

Animal-rights protesters get jail for Internet activity

A New Jersey judge last week sentenced four animal-rights activists to prison for using their website to incite harassment of the employees and shareholders of Huntingdon Life Sciences of East Millstone and the companies that do business with it.

The activists, Kevin Kionaas, Lauren Gazzola, Jacob Conroy and Joshua Harper, are members of the pressure group Stop Huntingdon Animal Cruelty (SHAC). They received prison sentences of between three and six years and were ordered to pay US\$1 million in restitution to the firm.

"People who engage in this sort of activity should know that there are real consequences to these things," says Charles McKenna, one of the government lawyers who prosecuted the case in the US District Court in Trenton.

On 2 March, a jury convicted the four SHAC members and two other members — due to be sentenced on 19 September — of interstate stalking and of conspiracy to violate the Animal Enterprise Protection Act.

Cash boost aims to spur a green revolution in Africa

Breeding new crops and training agricultural scientists will be two early aims of an initiative to stimulate farming and tackle hunger in Africa.

On 12 September, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the Rockefeller Foundation announced that they would invest an initial US\$150 million to boost

output from small farms by developing crop varieties suited to the harsh and varied African soils. It will also train crop specialists and set up systems for crop distribution, sales and advice.

The groups say they want to spark a green revolution to mirror that in Latin America and Asia in the 1940s. The project is the first investment in agricultural development by the Gates Foundation, which has previously focused on public health.

Discovery of Jupiter-lite is a massive surprise

Researchers have found an odd new planet that is nearly 1.4 times bigger than Jupiter, but only half as massive.

Dubbed HAT-P-1, the planet orbits a star much like the Sun once every 4.5 days. It was spotted by a network of automated telescopes designed to look for eclipses, or 'transits', of planets around distant stars. It is the second low-density planet spotted in recent years, and it runs contrary to current models, which predict that such objects cannot exist, says Robert Noyes of the Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics in Cambridge, Massachusetts. "These are very strange things," he says. The centre announced the discovery on 14 September.

'Species factory' spawns calls for protection

Diving expeditions off the northwestern coast of New Guinea have revealed Earth's richest collection of sea life, including many new species. Conservation International,



Cirrhilabrus cenderawasih, a new species of flasher wrasse found off the coast of New Guinea.

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the non-profit organization leading the expeditions, is using the find to push for a dramatically broadened protected marine area in the region.

Expedition leaders are calling the area, known as the Bird's Head Seascape, a "species factory". They have found 50 previously unknown species of fish (see above), coral and mantis shrimp. The area had been home only to subsistence fishing, but scientists are worried about the increasing use of dynamite fishing and the effects of deforestation and mining on coastal waters. Currently, only 11% of the 180,000-square-kilometre reef region is protected.

Earlier this year, scientists funded by Conservation International discovered a terrestrial ecosystem with dozens of new species in the Foja mountains, just a few hundred kilometres inland from the Bird's Head Seascape (see *Nature* 439, 774; 2006).

Clean-energy institute wins promise of big bucks

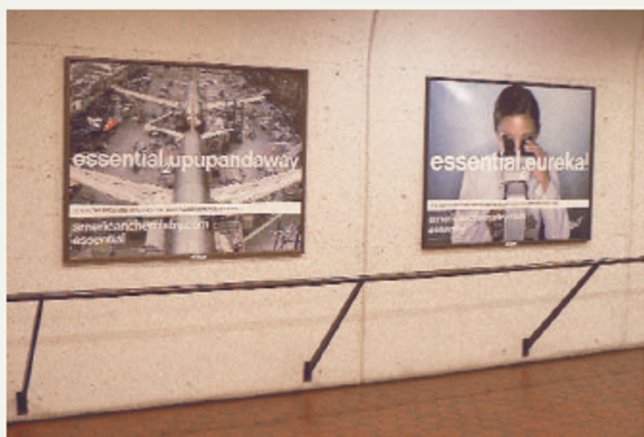
The UK government has pledged £500 million (US\$940 million) as part of its plan to set up a research institute to develop low-carbon energy sources. The centre, to be called the Energy Technologies Institute, is scheduled to open by 2008, and the government has called for the private sector to match its financial commitment.

The institute will focus on cleaner fossil fuels, renewable energy, energy efficiency and low-carbon transport and will require funding of £100 million a year over the next ten years, says a statement released by the Department of Trade and Industry last week. Power companies have until the end of November to declare an interest. Already on board are BP, EDF Energy, E.ON UK and Shell, each of which has offered £5 million a year to the scheme. "I want more companies to come forward and join us," says trade and industry secretary Alistair Darling.

US trade group rebrands chemistry

Last week, passengers on the Washington DC metro found stations decked with advertisements espousing the benefits of chemistry and the chemical industry. The campaign (see right) features pictures of fire fighters, police officers and premature babies accompanied by simple, one-line slogans such as "essential living".

The adverts are part of a US\$20-million nationwide public-relations effort by the American Chemistry Council, the US chemical industry's largest lobby, based in Arlington, Virginia. The council, which is frequently criticized by environmentalists and public-interest groups (see *Nature* 432, 6; 2004), says the campaign is designed to raise public awareness of the importance of its constituent companies. "We think that our industry is not as appreciated as it should be," says council spokesman Thom Metzger.



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