

'Nano' cleaning product recalled after health scare

A German company has mounted what is thought to be the first ever withdrawal of a nanotechnology-based product.

Late last month, more than 100 people reported headaches, insomnia and breathing problems after using two versions of a cleaning product known as Magic Nano. German discount store Penny Markt pulled the products from its shelves when it learned of the complaints.

At least six cases required hospitalization, according to Germany's Federal Institute for Risk Assessment in Berlin. The agency says it is investigating the cause of the illness, and it is unclear whether the 'nano' component of the product was involved.

The recall comes just weeks after a US survey showed a sharp rise in the number of consumer products advertised as nanotechnology (see *Nature* 440, 262; 2006).

Californian stem-cell centre gets stopgap funds

California's first training grants for stem-cell research is being funded with \$14 million in bond anticipation notes, which have been sold to six philanthropies, officials announced this week. These short-term bonds are intended to be paid off by a larger bond issue.

The California Institute for Regenerative Medicine will use the money as interim funding to cover training programmes identified in a review last year (see *Nature* 437, 800–801; 2005).

In 2004, Californian voters approved \$3 billion for stem-cell research, but the state has not been able to sell the bonds

because of lawsuits by religious groups and others that accuse the state of conflicts of interest and inadequate oversight. A court decision on the case is due soon.

If the institute wins, it hopes to begin selling the \$3 billion in bonds by spring 2007, repaying the bond anticipation notes now being purchased by the charities. Another \$36 million worth of bond anticipation notes are being sold to philanthropies for more interim research funding, officials say.

NASA reveals striking plan to find water on the Moon

NASA will smash a spent rocket stage into the Moon in 2008 to try to answer the long-standing question of whether water ice exists inside permanently shadowed lunar craters.

The crash will be monitored by the Lunar Crater Observation and Sensing Satellite (LCROSS), which was selected this week as a piggyback experiment on the Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter (LRO). The orbiter is being sent to create detailed maps of the Moon ahead of the expected arrival of astronauts in 2018.

Having delivered LCROSS to the Moon, the 2,000-kilogram empty rocket stage will crash into Shackleton Crater near the lunar south pole. LCROSS will then examine material thrown up during the impact and fly through the plume, looking for spectroscopic evidence of water vapour or ice. The satellite itself will then crash into the lunar surface generating a second plume for further analysis. Telescopes on Earth and the LRO itself will also be focused on the impact site. NASA planners hope to find water that can be used as a resource for a future Moon base.



Successful: John McDarby has won substantial damages in his case against Merck.

Jury rules against Vioxx in heart-attack case

The 2004 heart attack of 77-year-old John McDarby, a retired insurance agent, was due partly to taking the painkiller Vioxx for four years, a New Jersey jury decided last week. The jury — from the home state of Vioxx's maker, Merck — awarded McDarby \$4.5 million in compensatory damages and was mulling punitive damages as *Nature* went to press.

The same jury found Vioxx not to blame for the heart attack of Thomas Cona, 60. Cona could provide only patchy prescription records for his claimed 22 months of use. The jury also found that Merck failed to warn both men of the drug's cardiovascular risks, and that it committed consumer fraud by misrepresenting those risks to doctors. The verdicts are the first on the long-term use of Vioxx (see *Nature* 440, 277; 2006).

Germany approves cash boost for high-tech science

The German cabinet has given the go-ahead for a €6-billion (US\$7.3-billion) programme to strengthen academic and industrial research and development. The biological sciences, nanotechnology, information technology and space technology are among the priorities of the government's high-tech strategy, announced on 5 April.

The extra money will bring Germany a step closer towards spending 3% of its gross domestic product on science, says Annette Schavan, Germany's science minister.

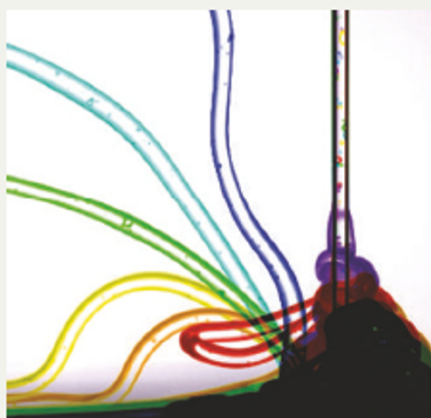
The windfall begins this year with an injection of €700 million into science — including €280 million for universities and academic research organizations — and will peak in 2009 at €2.2 billion.

Bouncing fluids make a splash

Dutch researchers believe they have cracked the physics behind a mysterious bouncing behaviour of liquids, called the Kaye effect. It occurs when viscous liquids are poured on to a surface; the down-going stream suddenly throws up a jet that merges with the incoming stream.

The Kaye effect was thought to be a strange property of complex liquids. But now, Michel Versluis of the University of Twente in the Netherlands and his colleagues say the effect may actually happen with everyday fluids, such as tomato ketchup, shampoo and liquid soap.

The team studied the Kaye effect using a high-speed video camera and found that it occurs in liquids whose viscosity drops as they flow. This property, termed shear-thinning, creates a slippery layer between the stream of liquid and the pool forming below, which allows the stream occasionally to jet up and away from the pool (see picture, which combines



several snapshots over a few hundred milliseconds). "It's a very simple experiment; you can do it in the bathroom," says Versluis (for videos see doi:10.1038/news060403-10).