

SEVEN DAYS

The news in brief

FACILITIES

Virus lab for Japan

Japan has cleared the way for its first lab to handle the highest-risk pathogens, such as Ebola virus, at a facility about 30 kilometres west of Tokyo. The National Institute of Infectious Diseases originally built the facility in Musashi-Murayama in 1981 to operate at the greatest biosafety level, BSL-4. But opposition from local residents has forced it to run as a BSL-3 lab. On 3 August, the country's health minister reached an agreement with the mayor of Musashi-Murayama that would allow BSL-4 operations to begin.

PEOPLE

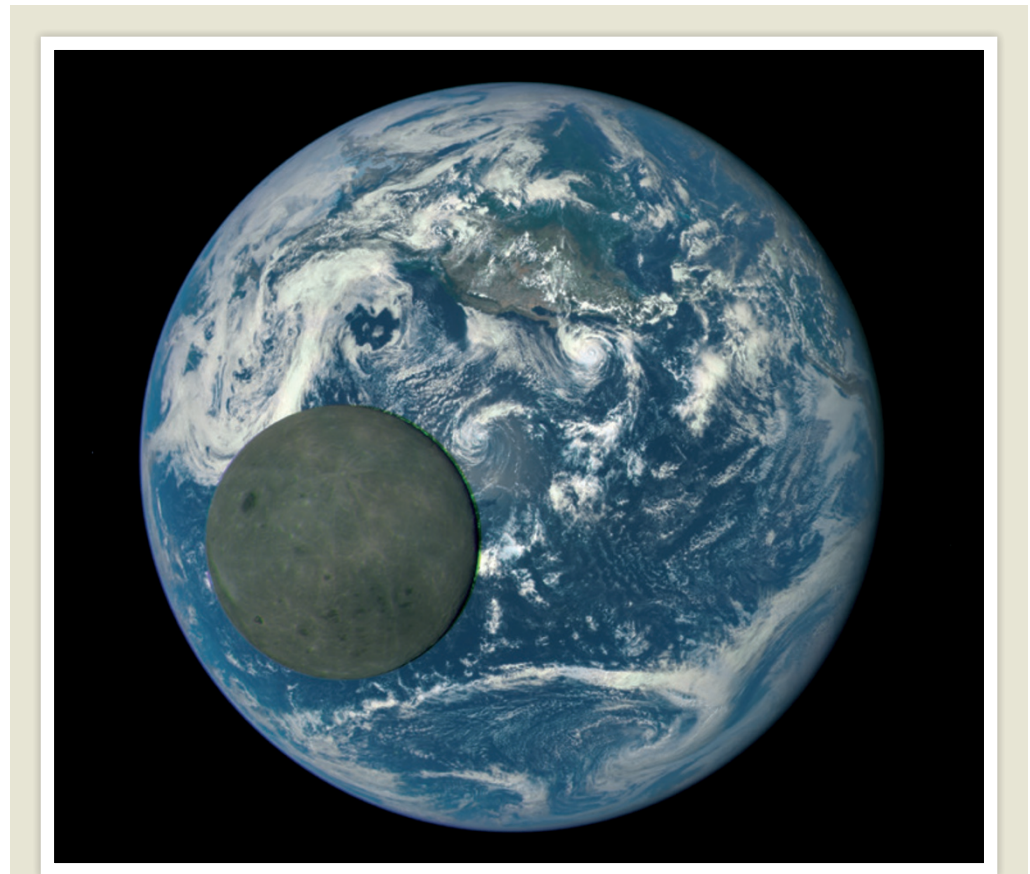
Energy director

US President Barack Obama will nominate physicist Cherry Murray as the director of the US Department of Energy's Office of Science, the White House announced on 5 August. The position has been vacant since 2013. Murray, now at Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts, was principal associate director for science and technology at California's Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory from 2007 to 2009. She also worked at Bell Laboratories in Murray Hill, New Jersey, from 1978 to 2004. At the energy department, Murray will oversee a US\$5-billion research budget.

POLICY

Interrogation ban

The American Psychological Association (APA) has decided to ban psychologists from participating in military interrogations, responding to a damning report implicating the organization in the torture of detainees by US military and intelligence agencies. At the



NASA/NOAA

Moon snapped from its dark side

NASA's DSCOVR satellite captured this image of the Moon crossing in front of Earth from a vantage point 1.6 million kilometres away. DSCOVR monitors space weather from the gravitationally stable L1 point. The far side of the Moon has fewer dark lava flows — or maria

— than the side that faces Earth. The most prominent flow (dark blotch, upper left) is Mare Moscoviense, named by the Soviet Union after its probe Luna 3 took the first photos of the far side of the Moon in 1959. The DSCOVR photo was released on 5 August.

organization's annual meeting in Toronto on 7 August, APA's council of representatives voted to approve the measure by 156 to 1, with 7 abstentions. The APA parted company with several senior officials after the report was released, and it says that it will convene a panel to review its ethics guidelines.

Scots say no to GM

Scotland has declared its intention to opt out of growing genetically modified (GM) crops approved by

the European Union (EU) on non-scientific grounds — the first region to do so under new EU rules. Rural affairs secretary Richard Lochhead said on 8 August that Scotland wished to protect its 'clean, green' status. The rules were introduced in April to overcome a political impasse in which EU member states that are divided on the principle of GM crops have blocked approvals for safety-cleared crops. Countries have until 3 October to opt out of

the varieties currently being assessed by the European Commission for cultivation.

Australia emissions

Australia's government plans to lower national greenhouse-gas emissions by 26–28% below 2005 levels by 2030, it announced on 11 August. It is the latest country to state its commitment ahead of a United Nations global-warming summit in Paris this December. Prime Minister Tony Abbott said that the

LUCAS MARIE/AP

targets balanced the need to slow climate change and to promote strong economic growth. Australia has the highest per capita emissions of any of the 34 industrialized countries in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

EVENTS

End for Ada project

The Ada Initiative, which has spent four years addressing sexism and harassment at science and technology conferences, announced on 4 August that it will cease activities in mid-October. The non-profit organization has sought to eliminate environments that discriminate against women. It has encouraged conferences in fields including artificial life, physics and entomology to formally adopt anti-harassment policies. The organization said it decided to close after it had difficulty finding a suitable head to replace its founders.

Debris discovery

A section of an aircraft wing, found on an island in the Indian Ocean on 29 July, is probably from missing Malaysia Airlines flight MH370, a French prosecutor said on 5 August. The announcement came after investigators in Toulouse, France, examined the debris



(pictured) and determined that it is from a Boeing 777 — the same model as the missing plane. In a stronger statement, Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak announced definitively that the wing fragment belonged to MH370. The families of passengers who were on the flight reacted to the mixed messages with disbelief and anger.

Iran deal backed

A group of 29 leading US physicists and experts on nuclear weapons and arms control wrote a letter to President Barack Obama on 8 August supporting the Iran nuclear agreement made with the United States and five other countries on 14 July. The letter's authors include the chief executive of the American Association for the Advancement of Science; a former head of the Los Alamos National Laboratory in New Mexico; and six Nobel prizewinners. They say that the deal includes "more stringent

constraints than any previously negotiated non-proliferation framework". The letter is intended to sway undecided US Congress members ahead of a vote that could derail the agreement in September.

FUNDING

Ticket to space

NASA has purchased rides worth US\$490 million aboard Russia's Soyuz spaceships, agency head Charles Bolden wrote to the US Congress on 5 August. Ever since the US space shuttle programme ended in 2011, NASA has relied on Russia to transport its astronauts to and from the International Space Station. The contract extends their agreement to the end of 2018, adding to the \$458 million that NASA is already paying for Soyuz flights in 2017. The agency is seeking private ways to ferry astronauts to space, but cuts to government funding of the 'commercial-crew' programme have hindered progress.

BUSINESS

Rare diseases bid

Drug firm Shire has proposed a US\$30-billion hostile takeover of its competitor Baxalta in Bannockburn, Illinois. Both companies make drugs to treat rare diseases. The offer from Dublin-based Shire was made

COMING UP

13 AUGUST

The Rosetta spacecraft, which is studying the comet 67P/Churyumov-Gerasimenko in detail, reaches perihelion — the closest point to the Sun during its journey.

16–20 AUGUST

Around 12,500 chemists gather in Boston, Massachusetts, for the 250th American Chemical Society meeting.

go.nature.com/5b3gxt

16–21 AUGUST

Geochemists meet at the 25th Goldschmidt conference in Prague. To mark the anniversary, 25 lectures will highlight geochemical advances since the first conference.

go.nature.com/hu9x5x

public on 4 August to appeal directly to Baxalta shareholders after an initial approach was rebuffed privately on 10 July. Baxalta's directors say that the offer significantly undervalues the company, which specializes in treatments for immune disorders and rare blood conditions.

3D-printed pills

The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved the first 3D-printed drug, an antiepileptic medication called levetiracetam, on 3 August. Manufactured by Aprelia Pharmaceuticals in Langhorne, Pennsylvania, the printed drug is a porous pill that dissolves in the mouth to make it easy to swallow. The company expects the drug to arrive on the market in early 2016 and intends to produce more 3D-printed therapies for central nervous system disorders.

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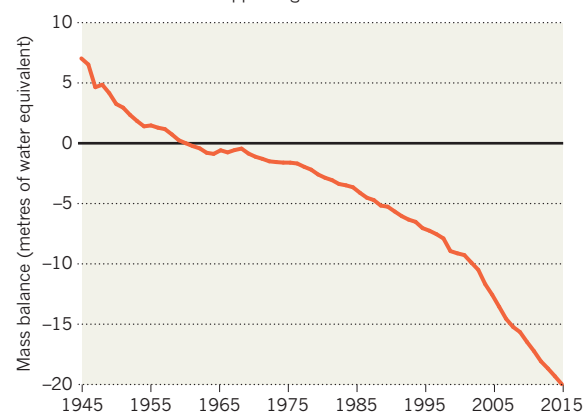
www.nature.com/news

TREND WATCH

The current rate of global glacier retreat is "historically unprecedented", researchers at the World Glacier Monitoring Service reported on 30 July (M. Zemp *et al.* *J. Glaciol.* **61**, 745–762; 2015). The team compiled more than 47,000 observations, dating as far back as the sixteenth century, and found that glaciers are now shrinking nearly twice as fast as they were during the late twentieth century. Even if the climate stabilizes, ice loss is expected to continue in many areas.

GLACIERS RETREATING EVER FASTER

The world's glaciers have been shrinking since the 1960s, but their cumulative mass is now disappearing faster than ever before.



WORLD GLACIER MONITORING SERVICE