

SEVEN DAYS

The news in brief

POLICY

Economic contagion

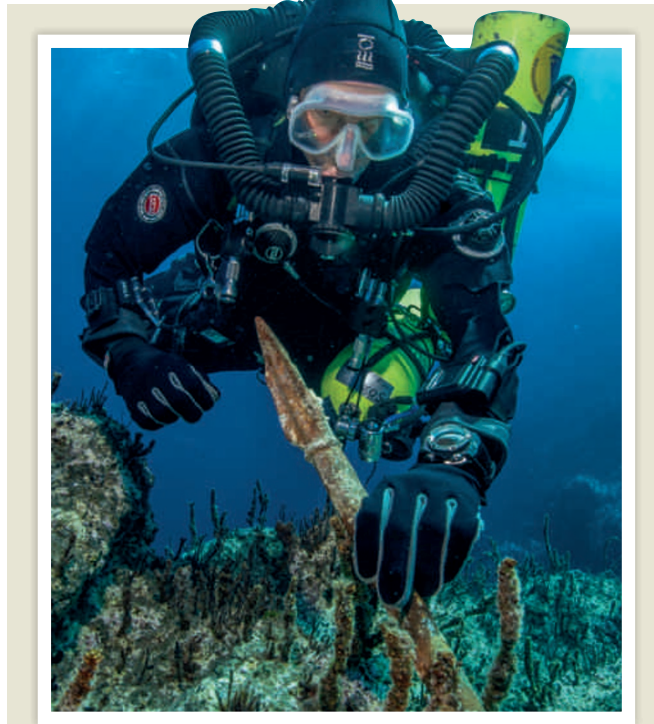
The World Bank reported on 7 October that the regional economic impact of the Ebola virus across West Africa could reach US\$32.6 billion by the end of 2015, if the outbreak is not quickly contained in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone—the three most affected countries. The projections expand on estimates published last month (see go.nature.com/dbznpb), and account for the probable spread of the disease and economic consequences from the core nations to neighbouring countries with much larger economies.

Environment report

Canada must step up long-range planning on several crucial environmental fronts, according to a 7 October government report. Among other areas, environment commissioner Julie Gelfand highlighted shipping areas in the Canadian Arctic that are poorly charted, increasing the risk of accidents as marine traffic rises. The government also needs to outline more clearly how it plans to reduce Canada's greenhouse-gas emissions, said the report, and how it will monitor the environmental impact of developing oil sands in Alberta.

Tar sands squeak by

In a proposal released on 7 October, the European Commission backed down from plans to label fuels derived from tar sands as more polluting than other fuels. Member states have yet to approve the move — although in 2012, they rejected a proposal to restrict fuel from tar sands that would have reclassified its environmental impact. The states were concerned that the change



Wreck yields fresh booty

Researchers revisiting an ancient shipwreck off the Greek island of Antikythera have rescued further treasures from the massive ship's remains, which are scattered over a much larger area than previously thought. Divers from the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution in Massachusetts and the Ephorate of Underwater Antiquities in Athens discovered the artefacts during an excavation season that finished on 7 October. The 2,000-year-old site is best known for yielding an intricate navigation contraption, the Antikythera Mechanism. Among the latest finds are an ornate bed leg, an intact jug and a giant bronze spear (pictured) thought to have been part of a statue. See go.nature.com/odmwtp for more.

would rile Canada, which is has extensive tar sands and holds the world's second largest oil reserves. See go.nature.com/yakmur for more.

Fossil-fuel retreat

The University of Glasgow has committed to withdrawing its investments from the fossil-fuel industry, becoming the first UK university to do so. The move comes after nearly a year of campaigning by the Glasgow University

Climate Action Society, a student advocacy group. In an announcement on 8 October, the university said that it would reallocate around £18 million (US\$29 million) of investments over 10 years.

Stifling science

Media policies at Canada's government science agencies fail to support open and timely communication between researchers and the public, says a report

released on 8 October by Evidence for Democracy, an advocacy group in Ottawa. Of 16 departments studied, 15 require approval for media interviews with scientists. Canada's health agencies scored lowest for protecting scientists' speech against political interference, allowing only approved spokespeople to talk to the media, and requiring all interviews to be monitored by a media-relations professional.

Climate threat

The US defence department has called climate change an immediate risk to national security, with the potential to exacerbate threats such as infectious disease and terrorism. In a report issued on 13 October, defence officials said that climbing global temperatures, rising sea levels and extreme weather events would worsen food and water shortages, pandemics and political instability around the world. The department will continue to integrate climate-change risks into its operations, including reviews of strategic locations for weapons stores and crucial supplies.

FUNDING

Funds for big data

The US National Institutes of Health announced on 9 October US\$32 million in grants to help to make large, complex biomedical data sets more accessible and more informative. This fiscal year's awards, part of the Big Data to Knowledge initiative, are an initial investment that the agency expects to build up to a total of nearly \$656 million over the next six years. The current funding will establish 12 centres of excellence for big-data computing, and will support the development of

BRETT SEYMOUR/RETURN TO ANTIKYTHERA

new data-mining approaches, software and data-science training programmes.

FACILITIES

Telescope tensions

Protestors showed up in force at a 7 October ground-breaking ceremony for the Thirty Meter Telescope on Mauna Kea, Hawaii. Many Native Hawaiians are opposed to the construction because they consider Mauna Kea to be a sacred mountain. Protestors blocked the road to the summit as scientists and officials made their way to a ceremony that included a Native Hawaiian blessing. The incident highlights ongoing tensions between astronomers and members of the local community who have long resented the large number of telescopes already on the mountain.



at the Taiwan Ocean Research Institute in Kaohsiung City, died. An investigation into the cause of the disaster is under way, and Taiwan's science ministry is considering whether to replace the 1.46-billion-Taiwan-dollar (US\$48-million) vessel. See go.nature.com/qwjmr for more.

Methane hotspot

A 6,500-square-kilometre spot in the southwestern United States is spewing the country's largest concentration of methane emissions. Located near the intersection of Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico and Utah, the methane hotspot released about 0.59 million tonnes of the potent greenhouse gas each year between 2003 and 2009, according to an analysis of satellite data published on 9 October that tripled previous ground-based estimates (E. A. Kort *et al.* *Geophys. Res. Lett.* <http://doi.org/v9f>; 2014). The data pre-date the

widespread use of fracking in the area, leading the authors to attribute the hotspot to leaks from more established methods of fossil-fuel extraction and processing in New Mexico.

EVENTS

Record high sea-ice

The sea ice surrounding Antarctica hit a maximum this year of 20.11 million square kilometres, the US National Snow and Ice Data Center in Boulder, Colorado, reported on 7 October. This is a record high since satellite records began in 1979. Scientists are unsure why the Antarctic sea ice has been growing so rapidly of late, setting new records in both 2012 and 2013.

Space-weather hub

The United Kingdom opened its first space-weather forecasting centre on 8 October. Based at the Met Office in Exeter, the centre will predict how radiation, energetic particles and fluctuating magnetic fields ejected from the Sun are likely to affect technology on Earth, such as communications satellites and power grids. The centre will operate around the clock, providing public forecasts and early warning of threats to crucial infrastructure. See go.nature.com/yuiplt for more.

COMING UP

19 OCTOBER

Comet Siding Spring sweeps within 140,000 kilometres of Mars, giving researchers a rare chance to make up-close observations using Mars orbiters.

Galileo mishap

A frozen fuel line caused the botched launch that placed two satellites for Europe's Galileo global navigation system into a misshapen orbit on 22 August, according to an announcement on 8 October. An independent panel appointed by launch operator Arianespace, the European Space Agency (ESA) and the European Commission to investigate the failure found that the hydrazine fuel line for the rocket's upper stage had been improperly clamped together with a cold helium line. The error caused the hydrazine line to freeze and prevented it from firing correctly. ESA is investigating whether the satellites can still be made useful for navigation (see *Nature* <http://doi.org/v9w>; 2014).

PEOPLE

PhD at stake

The lead author of two high-profile stem-cell papers retracted from *Nature* in July could lose her PhD. Waseda University in Tokyo announced last week that it will revoke Haruko Obokata's doctoral degree unless the biochemist corrects flaws found in her thesis within one year. In March 2014, *Nature* discovered that parts of the thesis had been taken from US National Institutes of Health materials. One image was also found to have been reproduced from a commercial website without attribution (see *Nature* 507, 283; 2014).

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RESEARCH

Sea tragedy

A Taiwanese research vessel capsized on 10 October, killing two scientists. *Ocean Researcher V* sank in the Taiwan Strait (pictured), one day into a voyage to study air pollutants. Forty-three scientists and crew members were rescued, but Hsu Shih-chieh, a researcher at Academia Sinica in Taipei, and Lin Yi-chun, an engineer

TREND WATCH

Untapped natural gas and renewable energy sources in sub-Saharan Africa should be exploited to boost prosperity and electricity access, the Paris-based International Energy Agency noted in a 13 October report. The agency expects that by 2040, 950 million people will gain electricity in the underserved region. But more than half a billion people will still be in the dark, mainly in rural areas, where small-scale 'micro-grids' will be needed (see *Nature* 507, 154–156; 2014).

RISE OF RENEWABLES IN AFRICA

Renewables could make up 41% of sub-Saharan Africa's electricity generation in 2040, says the International Energy Agency.

