SEVEN DAYS *The news in brief*

POLICY

Sharing climate data

The World Meteorological Organization (WMO) will create a global framework to give developing countries access to data on local weather and climate, and to help them to prepare for the expected impacts of climate change. The initiative, proposed two years ago (see *Nature* **461,** 159; 2009) was endorsed on 3 June by delegates representing 189 nations at a quadrennial congress of the WMO's governing body in Geneva, Switzerland. It has been given an annual budget of US$75 million.

Nuclear audit

Japan has "underestimated" the tsunami hazard for several of its nuclear plants, according to a fact-finding mission by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in Vienna. A preliminary report issued on 1 June recommended that further defences be added to protect plants in the future. But the team praised the Japanese response on the Fukushima nuclear site as "exemplary". On 6 June, Japan's Nuclear and Industrial Safety Agency more than doubled its estimate for the amount of atmospheric radiation released in the first week of the Fukushima disaster, to 0.77 exabecquerels. See page 135 for more.

Natural Britain

The first national assessment of the value of Britain's ecosystems, commissioned by the government, was released on 1 June. Building on efforts by the Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity international initiative — which makes an economic case for conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity — the study, claim its authors, sets global standards for environmental valuation. It found that yields of most crops and woodland species diversity have improved over the past 60 years. But many more UK 'ecosystem services' (the benefits people get from the natural environment) declined, including fish catches and soil quality. See go.nature.com/r2as7a for more.

D. SAMPAIO/AP/PRESS ASSOCIATION IMAGES

Amazon's giant dam approved

Brazil's environment agency, IBAMA, has granted a building licence for the controversial Belo Monte Dam, a massive 11.2-gigawatt hydroelectric plant on the Xingu River — a tributary of the Amazon in the state of Pará. The project's environmental impact had been subject to "robust analysis", IBAMA said. Billed as the world's third-largest hydroelectric plant, the dam will divert water from the river's 'Big Bend' (pictured). It was first planned three decades ago and has been opposed by environmental campaigners and indigenous peoples.

BUSINESS

Patent dispute

The US Supreme Court has ruled against Stanford University in California, in a case that tested the boundaries of legislation allowing universities to own intellectual property on federally funded discoveries. In a decision issued on 6 June, the court determined that pharmaceutical firm Roche, of Basel, Switzerland, shares the rights to an HIV test developed by a Stanford University researcher while he was working at Cetus, a company that has since been purchased by Roche. See go.nature.com/kqahzx for more.

RESEARCH

Phones and cancer

Mobile-phone use has joined the purgatorial category of "possibly carcinogenic for humans" as determined by the World Health Organization (WHO). A committee of experts brought together by the International Agency for Research on Cancer, a WHO scientific centre in Lyons, France, announced on 31 May that it could not rule out the possibility that heavy mobile-phone use might increase the risk of brain cancer. The WHO's 'possible carcinogen' category includes 266 other radiation sources and chemicals, including some pesticides, petrol and coffee. Further studies monitoring mobile phones and health are planned. See go.nature.com/hnspnw for more.

New elements

More than a decade after they were first observed, elements 114 and 116 have officially been added to the periodic table. Chemistry's governing body, the International Union of Pure and Applied Chemistry (IUPAC) in Triangle Park, North Carolina, confirmed the elements' discovery in a technical report published on 1 June (R. C. Barber *et al. Pure Appl. Chem.* doi:10.1351/PAC-REP-10-05-01; 2011). Scientists at the Joint Institute

for Nuclear Research in Dubna, Russia, and the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory in California, created the elements, which still don't have names. Evidence for elements 113, 115 and 118 has not met the criteria for discovery.

Halting melanoma

Two drugs have been shown to slow the progression of advanced melanoma, a particularly lethal form of skin cancer. Vemurafenib will get a priority review by the US Food and Drug Administration after achieving 84% survival rates (after six months) in a large clinical trial. And the recently approved melanoma drug ipilimumab improves average survival by two months, another large trial showed. Its maker, Bristol-Myers Squibb, will unite with vemurafenib's maker, Roche, to test the two drugs in combination. The trial results were presented on 5 June at the American Society of Clinical Oncology's annual meeting in Chicago, Illinois. See go.nature.com/zdmgu3 for more.

EVENTS

Shuttle retired

NASA's space shuttle *Endeavour* landed safely back on Earth on 1 June (**pictured**), completing its last spaceflight and the penultimate mission

T. FARRAR & T. GRAY/NASA

of the shuttle fleet. In 25 space missions, *Endeavour* travelled nearly 200 million kilometres and orbited Earth some 4,671 times. It will now be exhibited at the California Science Center in Los Angeles.

E. coli outbreak

The source of the outbreak of enterohaemorrhagic *Escherichia coli* sweeping across northern Europe had still not been clearly identified when *Nature* went to press. By 7 June, 23 people had died and more than 2,400 had been infected. The outbreak has sparked calls for changes to disease-surveillance systems. See page 137 for more.

FUNDING

Cheaper vaccines

Pharmaceutical companies have agreed to large cuts in the prices of the vaccines that they sell to the GAVI Alliance — a global health partnership based in Geneva, Switzerland, that focuses on getting vaccines into low-income countries. The cuts, from firms that include GlaxoSmithKline, Merck, Johnson & Johnson and Sanofi, cover vaccines against rotavirus and human papillomavirus, and a combined vaccine against five lethal diseases. Despite the savings, GAVI still needs US$3.7 billion to enable a planned $6.8-billion expansion of vaccination programmes in 2011–15. A key meeting for donors' pledges will be held in London on 13 June. See go.nature.com/b2sagg for more.

People power

The Wellcome Trust — Britain's largest non-governmental funder of biomedical research — has named the first researchers to benefit from a new scheme that directs money to people rather than projects (see *Nature* **462,** 145; 2009). Twenty-seven scientists will receive £56 million (US$92 million), with individual awards ranging from around £1 million to £3 million.

Genomics retreat

The Jackson Laboratory, a medical research centre based in Bar Harbor, Maine, has scrapped plans to set up a major satellite facility for personal genomics research in Florida. The centre had spent more than a year negotiating with two districts for a site, but announced that it was pulling out on 3 June, after Florida politicians determined that the state could not afford to invest the US$100-million co-funding that Jackson wanted.

COMING UP

15–17 JUNE
Stanford University in California hosts the Fifth International Meeting on Synthetic Biology, which includes discussions of the field's future.
http://sb5.biobricks.org

15–18 JUNE
The International Society for Stem Cell Research holds its annual meeting, in Toronto, Canada.
www.isscr.org/meetings

AWARDS

Winning millions

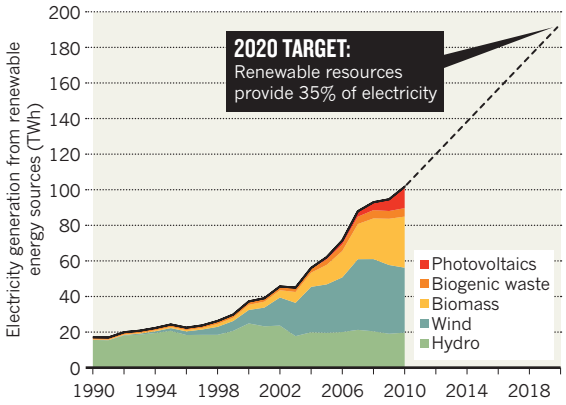
The three 2011 Shaw prizes, worth US$1 million apiece, were announced on 7 June. Astronomy prizewinners are Enrico Costa of Rome's Institute of Space Astrophysics and Cosmic Physics, and Gerald Fishman at NASA's Marshall Space Flight Center in Huntsville, Alabama. They led space missions demonstrating the origin of γ-ray bursts. The life sciences and medicine prize went to Jules Hoffmann of the University of Strasbourg, France, Ruslan Medzhitov at Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut, and Bruce Beutler at the Scripps Research Institute in La Jolla, California, for discovering the mechanisms of innate immunity. Demetrios Christodoulou at ETH Zurich in Switzerland and Richard Hamilton at Columbia University in New York won the mathematics prize; their work on nonlinear partial differential equations has applications in general relativity.

TREND WATCH

Germany's government wants to double the country's use of renewable resources to generate electricity by 2020. While cutting overall demand, it would increase renewables from 17% (or 100 terawatt-hours a year) of the total today to 35%. If the country maintains its current pace (see chart), it will meet that target. But even this doubling would not fill the energy gap left by the government's decision to shut down all the country's nuclear power stations by 2022. See go.nature.com/wordrf for more.

GERMANY'S RENEWABLES SURGE

If it maintains its recent pace, Germany can meet domestic targets to double electricity generation from renewables by 2020.



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