

## NEW WAVE OF TV CARTOONS URGE CHILDREN TO SAVE SEAS

**CANNES:** Coral reefs may be dying off at an alarming rate and pollution and overfishing emptying the seas. But fear not. Help is at hand in the form of a new wave of cartoon superheroes determined to save the oceans. While Disney blockbusters "Finding Nemo" and "Finding Dory" have been attacked for sparking a spike in the poaching of tropical fish, Muppets creators the Jim Henson Company said Sunday that their new animated children's series "Splash and Bubbles" would help mobilize a new generation to save the undersea world. The big-budget 40-episode series, which will screen on PBS in the United States next year, aims to "turn the tide of our world to save the planet".

Boss Lisa Henson, daughter of Jim Henson, the puppetry genius behind "The Muppets" and "Sesame Street", said the

series, which was premiered at the MIPJUNIOR festival in the French resort of Cannes, comes at a vital time. While four to seven-year-olds may not be able to do much now to tackle the millions of tons of plastic waste that have created the "Great Pacific Garbage Patch", she said it is "their generation who will be left to solve" such problems. The series comes in the wake of the huge success of "The Octonauts", the most watched cartoon by pre-school children in Britain, Ireland and Australia.

### 'Star Trek' meets Jacques Cousteau

The "edutainment" show has a team of animated animals rescuing sea creatures from their base in the Octopod. With its catchphrase slogans of "Explore! Rescue! Protect!" it has been described as "Star Trek" meets Jacques Cousteau. And now filmmakers are working with the Monaco

oceanographic museum which the legendary French marine explorer ran for decades to create another series about child heroes fighting for marine conservation.

"Pirates of the Abyss" will feature four friends who go off on aquatic adventures in an old submarine to right the wrongs of pollution and the overexploitation of the oceans. Producer Aymeric Castaing told AFP that the series-aimed at slightly older kids-would tap into their anger and impotence at what is happening to the environment. "The world we live in will soon be in the hands of these kids. It is they who will have to save the oceans," he added. Castaing said the children begin their quest after chancing upon a laboratory left behind by "some of the greatest brains of the past" including Jules Verne, the inventor Nikola Tesla, Gustave Eiffel and Prince Albert I of Monaco, an

early marine researcher. "These geniuses from the past are in a way helping them save the future," said Castaing, co-founder of the Bordeaux-based I Can Fly studio.

### 'Good values'

Henson said like "Sesame Street", "Splash and Bubbles" was also all about teaching children good values in a fun way. "You would not believe how diverse the ocean floor is... There are seahorse single dads with 499 children," she joked. "And it is the seahorse dads who give birth. There is so much weird stuff there." She said although the show took its mission to education seriously, with "today's Jacques Cousteau marine biologist Dr Sylvia Earle" among its advisors, she insisted it was "not preachy".

"We are opening up the weird and wonderful world" of marine science and

conservation through fun adventures and music. "And we are showing the oceans amazing diversity and interconnectedness," she added. Nevertheless, each 11-minute episode will be cut with a humorous documentary segment called "Get Your Feet Wet", where children will "find out for instance that octopuses have no bones". Henson's distribution boss Richard Goldsmith said it was in the "studio's DNA" to promote "good and solid values" and that "Jim Henson was thinking about ecology and diversity long before it was cool".

Far from overwhelming children with the planet's problems, he said the show's purpose was to empower them to confront them. "One of (lead character) Splash's favorite sayings is, 'There is only one way to get over the fear of the unknown and that is to go there and find out about it,'" Goldsmith added. — AFP



**LOS ANGELES:** In this Sept 9, 2015, file photo, Planned Parenthood supporters rally for women's access to reproductive health care on "National Pink Out Day" at Los Angeles City Hall. — AP

## WHY IT MATTERS: ABORTION

**NEW YORK:** Persistent Republican-led efforts to restrict access to abortion and to curb government funding for Planned Parenthood have been hotly debated in Washington and in states, and will be shaped in some way by the next president.

### WHERE THEY STAND

Democrat Hillary Clinton supports access to abortion and is an outspoken defender of Planned Parenthood, which is the largest provider of abortions in the US and also offers other health services. Republican Donald Trump, who in the past was a supporter of abortion rights, now says he isn't, although he's been somewhat inconsistent in his campaign statements on abortion. Numerous anti-abortion leaders, initially wary of Trump, now support him because of his pledge to nominate Supreme Court justices who are open to curtailing abortions and his choice of Mike Pence, a staunch abortion foe, as his running mate.

### WHY IT MATTERS

The prime battleground over abortion is the Supreme Court, which regularly confronts legal challenges on the issue. The next president has one vacancy to fill on the high court and could have more. A Clinton victory could strengthen the court's current 5-3 majority that supports abortion rights. A Trump win could lead to a reconfigured court that would uphold tough state laws restricting abortion and possibly consider overturning Roe v. Wade, the 1973 decision that established a nationwide right to abortion. Advocates on both sides have singled out the presidential election as the key to where the issue goes next.

In June, the Supreme Court issued its most important abortion decision in many years, striking down restrictions in Texas that required doctors who perform abortions to have admitting privileges at nearby hospitals and forced clinics to meet hospital-like building standards. The court held that this placed an "undue burden" on

women seeking abortion because it would force closure of many clinics.

In the future, the court is likely to face the question of whether other types of abortion restrictions impose an undue burden. One example: Laws adopted by numerous states that ban most abortions after 20 weeks of gestation on the disputed premise that a fetus can feel pain at that stage. Republicans in Congress voted to impose a 20-week ban nationwide, but it was blocked by Senate Democrats. If Democrats gain more Senate seats in November, that would make federal anti-abortion legislation even less likely. Congressional Republicans also have sought to halt federal money to Planned Parenthood. Most of that money goes to provide non-abortion services to low-income women.

A Clinton presidency would be expected to carry on President Barack Obama's opposition to such defunding attempts, with veto power to back it up. Trump says he'd support the stripping of federal financing from Planned Parenthood, though he also has made positive comments in the past about the importance of the organization's non-abortion services. States, too, have sought to curtail public money for Planned Parenthood over the past year - blocked by courts in some cases, but elsewhere forcing Planned Parenthood to curtail some contraceptive services, health screenings and other programs.

Federal law, and the laws of most states, already prevent public money from paying for abortions except in rare circumstances. The recent defunding bills prohibit state money for any services by organizations that also provide abortions. Public opinion on abortion is sharply divided, and has barely shifted in recent decades. The latest Gallup poll on the topic finds 50 percent of Americans say abortion should be legal under certain circumstances, 29 percent want it legal in all cases and 19 percent want it outlawed in all cases - roughly the same breakdown as in the 1970s. — AP

## TESLA HOPES TO WORK WITH PANASONIC ON SOLAR ENERGY

**TOKYO:** US electric car maker Tesla says it plans to start working with Japanese electronics company Panasonic Corp. on solar energy. Tesla's said on its corporate blog yesterday that the companies have signed a non-binding letter of intent to begin collaborating on Panasonic's production of photovoltaic cells and modules at a facility under



**Tesla Motors CEO Elon Musk**

construction by San Mateo, California-based solar-panel company SolarCity Corp. in Buffalo, New York.

The deal requires shareholders' approval of Tesla's planned acquisition of SolarCity. Panasonic confirmed it was studying a collaboration with Tesla to make solar products at SolarCity's Buffalo facility, but

declined to give details. Palo Alto, California-based Tesla said the cells and modules would be used with its energy storage products.

Tesla CEO Elon Musk says SolarCity's installation network and Tesla's global energy storage could provide customers a one-stop shop for sustainable energy and transportation. Shareholders are due to vote on the acquisition on Nov. 17. "We are excited to expand our partnership with Panasonic as we move toward a combined Tesla and SolarCity."

By working together on solar, we will be able to accelerate production of high-efficiency, extremely reliable solar cells and modules at the best cost," said JB Straubel, chief technical officer at Tesla. Tesla intends to provide a long-term purchase commitment for those cells from Panasonic, according to the company.

The collaboration extends the partnership between Tesla and Panasonic, which includes the production of electric vehicle and grid storage battery cells at Tesla's Gigafactory. Panasonic is a major manufacturer of home appliances, such as washing machines, refrigerators, TVs and microwaves, but its operations also encompass services and products for businesses, including health care and security camera systems. — AP

## CHINA LAUNCHES ITS LONGEST CREWED SPACE MISSION YET

METHODICAL PROGRESS IN COMPARATIVELY SHORT TIME

**BEIJING:** Two Chinese astronauts began the country's longest crewed space mission yesterday, blasting off on a spacecraft for a 30-day stay on an experimental space station as China steadfastly navigates its way to becoming a space superpower.

Ahead of the launch, one astronaut shouted: "We are ready! Please give instructions!" in front of dozens of people dressed in colorful dress representing China's ethnic minorities, in footage shown prominently on Chinese TV. The commander-in-chief of the manned space program, Gen. Zhang Youxia, replied: "Proceed!" followed by blaring marching music as the astronauts boarded a bus to take them to the launch pad. China, Russia and the United States are the only countries that have independently launched humans into space, and while the others have more experience in manned space travel, China's military-backed program has made methodical progress in comparatively short time. The launch is China's sixth manned mission, the previous longest being about two weeks.

For this mission, the astronauts will dock their spacecraft with the Tiangong 2 station within two days, conduct experiments in medicine and space-related technologies, and test systems and processes in preparation for the launching of the station's core module in 2018. A fully functioning space station is on course to begin operating six years from now and slated to run for at least a decade.

### 'More deeply and more broadly'

The Shenzhou 11 space capsule blasted off from the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center on the edge of the Gobi Desert in northern China at 7:30 am (2330 GMT) aboard a Long March-2F carrier rocket. Zhang declared the launch a success 16 minutes later. Defense Minister Fan Changlong then read a congratulatory message from President Xi Jinping calling for China's astronauts to explore space "more deeply and more broadly."

Since China conducted its first crewed space mission in 2003, it has staged a spacewalk and landed its Yutu rover on the moon. The Tiangong, or "Heavenly Palace," space stations are considered stepping stones to a mission to send a rover to Mars by the end of the decade. Administrators suggest a crewed landing on the moon may also be in the program's future.

The Shenzhou 11 astronauts are Jing



**JIUQUAN:** In this photo released by Xinhua News Agency, the Long March-2F carrier rocket carrying China's Shenzhou 11 manned spacecraft blasts off from the launch pad at the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center. — AP

Haipeng, who is flying his third mission, and 37-year-old Chen Dong.

"It is any astronaut's dream and pursuit to be able to perform many space missions," Jing, who turns 50 during his time in space, told a briefing Sunday. China was excluded from the International Space Station mainly due to US concerns over the Chinese space program's strongly military character. Chinese officials are now looking to internationalize their own program by offering to help finance other countries' missions to Tiangong 2, which, at 60 tons when completed, would still be considerably smaller than the 420-ton ISS.

China's space program also opened a fourth spacecraft launch site at Wenchang on the island province of Hainan in June. It was inaugurated with the launch of the newly developed Long March 7 rocket that was hailed as a breakthrough in the use of safer, more environmentally friendly fuels.

China is developing the Long March 5 heavy-lift rocket needed to launch the Tiangong 2's additional components and other massive payloads. A source of enormous national pride, China's space program plans a total of 20 missions this year at a time when the US and other countries' programs are seeking new roles. — AP

## COMPANY DEBUTS SOLAR SIDEWALKS

**SANDPOINT, Idaho:** Scott Brusaw has a vision for the nation's roads. He believes the solar-powered glass pavers his company makes could transform thousands of miles of pavement into a new energy source. His business, Solar Roadways, recently unveiled its first public installation, in a downtown plaza in this northern Idaho resort town. It's 150 square feet of hexagon-shaped solar panels that people can walk and bicycle on.

The company is working on proof that the panels, for which it has a patent, are strong enough and have enough traction to handle motor vehicles, including semitrailers.

"Our plan is to replace all the asphalt and concrete," said Brusaw, noting concrete occupies over 48,000 square miles in the US. "If you cover it with solar panels, we can make three times our energy needs."

### Going green

Solar Roadways is among a growing number of companies embracing renewable energy as the U.S. aims to reduce carbon emissions by one-third from 2005 levels by 2030. But it is the only business receiving federal highway research money in pursuit of solar road panels, part of the Federal Highway Administration's efforts to fight climate change, said Doug Hecox, a spokesman for the agency in Washington, DC.

Brusaw and his wife, Julie, got the idea for their Idaho business after watching the Al Gore movie "An Inconvenient Truth" and deciding they also wanted to join the battle against global warming. They aren't the only ones eyeing roads and sidewalks as a potential energy source. A solar bike path was built in the Netherlands in 2014, and Germany and France have announced plans to build solar roads in the future. The Brusaws hope to beat them into mass production. Incorporated in 2006, Solar Roadways has received three FHA grants, totaling \$1.6 million, and funding from the state and a local economic development agency. It also drew 50,000 donors who raised \$2.2 million on Indiegogo, a crowd-sourcing site.

### Can glass really support semis?

Solar Roadways has been testing the strength

of its half-inch-thick glass by dropping 1-pound steel balls on it from a height of 8 feet, a standard test for concrete. So far, the tests have been successful, Brusaw said.

The glass has a traction surface that is equivalent to asphalt. In tests, vehicles are able to stop in the required distance, he said. In strength tests, the panels can hold 250,000 pounds, three times the legal limit for a semitrailer.

### What do the panels look like?

They are made of tempered glass, weigh about 70 pounds each and contain lights that can be programmed to direct traffic or alert drivers to problems.

Each hexagonal panel is about 31 inches point-to-point. The panels contain microprocessors that allow them to communicate with each other, a central control station and vehicles. They also are designed to be easily replaced if dam-

aged. According to Solar Roadways, heat produced by the panels keeps roadways snow- and ice-free, improving winter driving safety. The panels can currently be used for sidewalks, driveways and parking lots. The company is still seeking permission from the federal government to use them in roads.

### What's next?

Solar Roadways wants to set up a manufacturing facility for the glass panels in Sandpoint as early as next year. "We want to get the cost down to where the average homeowner can afford it," Julie Brusaw said. For now, the Brusaws are doing custom jobs, but they envision do-it-yourselfers buying the panels at hardware stores. The next public installations will be in Baltimore and at a Route 66 rest area in Missouri, Scott Brusaw said. Both are surfaces for pedestrians. — AP



**SANDPOINT:** In this Sept 30, 2016, photo, Solar Roadways founders Scott Brusaw, left, and Julie Brusaw display a one-third sized replica of one of their solar pavement panels at a news conference. — AP