

SEVEN DAYS

The news in brief

POLICY

Haiti's cholera fight

Health officials have outlined plans for a proposed cholera vaccination programme in Haiti — but there is still tension over how large the effort should be. As the country struggles to recover from the earthquake that devastated it last January, some experts have pushed for a small pilot project, but the government wants a larger programme to be rolled out as soon as possible. See page 273 for more.

NIH conflict clash

The US National Institutes of Health (NIH) should issue regulations governing conflicts of interest for the institutions at which its grantees work, a report by the inspector general of the Department of Health and Human Services urges. The NIH is revamping rules that address the reporting of potential conflicts by individual investigators but it doesn't have analogous rules for universities and medical centres, even though these are required by law, the 10 January report notes. The agency says it is "carefully considering" comments it has received on institutional conflicts as it finalizes changes to the rules for individuals.

French drug reform

France's health minister Xavier Bertrand last week pledged to reform the country's drug-regulation system in the wake of a damning official report into why the weight-loss drug Mediator remained on the market for years despite concerns over potentially lethal side effects. The AFSSAPS, the French state body that approves drugs for marketing, banned the drug only in 2009, even though questions were

raised about its impact on heart disease more than a decade ago, a delay that the report says may have contributed to some 500 premature deaths. The AFSSAPS will now investigate 76 other products, Bertrand says.

NASA waste

NASA could end up spending US\$575 million on a space programme that has already been cancelled, the agency's inspector general has warned Congress. The US government is currently funded by a 'continuing resolution', which requires agencies to fund existing programmes at last year's level until Congress passes a new budget. This means that NASA has to fund Constellation, former president George W. Bush's programme to return to the Moon and reach Mars, at \$200 million

a month until 4 March. Congress passed legislation to cancel the programme last October. See go.nature.com/pshdef for more.

RESEARCH

Hunger still rife

Entire segments of the food production system have been damagingly neglected in international attempts to reduce hunger and poverty, according to a report from the Worldwatch Institute, an independent research organization based in Washington DC. The 'State of the World' report, published last week, says that previous approaches to feeding the world's population have "not really worked", given that 925 million people worldwide still go hungry every day. Worldwatch calls for new

water resources (see *Nature* **467**, 1021; 2010). But the EPA has ruled that Spruce 1 Mine in the Appalachian Mountains of West Virginia presented major environmental and water-quality concerns, and would jeopardize the health of local communities. US mountaintop mines, such as the one on Kayford Mountain (pictured), are largely found in the Appalachians.



J. GENTNER/AP

Permit for mountaintop mine revoked

The US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has for the first time revoked a permit for mountaintop mining. Arch Coal, a mining company based in St Louis, Missouri, obtained the permit for what would have been the country's largest mountaintop mine in 2007 from the Army Corps of Engineers, which is responsible for developing and maintaining US

approaches, such as growing a wider variety of crops and reducing reliance on chemical fertilizers. See go.nature.com/bbkrbb for more.

Climate records

Last year was one of the two warmest years on record, according to the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). Only

NUMBER CRUNCH

18%

The number of health advocacy groups receiving funding from Eli Lilly in the first half of 2007 that acknowledged it in their annual reports.

Source: *Am. J. Public Health*

2005 had an equivalent average global surface temperature. Global average temperatures for 2010 — which was also the wettest year on record — ran 0.62°C higher than the twentieth-century average, according to a preliminary analysis from NOAA's National Climatic Data Center in Asheville, North Carolina.

Spill science scarce

The presidential commission investigating last year's huge oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico has called for more science in federal decisions on oil production and spill response. In its final report, released last week, the commission asked Congress to supply more funding for scientific and environmental studies and to involve science agencies more formally in decisions about which areas should be opened to exploration. Commission co-chair Bob Graham said: "Science has not been given a sufficient seat at the table. Actually, I think that's a considerable understatement. It has been virtually shut out." See go.nature.com/skf5zx for more.

After artemisinin

At least US\$175 million is needed to halt the spread of malaria parasites that are resistant to artemisinins, says the World Health Organization (WHO). Of

this, some \$60 million should be used to boost research activities including developing classes of antimalarials to replace the artemisinins, currently the most potent antimalaria drugs. Published last week, the WHO's plan for containing resistance to the drugs also calls for increased monitoring, as only 31 of the 75 countries that should be routinely testing the drugs' efficacy did so in 2010.

PEOPLE

King Faisal prize

Chemists George Whitesides, of Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and Richard Zare, of Stanford University in California, have been announced as winners of this year's King Faisal International Prize for Science. James Thomson, of the University of Bern, and Shinya Yamanaka, of the University of California, San Francisco, and Kyoto University, Japan, took the prize for medicine for their work on stem cells. Winners receive a medal and share US\$200,000 in each category.

ERC rings changes

The European Commission has appointed seven members to the governing body of the European Research Council (ERC). The appointments to the 22-member Scientific Council will begin their



2-year terms on 2 February. Fotis Kafatos, a molecular entomologist at Imperial College London who was the first president of the ERC, is among those departing. Arrivals include Nobel laureate Timothy Hunt (pictured), a biologist at the London Research Institute of Cancer Research UK.

BUSINESS

BP in Russian deal

BP is joining up with Russia's state oil company Rosneft to drill in the Arctic waters of the Kara Sea. The London-based company will take 9.5% of Rosneft's shares and help its Moscow-based partner explore a 125,000-square-kilometre area that it compares in potential to the North Sea. Rosneft will get 5% of BP's ordinary shares, worth around US\$8 billion. Environmentalists have protested against the deal as they grow increasingly vocal about the dangers of drilling in the Arctic.

COMING UP

23–28 JANUARY

The fifth annual Arctic Frontiers conference takes place in Tromsø, Norway. Policy experts and scientists will tackle the topic of Arctic tipping points. www.arctic-frontiers.com

24–28 JANUARY

At a workshop in Chamonix, France, scientists at CERN will discuss whether to extend the run of the Large Hadron Collider to the end of 2012 in search of the Higgs boson. go.nature.com/udrnvx

24 JAN–4 FEB

The ninth session of the United Nations Forum on Forests — which officially kicks off the International Year of Forests, 2011 — takes place at the UN headquarters in New York. go.nature.com/potx5i

Satellite sacking

The chief executive of a leading German space company has been suspended as from 17 January for allegedly criticizing the European satellite-navigation system Galileo, which the company is helping to build. In a statement, OHB-System, of Bremen, said it saw "no alternative" to removing Berry Smutny "in order to effectively avert any further damage to the company". Cables from the US Embassy in Berlin, obtained by WikiLeaks and publicized in the Norwegian newspaper *Aftenposten*, claim that Smutny said the Galileo project is a "stupid idea" and a "waste of money". Smutny denies saying this.

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TREND WATCH

Even without the more expensive treatments for cancer that are to be adopted soon, the cost of caring for those with the disease will rapidly increase in the coming years. A team from the US National Cancer Institute in Bethesda, Maryland, modelled predicted changes to US population, cancer incidence and survival rates for the initial, final and continuing care stages of the disease and found that spending could rise by more than 20% by 2020. Even a small cost increase on top of that will drive numbers much higher.

CANCER COSTS WILL KEEP CLIMBING

A 2% increase per year in the cost of initial and end-of-life care could drive total cancer costs in the United States to US\$173 billion by 2020, a 39% increase. Initial care costs for three cancers are shown here.

