

SEVEN DAYS

The news in brief

POLICY

Stem-cell patents

Procedures using stem cells derived from human embryos cannot be patented, the European Court of Justice ruled on 18 October. The judgment — which agrees with the court's preliminary ruling in March — has dismayed some stem-cell scientists. Oliver Brüstle, director of the Institute of Reconstructive Neurobiology at the University of Bonn in Germany, called the decision a setback for biomedical research. His 1997 patent of a technique to generate nerve cells from human embryonic stem-cell lines sparked the legal debate. See go.nature.com/oxbnsf for more.

Carbon tax

After years of politicking, Australia seems set to introduce a tax on carbon dioxide emissions. The government's proposed tax, of Aus\$23 (US\$24) per tonne for the country's top 500 emitters, was narrowly passed by the federal House of Representatives on 12 October. If passed by the Senate in November, as looks likely, the tax will come into effect on 1 July 2012, and its price would increase by 2.5% a year above inflation until an emissions-trading scheme replaces it in 2015. See go.nature.com/9afdee for more.

Censored in Texas

Scientists last week withdrew their names from a draft coastal assessment after the administration of Texas governor Rick Perry censored the report to remove reference to rising sea levels. The state's environment agency, which commissioned the private, non-profit Houston Advanced Research Center to assess Galveston Bay, on the Gulf of Mexico near Houston, said the



H. TISCHLINGER/PHOTOSHOT

Fabulous fossil find

This near-complete fossil of a young theropod, pictured under ultraviolet light, is the best-preserved dinosaur skeleton found in Europe, according to Oliver Rauhut, curator at the Bavarian State Collection for Palaeontology and Geology in Munich, Germany, which announced the find on 12 October. The 72-centimetre

skeleton is 135 million years old, around 98% intact, and has some preserved skin and protofeathers. It was found near the town of Kelheim, Bavaria, and will go on public display at the Munich Show from 27 October, before being moved to the Bürgermeister-Müller Museum in Solnhofen. See go.nature.com/zyyt5f for more.

chapter in question did not conform with administration policy. Perry, a Republican presidential candidate, has said he does not believe in anthropogenic climate change. See go.nature.com/olkdvb for more.

Russian protests

About 500 Russian scientists rallied in Moscow on 13 October to protest against cuts and red tape in national research funding. Protesters want more money for the Russian Foundation for Basic Research, Russia's only grant-giving science-funding agency. The government has decided to freeze the

agency's budget — less than US\$200 million per year — at 2010 levels. Researchers also complained about excessive state bureaucracy involved in the purchase of reagents and research equipment. See *Nature* 477, 5 (2011) and page 324.

US-China block

By holding meetings that involved discussions with China, the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) violated a law that bans certain scientific activities between the two countries, a Government Accountability Office report found on 11 October. The congressman who in April

pushed through that ban — Frank Wolf (Republican, Virginia) — has turned up the heat on OSTP director John Holdren by asking the US attorney-general to take action. See page 294 for more.

BUSINESS

deCODE and Pfizer

Icelandic genomics company deCODE genetics is teaming up with pharmaceutical giant Pfizer to hunt for rare genetic variants linked to the autoimmune disease systemic lupus erythematosus. The deal is deCODE's first with a drug firm since it declared bankruptcy in November

2009, which happened in part because of its inability to translate genetic disease associations into drugs (see *Nature* 462, 401; 2009). The company has since become a more svelte research and genomics testing firm. The deal was announced on 12 October, but terms have not been made public.

Oil-spill charges

The US government's offshore-drilling regulator last week formally charged BP with seven safety violations in the lead up to the April 2010 explosion on the firm's Deepwater Horizon oil rig in the Gulf of Mexico. BP's contractors, Halliburton and Transocean, were each handed four notices of violations. The three companies are also all suing each other. The fines could total around US\$45 million, but BP also faces billions of dollars in penalties under environmental legislation relating to the oil that leaked after the explosion.

PEOPLE

Unix pioneer dies

Computer scientist Dennis Ritchie (pictured), who created the C programming language and co-developed the Unix operating system, died last week aged 70. Ritchie, who studied mathematics and computing at Harvard



University, worked at Bell Labs from 1967 until he retired in 2007. Languages such as C++ and Java built on C; and operating systems including Linux and OS X are based on Unix.

RESEARCH

Iran launch fails

Iran's bid to send a live monkey into space last month ended in failure, according to 12 October reports quoting the Iranian Students' News Agency. "The launch was not publicized as all of its anticipated objectives were not accomplished," deputy science minister Mohammad Mehdinejad-Nouri told the agency. He said that achieving such a launch was still a priority for the country's space programme.

Autism genomes

A high-profile US advocacy group plans to create the world's largest library of sequenced genomes from

people with autism. Autism Speaks, based in New York, announced on 13 October that it will help to fund the BGI genome sequencing centre in Shenzhen, China, to fully sequence 10,000 genomes over the next two years. The project will cost US\$40 million to \$50 million, says Autism Speaks' vice-president for scientific affairs, Andy Shih. It will begin with a pilot phase aiming to sequence 200 genomes by the end of the first quarter of 2012. See go.nature.com/i7xsan for more.

ExoMars mission

The European Space Agency (ESA) will forge ahead with ExoMars, an ambitious two-part robotic mission to look for signs of life on Mars, even though NASA cannot afford to provide a launch rocket for the first part of the mission. During a 12–13 October council meeting in Paris, ESA decided to begin negotiations with Russia for a rocket to launch the initial planetary orbiter stage of ExoMars in 2016, in exchange for Russian participation in the mission. See go.nature.com/zimumq for more.

Swedish funding

One of Sweden's largest private research funders, the Knut and Alice Wallenberg Foundation in Stockholm, on 13 October announced plans to support

COMING UP

24–28 OCTOBER
Researchers gather in Denver, Colorado, at a conference arranged by the World Climate Research Program, to appraise the state of climate science and its biggest research challenges.

go.nature.com/xcwaxa

22–23 OCTOBER
Open, collaborative models for drug research, personal genomics and scientific publishing are among the topics at the second Open Science Summit in Mountain View, California.

opensesummit.com

up to 125 young researchers for 5 years, in an initiative totalling 1.2 billion Swedish kronor (US\$180 million). So far, 185 million kronor has been set aside for a first group of researchers, who will start in late 2012. Scientists will be nominated by their universities and selected by the foundation; each will be in line for up to 7.5 million kronor. The foundation awarded 959 million kronor in research funding last year.

Tsunami test

After the first full-scale tsunami-warning exercise in the region, Indian Ocean nations say that they are ready to take control of a US\$100-million system set up in 2005. On 12 October, 23 nations around the ocean received a bulletin about a (practice) tsunami. National focal points then spread the alert to coastal communities and emergency services. The test passed without major glitches. See go.nature.com/yv9iws for more.

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TREND WATCH

Carbon dioxide emissions are attributed to the country that produces them. Yet around one-fifth of China's emissions, for example, come from making goods demanded by consumers in other nations. A 17 October analysis (S. J. Davis *et al.* *Proc. Natl Acad. Sci. USA* <http://dx.doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1107409108>; 2011) completes this supply chain, analysing both the emissions embodied in final consumer demand and where fossil fuels were originally extracted. The chart shows the results for Japan.

A GLOBAL CARBON FOOTPRINT

A study shows the origin of the carbon dioxide embodied in goods and services consumed by a country, in this case Japan.

