

SEVEN DAYS

The news in brief

EVENTS

Ebola outbreak

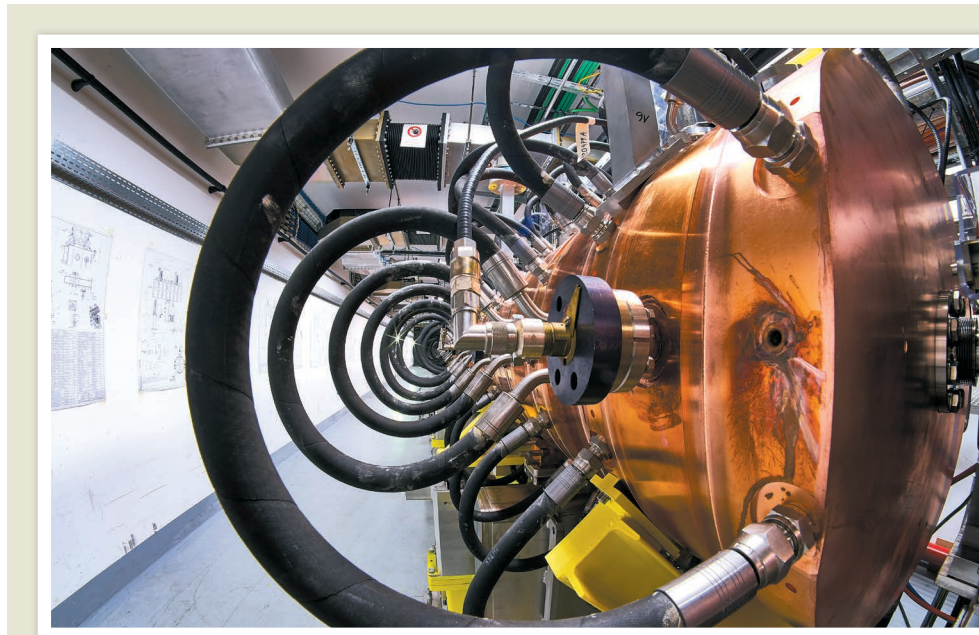
On 12 May, the World Health Organization (WHO) confirmed an outbreak of the Ebola virus in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where nine suspected cases of the infection have been reported in the past three weeks. Health authorities are now considering whether to deploy an experimental Ebola vaccine against the outbreak. The aid group Médecins Sans Frontières (also known as Doctors Without Borders) is discussing a potential vaccination campaign with the Congolese government that would require the approval of the WHO. See go.nature.com/2rlp3ei for more.

India's GM crops

India's top biotechnology regulator has approved the planting of a genetically modified (GM) breed of mustard, which would be the country's first GM food crop. The Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee gave the green light to the seed — which is grown mainly for its oil — on 11 May. But before farmers can sow the mustard, India's government will also have to approve its cultivation. And the government will need clearance from India's Supreme Court, which is currently considering a lawsuit filed last year to prevent the mustard's approval (see *Nature* 541, 267–268; 2017).

Uncertain future

The European Union and the United Kingdom will need at least two more years to agree on their future relationship concerning science and higher education, the EU's chief Brexit negotiator, Michel Barnier, said on 5 May. A deal concerning Britain's future participation in EU-funded research and



MAXIMILIEN BRICE/CERN

Fresh momentum for particle physics

CERN, Europe's particle physics laboratory, inaugurated its latest linear accelerator on 9 May. The 90-metre-long Linac 4 (pictured) will produce particles with 3 times the energy possible with its 39-year-old predecessor. Once fully tested, the new accelerator will allow an

upgraded version of the Large Hadron Collider (LHC) to collect experimental data at a much higher rate from 2021. Linac 4 will take over as the first stage in a series of accelerators that together feed the LHC and other experiments at the laboratory near Geneva, Switzerland.

student-exchange programmes is unlikely to be finalized before the United Kingdom leaves the bloc in March 2019, Barnier said at a state of the union event in Florence, Italy. The United Kingdom could continue to participate in European research collaborations as a third country, if it guarantees free movement of EU citizens.

Dubious ban

Turkey's Science Academy — an independent organization of Turkish scientists — has declared the government ban on Wikipedia to be unconstitutional. The Turkish government used state-of-emergency powers to block access to Wikipedia on 29 April. It stated that the online encyclopaedia had

operated a smear campaign against the country, with some pages implying that Turkey supports terrorist organizations. The academy said on 10 May that the ban deprives citizens of knowledge and open debate and that it “seriously undermines the image of Turkey in the 21st century”. Wikipedia has appealed to Turkey's constitutional court against the ban.

Arctic pact

The eight nations that border the Arctic Ocean have agreed to ease rules for cross-border field research in the High North. At an Arctic Council meeting in Fairbanks, Alaska, on 11 May, representatives of the Arctic nations promised to

reduce red tape for scientists trying to collect data in the region. The legally binding agreement, signed by Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Russia and the United States, will also give scientists better access to Arctic research facilities such as ice-breaking ships. See go.nature.com/2pfu3m9 for more.

FUNDING

Australian budget

Australia has started the process of joining the European Southern Observatory (ESO). The government's 2017–18 federal budget, released on 9 May, includes Aus\$26.1 million (US\$19.2 million) for optical astronomy research to be

carried out in partnership with ESO. The agreement, which guarantees Australian access to major astronomy initiatives and facilities, includes an additional commitment of roughly Aus\$12 million a year until 2027–28. Overall science spending from Australia's federal budget will remain stable. However, government funding for universities will decrease by Aus\$384.2 million (2.5%) over 2018 and 2019.

PEOPLE

FDA chief

Physician and venture capitalist Scott Gottlieb was sworn in as commissioner of the US Food and Drug Administration on 11 May, two days after his confirmation by the Senate. Gottlieb has experience at the agency, including a stint as deputy commissioner for medical and scientific affairs from 2005 to 2007. But he has also previously had extensive financial relationships with the industries he will now be regulating, including roles as a board member and consultant, which has concerned some consumer advocates.

Political addition

Cédric Villani, a flamboyant French mathematician, is to run for election to the



French parliament in June. The 2010 Fields medallist, who heads the Henri Poincaré Institute in Paris, stands for election in the Saclay constituency near Paris, home to a cluster of leading French research institutions. Villani (**pictured**), who joined the campaign of the newly elected president Emmanuel Macron in April, was one of a list of political outsiders whom Macron's party announced on 11 May as candidates for next month's elections.

Insel leaves Google

Psychiatrist Tom Insel left Google on 5 May, 18 months after he started a mental-health programme in the company's health-sciences division, Verily. Insel, who was formerly director of the US National Institute of Mental Health, will launch his own company, called Mindstrong, to analyse behaviour and mental illness using smartphone data. Co-founders of the company

in Palo Alto, California, include Richard Klausner, a former director of the US National Cancer Institute, and Paul Dagum, who holds several patents on 'digital phenotyping' methods. See go.nature.com/2po7uhn for more.

FACILITIES

Alarm underground

The US Department of Energy declared a site-wide emergency at the Hanford nuclear site on 9 May after a tunnel holding contaminated waste partly collapsed. Several thousand workers at the former nuclear-weapons facility in Washington state took shelter while officials deployed a robot to investigate the damage. No contamination was detected, and by the next day, the facility had filled the hole with more than 420 cubic metres of soil. The cold war-era tunnel was one of two that led to a reprocessing plant used to extract plutonium for nuclear weapons from 1956 to 1988. See page 266 for more.

POLICY

Methane control

The US Senate has rejected Republican efforts to block a rule limiting methane emissions on federal lands. Three Republicans joined all 48 Democrats in the 51–49

COMING UP

18–20 MAY

A meeting in Guangzhou, China, explores genomic approaches to precision medicine.

go.nature.com/2kedtww

21–23 MAY

Theoretical physicists gather at a conference in Jerusalem on recent work in general relativity.

go.nature.com/2qqgzjx

vote on 10 May. The rule, issued in November under former president Barack Obama, requires oil and gas operators to reduce flaring by half on public and tribal lands. Companies must also limit methane venting and regularly inspect equipment for leakage. The US Department of the Interior estimated that the rule would reduce methane emissions from the oil and gas industry by up to 35%.

SPACE

Empty run

NASA will not put astronauts on the first full flight of its new heavy-lift rocket, the agency announced on 12 May. That test will also come at least a year later than expected, no earlier than 2019. When complete, the Space Launch System will be the first rocket capable of carrying people beyond low Earth orbit since the Saturn V, which flew astronauts to the Moon from 1968 to 1972. Earlier this year, NASA had looked into whether it could put astronauts on the first test that will couple the enormous rocket to its Orion crew capsule. But cost and schedule delays mean that it will be easier to fly that first mission without astronauts.

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TREND WATCH

By 2040, one-third of cases of tuberculosis (TB) in Russia could be drug resistant, according to a study in *The Lancet Infectious Diseases*. And in India, multidrug resistance could soar to 12.4% of TB cases. Increased drug resistance in high-burden countries will mostly result from person-to-person infections, rather than from non-resistant strains acquiring resistance, the study predicts. Globally, some 10.4 million new cases of TB currently cause around 1.8 million deaths per year.

TUBERCULOSIS RESISTANCE ON THE RISE

Infections with drug-resistant tuberculosis are set to increase.

