

# Dutch family found in cellar 'waiting for end of time'

*Local media said the family were found after one of the sons went to a nearby pub in a confused state, drank five beers and then asked for help, saying he had not been outside for nine years*

AFP | The Hague

Dutch police found a father and six adult children hidden in the basement of a remote farmhouse where they had reportedly spent years "waiting for the end of time", officials said yesterday.

They discovered a man, be-



The family lived isolated in the farm for nine years

lieved to be the father of the family, and his children aged between 18 and 25 near the village of Ruinerwold in the northern province of Drenthe.

Local media said the family were found after one of the sons went to a nearby pub in a confused state, drank five beers and then asked for help, saying he had not been outside for nine years.

Police arrested a 58-year-old

man at the scene for failing to cooperate with the investigation, but he was not the father.

"I have never come across anything like this before," local mayor Roger de Groot told a press conference.

"Police investigated after receiving a tip-off from somebody who was concerned about the people's living conditions" and discovered the adults, de Groot said.

"They lived an isolated lifestyle," he said, adding that they had been living on the homestead for the past nine years and several of the children "had not been taken up in the birthing register" or officially registered.

Many questions were unanswered and police are investigating "all scenarios", the mayor added.

The family meanwhile had been taken to a nearby holiday

**Upon investigation police discovered a hidden staircase behind a cupboard leading to a cellar where a man said to be the family's father and five others, believed to be his children, were hiding**

park while the investigation continued, reports said.

## 'Living in a basement'

Local news station RTV Drenthe, which first reported the story, said the family "have been living in a basement for years, waiting for the 'end of times'."

Some of those freed "had no idea that other people existed," the station added.

Police were alerted after a man of around 25, believed to be the family's oldest son, walked into a village bar on Sunday evening.

The dishevelled man, unwashed and wearing old clothes said "he has not been 'outside' for the past nine years," bar owner Chris Westerbeek told RTV Drenthe.

"He said he'd never been to

school and seemed very confused. He spoke in a childish way," said Westerbeek.

The man told Westerbeek he ran away from home and urgently needed help, "so I phoned the police."

Upon investigation police discovered a hidden staircase behind a cupboard leading to a cellar where a man said to be the family's father and five others, believed to be his children, were hiding.

Aerial photos showed a remote farmhouse surrounded by fields.

The family had no contact with the outside world and were completely self-reliant with a vegetable garden and a goat, RTV Drenthe said.

"The father had a stroke a few years ago and was lying in bed. There was no sign of his wife," RTV Drenthe reported.

Neighbours told the station they did not know the family and they only knew that one man lived on the premises.

Police declined to give further details when contacted.

"All scenarios are being investigated. At this point we cannot give further information," local police said on Twitter.

# Swiss glaciers shrink 10 per cent in five years: study

Geneva

Switzerland's glaciers have lost a tenth of their volume in the past five years alone -- a melting rate unmatched during observations stretching back more than a century, a study showed yesterday.

Measurements on 20 Swiss glaciers have shown that melt rates this year have reached "record levels", according to the annual study on the state of the glaciers, published by the Cryospheric Commission at the Swiss Academy of Sciences.

The study, released amid growing global alarm over climate change, found that intense heatwaves over the summer in Switzerland had dashed hopes that an exceptionally snow-filled winter would limit the



The new study on Switzerland's melting glaciers comes less than a month after a "funeral march" was held on a steep mountainside to mark the disappearance of the Pizol glacier

glacier melt this year.

The commission said that in April and May, snow cover on the glaciers was between 20 and 40 percent higher than usual,

with depths of up to six metres measured in some places as late as June.

But during two weeks of intense heat at the end of June and



**A recent study by glaciologists at the ETH technical university in Zurich indicated that more than 90 percent of the some 4,000 glaciers dotted throughout the Alps could disappear by the end of this century if greenhouse gas emissions are not reined in.**

again in late July, "the volume of snow and ice melting on Swiss glaciers ... was equivalent to the country's total annual consumption of drinking water," it said in a statement.

The result, it said, was that the thick snow layer quickly disappeared and the strong melt continued until early September.

"This means that, over the past 12 months, around two percent of Switzerland's total glacier volume has been lost," the commission said, adding that the rate of loss over the past five years "exceeds 10 percent."

That marks "a rate of decline never previously observed in the time series extending back for more than a century," it said.

## Queen attends service for Westminster Abbey's 750th anniversary

Reuters | London

Queen Elizabeth attended a service at London's Westminster Abbey on Tuesday to mark 750 years since King Edward the Confessor's original church on the site was rebuilt during the reign of Henry III and consecrated in 1269.

The Anglo-Saxon abbey was where Elizabeth was crowned in 1953, where her grandson Prince William and his wife Kate were married in 2011 and where 17 British monarchs are buried.

# Four-metre king cobra wrestled from sewer in Thailand

Bangkok

A feisty four-metre (13-foot) king cobra was pulled from a sewer in southern Thailand in an hour-long operation, a rescue foundation said yesterday, describing the reptile as one of the largest they had ever captured.

Footage of the daring capture showed a man chasing the cobra -- the world's longest venomous snake -- into a dark and cramped drainage pipe.

The cobra splashed around in water and tried to slither back into the pipe, but was pulled out by the tail after multiple attempts.

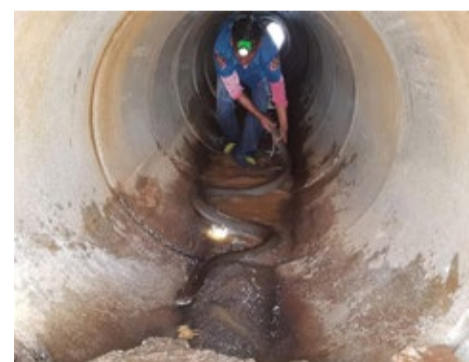
A security guard on the housing estate where it was found first alerted the rescue group on Sunday.

"Seven rescue workers, including me, went there," said Kritkamon Kanghae, 26, adding that the estate was built on a plot that was once jungle.

Kritkamon said the snake was more than four metres long,



Krabi Pitakpracha Foundation snake rescuers released the giant cobra into the wild after capturing it



A rescuer grabbed the king cobra by its tail as it attempted to flee into a drainage pipe



A Krabi Pitakpracha Foundation snake handler holds the four-metre (13 feet) king cobra he pulled from a sewer in southern Thailand

weighed 15 kilos (33 pounds), and was the third-largest they had found.

It was later released into the wild.

Thailand is teeming with reptiles, and several species of cobra are native to the southeast Asian country.

References to the deadly snake fill folklore.

The main international airport was built on an area that used to be called "Cobra's Swamp".

Snakes have increasingly become a headache for residents in the Thai capital, where the fire department is sent out to respond to calls from alarmed residents.

Authorities are reluctant to get rid of the reptiles because they help to control a rat population that could otherwise threaten crops and food stocks.

King cobras, however, mainly feed on other snakes -- particularly the rat snake.