

SEVEN DAYS

The news in brief

POLICY

Election results

Angela Merkel triumphed in Germany's parliamentary elections on 22 September to secure a third term as the country's chancellor. Federal science spending has increased by 60% since Merkel first came to power in 2005, and she has fought to keep government science expenditure high despite increases in public debt. The Free Democrat Party, which had previously expressed support for easing Germany's tough restrictions on stem-cell research, lost its representation in parliament. See page 461 and *Nature* 501, 289–290 (2013) for more.

Climate closures

Australia's new government is shutting the Climate Commission, an independent agency set up in 2011 to provide information on climate change. But its chair Tim Flannery says the organization will continue, as the Climate Council, with private funding. The government also aims to close the Climate Change Authority, which advises on carbon pricing and emissions cuts, and the Clean Energy Finance Corporation, a 'green bank' that was due to invest Aus\$10 billion (US\$9.4 billion) over the next five years in renewable-energy projects.

US power plants

Regulations proposed on 20 September by the US Environmental Protection Agency would limit carbon dioxide emissions for future fossil-fuel power plants in the United States. To meet the emissions limits, new coal-fired plants would need to install equipment to capture and sequester a portion of their carbon dioxide emissions — a requirement

that utility companies argue would effectively halt future coal-plant development. The agency is preparing separate regulations, due in June 2014, to govern existing power plants. See go.nature.com/c2m4tn for more.

Russian vote

On 18 September, Russia's lower house of parliament approved controversial reforms to the Russian Academy of Sciences. The upper house and President Vladimir Putin are widely expected to approve the law. This would see the 436 institutes and 45,000 staff of Russia's primary basic-research organization managed by a new federal agency overseen

by the government and reporting directly to Putin. Critics say that the move will deprive the 289-year-old body of its independence, and halt attempts to revitalize Russia's science system. See go.nature.com/8zqqme for more.

EVENTS

Arctic ice low

The extent of Arctic sea ice reached its minimum for the year on 13 September, when ice cover fell to 5.1 million square kilometres, the US National Snow and Ice Data Center in Boulder, Colorado, said on 20 September. This year's minimum falls short of 2012's record-breaking thaw but is the

sixth lowest since 1979, when satellite monitoring began. See go.nature.com/jnkee3 for more.

RESEARCH

Census shake-up

The census that has sampled the UK population once a decade since 1801 could be scrapped, according to a consultation launched on 23 September by the Office for National Statistics. The office is considering using information from national databases and smaller annual surveys for the next census, due in 2021. Some researchers are strongly opposed to this option, which they argue



Road test for experimental reactor

A 352-wheel, 800-tonne trailer last week carried a test load (pictured) along the 104-kilometre route through France by which components of the multibillion-euro ITER thermonuclear reactor will travel for assembly in St-Paul-lès-Durance. Seven international partners will contribute parts for the machine, which is designed to show the feasibility of nuclear fusion

as a power source (see *Nature* <http://doi.org/nwq>; 2012). The trailer — 10.4 metres high, 9 metres wide and 33 metres long — mimics the size of the largest components. The convoy travelled at night along roads and bridges that have been modified at a cost of €112 million (US\$151 million). The project is expected to need a total of 230 convoys over the next five years.

ITER ORGANIZATION

would mean losing important details. See go.nature.com/mwepcq for more.

Space mission dead

After a 7.6-billion-kilometre journey, NASA's comet-hunting Deep Impact spacecraft is no more. Project controllers had been unable to communicate with the craft since 8 August, and declared the mission over on 20 September. A computer calendar glitch probably caused the craft to fail (see go.nature.com/yupxju).

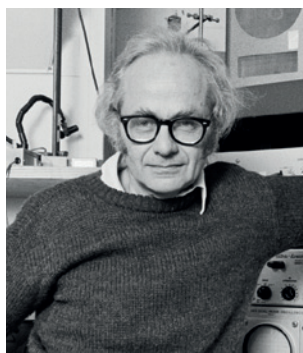
PEOPLE

Smithsonian head

Civil engineer Wayne Clough will retire next year as leader of the Smithsonian Institution in Washington DC, the centre announced on 18 September. Since taking over as secretary in 2008, Clough has raised US\$893 million in private donations for the \$1-billion institute, which hosts some 1,600 fellows and research associates across 19 museums and 9 research centres.

Nobel laureate dies

David Hubel, a Nobel-prizewinning neuroscientist who mapped the brain's visual system, died on 22 September, aged 87. In research covering 25 years, Hubel (**pictured**), based at Harvard Medical School in



Boston, Massachusetts, worked with Torsten Wiesel to show how light is transmitted from retinal cells in the eye to the brain's visual cortex, where it is processed. The duo shared the 1981 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine with Roger Sperry.

GM-rice fallout

Guangwen Tang, a nutrition scientist at Tufts University in Medford, Massachusetts, has been banned by the university from conducting human research for two years owing to ethics violations in a study published last year. Tang tested the health benefits of Golden Rice — genetically modified to produce a vitamin A precursor — on children in China's Hunan province (see *Nature* <http://doi.org/nv9>; 2012). On 17 September, the university upheld the study's results, but reported finding that the trial had violated university and federal regulations, and lacked proper approvals from

Chinese officials. Tufts also said that the participants were not adequately informed about the genetically modified nature of the rice.

Human-rights prize

Omid Kokabee, a physics PhD student jailed in Iran since January 2011, was on 23 September awarded the American Physical Society's Andrei Sakharov Prize, for courage in refusing to work on projects that he thought were harmful to humanity. Kokabee has said that he was pressured to cooperate in an Iranian military nuclear programme. This is the first time that the human-rights prize has been awarded to a person in prison. See go.nature.com/ic77ff for more.

FUNDING

US research boost

The US government has allocated US\$53 million to create 14 Tobacco Centers of Regulatory Science in the next year, the Food and Drug Administration and the National Institutes of Health (NIH) announced on 19 September. More than \$273 million may be invested over the next five years to help the programme to develop and evaluate regulations for tobacco products. The NIH last week also announced some \$45 million in awards

COMING UP

27 SEPTEMBER

In Stockholm, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change releases a summary of its fifth assessment of the basic scientific evidence for climate change. The panel publishes its full report on 30 September.

to study early interventions for Alzheimer's disease. Among the selected projects is a \$33-million trial to test preventive treatments in at-risk adults (see *Nature* **489**, 13–14; 2012).

Cancer cash

On 21 September, philanthropists Phil and Penny Knight announced that they would donate US\$500 million to cancer research at Oregon Health & Science University in Portland — but only if the university can raise another \$500 million from other sources within two years. The money would support science at the university's Knight Cancer Institute, to which the couple gave a \$100-million donation in 2008. Phil Knight is co-founder of the sportswear company Nike.

FACILITIES

Genome centre

On 19 September, the New York Genome Center officially opened the doors of its first dedicated research facility, located in Manhattan. The consortium of 12 research and health-care institutions was created three years ago as part of New York city's push to become a biomedical-research hub. Its aim is to provide non-profit genome services and to foster collaborations between academia and industry. See go.nature.com/htxqji for more.

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TREND WATCH

In 2012, some 6.6 million children died before reaching their fifth birthday. By contrast, more than 12 million under-fives died in 1990, according to a United Nations report released on 13 September. Although the death rate has been cut by about half, the situation is not improving fast enough to reach a target set for 2015 by the UN Millennium Development Goals initiative (see chart). Worldwide, malnutrition accounts for about 45% of deaths of children under five years old.

CHILD DEATH RATE HALVED

The United Nations says that the world has made encouraging strides in reducing the child mortality rate.

