Row grows over threat to tribes

Three ministers in Peru have resigned in protest at plans to drill for oil in a reserve for indigenous tribes, who risk being exposed to diseases that could kill them (James Hider writes).

A Deputy Culture Ministry has now quit over the project led by Argentina’s Pluspetrol, Hunt Oil of the US and Spain’s Repsol, which want to expand the huge Camisea project in the southeastern Amazon region, home to tribes including the Nanti, right, that have had shunned contact with the outside world. Peru’s Culture Ministry said the 1,000 oil workers, machinery and explosives could devastate the tiny Nahua tribe, half of which has been wiped out since the 1980s.

Rudd pledges vote on same-sex marriage

Australia
Bill Condie Brisbane

Australia’s Prime Minister last night used the first of three televised debates in the election campaign to pledge a vote on gay marriage.

Kevin Rudd’s declaration was designed to wrong-foot the opposition leader, Tony Abbott, a Roman Catholic and social conservative who has refused to allow his Liberal Party MPs a free vote on the issue. “I support marriage equality, I believe this is a mark of decency to same-sex couples,” Mr Rudd said. “We will allow a full conscience vote. I would appeal to Mr Abbott to do the same.” Mr Abbott skirted the issue, saying that his priority was reducing “cost of living pressure.”

The gay marriage pledge, a cause to which Mr Rudd is a late convert, came as a surprise in a campaign where the holiest issue has been a slowing economy.

The two men were questioned by three journalists at the National Press Club. Canberra Mr Rudd went into the debate having lost ground in the polls after one week of campaigning. His centre-left Labor Party has been in power since late 2007.

Stand and drive to

Pakistan
Annabel Southey Islamabad

Qazi Mustafa Jan stands at a bistro in Karachi. He has pitched colonising the grassy mound in the domain of hawkers and Jan, a district commissioner, is of polio vaccinators are ambulance containing children.

The vaccinators, most of them, horse between the traffic, sto men like Mr Jan, who find a child without a pinky thumb, a sign that they have not been vaccinated in this polio can which only countries where polio endemic. There have been 22 cases so far this year in Pakistan, do last year and 198 the year before, opposition from religious claim the vaccine is unislamic is an attempt by the US to sterilise

FROM OUR CORRESPONDENT

It’s tough to get back in shape

Rubbing her stomach, Hanan Masri pops the last almond and date biscuit in her mouth. “Tomorrow the diet up all the flour in the house, from tomorrow it’s Atkins for me.”

Like Muslims across the world, Hanan and her family fast during Ramadan, only eating and drinking after sunset. Christian friends are jealous of her holy diet. “If only they knew how much weight I gain. I love Ramadan for the spiritual cleansing and awareness it brings. Some people say they consider it a cleanse of their body. I guess they aren’t eating what we’re eating.”

Hanan blames the late-night meals and traditional Ramadan food. She describes a typical menu: lentil and lamb stew, savoury biscuits filled with za’atar spice, musakhan, a traditional chicken dish, stuffed courgettes and seven varieties of sweets. “We start eating as soon as the sun sets and eat all night. During the day we sleep and do little except for watching our favourite Ramadan soap.”

Her sister, a GP, worries about

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