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Newspaper sales falling throughout the world

AMSTERDAM, June 4: Sales of daily newspapers are falling throughout the world, the head of the World Association of Newspapers said here on Monday, but urged his audience not to panic.

Timothy Balding, head of the formerly-named international federation of newspaper editors (FIEJ) which is meeting here, said sales of newspapers in the European Union had fallen by 4.2 per cent over the past five years and 7.7 per cent in the 10 years since 1986.

In the United States, sales have dropped by 5.3 per cent in five years and 8.8 per cent in 10.

"I don't believe that newspaper readers are going to disappear ... but I could certainly

prove by statistical extrapolation that in many parts of the world this looks like our fate," Balding said.

In central and eastern Europe, sales are expected to fall by up to 36.1 per cent in five years.

One shining exception is Japan, the world's largest seller of newspapers, where sales have risen 0.9 per cent.

Balding said that sales figures were not available in most Latin American countries. However, he said that sales had risen by 2.2 per cent in Argentina over the last year and fallen 1.2 per cent in Brazil during the same period.

In Asia, too, attempts to find sales figures have yielded scant results, with the exception

of India, Indonesia, Malaysia and Sri Lanka, where sales are stable.

Japan is far and away the biggest seller of daily newspapers, with more than 72 million copies sold daily.

Next is the United States, selling nearly 57 million, and China, for which figures are unconfirmed, followed by India (30 million copies) and Germany (more than 25 million).

However, in terms of sales per resident, Norway, with 592 daily newspapers sold per 1,000 inhabitants, is the world's biggest seller, compared with 582 per capita in Japan.

However, Balding warned of the danger of "drawing too many conclusions from statistical surveys."

He stressed that in some countries, it was

more telling to speak in terms of how widely read newspapers are, rather than how many are sold, thus 87 per cent of Finnish adults read a newspaper, even though they have not necessarily bought it.

For the first time this year, the organization had made a distinction between female and male readers.

Balding cited a few examples: Portugal, 56 per cent men and 24 per cent women, Spain, 49 per cent men and 28 per cent women, Sweden, 52.6 per cent men and 32.3 per cent women.

The gap in Japan is also a full 20 age points (85.9 per cent men and 65.9 per cent women), while in Canada it is 14 age points (71.3 per cent and 58.7 per cent). AFP