

CONTROVERSIAL BRITISH PHOTOGRAPHER HAMILTON DIES

PARIS: Controversial British fashion photographer David Hamilton, 83, was found dead in his Parisian home Friday, emergency services sources said, just weeks after being accused of rape by several former child models. Hamilton, known for his widely published nude images of underage girls, was found in a state of cardiac arrest an informed source said, adding there was medication near his body. He was declared dead an hour later. Hamilton, who rose to fame in the 1970s and whose photography books have sold millions of copies, this week threatened to sue his accusers, saying he had previously been cleared of abuse.

The artist, whose work has long raised questions about where art ends and pornography begins, was at the centre of a raft of allegations after a French radio presenter accused him of raping her when she was 13. Flavie Flament, who modelled for Hamilton almost 30 years ago, published an autobiographical novel last month in which she told of being raped by a famous photographer during a shoot.

Although she did not name Hamilton in "The



British fashion photographer David Hamilton

Consolation", she used his photograph of her as the book's cover. Flament, 42, later told French media that it was Hamilton who had raped her after three other women contacted her with near identical allegations. Flament said Hamilton raped her in the

shower of his apartment after spotting her in a nudist resort at Cap d'Agde in southwest France where she was on holiday with her parents.

Hamilton confirmed Flament had been his model, but denied the allegations, telling AFP on Tuesday: "I have done nothing improper." "Clearly the instigator of this media lynching is looking for her 15 minutes of fame by defaming me in her novel," he said, adding that he would take legal action.

Flament's editor Karina Hocine told AFP Friday the radio presenter was "devastated" by the news of Hamilton's death. "Naturally, we feel horrified and, at the same time, really disgusted that there was not enough time for justice to run its course," she added.

"The horror of this news will never erase the sleepless nights," Flament told AFP, reiterating her allegations.

'Lost paradise'

Hamilton has said that his work looks for the "candour of a lost paradise", and is most famous for his kitschy calendars of young girls and his soft-focus erotic films including "Bilitis" from 1977. He

was born in London in 1933 and studied architecture as a young man, but it was in Paris where he first started to work in fashion, having moved there aged 20 inspired by the impressionist painters.

He first worked as a designer at Elle magazine and then as an artistic director at the luxury Le Printemps department store. With no formal training in photography, he found his calling aged 33, seeking his models in the streets and on the beaches. He became known for his trademark "Hamilton blur", his photos often bathed in a very distinctive artistic vagueness. His photos' subdued light, bluish tint and young girls, often blonde, blue-eyed and crowned with flowers, were fashionable in the 70s and 80s but the style became seen as passe in later decades, and his pictures were considered disturbing by some. Under the French statute of limitations, charges must be brought within 20 years for rape and 10 years for sexual abuse. However, in a twist, the French minister for children's and women's rights asked Flament to head a body which will look at whether to extend the statute of limitations. — AFP

SWEEPING UK SPY BILL DUBBED 'SNOOPERS' CHARTER' BECOMES LAW

LONDON: In Britain, Big Brother just got bigger. After months of wrangling, Parliament has passed a contentious new snooping law that gives authorities - from police and spies to food regulators, fire officials and tax inspectors - powers to look at the internet browsing records of everyone in the country. The law requires telecoms companies to keep records of all users' web activity for a year, creating databases of personal information that the firms worry could be vulnerable to leaks and hackers. Civil liberties groups say the law establishes mass surveillance of British citizens, following innocent internet users from the office to the living room and the bedroom.

Tim Berners-Lee, the computer scientist credited with inventing World Wide Web, tweeted news of the law's passage with the words: "Dark, dark days." The Investigatory Powers Bill - dubbed the "snoopers' charter" by critics - was passed by Parliament this month after more than a year of debate and amendments. It will become law when it receives the formality of royal assent next week. But big questions remain about how it will work, and the government acknowledges it could be 12 months before internet firms have to start storing the records.

"It won't happen in a big bang next week," Home Office official Chris Mills told a meeting of internet service providers on Thursday. "It will be a phased program of the introduction of the measures over a year or so." The government says the new law "ensures powers are fit for the digital age," replacing a patchwork of rules. In a move taken by few other nations, it requires telecommunications companies to store for a year the web histories known as internet connection records - a list of websites each person has visited and the apps and messaging services they used, though not the individual pages they looked at or the messages they sent.

The government has called that information the modern equivalent of an itemized phone bill. But critics say it's more like a personal diary. Julian Huppert, a former Liberal

Democrat lawmaker who opposed the bill, said it "creates a very intrusive database." "People may have been to the Depression Alliance website, or a marriage guidance website, or an abortion provider's website, or all sorts of things which are very personal and private," he said.

Officials won't need a warrant to access the data, and the list of bodies that can see it includes not just the police and intelligence services, but government departments, revenue and customs officials and even the Food Standards Agency. "My worry is partly about their access," Huppert said. "But it's much more deeply about the prospects for either hacking or people selling information on." James Blessing, chairman of the Internet Services Providers Association, said the industry has "significant questions" on how the law will work - including "how to keep the vast new data sets secure." He warned that if the law is not implemented in a "proportionate, considered way, there is a real danger the UK could lose its status as a world-leading digital economy." Some aspects of the new law remain clouded by secrecy. Not all internet companies will have to comply - only those that are asked to by the government. The government won't say who is on that list, and the firms involved are forbidden from telling their customers.

Encryption

Service providers are also concerned by the law's provision that firms can be asked to remove encryption to let spies access communications. Internet companies say that could weaken the security of online shopping, banking and a host of other activities that rely on encryption. The new law also makes official - and legal - British spies' ability to hack into devices and harvest vast amounts of bulk online data, much of it from outside the UK. In doing so, it both acknowledges and sets limits on the secretive mass-snooping schemes exposed by former US National Security Agency contractor Edward Snowden. — AP



PARIS: French President Francois Hollande attends the handover ceremony of the Francophonie presidency between Senegal and Madagascar during the 16th "Sommet de la Francophonie" (Summit of French-speaking countries) yesterday. — AFP

HOLLANDE, VALLS SHOULD CONTEST SOCIALIST TICKET, SAYS BARTOLONE

SOCIALIST PRIMARIES DUE TO TAKE PLACE IN JANUARY

PARIS: French President Francois Hollande and Prime Minister Manuel Valls should contest a Socialist primary election to pick the party's candidate for next year's presidential race, a leading Socialist said yesterday. The comments from Claude Bartolone, who heads France's National Assembly lower house of parliament, contrast with messages from the Valls camp in past months which have said he would not fight Hollande for the Socialist ticket and would only stand if his boss did not.

Hollande's popularity ratings are low. They fell to four percent in one opinion poll, and speculation over whether the unpopular leader will run or not is centre-stage as the opposition centre-right's own presidential primary contest reaches its climax this weekend.

Valls has meanwhile been giving interviews and making prominent speeches on a wide range of subjects, increasing speculation that he is preparing for a shot at next year's April presidential race. The centre-right Les Republicains

party will choose its candidate on Sunday, with former prime minister Francois Fillon in pole position. The Socialist primaries take place in January.

Bartolone said he wanted as many candidates as possible in the Socialist party race. He urged Hollande, Valls and former economy minister Emmanuel Macron to all stand, saying the party would benefit from a large field of candidates. Macron is standing anyway as an independent. "I want Valls to stand in the primaries, and I want Hollande to stand in the primaries," Bartolone told reporters as he arrived at a left-wing political gathering north of Paris.

"I would prefer it if they both stood in the primaries, rather than one of them say 'That's it, I'm out, so I'm moving away from the campaign, I'm moving away from the Socialists, I'm moving away from what the government is doing,'" he added.

The Socialist primaries battle has exposed divisions in the party, with some urging

Hollande not to stand while others have been more circumspect. Hollande, who is expected to say near the end of the first week of December if he intends to run for re-election, got a boost this week when data showed France's jobless total had eased back slightly in October to a two-year low.

However, the French economy remains sluggish and attacks by Islamist militants, including one in Paris in November 2015 that killed 130 people, have also damaged Hollande's ratings.

Current opinion polls show any Socialist candidate would get knocked out of the first round in next year's election, with the Les Republicains candidate seen as likely to beat the far-right Front National in the final vote. But polls have been getting it wrong this year. After Britain's referendum decision to exit the European Union and the election of Donald Trump as U.S. president, Fillon confounded the polls with a thumping win in the first round of the Les Republicains party primaries. — Reuters

EU-TURKEY PACT 'MUST BE RESPECTED': JUNCKER

BRUSSELS: The EU-Turkey deal that has substantially reduced the flow of migrants to Europe "must be respected and will be", said European Commission chief Jean-Claude Juncker in an interview published yesterday. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan threatened Friday to walk away from the agreement, speaking a day after the European Parliament angered Ankara by backing a freeze of its EU accession talks.

"We made an agreement, it must be respected and it will be," Juncker told Belgium's La Libre Belgique newspaper. He pointed to the period from 2003-2014 while Erdogan was prime minister, when Turkey "made a lot of progress in terms of the quality of its democracy". But in the past two years, the country has "distanced itself from European principles and values," Juncker said.

"I believe that Erdogan and his government are in the process of 'pre-blaming' Europe for the failure of its accession negotiations," he added. He noted that the current impasse between the two sides stems in particular from the fact that Turkey has refused to launch a reform of its anti-terror legislation, a condition for membership laid

down by the EU. "Instead of putting this failure on the European Union and Commission, Mr Erdogan would do well to start by asking himself if he responsible for Turks not being able to freely move on European territory," Juncker said. On March 18, Ankara and Brussels forged a deal for Turkey to halt the flow of migrants to Europe-an accord that has largely been successful in reducing numbers crossing the Aegean Sea between Turkey and Greece.

According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), just over 171,000 have crossed to Greece so far this year, much lower than the comparable figure for 2015 of almost 740,000.

Hundreds of migrants drowned while trying to cross the Aegean in 2015 on unseaworthy boats, including three-year-old Syrian Aylan Kurdi. The images of his lifeless body washed up on a Turkish beach spurred the international community into action. Juncker pointed out that the leaders of the 28 EU nations have the final say on Turkey's bid to join the bloc and not the European Parliament. Still, he said Thursday's vote was a "warning sign that Turkey should not underestimate". — AFP



PARIS: People hold a banner reading "Borders divide" and calling for "freedom of movement and residence" during a demonstration in support of migrants and refugees in Paris yesterday. — AFP

HURRICANE KILLS 9 IN COSTA RICA

SAN JOSE: A hurricane that churned its way across Central America before sweeping into the Pacific on Friday killed at least nine people in Costa Rica and caused millions of dollars in damage, officials said.

President Luis Guillermo Solis declared three days of mourning, starting Monday. In neighboring Nicaragua, officials reported no casualties but dozens of homes were damaged in low-lying areas.

Hurricane Otto had sparked red alerts in both countries when it spun in from the Caribbean on Thursday with winds of up to 175 kilometers (110 miles) per hour. It made landfall in southeastern Nicaragua, in an area with national reserves that is sparsely inhabited, before crossing into Costa Rica, losing strength as it went. Early Friday it headed out into the Pacific Ocean as a downgraded tropical storm. It should continue to weaken, the US National Hurricane Center said. A Costa Rican police official, Walter Espinoza, told a news conference:

"The number of people killed is nine. We have recovered eight bodies, only one remains." Solis said the storm dumped a month's worth of rain in just a few hours in Costa Rica. Authorities said it caused around \$8 million in damage to roads. Aerial television pictures from northern Costa Rica showed water and mud in several towns, and small bridges collapsed.

Evacuations

Updating an earlier death toll of four, Espinoza said five of the nine people killed died in Upala, a town near the border with Nicaragua that found itself in the storm's path. An Upala resident, Juan, told the Repretel channel he lost his son when rising waters tore away his home on a river bank. The other four died in Bagaces, a town 100 kilometers (60 miles) north of the capital San Jose. In Nicaragua, the government's



CARDENAS: A young man carries his bicycle across a road that flooded after the passing of Hurricane Otto in Cardenas on Friday. — AP

spokesperson, First Lady Rosario Murillo, said: "Up to now, thank God, we haven't counted any loss of human life." Officials in both countries had evacuated the most at-risk areas before the hurricane hit, and closed schools and mobilized emergency crews. Officials in Costa Rica said 5,500 people had been put up in shelters. Nicaragua had 44 shelters operating for many of the 10,500 people who had been evacuated.

UN agencies and non-governmental organizations had supported the emergency response, the UN office coordinating humanitarian affairs said in a statement. Early this week, as Otto gathered strength in the Caribbean, its outer

bands of wind and rain contributed to the deaths of eight people in Panama, according to the national civil protection service.

On Thursday, at the same time as the hurricane struck, a 7.0 earthquake was registered on the other side of the Central American isthmus, 120 kilometers (75 miles) offshore in the Pacific Ocean. Although the temblor prompted panicked residents in El Salvador's capital to run out of buildings, and briefly sparked tsunami alerts in El Salvador and Nicaragua, no damage was reported. The sole casualty was in Nicaragua, where one person died of a heart attack. — AFP