

NEWS IN brief

'20 terror plots foiled in NY since 9/11'

More than 20 terror plots have been foiled in New York since the September 11, 2001 terror attacks, according to the city's police chief Tuesday, who said the risk of another devastating attack remains "greater than ever." On Friday, New York marks the 14th anniversary of the 9/11 attacks that leveled the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center, claiming 2,753 lives, in addition to deadly attacks on the Pentagon and on a commercial airplane that crashed in rural Pennsylvania the same day.

British Airways plane catches fire in US

A British Airways jet caught fire on Tuesday as it was preparing to take off from Las Vegas, prompting the crew to abort takeoff and evacuate terrified passengers, with several injured. The Federal Aviation Administration said the fire broke out in the left engine of the 257-seat Boeing 777 shortly after 4:00 pm (2300 GMT) and the crew immediately aborted takeoff and ordered an evacuation.

Anti-charter protester shot dead in Nepal

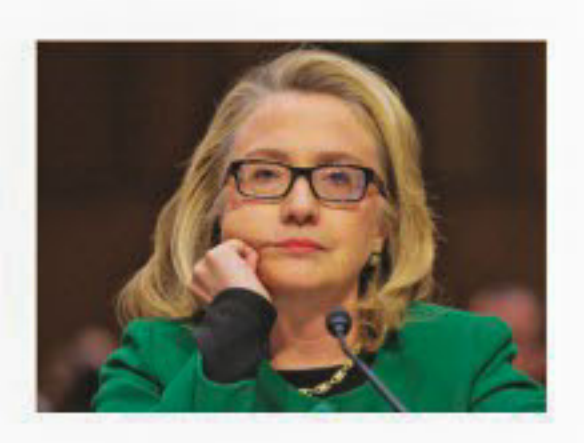
Nepal police fired into a crowd of demonstrators yesterday, killing one, as fresh protests erupted in the country's southern plains over a new draft constitution. Plans to divide the Himalayan nation into seven provinces have sparked fury among historically marginalised communities including the Madhesi and Tharu ethnic minorities, who say the new internal borders will limit their political representation.

7 Indians missing in Yemen after air strikes

Seven Indian nationals are missing in Yemen after Saudi-led air strikes hit their boats, as a Saudi-led coalition steps up attacks against rebels, the Indian foreign ministry said yesterday. The statement came after media reports on Tuesday of 20 Indians killed in air strikes on fuel smugglers in Yemen.

Second Pak media worker shot dead

Unidentified gunmen shot dead a Pakistani TV journalist in Karachi yesterday, less than a day after a similar attack on a news van in the same city killed a technician. Aftab Alam was targeted by two gunmen on a motorcycle while he was reversing his car outside his home in a central district of the port city in the afternoon. The motive behind the attack was not known till filing this report.



Clinton apologizes for using pvt email

Hillary Clinton apologized Tuesday for using a private email server while secretary of state, calling the decision a "mistake." "That was a mistake. I'm sorry about that. I take responsibility," she told in an interview to ABC's "World News Tonight". Until Tuesday, Clinton had demurred from issuing a direct apology. The lingering email saga has weighed on Clinton's popularity. But Clinton maintained she could weather the storm, telling ABC: "I can survive it, because I think I'm running to be president to do what the country needs done."



(From right, anti-clockwise) A helper puts a jacket at a refugee boy at the "Bayernkaserne", where clothes for migrants have been collected, in Munich, southern Germany; Migrants try to light a fire at sun rise in a make shift camp near Roszke village on the Hungarian-Serbian border; and members of European Parliament hold banners during a debate on the unprecedented flow of migrants and refugees at the European Parliament in Strasbourg, eastern France, yesterday.



PHOTO: AFP, REUTERS

'Murderers' EU chief urges crackdown on human traffickers

EU president Donald Tusk on Tuesday urged a crackdown on the "murderers" among human traffickers who have killed scores of people trying to reach Europe from conflicts abroad. "We have to focus on rescuing people's lives and... the fight against human traffickers and smugglers," Tusk said ahead of a meeting with Israeli President Reuven Rivlin. "In fact we can talk today about murderers because they are directly responsible for the death of thousands of people. Maybe this is the most important thing today." Tusk added that "in this dramatic crisis we talk also about the wider context. It is about economy, it is about

Australia PM bows to pressure

Says will take in additional 12,000 Syrian refugees, extends air strikes to Syria

Australian Prime Minister Tony Abbott yesterday bowed to pressure to increase refugee numbers in the face of the Middle East crisis and confirmed Canberra will also join US-led air strikes on the Islamic State group in Syria. With his hardline against asylum-seekers under intense scrutiny given the drama unfolding in Europe, Abbott said the government was acting "with our head as well as with our heart" to help the thousands of migrants fleeing the conflict. "All of us were shocked as a nation at the disaster that we saw on our television screens," said Abbott, whose own Liberal Party members had called on him to take more refugees after the image of drowned boy Aylan Kurdi resonated around the world. "And all of us as a nation wanted to

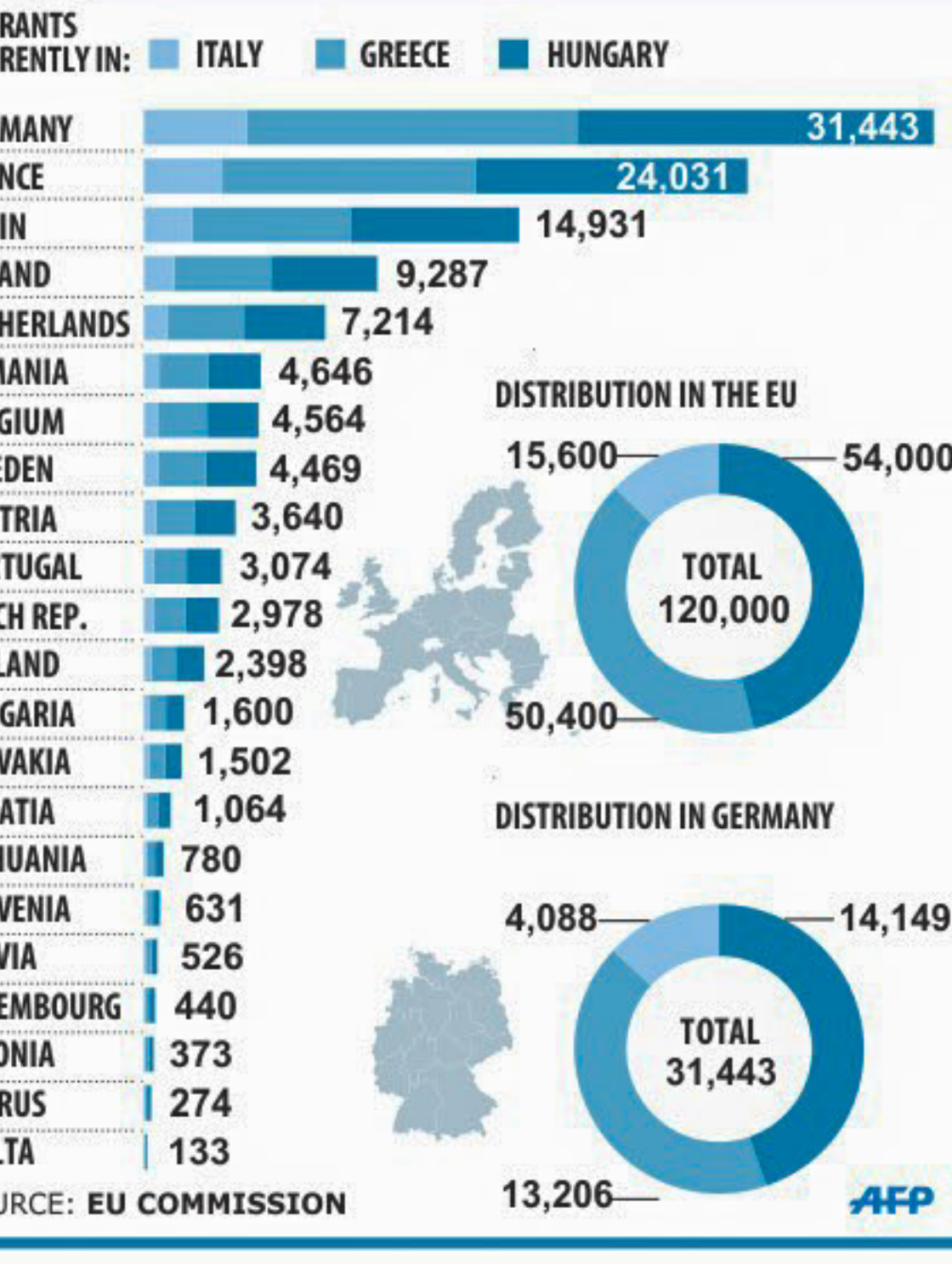
help." Abbott said it was obvious that many Syrians would never be able to return to their homes as he announced Australia would take an additional 12,000 refugees from the Syria-Iraq conflict.



The government will also pay to support more than 240,000 displaced people in countries neighbouring Syria and Iraq, funding food, water, healthcare, and other supplies, at an expected cost of Aus\$44 million (US\$31 million). The prime minister said both the

humanitarian response and the stepping up of military measures against the Islamic State group into Syria were in the national interest. Australia, which is already part of the coalition fighting ISIS in Iraq, said the legal basis for extending air operations into Syria was the collective self-defence of Iraq as the group did not respect state borders. "Destroying this death cult is essential, not just to ending the humanitarian crisis in the Middle East but also to ending the threat to Australia and the wider world," Abbott said. "We cannot defeat Daesh in Iraq without defeating Daesh in Syria too," Abbott said, using the Arabic acronym for the violent jihadists who control swathes of Syria and neighbouring Iraq. But the focus of the campaign would be on ISIS, and not the Assad regime, "evil though it is", he added.

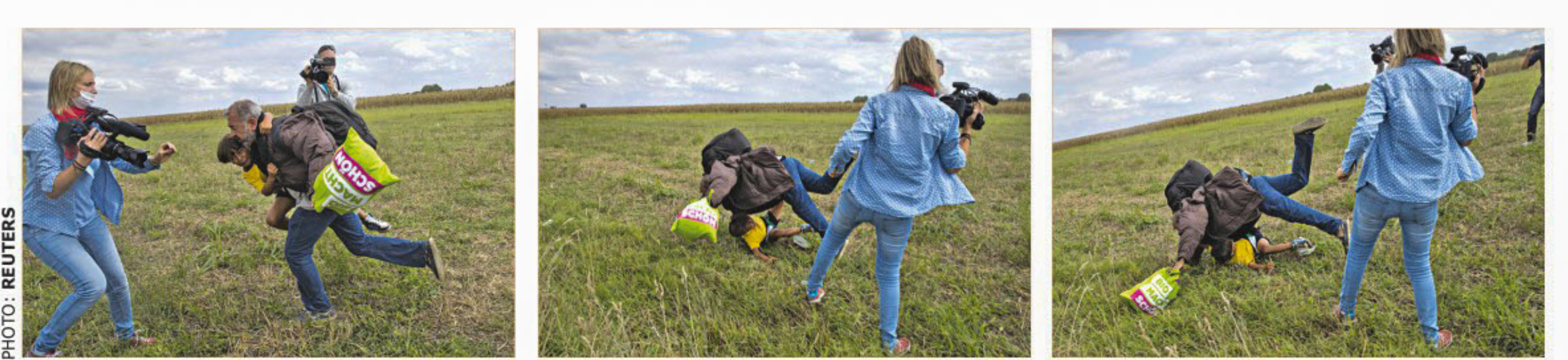
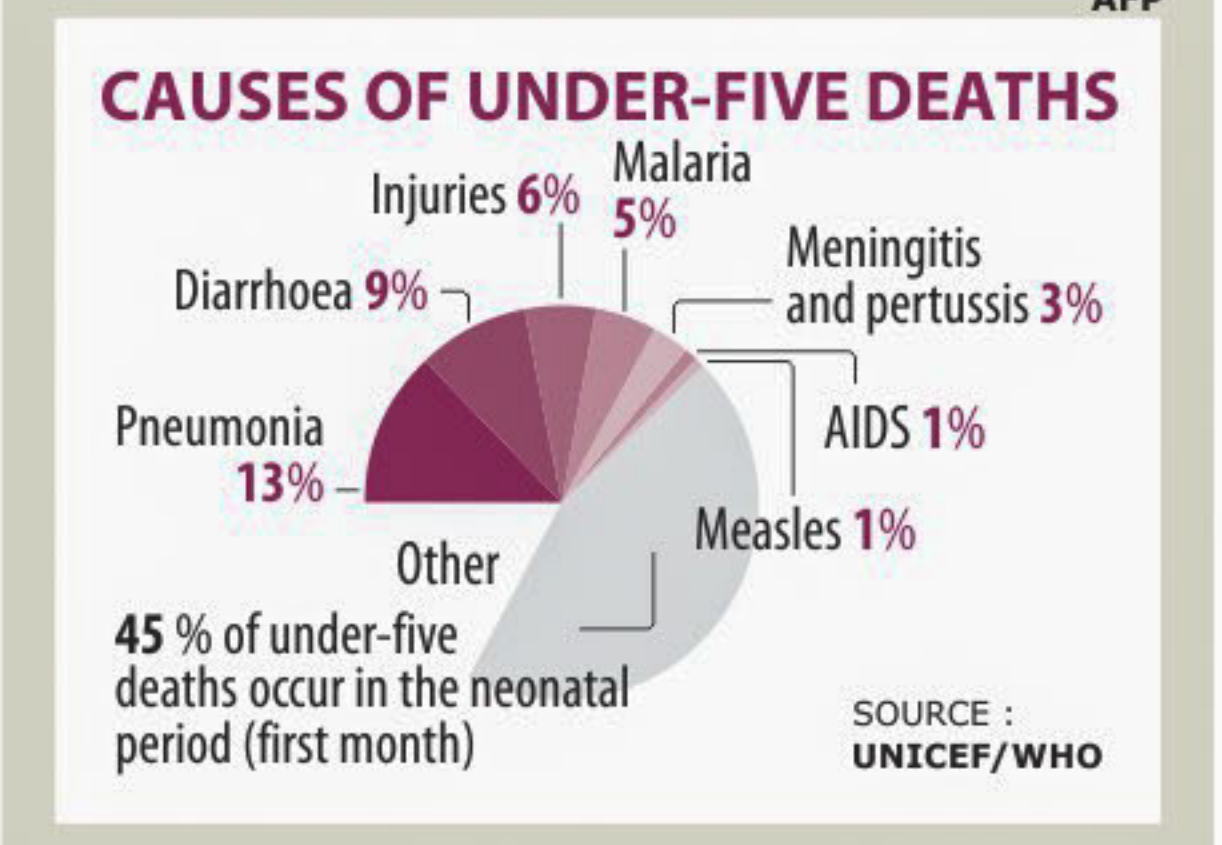
NEW EU MIGRANT QUOTA PROPOSALS



security -- not only the security of European borders but also the situation in some countries in your region." The crisis also touched on "social phenomena like xenophobia, for example," Tusk said, with the arrival of the migrants and refugees provoking harsh reactions in some European nations. Tusk had earlier warned in Brussels that the human haemorrhage to Europe would be long-lasting, calling it "the beginning of a real exodus, which means that we will have to deal with this problem for many

UN: Child mortality halved since 1990

The number of deaths among children under five has halved globally since 1990 -- well short of the UN goal of slashing infant mortality by two-thirds in 25 years, said data released yesterday. Only 62 of 195 countries met targets they adopted 15 years ago, said a study which measured the world's performance in one of the eight so-called Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) for a healthier, more prosperous world. The mortality rate among children younger than five fell globally from 91 deaths per 1,000 live births in 1990, to 43 per 1,000 in 2015, said the review published in The Lancet medical journal. Translated into hard numbers, the death toll of newborns, infants and small children -- mainly from preventable causes -- shrank from 12.7 million in 1990 to an estimated 5.9 million this year. The MDGs were set in 2000 and expire this year, but the period covered by the child mortality target reached back to 1990. There were a staggering quarter-of-a-billion deaths overall, and the MDG on child mortality was missed by a "wide margin", according to a UN statement. "We have to acknowledge tremendous global progress. But the far too large number of children still dying from preventable causes before their fifth birthday... should impel us to redouble our efforts to do what we know needs to be done," said Geeta Rao Gupta, deputy executive director of the Unicef, which participated in the research.



Combination picture (L to R) shows a migrant carrying a child tripping on TV camerawoman Petra Laszlo and falling while trying to escape from a collection point in Roszke village, Hungary, on Tuesday. Laszlo, a camerawoman for a private television channel in Hungary, was fired late on Tuesday after videos of her kicking and tripping up migrants fleeing police, including a man carrying a child, spread in the media and on the internet.

Thai police claim breakthrough

Say key suspect handed the backpack bomb to main suspect

A key suspect in last month's deadly Bangkok blast handed the backpack bomb to a man in a yellow T-shirt later seen placing it at a busy shrine moments before it detonated, Thai police said yesterday. The revelation came as investigators gave their most detailed account of how the alleged network of bombers coordinated the attack, including through drop-offs and WhatsApp text messages. Mystery still surrounds the motive of the group accused of being responsible for the August 17 bombing that left 20 people dead in the heart of Bangkok and rocked Thailand's key tourist industry. But after appearing flat-footed in response to the unprecedented attack, police have trumpeted the arrest of two foreigners and say they have identified several other suspects. One of the two men in custody, Yusufu Mieraili, was

detained last week near the border with Cambodia and has since been quizzed by military and police investigators. Mieraili, 25, who was holding a Chinese passport when he was caught, has admitted to playing a central role in the operation, according to police. Yesterday he was taken on a second reenactment of his alleged role in the crime -- a standard police procedure. "This is the area where he met the man in a yellow shirt to exchange the backpack," national police spokesman Prawut Thavornisri told reporters outside a Bangkok railway station, later adding he received his orders via WhatsApp. Local media reports have named the bomb mastermind as "Izan", saying he commissioned and guided the attack but left the country a day before it was carried out. But Prawut refused to be drawn on details of who pulled the strings behind the blast.

SHRINE BLAST



Yusufu Mieraili

No talks with US outside nuke issue: Khamenei

US Congress begins debate on Iran deal

Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei yesterday said that he would not permit negotiations with the United States beyond those that culminated in a nuclear deal with world powers in July. "We allowed negotiation with the US only on the nuclear issue for certain reasons," Khamenei said in a speech. "In other areas we did not and will not allow negotiations with the US." Khamenei charged that Washington only sought talks on a broader range of issues in a bid to impose its own policies on Tehran. "US officials seek negotiation with Iran. Negotiation is a means of infiltration and imposition of their will," he said. "The Iranian nation expelled this Great Satan, we barred their direct access and now we must not allow their indirect access and infiltration." The comments from Khamenei, who has

the final say on all matters of state in Iran, came after the US Congress began debate on Tuesday on the nuclear agreement reached with Iran. President Barack Obama has just enough support in the US Senate to prevent the deal being blocked. But a majority of lawmakers oppose the deal, backing Israeli claims that it does not do enough to prevent any possibility of Iran developing a nuclear weapon. Iran rejects Israel's right to exist, a stance Khamenei reiterated yesterday. "God willing, there will be no such thing as the Zionist regime in 25 years' time," the Iranian leader said. "In the meantime, the spirit of struggle and jihad will not leave the Zionists a moment's peace." Iran has always denied any ambition to acquire a nuclear weapon and Khamenei has himself said repeatedly that any such policy would be a violation of Islam.



Al-Qaeda takes last army base in Syria's Idlib

Al-Qaeda's Syrian affiliate and its allies seized the last regime-held military base in northwestern Idlib province yesterday, in the latest setback for President Bashar al-Assad's forces. Al-Nusra Front and a coalition of mostly Islamist groups captured the Abu Duhur military airport after a siege that lasted two years, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights monitor said. The attacking force began to enter the base on Tuesday night. Abdel Rahman said the forces appeared to have taken advantage of a massive sandstorm that blanketed much of the Middle East and made it difficult for regime aircraft to carry out strikes.

Saudi diplomat 'raped Nepali maids' in India

Indian police are investigating claims a Saudi official who enjoys diplomatic immunity repeatedly raped his two Nepalese maids in his home close to New Delhi, senior officers said yesterday. The women, aged 30 and 50, have filed complaints with police alleging the unnamed diplomat kept them locked in his apartment where they were abused, assistant commissioner Rajesh Kumar said. A police team rescued the women late Monday from the apartment in the upscale satellite city of Gurgaon after a third recently hired maid alerted a local NGO, the officer said. "We have registered a case of rape, sodomy and illegal confinement based on their complaint," Kumar told AFP. "They have also said that even guests at the house raped them. That is why we have added gang rape in the list of charges." The Saudi embassy denied the allegations in a statement to the Press Trust of India (PTI) news agency. "The embassy strongly stresses that these allegations are false and have not been proven," the statement said. One of the women told the NDTV network yesterday that they had been held at the Gurgaon apartment for about four months. "They raped us, kept us locked up, did not give us anything to eat... When we tried to run away, we were beaten up," the woman said, her face covered with a scarf to hide her identity.

Britain celebrates Queen Elizabeth's record reign

Britain yesterday celebrated Queen Elizabeth II becoming the country's longest-reigning monarch, a milestone the 89-year-old herself downplayed as "not one to which I have ever aspired." The bells of Westminster Abbey rang out in London as Prime Minister David Cameron paid tribute in parliament to her 63-year reign as a "golden thread running through three post-war generations." "Inevitably, a long life can pass by many milestones. My own is no exception," the queen told a cheering crowd of supporters waving British and Scottish flags as she opened a railway line in Scotland. She said the landmark was "not one to which I have ever aspired."



"But I thank you all and the many others at home and overseas for your touching messages," said the queen. Elizabeth overtook Queen Victoria, her great-great-grandmother, at 1630 GMT, the best estimate from royal officials for the time at which the monarch, who has become synonymous with Britain itself, reaches the historic moment. She has served more than 23,226 days on the throne -- a reign spanning from the gloom of the post-war years to the digital age, with a few royal scandals causing blushes along the way. "She is our queen and we could not be more proud of her," Cameron told parliament. "She has served this country with unerring grace, dignity and decency and long may she continue to do so."