



PROPHETIC TIMES

WEEKLY WORLD NEWS UPDATE

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ARTIFICIAL LIFE 'COULD BE CREATED WITHIN FIVE YEARS'

March 12, 2009 The London Telegraph reported: "Laboratories across the world are closing in on a "second genesis" - an achievement that would be one of the greatest scientific breakthroughs of all time.

Prof David Deamer, from California University, said although building a new lifeform from scratch is a daunting task he is confident it can happen in five to 10 years. He said: "The momentum is building - we're knocking at the door."

A synthetic, made-to-order living system could produce everything from new drugs to biofuels and greenhouse gas absorbers. Opponents of the controversial research claim the technology could lead to machines becoming "almost human". But there would be no safety issues for a long time as any initial organisms would be very primitive and need large-scale life support in the lab, reports New Scientist.

The finishing line could be in sight after geneticists Professor George Church and Dr Michael Jewett, of Harvard Medical School, told a synthetic biology conference in Hong Kong that they had synthetically created part of a cell, called a ribosome.

The breakthrough offers hope that they could create an entire cell; something Prof Church believes would be a relatively minor challenge. He said: "There's nothing you'd expect to go wrong - the way we expected things to go wrong with the assembly."

However, according to Dr Anthony Forster, of Vanderbilt University, Tennessee, who is also creating a synthetic living cell in a test tube with Prof Church, "until you actually try this you won't know".

"Having said that we know cells can do it so we should be able to do it sooner or later."



SARKOZY MARCHES FRANCE BACK INTO NATO COMMAND

March 12, 2009 AFP reported: "President Nicolas Sarkozy announced Wednesday that France would return to the NATO military command and seek a larger role as a full partner of the United States and its other Atlantic allies.

Four decades after General Charles de Gaulle declared France's independence from the command structure, while remaining a political member of the alliance, Sarkozy said the time had come to once more play a leading role.

"A state alone, a solitary nation, is a nation without influence and if we want to count for something we have to know how to bind ourselves to allies and friendships," Sarkozy told a defence seminar in Paris. "France wants peace, France wants freedom and France also knows who our friends are and who our enemies are. I'm not afraid to say it, our friends and allies are first and foremost the Western family," he said.

Speaking as commander in chief, Sarkozy said France had been moving closer to playing a full role in NATO's missions and committees ever since De Gaulle's decision to withdraw from the command in 1966.

"In ending this long process, France will be stronger and more influential. Why? Because those who are absent are always in the wrong. Because France must be a joint leader rather than submit to others," he said. Sarkozy said France's independent nuclear deterrent would remain outside NATO control, but argued that since the United States and Britain have the same policy this does not represent a continued exclusion.

The president and his supporters insist the move will boost France's influence among the Western allies, and allow Paris to promote a common European identity without this being seen as a rival to the US alliance.

Critics counter that Paris will now lose face internationally and be seen as a subordinate to the United States."...

But De Gaulle's decision has a powerful symbolic significance for the French, who are traditionally wary of falling under the domination of Washington and value their country's independent foreign policy.

Since the fall of the Berlin Wall, this half-in half-out stance has for many observers become an anomaly, with France's close involvement in NATO missions in the Balkans drawing it closer into alliance decision making."..."

U.S. 2008 HOUSEHOLD WEALTH FELL \$11.2 TRILLION: FED

March 12, 2009 Reuters reported: "U.S. households suffered a record-large 9 percent drop in wealth and pared debt in the fourth quarter as a deepening recession battered confidence and finances, Federal Reserve data showed on Thursday. Household net worth dropped by \$5.1 trillion from the prior quarter to \$51.5 trillion. For the full year, net worth dropped by \$11.2 trillion, reflecting steep declines in the housing and stock markets.

The declines in household net worth were the largest since quarterly and annual records began in 1951 and 1946, respectively, the Fed

said. Since a second-quarter 2007 peak of \$64.4 trillion, household wealth has dropped by about 20 percent. That has put a chill on consumer spending and added to Americans' anxiety about economic well-being.”...

VATICAN DIVORCES FROM ITALIAN LAW

January 2, 2009 BBCNews.com reported: “The Vatican City State, the world's smallest sovereign state, has decided to divorce itself from Italian law. Vatican legal experts say there are too many laws in Italian civil and criminal codes, and that they frequently conflict with Church principles.

With effect from New Year's Day, the Pope has decided that the Vatican will no longer automatically adopt laws passed by the Italian parliament. All Italian laws will be examined one by one before they are adopted.

Under the Lateran treaties signed exactly 80 years ago between Italy and the Pope, and the Italian Parliamentary system, Italian laws were applied automatically. A senior Vatican Canon lawyer, Monsignor Jose Maria Serrano Ruiz, has gone on record as saying that Italian laws are too many, too unstable and too often conflict with the moral teachings of the Catholic Church.

The reaction from the Italian government has been that from a technical point of view, the Vatican may well be right.”...

The Vatican has also decided to scrutinise international treaties before deciding whether or not to adhere to them. It has recently refused to approve a United Nations declaration decriminalising homosexuality. The wording went too far, Vatican officials said, in placing different sexual orientations on the same level.

Some legal observers believe that the Vatican is simply trying to assert its legal independence in cases involving for example, civil unions, divorce, living wills, or euthanasia. If Italy were to legalise same sex marriages or euthanasia, for example, the Vatican would now be able to refuse to recognise that.”

US WARSHIPS HEAD FOR SOUTH CHINA SEA AFTER STANDOFF

March 12, 2009 TimesOnline.com reported: “A potential conflict was brewing last night in the South China Sea after President Obama dispatched heavily armed American destroyers to the scene of a naval standoff between the US and China at the weekend.

Mr Obama's decision to send an armed escort for US surveillance ships in the area follows the aggressive and co-ordinated manoeuvres of five Chinese boats on Sunday. They harassed and nearly collided with an unarmed American vessel.

Washington accused the Chinese ships of moving directly in front of the US Navy surveillance ship Impeccable, forcing its crew to take emergency action, and to deploy a high-pressure water hose to deter the Chinese ships. Formal protests were lodged with Beijing after the incident.

On a day that Mr Obama and his senior officials met the Chinese Foreign Minister, Yang Jiechi, in Washington, Beijing showed no sign of backing down. Its military chiefs accused the unarmed US Navy ship of being on a spying mission.



The US keeps a close eye on China's arsenal, including its expanding fleet of submarines in the area. Washington says that the confrontation occurred in international waters, but Beijing claims nearly all the South China Sea as its own...”...”

NETANYAHU MAY SETTLE FOR INTERIM GOVERNMENT UNTIL EARLY ELECTION

March 12, 2009 DEBKAfile reported: “Having failed to draw Kadima and Labor into a unity government, ...political sources report that Israel's prime minister-designate Binyamin Netanyahu is planning to settle for a provisional administration serving six months before calling another early election.

Loth to rest his government's stability on right-wing and religious parties (61 out of 120 Knesset members), Netanyahu prefers to take his chances on a new ballot. But he rejected the recommendation from of his close advisers to notify the president next week that he is throwing in the sponge in the belief that he can use the extra six months to good advantage.

His main consideration is that Israel expects to be embroiled in a major military confrontation in the next few months with Iran, Hamas or Hizballah – or all three at once – a compelling scenario for a national emergency government against which Kadima and Labor will find it hard to hold out.

With this eventuality in mind, the Likud leader keeping the senior portfolios of security, treasury and justice open for members of those two parties or deposited with Likud ministers who will step aside and make way for them in an emergency.

A prominent example of this tactic is the new Likud legislator, the former chief of staff Moshe Yaalon. He is penciled in for defense in the interim administration on the understanding that if Labor joins, he will step down and accept the No. 2 position. Uri Yogev, a former treasury official, likewise expects to stand down for a Labor or Kadima candidate in finance.

Netanyahu is not waiting for a war emergency; he is quietly pursuing Labor and Kadima in informal conversations with defense minister Ehud Barak of Labor and Kadima's Shaul Mofaz and Tzahi Hanegbi.”...”

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