

## South Korean stem-cell researcher resigns over doubt

REUTERS, Seoul

South Korean researcher Hwang Woo-suk resigned from his university on Friday after the school said he fabricated stem-cell research that had raised hopes of new cures for hard-to-treat diseases.

A university panel, releasing initial findings of a probe, accused Hwang of damaging the scientific community with his deception, while South Korea's government ruled the scandal surrounding the country's star scientist and said it may pull its funding for his research.

"I sincerely apologize to the people for creating a shock and disappointment," Hwang told reporters as he was leaving his office at Seoul National University, considered the country's top institution of higher learning.

"With an apologetic heart ... I step down as professor," he said.

However, Hwang still maintained that he had produced the technology to create patient-matched stem cells as he claimed in a May article in the journal *Science*.

"I emphasize that patient-specific stem cells belong to South Korea and you are going to see this," said Hwang, a veterinarian.

Earlier Friday, a panel of Seoul National University experts said Hwang had faked results of at least nine of 11 stem cell lines he claimed to have created in the May paper, the first confirmation of allegations that have cast a shadow over all his purported breakthroughs in cloning and stem-cell technology.

"This kind of error is a grave act that damages the foundation of science," the panel said.

The South Korean government, which had strongly supported Hwang and designated him the country's first "top scientist," said Friday it was "miserable" over the reported results of the investigation and will start its own probe over ethics breaches.

Choi Seong-sik, vice minister of science and technology, said it's impossible to recover money already spent for Hwang, a total \$39.9 million for research and facilities since 1998. But his ministry, which admitted errors

in its handling of Hwang's projects, will look at ending other funding and withdraw the "top scientist" designation.

Still, the government said it would support other similar research.

The university panel said Friday it found that "the laboratory data for 11 stem cell lines that were reported in the 2005 paper were all data made using two stem cell lines in total."

To create fake DNA results purporting to show a match, Hwang's team split cells from one patient into two test tubes for the analysis rather than actually match cloned cells to a patient's original cells, the university said.

"Based on these facts, the data in the 2005 *Science* paper cannot be some error from a simple mistake, but can only be seen as a deliberate fabrication to make it look like 11 stem-cell lines using results from just two," the panel said.

"There is no way but that Professor Hwang has been involved," the university's dean of research affairs, Roe Jang-hye, told a news conference.

Hwang "somewhat admits to this," he added.

The panel said DNA tests expected to be completed within a few days would confirm whether the remaining two stem-cell lines it had found were actually successfully cloned from a patient. The earlier claims of patient-matched stem cells were seen by scientists worldwide as a key step to creating tailored therapies for hard-to-treat diseases, such as paralysis or diabetes.

In light of the revelations, the panel said it would now also investigate Hwang's other landmark papers which include another *Science* article in 2004 on the world's first cloned human embryos, and an August 2005 paper in the journal *Nature* on the first-ever cloned dog, an Afghan hound named Snuppy. The journals already are reviewing all the work.

## Rumsfeld

FROM PAGE 16

A brigade typically consists of 4,000 to 5,000 soldiers.

Asked about the possibility that the United States might want permanent military bases in Iraq – something that could be controversial across the Arab region – Rumsfeld did not rule that out, saying only discussion had so far not been possible in the absence of a fully empowered Iraqi government.

In any event, Washington's stated goal is a sharp reduction in its forces in Iraq as local forces are able to take over.

The administration has admitted progress has taken longer than expected, and analysts say local forces have a long way to go before they can operate without help from US forces.

The Adhaim attack was the latest in a series of large, frontal assaults over more than a year that betray the force of numbers and the military training of the guerrillas and raise concerns about how well government forces might survive in a civil war if US forces withdrew.

Lacking sophisticated armour or equipment, Iraqi police and soldiers are among the most exposed to attacks by insurgents.

As mortars slammed into the main army base in Adhaim at dawn, police said, gunmen launched their attack on an outlying post some 10 km (six miles) to the north, on the main road to Kirkuk, firing rocket-propelled grenades and heavy machineguns.

When reinforcements finally arrived, they turned on them too, a senior police officer in the area added. In all, the fighting raged for several hours before the attackers broke off.

Ethnic and sectarian tensions in Iraq appeared to soften somewhat during last week's elections, when Sunni Arabs turned out in larger numbers to vote. But animosity between rival sects has grown after partial election results showed Sunni Arab-led parties fared poorly in areas like Baghdad.

Some Sunni Arab leaders have warned that the informal truce called by insurgents eager for a bigger voice in parliament could end because of disappointment with the results that have triggered complaints of fraud. al-Qaeda-linked militants have always violently opposed the US-backed political process.

A UN official with Iraq's Electoral Commission told Reuters he saw no reason to hold a rerun of the election, as a common front of Sunni and secular parties have demanded, threatening to boycott the new parliament if they are refused.

But behind the scenes, participants say, even those parties accusing the government and Commission of rigging the result are engaged in negotiations for posts in a coalition government with the dominant Shia Islamists and their present Kurdish allies.

Talk of vote fraud appears to be partly a tactic to improve the losers' leverage, officials and analysts say, in a process of government formation that may take weeks and possibly months.

## JRC to survey

FROM PAGE 1

and attend the next region level committee meeting in Sylhet.

The meeting also discussed preparing a plan of action and a model test for dredging the Surma. It suggested further model study in both the countries for flood protection in the Barak valley along the Indian borders.

It reviewed the progress of the joint survey of the Barak and the Surma and Kushiara in Bangladesh conducted from 2000 to 2003.

The region level survey was started in 2000 and the JRC later held national level meetings in Dhaka and Delhi. The JRC Standing Committee also made a field visit of the Sylhet-Assam border in 2003.

Based on the previous work and reports, the latest meeting agreed to dredge the Surma to increase its navigability and check severe erosion along the Kushiara.

The Barak emerges from the hills of Manipur in India and bifurcates into two rivers -- the Surma and the Kushiara -- in Bangladesh.

The Kushiara and the Surma share the total discharge of the Barak at a proportion of about 80:20 during the monsoon, causing serious erosion of all concave banks from Amolshid to Gazukata affecting both the countries.

Asked if the government is hiding "al'amal" (documents) following the "secret pact", Ahab leaders said it is not true.

**GAIB AGAINST THE COUNTRY**

Asked about Galib's comments and speeches against democracy, parliament, constitution and the very election system, Muslehuddin said, "We honour law of the land but this law does not work always."

**MATIN SALAFI**

On the presence of Abdul Matin Salafi from India, who was expelled from Bangladesh in 1988 for militancy, Muslehuddin said, "We invite people irrespective of ideologies and anyone can address our annual conference."

He kept mum when asked how Matin Salafi can be "anyone" when Galib had a joint account with him at Motijheel Branch of Islami Bank Bangladesh between July 1989 and May 1990 (after his expulsion).

Matin Salafi helped Galib collect funds and establish links to militants abroad, especially in the Middle East and South Asia, investigators said.

**MILITARY ISSUE**

Muslehuddin confirmed Galib's speeches in 1997 revealing his outfit's underground activities inside Bangladesh army's UN peacekeeping mission in Kuwait as reported in different national newspapers. He said, "Our Daoat (invitation) is no secret and we convinced military men through reaching them our publications."

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