

PROPHETIC TIMES

WEEKLY WORLD NEWS UPDATE

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S. KOREAN PANEL DEALS KNOCKOUT BLOW TO STEM CELL CLAIM

December 29, 2005 Reuters reported: "A South Korean panel dealt a devastating blow to discredited scientist Hwang Woo-suk on Thursday, concluding his once-celebrated team provided no data to prove a claim they had produced tailored embryonic stem cells. The findings deepened the disgrace of a man once heralded as a national hero for his pioneering work on stem cell and cloning research, who now faces possible criminal charges.

The panel will also review Hwang's 2004 paper on creating the first cloned human embryos for research and a claim he produced the world's first cloned dog, an Afghan hound named Snuppy.

Hwang did receive a bit of good news when a DNA lab in Seoul, which is not part of the panel's investigation, said its own tests indicated that Snuppy was an actual clone. But that was the only upbeat news in an otherwise somber day for the scientist.

"It is the panel's judgment that Professor Hwang's team does not have the scientific data to prove that they (patient-specific stem cells) were made," said Roe Jung-hye, chief of Seoul National University's research office..."

CHIEF OF STAFF HALUTZ SAYS NO IDF ACTION YET AGAINST IRAN'S NUKES

December 29, 2005 Haaretz.com reported: "Chief of Staff Dan Halutz said Thursday that he does not think the IDF will act soon against the Iranian nuclear program. "I do not believe an IDF operation against the Iranians will be necessary soon," Halutz told Army Radio.

Halutz told interviewer Ilana Dayan that he believes Iran will achieve its goal - a nuclear bomb -in the next decade. He differentiated against the "point of no return" when Iran acquires the independent technological capability to make the bomb, and completing the process. Mossad chief Meir Dagan told the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee this week that Iran could cross the point of no return in a matter of months.

Halutz also said that all political options to torpedo the Iranian nuclear program should be exhausted before any other action is considered. He said those efforts have successfully delayed Tehran's plans by two years.

Halutz also said that because Iran doesn't yet have a nuclear bomb, it does not constitute an existential threat against Israel. "When there is an existential threat, a country must take every action to ensure its existence."

Mossad chief Meir Dagan told the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee on Tuesday that Iran seeks to produce more than a single nuclear bomb. Dagan warned that within a number of months, Iran will attain technological independence, and that the subsequent development of a nuclear bomb will only be a matter of time. He refused to predict when Iran would be able to produce a bomb.

Presenting an annual assessment to the Knesset panel, Dagan noted that Iran's chances of attaining the necessary technology depends on whether its plans will be thwarted by other countries or whether it will be able to advance the uranium enrichment process.

"There exists a strategic Iranian decision to reach nuclear independence and the capability to produce bombs," Dagan stressed.

Speaking after Dagan, Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee chairman MK Yuval Steinitz (Likud) said that if Iran's nuclear program continues unchecked, Tehran will certainly have operational nuclear capability within one or two years.

Steinitz added that if Iran possesses atomic weaponry, the region will become a "black Middle East" that will pose a danger and a threat to the entire world..."

CHINA'S UNDERGROUND WATER SUPPLIES '90 PERCENT POLLUTED'

December 28, 2005 Voice of America reported: "A Chinese environmental official says underground water supplies are contaminated in about 90 percent of China's cities, due to the country's fast-paced economic growth.

Vice Minister of the State Environmental Protection Administration Zhang Lijun is quoted as saying China will face even greater water pollution problems in the next 25 years, as its economy continues to expand.

China News Service, a non-governmental news agency in China, reports Wednesday that Mr. Zhang delivered his comments about water pollution at an environmental hearing in Beijing on Tuesday. Delegates at the meeting are said to have been told that pollution is most extensive in cities in northern China.



The government-run Xinhua news agency and other official media republished China News Service's account today. Underground water supplies are estimated to provide drinking water for almost 70 percent of China's population, as well as irrigation for about 40 percent of the nation's farmland..."

REPORT: SYRIA AGREES TO HIDE IRAN NUKES

December 26, 2005 The World Tribune.com reported: "Syria has signed a pledge to store Iranian nuclear weapons and missiles.

The London-based Jane's Defence Weekly reported that Iran and Syria signed a strategic accord meant to protect either country from international pressure regarding their weapons programs. The magazine, citing diplomatic sources, said Syria agreed to store Iranian materials and weapons should Teheran come under United Nations sanctions.

Iran also pledged to grant haven to any Syrian intelligence officer indicted by the UN or Lebanon. Five Syrian officers have been questioned by the UN regarding the Hariri assassination, Middle East Newline reported.

"The sensitive chapter in the accord includes Syria's commitment to allow Iran to safely store weapons, sensitive equipment or even hazardous materials on Syrian soil should Iran need such help in a time of crisis," Jane's said.

The accord also obligated Syria to continue to supply the Iranian-sponsored Hizbullah with weapons, ammunition and communications. Iran has been the leading weapons supplier to Hizbullah, with about 15,000 missiles and rockets along the Israeli-Lebanese border..."

BIRD FLU EXPANDS WORLDWIDE IN 2005

December 24, 2005 Voice of America reported: "Fears of a long-predicted global influenza pandemic grew stronger in 2005 as a deadly form of the virus spread among birds worldwide and killed 36 more people in the disease's Southeast Asian epicenter. Governments and international organizations stepped up cooperative measures to isolate the disease and to deal with a possible pandemic.

The number of human deaths from bird flu more than doubled in 2005 to over 70, according to World Health Organization numbers. So far, bird flu deaths are limited to East Asia, mainly the Southeast, with Vietnam the hardest hit. The death toll accounts for half of all human cases, an alarming death rate in the view of physician Gregory Poland of the Mayo Clinic College of Medicine in Minnesota.

"If that virus gains the ability to easily transmit from human-to-human, it will be a disaster of unprecedented proportion," he said.

Fueling this fear was the global spread of infected birds from Asia, thanks to seasonal migrations. By year's end, birds with the deadly H5N1 form of avian flu had been detected in Europe and Canada. In countries where it was found, tens of thousands of poultry were slaughtered..."

ISRAEL WORRIED OVER ISLAMIC POWER IN EGYPT

December 21, 2005 The Middle East Newline reported: "Israel has become concerned over the rising power of the Islamic opposition in Egypt.

Israeli officials have concluded that the gains achieved by the Muslim Brotherhood in parliamentary elections in December could change relations with the Jewish state and the Middle East. They said the Brotherhood win could encourage Hamas's takeover of the Palestinian Authority, particularly in the Gaza Strip.

"To get 88 seats in the Egyptian [People's] Assembly is an achievement that needs our attention," Amos Gilad, director of the Defense Ministry's political-military division, said.

The Brotherhood rise took place in wake of an Israeli decision to increase strategic cooperation with Egypt. In September 2005, Israel allowed Egypt to deploy 750 police commandos, supported by combat vehicles, helicopters and naval vessels, along the 14-kilometer Egypt-Gaza border..."

