

SEVEN DAYS

The news in brief

POLICY

Fishing fallout

The European Union (EU) has escalated a trade war with the Faroe Islands over fishing in the Atlantic. On 20 August, it adopted measures that will ban the importation of herring and mackerel fished by the Faroes from Atlantic and Scandinavian waters. Some boats from the Faroes will also be banned from European ports. The Faroe Islands has condemned the economic sanctions, which the EU says are a response to the country's continued overfishing of herring. See go.nature.com/qmuwst for more.

RESEARCH

Bat signal

Bats have been implicated in the spread of the deadly Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV), which has killed 48 people since April 2012. On 21 August, researchers reported that of 96 bats surveyed in Saudi Arabia, one animal carried a small viral genetic fragment identical to part of the MERS-CoV genome. The scientists say that the match connects bats to the spread of the virus, but critics argue that the fragment is too small to determine whether the animal had been infected with MERS-CoV, or a closely related virus. See go.nature.com/b6u7zr for more.

X Prize cancelled

The X Prize Foundation has cancelled a contest that would have awarded US\$10 million to the first team to produce 100 high-quality genome sequences in 30 days for \$1,000 apiece. In a 22 August blog post, Peter Diamandis, chair of the X Prize Foundation, said that the contest was made



TERRY ZAPERACH/NASA

More NASA surplus up for grabs

Three huge transport platforms for hauling space shuttles have outlived their purpose at NASA's Kennedy Space Center in Cape Canaveral, Florida. The space agency announced on 20 August that it is "seeking concepts" for the future use of the 3,700-tonne, 50-metre-long steel structures (pictured, beneath the space shuttle *Atlantis*), which carried Saturn rockets and space shuttles from

where they were assembled to their launch pads. NASA has already put one of its shuttle launch pads up for lease at the facility, attracting interest from commercial space companies SpaceX in Hawthorne, California, and Blue Origin in Kent, Washington. NASA says that the mobile launch platforms could be of use in future commercial launches at the Kennedy Space Center.

redundant by the tumbling cost of genetic sequencing — a factor that contributed to a lacklustre showing of only two competitors (see *Nature* 497, 535 and 546–547; 2013).

PEOPLE

Forensics fiasco

The number of people whose criminal cases were potentially affected by Annie Dookhan, a chemist alleged to have falsified test results at a Massachusetts crime laboratory, now exceeds 40,000, according to a state-commissioned review completed on 20 August. A database is being assembled

to aid prosecutors, courts and defence lawyers as they review the cases whose evidence came into contact with Dookhan — a list that now includes nearly 3,000 more individuals than previously thought. Dookhan pleaded not guilty to charges of obstruction of justice and perjury (see *Nature* 490, 153–154; 2012).

FACILITIES

Atomic hopes

Japan's high-energy physics community selected on 23 August a possible site for the International Linear Collider, a proposed atom smasher designed to make

precision measurements of known particles. Located in the Kitakami mountains of the Tohoku region, the site could be eligible for reconstruction funds set aside after the 2011 earthquake and tsunami that struck the region. The researchers hope to spur the government of Japan to put in an official bid for the machine, which is expected to cost US\$8 billion to construct.

Telescope strike

Less than six months after the inauguration of a US\$1.4-billion radio telescope array in Chile, astronomical observations have ceased because of a labour strike.

Work at the Atacama Large Millimeter/submillimeter Array (ALMA) ground to a halt on 22 August after contract negotiations broke down with the local workers' union, which is demanding pay rises, bonuses and shorter shifts. Most staff astronomers have left the site, but many of the 195 striking employees — who are mainly Chilean and include engineers, data managers and administrative staff — remain at the facility. See go.nature.com/vhxfrv for more.

WISE up again

NASA will revive the dormant Wide-field Infrared Survey Explorer (WISE) to help search for asteroids that the agency could grab and relocate near the Moon for study. The spacecraft will be switched back on in September, NASA announced on 21 August. The probe had been turned off in early 2011 after finishing its primary mission, but NASA is looking for all the help it can get in finding a small asteroid, in just the right orbit, for its planned asteroid-retrieval mission (see *Nature* **499**, 261–262; 2013).

Telescope deal

The Green Bank radio telescope in West Virginia will receive a US\$1-million boost from West Virginia University in Morgantown, according to an agreement announced on

23 August. The university will provide the funds to the facility over the next two years in exchange for a dedicated share of observation time. The US National Science Foundation, which owns the telescope, received recommendations last year to shed Green Bank and other observatories from its portfolio by 2017 to make way for new telescopes (see *Nature* **488**, 440; 2012).

BUSINESS

Biotech buyout

Biotech giant Amgen will buy Onyx Pharmaceuticals for about US\$10.4 billion, the firm, based in Thousand Oaks, California, announced on 25 August. The deal is one of the five largest-ever takeovers of a biotech firm. Onyx, based in South San Francisco, California, has focused on cancer therapies, including the bone-marrow cancer drug carfilzomib (Kyprolis), which was approved last year in the United States.

EVENTS

Old globe

Cartographers may have identified the oldest known globe depicting the New World, according to a study published last week (*S. Missinne The Portolan* issue 87, 8–24; 2013). The engraved, grapefruit-sized



orb (pictured), which is made of fused ostrich egg halves, depicts geographical details from early European explorers in a style reminiscent of Leonardo da Vinci. Carbon dating and other analyses date it to 1504. The copper Lenox Globe, dated to 1510 and previously considered to be the oldest showing the New World, may in fact be modelled on this globe, which was discovered in a 2012 London map fair.

Fukushima leak

Following the leakage of some 300,000 litres of radioactive cooling water at the Fukushima nuclear plant, Japan's Nuclear Regulation Authority says that it is considering upgrading the official severity level from 1 (an 'anomaly') to 3 (a 'serious incident'). The radioactive water, which came from a steel storage tank, is thought to have seeped into the ground about 50 metres above sea level. Observers worry that

COMING UP

5–7 SEPTEMBER

Scientists and engineers meet in Athens for the 13th International Conference on Environmental Science and Technology, to discuss topics such as emerging pollutants, soil remediation and water-resources management.

go.nature.com/s4s68s

groundwater is likely to carry the contaminated water into the nearby ocean.

Wildfires rage

Some 40 large wildfires are burning in the western United States, including a blaze that crossed into Yosemite National Park in California on 23 August, according to the US Forest Service. The quickly spreading blaze, one of a dozen major fires burning in the state, prompted California governor Jerry Brown to declare a state of emergency on 22 August. The US government has spent more than US\$1.2 billion this year to fight wildfires across the country, says the National Interagency Fire Center in Boise, Idaho.

Flood aftermath

Heavy rains and flooding in Sudan have killed 48 people, injured 70 more and placed an estimated 320,000 people in danger, the World Health Organization (WHO) said on 21 August. Agency officials are concerned about a mounting disease risk caused by sanitation failures in the wake of the flooding. Nearly 53,000 latrines have collapsed since heavy rains began in early August. The number of malaria cases in two affected regions has also risen over the past two weeks, the WHO reported.

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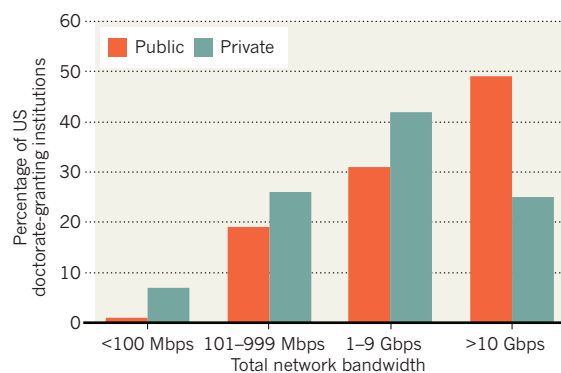
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TREND WATCH

Access to high-speed Internet has increased rapidly at US academic institutions over the past few years. The National Science Foundation estimates that in financial year 2012, 45% of all academic institutions could transmit data over the network at a rate of 2.5 billion bits per second or more, compared with just 6% in 2005. Among doctorate-granting institutions, public ones were more likely than their private counterparts to have access to the highest bandwidths.

UNEVEN NETWORK ACCESS AT US UNIVERSITIES

As availability of high-speed Internet spreads, public universities beat private schools at the highest network speeds.



*Number of institutions: 260 public; 119 private; Gbps = gigabits per second; Mbps = megabits per second.