



Oh! My News

Volume 2 (For All Levels)



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Economy and Business



LESSON 1

Is the World Producing Enough Food?

Food prices are zooming again for reasons besides bad weather, climate change and global growth.

Food inflation has returned for many of the same old reasons: the demand for meat has returned with the recovery of middle-income economies; the price of oil is up, which both raises the cost of food production and transport, and stokes the diversion of food crops into biofuel production. Speculators are taking pounds of flesh in the commodity exchanges. And, of course, freak weather has disrupted production in key export zones.

But what makes the weather matter? This is hardly the first La Niña weather cycle, after all. Every human civilization has understood the need to plan for climate's vicissitudes. Over the centuries, societies developed the tools of grain stores, crop diversification and "moral economies" to guarantee the poor access to food in times of crisis.

Global economic liberalization discarded these buffers in favor of lean lines of trade. Safety nets and storage became inefficient and redundant – if crops failed in one part of the world, the market would always provide from another.

Climate change turns this thinking on its head. A shock in one corner of the world now ripples to every other. The economic architecture that promised efficiency has instead made us all more vulnerable. Little has changed in this crucial respect since the last food crisis. But this isn't simply a rerun of 2008.



Economy and Business



While the global recession has turned a corner for some people in some countries, unemployment remains stubbornly high for many, and hunger has trailed it. There are 75 million people more undernourished now than in 2008. At the same time, governments are cutting back on entitlement programs for the poor as part of austerity drives to fight inflation.

Urban families are unable to afford food and fuel, and governments are unresponsive to their plight. Under such circumstances, as Egyptians know too well, food prices and climate change are revolution's kindling.

Vocabulary and Expressions

- **Inflation** is persistent increase in the level of consumer prices or a persistent decline in the purchasing power of money
- **La Niña** is defined as cooler than normal sea-surface temperatures in the central and eastern tropical Pacific ocean that impact global weather patterns
- **Moral Economy** is an economy that is based on goodness, fairness, and justice.

Discussion Questions

- Was there any case of food shortage in your country?
- How did your country resolve this?
- What are the possible effects of climate change in global food production?
- What's the difference between El Niño and La Niña?

Economy and Business



LESSON 2

Ready, Click, Spend

Most Americans celebrate Thanksgiving. They share a festive meal, watch football, and enjoy each other's company. For some people, shopping is a big part of their Thanksgiving tradition as well.

For many years, the day after Thanksgiving has been the busiest shopping day of the year. Many stores have sales on that day. Many people go to the sales so they can save money. The shoppers are looking for bargains. This busy shopping day is called "Black Friday."

Recently, researchers have noticed another busy shopping day. This day is a little different. It is the busiest day of the year for online shopping. The Monday after Thanksgiving has become known as "Cyber Monday." On this day, more and more shoppers buy their holiday gifts online.

One organization took a survey. The survey found that 80 percent of Internet users buy gifts online. Some cities have more online shoppers than others. The survey found that shoppers in one city will spend one third of their holiday budget online.

But, most shoppers still do not want to buy online. They are afraid to use their credit card on a Website. They fear that their credit card number will be stolen. They worry that retail Websites are not secure. They are afraid that shopping sites could be hacked into. Their personal banking information could be stolen. This is called fraud.





Vocabulary and Expressions

- **Black Friday** is the day following Thanksgiving Day in the United States, traditionally the beginning of the Christmas shopping season.
- **Cyber Monday/ Black Monday** is an expression used in online retailing to describe the Monday following U.S. Thanksgiving weekend. Cyber Monday is generally thought of as the start of the online holiday shopping season. Similar to Black Friday, (the unofficial start of the holiday season for offline businesses), online retailers will usually offer special promotions on this day.
-

Discussion Questions

- Online shopping is becoming more popular in different parts of the world, but how much have your shopping habits changed?
- Do you find that you spend more money shopping online than you do in traditional stores?
- What do you spend your money on the most?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of shopping online?

Economy and Business



LESSON 3

Piracy Boosts Somali Economy



Piracy along Somalia's coastline represents a very lucrative business — as the pirates collectively earned an estimated \$150 million in 2008 — but what is piracy's effect on Somalia's economy?

Somalia's economy is in a fairly grim state. An estimated 73.4 percent of the country's population lives in general or extreme poverty and the average Somali earns only \$600 per year, making Somalia one of the poorest countries in the world.

Fishing used to be one of Somalia's most profitable industries. But as piracy has increased — there were roughly 100 attacks in 2008 — the *New York Times* reports that foreign ships have become reluctant to brave the waters surrounding Somalia's coastline to buy fish and other exports. The amount of goods coming into Somalia, including aid, has also declined.

Pirate money has also skewed prices. In the town of Garowe, near Somalia's central coast, resident Mohamed Hassan told the BBC that "piracy has a negative impact on several aspects of our life," including a financial one.



Economy and Business



They have made life more expensive for ordinary people because they "pump huge amounts of U.S. dollars" into the local economy which results in fluctuations in the exchange rate.

On the other hand, pirates are putting wealth back into the Somali economy — an estimated \$1 million to \$2 million is made from each captured ship.

Whenever a ship is seized, pirates stock up on sheep, goats, water, fuel, rice, spaghetti, milk, and cigarettes in towns up and down Somalia's coast. Sugule Dahir, a local shop owner in Eyl, a town just off the coast in central eastern Somalia, feels the incoming money has had a positive impact. He tells ABC News that, because of the pirates, more businesses are beginning to emerge and the general public seems better off. "There are more shops and business is booming because of the piracy. Internet cafes and telephone shops have opened, and people are just happier than before."

Government officials are getting a fair sum of pirate money as well. By allowing the pirates to work in controlled areas, the regional Puntland Government is given shares of the pirate's earnings. About 30 percent of the collected ransom goes directly to government officials, Farah Ismael Eid, a captured pirate, tells *Time*.

Some Somalis are worse off because of piracy. But it's clear that the pirates do spread the wealth.



Vocabulary and Expressions

- **Piracy** is practice of a pirate; robbery or illegal violence at sea.
- **Lucrative** -producing wealth; profitable
- **Skewed** - distorted or biased

Discussion Questions

- What do you know about the Somali pirates?
- Do you think insurance companies should ask for more money from shipping companies that sail in pirated waters?
- Would you agree with the idea of pirates if they robbed from the rich and gave to the poor?

Economy and Business



LESSON 4

India develops world's cheapest 'laptop' at \$35

NEW DELHI -- India has come up with the world's cheapest "laptop," a touch-screen computing device that costs US\$35.

India's Human Resource Development Minister Kapil Sibal this week unveiled the low-cost computing device that is designed for students, saying his department had started talks with global manufacturers to start mass production.

"We have reached a (developmental) stage that today, the motherboard, its chip, the processing, connectivity, all of them cumulatively cost around \$35, including memory, display, everything," he told a news conference.

He said the touchscreen gadget was packed with Internet browsers, PDF reader and video conferencing facilities but its hardware was created with sufficient flexibility to incorporate new components according to user requirement.

Sibal said the Linux based computing device was expected to be introduced to higher education institutions from 2011 but the aim was to drop the price further to \$20 and ultimately to \$10. The device was developed by research teams at India's premier technological institutes, the Indian Institute of Technology and the Indian Institute of Science.

India spends about three percent of its annual budget on school education and has improved its literacy rates to over 64% of its 1.2 billion population but studies have shown many students can barely read or write and most state-run schools have inadequate facilities.





Vocabulary and Expressions

- **Laptop** is also known as Notebook.
- **Literacy** is the condition or quality of being literate, especially the ability to read and write.
- You can teach a student a lesson for a day; but if you can teach him to learn by creating curiosity, he will continue the learning process as long as he lives.
- Clay P. Bedford

Discussion Questions

- Do you have a laptop? What features do you like about your gadget?
- What's your opinion about "One Laptop, One Child Policy"?
- What are the advantages of having low-cost computers available in the market?

Society and Culture



LESSON 1

World Population May Reach 9.2 Billion by 2050

UNITED NATIONS — The world's population will likely reach 9.2 billion in 2050, with virtually all new growth occurring in the developing world, a U.N. report said Tuesday.

According to the U.N. Population Division's 2006 estimate, the world's population will likely increase by 2.5 billion people over the next 43 years from the current 6.7 billion — a rise equivalent to the number of people in the world in 1950.

Hania Zlotnik, the division's director, said an important change in the new population estimate is a decrease in expected deaths from AIDS because of the rising use of anti-retroviral drugs and a downward revision of the prevalence of the disease in some countries.

The new report estimates 32 million fewer deaths from AIDS during the 2005-2020 period in the 62 most affected countries, compared with the previous U.N. estimate in 2004.

This change contributed to the slightly higher world population estimate of 9.2 billion in 2050 than the 9.1 billion figure in the 2004 estimate, the report said.

The report also said most population growth will take place in less developed countries, whose numbers are projected to rise from 5.4 billion in 2007 to 7.9 billion in 2050. The populations of poor countries like Afghanistan, Burundi, Congo, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Niger, East Timor and Uganda are projected to at least triple by mid-century.

By contrast, the total population of richer countries is expected to remain largely unchanged at 1.2 billion. The report said the figure would be lower without expected migration of people from poorer countries, averaging 2.3 million annually.

Society and Culture



Vocabulary and Expressions

- **Third World** - used colloquially to describe the poorest countries in the world.
- **Retrovirus** - Any of a group of viruses, many of which produce tumors, that contain RNA and reverse transcriptase, including the virus that causes AIDS.
- Ex-World Bank President Robert McNamara said:
"Population growth is the gravest issue the world faces. If we do not act, the problem will be solved by famine, riots, insurrection and war." Do you agree?

Discussion Questions

- What would happen in the world if there was a population explosion?
- What factors influence changing population patterns?
- Is contraception a good way to reduce population?

Society and Culture



LESSON 2

Banning Valentine's Day

Is Valentine's Day bad for the soul? This Russian city thinks so.

MOSCOW, Russia — Not expecting flowers or candy on Feb. 14? No secret admirers waiting in the wings? Then take a trip to Belgorod, a small city in western Russia that has done what many singles can only dream of — banned Valentine's Day.

According to local authorities, Valentine's Day, like Halloween, is bad for the soul and not a Russian tradition. Therefore, they say, it should not be celebrated.

"The very atmosphere of these holidays does not foster the formation of spiritual and moral values in youth," Grigory Bolotnov, a consultant to the local government on social and religious issues, told local media last week.

Schools and clubs have been urged to cancel any Valentine's Day related events, and the local zoo even withdrew a two-for-one entry special set for Monday.

On the surface, it sounds frivolous enough. But the move is part of a wider drive to boost the influence of the Russian Orthodox Church in a country where church and state are constitutionally required to remain separate.

The Valentine's Day ban was added to a document that outlines "measures for providing spiritual security," Bolotnov said. The original document was signed last year by the regional governor's top deputy and the region's top church official. The church leadership in Moscow can only look on and smile.



Society and Culture



“All the actions surrounding this day can sound funny, but at the same time there’s a certain truth in the discussion,” Father Vsevolod Chaplin, a top church official, said in a telephone interview Sunday.

“In Russian tradition, love is inseparable from family and faithfulness,” he said. That’s why church and state officials have been promoting the celebration of a different holiday. Since 2008, July 8 has been dubbed “The Day of Family, Love and Fidelity,” Russia’s somewhat clumsily named alternative to Valentine’s Day. The idea was thought up by Svetlana Medvedeva, President Dmitry Medvedev’s wife, who is very active in the church.

“It is understandable,” Chaplin said of the new holiday. “People see the lack of connection between love, faithfulness and family in the consumerist tradition that we see in Valentine’s Day.”

Belgorod, a small city near Russia’s border with Ukraine, is no stranger to creative initiatives. In 2004, local authorities instituted fines for cursing on the street. Last year, they banned heavy metal concerts.

The Valentine’s Day initiative, however, will likely fail to catch on in Russia. Since the fall of the Soviet Union, Russians have adopted Valentine’s Day and Halloween with relish, rivaling the holidays’ popularity in the West.

According to polling agency Romir, 81 percent of Russians over the age of 18 plan on celebrating Valentine’s Day. It said 54 percent of those who plan to celebrate the holiday planned on giving their loved one flowers or a gift. The Levada Center, another polling agency, found that 52 percent of Russians planned on celebrating Valentine’s Day.

The issue has been widely discussed in the Russian press. Last week, Gazeta.ru, a respected online newspaper, headlined their article on the ban: “Belgorod — a territory without love.”

Society and Culture



Vocabulary and Expressions

- **Fidelity** is the devotion to duties, obligations : faithfulness

- **Catch on** - to become popular or fashionable

Put the words back into the correct order.

- 1. the the most world famous one holidays of in
- 2. to traditional express day their for love lovers the
- 3. is It unsigned card the leave to common
- 4. become It very has commercial
- 5. of custom The messages romantic exchanging

Discussion Questions

- What is the origin of Valentine's Day? (Why do we celebrate Valentine's Day?)
- On Valentine's Day, is it more common for men to give gifts to women or for women to give gifts to men?
- Do you think Valentine's Day is too commercial or consumerist?

Society and Culture



LESSON 3



Microphilanthropist donates daily

It's been more than 230 days since Carlo Garcia bought a cup of coffee. That's because in April, the Chicago resident realized that he could change lives and inspire others to do the same — all for the price of his morning joe.

“One day this idea popped into my head: How hard would it be to give back to charity every day? What's stopping us from doing that?” said Garcia, who catalogs his daily donations on his blog, Living Philanthropic. “Because I don't make a whole lot of money, I had to look at my finances and see what areas of unnecessary spending I could cut,” he said. That's when Starbucks got the boot in favor of free coffee at the ticketing company where Garcia works. “That's five dollars right there that could go to charity,”

Garcia said. While charities still rely primarily on the Bill Gateses and Warren Buffetts of the world, Garcia is a new breed of benefactor: a “microphilanthropist.” And even though he can only give a little, some experts believe that he and his fellow mini-donor have the potential to change the altruistic landscape. Each day, Garcia chooses a different non-profit organization to donate to, giving anywhere from \$5 to \$200. He often gets suggestions for which charities to give to from the roughly 5,000 followers he has amassed on his blog, Facebook and Twitter. Garcia estimates that so far, he's given away about \$2,500 and his followers \$3,400. While those amounts may be modest, Garcia says, those contributions will pay dividends.

"You don't have to be rich and famous to make a little bit of good in your community, and that good will have a ripple effect," he said.

Society and Culture



Vocabulary and Expressions

- **Joe** – informal word for brewed coffee
- **Microphilanthropy** is a model of philanthropy that is based on smaller, more direct interaction between those who are in need and those who can give.
- **Philanthropy** is the act of donating money, goods, time, or effort to support a charitable cause, usually over an extended period of time and in regard to a defined objective.
- **Ripple effect** means gradually spreading effect or influence

Every man must decide whether he will walk in the light of creative altruism or in the darkness of destructive selfishness.

- Martin Luther King, Jr.

Discussion Questions

- Do you have a favourite charity?
- How often do you give money to charities?
- Do you agree with the expression “charity begins at home”?
- Do you worry about where the money you donate to charity goes?

Society and Culture



LESSON 4

Hong Kong Is Lovin' McDonald's Wedding Services

By Chinese betrothal custom, the groom presents his bride's family with a whole, celebratory suckling pig. The pork, a culinary symbol of the girl's virginity, is roasted patiently to a crackling ruddy brown. But at a recent engagement party in Hong Kong, the food came quickly, turned out by restaurant workers at the pace of the city stirring outside. Guests on swivel seats raised chocolate milkshakes in a giddy toast. The couple shared a long, red-splotched French fry, meeting midway for a kiss. Before their loved ones and beneath a pair of golden arches, husband-to-be Kelvin Kwong explained earnestly, "Ashley loves ketchup."

In January, McDonald's added wedding packages to its Hong Kong menu. This is the only city in the world where the American restaurant chain offers the service, prompted by frequent inquiries about fast-food weddings from customers in recent years. Now, three McDonald's locations are equipped to stage marital festivities in the style of any six-year-old's model birthday. That the corporation should move to fill - or perhaps create - this niche is not so unusual. Despite being surpassed by Subway as the world's largest fast food chain, McDonald's still serves 400,000 Hong Kongers every day. Countless couples will have met, or at least dated, there. Business executives take clients there for lunch; high school students gather there over homework. The Golden Arches have in this region escaped the stigma, associated with mass production and prevalent obesity, that they carry in the U.S. and elsewhere. Denouncing big business is hardly a pastime in a city that, in its modern incarnation, emerged from international capitalism.



Society and Culture



"In Hong Kong, the transnational *is* the local," says James L. Watson, a Harvard professor of Chinese society and author of *Golden Arches East*. When McDonald's first came to the former British colony in 1975, Hong Kong was diligently reinventing itself from an outpost of light industry to a regional finance center. "The company and the town, they more or less grew up together," Watson says. McDonald's catered to, and likely prodded along, a new culture of speed, convenience and consumerism.

The traditional Chinese wedding banquet is slow-cooked, not flash-fried. A string of familial rituals are outdone in number by a dozen or so courses - shark's fin soup, sea cucumber, animals in their entirety meant to bring luck and completeness - and a series of costume changes. A ceremonial dinner of twenty crimson-clothed tables begins at about \$38,000, and the betrothed are unlikely to know personally a majority of the invitees. In a moment of economic recovery, this kind of decadence has, for some, simply lost allure. Coco Wong, Hong Kong's first wedding planner, still predominantly organizes conventional banquets. But, she says, the scale and gravity of these spreads is on the decline: "Couples are beginning to prefer smaller affairs with just the people they know, weddings that are more intimate and softer on the budget."

As Hong Kong leans increasingly toward a culture of informality and affordability, the fast food chain is there once more to meet it. "I was a bride," says Shirley Chang, managing director of McDonald's Hong Kong. "I didn't enjoy my own party. I needed to dress up beautifully, that was all. For me, there was no laughing, there was no eating." By contrast, the McWedding is casual, stress-free and inexpensive: The basic "Warm and Sweet Wedding Package" for fifty guests goes for under \$1,300. For another \$165, the bride can rent a gown of pearly white balloons.

Society and Culture



What a McDonald's wedding event lacks in liquor it more than makes up in helium. For Ashley and Kelvin's engagement party, in an area in one restaurant's rear cordoned off from the public, goody bags are stuffed with plush McDonaldland characters. A McDonald's MC coordinates games while waitresses deal out cheeseburgers. The couple's cake is a pyramid of green apple pie cartons. Dozens of heart-shaped balloons - it is Valentine's Day, after all - hover in the corners of the room in rosy clumps. The future bride, Ashley Tse, weeping from the excitement of it, wears a balloon ring and carries an inflated bouquet. Nothing would seem less personal than a cookie-cutter McDonald's restaurant open to Hong Kong's every diner. But Kelvin speaks of the spot with a wistfulness normally reserved for neighborhood institutions.

"We both used to come here all the time as children," he said during a press conference at the engagement party. "I just wanted people to have a good time. It's hard to find somewhere that's fun for kids and adults and where everyone will love the food." Even his mother, in all her fussiness, was able to find something she likes: the Filet-o-Fish

For the affianced couple - a model and a nurse, both striking and healthy - this is a family place. And it is for the benefit of their families that Kelvin lowers himself onto a single bent knee and, before them, the media and a pale pink banner, asks Ashley a question she has already answered. They had been dating for nine years when they first decided to marry. The engagement party is over by 10pm, but the bride would likely tell you that not everything in this city moves so quick!

Society and Culture



Vocabulary and Expressions

- **Betrothal** (also called **espousal**) is a formal state of engagement to be married.
- **marital**- of or relating to marriage
- **Affiance** – engagement, in a promise of marriage
- **decadence** - deterioration especially of morality or culture decay degeneration

WEDDING VOWS

Couples tying the knot in the Roman Catholic Church will essentially make the same pledge to one another.

The customary text in English is:

- I, ___, take you, ___, to be my (husband/wife). I promise to be true to you in good times and in bad, in sickness and in health. I will love you and honor you all the days of my life.
- I, ___, take you, ___, for my lawful (husband/wife), to have and to hold, from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, until death do us part.

Discussion Questions

- What is your dream wedding like?
- Are weddings important?
- What's the difference between wedding and marriage?
- Do changes in wedding styles have a significant effect on a country's culture?
- Why do McWeddings are getting popular these days?

Government and Policy



LESSON 1

China's Population Policy – Success or Failure ?

China's family planning policy has prevented 400 million births, Chinese officials say. "Because China has worked hard over the last 30 years, we have 400 million fewer people," said Zhang Weiqing, minister in charge of the National Population and Family Planning Commission.

"Compared with the world's other developing countries with large populations, we have realised this transformation half a century ahead of time."

And it looks likely that, nearly 30 years after the policy was first introduced, it will not be relaxed to allow couples to have more children. Many Chinese and foreign academics believe this is a mistake and will result in a number of serious demographic problems in the future.

The fall in fertility rates is also, at least partly, due to improving social and economic circumstances. In other East Asian countries, such as Thailand and South Korea, modernisation has led to women having fewer children, and yet these countries do not have strict family planning policies.



Government and Policy



But Professor Wang does admit that China's family planning policies since 1979 have helped reduce the fertility rate further and contributed to a change in attitudes. "A lot of people simply don't want that many children. People have accepted the policy," he says.

Chinese officials say the current fertility rate is between 1.7 and 1.8 births per woman, well below the 2.1 births needed to keep the population at a stable level. Overseas experts dispute this figure; they say the fertility rate is even lower and stands at 1.5.

This will result in an increasing proportion of older people, a smaller workforce to look after them and a disproportionate number of boys to girls. There are other problems too. China might have restricted its population growth, but this has not always helped solve wider problems, as was envisaged when the policy was first introduced in 1979.

Reducing the number of people, for example, does not automatically help the environment, as China has found. Prof Wang says the policy needs to be relaxed if China is to solve some of these problems.

Government and Policy



Vocabulary and Expressions

- **Family Planning Policy** is also known as **One-Child Policy** in China
- **Envisage** - To conceive an image or a picture of, especially as a future possibility
- **Mortality** - The total number of cases of a disease in a given population at a specific time.

Ex World Bank President Robert McNamara said:

"Population growth is the gravest issue the world faces. If we do not act, the problem will be solved by famine, riots, insurrection and war."

Discussion Questions

- What factors influence changing population patterns?
- What do you think of 'one child per family' policies to curb population growth?
- Is contraception a good way to reduce population?
- Do you think a diverse population is good for your country?

Government and Policy



LESSON 2



Malawi to Punish Breaking Wind in Public

The government of Malawi is planning to introduce a new law to try and stop people breaking wind in public. The proposed legislation would punish repeat offenders who choose to release their foul-smelling bodily gases in public places. The Local Courts Bill will soon be presented to parliament for approval. It intends to prosecute those “who foul the air” in an effort to “mould responsible and disciplined citizens”.

The bill states: “Any person who voluntarily [impairs] the atmosphere in any place so as to make it noxious to the health of persons in general, dwelling or carrying on business in the neighborhood or passing along a public way, shall be guilty of a misdemeanor.”

The bill has created a lot of anger among Malawians, who feel the country has more serious problems than trying to criminalize a natural bodily function. They also say it is causing embarrassment to the country internationally, with foreign media reporting on “Malawi’s farting law”. People are also worried about how fairly the law will be administered on the streets. Taxi driver Chikosi Nyondo said: “How on Earth will the police know who passed gas? I’m sure there’ll be people arrested for false farting.”

The Afrik-News website quoted another angry Malawian who said: “Everyone does that, even if it’s in public or it has an accompanying sound, making it criminal is a joke of democracy.”

Government and Policy



Vocabulary and Expressions

- **Break wind (or Fart)**- to allow gas to escape from your bottom, especially loudly
- **Noxious** - Harmful to living things; injurious to health
- **Misdemeanor** – minor offense, or a criminal offense defined as less serious than a felony.
- TIPS ON HOW TO DEAL WITH BREAKING WIND:

First of all, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure--if you know that certain foods make you gassy, try to avoid them if you can when you know you're going to be in a social situation. But if you're stuck with gas and a crowd of people, here are a few thoughts:

- If you can hold it in without causing yourself medical distress, then try to keep it contained until you are in a better place or situation.

Discussion Questions

- In your opinion, does the law on farting in Malawi sound ridiculous or acceptable? Explain why.
- If the new policy in Malawi will be implemented soon, what do you think will be the outcome?
- Many people lose their manners when it comes to breaking wind. How would you advise them on this issue?

- Excuse yourself and go to the bathroom, even if it is just to pass some gas. This is thoughtful of other people less embarrassing for you.
- If it's silent but deadly, you might consider the humorous approach if it is a casual setting, and relieve the tension by excusing yourself and blaming the non-existent dog.

Government and Policy



LESSON 3

EU plan to end discarding criticised by fisheries groups as 'kneejerk'

EU fisheries commission to prevent fleets discarding their catch – but fishermen fear move will leave them out of pocket

The European commission called for an end to the practice of throwing away unwanted fish at sea, in a victory for British campaigners that will lead to the biggest shakeup in EU fisheries policy for more than 40 years.

The plan to end "discarding", announced by the EU fisheries commissioner, Maria Damanaki, after the first ever high-level summit on the practice, had the support of several member states including the UK, France, Germany and Denmark. Some fishermen's representatives opposed the move as "kneejerk" and "heavy-handed", but it is now highly likely to become European policy, perhaps within two years, although the details still need to be hammered out.

Damanaki told the summit: "I consider discarding of fish unethical, a waste of natural resources and a waste of fishermen's effort. But I would like to go further – since our stocks are declining, these figures are not justifiable anymore."

Fishermen are driven to discard fish under the current quota systems because they can only legally bring home a certain quantity of the species they are allocated. When they catch too many, or accidentally net fish for which they do not have a quota, they must dump the excess. As a result, as much as two-thirds of the fish caught in some areas are thrown back into the water, usually dead. About 1m tonnes are estimated to be thrown back each year into the North Sea alone.



Government and Policy



The waste of edible fish was highlighted in an influential Channel 4 television series, headed by the Guardian's food writer Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall, which helped to gather more than 650,000 signatures for a petition to end the Practice. Some fishermen's representatives voiced concerns that a swift move to ban discards would leave fishermen of pocket.

Bertie Armstrong, chief executive of the Scottish Fishermen's Federation, dismissed the plan as a knee-jerk reaction. Richard Lochhead, the Scottish fisheries minister, who was not at the meeting, said a blanket ban would not work and warned that the EU was in danger of adopting "more ill-fitting and heavy-handed legislation that won't solve the problem of discards but make things worse".

There are several alternatives to the current quota system: a "catch" quota, whereby fishermen land all of their catch, monitored by CCTV cameras, but have their time at sea curtailed; changes to fishing tackle; techniques to reduce discards; and promoting markets, both within the EU and for export of fish that are currently little eaten, such as dab and pouting.

Under Damanaki's proposals, the changes would be phased in over several years, to help the industry adjust. Richard Benyon, the UK's fisheries minister, said: "We have tried and tested these solutions, and they work. We believe they would reduce discards by a huge percentage."

John Sauven, executive director of Greenpeace UK, said: "According to Scotland's fishing minister, £40m worth of fish a year are thrown away by Scottish fishermen alone. But it is ... crucial that a discard ban is not met by giving in to demands for higher quotas. We need to use more effective fishing gear as well as agreeing genuinely sustainable levels of fishing."

Government and Policy



Vocabulary and Expressions

- **Knee-jerk reaction** - an immediate reaction made without examining causes or facts
- **Fleet** - a number of ships or boats under one command or sailing together
- **Shake up** - To subject to a drastic rearrangement or reorganization
- **Hammer out** - discuss vehemently in order to reach a solution or an agreement
- **Quota** - A number or percentage, especially of people, constituting a required or targeted minimum
- **Blanket ban** - total prohibition
- **Dab** - Any of various flatfishes,, related to and resembling the flounders.
- **Pout** - Any of various freshwater or marine fishes, especially an eelpout or hornpout.

Discussion Questions

- Are you in favor of ending the practice of throwing discards of fleets back in the sea?
- Can you propose some alternative ways of salvaging the fisheries' excess into a more useful way?
- How does the practice of discarding unwanted fish at sea affect the balance in the ecosystem?

Government and Policy



LESSON 4

Assisted suicide: Debate around the world

Some say "assisted suicide". Others call it "assisted dying". Each term - and alternatives such as "mercy killing" and "death with dignity" - tends to reflect the differing assumptions which people bring to this intense debate.

Britain is by no means the only place where this debate is current. One obvious reason is that in the West more people are living into their 80s and 90s. Old people (and their families) are the most likely to face difficult choices about quality of life versus sheer survival.

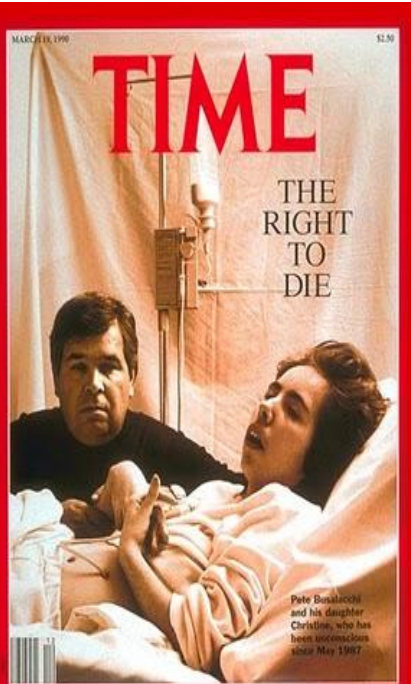
The existence of the much-publicised Dignitas clinic near Zurich means it is Switzerland which is often associated around the world with assisted suicide. Yet it is the Dutch who have led the way. In the Netherlands, doctor-assisted suicide was legalised in 2002. That change followed a couple of decades when assisted suicide was acknowledged to be getting more frequent but was unregulated.

Now about 2,300 people opt to die by assisted suicide in the Netherlands each year, out of a population of almost 17 million. If someone in Holland approaches their doctor wishing to die there are stringent safeguards and a second doctor experienced in the field must be consulted.

The patient must be suffering unbearably and have no hope of recovery. Sometimes that judgement can be relatively clear-cut. Far more contentious would be the case of a clinically depressed patient who believed life was simply not worth living.

However, the Royal Dutch Medical Association (KNMG) says its members overwhelmingly favour the present system. They say few Dutch doctors exercise their right to opt out of such discussions.

By comparison, and though the Dignitas clinic in Switzerland provides few figures, it is believed that in the last 11 years more than 800 people have died there.



Government and Policy



In the US, the issue remains one for the individual states, although there have been failed attempts to outlaw the practice at a federal level.

The first state to permit assisted suicide was Oregon in 1998. This followed a ballot initiative. It is thought that about 400 people there have taken advantage of the law.

After a long gap, Oregon was joined last year by neighbouring Washington, also after a ballot. The first actual cases were in March this year.

In theory, Montana became the third US state on the list in December 2008. But in Montana the position is very different. The change came not after a referendum and all the attendant debate, but because of a court ruling.

District Judge Dorothy McCarter ruled that, under the constitution of Montana, 76 year-old retired truck-driver Bob Baxter had the right to ask his physician to help him die. Mr Baxter died of leukaemia shortly after the ruling was issued. The state of Montana has asked the state's Supreme Court to overturn that ruling.

The fact there seems to be a new momentum to the debate in the USA is not accidental - the organisation Compassion & Choices has been lobbying hard to make assisted suicide more acceptable to more Americans.

So far, it seems to be having some success. And whether or not Montana ultimately allows assisted suicide, Compassion & Choices have other states on their target list.

Health and Safety



LESSON 1

Laughter As Medicine - Giggling Your Way To Health In India

A growing number of people in India say they've discovered the secret to health and happiness. It's free, and best results obtained in large crowds - literally, the more, the merrier. Lucy Craft traveled to southern India recently to test-drive one of the fastest-growing health crazes.

Some people get up early to do a few laps. But in India, tens of thousands say they've found a better way to keep body and mind fit: they flock to parks to work out by cracking up. It looks like organized lunacy, but make no mistake - these mirth-a-thons are serious business.

They're called "laughter clubs." Proponents claim heavy doses of hilarity keep the blues - and even illness - at bay. "It rejuvenates the body, takes care of the emotional system of the body," says one man. "We look at life in a more contented way."

According to another man, "A person would not normally laugh at home, because people might think he's mad. So, the individual laugh situations are much fewer at home. When a person comes to the club, they can laugh together, so he will not feel ashamed."



Health and Safety



Laughter clubs were started about a decade ago by an Indian doctor who decided that laughter was the best medicine. Now there are thousands of these clubs both here and in India and around the world.

Guffaws on cue, as the antidote to stress? It sounds like a joke - but I decided to join in. There is method to this madness, and for an hour, I marched through the laughter club's drills.

We practiced something called the "machine gun laugh", the "teasing laugh" and the "hot soup laugh". The bizarre ritual made me feel like an extra in a horror movie, but laugh-a-holics swear that working out their funny bones works up a sweat and promotes overall well-being. They feel it's good for just about anything from arthritis to insomnia. According to one woman "Cosmetically, it will help. You get fewer wrinkles."

Another

person, a retired engineer, claims he was having knee pain and now he can walk easily.

The birthplace of yoga, breathing exercises and lifestyle gurus was a natural for giving the world a refresher course in hilarity, demonstrating once again, the simple pleasures of a good laugh.

Health and Safety



Vocabulary and Expressions

- **Mirth** - To restore to youthful vigor or appearance; make young again.
- **Rejuvenate** -To restore to youthful vigor or appearance; make young again.
- **Guru** - A recognized leader in a field, a mentor
- **Hilarity** - great merriment, cheerfulness

So many tangles in life are ultimately hopeless that we have no appropriate sword other than laughter.

- Gordon W. Allport

Discussion Questions

- Do you agree that laughter is the best medicine?
- How important is laughter?
- Is laughter infectious / catching?
- Would you ever consider joining a laughter club?

Health and Safety



Friends can be the Secret to a Longer Life



LESSON 2

Busy Social Life May Stave Off Disability in Elderly

Seniors who are more socially active are less likely to become disabled, researchers say. The study from Rush University in Chicago looked at 954 elderly people, average age 82, who had no type of disability at the start of the study period. The participants underwent yearly physical and mental evaluations and provided information about their social activities, such as going out to eat, playing bingo, doing volunteer work, taking day or overnight trips, and participating in community groups.

Compared to people with low levels of social activity, people who had high levels of social activity were about twice as likely to remain free of disabilities that hindered activities of daily living (such as feeding, bathing, dressing, using the toilet) and about 1.5 times more likely to remain free of disabilities that affected mobility or instrumental activities of daily living (for example, using the telephone, preparing meals and managing medications), the investigators found.

"Social activity has long been recognized as an essential component of healthy aging, but now we have strong evidence that it is also related to better everyday functioning and less disability in old age," lead researcher Bryan James, postdoctoral fellow in epidemiology of aging and dementia at Rush Alzheimer's Disease Center, said in a university news release.

"The findings are exciting because social activity is potentially a risk factor that can be modified to help older adults avoid the burdens of disability," he added.

It's not clear how social activity helps prevent disability, but it may reinforce the neural networks and musculoskeletal function required to maintain physical function, James said.



Vocabulary and Expressions

- **Alzheimer's Disease** is the most common form of dementia. This incurable, degenerative, and terminal disease was first described by German psychiatrist and neuropathologist Alois Alzheimer in 1906 and was named after him.
- **Epidemiology** is the study of patterns of health and illness and associated factors at the population level.
- **Dementia** is a serious loss of cognitive ability in a previously unimpaired person, beyond what might be expected from normal aging.
- **DEMENTIA** (taken from Latin, originally meaning "madness", from de- "without" + ment, the root of mens "mind")

Discussion Questions

- Do you worry about your old age?
- What things are there to look forward to about old age?
- How many people do you know who are enjoying their old age?
- How many people do you know who are enjoying their old age?

Health and Safety



LESSON 3

Fish pedicure safety in question

Health experts are investigating the safety of fish pedicures after concerns that this latest pampering craze could spread infections. The treatment involves dunking the feet in tanks filled with *Garra rufa* fish that can nibble away dead skin.

The Health Protection Agency is concerned this could spread diseases from person to person through open wounds. It was first contacted by worried environmental health officers.

A Health Protection Agency spokesperson said: "Following a number of enquiries to the HPA from local environmental health officers over the past six months, the agency is currently investigating if there are any potential risks of infection associated with the commercial use of fish spa pedicures in the UK.

"Alongside colleagues in environmental health, Health Protection Scotland and the Health and Safety Laboratory, the HPA will examine the most up to date evidence of any possible risks associated with *Garra rufa* fish pedicures and will publish guidelines that will be available UK-wide.

"The HPA and Health Protection Scotland is currently unaware of any cases of infection associated with the use of the fish spas pedicures in the UK."

Tiny *Garra Rufa* fish, or "doctor fish" as they are affectionately called, are a type of toothless carp that nibble on the dead skin. Their use in spas across the UK has been gaining in popularity.

In the US, however, some states have banned their use over health and safety concerns of having the same fish clean the skin of multiple customers.



Health and Safety



Vocabulary and Expressions

- **Craze** - a short-lived popular fashion; a fad.
- **Enquiry** - a request for information, questioning
- **Pedicure** - A cosmetic treatment of the feet and toenails.
- **Nibble** - To bite at gently and repeatedly.

Discussion Questions

- How often do you get a pedicure?
- Have you ever tried going to a fish spa?
- Do you think Dr. Fish can also spread infection?

Health and Safety



LESSON 4

Shopping Carts Covered in Bacteria

A new study into the hygiene of supermarkets has found that shopping carts are dirtier than the store's bathrooms. Microbiologist Dr Charles Gerba of the University of Arizona conducted research on the handles of 85 carts in four American states. He reportedly found bacteria from human waste on the handles of 72 per cent of them. "That's more than you find in a supermarket's toilet," Dr Gerba said.

He explained: "That's because stores use disinfecting cleaners in the restrooms. Nobody seems to routinely clean and disinfect shopping carts." Further, half of the carts in Dr Gerba's study tested positive for E. coli bacteria, a nasty germ that can cause diarrhoea, vomiting and serious infection.

Professor Gerba is known as "Dr Germ" because of the number of studies he has done on bacteria and everyday objects. His previous studies warned of bacteria on reusable shopping bags, airplane seat-back trays, ground-floor elevator buttons, water fountain toggles, computer keyboards, iPads and playground equipment. He said just about anything touched by children has a high chance of contamination. He advised people to wash reusable shopping bags after use, otherwise they'll become full of "bacterial swamps".

He added: "It's like wearing the same underwear every day." Gerba said the best way to avoid getting sick from shopping trolleys is to wipe the handle with a disinfectant cloth and wash your hands often.



Health and Safety



Vocabulary and Expressions

- **Microbiology** -The branch of biology that deals with microorganisms and their effects on other living organisms.
- **Trolley**- cart
- **Disinfectant** - An agent, such as heat, radiation, or a chemical, that destroys, neutralizes, or inhibits the growth of disease-carrying microorganisms.

“Cleanliness is next to godliness.”

Discussion Questions

- How often do you wash your hands?
- Do you often use hand sanitizers?
- Do you believe that the places that we thought to be clean are in fact dirtier than toilets?
- What will happen if public facilities are not disinfected properly?

Weird News



LESSON 1

Breast Milk Ice Cream A Hit At London Store



A restaurant in London's Covent Garden is serving a new range of ice cream, made with breast milk. The dessert, called Baby Gaga, is churned with donations from London mother Victoria Hiley, and served with a rusk and an optional shot of Calpol or Bonjela. Mrs Hiley, 35, said if adults realised how tasty breast milk was more new mothers would be encouraged to breastfeed.

Each serving of Baby Gaga at Icecreamists costs £14. Mrs Hiley's donation was expressed on site and pasteurised before being churned with Madagascan vanilla pods and lemon zest.

Icecreamists founder Matt O'Connor placed an advert appealing for breast milk donations and believes his new recipe will be a success. "If it's good enough for our children, it's good enough for the rest of us," he said. "Some people will hear about it and go yuck - but actually it's pure organic, free-range and totally natural." He added that the ice cream was not certified organic.

Mrs Hiley, who gets £15 for every 10 ounces of milk she donates to the company, said it was a great "recession beater". "What's the harm in using my assets for a bit of extra cash?" she added. "I teach women how to get started on breastfeeding their babies. There's very little support for women and every little helps."

Mr O'Connor said 14 other women had come forward to offer their services. Health checks for the lactating women were the same used by hospitals to screen blood donors.

"No one's done anything interesting with ice cream in the last hundred years," he added.



Vocabulary and Expressions

- **Rusk** - a hard, dry biscuit or a twice-baked bread (zwieback, biscotte).
- **Churn** - a vessel or machine in which cream or whole milk is vigorously agitated to produce butter
- **Lactating** - To secrete or produce milk.
- **Yuck! / Gross!** - exclamation indicating disgust

Discussion Questions

- Would you ever try eating ice cream made of breastmilk?
- If this product will be commercialized, what could be the downside of breastmilk-ice cream production?
- Do you think this kind of products may pose a serious health risks?
- Does the idea of an adult consuming breast milk sounds gross?



LESSON 2

The woman who did her own caesarean section to give birth

This is one tough mother: Ines Ramirez is the only woman known to have performed a successful Caesarean-section on herself! The sun had set hours ago. The nearest clinic was 80 km away over rough roads, and her husband, her only assistant during a half-dozen previous births, was drinking at a cantina. She had no phone and neither did the cantina.

So at midnight, after 12 hours of constant pain, the petite, 40-year-old mother of six sat down on a low wooden bench. She took several gulps from a bottle of rubbing alcohol, grabbed a 15-cm knife and began to cut.

By the light of a single dim bulb, Ramirez sawed through skin, fat and muscle before reaching inside her uterus and pulling out her baby boy. She says she cut his umbilical cord with a pair of scissors, then passed out. When she regained consciousness, she wrapped a sweater around her bleeding abdomen and asked her 6-year-old son, Benito, to run for help. Several hours later, the village health assistant, Leon Cruz, and a second health worker found Ramirez alert and lying beside her live baby. Cruz sewed her 17-cm incision up with a regular needle and thread. The two men lifted mother and child onto a thin straw mat, lugged them up horse paths to the town's only road, then drove them to the clinic over two hours away.

That was March 5, 2000. Now Ines Ramirez is recognized internationally as a modern miracle: She is believed to be the only woman known to have performed a successful Caesarean-section on herself.



Weird News



Vocabulary and Expressions

- Also called **Caesarean section, C-section**. an operation by which a fetus is taken from the uterus by cutting through the walls of the abdomen and uterus.
- **Cantina** - a bar or wine shop, esp in a Spanish-speaking country
- **Gulp** - To swallow greedily or rapidly in large amounts:
- **Petite** - small, delicate, and dainty

WAYS OF SAYING YOU'RE PREGNANT.....

I'm

in the family way

heavy with child

preggers

expecting

Discussion Questions

- What are the dangers of pregnancy?
- Why is pregnancy so dangerous in many countries in the world?
- What duties and roles does the father have during a mother's pregnancy?
- How scary is pregnancy compared with other events in life?

Weird News



LESSON 3

Indian man with 39 wives, 94 children and 33 grandchildren

They all live in a four storied building with 100 rooms in a mountainous village in Mizoram state, sharing borders with Burma and Bangladesh, according to reports.

"I once married 10 women in one year," Ziona Chana said.

His wives share a dormitory near Ziona's private bedroom and locals said he likes to have seven or eight of them by his side at all times. The sons and their wives, and all their children, live in different rooms in the same building, but share a common kitchen.

The wives take turns cooking, while his daughters clean the house and do washing. The men do outdoor jobs like farming and taking care of livestock.

The family, all 167 of them, consumes around 200lb of rice and more than 130lb of potatoes a day. They are supported by their own resources and occasional donations from followers.

"Even today, I am ready to expand my family and willing to go to any extent to marry," Ziona said.

"I have so many people to care (for) and look after, and I consider myself a lucky man." Mr Chana met his oldest wife, who is three years older than he is, when he was 17.

He heads a local Christian religious sect, called the "Chana", which allows polygamy. Formed in June 1942, the sect believes it will soon be ruling the world with Christ and has a membership of around 400 families.



Weird News



Vocabulary and Expressions

- **livestock** -Domestic animals, such as cattle or horses, raised for home use or for profit, especially on a farm.
- **polygamy**-The condition or practice of having more than one spouse at one time
- **sect** - the group of people who follow a particular creed or embrace a certain set of opinions or rituals.

Discussion Questions

- What is your ideal size of family?
- Should religious sects be allowed to continue their practices?
- If practices like this will continue, how will it affect the culture and the status of the community where the members belong?

Weird News



LESSON 4

Egyptian names his daughter "Facebook"

Gamal Ibrahim, in his 20s, gave his daughter the name "to express his joy at the achievements made by the January 25 youth."

A man in Egypt has named his newborn daughter "Facebook" in honor of the role the social media network played in bringing about a revolution, according to reports.

Gamal Ibrahim, in his 20s, gave his daughter the name "to express his joy at the achievements made by the January 25 youth," according to a report in Al-Ahram, one of Egypt's most popular newspapers.

An English translation of the newspaper article reads: "The girl's family, friends, and neighbors in the Ibrahimya region gathered around the newborn to express their continuing support for the revolution that started on Facebook."

It adds, "Facebook received many gifts from the youth who were overjoyed by her arrival and the new name — a name that shocked the entire world."

Many young people used Facebook, Twitter and other social media networks to organize the Egypt protests, which began Jan. 25 and ultimately led to the ouster of President Hosni Mubarak after 30 years in power.

Around five million Egyptians reportedly own Facebook accounts, more than in any other country in the Middle East. Wael Ghonim, a Google executive who organized an opposition Facebook page, became a central figure of the revolution.

Oh! MyEnglish

No news — yet — of a baby named Twitter.



Weird News



Vocabulary and Expressions

- **Twitter** is a website, owned and operated by Twitter Inc., which offers a social networking and microblogging service, enabling its users to send and read messages called tweets.
- As of July 2010 **Facebook** has more than 500 million active users, Users may create a personal profile, add other users as friends and exchange messages, including automatic notifications when they update their profile.
- Hosni Mubarak is a former Egyptian politician and military commander. He served as the fourth President of Egypt from 1981 to 2011.

Discussion Questions

- Do you like your name(s)?
- What does your name mean?
- Why did your parents choose that name for you?
- What is the coolest name in the world?
- Can you guess the social status of someone in your country from his or her name?
- How does a name affect a person's social and economic status?



Thank You !

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