

# SEVEN DAYS

The news in brief

## EVENTS

### Science solidarity

More than 4,000 people from around the world have signed a petition supporting scientists from the University of Milan in Italy, whose animal-research facility was invaded by animal-rights activists on 20 April. The activists took almost 100 animals — mostly mice — and mixed up labels on many of the remaining cages. Researchers say that it will take years to redo their work. The petition was posted online on 29 April by the Basel Declaration Society, based in Switzerland, which encourages openness about the use of animals in research. See page 158 for more.

## POLICY

### Trial data blocked

A move to release information about industry-sponsored clinical trials has hit a setback. On 30 April, the European General Court ordered the European Medicines Agency (EMA) not to publish documents submitted by two drug companies: AbbVie, headquartered in North Chicago, Illinois, and InterMune, based in Brisbane, California. Both companies had previously filed complaints, stating

## NUMBER CRUNCH

# \$86 bn

Upper bound on cost of providing electricity and clean-burning cooking fuels and stoves globally by 2030, the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis in Laxenburg, Austria, said on 2 May.



FEISAL OMAR/REUTERS

## Somali famine death toll

Famine in Somalia killed about 258,000 people between October 2010 and April 2012, finds a study released on 2 May. More than half of those who died were under 5 years old (pictured). The report from the Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET), funded by the US Agency for International Development in Washington DC, is the first to estimate the

death toll of the crisis, which was triggered by a severe drought. Researchers estimated that nearly 5% of the total population of southern and central Somalia died. "It suggests that what occurred in Somalia was one of the worst famines in the last 25 years," says Chris Hillbruner, decision support adviser for FEWS NET.

that the documents contain confidential data that could cause commercial damage if made public. The injunction is temporary, pending a final ruling on the case, and the EMA is considering an appeal.

### Beyond the DSM

The US National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) will no longer use the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM)* to guide psychiatric research, NIMH director Thomas Insel announced on 30 April. The manual has long been used as a gold standard for defining mental disorders. Insel described the *DSM* as ill-suited to scientific studies, and said the NIMH will

now support studies that cut across *DSM*-defined disease categories. The American Psychiatric Association will release the latest edition of the tome, *DSM-5*, on 22 May.

### Plan B appeal

The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) made a controversial emergency contraceptive pill available to 15- and 16-year-olds without a doctor's prescription on 30 April. The next day, the government appealed against a decision made last month by New York district court judge Edward Korman, who ordered the FDA to make Plan B One-Step (levonorgestrel) available over the counter without age restrictions within 30 days.

See *Nature* 496, 142 (2013) and [go.nature.com/klhp8m](http://go.nature.com/klhp8m) for more.

## FACILITIES

### Autism network

Three US foundations that fund autism research announced on 2 May the launch of Autism BrainNet, a network of facilities to collect and process donated brains from those who have died, including children. The network — which includes centres in New York, California and Texas — will distribute tissue samples to autism researchers, who have struggled to obtain the very young brains needed to study the neurodevelopmental

disorder. Autism BrainNet will actively engage in outreach work to explain the importance of brain donation. See [go.nature.com/9bxphz](http://go.nature.com/9bxphz) for more.

## PEOPLE

**Meningitis lawsuit**

The brother of a 25-year-old researcher who died from meningitis last year after getting infected with *Neisseria meningitidis* at a San Francisco laboratory is suing for at least US\$20 million in damages, news reports said last week. The late Richard Din was infected by the bacterium while working on a vaccine for the disease at the Northern California Institute for Research and Education. His brother, Wei-Hsun Din, is suing the US government, the regents of the University of California and the lab's bosses, according to a civil lawsuit filed on 26 April.

## RESEARCH

**Virus controversy**

Chinese researchers have drawn criticism for a study published online on 2 May, which showed that the H5N1 avian influenza virus engineered with genes from the human pandemic H1N1 virus could spread through the air between guinea pigs (Y. Zhang *et al.* *Science* <http://doi.org/mfv>;



2013). Robert May (pictured), former president of the UK Royal Society in London, called the work “appallingly irresponsible”, citing concerns about laboratory containment and potential human-to-human transmission, according to news reports. The study authors say that the research could help to improve the surveillance of dangerous viruses.

**Oil estimates**

Underground rock formations in the north-central United States hold more than double the previous estimate of recoverable crude oil, the US Geological Survey said in a report published on 30 April. The Three Forks Formation that underlies parts of North Dakota, South Dakota and Montana was previously thought to hold little oil. New geological data suggest that it holds 3.73 billion barrels

of oil, surpassing the other reserve in the area, the Bakken Formation, where 3.65 billion barrels await recovery.

**Coronavirus cases**

The novel coronavirus hCoV-EMC, first discovered last year in Saudi Arabia, continues to spread. Saudi Arabia has reported 13 new cases to the World Health Organization since 2 May, including seven deaths. All the cases are linked to a single hospital, suggesting that the virus is spreading from human to human. There have been a total of 30 confirmed cases worldwide, including 18 deaths.

## BUSINESS

**Hidden emissions**

Only 37% of the world's 800 largest companies fully disclose their greenhouse-gas emissions, according to a report released on 1 May by the Environmental Investment Organisation (EIO), a non-profit research group based in Frensham, UK. Italian and Spanish companies were the best disclosers, with more than half providing complete and verified emissions data. The EIO also ranked companies by their environmental impact. “This ought to be a wake-up call for companies,” says Sam Gill, head of the EIO. “Large quantities of emissions are not being accounted for.”

## COMING UP

**14–17 MAY**

In Cancún, Mexico, 14 geophysical societies from North and South America hold a joint Meeting of the Americas, with discussions including megacities and regional climate change.

[moa.agu.org](http://moa.agu.org)

**15 MAY**

Ministers and scientists from the eight states of the Arctic Council meet in Kiruna, Sweden, to discuss issues including biodiversity and preparedness for marine oil pollution in the Arctic.

[go.nature.com/wio3fg](http://go.nature.com/wio3fg)

**Investment support**

The Academy of Medical Sciences in London announced on 2 May that it will advise a venture-capital firm seeking to invest in biotechnology companies. The effort will give the academy, which has more than 1,000 members, a business role typically taken on by individual scientists. The academy will receive an annual retainer from Park Vale Capital, a London-based investment firm, and a share of its performance fees. Park Vale hopes to invest in up to ten companies over the next two years. See [go.nature.com/ybi7th](http://go.nature.com/ybi7th) for more.

**CLARIFICATION**

The Trend watch in the 2 May issue (*Nature* **497**, 11; 2013) could be misread to suggest that the Office of Research Integrity is not taking any more cases. We meant to say that the office cannot take on any more cases than usual.

**NATURE.COM**

For daily news updates see: [www.nature.com/news](http://www.nature.com/news)

## TREND WATCH

The Royal Society — Britain's national science academy — last week announced 44 new fellows, and the US National Academy of Sciences (NAS) 84 new members. The proportion of women among newly elected members — 20% at the Royal Society and 26% at the NAS — has risen since 1994, but only marginally over the past decade. The Royal Society says that its selection mirrors the proportion of women put forward for membership. (The NAS election process is kept confidential.)

**WOMEN IN SCIENCE**

The female share of newly elected members of the US National Academy of Sciences is greater than that of new fellows of Britain's Royal Society.

