

Bills to double the agency's money were introduced in the Senate and the House of Representatives earlier this year (see *Nature* 417, 209; 2002) by a bipartisan group advocating rapid growth for the agency. The Senate bill was undergoing a fast-track process, which requires unanimous approval, but Jon Kyl (Republican, Arizona) blocked its passage last week. Kyl is believed to be acting on behalf of the president's Office of Management and Budget, which wants a more modest three-year bill.

The bills' backers say that they will now try to bypass the block and bring the bill up for a vote when the Senate comes back into session in early November.

## China's space visitors denied at final frontier

**Washington** Organizers of the World Space Congress, held earlier this month in Houston, Texas, have protested about the treatment of dozens of Chinese scientists and engineers, who were prevented from attending the meeting because of visa complications.

All but 2 of the 70 Chinese delegates were denied visas by the US Department of State on the grounds that they applied too late. The heads of the congress's two main sponsoring organizations, Marcio Barbosa of the International Astronautical Federation

and Gerhard Haerendel of the Committee on Space Research, wrote to National Academy of Sciences president Bruce Alberts last week to complain about the incident. Delegates from most countries had no difficulty with late applications, according to Barbosa's executive assistant, Oskar Klingl.

Klingl says that Chinese delegates and conference organizers only learned of the decision at the last minute, forcing the sudden withdrawal of most of the 40 Chinese papers that were to have been presented at the meeting.

## Sherlock Holmes and the case of the chemistry fellow

**London** British chemists took an elementary step towards polishing their public image last week by making fictional detective Sherlock Holmes an honorary fellow of the Royal Society of Chemistry.

The society's own Dr John Watson presented a specially struck silver medal to the statue of Holmes that stands near Baker Street, London, the street on which Holmes lived. Also present was a Mastiff crossbreed hound, intended as "a reminder of the dog that haunted the Baskerville family" — a case that Holmes solved 100 years ago.

Holmes was not around to solve the mystery of why the society chose to honour



Elementary, my dear Watson: Sherlock Holmes' statue is presented with the Royal Society of Chemistry's fellowship award.

him, so the society's chief executive David Giachardi offered an explanation. "Our particular interest is his love of chemistry and the way that he wielded such knowledge for the public good," Giachardi said.

**Correction** The News story on gene-therapy trials in severe combined immunodeficiency disease (*Nature* 419, 660; 2002) incorrectly stated that the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) had decided that the trials should continue. In fact, an advisory committee to the FDA recommended that the trials be permitted to resume, but the FDA has not yet lifted their suspension.