

Furore leads university to relent over Berlin science meetings

Munich The Free University of Berlin has backed down from its attempts to bring the prestigious Dahlem Conferences into more direct line with its own interests.

The conferences take place about three times a year in Berlin, and the proceedings are usually published rapidly. In the past year or so, the Free University, which administrates the meetings, has changed the organizational structure of the conferences, and dismissed the series editor (see *Nature* 433, 446; 2005). Protests at local and international levels have been vociferous.

Matters came to a head on 14 February, when more than half of the international scientific advisory board resigned. This followed the withdrawal of a conference from the schedule by its organizer, and confirmation from another organizer that the proceedings of a 2003 conference would be published elsewhere as the university had proved to be too slow.

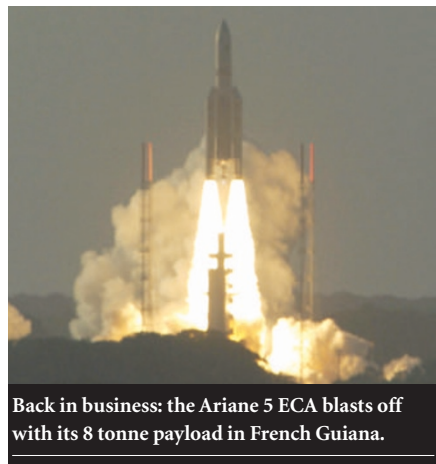
The Free University now says that it will leave all scientific decisions to the scientific advisory board without undue influence, and will reinstate the dismissed series editor.

Ariane rocket launches its comeback campaign

Paris A weight was lifted from the shoulders of Europe's space community last weekend when its 'heavy lifter' Ariane 5 ECA rocket launched successfully.

This was the first time Europe's souped-up rocket had flown since a disastrous maiden flight in December 2002, when an ECA launcher veered off course and self-destructed, throwing the future of the rocket into doubt. Since then, the European Space Agency and its industrial partners have spent more than half a billion dollars on redesigning the launcher.

Taking off from the Kourou spaceport in French Guiana on 12 February, the Ariane 5



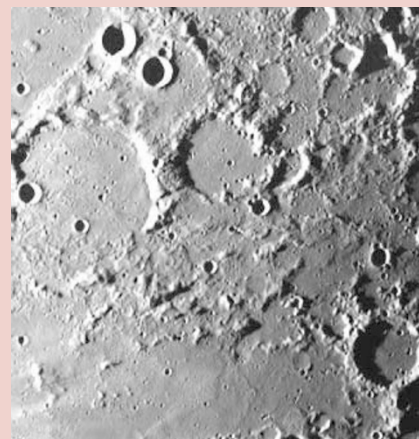
Back in business: the Ariane 5 ECA blasts off with its 8 tonne payload in French Guiana.

India offers Europe a ride to the Moon

Paris The European Space Agency (ESA) is considering an offer from India to place scientific instruments on its 2007 lunar mission, Chandrayaan-1.

ESA's Science Programme Committee, which discussed the plan last week, may spend up to €6 million (US\$7.8 million) on a package of instruments. European scientists would like to exploit the opportunity to analyse the chemistry of the Moon's surface using X-rays, to search for ice with infrared radiation, and to use visible laser light to create a topographical map. If the collaboration goes ahead, it would be the first time that Europe has joined a mission launched by the Indian Space Research Organisation.

ESA has also extended its current lunar mission, SMART-1, for a further year from August. SMART-1 was designed primarily to test new propulsion technologies but it also carried a



Small scientific payload, including instruments that in January beamed back their first close-range images of the Moon's surface (above).

ECA put three satellites — a total of eight tonnes of payload — into orbit.

The rocket can actually lift ten tonnes, four more than a standard Ariane 5, and is intended to become the workhorse for future heavy payloads, including the James Webb Space Telescope and other deep-space probes.

Mystery deaths prompt Canadian ban for drug

Washington A drug used to treat attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder has been banned by Canadian authorities after only a year on the market.

Adderall, made by Shire Pharmaceuticals, based in Basingstoke, UK, was withdrawn after it was linked to 12 strokes and 20 unexplained deaths. Fourteen of the deaths and two of the strokes occurred in children. The US Food and Drug Administration issued an alert to health officials about the Canadian action but has not banned the drug. Adderall is not available in Europe.

Robert Peterson of Health Canada says that it cannot justify the risk of "very rare but nevertheless catastrophic adverse events".

Shire maintains that Health Canada's move is wrong. "We disagree with their action and we disagree with how they are interpreting the data. The general population rate of sudden death is greater than the rate of sudden death among the population taking Adderall," says spokesman Matthew Cabrey.

Capital proposal moves medical lab to city centre

London Britain's prestigious National Institute for Medical Research looks set to relocate from Mill Hill in the suburbs of London to a site close to University College

London (UCL) in the centre of the capital.

The Medical Research Council (MRC), the funding body that runs the institute, opted for the UCL site on 10 February after considering a rival bid from King's College London. The MRC says its decision hinged on UCL's expertise in taking basic research into the practical arena, and on the possibility of collaborations with physical and engineering sciences. A detailed proposal for the move will be considered by the MRC in May.

The move follows an acrimonious consultation process that set many institute staff at odds with senior MRC officials and that was last week criticized by politicians (see *Nature* 433, 564; 2005). The MRC says it will work closely with Mill Hill staff while the UCL bid is being developed.

Tech centre focuses on developing world

London The United Nations has unveiled plans for a major centre dedicated to studies of technology in poor nations.

The institute, which will bring together 100 researchers, will focus on economic and political studies of how new technologies can benefit less-developed nations. Two existing centres — the Maastricht Economic Research Institute on Innovation and Technology and the United Nations University Institute for New Technologies, also in Maastricht — will be merged this year to create the new body.

The two organizations have extensive experience of issues in the developing world, including work on building scientific capacity in Africa, studies of innovation in traditional agricultural practices and the development of policies to ally scientific research with local decision-making processes.