NEWSIN

ICC rules 'mistrial' in Kenya Ruto case REUTERS, Amsterdam

Judges at the International Criminal Court declared a mistrial in the case of Kenyan Deputy President William Ruto, throwing out the charges he faced over post-election violence because political inteference had made a fair trial impossible. "The proceedings are declared a mistrial due to a troubling incidence of witness interference and intolerable political meddling," judges

SA leader survives impeachment vote AFP, Cape Town

said yesterday.

South African President Jacob Zuma easily survived an impeachment vote yesterday over a court ruling that he had violated the country's post-apartheid constitution over spending of public funds on his private residence. Lawmakers from Zuma's African National Congress (ANC) rallied to his defence, defeating the motion by 233 votes to 143.

UN: Syria peace talks to resume on April 11 AFP, Geneva

Syria peace talks will likely resume in Geneva on April 11, but regime negotiators will only arrive several days later after the completion of parliamentary elections in the country, the UN said yesterday. United Nations mediator Staffan de Mistura had previously said he wanted to restart the talks on April 9, but noted there was

Myanmar's Thein Sein 'becomes a monk'

AFP, Yangon

The retired junta general who steered Myanmar's last five years of reforms has temporarily become a monk, according to state media, days after he ceded power to a new government led by Aung San Suu Kyi's pro-democracy party. Pictures widely shared on social media showed a shaven-headed Thein Sein wearing his trademark spectacles and draped in the deep maroon robes of the Buddhist clergy.

WORLD MEDIA REACTION

HERE IS HOW THE STORY WAS COVERED AROUND THE WORLD:

RUSSIA: The opposition newspaper, Novaya Gazeta, carried a seven-page report on details of Vladimir Putin's associates named in the leaks and dedicated a special section of its website to its findings. But reports said the story was notably absent from state-controlled television, while online outlets attacked Western media coverage. 'Goebbels had lessbiased articles': Public slams MSM for Putin focus after Panama papers leak, read a headline on Russia Today. SAUDI ARABIA: The King of Saudi Arabia, Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud,

was named in the files that claimed he was linked to offshore firms in the

British Virgin Islands and Luxembourg. But the story was largely absent

from the homepages of all main Saudi news sites and the most recent item returned in a search for "Panama" in the official Saudi Press Agency's archive dated back to January. SYRIA: Reports on the Panama papers were conspicuously absent from the state-controlled Syrian Arab News Agency, despite two of President Assad's cousins being named in the leaks. The story was carried promi-

nently in the opposition Enab Baladi website, which was set up by activists during the Arab Spring. ICELAND: Revelations that the Prime Minister of Iceland set up a company

in the British Virgin Islands with his wife was the country's dominant news story on Monday. Amid mounting pressure for Sigmundur David Gunnlaugsson to resign, Icelandic news outlets published a series of revelations into his alleged links to Wintris Inc. He sold his share in the firm in 2009 and has denied any wrongdoing, while refusing to resign. INDIA: Reports were largely focusing on two prominent Indian actors,

Aishwarya Rai Bachchan and Amitabh Bachchan, and a real estate mag-

nate. The Indian Express, which was one of the media outlets handed the leaked documents eight months ago, published its investigation of more than 500 Indians it said were linked to offshore firms. The exposé resulted in the country's finance minister, Arun Jaitley warning that anyone failing to declare illegal assets stashed abroad would find "such adventurism extremely costly." FRANCE: The Le Monde newspaper ran the reports prominently, having been among the media outlets researching the database. The finance

minister, Michel Sapin, said authorities would investigate the documents in order to recover money from the hundreds of French citizens who might have committed tax evasion. Francois Hollande called the leak "good news" and praised the work of whistleblowers, calling for them to be afforded increased legal protections. EGYPT: Cairo was focusing on claims about the family of former President

Hosni Mubarak. Alaa Mubarak, the ousted leader's son, was linked to an offshore company called Pan World Investments Inc. He did not respond to Al-Bab's request for a comment. INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

Leak sparks outrage

Russia, China accuse hostile western forces behind leaks

AFP, Paris

World leaders and celebrities exposed in a massive leak of their secret offshore financial dealings are hitting back, saying they have done nothing wrong despite a growing international furore. Some of the biggest names in the

scandal said they were being unfairly targeted even as the scandal mushroomed and a series of countries vowed to open tax evasion investigations following the leak of 11.5 million confidential documents -- the socalled Panama Papers. The vast stash of records from

Panamanian legal firm Mossack Fonseca was obtained from an anonymous source by German daily Sueddeutsche Zeitung and shared with more than 100 media groups by the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists, which published their first findings Sunday after a year-long probe.

US President Barack Obama yesterday said that the revelations show tax avoidance is a global issue.

Offshore financial dealings are not

illegal in themselves but may be used

to hide assets from tax authorities, launder the proceeds of criminal activities or conceal misappropriated or politically inconvenient wealth. In Beijing, there was no official

reaction to ICIJ allegations that eight current or former members of the ruling party's most powerful body concealed their fortunes through offshore havens, as well as relatives of Xi Jinping, who has overseen a muchpublicised anti-corruption drive.

The Kremlin suggested a US plot

after the leaks put a close friend of Central American nation back on a "tax Putin's at the top of an offshore empire worth more than \$2 billion.

"Putin, Russia, our country, our stability and the upcoming elections are the main target, specifically to destabilise the situation," said a Kremlin spokesman, claiming many of the journalists were former officers



PANAMA PAPERS

UK PM under pressure over family wealth

France puts Panama back on tax haven blacklist; Panama mulls retaliation

Major banks set up thousands of offshore firms: report

and special services.

Australia, France and the Netherlands have announced investithe papers.

yesterday said it could retaliate if France makes good on its decision to put the

haven" list. France removed Panama from the list of Uncooperative States : ning more than 65 countries and Territories (ETNC) in 2012 after the · seeking to root out crosstwo countries reached a bilateral accord: border crime, corruption on fighting tax evasion. These are among the latest allegations

of the Panama Papers investigations:

used to help fund the country's nuclear : newspapers that expose weapons programme, Pyongyang- · secret offshore financial based DCB Finance Ltd, was among the : dealings of 140 political clients of the Panamanian law firm at : figures, including 12 current the centre of a massive data leak, according to the BBC and The Guardian. -- Prime Minister David Cameron's father ran an offshore fund that paid

no tax in Britain for 30 years, according journalist Chuck Lewis to the Panama Papers probe. Cameron's Downing Street office insisted it was a "private matter" although a government source later told AFP that the prime minister himself did not have any such funds. -- Syria used Mossack Fonseca to

create shell companies to help it break international sanctions and fund its war effort, the French paper said. Le Monde also said its investigation

into the papers found British banking giant HSBC has 2,300 offshore companies created through Mossack Fonseca, : nearly 130,000 individuals. Credit Suisse has 1,105 and UBS, also . from the US state department, the CIA of Switzerland, has 1,100, while: WikiLeaks whistleblowing France's Societe Generale has 979.

offshore entities covering almost 40 · such as Le Monde, the South gations into revelations contained in years, also name the president of . China Morning Post, the Ukraine and the king of Saudi Arabia. : BBC, the Washington Post, Meanwhile, Panama's government Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko · Folha de Sao Paulo and the denied any wrongdoing, but he may . Sueddeutsche Zeitung to face an attempt to impeach him.

: ICIJ: world's whistleblower . AFP, Washington

The International Consortium of Investigative · Journalists (ICIJ) is a collec-: tive of 190 journalists span-: and abuse of power.

This week it distributed 11.5 million documents -- A North Korean front company: compiled by more than 100 or former heads of state · along with celebrities in sports and show business.

Founded in 1997 by US · and based in Washington, the ICIJ is a non-profit organization.

The ICIJ is now run by Australian journalist Gerard Ryle, who emigrated to the United States in 2011 with details of 2.5 million digital files, a treasure trove that would ultimately yield information on 120,000 offshore companies and

Modeled on the site, ICIJ relies on respected The papers, from around 214,000 global press organizations : help it gather information.



Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi shakes hands with Myanmar Foreign Minister Aung San Suu Kyi (R) after a joint press conference in Ministry of Foreign Affair at Naypyitaw, yesterday. Suu Kyi, the country's democracy figurehead, invited China's Wang Yi for talks in the capital.

BP ordered to pay \$20b over 2010 oil spill

AL JAZEERA ONLINE

A federal judge in the US state of Louisiana has granted final approval to an estimated \$20bn settlement over the 2010 BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, resolving years of litigation over what caused one of the biggest ever environmental disasters. The settlement, first announced in July

last year, includes \$5.5bn in civil Clean Water Act penalties and billions more to cover environmental damage and other claims by the five US states along the Gulf coast, including Texas, Mississippi, Alabama, Florida and Louisiana.

The money is to be paid out over roughly 16 years for what has been called the biggest accidental marine oil spill in the history of Michigan law professor and former chief of the petroleum industry.

mated that the settlement will cost the oil giant as much as \$20.8bn, the largest environmental settlement in US history as well as the largest ever civil settlement with a single entity.

US District Judge Carl Barbier, who the future," he said.

approved the settlement, had set the stage with an earlier ruling that BP had been "grossly negligent" in the offshore rig explosion which killed 11 workers and caused a 134-million-gallon spill. In 2012, BP reached a similar settlement

agreement with private attorneys for businesses and residents who claim the spill cost them money. That deal, which did not have a cap, led to a protracted court battle over subsequent

payouts to businesses. BP has estimated that its costs related to the spill, including its initial cleanup work and the various settlements and criminal

and civil penalties, will exceed \$53bn. David Uhlmann, a University of the Justice Department's environmental The US Justice Department has esti-crimes section, said Barbier's ruling "ends a

> long, sad chapter in American environmental history. "The question that remains is whether we have learned enough from this tragedy to

> prevent similar environmental disasters in

FIRST PHASE OF ASSEMBLY POLLS

High turnout in W Bengal, Assam

THE HINDU ONLINE

West Bengal recorded voter turnout of about 81 percent, while in Assam the figure went over 78 percent in the first phase of assembly elections conducted on Monday, according to the Election Commission.

No incidents of election-related violence were reported. In the 2011 assembly polls, the voter turnout in the respective assembly constituencies of West Bengal stood at 83.72 percent and 75 percent in Assam, whereas in the 2014 general elections, the figures were 83.39 and 79 percent, respectively.



encies of West Bengal, including 13 naxal-affected segments. In Assam, 65 of the 126 constituencies went to polls. "The first phase of elections in the two States was by and large peaceful. No incidents of violence, injury or death were reported," said Deputy Election Commissioner Sandeep

Saxena at a press conference in the national capital. The overall turnout recorded in the three West Bengal districts of Paschim Medinipur, Purulia and Bankura was 80.92 percent. Six Assembly segments of Paschim Medinipur registered the highest overall turnout of 81.66 percent.

"We are not lowering our guard till all polling personnel return safely and the Electronic Voting Machines are safely deposited at recording rooms," said State Chief Electoral

Officer Sunil Kumar Gupta. Though the EC received over a dozen complaints of rigging and other irregularities, they were found to be false. Sharing details on action taken by enforcement agencies, the EC said 859 Excise Act cases had been registered in the constituencies

of Assam where elections were conducted on Monday.

China declares sanctions against N Korea INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

China yesterday announced a series of sanctions against North Korea. It has restricted imports of North Korean coal and sales of jet

fuel under UN sanctions. The Security Council passed a resolution in March, which expanded UN sanctions aimed at withholding funds for the North's nuclear and ballistic missile programmes. It came after Pyongyang conducted four tests in recent months.

Among the North Korean materials to be banned, some of which are fundamental to the country's revenue, is coal, iron, iron ore, gold, titanium and rare earths.

While China's restrictions allow some North Korean materials to be imported for civilian use, any trade connected to the North's missile or nuclear programmes has been prohibited. For the UN sanctions to succeed, the cooperation of China - an ally of North Korea - has been viewed as essential.

Banning the sale of jet fuel to the North has the potential to ground Pyongyang's state-owned airline, Air Koryo.

The move by China comes after the global Nuclear Security Summit held in Washington last week. There, at a meeting between Barack Obama and Chinese President Xi Jinping, the US president said both countries were "committed to the [denuclearisation] of the Korean Peninsula".

'Acting too presidential would be boring as hell'

AGENCIES

Donald Trump has said acting too presidential would be "boring as hell". The New York businessman, the frontrunner in the race to become the Republican presidential candidate in the US election, has often been criticised for his tone on the

campaign trail. But at a rally in Superior, Wisconsin, the 69-year-old said his unorthodox style was more entertaining. "I can be presidential, but if I was presidential I would only have - about 20 per cent of you would be here because it would be boring as

hell, I will say," he told voters at an open airplane hangar, according to Politico.

Voters in the state of Wisconsin cast ballots yesterday in US presidential primary races in which challengers to Republican Trump and Democrat Hillary Clinton seem poised to win.

The potentially pivotal contest is the first after a 10-day lull in the process that determines the parties' nominees for the November general election. Voting began at 7:00 am.

Trump's main rival Senator Ted Cruz is eyeing the Badger State as a crucial firewall against the celebrity billionaire's march to an outright nomination victory. Like

> Bernie Sanders who has won five of the last six contests, reports AFP. But April could ultimately prove a sunny month for the former secretary of state. She leads Sanders by double

Trump, Clinton risks losing

digits in New York, which votes April 19, and Pennsylvania, which casts ballots a week later. Trump also leads handily in those states. Wisconsin, the birthplace of the Republican Party, is seen as Ground Zero for the anti-Trump movement. Halting him there would bolster Cruz, the 45-year-old conservative senator from Texas.

NAGORNO-KARABAKH CLASHES Azerbaijan, armenia declare ceasefire

REUTERS, Baku/yerevan

Azerbaijan and its breakaway region of Nagorno-Karabakh said they had halted hostilities yesterday after four days of intense fighting that had prompted fears of all-out war.

Reuters was not able independently to verify whether the fighting - a resurgence of a decades-old conflict over the status of the region - had, in fact, stopped.

Wisconsin, where she faces a surging But an official in the breakaway region's Armenianbacked administration said the ceasefire was being observed.

The fighting has been the bloodiest in years, with Azerbaijan saying 16 of its servicemen had been killed in the previous 48 hours.

Officials in the breakaway region said 20 of their soldiers had been killed since the fighting started.

The ex-Soviet states of Azerbaijan and Armenia fought a war over the mountainous territory in the early 1990s in which thousands were killed on both sides and hundreds of thousands displaced. The war ended with a truce in 1994, although there have been sporadic flare-ups since.



This photo shows the wreckage of a government warplane after Al-Nusra front (Al-Qaeda's Syria affiliate) repotedly shot it down over the northern Syrian town of Al-Eis yesterday and captured one crew member alive, a rebel source and the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said. PHOTO: REUTERS

IS threatens attacks in Rome London, Berlin

AGENCIES

threatened a new wave of terror attacks as deadly as the Paris massacre in London, Berlin and Rome in a latest chilling video which shows images of the UK Parliament and Eiffel Tower crashing to the ground. The video shows footage

The Islamic State outfit has

of the Paris and Brussels attacks as well as 9/11 strikes, calling previous massacres a "cautionary message". It also shows other iconic European landmarks such as the Rome's Coliseum interplayed with footage of executions and beheadings from Syria and Iraq.