News Highlights

Yemen cholera to spread with rains; Oxfam sees 600,000 cases

Yemen`s cholera outbreak is far from being controlled and may be further exacerbated by the rainy season, even if the rate of new cases appears to be slowing in some hotspots, the World Health Organisation said. Oxfam projected the number could rise to more than 600,000 cases, "the largest ever recorded in any country in a single year since records began", exceeding Haiti in 2011. The WHO has reported 368,207 suspected cases and 1,828 deaths in the Arabian Peninsula country since late April.

White House developing comprehensive biosecurity strategy: official

The Trump administration is developing the first comprehensive strategy to defend the U.S. against disease pandemics and biological attacks by terrorists, the top White House homeland security official said. "We have not had as a country a comprehensive bio-defense strategy ever," White House homeland security adviser Thomas Bossert told the annual Aspen Security Forum. “It’s high time we had a bio-defense strategy”

China adds blockbuster drugs to insurance list after price cuts

China will add three dozen new drugs to a list of medicines covered by basic insurance schemes after global pharmaceutical firms agreed to slash prices of blockbuster treatments for cancer, diabetes and heart disease. The Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security said it had agreed to add 36 drugs to the National Reimbursable Drugs List in return for an average 44 percent price cut against last year`s retail prices.

Hepatitis B affects 3.5 million Ugandans

Ugandan government figures show the prevalence rate of Hepatitis is 10% compared to the 7.3% of HIV/AIDS in Uganda. One of the biggest challenges in the fight against the disease is that people who test positive and are referred for treatment do not even know where to go. There are few available facilities for testing Hepatitis viral load across the country and they are very expensive with poorly trained staff.

Preparedness, surveillance and response

WHO sees high risk from Kenya cholera outbreak

An outbreak of cholera in Kenya poses a high risk to the region and a moderate threat globally, the World Health Organization said after delegates at two international conferences were hit. The spread of the disease has surged since April, affecting the capital Nairobi, a major hub for conferences in Africa, and the large refugee camps of Dadaab and Kakuma. The disease hit 146 at a conference in Nairobi on June 22, and a further 136 people at the China Trade Fair on July 10-12, one of whom died.

Additional sources: (Capitalfm.co.ke) (Outbreak News Today) (Reuters) (Nation)

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Additional sources: (Deutsche Welle) (Aljazeera) (Cidrap) (Xinhuanet.com) (South Sudan News Agency)
**Cholera outbreak kills 17 in Nigeria**

At least 17 people have been confirmed dead in an ongoing cholera outbreak in Nigeria`s northcentral Kwara state, according to a report by the country`s centre for disease control. “The cholera outbreak in Kwara state continued ... with a total of 1,617 suspected cases reported, an increase of 3.6% from the last Epi-week. 13 laboratory samples were confirmed and 17 deaths recorded, giving a case fatality rate of 1.1%,” the centre said

http://uk.reuters.com/article/us-yemen-cholera-un-idUKKBN19X2E5

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**Flu menace: H1N1 claims 326 in Maharashtra**

The H1N1 virus claimed 326 lives in Maharashtra from January 1 to July 17, with 29 people succumbing to swine flu in the last week alone. The state health department`s death analysis report states that women account for 60 per cent of the deceased, and most of them were in the age bracket of 25 to 30 years. According to the report, the women had a weak immune system. The analysis report for the city, however, said that men are more susceptible to the ailment as they move about more than women


Additional sources: (Times of India)

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**Australia helps Sri Lanka to control dengue fever after 250 die**

Australia announced programs to help control dengue fever in Sri Lanka, where the disease killed around 250 people in the first half of this year. A short-term program through the WHO will try to reduce the transmission of the dengue virus, aiming for a reduction of more than 50 percent over a period of four to six weeks. A longer-term programme will use Wolbachia bacteria, a microbe that prevents the dengue virus from replicating inside the mosquitoes that carry it, to halt its transmission to people

http://www.reuters.com/article/us-sri-lanka-dengue-australia-idUSKBN1A4287

Additional sources: (ABC News) (Sunday Times Sri Lanka) (New Indian Express)

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**First Chikungunya, now dengue strikes Dhaka**

Amid the spread of Chikungunya in Dhaka, another mosquito-borne disease, dengue, has silently struck the city amid the variation in rainfall pattern. A large number (91) of people were infected with dengue virus in the city in January this year while 58 cases were reported in February, followed by 33 in March and 72 in April this year, according to the data provided by the National Health Crisis Management Centre and Control Room of the Director General of Health Services


Additional sources: (Financial Express)

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**Killer virus: South India worst hit as dengue spreads its tentacles**

Kerala is in the grip of dengue: Thiruvananthapuram and Palakkad districts are the worst hit, and experts say the worst is yet to come. Of the 23,000 cases and 32 deaths confirmed till July 16, 11,581 cases and 20 deaths have been in Kerala. Four of the five states with the highest cases and deaths are in south India

http://www.hindustantimes.com/health/killer-virus-south-india-worst-hit-as-dengue-spreads-its-tentacles/story-G4Sz38uD0xA38k5R7tBcDO.html

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**Bolivia registra el 5to caso de fiebre amarilla**

The Ministry of Health director general, Rodolfo Rocabado, announced that the country has recorded its fifth case of yellow fever. He referred specifically to the first case recorded in Cochabama which he said was now fully under control

Yellow Fever in La Paz
Four cases have been recorded in Norte de los Yunga with two deaths so far, a young girl of 9 and a man aged 38 years old. Health authorities say they are reinforcing their campaign against the disease and seeking to take all necessary precautionary actions to get the disease under control
Additional sources: (erbol.com.bo)

Brazil Yellow Fever Outbreak Persists Although Number of Cases Has Stabilized
In Brazil, which has been experiencing its biggest yellow fever outbreak since the 1940s, the Ministry of Health has reported 3,240 suspected cases of the virus since the current outbreak began in December 2016. Of those cases, health officials have confirmed 792, discarded 1,929, and are investigating another 519 cases. The country has seen 435 outbreak-associated deaths, 274 of which have been confirmed, 124 discarded, and 37 are under investigation

Sri Lankan Ministry of Health reports dengue fever outbreak
The Epidemiology Unit of Sri Lanka’s Ministry of Health recently reported a total of 80,732 cases of dengue fever throughout the first six months of 2017, a figure that is 4.3 times higher than the average number of cases reported from 2010-2016 and includes 215 deaths

Baby dies of viral meningitis after deadly kiss
Mariana Sifrit, the infant girl who contracted viral meningitis caused by HSV-1 when she was less than a week old, has died. HSV-1 is the same herpes virus that causes cold sores, and only rarely does it lead to viral meningitis, which causes the tissue covering the brain and spinal cord to become enflamed. It is believed that baby Mariana contracted the deadly virus from a kiss. Mariana’s parents, Nicole and Shane Sifrit, both tested negative for the virus
Additional sources: (medscape.com) (global news.ca)

Human infection with avian influenza A(H7N9) virus - China
On 19 June 2017, the National Health and Family Planning Commission of China notified WHO of five additional laboratory-confirmed cases of human infection with avian influenza A(H7N9) virus in China. On 24 June 2017, the NHFPC notified WHO of 10 additional laboratory-confirmed cases and on 30 June 2017, the NHFPC notified WHO of six more

Indian Poultry Farms Are Breeding Drug-Resistant Superbugs
Random tests on 18 poultry farms raising about 50,000 birds each in India’s Punjab found that two-thirds of fowl harbored bacteria that produce special enzymes, known as extended-spectrum beta-lactamase, or ESBL, that destroy most penicillin- and cephalosporin-based antibiotics. Of tested birds destined for meat consumption, 87 percent had the super germs, a study published in Environmental Health Perspectives showed. That compared with 42 percent of egg-laying hens
Additional sources: (Financial Times)

TB infection at mass facilities on rise: report
Suspected cases of tuberculosis outbreaks at mass facilities more than tripled in South Korea over the past three years, a report showed. According to a report from the Korea Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the government conducted 3,502 epidemiological investigations in 2016 for possible TB outbreaks at schools, hospitals and other mass facilities where at least one person was
confirmed to have contracted the infectious disease. The number of surveys more than tripled from 1,142 in 2013

**Malaria alert in district**
The District Medical Officer (Health) issued an advisory against the outbreak of malaria in Kozhikode district after three cases of an indigenous form of the disease were reported in the city limits in the past two days. V. Jayashree, DMO, said that indigenous malaria cases were being reported from certain parts of the district for the past three years. “There is a common form of malaria found among migrant labourers who belong to other States. Another form is diagnosed among natives who return here after travelling to other places. The indigenous form is found among natives who don’t travel much”

**Dengue kills 21 in Indian tourist hotspot, crisis looms**
A dengue outbreak has killed at least 21 people in India’s southern state of Kerala in the past three weeks, a government official said, adding that there was a shortage of medicines and health workers to tackle the crisis in the tourist hotspot. The mosquito-borne dengue virus, which causes flu-like symptoms and can develop into the deadly haemorrhagic dengue fever, has infected more than 11,000 people in Kerala since May, forcing the state to buy new hospital beds and cancel medical staff leave
http://uk.reuters.com/article/us-india-malaria-idUKKBN1A30JM

**CDC keeping a watchful eye on Candida auris**
In June 2016, the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) issued a clinical alert about an emerging multidrug-resistant fungus causing serious and frequently deadly invasive infections in healthcare settings around the world. The warning was intended as a message to healthcare providers to keep an eye out for Candida auris, which at that point had been found in only a handful of US patients. More than a year later, the CDC has identified 98 clinical C auris infections in nine states, some of them dating back to 2013, and the fungus has been isolated from an additional 110 patients

**Swine flu returns: Why it is bigger, more dangerous now than in 2016**
In India, Health Minister J P Nadda informed Rajya Sabha that 600 people had died of H1N1 infections until July 9 this year, nearly half of them — 284 — in Maharashtra. The death toll in the state so far this year is higher than the number of deaths from H1N1 in the whole country in 2016 — 265
http://indianexpress.com/article/explained/swine-flu-returns-why-it-is-bigger-more-dangerous-now-than-in-2016/

**Health systems**

**White House developing comprehensive biosecurity strategy: official**
The Trump administration is developing the first comprehensive strategy to defend the U.S. against disease pandemics and biological attacks by terrorists, the top White House homeland security official said. “We have not had as a country a comprehensive bio-defense strategy ever,” White House homeland security adviser Thomas Bossert told the annual Aspen Security Forum. “It’s high time we had a bio-defense strategy”
http://uk.reuters.com/article/us-usa-security-biodefense-idUKKBN1A52HZ

**China adds blockbuster drugs to insurance list after price cuts**
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http://uk.reuters.com/article/us-china-pharmaceuticals-idUKKBN1A408F

Escaping Big Pharma’s Pricing With Patent-Free Drugs
The U.S. government funded research and development of a new vaccine against Zika, but the Army, which paid a French pharmaceutical manufacturer for its development, is planning to grant exclusive rights to the vaccine to the manufacturer, Sanofi Pasteur, along with paying Sanofi up to $173 million. Sanofi will be free to charge the U.S. American health care providers and patients any price it wishes. Although American tax dollars funded the vaccine, and the U.S. took the economic risks, history suggests that many Americans would not be able to afford it


Merck reports HepB vaccine shortage
Pediatric hepatitis B vaccine will not be available from Merck until early 2018, the company announced. GlaxoSmithKline has an adequate supply of hepatitis B vaccine to make up for the shortage, but doctors may not have a choice between vials or syringes, according to the CDC. Merck said demand around the world and manufacturing process updates caused the shortage of Recombivax HB in both pediatric and adult formulations


Doctors, nurses must undergo tuberculosis screening to work
Korea Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said newly employed doctors and nurses would have to go through tuberculosis screening within a month of starting work starting in September. KCDC will impose a fine of 2 million won ($1,770) on medical staffs who do not receive tuberculosis screening within a month of employment. The state agency also issued a recommendation for medical workers that come in contact with newborns to wear masks


EU watchdog concerned drug agency EMA may be too close to companies
The European Medicines Agency (EMA), eager to accelerate access to promising new drugs, may be getting too cozy with the pharmaceutical companies it regulates. That is the concern of the watchdog charged with overseeing administrative irregularities in the European Union, which is launching a strategic inquiry to see if early-stage interactions with firms could influence agency approval decisions

http://uk.reuters.com/article/us-pharmaceuticals-eu-idUKKBN1A4129

Sexual violence in Haiti is a public health problem
Rampant sexual violence in Haiti against women and children, including some toddlers, should be treated as a public health issue and more care made available for survivors, Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF) said. Most of the 1,300 survivors of sexual violence who had been treated at one clinic run by MSF in the Haitian capital Port-au-Prince since it opened in May 2015 are younger than 25, and more than half are children, according to a MSF report

http://news.trust.org/item/20170719160132-6e9ld/

The Side Effect Of That New Malaria Drug? American Jobs
A 50-cent meningitis vaccine. Kid-friendly malaria drugs. A vaccine to prevent a deadly diarrheal disease. These U.S.-funded global health innovations have saved millions of lives around the world. But they also come with an added bonus for Americans. The details are in a study released by Global Health Technologies Coalition and Policy Cures Research of Australia. The researchers found that between 2007 and 2015, the U.S. government invested $14 billion in global health R&D, which
created 200,000 new American jobs and returned $33 billion to the U.S. economy

Gaza health care suffers as Palestinian factions play blame game
In what is seen as the latest step in an effort to force Hamas to relinquish its control of Gaza, Abbas in June reduced the payments the PA makes to Israel for electricity it supplies to the territory, meaning that Gaza’s two million people now have only 3 to 4 hours of power a day, forcing hospitals and other medical facilities to rely chiefly on generators and expensive fuel. Hamas says that Abbas restricted transfers of medicine to Gaza in March, accusing Hamas of failing to reimburse the PA for its purchases, and cut the salaries of its officials in May
http://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-palestinians-gaza-health-idUKKBN1A40E9

Communicable diseases

Battle against malaria: Fighting mosquitoes that killed 24,000 Indians in 2015
The Indian Space Research Organisation is providing remote-sensing technology to detect, map and classify mosquito breeding areas in the country, the latest in India’s war against the disease that is believed to have killed an estimated 24,000 people in the country in 2015. The number of officially recorded deaths for the year is, however, 384
http://www.hindustantimes.com/health/battle-against-malaria-a-war-on-mosquitoes-that-killed-24-000-indians-in-2015/story-LQK2x7hmsTuR238JB8gatI.html

Scientists plan to trick Zika-carrying mosquitoes into breeding themselves out of existence
This summer, a Silicon Valley tech company will have millions of machine-raised, bacteria-infected mosquitoes packed into windowless white vans, driven inland and released into the streets of Fresno, Calif. This year’s mosquitoes are being bred and distributed by Verily, a subsidiary of Alphabet that was formerly known as Google Life Sciences. Verily officials estimate that they will release 1 million mosquitoes per week in Fresno County, more than 25 times last summer’s numbers
Additional sources: (Verily.com) (npr.org)

Genetic variation linked to greater tuberculosis susceptibility
Researchers have shown that a single nucleotide change in a gene that affects production of hepcidin—a peptide involved in inflammation, immunity, and control of iron levels—is associated with greater susceptibility to extra-pulmonary tuberculosis
http://www.liebertpub.com/global/pressrelease/a-genetic-variation-may-increase-tuberculosis-susceptibility/2222/
Additional sources: (news-medical.net)

Scales tip in AIDS fight as death rates decline, treatment rates rise
The scales have tipped in the fight against AIDS, with more than half of people infected with HIV now getting treatment and AIDS-related deaths almost halving since 2005, the United Nations said. In its latest global report on the pandemic, which has killed around 35 million people worldwide since it began in the 1980s, the UNAIDS agency said there were particularly encouraging signs in Africa, a continent ravaged by the disease
http://uk.reuters.com/article/us-health-aids-idUKKBN1A50SC

GeneXpert for Tuberculosis can detect viral load in HIV: Study
Doctors at Kasturba Medical College in Mangalore decided to put their GeneXpert machine, which is in routine used to detect if the sputum sample is resistant to first line TB drug, Rifampacin, to use for
detecting viral loads in HIV patients. In 96.6 per cent of cases, the viral load figures for a patient on both GeneXpert and TaqMan Assay fell within threshold of statistical acceptability


Indian scientists develop new method of combating tuberculosis, identify molecules that inhibit growth
A group of Indian scientists have identified molecules which are effective in inhibiting the growth of tuberculosis-causing bacteria - Mycobacterium tuberculosis. The molecules target an important gene, IdeR, which is essential for the survival of the bacteria. This development could lead to new drugs against TB in future


Brazil risks rodent-borne Hantavirus rise due to sugarcane, climate change: scientists
The risk of being infected by Hantavirus could jump in Brazil`s Sao Paulo state as climate change sends temperatures higher and farmers grow more sugarcane, said scientists. More effective health education and pest control could help cut the risk of the disease in the area, along with forest restoration and better land use. The virus, which can be inhaled or caught via contact with rodent droppings or urine, causes Hantavirus Cardiopulmonary Syndrome which is fatal in more than half of cases

http://www.reuters.com/article/us-brazil-climatechange-health-idUSKBN1A52IV

Additional sources: (International Business Times)

How Cows Are Helping the Fight Against HIV
Scientists estimate that only about 20% of people who are infected with HIV produce broadly neutralizing antibodies (bNAbs): naturally occurring antibodies that can defend a cell against the virus. Even among people who do produce them, that production typically starts around two years after infection. Researchers at the Scripps Research Institute, the International AIDS Vaccine Initiative (IAVI) and Texas A&M University showed that they were able to induce potent antibodies against HIV in cows. Though cows do not get HIV, their immune systems produce unique antibodies against infections

http://time.com/4865239/how-cows-are-helping-fight-against-hiv/

Additional sources: (Philly.com)

OraSure Technologies Receives World Health Organization Prequalification of OraQuick® HIV Self-Test
OraSure Technologies announced that its OraQuick® HIV Self-Test (HIVST) has been Prequalified by the World Health Organization. The OraQuick HIV Self-Test is a rapid, point-of-care test that allows an individual to detect antibodies to both HIV-1 and HIV-2 with a simple oral swab and provides a result in as little as 20 minutes at home, at outreach testing settings, or at community based screening events


Additional sources: (IP-Watch.org)

WHO urges action against HIV drug resistance threat
WHO alerts countries to the increasing trend of resistance to HIV drugs detailed in a report based on national surveys conducted in several countries. The HIV drug resistance report 2017 shows that in 6 of the 11 countries surveyed in Africa, Asia and Latin America, over 10% of people starting antiretroviral therapy had a strain of HIV that was resistant to some of the most widely used HIV medicines. Once the threshold of 10% has been reached, WHO recommends those countries urgently review their HIV treatment programmes
1 in 10 Babies Received No Vaccinations in 2016
Nearly one in 10 infants worldwide, or 12.9 million, received no vaccinations in 2016, the WHO said. Those infants missed the critical first dose of the triple vaccination against diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis. An additional 6.6 million infants who received the first dose didn’t receive the other two doses in the three-dose series last year. “Since 2010, the percentage of children who received their full course of routine immunizations has stalled at 86 percent, with no significant changes in any countries or regions during the past year,” WHO said. “This falls short of the global immunization coverage target of 90 percent”

500,000 Malaysians likely have hepatitis C
About half a million Malaysians are believed to have hepatitis C, said Health Minister S. Subramaniam, adding that many were unaware they had been infected with the virus because of a lack of awareness about the disease. If left untreated, hepatitis C could be fatal, or lead to liver cancer or cirrhosis

Hepatitis B affects 3.5 million Ugandans
Ugandan government figures show the prevalence rate of Hepatitis is 10% compared to the 7.3% of HIV/AIDS in Uganda. One of the biggest challenges in the fight against the disease is that people who test positive and are referred for treatment do not even know where to go. There are few available facilities for testing Hepatitis viral load across the country and they are very expensive with poorly trained staff

UC Berkeley, biotech firm develop new test differentiating Zika from other viruses
An antibody-based test, developed by researchers at the University of California, Berkeley, and Humabs BioMed, is able to determine if a person’s infection is from the Zika virus or another virus of the same family, such as dengue and West Nile viruses. Hailed by the researchers as the best-to-date test in differentiating Zika virus infections from infections caused by similar viruses, the new assay is currently in the licensing process

CDC: More than 100 Million U.S. Adults Have Diabetes
While the rate of new diabetes cases is steady, a report released by the CDC shows that a third of adults in the United States currently are living with diabetes or prediabetes. The National Diabetes Statistics Report found that as of 2015, 30.3 million Americans are living with diagnosed diabetes and another 84.1 million have prediabetes, a condition that if left untreated leads to diabetes within five years

Additional sources: (Reuters) (Time) (BBC)

Additional sources: (Newsweek) (CIDRAP)

Additional sources: (Science Daily) (Genetic Engineering & Biotechnology News)

Additional sources: (EHS Today) (Drug Store News)

Additional sources: (VOA News) (CIDRAP)

Non communicable diseases

Death toll from respiratory diseases rising in Gurgaon amid soaring pollution
The number of deaths from respiratory ailments being reported by hospitals in Gurgaon is rising year-on-year with the city’s consistently high levels of air pollution seen as the exacerbating factor.
According to the data collected by TOI, 2,500 people admitted to five leading private hospitals in the city died in the last one year — from April 2016 to March 2017 — because of respiratory illnesses in which air pollution was an aggravating factor.


**Study to identify genetic risk of kidney diseases**

A study to determine the genetic risk of kidney diseases caused by diabetes is currently under way. The results could help doctors screen patients more effectively and give them early treatment. The $25 million research study is the latest programme to be funded under the health and biomedical sciences domain of the $19 billion Research, Innovation and Enterprise (RIE) 2020 plan. It aims to determine the underlying genes and process of how kidney diseases caused by diabetes develop.


**Tobacco companies interfere with health regulations, WHO**

Cigarette manufacturers are attempting to thwart government tobacco controls wherever possible, even as governments make progress regulating the products, a new WHO report has found. World health officials also warn that tobacco companies have moved their fight to the developing world, where smoking rates are predicted to rise by double digits in the coming decades.

https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/jul/19/tobacco-industry-government-policy-interference-regulations

Additional sources: (Deutsche Welle) (Economic Times) (United Nations) (Reuters)

**WHO report finds dramatic increase in life-saving tobacco control policies in last decade**

The latest WHO report on the global tobacco epidemic finds that more countries have implemented tobacco control policies, ranging from graphic pack warnings and advertising bans to no smoking areas. About 4.7 billion people – 63% of the world’s population – are covered by at least one comprehensive tobacco control measure, which has quadrupled since 2007 when only 1 billion people and 15% of the world’s population were covered.


Additional sources: (Economic Times) (news-medical.net)

**Two key CKD biomarkers predict risk for future peripheral artery disease**

Among patients without symptomatic peripheral artery disease at baseline, a lower estimated glomerular filtration rate and higher urinary albumin to creatinine ratio — even when not rising to the level of albuminuria — significantly increase the risk for developing future vascular disease, according to findings from a large meta-analysis of international prospective cohorts.


**Heart attack patients missing out on smoking cessation drugs**

For a new study, researchers analysed data on 9,193 smokers who had a heart attack between 2007 and 2013. All were at least 65 years old. Overall, 97 percent of patients were counselled during their hospital stay about smoking cessation, but only 7 percent ended up picking up medications to help achieve that goal within 90 days.

http://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-cardio-smoking-heart-idUSKBN1A62LM

**Cardiovascular disease may help speed glaucoma progression**

Cardiovascular disease is an important risk factor for rapid progression of glaucoma disease, regardless of IOP, according to a study. Looking at the clinical and visual field data of 11,254 eyes collected between 1991 and 2015, the authors of the study selected 54 eyes that satisfied the criteria for rapid progression. A total of 486 eyes were selected as non-rapid progressors for the control group. Patients with a cardiovascular history had double the chance to be rapid progressors.
Global health price tag could be $371 billion a year by 2030, WHO says
Meeting life-saving global health targets by 2030 could require investments by donors and national governments of up to $58 per person per year, or $371 billion annually, the WHO said. In a best case scenario of increasing investment to meet the goals, some 97 million premature deaths could be prevented between now and 2030, and up to 8.4 years of life expectancy could be added in some countries.

German politicians, industry agree diesel plan: sources
Car industry officials and politicians in Germany have agreed to update the engine software of around 9 million diesel cars as part of a plan to avoid bans on diesel vehicles in major cities, industry and government sources said. The software updates will cost under 2 billion euros ($2.33 billion) for cars in Germany, with the auto industry agreeing to shoulder the expense of about 100 euros per car.

Women murder victims: guns used in majority of homicides
Guns are used in more than half of murders of women, and the highest frequency is among non-Hispanic black victims, according to a new analysis by the CDC. Domestic violence is a big factor: Firearms were used in nearly 54 percent of female homicides, and in 55 percent of those cases the perpetrator is someone with whom the victim has been intimately involved. Past studies have demonstrated that a woman’s risk of homicide increases greatly if her male abuser owns a gun.

With climate change driving child marriage risks, Bangladesh fights back
Climate change-driven extreme weather is accelerating migration to Bangladesh’s cities, raising the risks of problems such as child marriage, according to UNICEF’s head of Bangladesh programmes. Innovative efforts to curb the threat - particularly training young people to help each other - are paying off, with Bangladesh’s government now incorporating programmes started by UNICEF and Save the Children.

More girls at risk of genital mutilation in Germany
The number of girls living in Germany who have had their genitals mutilated increased sharply in 2016 due to migrants arriving from countries where this is practised, a spokeswoman for a women’s rights organisation said. More than 58,000 women living in Germany have had their genitals mutilated, Terre des Femmes said. Spokeswoman Charlotte Weil said that marked an increase of 10,000 compared with 2015.

China’s War on Foreign Garbage
For more than 30 years, imports of recycled goods have fueled China’s manufacturing boom. The government has now announced that it`d had enough. By the end of the year, it told the World Trade Organization, it would stop accepting most recycled plastics, paper, textiles and other products from overseas. The decision is part of a campaign against "foreign garbage" that harms public health and the environment.
Insurance for poor could protect the most disaster-vulnerable - governments

Insurance is an underused way to help save lives in natural disasters and soften their impact on the poorest countries - and it needs to be better understood by governments and aid groups, said insurers, aid experts and government ministers. There is "clear evidence" that when insurance pay outs are available during a natural disaster "economic recovery is quicker, human deprivation is lower (and) there is lower cost to the taxpayer," said Stephen Catlin, chair of the Insurance Development Forum.

Paying Uganda farmers not to cut down trees halved deforestation - study

Paying Ugandan farmers not to chop down trees cut deforestation in half and was almost 50 times more cost effective in fighting climate change than many energy efficiency programmes in the U.S., according to a study by researchers from the U.S.'s Northwestern University and Dutch organisation Porticus. It involved 121 villages with half paid about $28 a year for every hectare of forest left untouched while the others continued as normal. Using satellite images to track deforestation over two years, the researchers found 5.5 more hectares of forest was preserved in the villages in the payment programme compared to the other villages.

Progress too slow on global goals for sustainable development, UN says

Progress is not moving fast enough to meet an ambitious set of global goals to conquer poverty, inequality and other international woes by a 2030 deadline, slowed largely by growing war and violence, the United Nations said. The cost of implementation has been estimated at $3 trillion a year. "The rate of progress in many areas is far slower than needed to meet the targets by 2030," wrote U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres.

Abortion rights groups sue Texas to block procedure ban

Abortion rights groups filed a lawsuit seeking to block a Texas law that bans the most common method of second-trimester abortion which critics argue erodes women’s rights. The challenge, which came six weeks after the state’s governor signed the law, was the latest salvo in a battle over state laws enacted by Republican-controlled state legislatures that advocates say limit access to abortion.

Life expectancy increases in Britain beginning to stall - report

Life expectancy in Britain has all but stopped rising after more than 100 years of advances, a leading professor of public health said. Until 2010, life expectancy at birth was rising by one year every five years for women, and by one year every three and a half years for men. But since 2010, the average rate of increase has halved, and in 2013-15 it was near zero, a report by the Institute of Health Equity found.