

# SEVEN DAYS

The news in brief

## POLICY

### Science Europe

A new Brussels-based lobby group, Science Europe, held its founding assembly in Berlin on 21 October. It hopes to become the “single voice for science in Europe”, its president, Paul Boyle, told *Nature* in August (see *Nature* 477, 18; 2011). The organization ([www.scienceeurope.org](http://www.scienceeurope.org)) unites two science-advocacy groups: the European Heads of Research Councils, which has now been officially dissolved, and the European Science Foundation, which is continuing as a separate body but may wind down its activities over the next few years.

### No carbon capture

The United Kingdom's energy and climate-change agency has ditched plans to invest £1 billion (US\$1.6 billion) in a project to capture and bury millions of tonnes of carbon dioxide produced each year by a coal-fired power station in Longannet, Scotland. The project, which aimed to be even larger than the US flagship FutureGen programme, was once a front runner in Britain's much-delayed competition to receive funding for carbon-capture and storage schemes. The money will be spent on other carbon-capture projects, the agency said on 19 October. See [go.nature.com/xqnctd](http://go.nature.com/xqnctd) for more.

## RESEARCH

### A planet is born

Astronomers have for the first time imaged a planet so young — a mere 2 million years old — that it is still gathering material from its birth site, a disk of gas and dust surrounding a star 145 parsecs (473 light years) from Earth. It lies about as far from its star

as Uranus does from our Sun. The finding was published on the arXiv preprint server on 17 October (A. L. Kraus and M. J. Ireland preprint at <http://arxiv.org/abs/1110.3808v1>; 2011), although it had been shared at conferences previously. See [go.nature.com/opa1pd](http://go.nature.com/opa1pd) for more.

### Warming verified

An independent analysis of the land-surface-temperature record has concluded — if anyone was in doubt — that global warming is happening. The Berkeley Earth Surface Temperature (BEST) study, led by Richard Muller, a physicist at the University of California, Berkeley, mostly agreed with results from three teams that had previously studied

data from land-temperature stations, although it used different statistical methods for the analysis. The BEST analysis was released on 20 October, but no part of it has yet been peer reviewed; the team is preparing to submit four papers to the *Journal of Geophysical Research*. See [go.nature.com/kqiypu](http://go.nature.com/kqiypu) and page 428 for more.

### Malaria vaccine

The world's leading candidate for a malaria vaccine has claimed promising results in a phase III trial, from which the first findings were published on 18 October. But the RTS,S/AS01 vaccine, funded by pharmaceutical company GlaxoSmithKline and the global PATH Malaria Vaccine Initiative, showed low

the Arabian tectonic plate converges with Eurasia, is prone to devastating earthquakes: a magnitude-7.6 quake in 1999 killed 17,000 people; and in 1976, a magnitude-7.3 quake struck just 70 kilometres away from this week's epicentre and killed several thousand.

## Earthquake strikes eastern Turkey

Several hundred people are feared to have died in the magnitude-7.2 earthquake that hit eastern Turkey on 23 October. As *Nature* went to press, rescue teams were searching for survivors in cities such as Erciş and Van, near the Iranian border. The region, where



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efficacy against severe forms of malaria, disappointing some experts. See page 439 for more.

### Hope for MS drug

A monoclonal-antibody treatment for multiple sclerosis has seen positive results in a late-stage clinical trial. The results, presented on 22 October at a congress in Amsterdam, found that 78% of patients treated with alemtuzumab remained free from relapse (a flare-up of inflammation) after two years, compared with 59% using one of the standard therapies, interferon  $\beta$ -1a. But evidence that the drug can actually reverse nerve damage was not statistically significant (unlike in earlier trials). Alemtuzumab is made

by Genzyme, a US subsidiary of Paris-based drug maker Sanofi. See [go.nature.com/suucta](http://go.nature.com/suucta) for more.

## BUSINESS

## Abbott splits up

Abbott Laboratories is splitting into two companies: an as-yet-unnamed research-based pharmaceuticals firm, and a medical-products business covering everything from generic drugs to lab diagnostics. The drug-maker, based in Chicago, Illinois, is the world's ninth-largest in terms of global revenues, bringing in US\$35.2 billion in 2010. The separation, announced on 19 October, is widely seen as an attempt to attract health-care investors to a business free of branded drugs, products on which some analysts feel the firm is overly dependent.

## EVENTS

## Floods in Thailand

Northern suburbs in Thailand's capital Bangkok were last week inundated by heavy floods (pictured), described as the country's worst in half a century. As *Nature* went to press, officials were hoping that floodwaters would retreat, and that defensive walls and drainage canals would save the centre of the low-lying city from severe



damage. The floods, which have been going on since late July, have killed more than 350 people and caused billions of dollars in damage.

## Europe GPS launch

The European Space Agency has launched the first two operational spacecraft of Galileo, Europe's global positioning system. The satellites, launched on 21 October, joined two test satellites already in orbit. The network, costing more than €5 billion (US\$6.9 billion), will feature up to 27 operational satellites and three spares. See [go.nature.com/jvcdb1](http://go.nature.com/jvcdb1) for more.

## PEOPLE

## Stealing secrets

A scientist who was born in China but is a permanent resident in the United States has pleaded guilty to economic espionage and stealing trade

secrets from two former US employers to benefit Hunan Normal University in China. Kexue Huang admitted to passing on details about pesticides that he had learned when working at Dow AgroSciences in Indianapolis, Indiana, from 2003 to 2008. He also admitted to stealing a key component of a food product developed at his subsequent employer, grain distributor Cargill in Minneapolis, Minnesota, federal prosecutors said on 18 October.

## Journal chief

Molecular biologist Inder Verma will be the next editor-in-chief of the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, the journal announced on 19 October. Verma, currently at the Salk Institute in La Jolla, California, replaces Randy Schekman, editor since 2006, who is moving to edit a new open-access life-sciences journal (see *Nature* 475, 145; 2011).

## Head for NIH centre

Cell biologist Chris Kaiser will be the next director of the basic-biosciences institute at the US National Institutes of Health in Bethesda, Maryland, the agency announced on 18 October. Kaiser, who currently heads the biology department at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Cambridge, will

## COMING UP

### 31 OCTOBER

The United Nations proclaims that the world population has reached 7 billion — see *Nature* 478, 300 (2011) for more.

### 1 NOVEMBER

China's Shenzhou 8 spacecraft is rumoured to launch. It is the country's first attempt to remotely dock a craft with its Tiangong 1 space module, which launched last month.

### 2–4 NOVEMBER

Progress in using stem cells to regrow livers, lungs, kidneys and spinal cords is discussed at the World Conference on Regenerative Medicine in Leipzig, Germany. [go.nature.com/jsdbdy](http://go.nature.com/jsdbdy)

lead the US\$2-billion National Institute of General Medical Sciences from spring 2012. He replaces acting director Judith Greenberg, who has been covering the role since former director Jeremy Berg stepped down in July. See [go.nature.com/a2zmbi](http://go.nature.com/a2zmbi) for an interview with Kaiser.

## UK physics head

Britain's most financially troubled science funding agency, the Science and Technology Facilities Council, has a new chief executive: John Womersley, who was its director of science programmes. He replaces Keith Mason, who was criticized for poor community engagement during years of dire financial straits for the council, which was founded by the merger of two councils in 2007 and funds mainly physics and astronomy research (see *Nature* 462, 396; 2009). The appointment was announced on 18 October.

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## TREND WATCH

According to the European Commission's 2011 scoreboard for industry spending on research and development (R&D), released on 18 October, the world's top 1,400 companies increased their R&D investment by 4% last year, after a 1.9% drop in 2009. Swiss drug firm Roche, based in Basel, spent €7.2 billion (US\$10 billion) on research — the most of any firm. The rise broadly mirrors a similar upturn in sales. Research spending as a proportion of net sales has fallen slowly over the past half decade (see chart).

## CORPORATE RESEARCH SPENDING RECOVERS

Firms increased their spending on research and development (R&D) last year, although the recovery is largely in line with greater sales.

