



# UK PM releases tax summary

AFP, LONDON

British Prime Minister David Cameron released his tax details yesterday in a bid to defuse a row over his father's offshore business, but faced further questions over money he received from his mother.

Cameron took the unprecedented step of publishing a summary of six years of his tax returns, and revealed that he got a £200,000 (\$280,000, 240,000 euros) gift from his mother, on top of £300,000 in inheritance from his late father.

The 2011 gift from Mary Cameron raised questions about whether it was an attempt to dodge inheritance tax later down the line.

The release came a day after Cameron admitted he had mishandled the situation, telling party activists: "blame me", while hundreds of demonstrators rallied outside Downing Street demanding his resignation.

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The gift was tax-free, and would only become liable to inheritance tax of up to 40 percent if Cameron's mother dies within seven years of handing over the money.

The revelations this week appeared to have undermined Cameron's claims to be spearheading a global clampdown on offshore havens.

But he insisted yesterday that Britain was at the "forefront of international action to tackle aggressive tax avoidance and evasion" with the announcement of a £10 million taskforce to scrutinise the Panama Papers.

The force will be led by Britain's tax authority and the National Crime Agency, and will investigate the leaked files from Mossack Fonseca to identify clients suspected of money laundering and tax evasion.



PHOTO: AFP, REUTERS



(From top, anti-clockwise) Refugees and migrants flee the tear gas as they clash with Macedonian police in the northern Greek border village of Idomeni, yesterday; an injured is being taken to shelter; and a woman reacts after the clashes. Dozens of people were hurt in the clashes as they tried to break through a fence on the border, reports said.

### Islamic militants kill 18 Philippine troops

AFP, Zamboanga

A Philippine offensive against the extremist Abu Sayyaf group after a spate of kidnappings has left 18 soldiers and five fighters dead in the worst violence in the troubled south this year, authorities said yesterday. The Abu Sayyaf was established in the early 1990s with seed money from Osama bin Laden's Al Qaeda network.

### Blasts rattle Kabul following Kerry's visit

AFP, Kabul

Explosions rang out in central Kabul yesterday night, shortly after the US Secretary of State John Kerry left the Afghan capital following an unannounced visit to call for the Taliban to re-enter peace talks. AFP journalists heard at least two explosions, minutes after the top American envoy's plane departed from the city.

### US deploys B-52 bombers against IS

AFP, Washington

The US Air Force on Saturday deployed Cold War-era B-52 bombers to bolster the fight against the Islamic State group in Syria and Iraq, stepping up efforts to defeat the extremists. The B-52 Stratofortress aircraft, which arrived in Qatar, were based in Saudi Arabia and last flown operationally in May 2006 as part of the war in Afghanistan, air force officials said.

### Dubai to build tower taller than Burj Khalifa

AFP, Dubai

Dubai plans to build a tower that will stand higher than its Burj Khalifa, currently the world's tallest skyscraper at 828 metres, property developer Emaar said yesterday. The viewing tower will cost around \$1 billion and will be "a notch" taller than Burj Khalifa. Designed by Spanish-Swiss architect Santiago Calatrava Valls, the tower will have observation decks, in addition to 18 to 20 mixed-use floors that will host restaurants and a boutique hotel, the company said.

### G7 ministers gather in Hiroshima

REUTERS, Hiroshima

In a city obliterated by a US atom bomb more than 70 years ago, Japan kicked off a gathering of foreign ministers from the Group of Seven (G7) advanced economies with a call to end nuclear weapons.

Japanese Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida, who presides over the two-day annual meeting this year, said yesterday that ministers will also discuss anti-terrorism steps, maritime security and issues related to North Korea, Ukraine and the Middle East.

US Secretary of State John Kerry is set to join his counterparts from Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy and Japan today to visit an atomic bomb museum and lay flowers at a cenotaph for nuclear bomb victims, becoming the first in his post to do so.

# Underdogs keep winning

## Cruz defeats Trump in Colorado, Sanders wins Wyoming

AFP, Washington

Democrat Bernie Sanders and Republican Ted Cruz both scored weekend victories against their front-running rivals in a tightening race as the two major parties prepare to pick their White House nominee.

Cruz, the Texas Senator, chipped away at fellow Republican Donald Trump's lead by taking all 13 Colorado delegates at stake in a state Republican convention Saturday, his fourth win in a row against the bombastic billionaire.

That was in addition to another 21 delegates Cruz won in the state through a series of county elections, for a total of 34.

Colorado will send a total of 37 delegates to the Republican National Convention in July, including three unpledged delegates who are the party's top leaders in the state.

"Today was another resounding victory for conservatives, Republicans, and Americans who care about the future of our country," Cruz said in a statement.

"Utah, North Dakota, Wisconsin, and tonight's incredible results in Colorado have proven this: Republicans are uniting behind our campaign because they want a leader with real solutions who will bring back jobs, freedom and security."

Sanders meanwhile pulled off a



surprise win over rival Hillary Clinton in the Wyoming caucuses, his eighth victory in the last nine contests.

Despite the Democratic Senator's 10-point lead over Clinton (55.7 percent to 44.3 percent), both candidates scored seven delegates each due to party rules in the overwhelmingly

Republican state.

That means Sanders barely put a dent in Clinton's more than 200-delegate lead.

But it gives the self-described democratic socialist another morale boost ahead of the crucial New York primary on April 19.

Clinton remains the clear frontrunner for the Democratic party presidential ticket for November's election, but Sanders has the momentum and has enjoyed a string of successes at the polls in recent weeks.

Speaking to supporters in New York, Sanders broke into his speech to say to cheers: "All right. News bulletin. We just won Wyoming."

Sanders -- who locked horns with his rival Clinton over trade and the "Panama Papers" scandal this week -- later said he continued to confound the doubters.

However, it will still take a remarkable turnaround for Sanders to win the nomination over Clinton, a former secretary of state and first lady who goes into the New York primary as heavy favorite to extend her lead in the overall race.



# Terrorists 'planned to hit France'

AFP, Brussels

The Brussels-based Islamic State jihadists behind the Paris attacks had planned a fresh strike in France but targeted the Belgian capital instead as police closed in, a prosecutor said yesterday.

Belgium's federal prosecutor also announced that the so-called "man in the hat" Mohamed Abrini, seen in CCTV footage at Brussels airport before the bombings last month, had been charged with "terrorist murders."

Suicide bombers killed 32 people at the airport and a metro station on March 22, and left a trail leading directly to the November attacks in Paris which left 130 dead.

"Numerous elements in the investigation have shown that the terrorist group initially had the intention to strike in France again," the federal prosecutor's office said in a statement.

"Surprised by the speed of the progress in the ongoing investigation, they urgently took the decision to strike in Brussels."

Abrini, who grew up with Abdeslam in the troubled Molenbeek area, was charged yesterday with "participation in the activities of a terrorist group, terrorist murders and attempts to commit terrorist murders".

On Saturday, the judge leading the Belgian investigation into the Paris carnage had laid the same charges against Abrini, the day after his arrest.

The 31-year-old Belgian of Moroccan origin confessed to being "the man in the hat" who calmly walked away from the devastated Brussels airport departure hall, the prosecutor said Saturday.



Catherine, Duchess of Cambridge plays a game of cricket with Indian children in Mumbai, yesterday. Inset, Britain's Prince William and his wife visit the historic Banganga water tank in Mumbai. The British royals started their seven-day tour of India and Bhutan yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

# Syria to launch Aleppo attack

35 dead in 24 hrs; opposition says truce near collapse

REUTERS, Beirut/Moscow

The Russian air force and Syrian military are preparing a joint operation to take Aleppo from rebels, the Syrian prime minister was quoted as saying yesterday, and an opposition official said a ceasefire was on the verge of collapse.

With a UN envoy due in Damascus in a bid to advance struggling diplomatic efforts, the "cessation of hostilities agreement" brokered by Russia and the United States came under new strain as government and rebel forces fought near Aleppo.

Syrian Prime Minister Wael al-Halaki told a delegation of visiting Russian lawmakers of preparations to "liberate" Aleppo, Syria's biggest city and commercial hub before the conflict that erupted in 2011. Aleppo is divided into areas controlled separately by the government and opposition.

"We, together with our Russian partners, are preparing for an operation to liberate Aleppo and to block all illegal armed groups

which have not joined or have broken the ceasefire deal," he was quoted as saying by TASS news agency.

Dmitry Sablin, a member of Russia's upper house of parliament and a member of the delegation, told RIA news agency "Russian aviation will help the Syrian army's ground offensive operation".

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said a total of 35 combatants had been killed on both sides in a 24 hour period in the area, where fighting has been raging for some 10 days.

A member of the main opposition council said the last 10 days had "witnessed a serious deterioration, to the point where the ceasefire is about to collapse". Bassma Kodmani of the High Negotiations Committee also told Journal du Dimanche that a US-Russian ceasefire monitoring mission was "powerless".

The war has killed more than 250,000 people, created the world's worst refugee crisis, and allowed for the rise of Islamic State.

# Clashes in Yemen ahead of ceasefire

AFP, Marib

Sporadic fighting gripped parts of Yemen yesterday, hours before a UN-brokered ceasefire aimed at laying the groundwork for upcoming peace talks was due to take effect.

Chaos has ruled the Arabian Peninsula since Iran-backed Huthi rebels overran the capital Sanaa in September 2014 and later advanced to other regions, prompting a Saudi-led military campaign in support of President Abedrabbo Mansour Hadi from March last year.

It is hoped that the new ceasefire, due to start at midnight (2100 GMT), can be the cornerstone of a long-lasting peace deal negotiated between Yemen's warring parties from April 18 in Kuwait. Previous UN-sponsored negotiations failed to make any headway, and a ceasefire in December was repeatedly violated and eventually abandoned by the Saudi-led Arab coalition on January 2. But analysts are more optimistic this time after mediation efforts have largely silenced guns along Yemen's border with Saudi Arabia, and a Huthi delegation has also visited Riyadh for talks.

# Strong quake rocks South Asia

AFP, Islamabad

A powerful earthquake rocked large parts of South Asia yesterday, with one person killed by falling rocks in Pakistan and tremors felt in at least four countries.

The 6.6-magnitude quake struck northeast Afghanistan at a depth of 210 kilometres at 2:58 pm (1028 GMT), the US Geological Survey said.

It was felt for a few seconds in the Afghan capital Kabul 282 km to the south and in Pakistan's capital Islamabad, where some residents evacuated apartment blocks after tremors shook ceiling fans and furniture.

In the Indian capital New Delhi, buildings in the centre swayed and the metro train system was halted temporarily as a precaution. People rushed

out of their homes in the northern region of Indian-administered Kashmir. In Dushanbe, capital of Tajikistan, tremors were felt but there were no immediate reports of damage.

One man was killed in Pakistan's



mountainous northern region of Gilgit-Baltistan when he was hit by falling rocks in the town of Chilas, an official told AFP on condition of anonymity.

Authorities in Pakistan's northwestern city of Peshawar said 28 people were brought to the government-run Lady Reading Hospital. They were discharged after first aid, said spokesman Jamil Shah.

An official of the provincial disaster management authority in Peshawar said they have received reports of 12 other people injured in Swat, Bunair and upper Dir districts.

There were no casualties in Afghanistan according to an initial assessment, said Aslam Sayas, deputy director of the country's disaster management authority.

Last October a 7.5-magnitude quake ripped across Pakistan and Afghanistan, killing almost 400 people and flattening buildings in rugged terrain that impeded relief efforts.

# Ukraine PM resigns

AFP, Kiev

Ukrainian Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk yesterday announced his resignation in the wake of a months-long political crisis that has paralysed the government and frozen the release of vital Western aid.

"Having done everything to ensure stability and make a smooth transition of power possible, I decided to step down from the post of prime minister of Ukraine," the 41-year-old pro-Western cabinet chief said in a video address.

The tough-talking prime minister's decision comes barely two months after he survived a no-confidence vote in his government. He said President Petro Poroshenko's party had already nominated parliament speaker Volodymyr Groysman to his post and that he would not stand in the way.

He vowed to push through "new election legislation, constitutional reform, legal reforms, a coalitions controlling the future government's course, international support for Ukraine, and its membership in the European Union and Nato".

