

## AWARDS

### Nobel prizes

The 2017 Nobel Prize in Chemistry was awarded on 4 October to Jacques Dubochet, Joachim Frank and Richard Henderson for their development of cryo-electron microscopy, which has transformed the imaging of biomolecules (see page 167). The Nobel Peace Prize, announced two days later, went to the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons in Geneva, Switzerland, for its efforts to achieve a “treaty-based prohibition” of the weapons. The economics prize was awarded on 9 October to Richard Thaler at the University of Chicago, Illinois, in recognition of his work on behavioural economics, which incorporates elements of psychology.

## PUBLISHING

### Copyright suit

Two large scientific publishers, Elsevier and the American Chemical Society, have filed a lawsuit against the scholarly social network ResearchGate to prevent copyrighted material appearing on its site. The publishers are two of five that on 5 October announced they had formed a coalition to start ordering ResearchGate to take down from its site papers that breach copyright. Up to 7 million papers may be affected, the coalition statement said. ResearchGate, based in Berlin, declined to comment on the lawsuit, which was filed in a German court. See [go.nature.com/2g7dhkl](http://go.nature.com/2g7dhkl) for more.

## UNIVERSITIES

### Budapest battle

The prestigious Central European University (CEU) in Budapest seems to have



MIKE KOROSTELEV/BIOSPOTO/FLPA

## Walrus left off threatened-species list

The US government will not list the Pacific walrus (*Odobenus rosmarus divergens*) as a threatened species, despite the dwindling of its Arctic sea-ice habitat, the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) announced on 4 October. The decision reverses a 2011 FWS finding that the walrus should be listed. Now, officials say that the population seems to be adapting to the

changing environmental conditions. They say that although the walrus's sea-ice habitat may shift, the animal should still be around in the near future, which the FWS defines as the year 2060. The Center for Biological Diversity, based in Tucson, Arizona, filed the original petition to force a decision. It called the announcement “disgraceful”.

dodged a law change that many see as a deliberate attempt to close it down. In April, the Hungarian government sparked mass protests by rushing through a law that requires international universities in the country to also operate as higher-education institutes in their countries of origin. Only the CEU, registered in New York state after being founded in 1991 by Hungarian-born philanthropist George Soros, was seriously affected. The revised law comes into effect on 11 October; the CEU announced on 3 October that it had agreed with Bard College in Annandale-on-Hudson, New York, to provide educational activities in the state.

## PEOPLE

### WHO leaders

Clinical scientist Soumya Swaminathan will be the new deputy director-general for programmes at the World Health Organization (WHO), making the post the most senior in the organization to be held by an Indian national. Swaminathan, a paediatrician and researcher specializing in tuberculosis, is the secretary of India's department of health research and director-general of the Indian Council of Medical Research. Former UK public-health minister Jane Ellison has been appointed as the WHO's deputy director-general for corporate operations. Swaminathan and Ellison are

two of 13 new WHO leaders announced by director-general Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus on 3 October.

### Whistle-blower quits

A senior executive who turned whistle-blower at the US Department of the Interior resigned on 4 October, accusing President Donald Trump's administration of advancing fossil-fuel interests ahead of the agency's conservation mission. Joel Clement, who had been at the department for nearly seven years, was director of the office of policy analysis before he was abruptly reassigned to an accounting division in June. Clement has filed a whistle-blower claim against

MARINE NATIONAL FACILITY, AUSTRALIA  
the agency, arguing that his reassignment was in retaliation for speaking out about the threat of climate change to Native Alaskan communities.

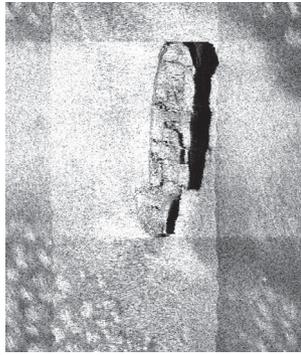
## EVENTS

**Climate lawsuit**

An environmental group is suing the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to gain access to public records related to the August disbanding of a federal climate-advisory committee. The panel was providing input into the next national climate assessment, a congressionally mandated report on the effects of climate change in the United States, due in 2018. On 18 August, NOAA announced that it would not renew the committee's charter, and on 31 August the Center for Biological Diversity in Tucson, Arizona, asked the agency for documents related to that decision. NOAA failed to respond to that request, and on 3 October the environmental group filed a lawsuit in federal district court, demanding access to the files.

**Shipwreck spotted**

Scientists on board Australia's national deep-water research ship have discovered the wreck of a merchant ship sunk during the Second



World War. The wreck of the SS *Macumba* (pictured) was found in the Arafura Sea off the coast of the Northern Territory on 4 October during a government-sponsored search by the RV *Investigator*. *Investigator*'s multibeam sonar located the wreck, which is sitting upright in 40 metres of water. Japanese aircraft sank the *Macumba* on 6 August 1943, killing three crew members.

## SPACE

**Plutonium problem**

NASA's plutonium supply could be threatened if production issues are not addressed soon, according to a report from the US Government Accountability Office (GAO). The space agency uses plutonium-238 to power long-term missions such as some Mars rovers. The review, released on 4 October, found that

current stockpiles, along with 100 grams of new <sup>238</sup>Pu manufactured by the Department of Energy (DOE), will last NASA until the 2020s. But without fixing one of the two US reactors capable of producing the isotope, the DOE will have trouble producing enough to meet demand. The space agency originally sourced its <sup>238</sup>Pu from nuclear-weapons programmes, but the DOE phased them out in the 1980s. NASA began paying the energy agency to manufacture <sup>238</sup>Pu in 2011.

## POLICY

**Drug applications**

China is overhauling its drug-registration system in a bid to fast-track new medicines to market. The powerful State Council announced rules on 8 October that will allow data from clinical trials in other countries to be used to support drug-approval applications in China. That will make it faster and cheaper for companies to introduce medicines — a boon for multinational pharmaceutical companies hungry for a piece of the Chinese market. After the announcement, shares in China's drug-makers jumped in anticipation of higher profits. The move is the government's latest attempt to clear the way for innovative

drugs, reduce the backlog of applications and crack down on fraudulent or otherwise-faulty drug applications. The rules will also help research institutions to conduct clinical trials.

**Endocrine row**

The European Parliament has vetoed draft criteria proposed by the European Commission to identify chemicals known as endocrine disruptors: substances such as bisphenol A that may interfere with hormone systems and cause health problems. Under a 2012 law, the commission had been asked to come up with scientific criteria for defining the chemicals by the end of 2013 as a step towards restricting the substances. But it failed to do so. Experts from 28 European Union member states finally agreed on criteria in July, but Parliament members rejected them in a 4 October vote. They said that the commission exceeded its mandate in exempting from its definition some chemicals that are designed to attack pests' endocrine systems. The Commission must now draft fresh proposals.

**Zika screen**

On 5 October, the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved a test to detect Zika virus in blood and organ donations. During last year's outbreaks in the US territories of Puerto Rico, the US Virgin Islands and American Samoa, the FDA permitted blood-donation centres to screen blood using the 'cobas' Zika test on an experimental basis, to ensure that people would not be infected through transfusions. The test, manufactured by Roche of Basel, Switzerland, detects Zika virus RNA in blood plasma. The FDA has not yet approved a Zika treatment, vaccine or commercially available diagnostic test.

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## TREND WATCH

The solar sector grew faster than any other energy market in 2016, according to the *Renewables 2017* report published on 4 October by the International Energy Agency in Paris. New electricity capacity provided by solar photovoltaics grew by 50% last year — faster than for any other fuel — to more than 74 gigawatts worldwide. China accounted for almost half of this expansion. The surge, driven by government policies and falling costs, opens “a new era for solar power”, says the report.

**SOLAR SURGE**

Growth in global electricity capacity in 2016: for the first time, solar power rose faster than any other fuel.

