

FUKUSHIMA SEABORNE RADIATION DETECTED ON OREGON SHORES

ALEM, Oregon: Researchers say seaborne radiation from Japan's Fukushima nuclear disaster has been detected on Oregon shores. Seawater samples from Tillamook Bay and Gold Beach indicate radiation from the nuclear disaster but at extremely low levels not harmful to humans or the environment. Citing the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, the Statesman Journal newspaper reports the samples

were taken last winter and later analyzed. Massive amounts of contaminated water were released from the crippled Japan nuclear plant following a 9.0 magnitude earthquake and tsunami in March 2011. Woods Hole chemical oceanographer Ken Buesseler runs a crowd funded, citizen-science seawater sampling project that has tracked the radiation plume as it makes its way across the Pacific Ocean.—AP

US LIFE EXPECTANCY FALLS, AS MANY KINDS OF DEATH INCREASE

NEW YORK: A decades-long trend of rising life expectancy in the US could be ending: It declined last year and it is no better than it was four years ago. In most of the years since World War II, life expectancy in the US has inched up, thanks to medical advances, public health campaigns and better nutrition and education. But last year it slipped, an exceedingly rare event in a year that did not include a major disease outbreak. Other one-year declines occurred in 1993, when the nation was in the throes of the AIDS epidemic, and 1980, the result of an especially nasty flu season.

In 2015, rates for 8 of the 10 leading causes of death rose. Even more troubling to health experts: the US seems to be settling into a trend of no improvement at all. "With four years, you're starting to see some indication of something a little more ominous," said S Jay Olshansky, a University of Illinois-Chicago public health researcher.

An American born in 2015 is expected to live 78 years and 91/2 months, on average, according to preliminary data released Thursday by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. An American born in 2014 could expect to live about month longer, and even an American born in 2012 would have been expected to live slightly longer.

In 1950, life expectancy was just over 68 years. The United States ranks below dozens of other high-income countries in life expectancy, according to the World Bank. It is highest in Japan, at nearly 84 years. The CDC report is based mainly on 2015 death certificates.

There were more than 2.7 million deaths, or about 86,000 more than the previous year. The increase in raw numbers partly reflects the nation's growing and aging population. It was led by an unusual upturn in the death rate from the nation's leading killer, heart disease.

Troubling trends

Death rates also increased for chronic lower lung disease, accidental injuries, stroke, Alzheimer's disease, diabetes, kidney disease and suicide. The only clear drop was in cancer, the nation's No. 2 killer. Experts aren't sure what's behind the stall. Some, like Olshansky, suspect obesity, an underlying factor in some of the largest causes of death, particularly heart disease. But there's also the impact of rising drug overdoses and suicides, he noted. Drug overdose deaths soared 11 percent to more than 52,000 last year, the most ever, driven by increases in deaths from heroin, prescription painkillers and other so-called opioids.

"There are a lot of things happening at the same time," he said. Some years the CDC later revises its life expectancy estimate after doing additional analysis, including for its 2014 estimate. Average life expectancy declined for men, falling by more than two months, to 76 years and 3 1/2 months in 2015. It fell by about one month for women, to 81 years and 2 1/2 months, the CDC said. Death rates increased for black men, white men, white women, and slightly for Hispanic men and women. But they did not change for black women.

The new CDC report did not offer a geographic breakdown of 2015 deaths, or analysis of death based on education or income. But other research has shown death rates are rising sharply for poorer people - particularly white people - in rural areas but not wealthier and more highly educated and people on the coasts. "The troubling trends are most pronounced for the people who are the most disadvantaged," said Jennifer Karas Montez, a Syracuse University researcher who studies adult death patterns. "But if we don't know why life expectancy is decreasing for some groups, we can't be confident that it won't start declining for others," she said.—AP

CHINA OPENS INVESTIGATION INTO SLAUGHTER OF RARE SEA TURTLE

BEIJING: Authorities in southern China have opened an investigation into the slaughter and sale of a protected leatherback sea turtle by local fishermen, media reported yesterday. The case grew to national prominence after cell phone video circulated showing the 200-kilogram (440-pound) turtle being sliced into pieces and sold to eager villagers in a fishing village in the southern province of Guangdong. The meat sold for about 70 yuan (\$10) per kilogram, the official Xinhua News Agency said.

Xinhua that six villagers have been referred to investigators. It said area residents were told by fishermen that the turtle was dead at the time it was caught.

Liang Daichong, a local fisheries policeman quoted by Xinhua, said the incident was the result of "bad eating habits" and simple ignorance of regulations.

China's growing animal rights movement has sought to raise awareness of abuses ranging from the slaughter of canines for an annual dog meat festival in a southern city to the farming of bears milked for their bile to be used in traditional Chinese medicine. Social media has played a major role in mobilizing such sentiments, although a push to enact animal protection legislation has made little progress through the national legislature.—AP



BANGALORE, India: In this Friday, Dec 9, 2016 photo, a crane lifts the carcass of a male Asiatic elephant, known as Sidda, to place him on the ground for autopsy after he died of his injuries, in Dabbagali village, outskirts of Bangalore, India.—AP

ELEPHANT BREAKS LEG, DIES AFTER THREE MONTHS OF CARE

'THE INFECTION WAS NOT NOTICEABLE FROM OUTSIDE'

BANGALORE, India: After an elephant broke his leg and was left to hobble around the backwaters of a reservoir in southern India, villagers and veterinarians brought him food and tried to soothe his agony through treatment. But he died Friday after efforts lasting more than three months. Sidda, the name given to the elephant by forest guards, was estimated to be 35 years old.

Sidda fell into a ditch and broke his right leg in the Manchiblele dam area in late August. He also sustained abrasions all over his body, and had an abscess on his back that required treat-

ment. The accident occurred in the Savandurga reserve, a home to wild elephants in the Ramanagara district of Karnataka state.

Doctors from Wildlife SOS India began treating Sidda after villagers alerted forest guards a day after the accident. The elephant had collapsed and couldn't move, and developed sores on his left flank. Soon there was a puss formation around the wound. Doctors administered painkillers to help ease Sidda's pain and anti-inflammatory medication for the swelling and the infection in his leg. Forest guards sought the

help of the army to build a structure to support Sidda and enable him to stand on his own without collapsing. A metal frame kept Sidda suspended, and a support structure like a cradle lifted him up and eased the stress on his limbs, according to Wildlife SOS India's website. A Ramanagara forest official, Manjunath, said yesterday that Sidda died of infection early Friday. The autopsy report said the infection was caused by a puss formation inside the leg that was not noticeable from outside. Manjunath uses one name.—AP



BANGALORE, India: In this Friday, Dec 9, 2016 photo, villagers and others offer prayers next to the carcass of a male Asiatic elephant, known as Sidda, after he died of his injuries, in Dabbagali village, outskirts of Bangalore, India.—AP

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