

## Charity announces deal for cheap AIDS drugs

Two steps taken last week may help keep the price of AIDS drugs down in developing countries.

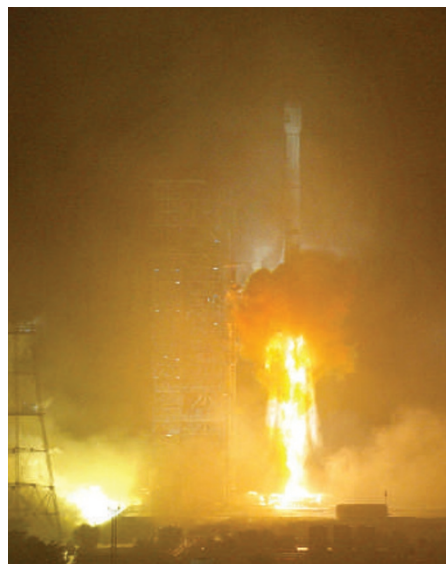
In one development, the charity run by former US President Bill Clinton announced that it has negotiated price reductions of up to 67% for 16 AIDS drugs in 66 developing countries. The New York-based William J. Clinton Foundation says the cut-price medicines will be supplied by two Indian manufacturers of generic drugs, Cipla and Matrix Laboratories, and paid for by UNITAID, an international drug-purchase facility established in 2006 by France, Brazil, Britain, Norway and Chile.

The 8 May announcement came shortly after Brazil said it would break a patent on efavirenz, an AIDS drug made by Merck. Under some rarely used World Trade Organization rules, a country may, in a public-health emergency, sign a compulsory licence that allows it to make or buy generic versions of patented drugs. Merck, which had offered the Brazilian government a 30% discount on the pills, said it was “profoundly disappointed” with the decision.

## Space satellite brings continents together

Africa and Asia joined forces on 14 May as the Chinese Long March 3-B rocket carried a telecommunications satellite into space for Nigeria.

China's state news agency says it is the first time that a foreign buyer has purchased both a satellite and its launching service from the country. About 30 other launches



Long March to space: China this week launched a Nigerian telecommunications satellite into space.

are planned, including one for Venezuela next year, the agency says.

NIGCOMSAT-1 now joins Nigeria's Earth observation satellite NIGSAT-1, which was launched from Russia in 2003.

## Massachusetts proposes \$1 billion for life sciences



Deval Patrick: planning a boost for biotech.

Massachusetts governor Deval Patrick has proposed a US\$1-billion life-sciences initiative intended to sustain the state's prominent biotechnology industry in the face of stagnant federal funding and increasing competition from

other states, notably California.

The plan, unveiled on 8 May at the BIO biotechnology convention in Boston, calls for funding over the course of 10 years and includes: tax incentives for biotech companies; a competitive grant programme for biomedical researchers; \$38 million in funding for RNA-interference research; and \$66 million to set up a stem-cell repository.

Funding for the proposal hinges upon legislative approval, but the heads of both houses of the Massachusetts legislature have said they will support the initiative.

## Nuclear-weapons lab under new management

Security concerns at the Los Alamos National Laboratory in New Mexico have had the entire US nuclear-weapons complex making big changes. Last week, for the first time in more than half a century, the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory in California got a new manager.

The new boss looks much like the old one, though: it is a consortium led by the University of California, which has managed the lab since it was founded in 1952, and the Bechtel Corporation.

The group — essentially the same team that won the right to manage Los Alamos in December 2005 — narrowly beat a rival bid from an industrial group led by the defence giant Northrop Grumman. The University of California/Bechtel proposal to manage the lab — which has a yearly budget of US\$1.6 billion — was lower in cost and scored higher, in part because of the university's scientific expertise, according to Tyler Przybylek, the Department of Energy official who chose the consortium.

Under the seven-year agreement, the consortium will receive up to \$45.5 million

## Publishing prize

Annette Thomas, the managing director of Nature Publishing Group, was last week awarded the 2007 Kim Scott Walwyn Prize for women in publishing in the United Kingdom. Annette was a biology editor at *Nature* and the founding editor of *Nature Cell Biology*, before moving into publishing with the launch of the *Nature Reviews* journals.

per year to oversee the lab, which was recently chosen to develop the reliable replacement warhead, a new class of nuclear warhead that will not require testing (see *Nature* 446, 121; 2007).

## Medical Research Council emphasizes clinical work

Britain's Medical Research Council (MRC) is set to shift its focus towards 'translational' research, which has a greater emphasis on producing clinical benefits for patients and is currently very much in vogue at the US National Institutes of Health (see *Nature* 441, 17–19; 2006). The change comes two months after the British government announced a 2.7% rise in the MRC's science budget for next year.

On 10 May, MRC leaders announced that it plans to improve links with the pharmaceutical industry and potentially increase the number of drugs it brings to market itself. But outgoing chief executive Colin Blakemore assured basic researchers that they will not lose out. “I don't think there's cause for concern,” he said. “This is not about withdrawing from areas we have previously funded.”

## Iranian researchers to rejoin chemical society

The American Chemical Society has reinstated 14 of the 36 Iranian researchers who had their memberships cancelled earlier this year (see *Nature* 446, 597; 2007).

The decision was made after consultation with lawyers and the US Department of the Treasury, which currently has a near-total embargo on dealings with Iran. The reinstated members will be eligible for all benefits except career-development services and discounts for meetings. The remaining 22 members will be offered an opportunity to renew their memberships, which have lapsed since the cancellations were made.

### Correction

Our News Feature 'Is this what it takes to save the world?' (*Nature* 447, 132–136; 2007) incorrectly identified Ralph Cicerone as a co-winner of the Nobel prize shared by Paul J. Crutzen, Mario J. Molina and F. Sherwood Rowland.