

Biology favoured in Japanese funding plan

Tokyo The life sciences look set to prosper while engineering research is squeezed, under budget proposals released by Japan's science ministry last week.

Japan's budget process involves ministries pitching high, projecting what they would like to spend. The government — guided, in the case of science spending, by its Council for Science and Technology Policy — will pare down these proposals to match the limited funds available in 2004.

In its proposal, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology seeks an increase of 21%, taking its research spending to ¥949 billion (US\$8 billion). It won't get that much, observers say, but its proposal shows where priorities lie: life sciences gets 26% and nanotechnology 35%, for example, whereas nuclear research gets 10% and aerospace programmes just 9%.

Michigan unveils major life-sciences institute

Washington Michigan's bid for prominence in biology research will get a shot in the arm when a \$230-million research facility opens next week.

The goal of the Life Sciences Institute, at



Funding for carbon nanotube research could increase under Japanese budget plans.

the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, is to gather biologists, physicists and chemists together to foster innovative approaches to biological problems, says spokesman Karl Bates. Similar approaches are being taken at Stanford University's Bio-X project and Harvard University's Bauer Center.

The institute is good news for Michigan's efforts to become a biotechnology powerhouse, which have been scaled back because of the state's budget problems (see *Nature* **422**, 102; 2003). The new institute has a dedicated endowment of \$130 million, unaffected by the cutbacks.

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Universities armed with cash for biotechnology

Washington The US Army is to give three universities \$50 million over five years to develop military products using biotechnology.

The Institute for Collaborative Biotechnologies, to be led by the University of California, Santa Barbara (UCSB), will focus on three areas: sensors and electronics, biologically inspired new materials, and biological methods of information processing.

"The inspiration for the institute comes from the fact that biology uses precise mechanisms to produce exquisitely structured materials," says Robert Campbell of the Army Research Office in Research Triangle Park, North Carolina.

UCSB will work with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and the California Institute of Technology on the project.

Correction

An article about research funding at the newly formed US Department of Homeland Security incorrectly stated that the agency had received over 3,000 unsolicited bids for research projects since it opened in January (see *Nature* **424**, 986; 2003). In fact, that is the number of solicited proposals the agency received in its first call for grant applications, which closed on 13 June.