of light/I'll write a novel in one night") and scientists Dr Bunsen Honeydew and Beaker from cult TV programme *The Muppet Show* ("Energy's simple, you just make an 'E'/ By timesing an 'M' and squaring a 'C'").

If you think you can do better, visit www.the-ba.net/universe and have a go.

Government guidelines weigh in over obesity

Washington Obesity has joined problems such as cardiovascular disease as a central issue in the US administration's advice on healthy eating. Released on 12 January, *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* highlights the need to reduce total calorie intake.

The guidelines, published every five years by the health and agriculture departments, also advise eating more fruit and vegetables, and minimizing intake of refined sugars.

"They look like the strongest dietary guidelines yet produced," says Michael Jacobson, who heads the Center for Science in the Public Interest, a nutrition advocacy group in Washington DC.

But Jacobson and other experts warn that the public will ignore the guidelines unless the government promotes them more vigorously. They argue that the fight against obesity requires education campaigns as well as new legislation, for example to subsidize healthy foods and curb food advertising aimed at children.

♦ www.healthierus.gov/dietaryguidelines