

SEVEN DAYS

The news in brief

RESEARCH

Chimp cut urged

The US National Institutes of Health (NIH) was advised on 22 January to retire most of its 360 chimpanzees to an animal sanctuary and shut down half of its ongoing experiments on the animals. The suggestions were made in a report by independent advisers, who say that about 50 chimpanzees should suffice for future research needs. Francis Collins, director of the NIH, is expected to announce in late March whether the agency will accept the report's recommendations. The report comes in response to advice from the Institute of Medicine in Washington DC, which said in 2011 that most chimp research is unnecessary.

NASA joins Euclid

NASA is joining a €1-billion (US\$1.3-billion) European Space Agency mission to explore the 'dark' parts of the Universe. On 24 January the US space agency announced that it would join Euclid, a space telescope that will measure the locations and shapes of some 2 billion

NUMBER CRUNCH

\$1.7 m

Total funding for each winner of the Tang Prize, new science prizes announced by Taiwanese billionaire Samuel Yin on 28 January. Starting in 2014, four biennial prizes of US\$1.35 million each will be awarded in sustainable development, biopharmaceutical science, law and Chinese studies. Winners can also propose five-year research projects each worth \$340,000.



REED SCHERER

Drilling team reaches Lake Whillans

A US research team drilled through 800-metre-thick ice to reach the subglacial Lake Whillans in Western Antarctica on 28 January. The project is the first to retrieve fully intact samples of liquid water (pictured) and sediment from a subglacial lake, which the team hopes will

provide clues to the kind of life that exists in such extreme environments. This is the first time that researchers have probed the water of one of the more than 300 lakes discovered under Antarctica's ice in recent years. See go.nature.com/byj4u8 for more.

distant galaxies. The data will be used to probe dark matter and dark energy. Under the agreement, 40 NASA scientists will join the project and NASA will contribute 20 infrared detectors, valued at around \$50 million in total, for one of the instruments on the spacecraft. The mission is scheduled to launch in 2020.

POLICY

Regulator relieved

Britain's beleaguered regulator of human-embryo research, the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority (HFEA), was thrown a lifeline on 25 January. The functions of the HFEA and another regulator — the Human Tissue Authority — were due to be

transferred to other bodies as a result of a 2010 government move to cut the numbers of semi-autonomous agencies. After a public consultation rejected the suggestion to close down the two bodies, the Department of Health announced an independent review to assess whether to merge their activities. See go.nature.com/gciolp for more.

Stem-cell reforms

California's US\$3-billion stem-cell agency — the California Institute for Regenerative Medicine (CIRM) in San Francisco — is to reform its governance structure to minimize conflicts of interest, the agency's governing board decided on 23 January. The move is in response to an

independent review published last month which raised concerns that 13 members of the agency's 29-member board come from research institutions that receive CIRM funds. Board members who represent such institutes will now abstain from votes to approve grants. See go.nature.com/zti7r for more.

Emissions profits

Airlines that fly to and from Europe may have profited by up to €1.36 billion (US\$1.83 billion) last year by raising air fares to cover costs of carbon emissions that they did not actually incur, says a report from CE Delft, a Dutch environmental consultancy group. The European Commission had hoped to

bring intercontinental flights into its 30-nation emissions-trading scheme, and had given airlines some free emissions allowances. But it exempted intercontinental flights from the scheme for 2012, enabling the airlines to achieve windfall profits.

Coffee at risk

Costa Rica has declared a national coffee-growing emergency. The fungus *Hemileia vastatrix*, which causes coffee rust, looks set to wipe out half the nation's 2013–14 harvest in the most affected areas. On 22 January, the government signed an emergency bill to tackle the outbreak. The disease has already attacked coffee crops in South and Central America. See go.nature.com/epwshp and page 587 for more.

Biodiversity panel

The Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services — set up in April 2012 to assess the state of the planet's ecosystems — has selected a group of 25 international scientists and ecology experts to safeguard the scientific quality and independence of its work. The appointments were made at a meeting ending on 27 January. Abdul Hamid Zakri, science adviser to the prime minister of Malaysia, was elected as the first chairman of the panel.

PEOPLE



Plagiarism inquiry

Germany's science and education minister, Annette Schavan (pictured), is being investigated after claims that she plagiarized parts of her PhD thesis in educational science. The University of Düsseldorf announced the inquiry on 23 January after finding that the accusations against Schavan, which were aired last May, are substantive. The minister was awarded her doctorate in 1980 for a study on how conscience develops in people. She denies claims that she quoted the works of others in her thesis without appropriate citation and called on the university to ensure that external experts are involved in the inquiry. See go.nature.com/5phncw for more.

Genomicist dies

David Cox, a pioneering genomicist and senior vice-president at the UK-based drug firm Pfizer, died on 22 January.

Cox's research group at Pfizer aimed to find a way to arrange clinical-trial participants on the basis of their genetic make-up. He was also a member of one of the teams that led the Human Genome Project, carried out research on the molecular basis of human genetic disease at Stanford University in California, and was a member of the US National Academy of Sciences.

FUNDING

Global Fund boost

Germany has announced a donation of €1 billion (US\$1.3 billion) to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria for the period 2012–16, of which €600 million is new money. The donation, announced on 24 January, signals support for administrative reforms and staff changes made by the fund last November to address allegations of corruption among its grant recipients. Other states are expected to announce future contributions to the global fund at a fund-raising meeting in September.

Future technologies

The European Commission announced the two winners of its first high-budget competition for future and emerging technologies on 28 January: projects to simulate the human brain

COMING UP

7–8 FEBRUARY

London's Royal Society hosts a meeting in Newport Pagnell, UK, to discuss challenges in dealing with storing and indexing massive amounts of research data.

go.nature.com/e2cn8o

7–8 FEBRUARY

In Brussels, European Union states meet again to negotiate the region's budget for 2014–20, including the amount apportioned to research, for which around €80 billion (US\$100 billion) has been proposed. Talks broke down last year.

go.nature.com/2kq2ua

and to develop the potential of graphene. The projects should each receive €1 billion (US\$1.3 billion) over ten years. See page 585 for more.

EVENTS

MIT hacked again

The website of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in Cambridge was hacked on 22 January for the second time in a week. The attacks are a protest at the suicide of Aaron Swartz, an Internet activist who killed himself earlier this month. Swartz had been charged with using MIT data networks illegally, by downloading millions of academic articles from JSTOR, a scholarly archive; he faced up to 35 years in prison and heavy fines. MIT has asked one of its computer scientists, Hal Abelson, to review the university's conduct in the affair. Abelson expects to complete a report in the next few weeks.

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TREND WATCH

Graphene research in Europe has a funding boost (see page 585), but the commercial action is hotter elsewhere. Multilayered flakes or discs of graphene — 'nanoplatelets' — which may find use in adding strength and conductivity to composites and coatings, are mainly produced in the Americas and Asia, according to analysts Lux Research in Boston, Massachusetts. Planned capacity expansion in China could see supply of the platelets outstrip demand, Lux analyst Ross Kozarsky adds.

EUROPE LAGS IN GRAPHENE PRODUCTION

Asia and the Americas dominate production of 'nanoplatelets' — discs of graphene that are one to hundreds of layers thick.

