

SEVEN DAYS

The news in brief

PEOPLE

Urologist sentenced

Austrian urologist Hannes Strasser will have to serve a two-year sentence for crimes relating to his use of an unauthorized stem-cell therapy to treat urinary incontinence, an appeals court confirmed on 11 June. The treatment was ineffective in many patients, and harmed others. The scandal was exposed six years ago, when Strasser was a professor at the Medical University of Innsbruck (see *Nature* 454, 922–923; 2008). The university was not allowed to dismiss him because of a ruling from a national employment committee, but the court judgment means that he now has to be dismissed.

POLICY

Drug data freed

The European Medicines Agency has agreed in principle to publish clinical-trial reports on any drug that receives marketing approval in the European Union. It announced the move on 12 June and is the first major drug regulatory agency to take such a step. The agency says that the shift will improve transparency in the medicine approval process and make it easier for academics to conduct non-commercial research. See go.nature.com/obsicm for more.

Chile axes dam plan

The Chilean government said on 10 June that it had rejected plans for a controversial hydroelectric project in southern Patagonia. The 2,750-megawatt HidroAysén project won partial government approval in 2011, but was dogged by concerns about the environmental and social effects of building five new dams on Patagonian



JOSEPH OKANGA/REUTERS/CORBIS

Ivory poaching continues apace in Africa

More than 20,000 African elephants were poached across the continent last year, finds a report by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). Published on 13 June, the report uses the latest figures from CITES programmes that monitor poaching. Overall poaching numbers were lower in 2013 than in the previous two years, but continue at levels

that will exacerbate the decline of the African elephant population. The report also shows a rise in seizures of large ivory shipments (weighing more than 500 kilograms). For the first time, more large seizures were made in Africa than in Asia, 80% of which occurred in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda. The results will be discussed at a CITES meeting in Geneva, Switzerland, on 7–11 July.

rivers. The government's latest move may not spell the end for the dam, however. Its backers, power companies Endesa Chile and Colbún, could revise their plans and seek permission to go forward with an updated version of the project, media reports say.

TB drug too costly

The high cost of treating a form of tuberculosis that is resistant to many drugs could allow the disease to spread, physicians warn. An effective new drug, bedaquiline, is available, but costs up to US\$30,000 for one course of treatment. On 12 June Caitlin Reed of the Olive View–University

of California, Los Angeles, Medical Center told the 2014 National TB Conference in Atlanta, Georgia, that the drug would be too expensive. Reed is currently using bedaquiline to treat a patient who, she said, has the most drug-resistant form of tuberculosis ever seen in the United States.

Biofuel cap

By 2020, biofuels made from food crops should be limited to providing only 7% of all transport fuel in the European Union, European ministers agreed on 13 June. The limit is more generous than the 5% cap originally proposed by the European Commission, but awaits a vote from the

newly elected European Parliament. Scientists have long warned that fuels such as biodiesel made from palm oil can produce more carbon emissions than the fossil fuels they replace (see *Nature* 499, 13–14; 2013).

Integrity audit

Scientists in Ireland should expect their research processes to be audited by outside consultants, according to plans outlined by Mark Ferguson, director-general of the basic-research funding agency Science Foundation Ireland. Ferguson told *Nature* that the aim of the audit is to ensure that work funded by the agency is being conducted

with integrity. He hopes that the first annual audits will begin by the end of the year. See page 325 for more.

EVENTS

Park oil-drilling axed

Oil company SOCO International is suspending explorations in Virunga National Park in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, it announced on 11 June. Virunga is Africa's oldest national park and is home to the critically endangered mountain gorilla (*Gorilla beringei beringei*). The move came after conservation groups led by the WWF filed a complaint with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. SOCO, which is based in London, has agreed not to drill in the park or in any other site given World Heritage status by the United Nations.

FACILITIES

RIKEN report

An independent committee has recommended that the RIKEN Centre for Developmental Biology in Kobe, Japan, should close because of its role in the publication of two problematic papers in *Nature*. The research in question purported to describe a new method for generating



embryonic stem cells, but the papers were found to include duplicated images, among other problems. On 12 June, a committee looking into research misconduct told a press conference (pictured, with committee head Teruo Kishi speaking) that it had found structural flaws in the running of the Kobe centre and called for it to be dismantled. RIKEN is planning structural reforms and intends to appeal against the judgement.

RESEARCH

Cancer trial

A groundbreaking clinical trial in lung cancer began enrolling patients on 16 June. The five-year Lung Cancer Master Protocol trial will assign up to 1,000 patients per year to receive one of five experimental treatments, depending on the genetic mutations in their tumours (see *Nature* 498, 146–147; 2013). It unites five

pharmaceutical companies, and will be led by the SWOG Cancer Research consortium in Portland, Oregon, and administered by the US National Cancer Institute. It is intended to serve as a model for how clinical trials can be streamlined and personalized.

Hubble search

The Hubble Space Telescope has begun searching for an icy world in the outer Solar System that NASA's New Horizons mission can visit after its fly-by of Pluto in July 2015. The search was announced on 16 June by the NASA committee that allocates observing time on Hubble. Mission scientists were unable to identify a suitable candidate in the Kuiper belt using ground-based telescopes, and they hope that Hubble's vantage point will give them a better view. See go.nature.com/nayaec for more.

H7N9 predictions

Researchers have developed a model that accurately predicts which live-poultry markets are at risk of becoming infected with the H7N9 avian influenza virus that has swept across China. Most human cases of the virus have occurred through exposure at such markets. The research team conducted a census of 8,943 live-poultry markets in China, and found that local density

COMING UP

21–26 JUNE

The Euroscience Open Forum meets in Copenhagen to discuss the future direction of research and science policy in Europe. esof2014.org/info

23–27 JUNE

The first meeting of the United Nations Environment Assembly takes place in Nairobi. Discussions will include the sustainable development goals that aim to reduce global poverty. www.unep.org/unea/en

is the most important factor in predicting the risk of outbreaks (M. Gilbert *et al. Nature Commun.* 5, 4116; 2014). The findings should help authorities to develop better control measures.

Child-study hold-up

A US study of 100,000 children that was authorized by Congress 14 years ago may face further delays. An external review released on 16 June found that planning for the National Children's Study lacked proper scientific input. See page 323 for more.

BUSINESS

Tesla opens patents

Electric-car company Tesla Motors has announced that it will let other firms use the technology it has patented. The company, headquartered in Palo Alto, California, said on 12 June that it would not initiate patent lawsuits, apparently in an effort to promote growth in the market for electric vehicles and to encourage common standards for supporting infrastructure, such as battery chargers.

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TREND WATCH

China's coal-intensive electricity grid means that making a silicon solar panel there — although cheaper — leaves a carbon footprint almost twice as large as that from making one in Europe, according to a study led by Fengqi You at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois (D. Yue, F. You and S. B. Darling *Sol. Energy* 105, 669–678; 2014). But emissions per kilowatt-hour of electricity produced by even the 'dirtiest-made' solar panel are some 16 times lower than those from a typical coal plant.

SOLAR POWER'S CARBON FOOTPRINT

The carbon dioxide emissions created when photovoltaic (PV) solar panels are made in China are twice as high as for those made in Europe.

