

## Visiting researchers in France promised 'fast-track permits'

[PARIS] Foreign researchers invited to work in France are to be spared the long queues and endless paperwork associated with extracting a *carte de séjour* (residency permit) from the police, under plans announced this week by Claude Allègre, the research minister.

Allègre said that many leading researchers had complained to him about what many see as the humiliating and ludicrous delays and obstacles that often need to be overcome to comply with France's bureaucratic and strict immigration laws. Several had indicated that as a result they would not return to work in France again.

Allègre promised that all visiting researchers will in future benefit from a fast-track procedure, and will be supplied with the necessary documentation before leaving their home countries. Foreign students will also benefit from simplified procedures.

## Ford links engineering and environment at MIT

[BOSTON] **Ford Motor Company announced last week that it is to give the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) at least**

**\$20 million over the next five years to support the study of engineering design and on-the-job education for engineers. The money will also establish an MIT-directed consortium — drawing on researchers from the academic community, industry and government agencies — to address environmental issues.**

**According to MIT's president, Charles Vest, the "global challenges" of the future "require closer, more cooperative interactions among universities, corporations, and governments". Ford's vice-president, John McTague, says that "this new joint effort will help set a model for how universities and industries can work together to achieve mutual benefits".**

## Congress critical over Gulf War illness

[WASHINGTON] The Pentagon and the Department of Veterans Affairs should lose their power to investigate Gulf War illnesses, according to a report by a US House of Representatives committee that is expected to be publicly adopted today (30 October). The report by the House Government Reform and Oversight Committee, an advance copy of which was obtained by the *New York Times*, says that the two departments have handled investigations of Gulf War illnesses so poorly that

responsibility for further investigation should be moved to a separate federal agency — a suggestion opposed last month by William Cohen, the Secretary of Defense.

The report, which has been 20 months in the making, asserts that "toxic agents", including Iraqi chemical weapons, were likely to be responsible for health problems in thousands of veterans. Congressman Christopher Shays (Republican, Connecticut), who chaired the subcommittee that drafted the report, writes that investigations by the two departments have been "irreparably flawed" and "plagued by arrogant incuriosity". The Pentagon declined to comment before receiving the report.

## Russia renews promise to pay scientists

[MOSCOW] **The Russian prime minister, Viktor Chernomyrdin, last week promised that the government would rapidly pay the total of 2.4 billion rubles (US\$400 million) owed to scientists who work for government research institutions, and will pay all of the money owing on the science budget by the end of October.**

**Opening a meeting in the House of Government in Moscow on 24 October, Chernomyrdin said that the 1998 science budget will be 13.5 billion rubles, 3.85 per**

cent of all state expenditures and close to the promised 4 per cent. Of this total, 4.8 billion rubles will be for fundamental research, 5.6 billion for innovative technologies, and 3 billion for space exploration.

Vladimir Bulgak, the vice-prime minister responsible for science, told the meeting that the government had changed its policy about financing science. He said it would no longer give money “to names, titles and signboards”, but to the projects and programmes selected through competition. “There are now 4,364 Russian ‘scientific’ organizations, some of which have nothing to do with science, and many of which duplicate the work of others. Naturally, we are not going to support all of them.”

## Ex-chief of Los Alamos to head FBI laboratory



[WASHINGTON] Donald Kerr (left), the former director of the Los Alamos nuclear weapons laboratory in New Mexico, has been named as the new director of the

Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Laboratory, which examines hundred of thousands of pieces of evidence each year for police forces across the United States.

The 700-strong laboratory has been under pressure to improve its performance after allegations that it had mishandled samples contaminated by explosives. Kerr, a physicist, says that his top priority would be to obtain accreditation from the American Society of Crime Laboratory Directors, and then the transfer of most of the staff from Washington to a new laboratory under construction at Quantico, Virginia.

## ‘Alternative’ Nobels for anti-nuclear activists

[LONDON] Two anti-nuclear activists, Mycle Schneider of France and Jinzaburo Takagi of Japan, are among the five recipients of this year’s Right Livelihood Award, sometimes known as the ‘alternative’ Nobel prize. Schneider, a Paris-based activist who has written widely about the shipment of used nuclear fuel, and Takagi, an associate professor of nuclear chemistry at Tokyo Metropolitan University who has been sharply critical of Japan’s plutonium policies, have worked jointly in opposition to the fast-breeder programmes in their respective countries.

Schneider and Takagi share the award, worth a total of US\$240,000, with Cindy Duehring, a US anti-toxic chemicals activist, Michael Succow of Germany, who has campaigned for the creation of nature

reserves in both the former East Germany and Soviet Union, and Joseph Ki-Zerbo from Burkina Faso, an historian of Black Africa.

## New journal launch: *Nature Neuroscience*

The publisher of *Nature* is to launch next May a new monthly journal, *Nature Neuroscience*. Calls for papers will be issued within the next few months.

Over the past five years, three monthly journals have been launched — *Nature Genetics*, *Nature Structural Biology* and *Nature Medicine* — joined in 1996 by the relaunched *Nature Biotechnology*. All operate with editorial independence from each other and from *Nature* (see author information in [www.nature.com](http://www.nature.com) for more details of the relationships). All have established themselves as the leading journals within their disciplines, without compromising *Nature*’s continuing role in publishing papers of unusually broad interest from any discipline.

Surveys of neuroscientists have revealed a strong enthusiasm for a *Nature* journal publishing across all areas of fundamental neuroscience. Editorial staff vacancies are advertised on Classified pages 8 and 21 of this issue.

Philip Campbell  
Editor, *Nature*