



PROPHETIC TIMES

WEEKLY WORLD NEWS UPDATE

OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA

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BIRD FLU VIRUS 'CLOSE TO PANDEMIC'

May 26, 2005 Guardian.co.uk reported: "A leading scientist warned yesterday that the avian flu virus is on the point of mutating into a pandemic disease and says that current estimates that such a pandemic could cause 7.5m deaths may understate the threat. His warnings come as experts writing in today's edition of Nature voice concerns about the world's inability to manufacture sufficient vaccines for a pandemic and warn of the impact that the virus - H5N1 - could have on the global economy.

In an accompanying editorial Nature argues that so far such warnings have "fallen on deaf ears". It backs a call by Prof Osterhaus and his colleagues at the Erasmus Medical Centre, in Rotterdam - one of the world's leading virus research labs - for a global taskforce to strengthen agencies on the ground.

There have been 90 human infections in south-east Asia, from which 54 people have died. But while culling and the vaccination of poultry appears to have slowed outbreaks in Thailand and other parts of south-east Asia, this year Vietnam has seen a worrying number of human infections in the same family groups. According to Prof Osterhaus such clustering could mean the virus is becoming more efficient at infecting humans - a precondition for a pandemic..."

EPIDEMIC THREAT AS BIRD FLU SPREADS TO MIGRATING GEESE

May 23, 2005 Times Online reported: "CHINA has closed nature reserves to the public and warned that people should avoid contact with poultry after the discovery of the deadly bird-flu virus in migrating geese in a remote western province. The World Health Organisation reiterated last week that the virus, known as H5N1, poses a huge potential threat in the event that it mutates to infect people. Such a strain could kill tens of millions of people, who would have no immunity.

However, officials said that the latest outbreak should not cause alarm because China had a "mature" bird-flu diagnosis, monitoring and prevention system. "People should be confident that the new cases can be brought under control as effective measures have been taken by the Government," Cui Shangjin, an expert from the national bird-flu reference laboratory, said.

The latest outbreak of avian flu was discovered after tests on 178 wild geese found dead on May 4 in the western Qinghai province. The bodies of the birds were on the shore of a vast lake in the province that borders Tibet and is a favourite migration pitstop.

The area, which is also popular among birdwatchers and as a tourist attraction, has been sealed off for ten days, officials said..."

IRAN RENEWS PROMISE TO REFRAIN FROM DEVELOPING NUCLEAR WEAPONS

May 26, 2005 Voice of America News reported: "Iran has renewed its promise to refrain from developing nuclear weapons, and talks on its atomic program will continue. British Foreign Minister Jack Straw made that announcement, following a three-hour meeting between Iranian nuclear officials and European Union ministers in Geneva. The E.U. has stepped up pressure on Tehran to abandon its nuclear efforts.

Mr. Straw said Iran's freeze of its uranium enrichment program would continue until agreement is reached on the future of its nuclear program.

The U.S. has called for Iran to be brought before the United Nations Security Council, to face possible sanctions, because it suspects Tehran is attempting to build nuclear weapons, in violation of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Iran has vehemently denied that claim, saying its nuclear program is solely for generating electricity.

So far, President Bush has shown support for the European efforts to entice Iran into an agreement. But Wednesday, White House spokesman Scott McClellan expressed skepticism about Iran's promises..."

MARINE KILLED BY SCRATCH AND SUPERBUG

May 24, 2005 Times Online reported: "A superfit Royal Marine collapsed and died within days of scratching his leg on a bush while on a training run — victim of a mutated superbug one doctor described as the worst she had ever seen.

Richard Campbell-Smith, 18, fell victim to pneumonia caused by a rare strain of bacteria that produces a lethal toxin that kills white blood cells. A microbiologist who gave evidence at the inquest into his death yesterday said that she had come across two such cases since December but none in the previous 15 years.

Marina Morgan, of the Royal Devon and Exeter Hospital, said that although cases of the toxin Panton-Valentine leukocidin were still rare, it was difficult to detect, even during post-mortem examination, and many cases might be slipping through.

Cases of the toxin have been reported in America, France, Australia and the Far East and Dr Morgan described the staphylococcus infection as the worst she had encountered.

Mr Campbell-Smith's grandmother, Edwina Fooks, said that the teenager was extremely fit and 28 weeks into his 32-week course at the Royal Marines' Commando Training Centre in Lympstone, Devon, when he was taken ill..."

STEM CELL HOPE FOR LIVER DISEASE

May 24, 2005 BBC News reported: "Researchers have begun a pioneering trial using patients' own stem cells to treat their chronic liver disease. A team at London's Hammersmith Hospital is attempting to reverse cirrhosis of the liver by harnessing and enhancing the body's own repair mechanism. They are using adult stem cells extracted from patients' bone marrow to generate new tissue in damaged areas.

A Japanese group is also testing adult stem cells as a treatment for liver fibrosis.

Liver disease is dramatically on the increase in the UK - something doctors mostly blame on burgeoning lifestyles of excess. Deaths from alcoholic liver disease have doubled in the last 10 years, with figures for the condition in young people increasing eight-fold due to binge drinking..."



FLAMES OF HATE

May 21, 2005 This is London reported: "Muslim protesters today called for the bombing of New York in a demonstration outside the US embassy in London. There were threats of "another 9/11" from militants angry at reports of the desecration of the Koran by US troops in Iraq.

Some among the crowd burned an effigy of Tony Blair on a crucifix and then set fire to a Union flag and a Stars and Stripes.

Led by a man on a megaphone, they chanted, "USA watch your back, Osama is coming back" and "Kill, kill USA, kill, kill George Bush". A small detail of police watched as they shouted: "Bomb, bomb New York" and "George Bush, you will pay, with your blood, with your head."

Demonstrators in Grosvenor Square, some with their faces covered with scarves, waved placards which included the message: "Desecrate today and see another 9/11 tomorrow."

The protest was organised by groups including the Muslim Council for Britain and the Muslim Parliamentary Association of the UK. Their protest follows fury in the Islamic world over the claims in a Newsweek magazine that US soldiers at Guantanamo Bay had abused the Koran..."

EGYPT THREATENED BY NEW INSURGENCY

May 23, 2005 Middle East Newline: "Egypt has been threatened by a new Islamic insurgency. The Jamestown Foundation said in a report that the spate of attacks in April has jeopardized Egypt's tourism industry and sparked a major crackdown by authorities against the opposition Muslim Brotherhood. The report said Egypt has prevented the Brotherhood and other Islamists from political activity.

Entitled "A New Phase for Jihad in Egypt?" the report was authored by Sherifa Zuhur a visiting professor of national security affairs at the Strategic Studies Institute at the U.S. Army War College. The report said Ms. Zuhur's report does not "necessarily reflect the official policy of the Department of the Army, the Department of Defense or the U.S. government."

On Saturday, Egypt reported the suicide of a leading Islamic insurgency suspect. Officials said Ashraf Yusef, accused of directing two suicide bombings in Cairo in April, died on May 20 after repeatedly beating his head against the wall..."

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