

Ohio closes the door on intelligent design in schools

The Ohio state board of education has voted to remove a teaching plan from its curriculum that had been accused of favouring intelligent design.

Approved in March 2004, the tenth-grade lesson plan did not specifically mention intelligent design — the idea that an intelligent being shaped the course of evolution. But it did encourage a ‘critical analysis’ of evolutionary theory that included several standard arguments used by advocates of intelligent design.

In its 14 February vote, the board also struck out language requiring the teaching of a critical analysis of evolution from its state teaching standards. Many had criticized the language as opening the door to intelligent design or creationism.

The Ohio decision follows closely on from a federal judge’s ruling that the teaching of intelligent design is unconstitutional (see *Nature* 439, 6–7; 2006). Patricia Princehouse, an evolutionary biologist at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland and director of Ohio Citizens for Science, says the ruling influenced the Ohio vote. “The decision made it very clear how this would be viewed in court,” she says.

Japanese company gives up contentious LED patent

A Japanese company has dropped its claim to a long-fought patent for blue light-emitting diode (LED) technology.

The patent was at the centre of a multi-million-dollar controversy between Shuji Nakamura, a materials scientist at the University of California, Santa Barbara, and his former employer, Nichia Corporation of Japan. In 2001, Nakamura sued the company, claiming that the patent was key to Nichia’s billion-dollar profits in blue LEDs and that, as its inventor, he did not receive the compensation guaranteed by Japanese law (see *Nature* 412, 844; 2001). In January 2004, a district court awarded Nakamura ¥20 billion (US\$169 million), based on an estimate of the patent’s value as ¥120 billion.

In an appeal to the Tokyo High Court, Nichia recalculated its view of the value of Nakamura’s contribution as only ¥10 million. In January 2005, Nakamura



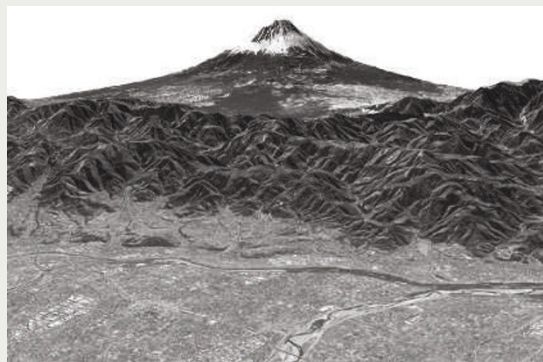
Shuji Nakamura: wanted compensation for patent.

Satellite tests its prowess by focusing on Mount Fuji

Japan’s sacred Mount Fuji towers here above the towns and rivers of the Kofu basin in one of the first images obtained by the Daichi Earth-observing satellite.

Launched on 24 January by the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA), Daichi can deliver high-resolution, three-dimensional images of Earth’s surface. This test picture was taken on 14 February using PRISM, an instrument with three independent systems that can simultaneously collect terrain and altitude data.

Other instruments on board allow Daichi to continue observing through any weather conditions, and to map vegetation at near-infrared wavelengths. JAXA says the satellite will help monitor natural disasters and identify natural resources in Asia.



JAXA

settled out of court for ¥840 million.

Earlier this month, Nichia announced that it would give up rights to the patent. “It wasn’t worth the cost of maintaining,” said a company spokesman.

Scripps Florida will be built away from wildlife refuge

After two years of legal and political wrangling, Florida officials have decided to relocate a planned research and biotechnology complex away from a sensitive wildlife area.

The Scripps Research Institute will now build its research complex near the campus of Florida Atlantic University in Jupiter.

In 2003, California-based Scripps, along with Florida’s Republican governor Jeb Bush, announced that the complex, housing some 550 scientists and technicians, would be built on a remote orange grove near a wildlife refuge (see *Nature* 431, 5; 2004). They heralded the project as a boost for Florida research, and Scripps put more than 100 researchers in temporary labs as planning moved forward.

But environmental groups sued, halting the development by arguing that there had been insufficient analysis of the project’s impact. After months of indecision, county officials chose the new location on 14 February. The planning process now begins afresh.

Greenland’s glaciers quicken their pace

Greenland’s glaciers are losing more than twice as much ice as a decade ago. Accelerated melting is causing some glaciers to flow out to sea at up to 14 kilometres a year. In total, glacial calving and melting sheds 220 cubic kilometres of Greenland’s ice

sheet each year, researchers reported last week in *Science* (E. Rignot & P. Kanagaratnam *Science* 311, 986–990; 2006).

Late last year, it was revealed that most of the continent’s ice cap is getting thicker, probably owing to increased snowfall. The middle portion of the island was growing at an average of 79 cubic kilometres per year as of 2003 (O. M. Johannessen *et al.* *Science* 310, 1013–1016; 2005). But the gains aren’t making up for the losses, the latest study suggests.

US academies to set up panel for stem-cell ethics

The US National Academies will create a committee to provide voluntary ethical guidelines for human embryonic stem-cell research. The decision is meant to bridge any regulatory gaps resulting from the restricted use of embryonic stem cells in federally funded research.

Currently, most embryonic stem-cell work in the United States is done by private companies, using regulations not specifically designed for this type of research. In the absence of federal guidelines, the academies last year issued its own, and the committee is intended to keep these periodically updated (see *Nature* 434, 1058; 2005).

The committee will be funded by private sources, including the Ellison Medical Foundation, the Greenwall Foundation and the Howard Hughes Medical Institute. The members of the committee have not yet been named.

Correction

The News Feature “Power struggle” (see *Nature* 438, 410–412; 2005) should have said that California governor Arnold Schwarzenegger has called for the state to slash its greenhouse-gas emissions to 20% of 1990 levels by 2050.