

SEVEN DAYS

The news in brief

POLICY

South Korea vision

South Korea's government officially launched its ambitious Institute for Basic Science (IBS) on 17 May. The government hopes that the institute, headquartered in Daejeon, will eventually rank alongside Germany's Max Planck Society and Japan's RIKEN as a world-leading institution. The IBS plans to attract 3,000 researchers and staff members to 50 research centres around the country, each with an average annual budget of 10 billion won (US\$8.6 million). Along with the construction of a rare-isotope accelerator, the IBS is one of the main initiatives of South Korea's 5.2-trillion-won 'science belt' project. See go.nature.com/uhjve1 for more.

SPICE trial stopped

UK-based researchers have called off an experiment to test climate-engineering technology by spraying water from a balloon 1 kilometre above Earth, part of the Stratospheric Particle Injection for Climate Engineering (SPICE) project. The lack of rules governing such geoengineering experiments, a potential conflict of interest over a patent application for some of the technology involved and the need for more public engagement all contributed to the decision, said principal investigator Matthew Watson, an Earth scientist at the University of Bristol, UK. See pages 415 and 429 for more.

Global research

The heads of around 50 national funding agencies took part in the inaugural meeting of the Global Research Council (GRC) at the headquarters of the US National Science Foundation



FISHERIES AND OCEANS CANADA

Canada cuts freshwater research

Canada's government has cancelled its funding for the Experimental Lakes Area (ELA), a site in Ontario where influential field research has been done for more than half a century. Fisheries and Oceans Canada told its staff on 17 May that research at the ELA, a collection of 58 lakes and a laboratory complex, would be shut down in March 2013. Studies at the

site (pictured) have influenced international policies, most notably a 1991 air-quality agreement between the United States and Canada, which led to reductions in acid rain. Ecologists condemned the decision, the latest in a string of moves to scale back or shut down research programmes in the wake of budget cuts. See go.nature.com/5fxqd2 for more.

in Arlington, Virginia, on 13–15 May. The GRC, a forum that will examine issues important to science-funding agencies worldwide, produced a set of international principles on peer review; it will next discuss open access and research integrity. See page 427 for more.

Coffin protest

Around 80 physicists and chemists in the United Kingdom have staged an unusual protest against their research funder: carrying a coffin down London's Whitehall to Downing Street. The stunt, performed on 15 May, marks the start of a campaign pressing for reform of the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC). Protesters

say that the council's policies have resulted in money being allocated to strategic priorities rather than to blue-skies research; the EPSRC said that the protesters were a small, vocal minority of scientists. See go.nature.com/demha6 for more.

Chilean dams

The Chilean Supreme Court has blocked the construction of a large hydroelectric dam in Patagonia, overturning the decision of a regional review board that had approved the project despite opposition from environmental groups. The 640-megawatt Rio Cuervo dam, developed by the Australian firms Origin Energy of Sydney and Xstrata Copper in Brisbane, is part of a three-dam system that

would generate one gigawatt of power. On 11 May, the court ruled that project backers had not completed an essential geological survey. The court has, however, already given the green light to the construction of the larger five-dam, 2.75-gigawatt HidroAysén project in the region.

Prostate screening

A US government advisory task force has recommended against the routine use of a controversial test for prostate cancer to screen healthy men, because its harms outweigh its benefits. The final recommendation from the US Preventive Services Task Force, published on 21 May (V. A. Moyer *et al.* *Ann. Intern. Med.* advanced online publication, 2012;

see go.nature.com/xjusen), immediately drew a backlash from physicians, who said that some patients would die from prostate cancer if routine screening for prostate-specific antigen (PSA) were stopped. The issue, which pits public-health evidence against politics, is contested in the United States; in other countries, the PSA test is less widely used (see *Nature* 478, 286; 2011).

PEOPLE

Nuclear stand-down

The embattled chairman of the US Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Gregory Jaczko, announced his resignation on 21 May, potentially signalling an end to three years of controversy, acrimony and stalemate over US nuclear-waste policy. Jaczko's leadership has been beset by bitter policy disputes over the closure of the Yucca Mountain nuclear-waste repository in Nevada, as well as accusations that his management style created a hostile work environment for staff members. See go.nature.com/wbyjjq for more.

French science head

Geneviève Fioraso (pictured) has been appointed minister of higher education and research in France's new government. Fioraso, a socialist parliamentarian and the deputy mayor of



Grenoble, has experience in research and innovation. Starting out as a lecturer in English and economics, she has managed high-tech start-up firms, authored a report on synthetic biology for France's Parliamentary Office for the Evaluation of Scientific and Technological Choices, and is currently chief executive of the business-incubator wing of Minatec — Grenoble's innovation campus for nanotechnology and electronics. See go.nature.com/kayiqy for more.

New head for MIT

Rafael Reif, an electrical engineer who has been provost of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in Cambridge since 2005, will be the institution's next president. MIT announced Reif's election on 16 May; he will take up the post on 2 July. Reif replaces neuroscientist Susan Hockfield, who is standing down after seven years in charge.

EVENTS

GM crop attack

A trial crop of genetically modified (GM) wheat at Britain's leading agricultural research centre, Rothamsted Research in Harpenden, was attacked on 20 May. The institute said that a lone protester broke in and damaged property, but that the trial was unaffected. He has since been charged by police. A protest group called 'Take the Flour Back', which has been publicizing its intention to destroy the crop on 27 May, says that its action will go ahead as planned. See go.nature.com/zdvnye for more.

Gas leak plugged

A major gas leak at a drilling platform in the Elgin gas field in the North Sea has been stopped after 52 days. The site's owner, oil company Total, pumped heavy mud into a well to plug the leak, and announced on 16 May that the effort had been a success. The leak, which began on 25 March, had triggered an evacuation of the site and was one of the highest-profile drilling accidents since the Gulf of Mexico Deepwater Horizon disaster in 2010.

Private space flight

The first commercial cargo mission to the International Space Station (ISS) — a

COMING UP

29 MAY

In London, the International Energy Agency issues a report on the 'golden age of gas', evaluating the potential of shale-gas resources found in recent years, and concerns about how to exploit them.

30–31 MAY

Research ministers from European Union (EU) member states meet in Brussels to discuss detailed proposals for Horizon 2020, the EU's €80-billion (US\$102-billion) research-funding programme for 2014–20.

go.nature.com/8vn3om

milestone for private space flight — lifted off from Cape Canaveral in Florida on 22 May. Launched by SpaceX of Hawthorne, California, the Falcon 9 rocket carried the company's Dragon capsule, packed with some 460 kilograms of supplies for the ISS crew. The mission aim is for the capsule to dock with the ISS on 25 May and spend 18 days attached to the station before splashing down in the Pacific Ocean. See go.nature.com/hrq5mh for more.

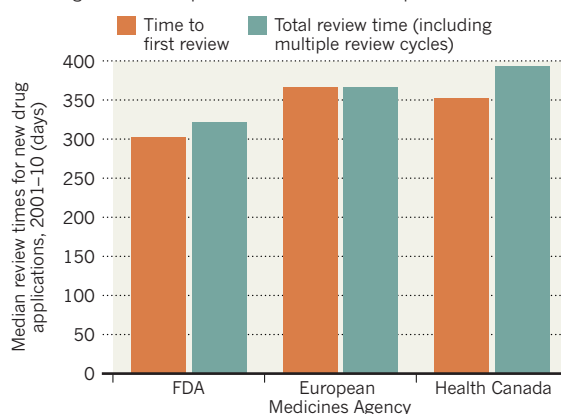
RESEARCH

TREND WATCH

The US Food and Drug Administration is often criticized for taking a plodding approach to drug regulation. But when it comes to approving novel therapeutics, the agency is actually quicker than its European and Canadian counterparts. Researchers from Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut, reported the findings on 16 May (*N. S. Downing et al. N. Engl. J. Med.* <http://dx.doi.org/10.1056/NEJMsa1200223>; 2012). See go.nature.com/brlmhf for more.

SPEEDY DRUG REVIEWS

The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is quicker to review new drugs than its European and Canadian counterparts.

**Alzheimer's plan**

The US government has released its first strategic plan for battling Alzheimer's disease — the progressive, incurable dementia that afflicts more than 5 million Americans. The plan, released on 15 May, was mostly unchanged from a draft released in February, and aims to find ways to treat and prevent Alzheimer's by 2025. See page 426 for more.

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