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GULF NEWS
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Defiant pirates recapture US hostage

THREE DIE IN FRENCH OPERATION AS SOMALI CAPTORS THREATEN TO KILL AMERICAN CAPTAIN

Nairobi (AFP & AP) French commandos stormed a yacht held by Somali pirates in an operation yesterday that left one French hostage and two gunmen dead, hours after an American shipper held in a separate ransom battle narrowly failed in a dramatic rescue bid, officials said.

As a multinational force off Somalia built up its military muscle, French forces staged their rescue six days after the yacht was seized by pirates in the Gulf of Aden and talks broke down, the French presidency said. One hostage and two pirates were killed and three other adults and a child on the yacht were rescued, a French presidential spokesman said.

Earlier, the American captain held hostage by four Somali pirates made a desperate escape attempt but was recaptured soon after he had jumped off the boat. Officials said other pirates sought to reinforce their colleagues by sailing hijacked ships with other captives aboard to the scene of the standoff.

A Somali in contact with a pirate leader said the captors want a ransom and are ready to kill the hostage, Captain Richard Phillips, if attacked. The US was bolstering its force by dispatching other warships to the site off the Horn of Africa, where a US destroyer shadowed the drifting lifeboat carrying Phillips. He was taken hostage in the pirates' failed effort to hijack the cargo ship Maersk Alabama on Wednesday.

The pirates' strategy is to link up with their colleagues, who are holding Russian, German, Filipino and other hostages, and get Phillips to lawless Somalia, where they could hide the hostage and make it difficult to stage a rescue.

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SECOND LIFE



Rescued cheetahs among attractions at Abu Dhabi Wildlife Centre
Abu Dhabi Wildlife Centre (ADWC) Director Rami Barcellos plays with smuggled cheetahs Jeanie and BoB. The centre rescued the endangered pair, who as original owners wanted to keep them as pets at home. Both were medically treated and given a second chance at survival. Cheetahs are the world's fastest land animals, but have weak jaws and small teeth which does not help when fighting predators in the wild. The ADWC will open its doors to the public this summer, providing educational lectures at the sanctuary that is home to numerous rehabilitated, orphaned or abandoned animals.
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YOUR TURN P24
Your complaints resolved
Gulf News helps find solutions
to readers' problems

FUNDAY
Help the Easter Bunny!
Guide him through the puzzle to find the eggs



**Gene mutation
found to trigger
deadly skin cancer**

Excessive sun exposure believed to be cause

London (Reuters) Up to 70 per cent of melanoma skin cancers may be triggered by a gene mutation that causes cells to become cancerous after excessive exposure to the sun, researchers say.

The discovery could lead to better treatments for the deadliest form of skin cancer after scientists at Britain's Institute of Cancer Research established the BRAF gene mutation is often the first event in the cascade of genetic changes leading to melanoma.

Scientists already knew the BRAF gene was frequently damaged in patients with melanoma, but it was unclear if this was a cause or effect of the cancer.

The British institute published its findings in the journal Cancer Cell.

"Our study shows that the genetic damage of BRAF is the first step in skin cancer," said lead author Richard Marais. "Understanding this process will help us develop effective treatments for the disease." The hope is that

FACTBOX
What is melanoma?

- The most serious form of skin cancer
- Sun exposure is the main - and most preventable - risk factor, causing genetic damage to the skin
- Around one third of melanomas develop from normal moles
- The most develop on areas of previous normal skin
- Warning signs include: Two halves of mole do not look the same; The edges of the mole are irregular, blurred or jagged; Colour is uneven, with more than one shade; Mole is wider than firm.

knowing the genetics behind skin cancer will lead to the development of targeted drugs that can fix the faulty genetic machinery.

Melanoma accounts for a small percentage of skin cancers, but it is responsible for most skin cancer deaths.

DEFENCE CONTRACT

Russia signs \$50m deal to buy Israeli spy drones

Tensions colour unprecedented pact with Jewish state to deliver unmanned aerial vehicles

Moscow (AFP) Russia has concluded a contract with an Israeli firm for the sale of drones, a defence official said yesterday, in Moscow's first purchase of military hardware from the Jewish state.

"We have concluded a contract with an Israeli firm on supplying Russia with several drones," Russian

Deputy Defence Minister Vladimir Popovkin said after returning from a trip to Israel, quoted by Russian news agencies.

The minister did not name the Israeli company, but press reports have identified it as Israel Aerospace Industries and put the value of the deal at \$50 million (\$7 million euros). Negotiations

with Israel are likely to have been coloured by tensions over Russian ties with some of the Jewish state's Middle Eastern adversaries, such as Iran, say analysts.

Popovkin yesterday echoed earlier dissatisfaction voiced by Russia's military with the drones produced by his country's own defence industry. The purpose of the

latest purchase is "for our manufacturers to see what it is we're talking about," he said. Moscow began shopping for foreign unmanned aircraft after last year's war in Georgia. Defence analysts say Georgia made effective use of its Israeli drones in the conflict, while Russia's home-made drones turned out to be inferior.

ALGERIA

Bouteflika wins third term in office

Algiers (Reuters) Algerian President Abdelaziz Bouteflika won 90.24 per cent of the vote in a presidential election, officials said yesterday extending his holdover Algeria, an oil producer with a lingering Islamist insurgency.

The result gives Bouteflika, 72, a third five-year term as president and leaves him in power until 2014.

President His Highness Shaikh Khalifa Bin Zayed Al Nahyan and His Highness Shaikh Mohammad Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice-President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai, sent Bouteflika cables of congratulations on winning the election.

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WHIFF OF LUXURY

This chocolate takes your breath away

Mini-inhaler shoots chocolate mist into mouth to mimic experience of savouring cocoa delights

By Kay Lorenz

New York Chocobolics rejoice: A Harvard professor has invented a calorie-free way of experiencing the sweet obsession - by inhaling it.

Biomedical engineer David Edwards has created a mini-inhaler - dubbed Le Whif - that shoots a chocolate mist into one's mouth, mimicking, he says, the experience of savouring the real thing.

Edwards is known in science circles for designing a more efficient way to deliver inhaled medicines by tinkering with the particle sizes, and he has tapped that science in his lipstick-size chocolate delivery gadget. The chocolate particles are small enough to shoot out of the inhaler, but too large to make it to the lungs.

Not only does this delivery system remove the guilt that comes with chocolate's calories, he says, but it also moves us toward our culinary future. Evolution, he says, is trending toward smaller meals eaten more frequently - until chewing is pretty much replaced by breathing. "Breathing is eating," he says.

Of course, before dessert comes the main meal: Edwards has plans for inventing inhalable steak, carrots, and more. But for now, he is busy marketing Le Whif: a world tour is on tap.

— New York Times News Service



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