

Germany casts doubt on extra Framework funding

Plans to double the European Union's research budget may have suffered a major setback last week when Germany indicated that it will back down from its proposed funding.

In April, the European Commission proposed a budget of €68 billion (US\$83 billion) for the Seventh Framework Programme, to run from 2007 to 2013. But at a meeting in Berlin on 2 June, Joschka Fischer, the German foreign minister, told Janez Potočnik, the European commissioner for research, that Germany cannot afford to finance any substantial increase in European budgets.

Europe's heads of governments will discuss European budgets at a summit meeting next week in Brussels, but the commission expects the initial proposal to be cut by more than a third. "Obviously, we are in a very, very difficult situation," said Peter Dröll, head of Potočnik's cabinet, at a workshop of research funding experts on 3 June.

Libya delays verdict on AIDS nurses' appeal

Five Bulgarian nurses and a Palestinian doctor sentenced to death in Libya in May 2004 will remain in jail for six more months before knowing the outcome of their appeal. A Libyan court found the group guilty of deliberately infecting hundreds of children with HIV, the virus that causes AIDS.

The six have languished in jail since 1999. They claim they are innocent and that their confessions were extracted under torture. Scientists have taken up their case, saying the evidence shows that many of the children were infected as early as 1994, long before the workers arrived in Libya (see *Nature* 430, 277; 2004). The decision by Libya's supreme court to delay the verdict from 31 May until 15 November came after a visit by Benita Ferrero-Waldner, the European Union's commissioner for external relations.

Treaty on transgenics hits trouble over labelling

A major conference meant to iron out differences over shipping genetically modified (GM) organisms between countries has ended in failure.

Negotiators left Montreal last week in disappointment after arguing over the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, which is meant to ensure the safe international handling of GM organisms. The stumbling



Japan plays trump card to get kids into science

Japanese biologists have a new way to get kids interested in science — a card game based on manga, the cartoons that Japan has exported to the world. The RIKEN Center for Developmental Biology in Kobe developed the game, which resembles 'card battle' games such as *Pokemon*. But in this game, players pick up information and images about developmental biology, such as *Drosophila* mutations and developmental stages.

The game gives scientists a manga-style makeover. From an enthusiastic postdoc to a lovely pipette-wielding technician, the characters

are colourful and attractive. "It would be great if we can help supplant some of the stereotypes about scientists before they take root," says Doug Sipp, manager of the centre's Office for Science Communications and International Affairs, "but really we just wanted to make something kids can collect and play with."

Students visiting the centre will get the cards for free. English versions will be distributed at some scientific meetings, including the Society for Developmental Biology meeting in San Francisco this July.

block was an article describing the documentation needed to ship them. Exporting countries prefer notification that a shipment "may" contain GM products; opponents demand detailed documents on the specific genetic alteration.

The group will now miss its September deadline, leaving countries with no international framework to refer to as they develop their own biosafety regulations.

Schwarzenegger breaks rank on climate change

California governor Arnold Schwarzenegger wants the state to slash its greenhouse-gas emissions, a move that challenges the Bush administration's rejection of the Kyoto Protocol on climate change.

Last week, after receiving a letter from 500 members of the Union of Concerned Scientists, Schwarzenegger announced that

California would aim to cut emissions to 20% of their 1990 levels by 2050. His proposal contains few specific measures, but is thought to include incentives for businesses to cap and trade emissions.

NASA gives go-ahead to Juno journey to Jupiter

Jupiter beat the Moon last week to become the destination for NASA's next New Frontiers mission. The Juno spacecraft, led by Scott Bolton of the Southwest Research Institute in Boulder, will be launched by 2010 into orbit around Jupiter to study the planet's interior and atmosphere.

Juno beat a proposal called Moonrise, which would have flown two landers to the lunar south pole and brought back rock samples. Juno had the edge in part because another unmanned NASA Moon programme is under way, whereas opportunities to visit the outer Solar System are rare.

IMAGE
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REASONS

Leading role: Arnold Schwarzenegger commits California to slashing greenhouse-gas emissions.

Correction

The News Feature "Consenting Adults? Not Necessarily..." (*Nature* 435, 138; 2005) quoted Xiaomei Zhai, a bioethicist at Peking Union Medical College, as saying: "For AIDS, we have to accept that we have to compromise." This quote was taken out of context. Zhai was not justifying a general compromise in ethical standards for clinical trials; rather, she was pointing out that the lack of suitable animal models makes it necessary to initiate research directly on human subjects. *Nature* apologizes for this error.