

PROPHETIC TIMES

WEEKLY WORLD NEWS UPDATE

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BEATING HEART TISSUE GROWN IN LAB



December 15, 2004 BBC News reported: "Scientists have cultured small pieces of heart tissue which beat in the same way as the whole organ. The US Massachusetts Institute of Technology team hope the work will lead to new ways of repairing heart damage.

They grew the tissue from a few rat heart cells which were placed on an artificial scaffold, and then stimulated with an electric current. Researchers told Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences: "Think of it as a patch for a broken heart."

Myocardium, or heart muscle cells, cannot regenerate after injury, limiting the effectiveness of standard therapies. And heart cells are difficult to culture by conventional methods because they tend to lose their shape and stop functioning. Researcher Dr Gordana Vunjak-Novakovic said: "We have been trying to engineer a

patch of tissue that has the same properties as native heart tissue, or myocardium, that could be attached over injured myocardium." The MIT approach involves seeding cardiac cells from a rat onto a 3D polymer scaffold, which slowly biodegrades as the cells develop into a full tissue.

The cell/scaffold constructs, which are a little smaller than a penny piece and about the same thickness, were bathed in a medium that supplies nutrients and gases. The researchers then applied electrical signals designed to mimic those in a native heart. They had no idea whether the approach would work, but it turned out that electrical stimulation was crucial for the development of fully functioning cardiac tissue. After only eight days of cultivation, single cells grew into a tissue with a remarkable level of structural and functional organization..."

ISRAEL CALLS ON NATIONALS TO LEAVE IRAQ

December 13, 2004 The Middle East Newline reported: "Israel has called on nationals to leave Iraq immediately.

Israeli officials said Israelis in Iraq were deemed to be in danger of abduction and death. They said an undetermined number of Israelis were in Baghdad as well as in northern Iraq.

On Sunday, the government's Counter-Terrorism Command issued a warning against Israeli travel to Iraq. In the first such acknowledgement, the unit also called on Israelis to leave Iraq immediately.

Arab diplomatic sources have asserted that scores of Israelis were providing services and training to Kurdish militias in northern Iraq. The sources said Israelis have also been engaged in business ventures with Kurdish companies and transporting goods to and from Iraq..."

ISRAEL, EU AGREE ON UPGRADED STATUS

December 13, 2004 International Christian Embassy Jerusalem- reported: "Israel and the European Union have overcome the remaining sticking points in negotiations, paving the way for the Jewish state's entrance to the European Neighborhood Policy, a status one step below full membership. Trade and economic programs previously of-limits to Israel will now be opened. Israel had to make concessions regarding the EU's involvement in the peace process, and agreed to 'formalizing a dialogue' between the two regarding Israel's undeclared nuclear weapons capabilities."

CHINA, RUSSIA WILL HOLD FIRST WAR GAMES

December 13, 2004 The Associated Press reported: "China and Russia will hold their first joint military exercise next year, the Chinese government said Monday, as President Hu Jintao called for an expansion of the rapidly growing alliance between the former Cold War rivals.

The announcement came during a visit to Beijing by Russian Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov, who was expected to discuss expanding the Kremlin's multibillion-dollar annual arms sales to China. The exercises are to take place on Chinese territory, the official China News Service said. But that report and other government statements didn't say when they would take place or what forces would be involved.

"We want ... to promote the development of the two countries' strategic collaborative relationship in order to safeguard and promote regional and world peace," CNS quoted Hu as telling Ivanov. Beijing and Moscow have built up military

and political ties since the Soviet collapse in 1991, driven in part by joint desire to counterbalance U.S. global dominance.

They are partners of the six-nation Shanghai Cooperation Organization, formed to combat what they consider the common threat of Islamic extremism and separatism. The other members are the former Soviet republics of Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

The announcement of military exercises comes two months after Beijing and Moscow settled the last of their decades-old border disputes that led to violent clashes in the 1960s and '70s. The agreement was signed during an October trip to Beijing by Russian President Vladimir Putin, who said relations had reached "unparalleled heights." That visit also produced a pact to jointly develop Russian energy resources - an urgent issue for Beijing, which is trying to avert fuel shortages in its booming economy.

The frontier where at one point 700,000 Soviet troops faced 1 million Chinese soldiers is now a bustling cross-border market. China has become the Russian arms industry's No. 1 customer, and is expected to buy \$2 billion in weapons this year. Russia is a key supplier for the Chinese military's effort to modernize its arsenal and back up frequent threats to invade Taiwan, the self-ruled island that Beijing claims as its territory.

The United States and the European Union have banned weapons sales to China since its bloody 1989 crackdown on pro-democracy protesters. But Moscow has supplied Beijing with high-performance Su-27 fighters and other top-of-the-line arms..."

N. KOREA: JAPAN SANCTIONS WOULD BE WAR DECLARATION

Dec 15, 2004 Reuters reported: "North Korea warned Japan on Wednesday that it would treat economic sanctions as a "declaration of war" and threatened to try to exclude Tokyo from six-party talks on Pyongyang's nuclear arms programs.

Calls are growing from the Japanese public and politicians for the government to impose sanctions on North Korea after Tokyo said bones Pyongyang had identified as those of Japanese it had kidnapped were from other people.

"If sanctions are applied against the DPRK (North Korea) due to the moves of the ultra-right forces (in Japan), we will regard it as a declaration of war against our country and promptly react to the action by an effective physical method," a spokesman for North Korea's Foreign Ministry said in a statement carried by the official Korean Central News Agency, monitored in Tokyo.

North Korea handed over the bones at talks in Pyongyang in November, saying they were the remains of Megumi Yokota and Kaoru Matsuki, two of 13 Japanese who Pyongyang has admitted abducting in the 1970s and 1980s to teach its spies about Japan.

Japan, which has no diplomatic ties with North Korea, lodged a protest with Pyongyang and demanded clarification on the fate of 10 Japanese who Tokyo believes were kidnapped. North Korea has said eight of the 10 are dead and two others unaccounted for.

Pyongyang has said in the past that any imposition of sanctions by Japan would be tantamount to a declaration of war. A hefty majority of Japanese citizens favor economic sanctions on North Korea, media polls have shown..."



BIN LADEN TAPE ADVOCATES OVERTHROW OF SAUDI GOVERNMENT

December 16, 2004 The Voice of America reported: "Terrorist mastermind Osama bin Laden apparently has surfaced on an audiotape calling for the overthrow of Saudi Arabia's government. The lengthy message criticizes the Saudi monarchy, saying its attempts at reform will not change anything and that change will only come through armed struggle and the government's overthrow.

Authorities say the authenticity of the tape, which surfaced Thursday on an Islamist website, could not immediately be verified. He also praises the militants who attacked the U.S. consulate in the Saudi city of Jeddah earlier this month, asking God to be merciful on them. Four of the attackers were killed, a fifth was arrested. Five consulate staff members who were not American were also killed.

Osama bin Laden remains a fugitive. He was last heard from in a videotape shortly before the U.S. presidential elections last month..."