

**NEWS IN**  
*brief*

**Yemen peace talks begin in Kuwait**

AFP, Kuwait  
Talks aimed at ending Yemen's war opened in Kuwait on Thursday, with Kuwait's top diplomat appealing to both sides to "turn war into peace" after more than a year of conflict which has killed more than 6,200 people and caused a humanitarian crisis.

**Dialogue with Pakistan not suspended: India**

IANS, New Delhi  
The Indian government yesterday said that the dialogue process with Pakistan has not been suspended and the visit of Pakistan's Joint Investigation Team (JIT) to probe the Pathankot airstrike attack was "very constructive". JIT's visit to Pathankot came in a "in a very constructive and cooperative environment", external affairs ministry spokesperson Vikas Swarup said at a media briefing here.

**Landslide in India kills 15**

TNN, Itanagar  
At least 15 labourers were killed when a massive landslide triggered by incessant rains hit a labour camp in Tawang district of Arunachal Pradesh yesterday. The incident occurred at 3:00am when 17 labourers engaged in construction works were inside the camp at a place 4km away from Tawang town.

**Mexico oil plant blast climbs to 24**

AFP, Coatzacoalcas  
The death toll from a powerful explosion at a petrochemical plant in Mexico climbed to 24 on Thursday after authorities were able to enter the facility, state-run oil giant Pemex said. The number of missing dropped from 18 to eight, an official said.

**Blast kills eight at Iraq Shia mosque**

AFP, Baghdad  
A suicide bomber targeted Shia worshippers at a Baghdad mosque after Friday prayers, killing at least eight people, security and medical officials said. The attack in southwest Baghdad also wounded at least 31 people, the officials said. There was no immediate claim of responsibility.



US President Barack Obama and first lady Michelle Obama are greeted by Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh upon their arrival for lunch at Windsor Castle in Windsor, yesterday. PHOTO: REUTERS

**Stay in EU, Obama urges Britain**

REUTERS, Windsor  
US President Barack Obama yesterday appealed directly to British voters to remain in the European Union, saying membership had magnified Britain's place in the world and made the bloc stronger and more outward looking. Obama, who opinion polls show is popular in Britain, applauded Britain's EU membership which he said had helped make the world freer, richer and better able to tackle everything from migration to terrorism. Invoking the interlinked history of the United States and Britain and the tens of thousands of Americans lying in European war graves, Obama implored voters to weigh the benefits of membership ahead of a June 23 referendum. "The European Union doesn't mod-

erate British influence - it magnifies it," Obama wrote in The Daily Telegraph, a eurosceptic British newspaper. "As your friend, I tell you that the EU makes Britain even greater," the headline of Obama's article read. His remarks, which led television news broadcasts in Britain, undercut one of the most passionate arguments of the opponents of EU membership: that Britain could prosper on an equal basis with global powers such as the United States. A spokeswoman for Prime Minister David Cameron welcomed Obama's intervention, but the president's comments drew scorn from opponents of Britain's EU membership. New York-born London Mayor Boris Johnson, a leader of the "Out" campaign who hints he wants Cameron's

job, derided Obama's arguments in a newspaper column that referred to "the part-Kenyan President's ancestral dislike of the British empire". John McDonnell, the opposition Labour Party's finance policy chief, called Johnson's remarks "dog-whistle racism". The White House declined to comment. Obama said Britain's closest ally wanted it to remain in the club it joined in 1973 to bolster trade and strengthen the 28-member bloc, which Washington views as a pillar of stability in the post-World War Two era. The US government, and many US banks and companies, fear a Brexit would cause market turmoil, diminish the clout of Washington's strongest European ally, hurt London's global financial hub status, cripple the EU and weaken Western security.

**Russia fired on Israeli aircraft**  
*Says report; Syria peace talks may start next week*

REUTERS, Jerusalem  
Russian forces in Syria have fired at least twice on Israeli military aircraft, prompting Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to seek improved operational coordination with Moscow, Israel's top-selling newspaper said yesterday. Asked about the alleged incidents, however, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said: "In this case, Israeli press reports are far from reality." But Netanyahu, in remarks published by Israeli reporters whom he briefed by phone on his talks on Thursday with Russian President Vladimir Putin, said "there have been problems" regarding Israeli military freedom of operation in Syria. He gave no details, but said: "If you don't

deal with the friction, it could develop into something more serious." The unsourced report in Yedioth Ahronoth made no mention of dates or locations for the two reported incidents. The UN special envoy for Syria has vowed to take fragile peace talks into next week despite a walkout by the main armed opposition, a breakdown in a truce and signs that both sides are gearing up to escalate the five-year-old civil war. Staffan de Mistura, who dismissed the opposition's departure as "diplomatic posturing", expected the delegation to return to the negotiating table. Meanwhile, air strikes on rebel-held neighbourhoods in Syria's second city Aleppo yesterday killed at least 18 civilians and wounded more than a dozen others, the local civil defence told AFP.

**'FREEDOM OF SPEECH' BATTLE IN TURKEY**  
**Academics, press on trial**

AFP, Istanbul  
Four Turkish academics went on trial yesterday for "terrorist propaganda" in the latest of a series of court cases highlighting growing restrictions on free speech under President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. Riot police stood guard outside the courthouse in central Istanbul, where two journalists accused of divulging state secrets attended the third hearing of their espionage trial, before staying on to watch the scholars' case. "We are at the academics' hearing. The same groundless allegations," tweeted Can Dundar, editor-in-chief of the leading opposition daily Cumhuriyet, who is on trial with his Ankara bureau chief for allegedly trying to unseat the government. Some 500 people had gathered at the court to support both the journalists and the scholars, with protesters holding up placards reading "Freedom for the academics" and "Freedom for the pencils". The university scholars are being prosecuted

for signing a petition along with over a thousand colleagues and supporters denouncing the government's military operations against Kurdish rebels in the country's southeast. The petition urged Ankara to halt "its deliberate massacres and deportation of Kurdish and other peoples in the region", infuriating Erdogan who accused them of falling into a "pit of treachery". The four are accused of engaging in "terrorist propaganda" and "inciting hatred and enmity" for not only signing the plea but making a statement on the same lines on March 10, a day before the petition was published. If convicted, Esra Mungan Gursoy, Meral Camci, Kivanc Ersoy and Muzaffer Kaya face up to seven and a half years behind bars, according to Academics for Peace (BAK), the organisation behind the contested statement. As well as signees from over 90 Turkish universities, the petition was also endorsed by dozens of foreigners, among them American linguist Noam Chomsky and the Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Zizek.



Local residents line up to receive food in Manta on Thursday. A powerful earthquake measuring 6.0 magnitude struck off Ecuador's disaster-stricken coast on Thursday, as survivors of an earlier deadly quake that killed 587 people clamored for food, water and medicine in parts of the disaster zone. PHOTO: REUTERS

**World pays tribute to PRINCE in purple**

BBC ONLINE  
Fans have been remembering the life of Prince with purple-coloured tributes and dance parties, after the star died suddenly at the age of 57. Buildings, newspaper front pages and websites across the US and beyond have changed colour in his honour. Prince was found dead in a lift at his Minnesota home on Thursday. He became a star in the 1980s, with albums like Purple Rain and Sign O' the Times. Prince's innovative music spanned rock, funk and jazz. He sold more than 100 million records during his career. US President Barack Obama said the world had "lost a creative icon". In Prince's native Minneapolis, the Minnesota Twins baseball team turned their stadium purple, as did the Lowry Avenue Bridge in the centre of the city. The Niagara Falls were turned purple to mark the Queen's 90th birthday, but the coincidence was welcomed by Prince fans online. On Thursday evening, hundreds of people gathered for an all-night party at the First Avenue nightclub in Minneapolis, where Prince recorded his 1984 hit Purple Rain. Vigils for the singer were also held outside his home as well as in Los Angeles and Brooklyn, where the film director Spike Lee, a friend of Prince's, led another impromptu party. Prince's home at Paisley Park has become a makeshift shrine, said the BBC's James Cook at the scene. Born in 1958, Prince was a prolific writer and performer from a young age - reportedly writing his first song when he was seven. He was also an arranger and multi-instrumentalist, and recorded more than 30 albums. His best-known hits include Let's Go Crazy and When Doves Cry.

**REBUILDING NEPAL AFTER QUALES**  
**Landless victims missing out**

REUTERS, London  
A year after the deadly earthquake in Nepal, thousands of people, especially women, are being deprived of funds to rebuild because they do not own land or cannot prove they owned the land where they lived, Oxfam said yesterday. Nepal's government requires proof of ownership, but many victims have lost documents and others did not formally own the land where they lived, said a report by the international anti-poverty organisation. The government this month began distributing grants of 200,000 Nepali rupees (\$1,900) to families that can prove they owned land before the earthquake, which struck on April 25, 2015. The quake killed some 9,000 people, injured more than 22,000 others and damaged or destroyed more than 900,000 houses. "Families who are landless and who were living on unregistered land are very much uncertain about the future and support that the government had promised," said Prabin Man Singh, research and policy coordinator for Oxfam, who co-authored the report. "Those families are the poorest and the most vulnerable among the victims." Some 3 million people are living in temporary shelters with tarpaulin roofs ahead of Nepal's monsoon season, according to Save the Children, CARE International and other agencies. Land tenure is largely undocumented in Nepal, and data is limited and contradictory, the Oxfam report said. It cited one pre-quake government report that said as many as 480,000 families, or 9 percent of the population, did not have access to land, and another report that said a third of Nepal's farmers did not own the land they cultivated.

**EU DEAL WITH TURKEY**  
**Migrant flow picking up again: IOM**

REUTERS, Geneva  
The numbers of migrants landing in Greece from Turkey is starting to creep up again, showing efforts to close off the route are coming under strain, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) said yesterday. Around 150 people a day had arrived over the last three days, still way off the numbers seen a month ago, the organisation added, but showing an increase since an EU deal with Turkey to stem the flow. "The arrivals in Greece which were down to literally zero some days this month, are beginning to creep back up," IOM spokesman Joel Millman told a Geneva news briefing. "It could be the weather, it could be any number of things, it could be that smugglers are getting more creative."

**Trump 'promises to change image'**

BBC ONLINE  
Donald Trump has promised to change his image, in a closed-door meeting with Republican party leaders. The businessman, who leads the party's race to be presidential nominee, delivered his message via aides, the Associated Press news agency reports. His success in primary elections so far has set off alarm bells among those in the party anxious that his tone and policies will turn off voters. Five states go to the polls on Tuesday to pick their presidential candidates. In a recording of Thursday's meeting obtained by Associated Press, his senior aides told Republican leaders that he has been "projecting an image" so far and "the part that he's been playing is now evolving". In it, his newly hired senior aide, Paul Manafort, told the Republican National Committee members that Trump has a campaigning personality and a private one. "When he's out on the stage, when he's talking about the kinds of things he's talking about on the stump, he's projecting an image that's for that purpose," he said. He knows he needs to moderate his personality, Manafort told the meeting. "The negatives [unfavourable ratings in polls] will come down. The image is going to change." Trump has a clear lead in the number of delegates but may fall short of the 1,237 threshold required to win the nomination without a contested convention - where the nominee is chosen through negotiations among party figures. His standing among female voters is particularly low, after a series of controversial remarks about women, abortion and rival Ted Cruz's wife.



**Who exported US\$ 21 million in its maiden year?**