

SEVEN DAYS

The news in brief

EVENTS

Hinkley deal delay

In a surprise move, the UK government delayed its final approval of a new nuclear power plant at Hinkley Point on 28 July, just hours after French energy company EDF, which is financing most of the project's construction, gave it the go-ahead. Hinkley Point C would be the first new UK nuclear power station this century, and has an £18-billion (US\$24-billion) price tag. China has signed up to provide one-third of the cost. The project was championed by the previous UK government, but the current government said that it needed time to review the deal.

Farewell Philae

On 27 July, the European Space Agency (ESA) switched off radio communications with Philae, the space probe that made history by landing on a comet in November 2014. Philae had a bright but unlucky career. After landing on the comet 67P/Churyumov-Gerasimenko, it failed to grip the comet's surface and

SOUND BITE

“I believe in science. I believe that climate change is real.”

Hillary Clinton gives time to science in her speech accepting the Democratic nomination for US president at the party's convention in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, on 28 July.



YANNIS BEHRAKIS/REUTERS

EU funds research on migrant crisis

The European Commission is making €11 million (US\$12.3 million) available for research that addresses challenges related to migration. Some 1.25 million refugees have entered Europe since the start of 2015, but management policies across the continent are weak and poorly coordinated. As part of

its Horizon 2020 framework programme, the commission will next year announce five calls for proposals related to different policy areas, including the integration of migrants into the workforce and society. Carlos Moedas, European Commissioner for Research, Science and Innovation, announced the measures last week.

bounced into a shady spot where it was unable to charge its solar panels. It performed just 64 hours of experiments before its batteries died. The probe signalled again briefly in June and July 2015, but by February, ESA said that there was “close to zero” chance of hearing from it again. Philae's parent satellite, Rosetta, is preparing for its own demise. It will crash land on 67P on 30 September, and scientists hope that it will collect a rich trove of cometary data on its approach.

Zika in Florida

Fourteen cases of Zika virus in Miami, Florida, are likely to have arisen from local *Aedes aegypti* mosquitoes, state authorities said on 1 August. Although this would be the

first time that people in the continental United States have become infected at home and not abroad, US health authorities have long predicted that such small local clusters would be seen in some US southern states — but not elsewhere in the country. On the basis of past experiences with dengue and chikungunya, viruses spread by the same mosquito, US authorities do not expect to see any widespread transmission, in sharp contrast to the situation in most of the 50 countries and territories that since 2015 have reported their first ever outbreaks of Zika.

Audit revisions

A government-commissioned report on the Research Excellence Framework (REF),

the United Kingdom's periodic audit of the quality of its research, has called for changes to the system in a bid to cut costs and prevent ‘gaming’. The REF, which occurs every 5–7 years, is used to allocate about £2 billion (US\$2.6 billion) in annual research funding. Among its suggestions, the report proposed that the audit should not give universities credit for papers written by staff before they joined, and that institutions should submit all their researchers to the audit process, rather than just a selection. The government will consider the recommendations in the report, which was led by economist Nicholas Stern and released on 28 July, before issuing a formal response. See page 5 and go.nature.com/2ardiyc for more.

COURTESY OF NIH

RESEARCH

New whale species

Scientists have identified a new species of whale, after a DNA analysis of 178 beaked whales revealed a genetically distinct subset. The species, in the genus *Berardius*, is found in the Okhotsk and Bering seas in the northern Pacific and was previously considered to be a dwarf form of Baird's beaked whale (*B. bairdii*). Japanese whalers had long acknowledged two distinct variants of the whale: the common 'slate-grey' variety, and the newly recognized 'black' form, which they called *karasu*, Japanese for raven. The discovery was published on 26 July (P. A. Morin *et al. Mar. Mamm. Sci.* <http://doi.org/bm7b>; 2016).



expected to take up the post at the NIMH, which has an annual budget of about US\$1.5 billion, in September.

PEOPLE

NIMH chief

Psychiatrist and neuroscientist Joshua Gordon will be the next head of the US National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), it was announced on 28 July. Gordon (**pictured**) will join the institute from the Columbia University Medical Center in New York City, where his research has focused on schizophrenia and anxiety, and on how genetic mutations lead to particular behaviours. Gordon is

BUSINESS

GSK backs Britain

Drug giant GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) said on 27 July that it will invest £275 million (US\$363 million) into its UK operations, allaying fears that big pharmaceutical companies would begin to move out of the United Kingdom after the country's vote last month to leave the European Union. GSK will put the money into three manufacturing sites, to support production of respiratory and large-molecule biological medicines.

Indian space case

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) received a major blow on 25 July, when the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague, the Netherlands, ruled against

it in a contract dispute. In 2011, ISRO's commercial arm, Antrix Corporation, scrapped a 2005 deal with satellite company Devas Multimedia in Bangalore for the long-term lease of two satellites, citing allegations of irregularities in the deal, including security concerns. Devas took the matter to international arbitration courts. Industry observers say that the Indian government may have to pay about US\$1 billion in damages to Devas.

Bioelectronics firm

London-based drug giant GlaxoSmithKline announced on 1 August that it is teaming up with Verily, Google's life-sciences spin-off in South San Francisco, California, to develop electronics-based therapies. The two companies will contribute up to £540 million (US\$713 million) to the newly established Galvani Bioelectronics, which will be based in the United Kingdom, over 7 years. Galvani will develop miniature implants that can alter the body's electric nerve signals, with the aim of treating inflammatory, metabolic and hormone conditions.

Theranos device

Elizabeth Holmes, chief executive of the beleaguered biotechnology firm Theranos, unveiled a new blood-testing

COMING UP

11–12 AUGUST

Chemistry graduates gather in Oxford, UK, for the Oxford Synthesis Summer Conference. go.nature.com/2aunyt

12 AUGUST

The annual Perseids meteor shower reaches its peak.

machine on 1 August at a meeting of the American Association for Clinical Chemistry in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Theranos rose to prominence with promises of a technology that could perform a wide range of diagnostic tests using a few drops of blood. But its claims faced scepticism and government scrutiny, and in July, US regulators banned Holmes from running a lab for two years. Theranos, of Palo Alto, California, says that its new miniLab machine can perform a variety of tests from a finger-prick of blood, but the device has not been independently verified.

POLICY

Inclusive astronomy

On 28 July, the American Astronomical Society endorsed a statement intended to improve the experience in astronomy of under-represented groups including women, ethnic and racial minorities, disabled people and some sexual and gender identities. Suggested changes include eliminating discriminatory hiring practices and ensuring that astronomy institutions, facilities and data are accessible to everyone. The recommendations, spurred in part by discussions about inequality in science, came from a meeting on inclusive astronomy held in Nashville, Tennessee, in June 2015.

TREND WATCH

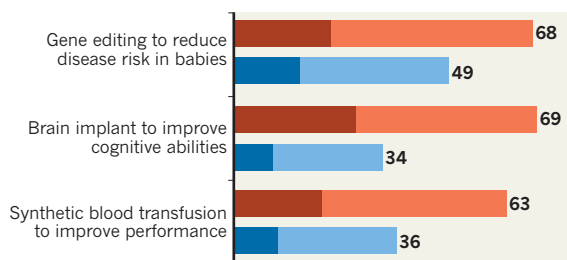
More than 60% of people in a US survey are concerned about scientific advances being used for human 'enhancement', revealed the Pew Research Center in Washington DC on 26 July. The poll asked 4,726 people how they felt about three potential technologies: gene editing to reduce disease risk in babies; brain implants to enhance brain processes; and transfusions of synthetic blood to improve strength. In each case, fewer than half expressed enthusiasm. See go.nature.com/2ag0jjd for more.

US PUBLIC WARY OF HUMAN ENHANCEMENT

Most people in the United States are concerned about the prospect of using cutting-edge science to enhance human abilities.

How (a) worried and (b) enthusiastic do you feel about each of these ideas?

Enthusiastic: ■ Very ■ Somewhat Worried: ■ Very ■ Somewhat



Percentage of respondents

Based on survey answers from 4,726 US adults in March 2016.

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