

PROPHETIC TIMES

WEEKLY WORLD NEWS UPDATE

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BUSH REAFFIRMS US FIRST STRIKE POLICY

March 16, 2006 Voice of America News reported: "President Bush has reaffirmed that the U.S. may consider pre-emptive military strikes against terrorists and enemy nations. Outlining his second term national security strategy, Mr. Bush says America prefers using diplomacy to halt the spread of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction. But in the report issued Thursday, the president adds the U.S. could launch a first-strike even if there is uncertainty about the time or place of an enemy attack.

White House spokesman Scott McClellan was later asked about international law against pre-emptive strikes. He defended the policy, calling it an "inherent right to self-defense."

In the report, Mr. Bush singles out Iran as perhaps posing the biggest threat by a single country. He argues that diplomacy to get Iran to give up its nuclear ambitions must succeed "if confrontation is to be avoided."

Mr. Bush also points to the threat of North Korea's nuclear program. Iran and North Korea are in a group of seven nations denounced for what the president calls their "despotic systems." Also on the list are Syria, Cuba, Belarus, Burma and Zimbabwe.

Mr. Bush addresses administration's concerns about the Chinese and Russian government's current policies, and their effect on U.S. national and economic security..."

BAHRAIN STRUGGLES WITH SHI'ITE UNREST

March 15, 2006 The Middle East Newsline reported: "Bahrain continues to struggle with rising Shi'ite unrest. Officials said Bahrain's Shi'ite majority has turned more violent over the last year. The sources said young Shi'ites believed directed or inspired by Iran have sought to confront the Sunni kingdom during the Formula-1 Grand Prix outside Manama.

"These acts of sabotage are rejected by everybody, and those who have pushed these young men to these actions should be punished," Bahraini Interior Minister Rashid Bin Abdullah Al Khalifa said.

For four straight nights, Shi'ite youngsters clashed with police in Manama. Masked rioters torched garbage cans and vehicles, blocked roads, detonated gas cylinders and threw stones at police from the downtown district to the Sanabis suburb..."

BIRD FLU COULD HURT WORLD ECONOMY, IMF WARNS

March 14, 2006 The EU Observer reported: "Governments are not sufficiently prepared for a possible human pandemic of the H5N1 bird flu strain which could deal a serious blow to the world economy, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has said. In a study revealed on Monday (13 March), the IMF said "if the pandemic is severe, the economic impact is likely to be significant."...

The IMF study points to likely absenteeism in the work place as well as disruptions in trade and payments in the event of a global pandemic of the H5N1 bird flu strain. If a global human pandemic breaks out "economic disruptions on the supply side would come directly from high absenteeism, as people may be asked to stay at home, or may choose to do so to care for sick relatives or because of fear of being exposed themselves," said the IMF.

The top financial body added that there may also be "disruptions to transportation, trade, payment systems, and major utilities... Moreover, demand could contract sharply, with consumer spending falling and investment being put on hold," according to the report.

The IMF researchers stress that predictions are based on a "high degree of uncertainty" referring, among others, to WHO reports indicating that accurate predictions of a pandemic's scope cannot be made before a virus emerges and begins to spread.

Nevertheless the IMF states on the basis of WHO information that "because of high global mobility and interconnection, illness could spread quickly, and, if the virus has a high fatality rate, threaten millions of lives around the world."..."

NANOTECHNOLOGY RESTORES HAMSTERS' SIGHT

March 14, 2006 The Guardian.co.uk reported: "Scientists claim to have repaired brain damage and restored the eyesight of blind animals using a revolutionary nanotechnology-based treatment. The therapy raises hopes that nanotechnology, the science of the incredibly small, could usher in an era of novel therapies for some of the most debilitating medical conditions, such as strokes and spinal cord damage.

The treatment will require extensive testing in animals before scientists know whether it is safe and effective enough to use on humans,

and if so, what kinds of damage it can help repair. But the study's researchers believe it could be used in humans within five years.

Rutledge Ellis-Behnke of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, who led the research, said that the technology could first be used to prevent patients undergoing brain surgery from suffering more damage from the surgeon's scalpel. Injecting nanoparticles into the brain while it was being operated on could, the researchers say, heal nerve damage caused by the removal of a tumour, for example.

The therapy uses tiny particles which, when injected into a damaged part of the brain, spontaneously assemble themselves into a "scaffold" gel which spreads through the damaged area. Tests show that severed nerves later regrow through the scaffold and form new connections.

The treatment exploits the ability of peptides, the building blocks of proteins, to assemble into 3D scaffolds under specific conditions. In the latest research, scientists at the institute used peptides measuring only five billionths of a metre long which assemble into a fine mesh of woven fibres as soon as they mix with cerebrospinal fluid, the liquid that bathes nerves in the spinal cord and brain.

In tests, injections of the nanoparticles formed a gel that triggered fresh growth of damaged nerves and helped restore the eyesight of 75% of animals, according to the study published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.

"We saw the tissue heal itself, which we've never seen before," said Dr Ellis-Behnke.

Repairing nerves in the central nervous system is fraught with difficulty because injuries to the brain or spine usually scar with thick tissue which prevents nerves from regrowing. The body also releases chemicals that hamper nerve growth, a safety mechanism that prevents damaged nerves forming the wrong connections, which could be disastrous.

Dr Ellis-Behnke believes the therapy stops scar tissue forming and protects damaged nerves, allowing them to regrow only in the damaged area of the brain.

In the tests, surgeons made incisions a millimetre or two long in hamsters' brains and injected them with nanoparticles up to 45 minutes later. After six weeks, most of the animals had regained their sight, while control animals injected only with a saline solution remained blind."..."

MAD COW DISEASE FOUND IN SOUTHERN US

March 14, 2006 The VOA News reported: "A cow in the southern state of Alabama has tested positive for mad cow disease. It is the third case ever found in the United States.

Officials with the state of Alabama say random testing has confirmed the presence of bovine spongiform encephalopathy, BSE, in a cow in the state. It is only the third case of the brain-wasting disease in the United States since the first case in December 2003. One case was imported from Canada. The other was reported in Texas last summer.

In Alabama, State Veterinarian Dr. Tony Frazier said the illness was detected in the brain tissue of a cow that had been sick and was not able to stand - what is known in the cattle industry as a downer. The animal failed to respond to treatment and was euthanized. "The physical exam by the attending veterinarian was that she was a downer. That's another important point because another firewall that's in place is that downer animals are not allowed into the food chain, so she could not have gone to slaughter," he said.

The cow was tested as part of routine surveillance for the disease. The United States Department of Agriculture says more than 660,000 cattle have been tested for BSE during the past two years.

Alabama State Health Officer Dr. Donald Williamson said there was no threat to human or animal health. "The animal never got in the food chain. The absence of the animal in the food chain then means that from this cow, the citizens of Alabama have no reason to think the beef supply is in any way unsafe. It is absolutely as safe today as it was yesterday as it will be tomorrow," he said."..."

INDIA HAS BEGUN TRAINING PERSONNEL FROM IRAN'S NAVY

March 13, 2006 The Middle East Newsline reported: "Indian officials said the training marked the first military cooperation between Teheran and New Dehli in a decade. They said the two countries were implementing a military agreement that included an exchange of visits by commanders, training, joint exercises and technical cooperation.

On March 8, the Iranian Navy completed a five-day training program at the Indian naval base in Kochi. Two Iranian Navy ships stayed in the southern Indian city for nearly a week and nearly 200 cadets underwent training.

The Indo-Asian News Service reported that the IRIS Bandar Abbas and IRIS Lavan anchored in Kochi on March 3. Bandar Abbas was termed a modified training ship; Lavan was described as an amphibious assault vessel..."

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