



Japan equestrian, 75, loses shot at being oldest Olympian

TOKYO (AP) — A 75-year-old Japanese equestrian rider will not be able to become the oldest competing Olympian of all time in Rio de Janeiro because of an illness to his horse. Hiroshi Hoketsu was unable to meet the criteria to join the qualifying trials for the Japanese team, Kyodo news agency reported. “I don’t want to push the horse, so unfortunately I have given up upon the dream of competing in the Rio Olympics,” Hoketsu said. “There’s nothing decided about the future. First I’d like to prioritize getting the horse well again.” Hoketsu, who made his Olympic debut in Tokyo in 1964 and at age 71 was the oldest athlete to compete at the 2012 London Games, has been training in the Netherlands and Germany, but hadn’t been able to take part in competitions after his horse fell ill. Hoketsu would have become the oldest athlete to compete at the Olympics had he qualified for Rio, overtaking Swedish shooter Oscar Swahn, who participated in the 1920 Antwerp Games at age 72. Hoketsu was aiming for his fourth Olympics after also appearing at the 2008 Beijing Games, where he finished ninth in team dressage and 35th in individual dressage. In 2012, Hoketsu competed in individual dressage, finishing 40th. Hoketsu also qualified for the 1988 Seoul Olympics, but was unable to compete when his horse was quarantined.

Indonesia to punish child rapists with chemical castration

JAKARTA, Indonesia (AP) — Indonesia’s president has issued a regulation that provides tougher penalties for child rapists, including chemical castration. President Joko “Jokowi” Widodo says the administrative order is a response to increasing sexual violence against children. The president earlier declared that sexual offenses against children are a particularly serious crime because they endanger the child’s life and wellbeing. Demands for harsher punishments have grown following the rape and murder of a teenage girl by 14 men in western Indonesia.

Filipino population growth slows as contraceptives spread

MANILA, The Philippines (AP) — Officials say population growth in the Philippines has slowed amid an increased use of contraceptives in the predominantly Roman Catholic country. The Commission on Population said the 2015 census results show the population grew 1.72 percent last year, down from the 1.9 percent rate during the previous census in 2010. The commission’s executive director, Juan Antonio Perez III, said the country’s population of 100.98 million recorded last year was half a million lower than what was forecast in 2010. Perez said the use of modern contraceptives — which the Catholic Church opposes — has increased to 45 percent of couples as of last year, up from 38 percent recorded by a national survey in 2013.

Fiji pulls some peacekeepers amid security fears

WELLINGTON, New Zealand (AP) — Fiji says it’s bringing home about 65 of the 300-plus peacekeepers it has stationed in Egypt’s Sinai Peninsula and has closed remote bases there as the security situation deteriorates. Commander Humphery Tawake, who heads the South Pacific nation’s foreign peacekeeping force, said Fiji was asked to scale down its presence by the leaders of the international peacekeeping force stationed in Egypt. Tawake said the U.S. and Colombia are also planning to reduce troop numbers as the peacekeepers find themselves increasingly caught amid fighting between Egypt’s armed forces and militants. He said the decisions on troop numbers were made at the headquarters of the Multinational Force and Observers group. Tawake said five of Fiji’s seven or eight remote Sinai outposts were closed in the past several weeks.

‘Oppenheimer Blue’ diamond sells for more than \$51M

GENEVA (AP) — The ‘Oppenheimer Blue’ has sold for a hammer price of 50.6 million Swiss francs (\$51.3 million), setting a new record for a diamond sold at auction. The 14.62-carat stone, billed as the largest Vivid Blue diamond ever put up for auction, obliterated Christie’s pre-sale estimate range of between 38 million and 45 million Swiss francs. The sale rounded out a two-day run of big-ticket jewelry auctions in Geneva. The rectangular-cut diamond has been set in a ring and flanked by two smaller trapeze-shaped diamonds. The previous record sale for any diamond was \$48.5 million for the 12.03-carat polished “Blue Moon” diamond in Geneva last year. The diamond got its name from the late Sir Philip Oppenheimer, who long oversaw De Beers mining and had given the stone to his wife.

Peace Corps coming to Vietnam for first time

HANOI, Vietnam (AP) — The Peace Corps is at last coming to Vietnam. President Barack Obama announced during his visit to Vietnam that the Peace Corps will be invited to establish operations in the country, the volunteer organization said. The volunteers will focus on teaching English to students and training Vietnamese colleagues to teach English. It’s a striking turnaround from the years when some young men joined the Peace Corps in an effort to avoid serving in the military during the Vietnam conflict. The Peace Corps has been working on gaining entry to Vietnam for years. In 2012, then-Peace Corps director Aaron Williams made a three-day visit to the country to explore the possibility of an invitation to establish a program. The Peace Corps was established in 1961 by President John F. Kennedy to promote world peace and friendship. Since then, more than 220,000 Americans have served in 141 host countries. Currently, volunteers work in 63 countries. Peace Corps volunteers live in host communities overseas for 27 months and work in areas such education, environment, health, agriculture, youth, and community development.



DUNG DAMAGE. The sun rises over the Taj Mahal in Agra, India, in this November 18, 2009 file photo. Archaeological experts say insects proliferating in a polluted river near the Taj Mahal are marring the intricate marble inlay work by leaving green and black patches of waste on the walls of the 17th-century monument of love. (AP Photo/Gurinder Osan, File)

Insect poop threatens to damage marble at India’s Taj Mahal

By Biswajeet Banerjee
The Associated Press

LUCKNOW, India — Swarms of insects breeding in a polluted river near the Taj Mahal are threatening the intricate marble inlay work at the 17th-century monument of love, by leaving green and black patches of waste on its walls, according to archaeological experts.

Workers scrub the walls clean every day, but the regular scrubbing can damage the floral mosaics and shiny marble surface, said Bhuvan Vikram of the Archaeological Survey of India.

“A series of marble panels depicting plant motifs on the walls or reflective tiles used in this part of the monument are becoming disfigured,” Vikram said.

Authorities are looking for a permanent solution to the problem created by the insects from the genus *Goeldichironomus*, a type of elongated fly that resembles a mosquito, that are proliferating in the polluted Yamuna River. The river has stagnated to the point that it no longer supports fish that once kept the insects in check, environmentalist Yogesh

Sharma said.

In addition, heavy algal growth and deposits of phosphorus from ash dumped by a nearby cremation ground “are the primary source of food for this particular species of insect,” said Girish Maheshwari, who heads the Department of Entomology at St. John’s College in the northern city of Agra.

The highest elected official of the state of Uttar Pradesh, where the Taj Mahal is located, called the insect menace a matter of “serious concern.”

The Taj Mahal, one of India’s most cherished tourist attractions, brings millions of visitors to Agra every year. Archeologists are also struggling to protect the monument from air pollution, which turns the marble yellow and brown.

“Officials have been asked to investigate why there is sudden increase in number of these insects and how to control their population,” Uttar Pradesh state spokesman Navneet Sehgal said.

The Taj Mahal was built by Mogul Emperor Shah Jahan between 1632 and 1654 for his favorite wife, Mumtaz Mahal, and houses their graves and a mosque.

Filipino Jaclyn Jose is best actress at Cannes Film Festival

MANILA, The Philippines (AP) — Jaclyn Jose has become the first Filipino to win the best actress award at the prestigious Cannes Film Festival.

Jose won for her performance as a mother who falls prey to corrupt police after being forced to sell drugs to survive in *Ma’ Rosa*.

The movie was directed by Brillante Mendoza, who in 2009 became the first Filipino to

win best director at the festival for *Kinatay*.

In accepting the award, Jose said she was surprised to win, and that she went to Cannes primarily for a red carpet walk with her daughter, actress Andi Eigenmann, who also played a role in the movie.

Jose thanked the jury and shared the recognition with all Filipinos, including the cast of the film.



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