



PROPHETIC TIMES

WEEKLY WORLD NEWS UPDATE

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CORD BLOOD YIELDS 'ETHICAL' EMBRYONIC STEM CELLS

August 18, 2005 NewScientist.com reported: "Hopes for treating disease with stem cells from umbilical cord blood has received a major boost, following the discovery of primitive cells with clinical potential matching that of the far more controversial embryonic stem cells (ESCs). The latter are originally derived from human fetuses, which are then destroyed, and have become a major ethical issue, especially in the US.

Furthermore, the same team is applying new microgravity technology - originally developed by NASA for the International Space Station - to make large enough quantities of the stem cells to repair tissue damage in patients.

The newly discovered human cells, named "cord-blood-derived embryonic-like stem cells" or CBEs, are not quite as primitive as embryonic stem cells, which can give rise to any tissue type of the body. But they appear to be much more versatile than "adult stem cells" such as those found in bone marrow which repair damaged tissue during life.

"We have found a unique group of cells that bring together the essential qualities of both types of stem cells for the first time," says Colin McGuckin of Kingston University in Surrey, UK, who co-led the team with colleague Nico Forraz.

In laboratory experiments, the team successfully coaxed CBEs into becoming liver cells. They also showed that the cells have most of the surface "markers" considered as identifiers of embryonic stem cells and form "embryoid bodies" - characteristic clumps of cells formed by ESCs.

But the factor that may make the discovery very significant is that umbilical cord blood can be saved, stored and multiplied without any of the ethical dilemmas facing embryonic stem cell use, which are derived from human fetuses. And with more and more "banks" around the world for saving cord blood, the potential for finding tissue matches for every patient becomes more and more realistic. "There are now eight banks in the UK alone," says McGuckin..."

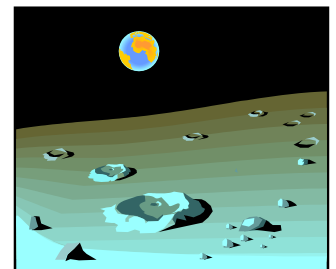
CHINA PLANS UNMANNED MOON MISSION BY 2007

August 18, 2005 CNN reported: "China plans to launch its first unmanned lunar flight by 2007 in a three-phase mission that aims to bring back rock samples, state media said on Tuesday. In the second stage, a lunar vehicle would land on the moon by 2012 and by 2017 the rock samples could be collected, the report said quoting aerospace officials.

"Scientists hope to get to know the moon's environment and analyse the composition of lunar rocks," the China Daily quoted Luan Enjie, chief commander of China's lunar exploration program, as saying.

China has developed an ambitious space program since its first Long March rocket blasted off in 1970. It became the third country to successfully send a man into space in October 2003 and regularly sends up research satellites.

China's lunar orbiter weighed more than two tons and was expected to fly for a year, collecting information for a mapping of the moon's surface and studying its mineral content, Luan said. He did not say when China might be sending an astronaut to the moon, but said the 2017 mission would provide data for a manned expedition."



WIDE AREA OF JAPAN SHAKEN BY POWERFUL EARTHQUAKE

August 16, 2005 Voice of America News reported: "An earthquake with an estimated magnitude of seven-point-two rattled a wide area of Japan on Tuesday. While there are dozens of people reported injured, the casualties and damage appear relatively light.

The tremor off the Pacific Coast in northern Japan swayed skyscrapers in Tokyo, more than 300 kilometers from the earthquake's epicenter. In the northern city of Sendai, part of the roof of a sports center caved in, but rescuers say most of the injuries there are not serious. A tsunami alert was issued for part of northern Japan's Pacific coast. The largest waves observed hitting the shore were reported to be only ten centimeters high.

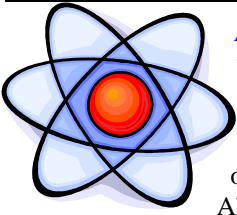
Japan Meteorological Agency official Yasuo Sekita says the offshore quake would have been much more destructive if it had been closer to land. But Mr. Sekita warns that people in northern Japan should still be prepared for powerful aftershocks that could cause damage.

Landslides triggered by the earthquake, which was more than 40 kilometers below the sea surface, were reported in several rural

locations. Electricity was knocked out to 17,000 households in Miyagi and Fukushima prefectures and at least one building caught fire in Sendai.

Several nuclear power plants automatically shut down for a brief period and bullet train service in the affected area also was suspended. Flights in and out of several airports, including those in Tokyo, were temporarily halted while runways were inspected for damage."

IRAN UNVEILS HARDLINE CABINET, WARNS US OVER NUCLEAR THREAT



August 15, 2005 SpaceWar.com reported: "Iran's ultra-conservative President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad unveiled a new hardline cabinet on Sunday as Tehran warned the West not to resort to bullying over its nuclear programme.

Among the key appointments submitted to parliament for approval, Ahmadinejad proposed Ali Saidloo as oil minister of the OPEC member, and conservative MP Manoushehr Mottaki as foreign minister. Saidloo, Ahmadinejad's successor as mayor of Tehran, is a relative unknown in national Iranian politics, while Mottaki has served as ambassador to Japan and Turkey.

Iran bluntly told US President George W. Bush that it would respond to any attack, and warned that it could consider ending a freeze on uranium enrichment, a process that can make fuel for a nuclear bomb.

"Bush should know that our capabilities are much greater than those of the United States," foreign ministry spokesman Hamid Reza Asefi told reporters. "We don't think that the United States will make such a mistake."

The US president on Friday refused to rule out the use of force against Iran over its resumption of limited nuclear activities last week, saying "all options are on the table."

His stance was also opposed by Germany, one of the three European countries which have been negotiating with Iran over its nuclear work, with Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder saying military options were "don't amount to anything."

The standoff between Iran and the West reached crisis point last week when a Tehran defiantly resumed uranium conversion, the initial stage in the nuclear fuel cycle, despite international warnings.

The International Atomic Energy Agency's board subsequently called on Iran to halt the work and ordered the UN watchdog to report back on September 3 on Tehran's compliance with international safeguards. But the IAEA, which has been investigating Iran for more than two years after determining it had hidden nuclear activities over two decades, stopped short of referring the dossier to the UN Security Council, which could impose sanctions..."

BRUSSELS SAYS THINGS ARE LOOKING UP FOR EURO ZONE ECONOMY

August 15, 2005 EUobserver reported: "The European economy appears to be regaining some momentum and the indications are that things will continue to improve in the second half of the year, the European Commission announced yesterday (11 August)

Presenting its growth figures for the second quarter of 2005, the Commission said that the euro zone had grown by 0.3%, a much stronger performance than most analysts had expected, although weaker than the 0.5% seen in the first three months of the year. The figures were helped by some surprisingly strong economic growth from Italy, which has rebounded from recession but were dragged down by stagnation in Germany, Europe's largest economy.

The Commission also said that growth should be higher in the fourth quarter of the year (September to December), forecasting 0.4%-0.8%. The economy should be spurred on by better economic conditions globally and the fact that the recent decline in the value of the euro against the dollar has made life easier for European exporters, Brussels said.

The European Central Bank also sounded a slightly more optimistic note on the European economy. In its monthly report published yesterday, the Bank said that the economy should grow in a "sustained, albeit gradual manner".

Although this may not seem like an especially optimistic outlook, it represents a key departure from the ECB's usual language and signals a marked change in the Bank's usually more gloomy assessment of the economy. However, there was little comfort for those euro zone politicians calling for lower interest rates. The ECB repeated its opinion that it believes rates – at a historically low level of 2% - were "appropriate".

And the Bank warned that high oil prices, which continue to rise strongly, could dampen the recovery. The ECB said it was also worried about the low level of consumer confidence in the euro zone. Economists and market participants now expect the Bank to increase borrowing costs rather than decrease them, which would potentially slow the economy and harm the consumer."