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HEALTH AND SCIENCE

Hormones could explain progression of AIDS in women

PARIS: Scientists in the United States said yesterday they could help explain why women infected with the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) advance faster to AIDS than men. One of the enigmas is why women seem better able to combat HIV in its early stages but then advance faster to AIDS compared to men. The answer lies in the response of a key component in their immune system, and hormonal differences may account for it, according to a paper published online by the journal *Nature Medicine*. Ragon Institute investigator Marcus Altfeld said that the results suggest men and women may differ in an important way in how their immune systems respond to HIV. In the early stages of infection, a stronger activation of their immune system could be beneficial to women, he said. But in the long run, the persistent viral replication and chronic activation of the

immune system can lead to faster progression to AIDS. — AFP

Walking, biking to work linked with better fitness

CHICAGO: Walking or biking to work, even part way, is linked with fitness, but very few Americans do it, according to a study of more than 2,000 middle-aged city dwellers. In what may be the first large US study of health and commuting, the researchers found only about 17 per cent of workers walked or bicycled any portion of their commute. Those active commuters did better on treadmill tests of fitness, even when researchers accounted for their leisure-time physical activity levels, suggesting commuter choices do make a difference. For men in the study, but not women, the active commuters also had healthier numbers for

body mass index, blood pressure, insulin and blood fats called triglycerides. — AP

Fat-busting drug helps obese mice

PARIS: A drug that controls glucose processing reduced the bodyweight of lab mice by a quarter and their fat mass by 42 per cent in just one week, according to an investigation published yesterday. The compound is a combination of two artificial hormones replicating glucagon and glucagon-like peptide-1 (GLP-1), which help control the breakdown of glucose, says the paper, published in the journal *Nature Chemical Biology*. The treatment could open up a new path for people with obesity and Type 2 diabetes, but more work is needed before it can be used on humans, according to the researchers, led by Richard DiMarchi of Indiana University. — AFP

