



PROPHETIC TIMES

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EXPERTS FEAR ESCAPE OF 1918 FLU FROM LAB

October 21, 2004 NewScientist.com reported: AThe 1918 flu virus spread across the world in three months and killed at least 40 million people. If it escaped from a lab today, the death toll could be far higher. AThe potential implications of an infected lab worker B and spread beyond the lab B are terrifying,≡ says D. A. Henderson of the University of Pittsburgh, a leading biosecurity expert.

Yet despite the danger, researchers in the US are working with reconstructed versions of the virus at less than the maximum level of containment. Many other experts are worried about the risks. AAll the virologists have spoken to have concerns,≡ says Ingegerd Kallings of the Swedish Institute for Infectious Disease Control in Stockholm, who helped set laboratory safety standards for the World Health Organization.

Work on the 1918 flu virus is not the only worry. Some experiments with bird flu have also been criticized as dangerous (New Scientist print edition, 28 February 2004).

Kallings and others are calling for international discussions to resolve the issues related to such work. Alt is time for influenza scientists to find a consensus on containment,≡ she says. John MacKenzie of the University of Queensland in Australia, who investigated how the SARS virus escaped from high-level containment labs in east Asia on three occasions after lab workers became infected, agrees. AA meeting would be beneficial.≡

The researchers working on the 1918 virus say their work is vital to understand what changes make flu viruses dangerous. So far five of the 1918 flu virus=s eight genes have been sequenced, using fragments retrieved from victims of the pandemic. Several teams have added one or more of these genes to modern flu viruses, or plan to B in effect partially recreating the long-vanished pandemic virus.

The latest work was done by Yoshihiro Kawaoka at the University of Wisconsin at Madison. His team showed that adding the 1918 gene for the surface protein haemagglutinin to modern viruses made them far deadlier to mice. The researchers also found that people born after 1918 have little or no immunity...≡

U.S. WARNS NATIONALS IN LEBANON OF ATTACK

October 19, 2004 Middle East Newslite reported: AThe United States has warned its nationals of an Al Qaida attack in Lebanon. A warden message issued by the U.S. embassy in Beirut warned Americans of the prospect of a major Islamic insurgency strike in Lebanon. The embassy urged the U.S. community in Lebanon to stay away from shopping centers in Beirut.

"In light of recent events, U.S. embassy personnel are exercising greater caution with respect to visits to shopping malls in the Beirut area and recommend American citizens do the same," the warden message, dated Oct. 14, said. The message did not elaborate. The embassy did not specify the danger of Americans in shopping malls.≡

FIVE BIGGEST EU STATES AGREE BIOMETRIC PASSPORTS

October 19, 2004 EUobserver reported: AInterior ministers of the five biggest EU countries have agreed at a meeting in Florence to include biometric indicators in passports. In a statement at the end of the talks, the ministers said they were hoping to introduce the fingerprint measure for passports issued in their countries starting in 2006.

The US has said it will start demanding visas from 27 countries - mostly European states - from 26 October 2005 if they do not have biometric data on their passports. The issuing of biometric passports is part of a US law designed to tighten up border security after the 11 September (2001) terrorist attacks.

However, ministers from Britain, France, Germany, Spain and Italy failed to agree on a German proposal to set up transit camps in North Africa to process would-be asylum seekers before they reach Europe. Italy backed the idea, which was also seen positively by the British. Spain and France, however, opposed the plan.≡

70,000 DEAD IN DARFOUR SINCE MARCH

October 18, 2004 The Middle East Newslite reported: AThe United Nations has assessed that at least 70,000 people have died or been killed in Sudan's Darfour province since March 2004.

The World Health Organization identified the casualties as those driven from their homes in Darfour over the last year. Many of the Darfour residents were said to have been killed in attacks by state-sponsored Arab militias.

"A significant percentage of deaths -- even between June and August 2004 -- is associated with violence, though its origins and nature have not been determined," the report, released at the agency's headquarters in Geneva, said.

The report, released on Oct. 15, said up to 15 percent of the casualties in the refugee camps were killed by the regime-aligned Janjaweed militia. The rest of the Darfour residents, said to have been black Christians, died from disease, including diarrhea, fever and respiratory ailments.≡

BRITISH TEAM TAKES FIRST STEP TO CLONING HUMAN EMBRYOS

October 20, 2004 London Daily Telegraph reported: A British scientists have begun an attempt to create Europe's first cloned human embryos. As the United Nations discusses a ban on all such research today - one that the UK would never sign and ratify even if it was agreed - a team in Newcastle upon Tyne has conducted experiments that mark the start of its human cloning effort.

The work, which is bitterly opposed by pro-life groups, will place the UK at the forefront of research to create a new generation of medical treatments using cloning to grow a potentially unlimited supply of a patient's own "stem cells" to treat a vast range of diseases, from Alzheimer's to Parkinson's.

The Newcastle team - Prof Alison Murdoch and Dr Miodrag Stojkovic - is based at the Centre for Life. In August, they were given permission by the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority to study how to clone microscopic human embryos and use them as a source of stem cells, which can turn into any of the 200 types in the body.

Yesterday Dr Stojkovic said that he had begun to use spare eggs, left over from IVF treatments. "I have done the first manipulation with human eggs," he said.

However, the eggs were not in a suitable state - with all the DNA in an easy-to-remove lump - for nuclear transfer, the cloning process. Prof Murdoch admitted that, although her team at the Newcastle NHS Fertility Centre has access to as many as 2,000 human eggs each year, they had a "huge mountain to climb" to use these eggs, which are a day or two old. "The quality is pretty awful."

But Dr Stojkovic said he was still confident that the first nuclear transfer - the actual process of cloning - will take place this year...≡

SANHEDRIN LAUNCHED IN TIBERIAS

October 14, 2004 Arutz Sheva reported: A unique ceremony - probably only the second of its kind in the past 1,600 years - is taking place in Tiberias today: The launching of a Sanhedrin, the highest Jewish-legal tribunal in...Israel.

The Sanhedrin, a religious assembly that convened in one of the Holy Temple chambers in Jerusalem, comprised 71 sages and existed during the Tannaitic period, from several decades before the Common Era until roughly 425 C.E. Details of today's ceremony are still sketchy, but the organizers' announced their intention to convene 71 rabbis who have received special rabbinic ordination as specified by Maimonides.

An attempt to reconvene the Sanhedrin was made several centuries ago in Tzfat. The body in fact ordained such greats as Rabbi Yosef Karo, the author of the classic Jewish Law code Shulhan Arukh. However, the opposition of other leading rabbis soon forced the end of the endeavor.

One of the leaders of today's attempt to revive the Sanhedrin is Rabbi Yeshai Ba'avad of Beit El. He said that the 71 rabbis "from across the spectrum received the special ordination, in accordance with Maimonides' rulings, over the past several months." Rabbi Ba'avad explained that the membership of the new body is not permanent: "What is much more crucial is the establishment of this body. Those who are members of it today will not necessarily be its members tomorrow. But the goal is to have one rabbinic body in Jerusalem that will convene monthly and issue rulings on central issues. This is the need of the generation and of the hour."

Rabbi Yisrael Ariel, who heads the Temple institute in Jerusalem, is one of the participating rabbis. He told Arutz-7 today, "Whether this will be the actual Sanhedrin that we await, is a question of time - just like the establishment of the State; we rejoiced in it, but we are still awaiting something much more ideal. It's a process. Today's ceremony is really the continuation of the renewal of the Ordination process in Israel, which we marked several months ago. Our Talmudic Sages describe the ten stages of exile of the Sanhedrin from Jerusalem to other locations, until it ended in Tiberias - and this is the place where it was foretold that it would be renewed, and from here it will be relocated to Jerusalem..."

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