

Space station module ready to launch HIV pregnancy drug treatmen Clinter

ry the long-delayed International Space Station's service module into orbit was prepared for fueling Tuesday as workers made last-minute checks to ensure a smooth launch.

Both Russia and the United States have a lot riding on the success of Zvezda, which will be the heart of the 16-nation space station project. As well as containing flight controls and the sewage system, the Zvezda will be a hub for future modules and is where the crew will sleep.

It was a quiet day Tuesday at the Baikonur cosmodrome, located on the remote steppe of this Central Asian nation, with the giant Proton-K rocket standing at its launch pad and most preparations already completed for the Wednesday morning launch. Workers measured temperatures at the rocket's base and readied it for the fuel that will be pumped into its tanks just before the launch.

The 22-ton, 43-foot-long segment, which Russia says cost about \$320 million to build, has taxed Russia's dwin-

years behind schedule, casting doubts on Russia's reliability as a major partner.

The launch could have come sooner if not for two crashes of Proton rockets. Russia insists problems with the rocket have been worked out, and it has put several satellites into orbit with the help of Proton rockets since the crashes.

The Zvezda module will go into orbit unmanned, docking several days later by computer with two other space station components that were launched in 1998. The first crew could go to the station by October, NASA has said.

Two cosmonauts will be prepared to immediately launch to Zvezda aboard a Soyuz rocket if the automatic linkup goes wrong.

A failed launch would be a major setback for the project and Russia's attempts to retain its image as a leading space power, which it gained by putting the first satellite and the first man into space.

DURBAN, South Africa (AP) -Treating HIV-infected mothers during pregnancy reduces the number of babies who get AIDS, even if the women risk passing on the virus later through breast-feeding, researchers report.

Several studies have shown that giving AIDS drugs such as AZT during pregnancy can substantially reduce the risk of passing on HIV at birth. However, more than half of all mother-to-child HIV transmission results from breast-feeding, and some have questioned whether the early treatment actually matters in the end.

A new analysis, presented Tuesday at the 13th International AIDS Conference, suggests indeed it does, even though breast-feeding clearly does wipe out much of the advantage of the treatment during pregnancy.

Dr. Stefan Z. Wiktor and colleagues from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention analyzed two studies conducted on 641 births in Ivory Coast and Burkina Faso. In both studies, women were treated with AZT during the last month of their

At birth, 14 percent of the babies

were infected among mothers getting vival advantage from AZT was AZT, compared to 23 percent among those who received dummy pills. The researchers then followed the babies while most of the infected mothers breast-fed.

shows reduction of AIDS in babie

"Providing women with a single dose of nevirapine, you can reduce by at least one-third the transmission from mother to child."

> - Dava Moodley University of Natal

After two years, 22 percent of the babies whose mothers received AZT were infected, compared with 30 percent of those who got placebos.

Wiktor said this is because the sur-

strug whelmed by the large number tor pi deaths from other infant diseases, as diarrhea. Wiktor said that while passing

THURMONT, through breast milk is a serious diler inton continue ma, "we don't have to solve that put day to push Israe lem in order to start these regimens oser to a settlem prevent AIDS transmission at birth The treatment, which costs abut Observing a

\$4, involves one dose of neviration during labor, one after birth, plus dose to the newborn. Dr. Daya Max ley of the University of Natalan pared this with a combination of the drugs AZT and 3TC.

Eight weeks after birth, the inter tion rates were virtually idential-H percent in the nevirapine babisanil percent in the comparison group. "The message is very simple,"

Moodley. "Providing women with single dose of nevirapine, you cante duce by at least one-third the trans mission from mother to child."

On Friday, Boehringer Ingehein which makes nevirapine, said it would offer the drug free to developing our tries to help stop mother-to-di something that I spread of HIV.

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"We went into

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