

## TUNISIA UNREST

## Rural Tunisians join demonstration

## Curfew remains at night

REUTERS, Tunis

Protesters from Tunisia's poor rural heartlands demonstrated in the capital yesterday to demand that the revolution they started should now sweep the remnants of the fallen president's old guard from power.

A week after Prime Minister Mohamed Ghannouchi took the reins of an interim coalition following the overthrow of veteran strongman Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali, he and other former loyalists of the feared ruling party face mounting pressure to step down.

Striving to distance themselves from the old regime, the transitional leadership placed under house arrest two former aides to Ben Ali, who has fled to Saudi Arabia. As with earlier arrests of 33 of his rapacious entourage, details were sparse.

For days, protesters have gathered at the

premier's office in Tunis, limited in numbers but tolerated by a police force wary of its own fate after Ben Ali and enjoying wider support among a population that is unused to free political expression.

Hundreds of people, amid a weekend calm, who had been driven to the capital in a "caravan of freedom" surrounded Ghannouchi's building in central Tunis yesterday. Many were from Sidi Bouzid, the bleak central city where the "Jasmine Revolution" was sparked a month ago by one young man's suicide.

"We are marginalised. Our land is owned by the government. We have nothing," said Mahfouzi Chouki from near the city, which lies 300 km south of Tunis and a world away from the opulent coastal resorts favoured by Ben Ali's elite.



A woman raises her fist during a demonstration calling on the new government to quit, on Bourguiba avenue in central Tunis. Thousands of people, including people from the rural areas, rallied in Tunisia yesterday as the prime minister said he would resign only once the first democratic vote since independence has been held.

PHOTO: AFP

## Haiti braces for fresh troubles

AFP, Port-au-prince

Residents in the Haitian capital braced for more unrest yesterday, with presidential candidates calling for street protests to annul November elections marred by fraud allegations.

The candidates urged peaceful protests, but the atmosphere has been tense since the surprise return of former strongman Jean Claude "Baby Doc" Duvalier after a quarter-century in exile.

The calls came as Haiti's election commission (CEP) began hearing legal complaints about the elections, the initial results of which saw President Rene Preval's handpicked candidate edge a popular singer out of a run-off.

## NEWS IN brief

## Portugal to re-elect president, boost for reforms

REUTERS, Lisbon

Portugal was poised to re-elect President Anibal Cavaco Silva yesterday in a vote expected to reinforce the country's determination to cut its budget deficit and avoid an international bailout.

The presidency is a mostly ceremonial post but the election comes at a time when Portugal is at the centre of the euro-zone debt crisis and many economists expect it to seek debt relief.

The latest polls show Cavaco Silva, of the opposition Social Democrats, getting an overwhelming 60 percent of the vote against 20 percent for his closest rival, Manuel Alegre of the ruling Socialists.

## Somali pirates threaten to kill Korean hostages

REUTERS, Bosasso

Somali pirates threatened yesterday to kill any South Korean seamen they take hostage in future in revenge for the killing of eight pirates by South Korean troops who stormed a hijacked vessel.

Pirates from two bases on the Somali coast said they were taking some crews held as hostages off their vessels and moving them inland in case of more rescue attempts by the fleet of foreign warships patrolling off the lawless country's shores.

Somali pirates typically do not harm their captives because they expect to negotiate a lucrative ransom for the release of a vessel. But now they say

## Central African Republic goes for vote today

REUTERS, Bangui

The Central African Republic holds presidential and parliamentary elections today.

The polls which was scheduled last April, have been delayed three times because of problems over funding and rebel disarmament, leaving incumbent President Francois Bozize in power beyond his initial mandate which ended in June.

Five candidates including former president Ange Felix Patasse and Martin Ziguete will compete in the election.

Central African Republic one of the world's poorest countries despite being endowed with minerals and mines of precious natural resources, it is situated in the centre of Africa, stretching from rain-

## Israel inquiry finds Gaza aid flotilla raid 'was legal'

BBC ONLINE

An Israeli inquiry has found the country's navy acted legally in a deadly raid on a flotilla of aid ships trying to reach Gaza last May.

The raid, in which nine Turkish activists were killed, attracted widespread international condemnation.

Correspondents say the report will probably be dismissed by Israel's critics as biased.

A separate UN inquiry last year said the navy had

## Philippines rejects demand to free rebel

AFP, Manila

The Philippines yesterday rejected a demand by communist rebels to free a senior guerrilla leader as a goodwill gesture ahead of formal peace negotiations in Norway next month.

Presidential chief peace adviser Teresita Deles said New People's Army (NPA) leader Tirso Alcantara was not on the list of guerrillas covered by an agreement granting immunity from arrest for rebel negotiators.

"As what we have said in the beginning, it's still our position -- he's not in the list that they gave us. He's not carrying documents," to identify him as

## Regional bank ally of Gbagbo quits

BBC ONLINE

A key ally of Ivory Coast's disputed leader Laurent Gbagbo has resigned as head of the Central Bank of West African States amid regional pressure.

Governor Philippe Henri Dacoury-Tabley, an Ivorian, quit after a bank meeting on Saturday.

The bank said he had failed to implement an order to no longer accept Mr Gbagbo's signature for funds.

The internationally recognised new president Alassane Ouattara has been asked to designate a new bank chief.

Mr Ouattara says Mr Gbagbo has withdrawn hundreds of millions of dollars from the bank since the disputed November presidential election.

## Ahmadinejad hopes for more talks with world powers

REUTERS, Tehran

Iran hopes to resume talks with world powers on its nuclear programme, President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad said yesterday, a day after discussions ended in stalemate with no clear agreement to meet again.

"If the other party is determined and committed to law, justice and respect, there is hope that in the next sessions good results would be achieved," Ahmadinejad said in a speech.

Two days of talks with the United States, France, Germany, China, Russia and Britain ended without progress on Saturday with the group's lead negotiator, the European Union's Catherine Ashton, saying no further meeting was scheduled.

Ahmadinejad spoke as if it were understood the talks would resume. "In the upcoming meetings there will be good agreements made, provided the two parties remain committed to the spirit of the talks," he said in the televised speech to a crowd in the city of Rasht.

He blamed Israel and its allies in the West for the lack of progress. "Uncultured Zionists and some people in America and Europe are hopeful the issues remain unresolved," he said.

## US, UK lost legitimacy to lead Afghan solution Says British MP

REUTERS, Jaipur, India

The United States and Britain have lost the legitimacy and trust necessary to find a resolution to the conflict in Afghanistan, a British MP said yesterday as Asia's largest literary event turned to politics.

The US-led foreign military presence in Afghanistan is scheduled to begin withdrawal in July, as Washington commits to handing over control to local security forces nearly a decade after US-backed Afghan forces overthrew the Taliban.

"After nine years, the international community needs to recognise it lacks knowledge, it lacks power, it lacks legitimacy," said Rory Stewart, a member of parliament for the Conservative party, the senior partner in Britain's ruling coalition.

Stewart, a former diplomat who worked on rebuilding Iraq after the 2003 invasion, also walked the length of Afghanistan shortly after the fall of the Taliban and wrote a best-selling book on the experience.

## Russian envoy to visit Seoul for N Korea talks

AFP, Seoul

Russia's chief envoy to disarmament talks on North Korea will visit Seoul this week, South Korea's foreign ministry said yesterday, amid calls to revive the long-stalled discussions.

Alexei Borodavkin will travel to Seoul on January 28 to discuss "a range of issues including the North's nuclear situations and future response" with his counterpart Wi Sung-Lac, the foreign ministry said in a statement.

## New protest called as Albania buries victims

AFP, Tirana

Albania's opposition said yesterday it will stage a new anti-government protest on Friday, a week to the day three protesters were shot dead in a similar rally.

The announcement was made by opposition Socialist Party leader and Tirana mayor Edi Rama after he attended the burials of two of the victims on a day of mourning in the southern Balkan country. "You must come to honour the victims, to condemn the violence and the crimes that cost three innocent men their lives," Rama said during one funeral service in the southern town of Fieri.

Tens of thousands of people demonstrated outside the Albanian government headquarters in central Tirana on Friday. The opposition has called on the government to resign over corruption and electoral fraud.

Three people were shot dead and a fourth remains in a critical condition after clashes between police and protest-

ers. Each side blames the other for the deaths.

Despite international appeals for calm both the opposition and the government have announced new rallies. Prime Minister Sali Berisha called his supporters to gather on Wednesday for a rally against violence in Tirana.

The government and the opposition are currently entangled in a media war each blaming the other for the deaths, amid fears that a crisis which has stifled the country since a disputed general election in 2009 could worsen.

The international community has called for an impartial investigation into the deaths, urging both parties to remain calm while blasting the plans for new protests.

Albania has been in political deadlock since its last elections in July 2009. The opposition refused to recognise the results, blocking legislation and reforms in parliament.

Since the collapse of the hardline communist regime in 1991, elections in the country have often been marred by violence and allegations of fraud. The current impasse is the longest political crisis the country has faced.

## The hippy who became an imam

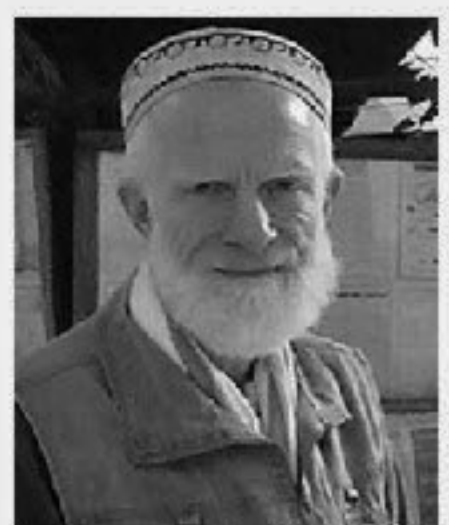
BBC ONLINE

Forty years after following the hippy trail to South Asia, John Butt is still living in the region, and still spreading a message of peace and love - though now as an Islamic scholar.

As our car turned around the bumpy Indian road, a gleaming white marble minaret came into view. My fellow passenger, John Mohammed Butt, could barely contain his excitement.

"Can you see it?" he asks. "It's like the Oxford University of Islamic learning. For me these minarets and domes are just like the spires and towers of Oxford."

"It's been almost 30 years since I was last here and I am still getting the same



thrill. This is my alma mater." The alma mater in question is Darul-Uloom Deoband, South Asia's largest madrasa, or Islamic school.

Driving through the madrasa gates, we entered a world rarely seen by Western

Everywhere are the Talibs, religious students, young men with dark-eyed fervent expressions carrying books or quietly reciting the Koran.

And in another scene reminiscent of Oxford, students riding bicycles.

A chai (tea) seller recognises John and runs towards him. "John Sahib, John Sahib."

"There was only one John Mohammed - unique," he laughs.

## Sangsad TV awaits

FROM PAGE 1

sources at the parliament secretariat told The Daily Star.

The Sangsad TV will mainly broadcast live the parliament proceedings. During recess, it will show programmes on the history of the Sangsad, discussions on important bills and legislative practices in other countries from 6:00pm to 8:00pm.

Speaker Abdul Hamid has commissioned a five-member preview committee to ensure quality of the documentaries to be aired.

Whip Noor-E-Alam Chowdhury Liton will head the committee whose other members are Whip Sagufta Yasmin, lawmakers Asaduzzaman Noor, Shahriar Alam and Tarana Halim.

A meeting chaired by the speaker on Friday discussed matters relating to the channel.

Initially, the channel will use the infrastructure, establishment and manpower of Bangladesh Television, Shahriar Alam, who attended the meeting, told The Daily Star.

"The playing time would be expanded when the TV would have its own logistics and manpower," he continued.

The parliament secretariat has submitted an initial budget of Tk 15 crore to run the channel. It now plans to ask the Public Service Commission to recruit staff for the JSTV.

The station would be based on the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban premises, and its temporary studio would be at the North Plaza, said the JS secretariat sources.

CHIEFWHIP'S INVITE Chief Whip Abdus Shahid yesterday invited opposition's Chief Whip Zainul Abidin Faroque to return to the House that goes into session tomorrow.

He made the invitation while talking to his opposite number over the phone.

In reply, Faroque said he would communicate the message to BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia.

The BNP-led opposition has been boycotting parliament proceedings since June 2 last year.

## STUDY IN UK

## Information &amp; Interview Session

24th January 2011  
Venue: IECC Banani Office  
Time: 10 AM - 5 PM

25th January 2011  
Venue: IECC Dhanmondi Office  
Time: 10 AM - 2 PM

LIZ GREEN,  
(Sr. International Officer),  
The University of Manchester  
will conduct the interview session

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