SEVEN DAYS *The news in brief*

POLICY

Pathogen dangers

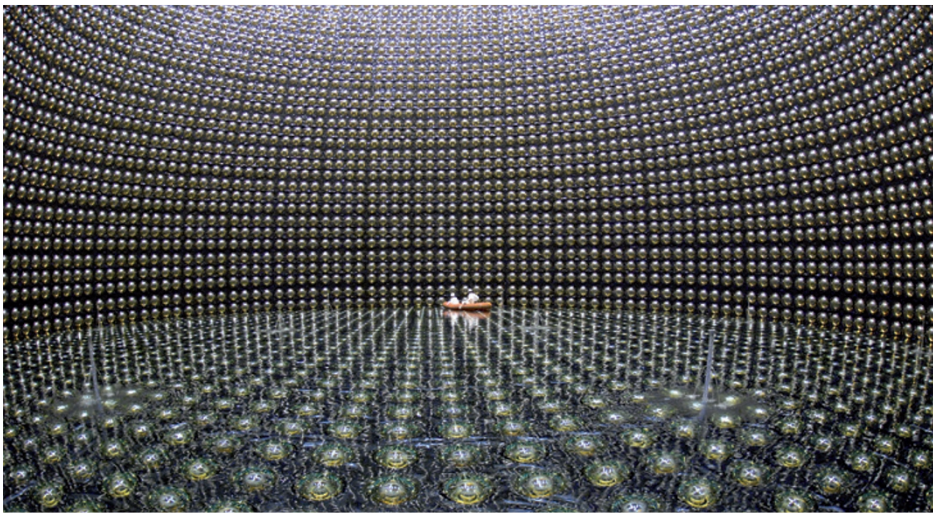
A US panel has named the most dangerous pathogens with potential for misuse. In a report released on 14 June, the Federal Experts Security Advisory Panel identified 11 biological agents that it said needed more rigorous monitoring, and recommended background checks for researchers working with them. The pathogens include bacteria and viruses that cause smallpox, the plague, anthrax, Ebola and foot-and-mouth disease. The panel also recommended that 19 agents be dropped from an existing list of 82 'select agents and toxins', including camel, goat and sheep pox viruses. The report was a response to an executive order from US President Barack Obama last year.

Asylum DNA tests

The UK Border Agency has ended a plan to use DNA samples to determine the nationalities of asylum seekers. The 'Human Provenance Pilot Project' was scientifically unworkable and was widely protested by geneticists and migration organizations (see *Nature* **461,** 697; 2009). *The Times* newspaper reported on 17 June that the project had been abandoned; the border agency says that it will not publish any evaluation of the scheme, nor the data collected.

Cut black carbon

Curbing ground-level ozone pollution and emissions of black carbon (soot particles) could cut half a degree from the global warming that is projected by 2030, save tens of millions of lives and protect agricultural crops, according to a scientific assessment released on 14 June. Sponsored by the United Nations Environment Programme and the World Meteorological Organization, the report says that black-carbon emissions from vehicles, cooking stoves and other sources could be reduced, and that emissions of methane — a precursor to ozone and itself a powerful greenhouse gas — could be cut from agricultural waste and oil and gas operations.



KAMIOKA OBS./ICRR/UNIV. TOKYO

Watching neutrinos change flavour

Some muon neutrinos that had been fired as a beam across the width of Japan changed into electron neutrinos on the way, physicists with the T2K (Tokai to Kamioka) multinational collaboration reported on 15 June (T2K Collaboration http://arxiv.org/abs/1106.2822; 2011). Previous experiments had found that neutrinos — almost massless fundamental particles — of one type (or 'flavour') seem to disappear as they travel. But the observations at the Super-Kamiokande detector (pictured) near Hida, Japan, are the strongest evidence yet that they reappear as neutrinos of a different flavour. With data-taking cut short prematurely by the earthquake in Japan on 11 March, the result falls short of the level of statistical significance needed to claim a discovery. But it raises the prospect that future experiments will be able to test the symmetry between matter and antimatter, by comparing neutrino oscillations with those of antineutrinos. See go.nature.com/ty8t3i for more.

Ethanol subsidies

The US Senate has voted to end costly federal subsidies for producing ethanol from maize (corn). The measure would eliminate a tax credit of US$0.12 per litre of ethanol and a separate tariff of $0.14 per litre on imported ethanol, and so would raise an extra $6 billion a year. The vote, on 16 June, does not spell an immediate end for subsidies, as it came in the form of an amendment attached to an economic-development bill with uncertain prospects of becoming law. But the decision suggests that lawmakers are prepared to ditch support for biofuels to help close the budget deficit. See go.nature.com/egbwop for more.

Horizon 2020

Europe's research-funding system after 2013 will be called 'Horizon 2020 — the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation', the European Commission revealed on 21 June. The name for the successor to the current €50-billion (US$72-billion) Seventh Framework Programme was chosen by an online public vote.

Global drug safety

Pronouncing itself at the centre of a "global bazaar", the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has announced its intention to assemble an international coalition of regulatory agencies to strengthen product safety worldwide. In a report released on 20 June, the FDA says that it will build a global data network that will allow regulators to proactively share real-time information. Margaret Hamburg, commissioner

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of the FDA, says that the distinction between domestic and imported products is "obsolete"; the report notes, for example, that 80% of the active ingredients in medications sold in the United States come from elsewhere.

Climate lawsuit

The US Supreme Court has dismissed attempts by six states and other parties to force utility companies to reduce their greenhouse-gas emissions on the grounds that the emissions are a "public nuisance". The judgment, on 20 June, rules out the use of such lawsuits at the federal level to limit greenhouse gases. Instead, the Supreme Court pointed out that the Environmental Protection Agency already has the powers to impose such limits, through the Clean Air Act. See page 421 for more.

FUNDING

Plant grants

Fifteen plant-biology researchers have won a total of US$75 million from two private US foundations for their work. The Howard Hughes Medical Institute, based in Chevy Chase, Maryland, joined with the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation in Palo Alto, California, to provide the money for what it called an "underfunded field". The

winners, who will receive their grants over five years, include Philip Benfey at Duke University in Durham, North Carolina, who studies the development of plant roots from stem cells, and Xuemei Chen (**pictured**) at the University of California, Riverside, who looks at the formation of flowers. See go.nature.com/r4yblx for more.

EVENTS

Primate peril

Employees at a major US primate-research centre, and the animals it houses, all survived unscathed a massive chemical explosion at a nearby plant on 14 June. The New Iberia Research Center in Louisiana holds 6,500 macaques and 360 chimpanzees. Some 1,900 rhesus and pigtail macaques were housed within 350 metres of a fire and multiple explosions at the Multi-Chem facility in New Iberia, but none seemed to be harmed; they are now being monitored for stress and other adverse affects. Employees were safely evacuated from the centre. See go.nature.com/xow5dw for more.

Iran in orbit again

Iran has placed its second satellite into orbit, according to state media. The 15.3-kilogram 'Rasad' (Observation) satellite was launched on 15 June into an orbit 260 kilometres above Earth, and is transmitting images and telemetry data to tracking stations. Iran's first successful satellite launch was in February 2009. The country hopes to launch more satellites in the coming years, and to achieve human space flight by the end of the decade.

RESEARCH

Smashing data

The Large Hadron Collider has passed a key data milestone as it increases its rate of particle-smashing. On 17 June, the proton collider, located at CERN, Europe's particle-physics lab near Geneva, Switzerland, had delivered exactly one inverse femtobarn of collisions to its detectors. An inverse femtobarn is equal to about 70 trillion collisions. The Tevatron, a rival collider at Fermilab in Batavia, Illinois, has already gathered 11 inverse femtobarns of data, although at lower energies. Physicists hope to eke out 12 before the 26-year-old machine shuts down at the end of September.

Drug-approval race

Since 2003, the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has approved more cancer drugs than the European Medicines Agency (EMA), and approved those drugs more quickly, according to a report in *Health Affairs* on 16 June. Up to the end of March 2010, the US agency had approved 32 new anticancer drugs, whereas the EMA had approved 26. The median time from submission to approval was 182 days in the United States and 350 days in Europe. Janet Woodcock, the FDA's top drug-approval official, says that the difference extends to all categories of drug. See go.nature.com/ouxsup for more.

UK health research

The UK government has promised that medical research will receive greater attention in its revised proposals for reforming the country's public health service, published on 14 June. Britain's health minister would be given a new duty to "promote research" in the National Health Service, the plans say. See go.nature.com/x4qsbb for more.

COMING UP

25–30 JUNE
The complexity of RNA biology features in the Federation of European Biochemical Societies congress in Turin.
go.nature.com/kvlglw

25 JUNE–2 JULY
An annual United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization meeting in Rome debates rising global food prices.
go.nature.com/l3naqa

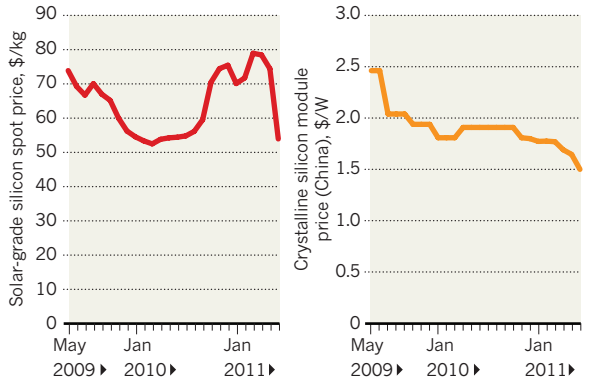
SOURCE: BNEF

TREND WATCH

The solar-energy industry's drive to cut costs got a sharp boost in June, after the spot price of solar-grade silicon fell by 28% from May. Raw materials for photovoltaics had been overpriced owing to high demand and national subsidies, says Jenny Chase, a solar-energy analyst at consultants Bloomberg New Energy Finance in London. But as subsidies are reduced and demand drops, "we're starting to see the bare bones of what it costs to make crystalline silicon modules — and it's low, which is exciting", she says.

SOLAR GETTING CHEAPER

The price of solar-grade silicon dropped sharply in June, while module prices continued their gradual decline.



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