

## German reunification hits grant money for young scientists

[MUNICH] Young scientists in Germany are becoming increasingly disheartened by a sharp decrease in the likelihood of being awarded a research grant by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG), the main grant-giving agency for university research, as a direct consequence of the country's reunification. That is the conclusion of a report published by the DFG last week.

Since 1989, the DFG has found itself under pressure to provide the same level of support to east German university scientists as to their west German colleagues. As a result, despite an annual 5 per cent increase in budget since 1990, its overall level of support has fallen.

DFG was able to approve 80 per cent of grant applications in 1989, yet can manage only two-thirds today.

Pressure on the DFG coffers comes not just from having to absorb east German researchers but also from having to deal with more applications from west Germans, required to seek external research money because the public funding of research in Germany's universities has decreased in the post-reunification recession.

Since 1989, the value of applications for DFG grants has grown twice as fast as the organization's budget.

## CNRS plan to encourage more long-term research

[PARIS] France's fundamental research agency, the 26,000-strong Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS), is considering steps to reduce pressure on its scientists to 'publish or perish' in a bid to encourage them to explore more speculative long-term research avenues. Under plans being considered by the agency, research grants would be reviewed only every four years instead of every two as at present.

Many senior CNRS officials believe that the current system tends to encourage 'safe' research, as this is considered more likely to yield results within the two years. But it offsets one of the advantages of the French system, that the life tenure enjoyed by all publicly funded researchers should in principle give them an unrivalled opportunity to carry out long-term research.

## Centre renamed to honour Abdus Salam

[LONDON] The International Centre for Theoretical Physics in Trieste, Italy, has been renamed the Abdus Salam International

Centre for Theoretical Physics in honour of its Nobel-prizewinning founder Abdus Salam, who died a year ago after a long illness (see *Nature* 384, 296 & 520; 1996).

Salam, who was born in Pakistan (then part of India), set up the centre in 1964 to help physicists from developing countries. It was funded by the International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna, Unesco, and the Italian government, which now provides most of the funding. The centre has since expanded, and offers facilities for scientists from a range of disciplines.

## India and United States strengthen health links

[NEW DELHI] India and the United States have signed a five-year agreement on collaborative research in the field of contraceptives and reproductive health. The two countries have also decided to extend by another five years the Indo-US Vaccine Action Programme, which was launched in 1987 amid sharp controversy (see *Nature* 328, 287; 1987).

Both the new initiatives and an earlier US proposal for an Indo-US Science and Technology Forum are being seen as attempts to create a favourable climate for a scheduled visit by US President Bill Clinton to New Delhi early in 1998. The forum, whose membership is being finalized, will allow scientists of the two countries to