

## FT BIG READ

# Poverty - Vulnerable to change

By Shawn Donnan

With more than one billion people still living on less than USD1.25 a day and many emerging economies stalling, the impressive progress made in reducing poverty in the past 25 years looks difficult to maintain.

The arithmetic is daunting. To end "extreme poverty" by 2030, the world needs to help 7,500 people move up the economic ladder every hour for the next 15 years, according to one calculation. Put another way, that is 181,729 people - roughly the population of Amarillo, Texas - every day.

But that is exactly what world leaders have committed to do at the UN on Friday as part of a three-day summit held under the watchful eye of Pope Francis. The gathering will put a formal seal on a plan - prosaically known as the global goals for sustainable development - to rescue humanity. At the heart of the plan is a pledge to "eradicate extreme poverty" - currently measured as people living on less than \$1.25 a day - within 15 years. But that ambition, while laudable, looks virtually impossible to achieve.

World Bank economists question if it can be met amid signs of slowing growth in emerging markets, which has lifted millions out of poverty and raised living standards in recent years. The organization is also about to reset its measure of poverty - to about \$1.90 a day - casting millions more into the statistical bracket, placing the target even further out of reach.

The remarkable reduction in poverty over the past 25 years and the new global middle class it has helped create has been the economic story of our time. But both the goal to finish the job and the challenges it faces illustrate the uncertainty that hangs over the next chapter.

The more than halving of the number of people living in extreme poverty in recent decades has been fuelled above all else by rapid growth in places like China and Brazil. And that growth is unlikely to be replicated over the next 15 years.

The IMF expects the world's emerging and developing economies to grow by 4.2 per cent in 2015, down from an average of 6 per cent over the past 15 years. For those economies it is forecasting average growth of just 5 per cent over the next five years,



An elderly woman searches inside a garbage bin in the Mong Kok district of Hong Kong

a prediction that looks vulnerable to global economic shocks.

Even repeating the economic performance of the past 15 years between now and 2030 would still leave 6-7 per cent of the global population living in extreme poverty, admits Jim Yong Kim, the World Bank's president. "Growth is the most important factor in ending extreme poverty," he says. "And in terms of growth there are a lot of things that are worrisome."

Although the world has begun to focus on broader issues such as inequality and the impact of booming economies on climate change, boosting growth remains the most effective tool for those trying to end extreme poverty.

Poverty data, based on house-

**“ The notion that someone on USD1.26 [a day] is fine is obviously nuts**

JAMIE DRUMMOND

hold consumption surveys, are notoriously slow to produce. Kaushik Basu, the World Bank's chief economist, says the "piecemeal" economic evidence so far indicates that the slowing growth of recent years in emerging economies has yet to have an effect on poverty rates.

But that is about to change, he argues, with countries like Brazil and Nigeria facing new economic struggles due to col-

lapsing prices for oil and other commodity exports they depend on. This will almost certainly lead to a rise in poverty levels, he says, with knock-on effects for the global economy.

If the future lies in a new consuming middle class emerging in developing economies, as many multinational corporations hope, then those people have to rise out of poverty - and stay out.

The use of global poverty lines

has always invited what experts call a level of "false precision". But they are used to guide policy and have been at the very least a crude tool to measure improvements in global poverty rates. "There's an absurdity in any hard line," says Jamie Drummond, the co-founder of One, a campaigning group. "The notion that someone on \$1.26 [a day] is fine is obviously nuts."

The biggest gains in the fight against poverty in recent decades have come in Asian economies like China and Vietnam, which followed the rise of South Korea and Japan before them. According to World Bank data, one in three of the world's poor lived in East Asia in 1999; today that figure is 8 per cent. In 1999 there were more than 450m people living on \$1.25 a day or less in China and they alone made up a quarter of the world's poor. By 2011, the latest year for which data are available, that number had fallen to 84m.

More than 80 per cent of the 1bn people struggling to get by on \$1.25 a day or less do so in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. India alone is still home to more than 280m of those people. But Africa, even after a relative boom in some of its corners, remains an even bigger challenge.

The reality is that many of the people who have risen out of poverty in recent years remain vulnerable to slipping back into it. In Africa the percentage of the population living on less than \$1.25 a day has fallen below 50 per cent in recent years. But almost 90 per cent of people still survive on \$5 a day or less.

More daunting perhaps for those looking to eliminate poverty is the fact that 400m of the global poor now live in conflict-torn or fragile states like Somalia or the Democratic Republic of Congo, a number that has changed very little over the past 25 years. By 2030, people living in such fragile states are expected to account for 90 per cent of the world's poor. Those predictions also do not take into account the potential impact of climate change, drought and other natural disasters. Most of the world's poor still depend on agriculture.

The renewed focus on poverty comes amid a growing debate within the World Bank about how to measure it. A new line of about \$1.90 would be the

bank's biggest revision since it first introduced its \$1-a-day measure in 1990. Separately it has created a new commission led by economist and poverty expert Sir Anthony Atkinson to establish a robust way to handle future adjustments and look at potential alternative measures. Parts of the UN, for example, have adopted a "poverty index" to measure things such as access to education and healthcare that ignores income in favor of a broader reading of "living standards".

Such measures of poverty are controversial because they are open to a wide range of interpretations. Should deprivation be measured by years of schooling? Or by pupils' results or even success or failure in the labor market?

In the past, those adjustments have also come with wild swings in the numbers of poor in the world. When the World Bank last tweaked its poverty line from \$1.08 to \$1.25 a day in 2008 it announced that it had found 400m more people - or the equivalent of a third of the population of China - than it previously expected living in extreme poverty.

When independent researchers in 2014 applied that same \$1.25 poverty line to the existing World Bank data using the 2011 PPP update they calculated a halving in the number of people in the world living in extreme poverty from 1.2bn to less than 600m.

The moves have yielded new questions about whether the bank is massaging the numbers in its own interest. "There's always been a credibility problem around global poverty numbers and it's not clear that things are going to get better in the foreseeable future," says Laurence Chandy, a fellow at the Brookings Institution in Washington and member of the new Atkinson commission's advisory panel.

Dr Kim has vowed to improve the poverty statistics and especially the paucity of data in the developing world. But such discussions of arithmetic obscure the bigger issue: too many people in the world remain stuck in poverty, however you measure it. Ultimately that is what world leaders want to address but an already difficult task is about to get even harder.

## Indian nursery worker with little chance of a better life

A security guard at a nursery in an upmarket New Delhi neighbourhood, Swami Prasad, 45, knows plenty about surviving below the World Bank's official poverty line of \$1.25 a day, or about Rs82.

Mr Prasad, who migrated to Delhi from a water-scarce region of Uttar Pradesh, earns Rs6,000 per month, working 9am to 6pm - seven days a week - writing down the licence plate numbers of every car that enters the nursery premises. Even at twice the \$1.25 a day poverty line he is struggling to survive. Each month, he sends Rs3,000 to Rs4,000 from his salary back to his village for his wife and three children, who range from 10 to 17 years old, and manages to get by on the rest.

Unable to afford a room, he sleeps outdoors, usually on a bench in one of the community parks in the residential area where the nursery is located, but sometimes in a local market after it is shut. His meager possessions - a spare set of clothes, a towel and

a toothbrush - are kept in a small bag at the nursery.

Mr Prasad usually eats two meals a day - lunch and dinner. He buys the first from nearby food stalls, paying Rs35-40 for a meal of four rotis, dal and a cooked vegetable. "It's enough to fill my stomach," he says. For dinner, Mr Prasad walks to a nearby Hindu temple, where wealthy devotees often distribute free food to the poor. If there is no food there, he walks another 25 minutes to a more distant Sikh temple, which serves free meals every day. After dinner it is a 45-minute walk back to the neighbourhood where he sleeps. Tea and breakfast are luxuries he cannot afford.

He also has to save Rs360 every four or five months to buy a train ticket for brief visits home. On his next trip, he'll be taking his blanket to shield him from the winter cold.

"I can't really live within the money I'm getting but I don't have any choice," he says. Amy Kazmin

# Japan - End of the rice age

By Leo Lewis

The basin of the NP-WU10 is hand-molded in an iron foundry for exquisitely even heating. The lid is platinum-coated to generate the perfect levels of amino acids. A digital sensor selects from 121 possible micro-adjustments until steamed perfection is achieved.

For a rice-worshipping nation, where the gleaming Japonica grains are both food and religious offering, and where rice production is politically sacrosanct, Zojirushi's USD1,500 rice cooker is the high altar. Or at least, it should be. The problem for the Osaka-based company, whose engineers, designers and rice-tasters have been developing the NP-WU10 for many years, is that Japan's daily rice consumption is falling - hard.

Japan's rice crisis starts with its older, smaller stomachs. As the population ages, appetites are shrinking. Diets among younger Japanese favor wheat and the country is eating about 20 per cent less rice than it did two decades ago.

Other sources of demand are also vanishing: Japan drinks about a third as much (rice-based) sake as it did in 1970 and consumption of fish - the traditional accompaniment to rice - is down 30 per cent since 2005. In desperation, the agriculture, forestry and fisheries ministry has been forced to find ways of promoting a grain whose very name in Japanese - gohan - means "meal".

After hitting a peak of 2,670 in 2006, Japan's average daily calorie intake has been on the decline, falling to 2,415 last year.

The industry has watched helplessly as Japanese-grown rice has become cheaper than its Californian-grown equivalent for the first time since 1953. The price may recover in the short term, but the fundamentals suggest it is the start of a long-term trend. This inflection point, say Japan's leading rice experts, demands a wholesale revision of the way the nation thinks about its staple.

According to some, the politics and protectionism behind Japan's relationship with rice - defining features of the way the ruling Liberal Democratic party has maintained power and the country has been governed since the second world war - are already in flux. The public may see Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's new national security law as his most radical bid for reform. But the changes he may have in store for agriculture could be far more profound, analysts say.

Earlier this year, Mr Abe's party forced the JA-Zenchu union to waive its right to supervise and audit farming groups - a move intended to dilute the power of the union. The idea, considered to be among the re-



A farmer checks harvested rice grain on a truck in a paddy field in Katori, Chiba Prefecture, Japan

forms that make up the "third arrow" of Abenomics, could give greater autonomy to co-operatives. The government has also relaxed some of the limits on corporate farm ownership and created ways to merge small holdings into larger ones. Mr Abe may seek to expand the policy.

JA's control over the distribution of Japan's crops gives it a stranglehold on farming. Breaking that is likely to remain a priority for the prime minister. Despite its enduring status as the sole symbol of Japan's self-sufficiency in food, and the rescuer of a nation from postwar hunger, the rice industry has fewer defenders than in the past. The demographics of the rice industry, whose average age is 70, are working against it. About 64 per cent of Japan's farmers grow a crop that represents just 21 per cent of the country's agricultural output by value, says the Canon Institute for Global Studies.

Japanese consumers may be wealthy enough to shun imports that have been 20-30 per cent cheaper. But former agriculture ministry sources say even they have begun to notice the absurdity of a system which funnels billions of their taxes into subsidies that cause more fields to lie empty and inflate prices.

The beef and wheat lobbies, say government insiders, now wield more influence at the top

levels of government. It has finally become acceptable to question precisely how a rice industry this rickety holds the nation in its thrall. "As we are now starting to see very clearly, without its protections, Japanese domestic rice policy does not actually work at all," says Tokyo University's Masayoshi Honma.

For some, particularly the JA which has a 50 per cent stranglehold on Japan's ¥2tn rice industry, falling prices and falling demand are nothing short of disaster. JA owes much of its wealth to the 2-3 per cent commissions it levies on every rice trade, and much of its political power to the 4.6m farming households it counts as members.

The problem, admitted a Kanagawa-based JA member who gave her family name as Hayashi, represents an irresistible challenge to the historic power and wealth of the Japanese rice industry. "Rice is the heart of Japan, even if we eat less of it. But that feeling alone may not be enough any more. The farmers are old, the prices are falling and the battles are going to get harder to fight. Would you tell your children to become rice farmers in this situation?"

For others, not least Mr Abe, the falling rice price helps uncover the long-term manipulations by the industry lobby. It may also offer a chance for

Japan to approach global trade, especially ongoing negotiations on the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP), with lighter baggage than in the past, diplomats say. If Californian rice remains more expensive than domestic rice, as seems likely if drought conditions persist in California, Japanese rice farmers should be less worried about imports.

The underlying economics of rice is in perilous shape. Japanese domestic rice prices have trended steadily lower since 2003. As Prof Honma and others point out, if the Japanese rice market had ever been allowed to respond to supply and demand, domestic rice prices would have fallen sooner and deeper than they already have.

The current difference between Japanese and Californian rice, as defined by the average price of a 60kg bag, may only amount to a few hundred yen. But that difference, says Kazuhito Yamashita, a former agricultural ministry employee and research director at the Canon Institute for Global Studies, is significant. It shows, he says, that despite JA's long-term efforts to maintain high prices, keep inefficient farms afloat and ensure the size of its membership, the rice price is becoming immune to support as the fundamentals desert it.

A key gauge of the ferocity of Japan's rice protectionism,

says Mr Yamashita, is the high tariffs on imported rice. Two decades ago, Japan grudgingly agreed to an import quota of 770,000 tonnes a year of rice. This "opening" of the market, however, was mostly verbal: the rice arrived from the US and China, but barely any of it was ever released on to the market. With the total bill for this exercise now approaching \$3bn since 1995, a lot of the rice degraded to the point where it was only usable as animal feed. The rest was sent abroad as aid.

The true purpose of all this, says Mr Yamashita, has been the growth of JA's influence. Prices have been protected to ensure that millions of small rice farmers - all commission-generating members of JA, with votes that can swing elections - are not forced to stop farming.

Since the 1970s, Japan has effectively paid farmers not to grow rice, the so-called "set-aside" program that has used hefty subsidies to encourage an ever greater proportion of Japan's 2.5m hectares of rice paddy to lie fallow. In 1971, some 541,000 hectares were out of use. Today, the total stands at

## “Rice is the heart of Japan”

HAYASHI

just over 1m hectares.

"Even at that level of paddy fields out of use, JA is finding that it is still too small to maintain the desired price because demand is continuously declining. Also, rice farmers are reaching the limit of how much area they want to set aside: for emotional reasons, they want to keep on farming rice and are too old to learn the completely different skills of growing barley or wheat," says Mr Yamashita.

Does JA fundamentally want rice farmers to farm less? "Yes. There are some terrible distortions here. It's madness, but that is the basis they are working on. They don't care about

actual rice farming," adds Mr Yamashita. There are other price support efforts in play. The agriculture ministry and JA favor a system that incentivizes farmers to produce rice as animal feed rather than for human consumption. Japanese cows and pigs would be consuming some of the most expensive feedstock in the world, but, in theory, their output would not drag rice prices any lower.

The irony here, says Mr Yamashita, is that Japan's government has talked enthusiastically about promoting Japanese rice as an export product - an option that would be considerably easier if prices were allowed to continue falling to settle at a level where it is competitive with Californian rice.

There is also debate over how many legitimate members JA has - it claims 4.6m from 3.94m farming households. Mr Yamashita, Prof Honma and others say many of those members are retired, and many may be illegally claiming membership to secure tax exemptions and lucrative deals on the sale of farmland.

"The difference between the real number of farming households and JA members is a real wonder," says Prof Honma. "But JA's membership is the source of its political power. The distortions that have been created are definitely destructive."

JA's power will begin to ebb as prices continue to fall, he says, but the group has mounted protests against the TPP. Earlier this year, JA mobilised some 10m to sign a petition arguing that Japan should not sacrifice the interests of its rice farmers during the TPP talks.

But analysts say that it was muscle-flexing by a stumbling giant. In the past, says Koichi Nakano, a professor of politics at Sophia University in Tokyo, the political influence of the JA was part of a three-way pact between itself, the ruling LDP and the Keidanren business lobby. As farmers have retired and the power of the rural vote has declined, the pact has now begun to fall apart.

"JA and the agricultural lobby have actually grown weaker as a direct result of Mr Abe's political strength and the demise of the [opposition] Democratic Party of Japan," says Prof Nakano. "To have political power, you have to have a credible threat that you will switch your vote to another party, but they cannot use that with Abe."

The effect, he adds, is that Mr Abe may be in a stronger position than any of his predecessors either to push through further agricultural reforms or, more immediately, sign up to a TPP deal without a damaging backlash in the rural ballot-boxes.

## Machines allow agricultural workers to diversify

If the pinnacle of rice consumption is Zojirushi's latest cooker, the secret of much of Japan's rice production is another feat of engineering - the Yanmar RG8, a riding automated rice planter. It is this machine, along with its predecessors and rival products, that has arguably done more than anything else to transform Japanese rice farming, narrow the urban-rural divide and help maintain the vast membership base of the JA-Zenchu union of agricultural co-operatives.

The government's longstanding support of prices has gone a long way towards maintaining Japan's very inefficient rice

farmers. But that was not enough on its own, analysts say. Operated by a single farmer, Yanmar's machine can plant in the space of 15 minutes an area that would otherwise take a person a full day of back-breaking labor.

In effect, it created the weekend farmer. Japanese farmers have become increasingly released from their fields since the first automated planters were introduced in the 1960s. That has allowed them to take on other, more lucrative jobs, meaning that the average income from agriculture for a typical Japanese farmer's total income is just 15 per cent, says Kazuhi-

to Yamashita of the Canon Institute for Global Studies. The non-farming portion of their pensions is about 60 per cent.

The comparative ease with which an automatic rice planter can be operated by elderly farmers or their city-dwelling offspring allows them to plant their crops in a two-day blitz. Tens of thousands of households are able to continue farming when once they might simply have stopped. For JA, the mechanisation has allowed more Japanese to continue being registered as active farmers, boosting their numbers and their political muscle.

By Tim Sullivan in New Delhi

ODD PARTNERSHIP

# Ties warm between India and North Korea

**I**T'S not the most obvious international friendship. On one side is the world's largest democracy, with its riotous collection of battling political parties and a freewheeling media with thousands of newspapers, TV stations and websites. On the other is a deeply isolated nation, a country with no political opposition and a media that does not question the long-ruling family. Access to the Internet, except for a handful of government-approved websites, is restricted to a tiny elite.

But ties are warming between New Delhi and Pyongyang, with mineral-hungry India looking to boost trade while North Korea, facing sometimes-rocky relations with China, searches for new friends.

"We feel that there should not be the usual old hurdles and suspicion," Kiren Rijju, a top official in India's home ministry told The Hindu newspaper after a recent meeting with North Korea's ambassador. "We have been discussing inside the government ways and means of upgrading bilateral ties."

The goodwill began earlier this year, when North Korea dispatched Foreign Minister Ri Su Yong on a three-day trip to India, just a few weeks before Prime Minister Narendra Modi flew to Seoul for meetings with South Korean President Park Geun-hye.

While Pyongyang and New Delhi have long had diplomatic relations, things cooled a couple decades ago as India blamed North Korea for selling nuclear technology to its archrival, Pakistan, and North Korea grew upset that India was growing close to South Korea.

But times change. North Korea, for its part, has had to accept South Korea's economic dominance, and how even a longtime ally like China is anxious to increase trade with Seoul.

India, meanwhile, has a growing economy with an increasingly voracious hunger for raw materials.

"There is always a resource

**There is always a resource crunch that pushes countries to look for new friends and new allies.**

VYJAYANTI RAGHAVAN



In this Monday, April 13, file photo, Indian Foreign Minister Sushma Swaraj, right, shakes hands with North Korea's Foreign Minister Ri Su Yong in New Delhi, India

crunch that pushes countries to look for new friends and new allies," said Vyjayanti Raghavan, a professor at the Centre for Korean Studies at Jawaharlal Nehru University in New Delhi.

While the diplomatic moves would not be newsworthy for most countries, and have yet to result in a concrete agreement, they are significant for North Korea, whose foreign relations are largely limited to a handful of other countries.

North Korea, Raghavan said, had long been anxious to repair ties with India.

"But North Korea had nothing much to offer to India," she said. "Now, India can benefit from the relationship."

North Korea's export economy is highly dependent on raw materials, mostly coal and iron ore, though it is also increasingly seen as a potential major source of the rare earth minerals used in high-tech

products.

Pyongyang is also anxious to forge new alliances. China remains North Korea's closest ally, and is by far its largest trade partner, but ties are not as warm as they once were.

Beijing reacted angrily to North Korea's last nuclear test, in 2013. Kim Jong Un, meanwhile, has kept his distance from China after taking power in 2011, following his father's death. Apparently concerned about the growth of Beijing's influence, Kim has not traveled China, where his father was a regular visitor, and has held few talks with top Chinese officials. North Korea has also ratcheted up ties with Russia as relations with Beijing have cooled.

New Delhi may also see the renewed North Korean ties as a way to make quiet advances into a country long seen as part of China's sphere of influence. Chinese-Indian relations are delicate and of-

**North Korea's export economy is highly dependent on raw materials, mostly coal and iron ore**

ten-contradictory, with mutual distrust — and occasional squabbling over their long shared border — mixing with a desire to increase trade and avoid open confrontation.

India has watched warily as China has made inroads across the Indian Ocean, where New Delhi's traditional dominance has declined as a result of billions of dollars in Chinese aid and construction projects.

Simply the choice of Rijju to meet with North Korean

diplomats could have been intended to make a point, since he is from Arunachal Pradesh, a state that Beijing has long insisted is actually Chinese territory.

And what will India's other allies say about improved ties with North Korea?

That probably doesn't matter. While North Korea remains economically isolated from much of the world, treated as a pariah by Washington and much of the West, India has long charted its own foreign policy course. For instance, even as India became increasingly close in recent years to the U.S., New Delhi remained friendly with such countries as Iran and Syria.

"Why shouldn't India have relations with North Korea?" demanded Hamdullah Saeed, an opposition politician who visited North Korea as part of a parliamentary delegation in 2013. "India can have ties with who it wants." AP

# Environmentalists ask court to stop Hawaii tuna quota shift

By Audrey McAvoy in Honolulu

**E**NVIRONMENTALISTS on Friday asked a federal judge to stop the National Marine Fisheries Service from allowing Hawaii-based fishermen to attribute some of the bigeye tuna they catch to U.S. territories.

They argue the agency is enabling the fishermen to circumvent international agreements aimed at controlling the overfishing of a popular tuna species known as ahi.

Earthjustice attorney David Henkin told U.S. District Court Judge Leslie Kobayashi the fisheries service acted illegally when it created a framework allowing Hawaii longline fishermen to record some of their catch as having been caught by fishermen in Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands and American Samoa.

"This is allowing them to fish without limits," Henkin said of Hawaii fishermen during a hearing in federal court for a motion Earthjustice filed on behalf of the Conservation Council for Hawaii and other environmental groups.

Bradley Oliphant, a U.S. Jus-



Bigeye tuna line the floor of the United Fishing Agency's auction house in Honolulu

Department attorney who argued on behalf of the fisheries service, said the agency carefully studied the environmental effects of the quota transfer. He said the arrangement meets the

**This is allowing them to fish without limits**

DAVID HENKIN

requirements of U.S. fisheries and environmental laws.

The 26-member nation Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission, which regulates fishing from east and southeast Asia to waters around Hawaii, set a limit of about 3,500 metric tons for Hawaii longline fishermen this year. That's about 7 percent less than last year.

The National Marine Fisheries Service enforces these limits in the U.S. This year, the Hawaii

fishery reached its annual limit in August, several months earlier than in the past.

The agency has also proposed rules that would allow Hawaii longline fishermen to bring in more bigeye tuna by shifting some of their catch to territorial fleets, which do not face the same limits from the commission.

In exchange, the Hawaii longline fleet would pay the territories money to support the development of local fisheries.

The agency has put similar ru-

les in place in recent years after Congress, in a 2012 appropriations bill, directed the agency to create a quota transfer program. The late Sen. Daniel Inouye of Hawaii was Senate appropriations committee chairman at the time the bill was passed.

Lawyers in the case explained to Kobayashi their views on the validity of the agency's quota shifting rule, whether Congress' directive was still applicable or had lapsed and what federal fisheries laws require the agency to do.

Kobayashi gave the attorneys two weeks to file additional arguments.

The Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission counts major fishing nations such as Japan, Taiwan, South Korea and the U.S. among its members along with small island states such as the Marshall Islands. About 40 percent of the global supply of bigeye is caught in waters regulated by the commission.

Hawaii longline fishermen — who string long lines in the ocean from which they run shorter lines with baited hooks — account for only 1.6 percent of the bigeye caught in this region. U.S. purse seine boats also catch bigeye in the area. They use giant nets to surround and scoop up masses of fish.

Bigeye is one of two types of tuna known as ahi. The other is yellowfin. **AP**

## ASK THE VET

by Dr Ruan Du Toit Bester



### 6 WAYS TO STOP A DOG SNORING

**D**OG snoring is caused by an obstruction in the nasal passage or nostrils that leads to airway constriction. Before you try to stop the snoring, it's necessary to understand the reasons why dogs snore so that you can either take preventive or curative measures to stop the problem.

#### CAUSES OF DOG SNORING

Dogs that are overweight or obese tend to have excess tissue in their throat which causes the obstruction that blocks the airways.

Allergens like tree and weed pollen, dust and smoke cause nasal allergies. The resulting mucus blocks the nostrils and causes heavy breathing.

Certain dog breeds are predisposed to snoring. Pekingese, Pugs, Boston Terriers, Bull Dogs are well known to snore as their windpipe flattens (Tracheal Collapse) which makes it difficult to breathe.

Tobacco smoke is a big irritant to your pet. As long as your dog lives in a smoke filled environment he will continue to snore.

If your pet is suffering from a cold he might snore in his sleep until his nostrils are clear.

#### SIX USEFUL WAYS TO STOP DOG SNORING

If your dog is suffering from snoring caused by allergens make sure you clean his bedding every day. Walk him outdoors when the pollen levels are low and when there isn't too much traffic. Vacuum regularly and keep rugs and curtains dust free.

Regularly exercise your pet so that he will reduce in weight and the snoring problem stops.

A small surgery may be conducted on breeds predisposed to snoring. However, the surgery is generally conducted when dogs are young.

Try to change the way your dog sleeps by either changing his bed or his sleeping posture.

Give your dog a pillow. If he uses the pillow it will elevate his head and may reduce snoring.

Avoid smoking next to your dog. Keep him in a smoke free environment.

Your dog may show certain signs along with snoring that indicate underlying illnesses. If your dog doesn't respond to any of the tips a vet check will help determine the true cause. Dog snoring can be bothersome as your dog will have a dis-



turbed sleep pattern and wake up tired and grouchy. The noise caused due to his snoring will also prevent the owner from getting a good night's rest. Consider keeping your dog in another room at night. Don't be impatient or try to wake your dog from his sleep as this will do more harm than good.

A round sleeping bed might stop the snoring, as your dog will curl up and this helps the airway passages to expand. If your dog has never snored before and the snoring unexpectedly emerges, take your dog for a vet check as he may be sick. Tumors or cysts don't usually cause dog snoring but occur in rare cases.

If you take simple preventive measures it

will be rewarding for both you and your pet. It can also increase your dog's life span. Be sure to keep him in an environment that's clean and make exercise part of his routine.

Hope this helps  
Till next week  
Dr Ruan

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