

SEVEN DAYS

The news in brief

POLICY

US climate agenda

Barack Obama has vowed to put climate change onto the nation's political agenda in his second term as president of the United States. He delivered his second inaugural address on 21 January before a crowd of thousands on the National Mall in Washington DC, stating that Americans "will respond to the threat of climate change, knowing that the failure to do so would betray our children and future generations". Environmental groups criticized Obama for not implementing climate policies in his first term.

Yes to flu vaccine

The US Food and Drug Administration on 16 January approved Flublok, the first seasonal flu vaccine made from recombinant proteins, which is produced in insect cells grown in culture. The standard vaccine-production method uses inactivated or weakened viruses grown in chicken eggs. Limited supplies of Flublok will be available this winter, providing some relief for vaccine shortages in the United States, which is suffering from a severe flu season. Development of Flublok by Protein Sciences in Meriden, Connecticut, was supported by the US Biomedical Advanced

NUMBER CRUNCH

13.2 GW

Wind-energy capacity installed by the United States last year — an annual record — with 5.5 gigawatts (GW) in December alone. US wind capacity is now 60 GW, 6% of the country's electricity-generating total.



HERIBERT PROEPER/AP/PRESS ASSOCIATION IMAGES

Insecticides linked to poor bee health

The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) in Parma, Italy, has warned that three widely used neonicotinoid insecticides could pose a risk to honeybee health. It recommends their use be restricted to crops that are not attractive to the insects, amid concerns about declining bee populations. Syngenta, the Swiss company that

manufactures one of the chemicals investigated, described the EFSA's work as "hurried and inadequate", and suggested that the agency had succumbed to political pressure to reach quick conclusions. The EFSA had not responded to this allegation when *Nature* went to press. See go.nature.com/v3zdne for more.

Research and Development Authority. See go.nature.com/2cpzzy for more.

Gun research

US President Barack Obama has ordered the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta, Georgia, to conduct or fund research into the causes of gun violence. Obama announced the move on 16 January after a shooting at an elementary school in Newtown, Connecticut, in December killed 26 adults and children. The work ends a 17-year hiatus in the CDC's gun-research activities. See go.nature.com/xn75ly for more.

Mercury capped

A legally binding treaty to cap environmental emissions of the toxic metal mercury was agreed

by 140 nations on 19 January. The treaty has taken four years to negotiate and will be open for signatures at a meeting in Minamata, Japan, in October. It is expected to come into force within 3–5 years and requires countries with artisanal and small-scale gold-mining operations to draw up national plans to reduce and, if possible, eliminate the use of mercury. See go.nature.com/vqch6y for more.

RESEARCH

Flu work resumes

Flu scientists have partially lifted a year-long moratorium on research aimed at re-engineering highly pathogenic H5N1 avian influenza viruses to transmit efficiently between mammals. In a letter published on

23 January in *Nature* and *Science*, 40 flu scientists said that authorities have now reviewed the biosafety and biosecurity conditions under which the research can be done safely, and scientists with national approval should resume their work. See pages 451 and 460 for more.

India Moon mission

India's second mission to the Moon, scheduled for 2015, will be a solo affair and not the joint venture with Russia that was originally proposed, a top scientist at the Indian space agency told *Nature* on 22 January. Russia had agreed in 2007 to provide a lander and rover for the mission, but withdrew after a Russian mission to Mars's moon Phobos failed in November 2011, leading to a review of

USGS its lander technology. See go.nature.com/izhskf for more.

FUNDING

Disaster relief

The US House of Representatives on 15 January approved some US\$50 billion in emergency-relief funding to help the east coast recover from the destruction caused by Hurricane Sandy last year. The package includes roughly \$194.5 million for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to improve weather prediction and monitoring, and \$15 million for NASA to repair damaged facilities. The Senate is expected to consider the bill in the week of 21 January.

PEOPLE

Space chief quits

The president of the Canadian Space Agency, former astronaut Steve MacLean, announced that he is to leave the agency on 1 February after five years in the job. He is moving on to lead a research team in quantum physics at a new venture to be created by Mike Lazaridis, former co-chief executive and co-founder of the Research in Motion company, which makes BlackBerry smartphones. See go.nature.com/bxeq7 for more.

**USGS departure**

Marcia McNutt (pictured), director of the US Geological Survey (USGS), has announced that she will resign on 15 February. McNutt, a geophysicist, will stay to oversee the launch of the Landsat 8 Earth-observation satellite scheduled for 11 February. Her resignation is one of several leadership changes at national agencies as Barack Obama heads into his second term as US president. On 16 January, Ken Salazar announced his resignation as head of the Department of the Interior, the parent agency of the USGS.

FACILITIES

Fusion home

The European Union has awarded a €300-million (US\$399-million) contract to build the housing for ITER, the international experimental fusion reactor, to a consortium of French and Spanish construction

companies. Completion of the building is slated for mid-2018, and ITER is scheduled to conduct its first experiments in November 2020. The total cost of the project, located at Cadarache in the south of France, is estimated at roughly €15 billion. See go.nature.com/uvjx7 for more.

Reef lab saved

A beleaguered underwater research laboratory in Florida was thrown a lifeline on 15 January after Florida International University in Miami agreed to take over the running of the facility in 2013. The Aquarius Reef Base, owned by the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), was set to close because of federal budget cuts. The university has received US\$600,000 from NOAA towards maintaining the lab this year, but the base's long-term future remains uncertain. See go.nature.com/4wup3y for more.

Institution for sale?

The luxurious west London headquarters of the esteemed Royal Institution, where electrical pioneer Michael Faraday made many of his discoveries and established the prestigious Christmas lectures, could be put on sale for upwards of £60 million (US\$95 million). In a statement on 17 January,

COMING UP

29 JANUARY

NASA is scheduled to launch the first in a new generation of communications satellites to transfer data from the International Space Station and agency satellites, craft and balloons. Its most recent data-relay satellite was launched a decade ago.

tdrs.gsfc.nasa.gov

30 JAN–2 FEB

ScienceOnline — a conference for writers and researchers to discuss science and science communication on the Internet — takes place in Raleigh, North Carolina.

scienceonline.com

chairman Richard Sykes said that the 200-year-old institution would consider subletting or selling the building. The move follows years of financial turmoil and internal strife at the institution, which in 2005–08 spent £22 million on a controversial refurbishment that left it short of funds. See go.nature.com/xoeldp and page 452 for more.

Slashed budget

A troubled cancer-research agency in Texas faces a massive budget cut announced in the state's preliminary spending plans on 14 January. The Cancer Prevention and Research Institute of Texas in Austin is set to receive only US\$5 million per year for 2014 and 2015, down from nearly \$300 million per year. The cut reflects criticisms last year that some grants awarded had not gone through the institute's peer-review system. See go.nature.com/sjyomo for more.

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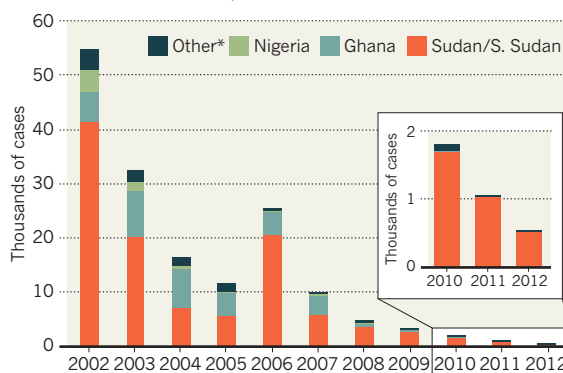
www.nature.com/news

TREND WATCH

The Carter Center in Atlanta, Georgia, says that it is in the final stages of wiping out Guinea worm disease (dracunculiasis), which is carried by larvae in contaminated water. The disease was once endemic in 21 countries in Africa and Asia, but just 542 cases were reported in 2012, most of them in South Sudan (see chart). There are no medicines to treat dracunculiasis, but with health education and by teaching people to filter drinking water, the centre aims to eradicate it in the next few years.

GUINEA WORM ALMOST WIPED OUT

Dracunculiasis would be the second human disease to be eradicated, after smallpox.



*Cameroun, Mauritania, Kenya, Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Uganda, Togo, Burkina Faso, Niger, Ethiopia, Chad, Mali