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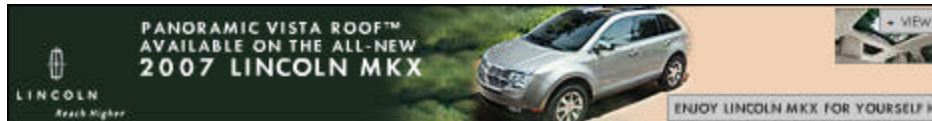
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Researchers aim to use mosquitoes to bite back at malaria

28 Oct, 2007, 0830 hrs IST, AGENCIES

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ROCKVILLE (US): A US scientist is leading an international team of researchers using an army of blood-sucking mosquitoes to produce a potentially potent vaccine against malaria.

Stephen Hoffman, 58, founded Sanaria Inc, a biotech firm solely dedicated to the production of a vaccine against malaria, a mosquito-borne disease that kills one million people a year, many of them African children.

Hoffman officially opened a manufacturing facility on Friday in the Washington suburb of Rockville, Maryland, where he said he aims to produce 75 to 100 million doses a year

to vaccinate the 25 million infants born every in year in sub-Saharan Africa.

"The opening of this facility is an important step in the process to develop a whole-parasite malaria vaccine," he said.

The scientist told reporters touring the facility he was optimistic that the vaccine could be tested in clinical trials by late 2008.

His goal, which has received US government support, was given a major boost in late 2006 when the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation donated USD 29.3 million through the PATH Malaria Vaccine Initiative, Hoffman said.

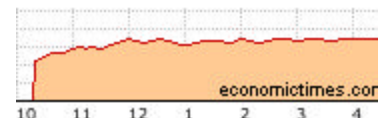
Hoffman knows the debilitating effects of malaria all too well.

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Corporate Announcement

In the 1980s, when he was director of the US Navy's malaria research programme, he was so confident in a new vaccine that he reportedly let himself be bitten by mosquitoes carrying Plasmodium falciparum, the malaria parasite responsible for more than 95 per cent of severe malarial illnesses and deaths worldwide.

Sure enough, he came down with malaria symptoms days after being bitten. The vaccine did not work.

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