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IIT scientists use kaajal to make CNTs

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NEW DELHI: Indian women for ages have been using "kaajal" as eye-liner without knowing that it is a product of high technology. Now scientists are talking about commercializing the process. Scientists at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) in Kanpur have shown that "kaajal" actually contains carbon nanotubes (CNTs). These objects, much thinner than human hair, have strange properties and are considered the building block of ultra-small (nano) electronic and other devices. While researchers worldwide are trying to develop newer and better methods for producing CNTs, the age-old practice of making kaajal is the simplest and the cheapest way of making them, the IIT scientists say. Women in India prepare kaajal at home from the 'soot' collected from lamp burning vegetable oil. "Synthesis of kaajal is long known and its use is even mentioned in epics like the Ramayana and the Mahabharata," says Sabyasachi Sarkar, chemistry professor at IIT.

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