



**Watchdog urges P.I. to remove barriers to condom access**

MANILA, The Philippines (AP) — A human-rights watchdog says the Philippines has one of the fastest growing epidemics of HIV in the Asia Pacific which may worsen unless the government changes its approach and removes barriers to condom use by men who have sex with men. Human Rights Watch said in a recent report that HIV prevalence among men who have sex with men has increased tenfold in the last five years, but the government has failed to adequately target prevention measures within that population. It says HIV prevention education in Philippine schools is woefully inadequate, commercial marketing of condoms is nonexistent, and barriers to condom access and HIV testing — particularly for those below age 18 who are required by law to have parental consent — have contributed to the worsening epidemic.

**FIFA urges greater vigilance to prevent abuse in soccer**

SINGAPORE (AP) — Soccer must be more vigilant in protecting young players as allegations of sexual abuse mount across the British game, according to Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) president Gianni Infantino. Police in London have become the latest force to open an investigation into allegations of “non-recent” abuse at clubs, which were not named. More than 20 forces are looking into potential crimes by coaches from the 1970s after about 500 people approached police. FIFA has braced for reports of abuse beyond British soccer. “In football, we need to look into that with more care and attention to prevent any child abuse in the future,” Infantino said after a meeting of soccer associations in Singapore. “Those who have been guilty of abusing children need to be punished very seriously. They have to be out of football — that is without question — but also on the criminal side they need to be punished.”

**Medtronic fined \$17 million for anti-monopoly charges**

BEIJING (AP) — Medical device maker Medtronic has been fined \$17 million by Chinese anti-monopoly regulators in the latest effort by Beijing to force down what it sees as unreasonably high prices. Regulators concluded Medtronic, which supplies cardiovascular-, restorative-, and diabetes-related medical devices, suppressed competition by enforcing minimum prices its distributors were required to charge, the government has said. Foreign automakers, milk suppliers, and other companies have faced similar penalties. Setting minimum prices is a common tactic in other markets, but lawyers say Beijing appears to see them as a barrier to competition. “Competition in China’s high-value consumables and implantable medical equipment market is inadequate,” said a statement by the cabinet’s planning agency. It said preventing market forces from setting prices “increases the burden on patients and damages the interests of consumers.” Business groups welcomed the passage of China’s first anti-monopoly law in 2008 as a step toward clarifying operating conditions. Since then, they have said it is enforced more actively against foreign companies than against their Chinese rivals. There have been few court rulings to clarify the application of the 2008 law. That has fed uncertainty about how it will apply to global companies that are eager to expand in the world’s second-largest economy.

**New spy agency chief appointed in military reshuffle**

ISLAMABAD (AP) — Pakistan’s military has announced a major reshuffle in its senior posts, including appointing a new chief for the country’s top spy agency. A statement said Lt. Gen. Naveed Mukhtar will replace Lt. Gen. Rizwan Akhtar as the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) chief. ISI has often been criticized of cultivating ties with militant groups and interfering in domestic politics. The appointment came days after Gen. Qamar Javed Bajwa was named the new army chief. His predecessor, Gen. Raheel Sharif, retired on November 29. The reshuffle involves a total of 11 new appointments, including that of spymaster and Lt. Gen. Bilal Akbar, who is taking over as chief of the army general staff. Pakistan’s powerful army has ruled the country for most of its history since independence from Britain in 1947.

**Japan, Chinese clash over “jamming shells”**

TOKYO (AP) — Japan has protested to China about what it says are groundless accusations that Japanese fighter jets had fired “jamming shells” as six Chinese military planes flew over waters between Japan’s southern Okinawa and Miyako islands. “It is extremely regrettable that the Chinese military is making announcements that are clearly factually wrong,” chief cabinet secretary Yoshihide Suga told reporters. “It also hurts the effort to improve our relations, so we lodged a strong protest.” Japan scrambled fighters as Chinese planes flew over the Miyako Strait. Taiwan’s defense ministry said four Chinese planes also flew over the nearby Bashi Channel between Taiwan and the Philippines. The waterways and airspace are two of the connections between the contested South and East China seas and the Pacific Ocean. China said two Japanese fighters launched “jamming shells” that endangered the safety of Chinese aircraft and crew. Such decoy flares are typically used by a pilot to draw away an incoming missile. Suga denied the Japan did anything that posed a danger to the Chinese. Japan regularly scrambles jets to track Chinese military planes entering the area. Separately, three Chinese ships patrolled waters around disputed islands in the East China Sea. The uninhabited Senkaku islands are controlled by Japan but also claimed by China, which calls them the Diaoyu. The Chinese exercises came shortly after the Taiwanese president spoke to U.S. President-elect Donald Trump in a call strongly denounced by China, which considers Taiwan to be a Chinese territory.



**NUTRITIONAL CHALLENGES.** Kundhavi Kadiresan, the assistant director general of the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization, addresses a conference in Bangkok, Thailand. Asia has halved hunger rates in the past quarter century, but because of westernized lifestyles, obesity is skyrocketing and people aren’t receiving enough vitamins and minerals, according to a new U.N. report. (AP Photo/Dake Kang)

**U.N. says dairy a potential ally in Asian nutrition challenges**

By Dake Kang  
The Associated Press

**B**ANGKOK — Even as Asia makes clear strides in taming hunger and famine, the rapidly modernizing continent needs to focus more on diversifying its diet or risk failing to quell malnutrition, with milk having the potential to help, the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) said in a recent report.

“We still have nearly half a billion hungry people in this region,” said Kundhavi Kadiresan, FAO’s assistant director general. “This report is an eye-opener.”

With greater political stability and modern farming techniques, undernourishment rates halved in Asia from 24.3 percent to 12.3 percent in the past 25 years, satisfying one of the U.N.’s Millennium Development Goals, the report said.

As people move from the countryside to big cities by the millions, diets are changing from ones dominated by rice to more westernized versions incorporating more fruits, vegetables, and meats. Calories from starches declined by 50 per person a day while ones from fruits, vegetables, and meat increased by more than 300 per person per day, the report said.

But despite this improvement, the changing diets aren’t all good news. Like citizens in the west, people in Asia are exercising less and chowing down on heavily processed foods filled with sugar and fat instead of traditional ones like chickpeas. This means many still aren’t getting enough nutrients like zinc, iron, or vitamin A. Obesity levels are skyrocketing, rising more than four percent per year, the report said.

So as dire hunger becomes less common,

balanced and diverse diets are becoming a more pressing issue. Agriculture experts acknowledge they have been obsessed with rice, wheat, and maize in the fight against hunger, at the cost of overlooking whether expanding diets are also nutritious.

“It has filled the belly, but it is creating a lot of problems,” said Kadambot Siddique, a professor at the University of Western Australia.

“We must make this distinction between hunger and malnutrition,” said Biraj Patnaik, a food policy adviser to India’s government. He said India is in the process of eliminating hunger, but has only reduced undernutrition by one percent in the past decade.

With persistent hunger in South Asia, only two out of 19 developing Asian countries are on track to reach the U.N.’s Sustainable Development goal of zero hunger by 2030, and seven by 2040, the study said.

However, changing tastes in food means Asians are drinking more milk, a cheap and nutritious way of diversifying diets. Dairy products are traditionally largely absent in Asian diets but now fly off the shelves from Bangkok to Beijing, with production almost tripling from about 110 million tons in 1990 to nearly 300 million tons in 2013. Some countries are providing cartons in classrooms, like Thailand’s National Milk Program.

But experts say governments should avoid repeating the mistake of taking “shortcuts” that emphasize investment in big agribusiness over small farmers. Small producers produce nearly 80 percent of the milk in Asia, so booming milk sales benefit everyone, not just the rich, in contrast to farmland, where major landowners often win big on crop subsidies.

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**Asian Currency Exchange Rates**

Units per U.S. dollar as of 12/16

Bangladesh Taka	79.28
Cambodian Riel	4035.0
China Renminbi	6.9615
Fijian Dollar	2.1171
Hong Kong Dollar	7.7645
Indian Rupee	67.771
Indonesian Rupiah	13395
Iranian Rial	32300
Japanese Yen	117.93
Laos New Kip	8167.8
Malaysian Ringgit	4.478
Nepal Rupee	108.41
Pakistani Rupee	104.86
Papua N.G. Kina	3.1742
Philippine Peso	49.935
Russian Ruble	62.065
Saudi Riyal	3.7509
Singapore Dollar	1.4454
South Korean Won	1186.7
Sri Lankan Rupee	149.3
Taiwan Dollar	31.953
Thai Baht	35.853
Vietnam Dong	22607