

SEVEN DAYS

The news in brief

POLICY

Tar-sands disputes

Europe is moving to block the importation of oil from tar sands in Canada by revising its fuel directive to classify the fuel source as highly polluting in terms of carbon dioxide emissions. Because the directive requires fuel importers to reduce emissions, the classification would effectively shut down a European market for the sources, and Canada's natural-resources minister Joe Oliver said that his country would complain to the World Trade Organization if the directive — passed last week by the European Commission — is approved by member states. Canada's main market for tar-sands oil will be the United States, where the government last week faced contentious final public hearings before it decides whether to approve a 2,700-kilometre pipeline from Alberta in Canada to Texas.

US geoeengineering

A panel of scientists, engineers, environmentalists and policy experts has urged the US government to coordinate a



S. GARDNER/REUTERS

Cleaning up the Gulf Coast

Last year's oil spill was just the latest disaster to hit the Gulf of Mexico, which has suffered years of environmental damage. Now a federal task force has laid out a long-term strategy to restore ecosystems in the region. The 5 October preliminary report, released a year after it was commissioned by US President Barack Obama, focuses on goals such as restoring wetlands and water quality; replenishing marine

resources; and enhancing the resilience of Gulf Coast communities. The final version will be published in December. According to bills that have been proposed but not yet passed in both arms of Congress, around 80% of the US\$5-billion to \$20-billion fines collected after the oil spill could go directly towards the restoration effort, with perhaps 5% of that for new science programmes.

multi-agency programme of research into the potential of geoeengineering, or 'climate remediation' technologies, as the panel termed such techniques. The task force, organized by the Bipartisan Policy Center in Washington DC, published its report on 4 October, just five days after the European Parliament passed a resolution expressing "opposition to proposals for large scale geoeengineering". See go.nature.com/7xfbi for more.

War on Guinea worm

The Carter Center in Atlanta, Georgia, has announced a new push to wipe out Guinea worm disease (dracunculiasis) by 2015. At an appeal in London on 5 October, the centre, established in 1982 by

former US president Jimmy Carter, announced that Britain has committed to contribute £20 million (US\$31 million) to the effort over four years — about one-third of what the centre says is needed — if other donors step up. Better case surveillance and safer water supplies are needed to wipe out the parasitic disease. The condition was once endemic in parts of Africa and Asia but fewer than 1,800 cases were reported in 2010, nearly all of them in the area that is now South Sudan.

Spanish funding

Spain's ministry of science has named eight research centres that will each receive an extra €5 million (US\$6.8 million) in funding over the next five years — the first fruits

of a programme set up by science minister Cristina Garmendia to preserve scientific excellence at a time of economic crisis. Thirty-two further centres are supposed to receive similar funding over the next four years, but only if the programme survives a possible change of government after elections in November. See go.nature.com/2pvrph for more.

Paying for eggs

Women who donate their unfertilized eggs to research deserve to be paid, concluded a report released on 10 October by the influential Nuffield Council on Bioethics, an independent charity based in London. In Britain, direct payment for unfertilized eggs is prohibited; in the United

JOURNALISM AWARD



Nature reporter Quirin Schiermeier last week won the American Meteorological Society Award for Distinguished Science Journalism in the Atmospheric and Related Sciences for his feature 'The real holes in climate science' (*Nature* **463**, 284–287; 2010).

States, rules vary by state. The report called for a pilot scheme to look into paying women who donate their eggs for research. It also explored issues involving compensating organ donors and their families. See go.nature.com/trvczc for more.

BUSINESS

The Scientist retires

The Scientist, a loved and respected US professional magazine for life-sciences researchers, closed down abruptly last week, after celebrating its 25th anniversary. Launched in 1986 by Eugene Garfield, who also founded Thomson Reuters' Science Citation Index, *The Scientist* was most recently bought by the Science Navigation Group in London, which is chaired by Vitek Tracz, founder of open-access publisher Biomed Central. But the magazine's owners could not find a way to make it financially viable. See go.nature.com/9nnrj6 for more.

PEOPLE

XMRV row drags on

The scientist behind a partially retracted paper that linked chronic fatigue syndrome to the XMRV virus has lost her job and is now facing accusations that she has misrepresented data. Judy Mikovits (**pictured**), former



director of research at the Whittemore Peterson Institute for Neuro-Immune Disease in Reno, Nevada, was fired on 29 September after she clashed with the institute's president and co-founder, Annette Whittemore, over the work of another researcher. The following day, Abbie Smith — a virology graduate student at the University of Oklahoma in Norman — said that Mikovits had used an image from the paper to illustrate different results in a presentation last month. See go.nature.com/w2kskt for more.

Chemistry Nobel

Dan Shechtman of the Technion Israel Institute of Technology in Haifa has won the 2011 Nobel Prize in Chemistry for his 1982 discovery of quasicrystals — materials with ordered atomic structures that, unlike those of conventional crystals, never quite repeat themselves. See page 165 for more.

RESEARCH

Climate coalition

Leading climate research organizations from eight European nations have agreed to join forces. The European Climate Research Alliance, a loose coalition launched on 4 October at the European Parliament in Brussels, will focus on research on Arctic climate variability, hydrological cycles in the Mediterranean region, links between climate change and extreme weather, and sea-level rise. Researchers with the founding institutions will set up collaborative research projects at workshops to be held next year. See go.nature.com/qiq86t for more.

University rankings

The California Institute of Technology (Caltech) in Pasadena pipped Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts, to the top spot in an annual ranking of the world's top universities. *Times Higher Education* uses scores in areas such as research, citations and teaching to produce its list. But a rival list compiled by education consultants Quacquarelli Symonds in London — who worked with *Times Higher Education* until 2010 — puts Caltech 12th, with Harvard second and the University of Cambridge, UK, on top. See go.nature.com/pwvwmt for more.

COMING UP

17–21 OCTOBER

The General Conference on Weights and Measures meets in Sèvres, near Paris, to discuss how to redefine the kilogram, ampere, kelvin and mole. go.nature.com/jd84hb

20 OCTOBER

The European Space Agency will launch the first two operational spacecraft of Galileo, Europe's new global positioning system. go.nature.com/wiz7ks

Cosmic missions

The European Space Agency has approved the first two space missions under its Cosmic Vision 2015–2025 programme. In the Solar Orbiter mission, a spacecraft launched in 2017 will venture within 42 million kilometres of the Sun, sampling the solar wind and other ejections of material. The Euclid space telescope will launch in 2019, and will map the structure of the Universe to pin down parameters relating to dark energy and dark matter. Both missions were chosen on 4 October by the agency's science programme committee.

SuperB accelerator

Italy's SuperB particle accelerator, which will be built at the University of Rome Tor Vergata by 2017, was officially launched on Friday. The country's National Institute of Nuclear Physics signed an agreement with the university to set up a lab to oversee the accelerator's construction and operation. SuperB doesn't yet have enough funding to meet its estimated €450-million (US\$610-million) to €600-million price tag. See go.nature.com/xt0000 for more.

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TREND WATCH

A provisional database of the discoveries of almost 3,100 nuclear isotopes shows how the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory in California lost ground to other labs during the 1980s when it failed to upgrade equipment. Most finds now come from the GSI Helmholtz Centre for Heavy Ion Research in Darmstadt, Germany, the RIKEN Radioactive Isotope Beam Factory in Wako, Japan, and the Joint Institute for Nuclear Research (JINR) in Dubna, Russia. See go.nature.com/viznae for more.

ISOTOPE RANKING REVEALS LEADING LABS

Laboratories in Russia, Germany and Japan have taken the lead from the United States in finding new isotopes.

