

# SEVEN DAYS

The news in brief

## POLICY

### US science cuts

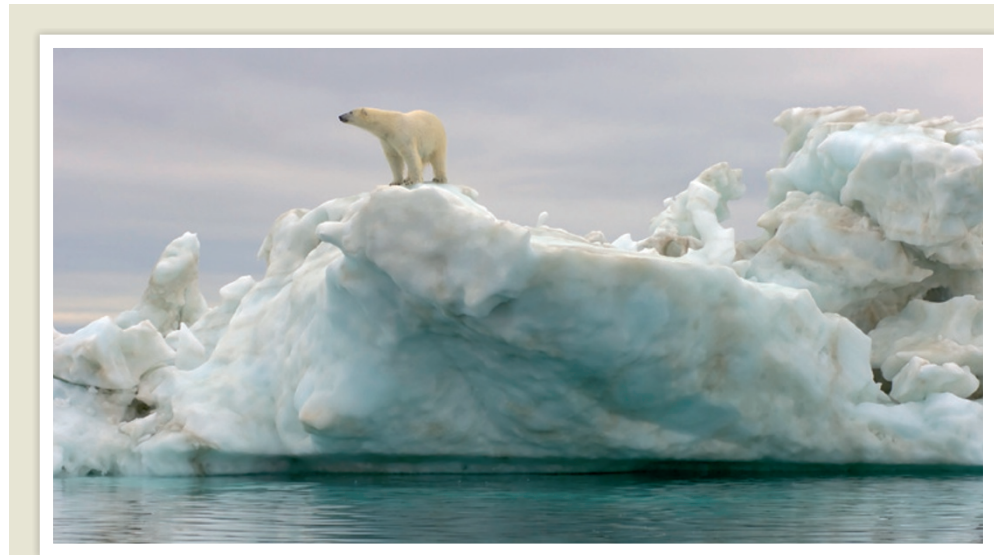
After US lawmakers failed to reach a budget compromise, federal science programmes took a 5% hit to their annual budgets on 1 March — part of across-the-board government cutbacks known as sequestration. National Science Foundation director Subra Suresh said that the agency would probably maintain funding for currently approved research grants, and eliminate about 1,000 new grants. At the National Institutes of Health, director Francis Collins said that the agency would probably not complete funding for some multi-year grants this year. See [go.nature.com/8vdcht](http://go.nature.com/8vdcht) for more.

### European advisers

The president of the European Commission, José Manuel Barroso, announced on 27 February the establishment of a council to advise him on where research could support social and economic growth in the European Union (EU). The Science and Technology Advisory Council comprises 15 high-ranking scientists and will meet several times a year under the chairmanship of Barroso's chief scientific adviser, Anne Glover, to promote the public acceptance of science and technology and to support 'evidence-based' EU policy-making. Members include Swiss molecular biologist Susan Gasser, head of the Friedrich Miescher Institute in Basel, and neuroscientist Tamás Freund, director of the Institute of Experimental Medicine in Budapest.

### India budget

Indian scientists were disappointed for a second year by budget allocations for science and technology in the government's 2013–14



STEVEN KAZLOWSKI/SCIENCE FRACTION/CORBIS

## Polar bear stays on US endangered list

The US Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia has upheld a 2008 decision to list the polar bear as threatened under the Endangered Species Act. The Fish and Wildlife Service's 2008 listing relied in part on climate-model projections indicating that the animals' summer sea-ice habitat may disappear in

the future, making this the first time that a species has been listed primarily on the basis of the threat of global warming. On 1 March, the appeals court rejected a challenge filed by the state of Alaska and others, ruling that the underlying science is "adequately explained and uncontested".

budget request. Nine research departments share some US\$6.9 billion, a mere 4% more than budgeted for 2012–13, and below the rate of inflation. India's prime minister, Manmohan Singh, had promised large increases in science spending from 2012 to 2017, but these have not yet materialized. C. N. R. Rao, who heads the prime minister's science advisory council, says that he is glad that science at least escaped big cuts.

### Patent reform

The UK government has revealed plans to change national patent law to ensure that clinical trials do not count as a breach of existing drug patents. To obtain marketing approval, new drugs must be compared with medicines already on the market, but

such comparison trials could infringe the patents of existing drugs. Under rules announced on 26 February, which are still subject to parliamentary approval, clinical trials will be exempt from these patent restrictions. Other countries, including the United States and Canada, already have such exemptions in place. See [go.nature.com/rpuunl](http://go.nature.com/rpuunl) for more.

### Pipeline push

The US Department of State has identified no major concerns in its draft environmental assessment of a controversial 1,400-kilometre pipeline proposed to link oil sands in Alberta, Canada, to existing pipelines in Nebraska. Opponents argue that the Keystone XL project would encourage the development of carbon-intensive energy.

But the analysis, issued on 1 March, concludes that approval or denial of the project is "unlikely to have a substantial impact" on the rate of development of the oil sands. Many analysts expect the US government to approve the pipeline, although it denied an initial proposal last January.

## RESEARCH

### HIV cure

An infant born with HIV has been "functionally cured", a multi-institute team reported on 3 March at a conference on retroviruses in Atlanta, Georgia. The child received a combination of antiviral drugs within 30 hours of birth and for the next 18 months, at which point doctors lost track of the infant for 10 months and treatment ceased. Subsequent

ALEXBRANDON/AP

blood tests found no sign of the virus. Quick treatment, the doctors believe, prevented the formation of dormant infected cells in which the virus can persist. It is the first time that a cure has been reported in a child with HIV.

## Fukushima review

The World Health Organization released on 28 February its report on the health impacts of the 2011 catastrophe at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant in Japan. The report concludes that the accident will have little health impact apart from small, but significant, increases in cancers among populations in a few hotspots exposed to higher doses of radioactivity. But the health consequences would have been much worse had prevailing winds during the accident not blown most of the massive release of radioactive elements out to sea. See [go.nature.com/fkp9vb](http://go.nature.com/fkp9vb) for more.

### PEOPLE

## Obama's new team

After weeks of speculation, on 4 March US President Barack Obama nominated Ernest Moniz, a physicist at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Cambridge, to succeed Steven Chu as secretary of Energy (see *Nature* **494**, 409–410; 2013).



Obama also named Gina McCarthy (**pictured**) to replace Lisa Jackson as head of the Environmental Protection Agency. McCarthy currently leads the agency's office of air and radiation and previously served as commissioner of the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection, where she worked on a regional greenhouse-gas trading initiative.

## Nobel physicist dies

Donald Glaser, a Nobel prizewinning physicist and inventor of the bubble chamber used to track elementary particles, died on 28 February, aged 86. Glaser won the 1960 Nobel Prize in Physics for his realization — in 1952, aged just 25 — that a vat of superheated liquid could detect electrically charged particles better than the vapour-filled 'cloud chambers' in use at the time. He later switched to molecular biology, then to studies

of human vision. He also co-founded Cetus in Berkeley, California, one of the first biotechnology companies.

### BUSINESS

## Drug-trial data

The Swiss drug giant Roche announced last week that it would give researchers access to anonymized clinical-trial data. Requests for data would need to be approved by an independent panel of experts, the Basel-based company said. The move follows that made last month by GlaxoSmithKline to make data from all its future trials publicly accessible (see *Nature* **490**, 322; 2012). The European Medicines Agency intends from next year to make public all trial data submitted to it by industry for drug approvals.

## Arctic drilling pause

Royal Dutch Shell announced on 27 February that it is suspending its Arctic drilling programme this year. Work commenced on two oil wells in Alaska's Beaufort and Chukchi seas less than a year ago, but one drilling rig lost its moorings in July, and a second ran aground in December, sparking a federal review of the programme. Shell says that it plans to tow the rigs to Asia for maintenance and repairs as the company prepares for future drilling efforts.

## COMING UP

### 10 MARCH

Comet C/2011 L4 (PANSTARRS), which is coming into view in the Northern Hemisphere, brightens as it reaches the point in its orbit closest to the Sun. [go.nature.com/bpf2yy](http://go.nature.com/bpf2yy)

### 11–12 MARCH

At the Royal Society in London, researchers aim to set the agenda for the next decade of extrasolar-planet science. [go.nature.com/a5cxah](http://go.nature.com/a5cxah)

## Dragon docking

An unmanned Dragon spacecraft docked with the International Space Station on 3 March, arriving a day late because of thruster problems that were resolved. Built by California-based firm SpaceX, the space freighter carries supplies, equipment and scientific experiments. After completing its delivery — SpaceX's second — Dragon is scheduled to return and splash into the Pacific Ocean on 25 March, bringing back more than 1,300 kilograms of spent supplies and research samples. See page 18 for more on private spaceflight.

### FACILITIES

## Museum fire

A large fire on 4 March gutted much of an iconic science centre: the 12,000-square-metre City of Science exhibition centre and museum in Naples, Italy, which opened in 2001. No one was hurt — the museum was closed at the time — but media reports say that the fire destroyed four of the complex's five buildings. City authorities had not ruled out arson as *Nature* went to press.

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SOURCE: US FWS/PETA

## TREND WATCH

The number of non-human primates being imported into the United States for research purposes has dropped sharply since the British Union for the Abolition of Vivisection (BUAV) in London and People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) in Norfolk, Virginia, started pressuring major airlines to stop the activity (see *Nature* **489**, 344–345; 2012). All but a few have acquiesced, including Air China and China Southern, which had been transporting large numbers of animals.

## US PRIMATE IMPORTS DECLINE

The number of non-human primates imported for research has fallen by 36% between 2006 and 2012.

