

SEVEN DAYS

The news in brief

RESEARCH

No faster than light

Neutrinos don't travel faster than light, according to results from the ICARUS experiment at the Gran Sasso National Laboratory near L'Aquila, Italy. The experiment found no light-busting speed when it timed 7 neutrinos as they travelled about 730 kilometres from CERN, Europe's particle-physics lab near Geneva, Switzerland — contradicting last September's results from the OPERA experiment, also at the Gran Sasso lab. OPERA had recorded neutrinos travelling faster than light, but has since uncovered possible problems with its measurement. The ICARUS report was posted to the preprint server arXiv.org on 15 March (M. Antonello *et al.* <http://arxiv.org/abs/1203.3433>; 2012). See go.nature.com/go4247 for more.

Early drug screening

The newest centre at the US National Institutes of Health — the National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences (NCATS) in Bethesda, Maryland, which aims to speed new drugs to market — has announced its first major deal. NCATS will partner with drug firm Eli Lilly, based in Indianapolis, Indiana, to screen around 3,800 approved and investigational medicines to find potential new uses. The two organizations announced on 13 March that the screening will take place over the next 12–18 months and the results will be posted publicly at <http://tripod.nih.gov/npc>. See go.nature.com/rgudpy for more.

LHC restarts

The world's most powerful particle accelerator has begun warm-up stretches for its 2012 run. On 14 March, beams of protons again began to



E. SARKISOV/CORBIS

Scientists join protest over Spanish cuts

Scientists have warned Spain's government that its planned budget cuts and hiring freeze could be fatal for national research. Along with widespread general protests (pictured, in Madrid) this month against budget cuts and labour reforms, more than 36,000 people (including three Nobel laureates) and 65 organizations have signed an 'open letter

for science in Spain', which was presented to members of parliament at the Spanish Royal Academy of Sciences in Madrid on 16 March. Research minister Carmen Vela says that the government is planning to cut €743 million (US\$978 million) from the science budget, a fall of 9% from last year; a draft budget is due on 30 March. See go.nature.com/hcarmz for more.

circulate in the Large Hadron Collider (LHC) at CERN, Europe's particle-physics lab near Geneva, Switzerland. Full-scale collisions at 8 teraelectronvolts should begin in April, and scientists could confirm the detection of the long-sought-after Higgs particle by the end of the year.

Children's study row

Two advisers to the US National Children's Study — which aims to track environmental influences on the health of 100,000 children — have resigned in less than a fortnight. Ellen Silbergeld, an environmental scientist at Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health in Baltimore, Maryland, resigned

on 5 March, followed on 16 March by biostatistician Jonas Ellenberg of the University of Pennsylvania's Perelman School of Medicine in Philadelphia. They and other scientists are complaining about an abrupt change in sampling design, in which the study will recruit subjects from the offices of physicians rather than taking a representative sample of the US population. See go.nature.com/wb9sh8 for more.

Biomedical awards

The Howard Hughes Medical Institute in Chevy Chase, Maryland, is investing US\$200 million to fund up to 30 US biomedical researchers for five years. The 15 March announcement marks the first

time the institute has held a general competition for its coveted investigator awards since 2007. See go.nature.com/j2a3xt for more.

BUSINESS

Academic pharma

In the latest union between academia and industry, drug giant Merck has announced that it will create a non-profit research entity called the California Institute for Biomedical Research (Calibr), to be located in San Diego, California. The institute plans to hire about 150 scientists and will be headed by chemist and serial entrepreneur Peter Schultz, currently at the Scripps Research Institute in La Jolla, California.

D. GRAY/REUTERS
Academics from around the world will be able to submit proposals for research at Calibr. See go.nature.com/26fij7 for more.

UK venture capital

The Wellcome Trust, the world's largest non-governmental funder of biomedical research, announced on 20 March that it would launch a £200-million (US\$371-million) business to invest in health-care and life-sciences companies. The charity — which awards around £600 million in research grants each year — says that in the past it has invested in biotech companies, and that £148 million of £2.7 billion it invested in venture-capital firms in the year to 30 September 2011 already goes to life-sciences and health-care businesses. But the new fund marks its largest direct effort to invest in biotech start-ups.

POLICY

Rare-earth trade

The United States, Europe and Japan have jointly complained to the World Trade Organization that China is restricting exports of rare-earth elements. The elements are quite plentiful, but miners in China (**pictured**, smelting lanthanum) produce more than 90% of the supply. They



are used as catalysts and in high-tech magnets, car batteries, wind turbines and mobile phones. The formal complaint — which could result in sanctions — was made on 13 March, and follows years of disputes about China's export quotas.

Misconduct in China

China's education ministry has launched an effort to curb scientific misconduct at universities. Rules announced on 14 March require universities to create mechanisms for inspecting original data, and for getting departing scientists to hand over materials produced in experiments. Universities must also create committees with five or more experts to investigate academic misconduct, and arrange ethics training. Various Chinese organizations have previously issued guidelines to stem scientific misconduct, but many scientists complain that the measures are not implemented and cheaters remain unpunished. A few

universities, notably Zhejiang University in Hangzhou, have stepped up efforts to be stringent (see *Nature* **481**, 134–136; 2012).

SESAME funding

A US\$110-million synchrotron is still on track for construction near Amman, Jordan, despite political upheaval in the Middle East. Iran and Israel announced on 13 March that they had joined Jordan and Turkey in committing funding to the project, known as SESAME (Synchrotron-light for Experimental Science and Applications in the Middle East). Partners have now promised \$20 million in total, and SESAME is looking for \$15 million more to complete its first four beamlines by 2015. See page 385 for more.

Animal shipments

UK scientists warned last week that pressure from animal-rights activists has led all ferry companies and many airlines to stop transporting research animals (including mice) into the United Kingdom. Less than 1% of UK experiments use animals from abroad. Science minister David Willetts said that the government is working with airlines and ferry companies to try to tackle the problem, perhaps by getting researchers and industry to agree on codes of conduct for

COMING UP

25–29 MARCH

The 'chemistry of life' — including topics such as the biochemical basis of epigenetics — is the key topic at the American Chemical Society's spring meeting in San Diego, California. go.nature.com/ystlhb8

26–29 MARCH

'Planet under Pressure' will see scientists and policy-makers meet in London to discuss the latest research on ecosystems and planetary stewardship. go.nature.com/xtqrnh

28 MARCH

Swiss drug firm Novartis's six-year legal fight with India's government, which began when the firm was denied a patent on a cancer drug, goes to India's supreme court. The ruling could set precedents for patented drugs in India and many developing countries. go.nature.com/aliuqr

animal transportation. For more on the issue of airlines and primate transport, see pages 373 and 381.

Indian budget

Researchers in India were not impressed by a moderate increase in the country's science budget, announced on 16 March. Rises varied between 2% and 18% for scientific departments, but, with inflation running at 7%, there will be little extra real spending power — even though Prime Minister Manmohan Singh had promised in January that there would be a "major increase" in research spending. See page 384 for more.

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TREND WATCH

Junior researchers are being squeezed out of Japanese universities by government policies that have trimmed hiring. The claim is made in a draft report on Japan's science and technology activities from the Council for Science and Technology Policy, the nation's top advisory body on science. It points out that the number of faculty members under 35 has plunged from more than 10,000 to 6,800 in the past 30 years (see chart). See go.nature.com/bide1g for more.

GOING GREY

Despite a growth in the number of university faculty members in Japan, there are fewer opportunities for young researchers.

