ASIA

Avian Flu Outbreak Continues to Spread

Asia has suffered a setback in the struggle to control Avian Flu, with Vietnam confirming its 21st human case of the disease and Thailand saying a previously unaffected province had been hit. China, meanwhile, confirmed bird flu in fowl in Tibet, raising the number of regions affected to 16 out of 31. Ten Asian governments are fighting the disease, which has killed more than 60 million chickens and ducks since first appearing two months ago. The virus has also jumped to humans in Vietnam and Thailand, killing a total of 20 people. China, Cambodia, Japan, Indonesia, Laos, Pakistan, South Korea, Thailand, Taiwan and Vietnam have been hit by bird flu. Pakistan and Taiwan are reporting a milder strain of the virus. The United States has reported outbreaks — confirming new infections in Pennsylvania overnight — but the strains there are not considered a danger to people. The WHO says the H5N1 strain that has jumped to people in Asia appears to be resistant to some antiviral drugs, though little is known yet about the effectiveness of various treatments of the disease. Preliminary testing indicates that current H5N1 strains may be resistant to amantadine and rimantadine — therefore it is recommended that other antiviral medication, called nueraminidase inhibitors, be used as early as possible for an infected patient. The federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says travelers "should avoid poultry farms, contact with animals in live food markets, and any surfaces that appear to be contaminated with feces from poultry or other animals."


AUSTRALIA

Dengue Fever in North Queensland, Australia

Hundreds of people across northern Queensland and the Torres Strait have contracted Dengue Fever in recent months -- 200 people have been infected in the latest outbreak on Thursday Island, and now, for the first time in 100 years, the 1st death has been reported from the fever's complications. But of greatest concern to health authorities are 3 cases of the potentially fatal dengue hemorrhagic fever [DHF]. 2 women from Yam Island in the Torres Strait survived their recent ordeal with dengue hemorrhagic fever, but a female relative living on Thursday Island died. At present, the only method of preventing dengue is to control mosquitoes carrying the virus, so extensive education
campaigns encourage north Queenslanders to get rid of containers of water around their homes where mosquitoes can breed.

Source:

BANGLADESH

Dhaka Contradicts WHO figures Regarding AIDS Patients

Health and Family Welfare Minister Khandakar Mosharraf Hossain has contradicted United Nations agency reports that Bangladesh has 13,000 AIDS patients, pegging the figure as assumption-based. Replying to a question in the Jatiya Sangsad yesterday, Mosharraf said the figure was the estimate of the World Health Organization and UNAIDS, not of the government. He said until last December, 57 AIDS patients and 363 HIV-infected people were detected in Bangladesh.

Source:

Malaria Kills 112, Sickens 45,000 annually in Bandarban

Malaria claims the lives of at least 112 people and attacks over 45,000 annually in the malaria-prone district of Bandarban, according to official statistics. At least 80 per cent of the people of the district have been carrying malarial parasites in their bodies, according to a survey report compiled by the World Health Organization (WHO) very recently in collaboration with the local health department. Experts have identified 13 districts of the country bordering on India and Myanmar as ‘malaria risky zones’ in their latest survey. Rangamati bordering on Mizoram of India, Bandarban and Cox’s Bazar bordering on Myanmar, Khagrachhari, Feni, Chittagong and a portion of Comilla bordering on Agartala of India and Mymensingh, Netrakona and Sylhet bordering on Assam and Meghalaya of India are included in the survey report as malaria-prone districts. Experts identified the entire Chittagong Hill Tracts as ‘high-risk zone of malaria’, and Bandarban as ‘pan-endemic area of malaria’ in their reports.

WHO, along with the local health department, has been working on the ‘Roll Back Program’ to control malaria in the district. Bandarban, which is full of dense forests, is considered more vulnerable and risky in comparison with other two hill districts of Rangamati and Khagrachhari, as the literacy rate of its people and their living standard is very low. Seven types of anopheles mosquitoes spread malaria out of 43 genera and species seen in the hills. Anopheles minimus and Anopheles dirus are abundant in Bandarban. It is not possible to control the main carrier of malaria, Anopheles dirus, as its abodes and breeding centers cannot be found, while the control of Anopheles minimus is possible to some extent. It is not possible to eradicate malaria totally in the district, so WHO has been executing the ‘roll back program’ to keep the malarial situation under control. Malaria cannot assume epidemic form in the district as resistance has developed in the blood of its people as 80 per cent of them have been carrying malarial parasites. Pregnant women and children are most vulnerable to malaria. At least 70 per cent of the patients in the hospitals are malaria victims. Malaria usually takes a serious turn with the advent of the rainy season and before the winter. It killed 108 persons and attacked 40,240 last year. About 80 per cent of the people who die or are affected by malaria cannot get access to district government hospitals or
upazila health institutions due to distance, communication hazards and fund constraint. The actual death toll is much higher than official records. Different kinds of medicine are required to treat the malaria patients because of different symptoms but the authority supplies only quinine and paracetamol to fight malaria. Two-thirds of the medicine for treatment has to be acquired from outside.

Source:

CHINA

China Sends Team to Villages to Fight AIDS
China will send government officials to AIDS-stricken villages in central Henan province to help victims and their families in the latest official commitment to fight the disease. China has been criticized for its slow response to a disease that has infected more than 800,000 people. Health agencies say China could have 10 million AIDS victims by 2010 if it fails to take the scourge seriously. A total of 76 provincial health and finance bureau officials would fan out across Henan in pairs from Wednesday. Henan became the site of one of China’s worst AIDS outbreaks when thousands of peasants were infected after selling their plasma and having HIV-infected blood pumped back into them. The officials were being sent to work in villages with high incidences of AIDS for one year to help improve prevention and treatment systems and strengthen infrastructure construction. They would supervise distribution of free medicine for carriers and provide free AIDS tests for villagers after receiving AIDS prevention training themselves. They would provide free education for orphans of victims and take care of elderly people who have lost their children to AIDS. Henan is one of China’s most secretive provinces and has regularly arrested reporters trying to cover the AIDS story. Activists and experts continue to cite local cover-ups of blood bank scandals plaguing entire villages, as well as newspaper stories that play down the plight of people.

Source:

RT-PCR Method Developed in China -- Able to Detect Bird Flu Virus in 4 Hours
China has developed a method to test for avian influenza A (H5N1) virus in 4 hours, much shorter than the 21 days taken by the internationally-accepted detection method recommended by the Paris-based World Organization for Animal Health (OIE), according to a meeting held on 14 Feb 2004 in Beijing to approve the method. The new method of reverse transcription-polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR) was jointly developed by the Beijing Administration for Entry-and-Exit Inspection and Quarantine and a company in Shenzhen, south Guangdong Province. The method has been assessed and approved by experts from the Ministry of Science and Technology, the State Administration of Quality Supervision, Inspection and Quarantine, Agricultural University of China, and the Chinese Academy of Medical Sciences.

Source:
Bird Flu Spreads in China
Asian countries should intensify their war on a deadly bird flu that shows no signs of receding with fresh outbreaks in China and which threatens to evolve into a SARS-like epidemic, health experts said on Thursday. The World Health Organization said authorities were rushing to declare the disease ravaging their poultry flocks under control and it warned people were still at risk from the H5N1 virus that has killed 22 people in Asia. "We are in an emergency, urgency mode," Bjorn Melgaard, the WHO representative in Thailand, told regional health experts gathered in Bangkok to compare notes on fighting the virus. "The bird epidemic is unfolding and continuing to spread at an unprecedented rate." China confirmed three outbreaks among poultry in three provinces on Thursday, but so far no human cases of the virus that has killed 15 Vietnamese and seven Thais. The U.N.'s Food and Agriculture Organization said it would be at least a year, perhaps never, before the virus was under control. And health experts say the risk of a human pandemic grows the longer the virus lingers. "If you allow this virus to keep on entering the human population over and over again, you could have the virus learning to transmit effectively from human to human," said Malik Peiris, an influenza expert at the University of Hong Kong. "This is clearly what happened with SARS last year." Experts worry the virus could infect a person who also has the human flu virus, allowing it to mutate into a strain that could spread through people with no immunity.

Source:
- Utusan Online, Feb 19, 2004,

HONG KONG
Dengue Fever (Imported) in Hong Kong
Hong Kong Special Administrative Region's Department of Health confirmed an imported case of dengue fever and urged the public to guard against the disease. The new case is the 7th reported case in Hong Kong in 2004. All of the reported cases are imported. A 27-year-old man developed fever and headache on 31 January 2004, after he traveled to southeast Asian countries on 10 January 2004. He returned to Hong Kong on 3 February 2004. He has since recovered and been discharged from Hong Kong's Prince of Wales Hospital. The department said it is essential that the public stay alert to the threat of dengue fever and help in the reduction of mosquito breeding.

Source:

INDIA
Undiagnosed Disease in Himalayan Villages Kills Six Children
A mysterious disease in two remote Himalayan villages has killed at least six children and sickened 70 others in the last 15 days. The deaths occurred in the Unampur district. State health authorities have sent three medical teams to the villages of Chordmatoo and Chorpanjia in the northern Indian state of Jammu-Kashmir to investigate. The symptoms of the ailment are similar to measles. Udhampur is about 120 kilometres (75 miles) north of Jammu, the winter capital of Jammu-Kashmir state. The mountainous villages are not accessible by road and are nearly a day away from the closest road by foot. Villagers believed the disease was the result of displeasing the local goddess and that sick children would be cured only by making offerings to her.

Source:
Dengue Fever has spread to four more Indonesian provinces as the national death toll rose to 188. As of late Thursday the death toll since January 1 was 188 and 9,365 people had become infected in 16 provinces. The health department calls it an "extraordinary" outbreak because the number of infections is more than double those in the same period last year. Most cases are on Java island, where over half of Indonesia's 212 million people live. The female mosquitoes which spread dengue breed in clean water which collects in containers. Health officials say efforts to counter the illness depend very much on the ability of people to keep their environment clean. Indonesian health officials suspect a new virus strain could be responsible for the outbreak. But the local head of the World Health Organization, Dr Georg Petersen, said it was hard to say whether a new strain was behind the current outbreak, which was not totally unexpected. Every year there has been a steady increase in dengue cases all over Southeast Asia. Dengue also peaks in cycles of about five years and the current infections come at the peak of that cycle.

New Strain of Dengue Found in Indonesia

Doctors treating hemorrhagic fever patients confirmed on Tuesday the government's suspicion of a new sub-variant of the dengue fever virus that was responsible for the outbreak in several regions. A case was discovered last year in Bandung in which a girl died from a flu-like illness. A blood test conducted at the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta, the United States, confirmed the girl died from dengue fever, although she did not have a skin rash, which is a common symptom of dengue fever. Earlier, a pediatrician with the city-run Budhi Asih Hospital in East Jakarta, claimed to have found two different types of the dengue fever virus in his patients. He said the mutation of the virus had led to double infections in the patients. The head of the East Java Health Agency, Bambang Giyatno, said preliminary examinations by a team from Dr. Soetomo General Hospital in Surabaya found the dengue fever outbreak in the province was caused by a new strain of the virus. The new virus could be identified by the faster spread of the disease and the larger number of casualties it caused. The new virus has a casualty rate of above 1 percent, a figure never seen in previous outbreaks. East Java has been the hardest hit area, with a casualty rate reaching 3 percent, while in Jakarta the casualty rate is 1 percent. At least 4,500 people in six provinces have been hospitalized with dengue fever since the beginning of the year, with 91 deaths as of Tuesday. The government has ordered extraordinary measures to contain the virus, including ordering hospitals to accept all patients with dengue symptoms. The new strain of the virus caused typical dengue symptoms: skin rashes, a temperature of more than 38 degrees Celsius, headaches, severe joint pain and nausea, but the symptoms spread much faster. To verify that the outbreak is caused by a new strain of the virus, the Ministry of Health will dispatch a team to take blood samples from patients across Jakarta. After the team has collected
enough samples, research will be conducted to determine whether a new sub-variant of the virus has caused the outbreak. According to recent data, 1,076 people in West Java have been infected with dengue fever, with 20 deaths, and 78 people with four deaths in East Kalimantan. Cases have also been reported in Bali and West Nusa Tenggara. Dengue fever, transmitted by the Aedes aegypti mosquito, infects between 50 million and 100 million people worldwide each year, including many children. Some 200,000-500,000 of these cases are the potentially life-threatening dengue hemorrhagic fever.

Source:  

JAPAN

Japan Hit By Deadly Bird Flu Strain

A bird flu virus that had infected pet chickens in southern Japan has been confirmed as the same deadly strain that has ravaged other parts of Asia. The World Health Organization listed Japan among the countries affected by the avian flu after an outbreak last month killed thousands of egg laying chickens in the country's southwest. Health experts say migratory birds, fighting cocks and farmers' trucks could be behind bird flu's persistent spread through Asia despite massive culls. More than 80 million chickens and other fowl have been slaughtered to contain the disease. Avian flu generally infects only birds, although it has spread to people in a few isolated cases. The virus has only jumped to humans in Thailand — where it has killed seven people — and Vietnam, where 15 people have died. Also affected by the H5N1 strain are Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos and South Korea. Pakistan and Taiwan are reporting a milder strain of the virus. Past outbreaks of the H5N1 strain — which killed six people in Hong Kong in 1997 — have taken years to bring under control, and never has the disease spread as far and as fast as it has this year.

Source:  

PHILIPPINES

Anti-Measles Drive in Maguindanao is 50% Complete

The Integrated Provincial Health Office (IPHO) in Maguindanao claimed it has administered anti-measles vaccine to 94,000 children or 49 percent of its target under the Ligtas Tigdas campaign and given free Vitamin A capsules to 75,000 children or 53 percent of its target in less than two weeks since the campaign started. The IPHO intends to immunize 193,000 children with ages ranging from nine months to below eight years. It also aims to provide free Vitamin A to 142,000 children. The IPHO hopes to go beyond the 95-percent target set by the national government for the Ligtas Tigdas 2004 drive. The Department of Health has targeted 18.5 million children who were born between February 1996 to May 2003 for the anti-measles drive. Among the areas they prioritized for the first two weeks were mostly hard-to-reach, remote, coastal, and upland villages in Maguindanao as most measles cases were recorded from these areas.

Measles, known among Filipinos as "tigdas", is one of the leading causes of deaths among children. Last year, the IPHO-Maguindanao recorded at least 639 measles cases, mostly children who were not given the vaccine. Of these number, 12 died. At
least seven cases were monitored from January to first two weeks of February this year, mostly from Shariff Aguak, Ampatuan, and other former war-torn areas in Maguindanao. The country has made a commitment to eliminate the virus by 2008. The campaign ends on Feb. 29 but the IPHO-Maguindanao said immunization against measles virus would continue throughout the year. The DOH uses the "door-to-door" strategy in this campaign where "Bakuna Doors" or vaccination teams went from house-to-house or building-to-building and even in streets, markets and other public places to look for children who would be immunized.


Increase in Rabies Deaths in Zamboanga City
In Zamboanga City, four people had died of rabies last year from out of the 916 recorded cases of dog bites in this city, or an alarming 50-percent increase in mortality compared to the previous year's record. Of the four fatalities, three were victims of stray dogs and one acquired rabies through cut bites. The majority of the cases reported last year came from the barangays of Sta. Maria, Tumaga and Ayala. In view of the situation, the local Rabies Control and Eradication Council has stepped up its rabies awareness program in coordination with the barangay councils and other agencies concerned. The rabies council also resolved to pursue its dog round-up activities as well as continue with the dog elimination program to prevent the proliferation of rabid dogs.


SINGAPORE

Six Areas in Singapore Identified to Have Dengue
Six areas in Singapore have been identified to have dengue fever. Each area has had two or more cases within 150 meters, occurring within a 2-week period. Dengue cases reached a peak last year [2003]. A total of 4772 people fell ill with the disease - the highest number since 1998. With six people dying last year [2003] from the disease and 4644 people hospitalized, urgent prevention work is needed to stop mosquitoes from breeding, particularly in households. During 2003, 796 households were found breeding mosquitoes, a jump of over 50 percent compared to 2001. Homeowners were issued warning letters after they were found breeding mosquitoes, and 451 households were slapped with a fine after they failed to get rid of the breeding areas. Another 5349 households were also warned for having environments conducive to breeding mosquitoes. The NEA says 56 out of every 1000 landed properties inspected were found with mosquitoes. The 6 clusters with outbreaks of dengue fever are Cornwall Gardens and the Holland area, Marine Terrace and Marine Crescent, Hougang Avenues 8 and 10, Simei Street 3, Thomson Ridge and Sawnage Road, in the Tanjong Katong area.


SRI LANKA

Dengue Spreads in Trincomalee, Sri Lanka
The North East Provincial Health Department has launched an emergency awareness campaign in Trincomalee to educate the residents of the eastern port town against the
spread of dengue fever, after medical officials detected 11 suspected positive cases in recent days. Health officials sought the assistance of students in a house-to-house campaign to educate the residents to keep their houses and premises clean and to destroy all discarded coconut shells, tires, empty tins and bottles, which are considered breeding grounds for mosquitoes.

Source:

THAILAND

Bird Flu Detected in Cats in Thailand
The deadly H5N1 strain of bird flu has been detected in a leopard, a tiger and two domestic cats in Thailand. The discoveries have alarmed scientists, who now fear the disease can spread as easily between species as it has between countries. The H5N1 strain has hit eight Asian nations, with weaker varieties detected in Taiwan, Pakistan and the United States. On Thursday Canada also reported a less virulent strain in the western province of British Columbia. Thailand's hopes of declaring its bird flu outbreak over, and rebuilding its shattered poultry industry, were dashed earlier this week when it announced major new outbreaks had erupted across the nation. So far all the human casualties are believed to have been infected through contact with sick birds or their secretions. But the World Health Organization has warned H5N1 could kill millions around the globe if it combined with a human influenza virus to create a new highly contagious strain transmissible among humans. That prospect could be more likely if mammals like pigs are found to carry H5N1, as experts say they are an ideal ``mixing vessel'' in which viruses swap genes, become more lethal or contagious and then leap to humans.

Source:

VIETNAM

21st Avian Influenza Virus Case Confirmed in Viet Nam
On 16 February 2004 Viet Nam confirmed its 21st case of bird flu. The 15-year-old boy in Viet Nam was hospitalized with fever, coughing, and shortness of breath in northern Thanh Hoa province, where doctors said it was unclear how he was infected. Many of the 20 people killed by bird flu in Asia have come from poultry-farming families or otherwise had contact with birds sickened by the outbreak, which was first reported in December 2003 in South Korea and now spans 10 countries. The boy's family raises no poultry, and says he did not come in contact with birds, although his neighborhood did experience a bird flu outbreak, health officials said. [Note: 8 cases and 6 deaths have been reported from Thailand, which brings the total number of laboratory-confirmed cases in East Asia to 29, 20 of whom have died.]

Source:

Other World News

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Small Study Indicates Experimental Vaccine May Stop Lung Cancer
An experimental vaccine stopped lung cancer in some patients and slowed its spread in
others in a small but promising study. Three patients injected with the vaccine, GVAX, had no recurrence of lung cancer for more than three years afterward, according to the study of 43 people with the most common form of the disease, non-small cell lung cancer. The findings were published in Wednesday's Journal of the National Cancer Institute. The research was funded in part by CellGenesis, a pharmaceutical company that hopes to produce the vaccine. The vaccine, developed by researchers at Baylor University Medical Center in Dallas, is years away from reaching the market. The researchers hope to apply for Food and Drug Administration approval in three years. The results are very promising for patients with non-small (cell) lung cancer, which is frequently resistant to chemotherapy. Non-small cell lung cancer is the nation's leading cause of cancer death, killing more than 150,000 people each year. The disease is related to smoking and is often difficult to treat. Treatment usually involves removal of the tumor, chemotherapy or both. This study is the first to show complete and long-lasting regression of lung cancer by stimulating the immune system to attack cancer cells. A similar approach has shown promise against skin and renal cell cancer.


Next Year's Influenza Vaccine
A Food and Drug Administration committee decided Thursday to add the flu strain that caused the most illnesses this year to next year's influenza vaccine. The advisory committee joined the World Health Organization in deciding to add the A-Fujian to the vaccine, which will also contain a second A strain which was in this year's vaccine. The vaccine includes two strains of A-type flu and one of B-type. Tentatively the committee decided to keep the current B-Shanghai in the vaccine. Complicating the decision this year was confusion over just how well this winter's imperfect vaccine protected people. The committee saw conflicting research Wednesday that indicated a range of results, from no protection to a fair amount.

Flu viruses come in different strains that constantly mutate. Type A strains are always the harshest, particularly a type known as H3N2. Fujian is a new H3N2 strain. Flu and pneumonia accounted for 10 percent of all deaths during influenza's peak in late December -- just shy of the flu's death toll in 1999, the last time an H3N2 strain predominated. This season was not greater in magnitude in terms of mortality than previous H3N2 seasons. There also was concern about whether this winter's flu was particularly deadly to young children. The CDC so far knows of 134 flu-associated deaths among children, 82 of them in youngsters under 5. In the 1990s, there was an average of 92 deaths a year among children under 5. Studies to determine if child hospitalizations increased this winter aren't yet complete.

The flu vaccine is reformulated every year to try to match the three strains -- two Type A varieties and one more benign Type B variety -- that specialists predict are most likely to strike. It has to be done months in advance so manufacturers have time to brew vaccine. Preliminary results of a CDC study of 50- to 64-year-olds in Colorado, among the first states hard-hit by flu, found those at particularly high risk from influenza received little if any protection from the vaccine. But a military study of the families of 114 Air Force personnel who caught the flu suggests the vaccine was 40 percent effective. And a study by France's National Institute for Health and Medical Research suggests the vaccine was 60 percent effective. (France experienced a flu season
almost identical to the United States’, and used the same vaccine.) When the vaccine is a good match to circulating strains, it is 70 percent to 90 percent effective at protecting people from flu.

Source:

**WORLD**

**New Drug From Australia Prevents Bird Flu Transmission**

Laboratory tests by Australia’s Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization (CSIRO) have shown the drug, called Relenza, can prevent the transmission of the H5N1 influenza virus and reduce the symptoms. The H5N1 virus has so far killed 21 people in Asian nations as well as decimated millions of chickens and other poultry in the region. The World Health Organization has warned that a potential mutation of the virus which could see the flu spread between humans could have a devastating impact, worse even than the SARS illness which killed more than 800 people last year. Human clinical trials testing the effectiveness of Relenza will need to be conducted, however, before the drug could be confirmed as a counter for bird flu. The drug prevented transmission of flu in about 80 percent of cases and was similarly successful in reducing the duration and severity of flu symptoms. She said the laboratory tests indicated a similar level of effectiveness could be expected for prevention or treatment of bird flu in humans. Relenza, which was first released in 1999, works by targeting and binding to a small, non-mutating part of all strains of flu viruses. The drug emerged from a 20-year research project involving CSIRO scientists, the Victorian College of Pharmacy and pharmaceutical companies Biota Holdings and Glaxo Wellcome Australia. Another flu drug, Tamiflu, based on the CSIRO research, has also been released. The WHO’s pandemic planning committee earlier this year recommended nations begin stockpiling these two drugs in the event of a human bird flu virus outbreak.

Source:

**Italian Scientists Discover New Form of Mad Cow Disease**

Italian researchers have discovered a new form of mad cow disease (that more closely resembles the human Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease), according to a study published Tuesday in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences. The brain-wasting diseases BSE, known as mad cow disease, and human CJD are caused by different forms of mutant proteins called prions (a prion is a misfolded protein particle that is believed to be the cause of various infectious diseases of the nervous system). A number of people, mainly in England, have also suffered from what is called variant CJD, a brain disease believed to be acquired by eating meat from infected cows. No Americans have been reported with variant CJD. Now, the team of Italian researchers reports a study of eight cows with mad cow disease found that two of them had brain damage resembling the human victims of CJD. Prior to this new study, only one prion had been found to cause the deadly bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) found in cows and CJD. The researchers say the cows were infected with prions that resembled those involved in the standard form of the human disease, called sporadic CJD, not the variant caused by eating infected meat.
Both the human and cattle diseases cause holes to form in the brain. The Italian researchers found that, in addition to the holes, two cows had an accumulation of amyloid plaque in their brains. Amyloid plaques are an indication of Alzheimer's disease in humans. They have also been found in people with sporadic CJD but had not been found in cattle. Mad cow disease is formally known as BSE -- bovine spongiform encephalophy -- and the Italians named the new form with amyloid plaques BASE. Although observed in only two cattle, the BASE phenotype could be more common than expected. But while human CJD and BASE share several characteristics, the Italian researchers cautioned against assuming a link between the two.

Source:

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