

## Terror fears prompt tighter controls for UK labs

In the wake of security concerns about terrorist attacks, the UK Home Office boosted its list of 'controlled substances' used in the lab from 47 to 103 on 25 January.

University, hospital and commercial labs will have to give the government details of their exact stocks of all of these substances, which now include the virus that causes African swine fever and the strain of enterohaemorrhagic *Escherichia coli* that recently caused havoc by contaminating US spinach. If asked, they will also have to inform the police of the names of everyone handling them. The updated list also sees two new categories introduced — 18 animal pathogens and 2 fungi are now included as substances that might be of use to terrorists.

Tony McNulty, minister for police and security, says the measures are to stop terrorist groups using chemical or biological materials as terrorist weapons — a chief threat anticipated by the UK security service MI5. But some scientists say the extended list is overkill, and the increased burden of paperwork will hamper research.

## Russia woos India in deal on nuclear fuel

With the much debated Indo-US nuclear deal still facing roadblocks, Russian President Vladimir Putin has offered to build four more nuclear reactors in India, in addition to the two 1,000-megawatt reactors it is already building at Kudankulam in the south of the country.

Indian officials say Russia has offered them a lifetime fuel supply and will not stop them from reprocessing the spent fuel — two crucial issues that have clouded India's deal with Washington. Russian officials say that they are still bound by the guidelines of the Nuclear Suppliers Group; but these may change and, as this regime is voluntary, it may not significantly restrict their actions.

The Indo-Russian accord, signed in New Delhi on 25 January, is seen as a signal that Russia will step in if the US deal falls through.



Vladimir Putin and Manmohan Singh discuss Russia's nuclear deal with India.

## Fisheries lay plans to save tuna stocks from extinction

On 26 January, after a five-day meeting in Kobe, Japan, representatives from the world's tuna fisheries issued an 'action plan' on how to save the beleaguered fish. The group agreed that urgent action was needed and decided on broad strategies, from developing catch documentation and tagging systems, to improving trade-tracking programmes and enforcing strict penalties.

But as yet the plan lacks details such as numerical targets or timelines. "Their only agreement was to gather more data and talk more often," said conservation group the WWF in a press release.

Overfishing of tuna is endangering wild stocks — with some now listed as critically endangered. The number of spawning Atlantic bluefin tuna in the western Atlantic is estimated to be at 13% of 1975 levels, for example, according to a WWF report. Japan is widely blamed for the decline, as it consumes more than a quarter of the 2-million-tonne global tuna production.

The group plans to meet next in 2009 to work out more specific plans.



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## US set to embrace law on genetic discrimination

The US Congress looks likely to ban the use of genetic information in job-hiring and insurance-coverage decisions, after a 12-year effort by lawmakers.

The Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act would make it illegal for health insurers to deny coverage or increase premium prices for healthy people solely on the basis of a genetic predisposition to a specific disease. It would also stop employers from using such information in making decisions about hiring, firing or promotion.

In the past, Republican House leaders have not brought the bill to a vote. But with Democrats now in charge in both houses, where the bill has bipartisan support, it looks bound for passage into law after its introduction this January. President Bush put his voice behind a ban on genetic discrimination during a visit to the National Institutes of Health earlier in the month.

## Britain calls time on plan to advance clocks

A plan to bring Britain's clocks into line with those in Europe failed to gather the necessary political support and so will be dropped.

The potential change, championed by supporters as a way to save lives and energy, would have given Britain an extra hour of evening daylight all year round, by advancing the clocks by an hour from their current times. Preliminary calculations suggest that the move could have saved around 100 lives a year through reducing traffic accidents in the evenings, and about £485 million (US\$950 million) in energy

costs (see *Nature* 445, 344–345; 2007).

The private member's bill got marginal support in the 26 January vote, but failed to draw the necessary 100 Members of Parliament needed for the measure to proceed. Only 52 members voted, with 32 backing the bill.

## Bush offers words but no action on climate change

President George W. Bush received some plaudits for referring to "the serious challenge of global climate change" in his State of the Union address last week. He called for a 20% drop in petrol use by 2017, proposed raising fuel-efficiency standards for cars, and called for more research into alternative fuels — specifically boosting investment in finding new ways to produce ethanol as a biofuel. But he did not propose any limits on carbon emissions, leading many experts to say the speech was very light on actual commitments.

In the same week, researchers at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Cambridge called for a renewed focus on geothermal energy as part of the country's solution to weaning itself off oil. An investment of up to \$1 billion over 15 years, they said, could allow the United States to harness 10% of its electricity-generating capacity from the hot bowels of Earth by 2050. Geothermal energy currently accounts for less than 1% of US electricity use.

### Correction

In our News story "PR's 'pit bull' takes on open access" (*Nature* 445, 347; 2007), we incorrectly quoted Wiley's director of corporate communications, Susan Spilka, as writing in an e-mail: "Media massaging is not the same as intellectual debate." She actually wrote "messaging", not "massaging".