

SEVEN DAYS

The news in brief

POLICY

Japan whaling plan

The scientific committee of the International Whaling Commission (IWC) has been unable to reach a consensus on the merits of a proposed plan by Japan to resume hunting whales around Antarctica. Japan is seeking IWC permission for a new programme of whaling that it claims is for scientific purposes, but which critics claim is a commercial hunt in disguise. In a report published on 19 June, the committee said that it had not been given enough information to say whether killing whales was necessary to achieve Japan's stated scientific objectives. A previous hunt was deemed unscientific by an international court last year.

RESEARCH

Ebola trial ends

A clinical trial of an experimental Ebola drug being tested in people in Sierra Leone has stopped enrolment because the drug does not seem to be effective, the company leading the trial said on 19 June. The drug, TKM-Ebola-Guinea, consists of RNA molecules designed to stop the virus from replicating. Despite encouraging results in monkeys, the drug was deemed unlikely to show

NUMBER CRUNCH

\$95m

The amount that drug company GlaxoSmithKline will give over five years to set up a non-profit institute in Seattle, Washington, to study cell 'operating systems' and their role in health.



MIKE HILL/GETTY

High seas to get legal protection

Biodiversity in ocean areas outside national jurisdictions — the 'high seas' — will receive protection under new laws, the United Nations said on 19 June. A resolution adopted by the UN General Assembly states that rules will be designed to ensure the "conservation and

sustainable use" of marine life in such regions, which are currently often unmanaged. Amid increasing scrutiny of fishing and other activities, a treaty that governs responsible use of the high seas has long been a goal of conservation organizations and some governments.

benefits in humans, said Tekmira, its manufacturer, based in Vancouver, Canada.

PEOPLE

Sandia head

Materials scientist and engineer Jill Hruby will become the first woman to head any of the three US national-security laboratories when she takes over the running of Sandia National Laboratories on 17 July. Her appointment was announced on 22 June. Hruby has been at Sandia, the main offices of which are in Albuquerque, New Mexico, and Livermore, California, for more than three decades, and has had roles overseeing nuclear, biological and chemical security. Like the Los Alamos and Lawrence Livermore

national laboratories, Sandia is trying to reinvent itself by focusing on scientific research for today's national security needs.

French minister

Thierry Mandon was named French minister of state for higher education and research on 17 June, after the post had lain vacant for three months. He replaces Geneviève Fioraso, who stepped down in March for health reasons. Mandon is a seasoned politician, but from 1998 to 2014 he served as president of Genopole, a cluster of biotechnology and genetics companies and academic research labs in Evry, south of Paris. French researchers have welcomed Mandon's appointment. See go.nature.com/yizy3d for more.

FACILITIES

Telescope restarts

Construction of the Thirty Meter Telescope (TMT) on the summit of Mauna Kea in Hawaii is to resume on 24 June. Work has been halted since early April because of protests by Native Hawaiian groups, who see it as a violation of a sacred mountain. "We are now comfortable that we can be better stewards and better neighbors during our temporary and limited use of this precious land," Henry Yang, chair of the TMT International Observatory Board, said in a 20 June statement. The controversy has caused Hawaii's governor to limit future astronomical development on Mauna Kea, which currently hosts 13 telescopes.

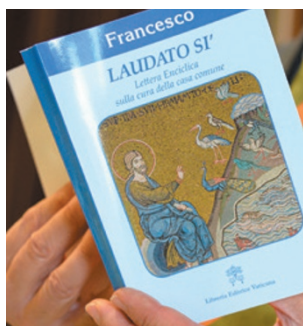
EVENTS

Imaging satellite

Sentinel-2A, an Earth-observation satellite that scientists say could revolutionize monitoring of land-use changes, launched on 22 June from Europe's Spaceport in Kourou, French Guiana. The satellite has superior specifications to Landsat-8, the most advanced US Earth-observation satellite so far, and will be joined in orbit by its twin next year. Together they will image the entire planet every two to five days. The duo is part of a planned fleet of six families of Sentinel satellites that will form the core of the European Union's Copernicus environmental monitoring system (see go.nature.com/evfinv), which is designed to provide near-real-time data on many environmental variables.

Papal climate call

In a long-anticipated encyclical letter (pictured), Pope Francis warns that climate change caused mainly by human activity threatens to devastate ecosystems and human civilization. Released on 18 June, the nearly 200-page letter contains a sweeping account of scientific findings and urges world leaders to transition the global energy system away from fossil fuels.



Scientists and policy-makers hope that the encyclical will help to strengthen public trust in climate-change science among the more than 1 billion Catholics worldwide, and facilitate international efforts to cut global emissions of greenhouse gases. See go.nature.com/r1i3q4 for more.

Thai MERS case

Thailand announced its first case of Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS) on 18 June. An elderly man, who travelled from Oman to Thailand and sought medical care, was diagnosed with MERS at a Thai hospital. The man and his family were put into isolation, and infection-control measures implemented. Meanwhile, the MERS outbreak in South Korea seems to be slowing down. As of 23 June, there have been 175 confirmed cases in South Korea and 1 in China. The South Korean Ministry of Health and Welfare announced on 21 June that

seven experts from the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention would be visiting the country to provide technical assistance.

End of Aquarius

A US–Argentinian research satellite that carried Aquarius, the first instrument specialized to measure ocean salinity from space, has stopped working, NASA announced on 17 June. A piece of hardware aboard the SAC-D observatory failed and sent the satellite spinning out of control earlier this month. Although Aquarius had finished its main three-year mission, it had been expected to last for at least another year. Among other achievements, Aquarius's maps show how fresh and salt water interact as rivers pour into the ocean.

BUSINESS

Hepatitis C drug

China's patent office has rejected attempts to patent a blockbuster hepatitis C drug, said charity Médecins Sans Frontières of Geneva, Switzerland, on 19 June. The antiviral drug sofosbuvir is made by Gilead Sciences of Foster City, California, but health advocates have argued that it is too expensive for people in middle- and low-income countries. It costs US\$84,000 per course, although Gilead has negotiated

COMING UP

28 JUNE – 3 JULY

More than 650 young researchers meet 65 Nobel laureates for this year's Lindau Nobel Laureate Meeting in Germany. The scientists come from all three natural-science Nobel Prize disciplines: medicine and physiology, physics and chemistry. go.nature.com/tpithk

30 JUNE

The world's first Asteroid Day is held on the anniversary of the 1908 Tunguska event in Siberia, the largest impact on Earth in recent history. The event is intended to raise global awareness about the risk from asteroids and how to protect Earth. go.nature.com/uvhz7w

a discounted price of \$900 with countries including Egypt. China's decision — which has not been announced by the government — could spur other countries to challenge the patent, leading to the manufacture of cheaper generic versions.

Vaccine purchase

Pharmaceutical giant GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) of Brentford, UK, has sold two meningitis vaccines to Pfizer in New York City for £82 million (US\$130 million). Announced on 22 June, the deal will give Pfizer Nimenrix and Mencevax, which protect against 4 strains of meningitis. The sale was deemed necessary by regulators after GSK's purchase earlier this year of a vaccines business owned by Novartis of Basel, Switzerland; that transaction included two other meningitis vaccines.

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TREND WATCH

The global market for photovoltaic solar energy will rise rapidly, says the consultancy GTM Research in Boston, Massachusetts. It predicts that by the end of 2015, the market will have expanded by 36% with 55 gigawatts (GW) of new installed solar capacity; southeast Asia will account for 30 GW of this. Total solar photovoltaic capacity will triple by 2020 to nearly 700 GW. By then, demand for solar panels will be largely independent of government incentives, says the analysis.

SOLAR CAPACITY SOARS

The world's solar photovoltaic capacity is predicted to triple by 2020.

