

SEVEN DAYS

The news in brief

POLICY

HIV in Europe

Eastern Europe and Central Asia have seen a surge in new HIV cases in the past decade, the World Health Organization warned in a report released on 27 November. Last year, 136,235 new cases of HIV infection were reported in what the agency calls the European region, with almost 60% of these diagnoses in Russia. The rate of reported new HIV diagnoses in countries in the east of the region, which includes Russia, has shot up by 144%, from 16.9 per 100,000 people in 2004 to 41.2 in 2013.

Smog standards

The US Environmental Protection Agency on 26 November released proposed rules that would tighten standards for smog-producing ozone in the atmosphere. The draft measure would lower the threshold for acceptable levels from 75 parts per billion to between 65 and 70 parts per billion. Agency scientists examined more than 1,000 studies to settle

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RAPHAEL ALVES/AFP/GETTY

Amazon logging levels down

Deforestation in the Brazilian Amazon dropped by 18% in 2014, reaching the second-lowest level since monitoring began in 1988, the Brazilian government announced on 26 November. The low-resolution satellite data used for enforcement activities had suggested increased deforestation this year. But high-resolution satellite imaging showed just 4,848 square kilometres of new clearings from

August 2013 to July 2014, nearly 83% below the peak in 2004. Most of the newly cleared land is destined to become cattle pasture. Deforestation hit a record low of 4,571 square kilometres in 2012, but a decade of aggressive law enforcement has sparked a political backlash. The Brazilian Congress weakened the country's forest-protection law in 2012, and deforestation spiked by 29% last year.

on a range projected to better safeguard against asthma and other lung diseases. States would be required to meet the new standards between 2020 and 2037, depending on the severity of their ozone problem.

Beijing smoking ban

The city of Beijing on 28 November adopted a law banning smoking in indoor public spaces. China is considering implementing the same restrictions nationwide, according to the country's state-run news agency, Xinhua. The Beijing law, due to be enforced from June 2015, also bans tobacco advertising. China has tried before to restrict smoking in public spaces such as hotels

and restaurants — but the rules were never rigorously enforced. The country is the world's largest consumer of tobacco, with more than 300 million smokers.

EVENTS

Polio killings

Three polio vaccinators and their driver were killed in Quetta, a city in western Pakistan, on 26 November. It was the latest in a series of fatal attacks on health workers in Pakistan — where the Taliban have banned polio vaccinations — over the past two years. The country has seen a surge in polio cases this year, with 260 reported as of 25 November, compared with 64 at the same time last year.

Probe postponed

Forecasts of bad weather delayed the planned launch on 30 November of Japan's Hayabusa-2 spacecraft. The mission to 1999 JU3, a 900-metre-long asteroid, aims to collect sample material that is relatively unchanged from 4.5 billion years ago, when gas and dust were clumping into particles around the newborn Sun. See go.nature.com/ofm5if for more.

Nobel for sale

James Watson is selling the gold medal that he received as part of his share in the 1962 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine, which he won with Francis Crick and Maurice Wilkins for their work uncovering the double-helix

structure of DNA. Watson's medal is expected to fetch up to US\$3.5 million at an auction on 4 December. Nobel medals have been sold before, including Crick's, which drew \$2.27 million at auction last year. Watson's is the first to be offered by a living recipient.

PEOPLE

Scientist sentenced

A scientist who worked at Sandia National Laboratories in Albuquerque, New Mexico, has been sentenced to a year and one day in federal prison, the US Attorney's Office in New Mexico announced last week. Jianyu Huang was arrested in 2012 on six charges, including the misuse of US government resources and equipment to conduct research for institutions in China. In August, Huang pleaded guilty to unlawfully carrying a US government laptop with him on a trip to China, and to falsely stating beforehand that he would not take the computer.

Iranian minister

Iran's parliament voted on 26 November to accept Iranian president Hassan Rouhani's nominee, Mohammad Farhadi, as science minister. The parliament had previously rejected four candidates, apparently in protest over Rouhani's plans to encourage



greater staff and student freedoms at universities — a sensitive issue because campuses were a hotbed of political protests in 2009 (see go.nature.com/hk7zkh). Farhadi (pictured), an ear, nose and throat researcher at the Iran University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, heads Iran's Red Crescent Society, a medical-aid organization. He was formerly health minister under the reformist president Mohammad Khatami, and science minister in the 1980s under prime minister Mir-Hossein Mousavi.

Plagiarism charge

Deepak Pental, a well-known Indian geneticist and former vice-chancellor of the University of Delhi, has been accused of plagiarism in a case that saw him arrested but quickly released on 25 November. Concerns were raised by P. Pardha Saradhi, an environmental biologist at Delhi, who says that his

work on genetically modified mustard seed was plagiarized by Pental and his postdoc K. V. S. K. Prasad, who did his PhD with Saradhi. Saradhi also says that Pental used material from his laboratory (then at the National Islamic University in New Delhi) without permission. Pental told *Nature* that “the charges are false and frivolous and will not stand the scrutiny of law”. The High Court of Delhi is looking into the case.

FUNDING

Quantum industry

The United Kingdom has picked four research hubs — based at the universities of Oxford, York, Glasgow and Birmingham — to share £120 million (US\$188 million) to develop technologies based on quantum mechanics. Seventeen universities and 132 companies will work across the hubs, which will focus on developing quantum computers; quantum-based imaging devices such as cameras; gravity sensors and atomic clocks; and encryption. See go.nature.com/21puqw for more.

BUSINESS

Renewables shift

One of Europe's biggest energy providers, E.ON, is restructuring to focus

COMING UP

9–11 DECEMBER

The Regional Aquaculture Conference takes place in Bari, Italy, coordinated by groups including the European Commission and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. It focuses on sustainable aquaculture in the Mediterranean Sea and the Black Sea.

go.nature.com/lpo1nx

on renewables, electricity distribution networks and energy-efficiency services. The Germany-based company will offload its conventional power generation (coal, gas and nuclear fuel) and energy-trading business into a separate, independent company, it announced on 30 November. The idea is to “propel the transformation toward a clean, sustainable energy supply”, Johannes Teyssen, E.ON's chief executive, told journalists.

Pharma hacked

Dozens of health-care and pharmaceutical firms have been targeted by a band of hackers, the cybersecurity firm FireEye of Milpitas, California, announced in a report released on 1 December. Because stocks in these companies can gain or lose value rapidly on the back of events such as the release of clinical-trial results, access to their confidential business information can be particularly lucrative. The group of hackers, which FireEye has named 'Fin4', gains access to e-mail accounts and documents using personalized phishing messages. Of the more than 100 publicly traded businesses targeted by Fin4, 68% were health-care or pharmaceutical companies.

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TREND WATCH

Only a tiny fraction of electronic-cigarette users in the United Kingdom are using the devices as their first introduction to nicotine, according to a report by the Office for National Statistics (ONS). Researchers are seeking evidence for whether people who have never smoked are tempted by the products — which provide nicotine by vaporizing a liquid, rather than burning tobacco. The ONS data (see chart) suggest that e-cigarettes are mainly used as an aid to quit smoking.

NON-SMOKERS RARELY VAPE

A UK survey suggests that electronic cigarettes are almost exclusively used by smokers and ex-smokers.

