

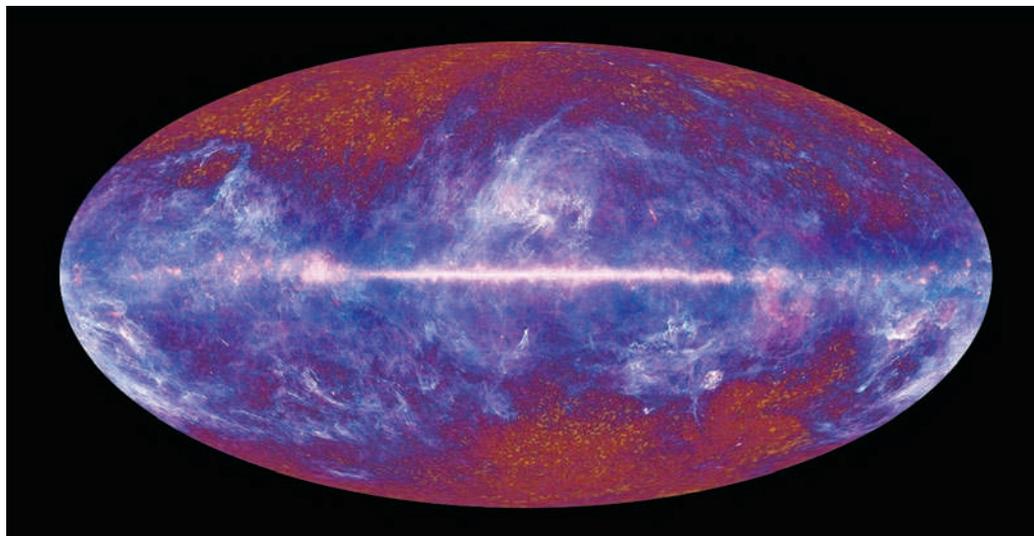
NEWS BRIEFING

● POLICY

Biosecurity measures: The most dangerous items on an existing list of 82 'select agents and toxins' will be designated by the US government for tough, tailored security, under an executive order issued on 2 July. President Barack Obama ordered the secretaries of health and human services and of agriculture to designate within 18 months the agents on the list that have the greatest risk of misuse or potential for mass casualties, and then to lay out security actions for scientists who work with those agents. The order comes six months after a US government report recommended this tiering. It also asks departments to consider reducing the number of agents on the list.

Yucca drags on: The administration of US President Barack Obama has had a setback in its attempts to scrap plans for a nuclear-waste repository at Yucca Mountain in Nevada. A three-member panel of administrative judges from the Atomic Safety and Licensing Board, part of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), ruled on 29 June that the Department of Energy cannot withdraw its application for authorization to construct a waste repository at the Yucca site without the say-so of Congress. The decision might still be overruled by the full NRC.

Economical plans: The European Commission's in-house research arm is shifting some resources away from reports on health and security to focus on economics. The Joint Research Centre — which carries out research to inform European policies — announced on 2 July its 2010–20 strategy, which involves focusing efforts on seven key areas, including the new priority of "an open and competitive economy". The centre is made up of seven institutes in five countries, and employs around 700 core science staff along with more than 400 PhD students and postdocs.



ESA/LEI & HFI CONSORTIA

THE BIG BANG'S AFTERGLOW

The European Space Agency (ESA) has unveiled the Planck telescope's first complete image of the cosmic microwave background (CMB). The CMB (the mottled backdrop pictured above and below the main disc of our Galaxy) is a ubiquitous glow produced by photons created at the beginning of the Universe around 13.7 billion years ago. Launched by ESA in 2009 (see *Nature* 458, 820–824; 2009), the Planck satellite is the latest in a series of spacecraft designed to map fluctuations in the temperature of these photons. The all-sky picture was completed over the course of around nine months, and should further astronomers' understanding of the structure and composition of the Universe.

Space policy: The US White House released its national space policy on 28 June, emphasizing access to low Earth orbit by commercially owned rockets rather than government-developed ones. NASA is currently caught in a tug of war between the White House, which wants to cancel a system of Moon rockets, and Congress, which wants the programme to continue. By promoting the shared, transparent, responsible use of space, the new policy also opens up the possibility of a future space-weapons treaty.

Dispersants research: The US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) said that it would have to do further toxicity tests before it could determine whether to order BP to change the chemical dispersants being sprayed on the oil slick in the Gulf of Mexico. On 30 June, it released the results of agency tests on eight dispersants, all of which had roughly the same impact on animals, and no 'significant'

endocrine-disrupting activity. The agency had in May ordered BP to find a less toxic dispersant, but the company said that it couldn't. The EPA will now test the dispersants in combination with crude oil.

● BUSINESS

Russian drug development: Russia's nascent commercial drug industry could get a shot in the arm from a US\$163-million project announced on 1 July. The state-owned Russian Corporation of Nanotechnologies (known as Rusnano) in Moscow, along with a yet-to-be-announced co-investor, plans to fund the development of up to 15 potential drug molecules, taking them through to phase II clinical trials. The project is the latest of several recent steps that the Russian government has taken towards seeding a domestic biotechnology and pharmaceutical market. See go.nature.com/bw6Lox for more.

SOUND BITES

"I think it's a small catastrophe in the present situation."

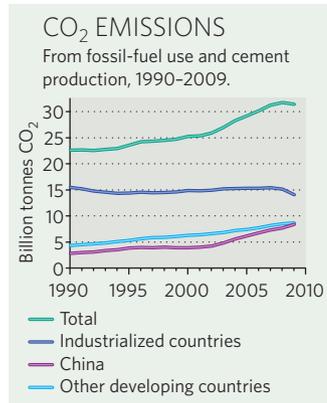
Helga Nowotny, president of the European Research Council, comments on the news that more than €1 billion (US\$1.3 billion) earmarked for European research grants may be diverted to pay for the experimental ITER fusion reactor. See page 171 and go.nature.com/4KK24o for more.

Biotech acquisition: Celgene, the giant biotechnology company, announced on 30 June that it intends to purchase Abraxis BioScience for US\$2.9 billion. Abraxis, based in Los Angeles, California, is best known for its tumour drug Abraxane, a form of paclitaxel that is bound to the protein albumin and is thought to be more effective and less toxic than paclitaxel alone. Celgene, of Summit, New Jersey, had 2009 revenues of \$2.7 billion.

● **RESEARCH**

Emissions report: Global emissions of carbon dioxide levelled off in 2009 for the first time since the 1992 recession, the Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency in Bilthoven reported on 1 July. Rapid increases in developing countries such as China and India offset steep declines resulting from the economic woes of industrialized countries (see 'CO₂ emissions'). Cumulative emissions from fossil fuels and cement production registered at 31.3 billion tonnes, a slight reduction on 2008 levels

SOURCE: PBL



NUMBER CRUNCH
\$1 million

The value of the prize, awarded by the Clay Mathematics Institute, that has been turned down by reclusive Russian mathematician Grigory Perelman. See go.nature.com/ruayON for more.

but essentially flat given the uncertainties in the estimate, says the report.

Satellite maps: A detailed map of Earth's gravity was unveiled last week at a European Space Agency (ESA) conference in Bergen, Norway. ESA's Gravity Field and Steady-State Ocean Circulation Explorer — launched last year — provided a picture of Earth's 'geoid', a planetary surface showing height differences, caused by subtle

variations in gravity, in the level of an imaginary global ocean unaffected by tides and currents. See go.nature.com/cDy4rn for more. Also unveiled was the first global map of soil moisture, based on early observations from ESA's Soil Moisture and Ocean Salinity Mission, launched last November. See go.nature.com/lSse54 for more.

● **PEOPLE**

Mann cleared again: There is "no substance" to accusations of research misconduct, or deviation from sound academic procedures, against climate scientist Michael Mann of Pennsylvania State University, a committee of faculty peers at the university concluded on 4 June. A separate committee had in February already cleared Mann of more serious accusations of scientific fraud and data manipulation, raised in the wake of public inquiries after e-mails were stolen from the Climatic Research Unit of the University of East Anglia, UK.

Gruber awards: Gerald Fink of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Cambridge was announced as the winner of the US\$500,000 genetics prize by the Peter and Patricia Gruber Foundation, based in St Thomas, the US Virgin Islands, on 30 June. Fink was cited for developing a way to introduce DNA into yeast cells, thus pioneering baker's yeast as a model for studying molecular biology and for producing drugs. Earlier in June, Charles Steidel at the California Institute of Technology, Pasadena, won

THE WEEK AHEAD

11 JULY
Easter Island will be flooded with tourists hoping to view a total solar eclipse across the South Pacific, the last for 28 months.
go.nature.com/abiNZO

12-14 JULY
The Royal Society hosts a meeting in Chicheley, UK, on scientific solutions to global sustainability — and their limits.
go.nature.com/pqlcTI

13-15 JULY
The National Academies in Washington DC hold an open meeting to discuss the planetary science decadal survey, exploring which planetary missions should be funded for 2013-22. See page 168 for more.
go.nature.com/YYIBo2

13-14 JULY
Advisers to the US Food and Drug Administration meet in Washington DC to decide whether GlaxoSmithKline's diabetes drug Avandia (rosiglitazone) should be pulled from the market because it boosts heart attack risk.
go.nature.com/mS8XbM

the cosmology prize for his studies of distant galaxies, and Robert Wurtz at the National Institutes of Health in Bethesda, Maryland, won the neuroscience prize for his work on visual cognition.

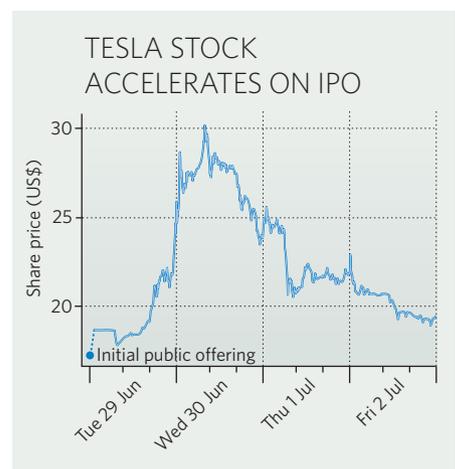
BUSINESS WATCH

Tesla Motors, the electric-car company based in San Carlos, California, made a long-awaited initial public offering (IPO) on 29 June. The company, which has attracted wide attention for its glamorous sports cars, raised US\$226 million and saw its share price leap 41% to \$23.9 on its first trading day, only to fall back to \$19.2 by 2 July (see chart).

But many green-energy companies are still finding the public markets a difficult place to raise cash. On 14 June, Chinese wind-turbine maker Goldwind, based in Urumqi, Xinjiang, shelved its plans to raise up to \$1.2 billion in a planned share sale in Hong Kong, citing poor market conditions. And on 18 June,

photovoltaics manufacturer Solyndra, of Fremont, California, aborted plans for a \$300-million IPO, saying that it would instead raise \$175 million from existing investors.

A lacklustre IPO climate has, however, been countered by strong venture-capital interest. According to preliminary figures released on 1 July by analysts Cleantech Group and Deloitte, the first half of 2010 has seen an all-time record of global disclosed venture-capital investment in clean technology, reaching \$4.04 billion. The second quarter of this year saw \$2.02 billion of that investment; the solar sector drew in the largest proportion of that cash, with 26 deals raising \$811 million.



SOURCE: NASDAQ