

Germany sets up national academy of sciences

The Leopoldina, a 350-year-old scientific academy based in Halle, is to become Germany's first national academy of sciences.

The country's science minister, Annette Schavan, announced her decision in a radio interview on 16 November — without having first told the Leopoldina or Germany's seven regional science academies. In its new role, the Leopoldina will advise the government, parliament and the public about socially relevant scientific issues.

Schavan hopes that the decision will end a decade-long debate over whether to promote any of the regional academies to the national level. Germany's scientific organizations, including the Leopoldina, had recommended strongly against the move — favouring instead the creation of a 200-strong council appointed by the regional academies.

The 1,280-member Leopoldina now plans to collaborate with the other academies to produce science-led policy advice, says its secretary-general, Jutta Schnitzer-Ungefug. See Editorial, page 458.

Climate body's summary urges action on warming

The final summary of this year's three massive reports from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) contains notably more urgent language than before.

Released on 17 November in Valencia, Spain, the synthesis report talks about "dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system". That phrase was absent from previous IPCC publications because of objections from some political delegates to the panel's conferences.

The report confirms that it is at least 90% certain that global warming is real



IPCC chairman Rajendra Pachauri (left) and UN secretary-general Ban Ki-moon at the release of the climate body's synthesis report.

and caused by human activities, and sets out possible strategies for avoiding global temperature rises that could reach as high as 6°C by the end of the century.

Hans Verolme, head of the WWF Global Climate Change programme in Washington DC, points to a section called 'reasons for concern', which he says acknowledges the risk of both abrupt climatic shifts and irreversible impacts. Although there is "a little hedging and qualifying going on", he says, the fact that such a statement is in the report is notable.

Stem-cell researcher accused of negligence

An investigation by an Australian university has found evidence of negligence but not fraud in a project headed by stem-cell researcher Alan Trounson. The focus has been on an unnamed senior researcher. Trounson, incoming president of California's US\$3-billion stem-cell research programme, has not been accused of misconduct.

Monash University in Victoria launched the investigation in April, after an audit by the Australian Stem Cell Centre found inconsistencies in quarterly progress reports submitted by the research team. The Aus\$1-million (US\$890,000) project, which aimed to find stem-cell therapies for smoking-

induced lung damage, has been on hold since February, when questions first arose.

Investigators concluded that the senior researcher, who has left the university, lacked sufficient management experience for his position, and was negligent in his reporting of the data. Monash is considering whether to repay the funds to the stem-cell centre.

Presidential veto leaves NIH facing shortfall

Funding for the US National Institutes of Health (NIH) is in limbo as President Bush and Congress fight over the country's financial priorities. On 15 November, the House of Representatives failed to override a presidential veto of a spending bill that includes the NIH along with other health, education and labour programmes.

The action means that the \$28.9-billion budget of the NIH will not get a proposed 3.1% increase in 2008, putting the agency on the road to a far smaller increase or even a cut from its 2007 funding level. The House fell two votes short of the two-thirds majority needed to override a veto.

House appropriations chairman David Obey (Democrat, Wisconsin) says that shaving billions from the huge bill to avoid another presidential veto will mean cutting at least \$700 million from what would have been a \$1.1 billion increase for the NIH.

Midwest coalition joins fight against emissions

Six US governors and the premier of Manitoba in Canada have agreed to cut greenhouse-gas emissions and set up a midwestern carbon-trading market, marking the third such regional accord.

With similar pacts in place in the northeastern and western states, roughly half the US population is now covered by some form of greenhouse-gas agreement, according to the World Resources Institute. The governors of Wisconsin, Minnesota, Illinois, Iowa, Michigan and Kansas signed the accord on 15 November. South Dakota, Indiana and Ohio will be observers, allowing them to help set up the carbon trading.

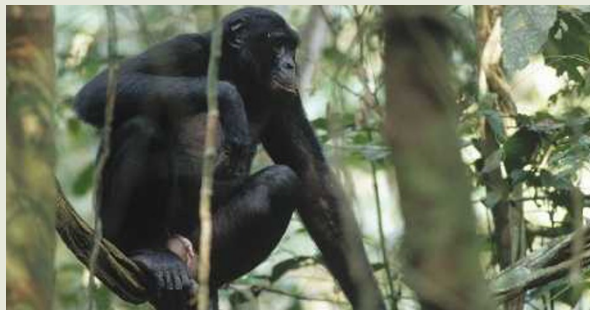
Meanwhile, a US appeals court has thrown out fuel-efficiency regulations instituted for sports utility vehicles (SUVs) and other light trucks by the Bush administration last year. In its 15 November ruling, the court in San Francisco ordered the administration to strengthen the standards and address CO₂ emissions.

Correction

In the Graphic Detail in last week's News (*Nature* 450, 327; 2007), the label South Korea erroneously pointed to mainland China.

Congolese government creates bonobo reserve

The Democratic Republic of the Congo is to establish the world's largest protected area for great apes. Larger than the state of Massachusetts, the Sankuru reserve is targeted to save bonobos (*Pan paniscus*; pictured), one of the two species of chimpanzee.



An estimated 10,000 bonobos remain and are found only in the Congo. The apes are often hunted for bushmeat, and conservation efforts fell by the wayside during the Congo's latest civil war. The new, 30,500-square-kilometre reserve — established with the help of the Bonobo Conservation Initiative in Washington DC — brings the amount of the Democratic Republic of the Congo set aside for wildlife to just over 10%. The government's target is 15%.