

# Bustling traffic returns to Cairo protest square

## Britain seeks international action on Mubarak assets

AFP, Cairo

Traffic again flowed through much of Cairo's emblematic Tahrir Square yesterday as most protesters headed home following the nationwide revolt which brought down president Hosni Mubarak.

Military police directed cars through what had been the epicentre of the uprising, past tanks that had moved to the side of most roads and past giant pictures of "martyrs" killed during clashes with pro-Mubarak militants.

Hundreds of thousands of people who occupied the square had left by yesterday after a massive volunteer clean-up effort that saw hundreds of people from all walks of life sweeping the streets and collecting rubbish.

"Mubarak left. We will complete our cleaning, polish the stones, and then we

will leave the square as clean as it was," said Nur Khersha, a 24-year-old student.

At one point a group of several dozen police marched into the square bearing flowers, belatedly proclaiming their solidarity with the uprising and chanting: "The police and the people! With one hand!"

Cairo patrolman Mohammed Chopra defended the march, saying: "We want more money and we want to show we are with the people."

Yesterday, a few hundred protesters refused to leave until the promises for reform are implemented and briefly scuffled with troops who tried to remove them before the soldiers backed down.

"The Egyptian army asked people to leave so that traffic can start again," said Ahmed Afifi, a 21-year-old information specialist.

"But we don't want to go. We will stay until the army answers our demands," which include freeing political prisoners and lifting a 20-year-old emergency law that allows people to be detained indefinitely without being charged.

Meanwhile, Britain urged the international community yesterday to take "concerted" action to deal with any assets held abroad by ousted former Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak.

Business Secretary Vince Cable also warned that the British government would act against any British bank involved in helping Mubarak improperly move funds.

"I wasn't aware that he (Mubarak) had enormous assets here but there clearly needs to be concerted international action on this," Cable told the BBC.



PHOTO: AFP

Yemenis protest near the presidential palace in the capital Sanaa yesterday, calling for the resignation of President Ali Abdallah Saleh, in power for 32 years.

## India to pull 10,000 troops from Kashmir

AFP, New Delhi

India plans to withdraw 10,000 paramilitary troops from Kashmir in 2011 and renew efforts to hold talks in the rebellion-hit Himalayan region, a top government official said yesterday.

A separatist insurgency has raged in Indian Kashmir a Muslim-majority state, for 20 years and at least 11 people died in street protests last summer in pitched battles with security forces.

"I think this year we can easily take out 10 battalions, if not more," Indian Home Secretary Gopal Pillai told the Press Trust of India news agency.

There are currently 70,000 paramilitary troops in Indian Kashmir plus 100,000-150,000 army soldiers.

## Thai 'reds', 'yellow' rally on Bangkok

AFP, Bangkok

Thousands of Thais held colour-coded "red" and "yellow" protests in Bangkok yesterday, underlining persistent anti-government sentiment and deep political divisions ahead of an election planned this year.

The "red shirts" called for the release of 18 of their detained leaders and their rival "yellow shirts" demanded Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva's resignation over his handling of a long-running border dispute with Cambodia.

The rallies were staged ahead of an election that Abhisit says could take place in the first half of the year. Violent protests point to a rocky road for Southeast Asia's second-biggest economy.

## Yemen rocked by third day of protests

### Opposition agrees talks with govt

AGENCIES, Sanaa

Hundreds of demonstrators have clashed with police in the Yemeni capital Sanaa yesterday, on the third day of anti-government protests.

Violence broke out as demonstrators marched through the city, demanding political reform and the resignation of President Ali Abdullah Saleh.

Mr Saleh, in power since 1978, has already pledged to step down in 2013, but has previously promised to quit.

Yemen's protests have gathered momentum with the success of Egypt's revolution.

"A Yemeni revolution after the Egyptian revolution," chanted demonstrators as they tried to march to the presidential palace in Sanaa yesterday.

Witnesses said several people were hurt as police armed with batons clashed with stone-throwing protesters.

Later, Yemen's parliamentary opposition agreed to resume talks suspended since October with the government of President Ali Abdullah Saleh, who has been facing calls by protesters to step down.

The Common Forum, an alliance of parliamentary opposition groups, "is ready to sign a framework agreement this week... on (resuming) national dialogue," it said in a statement received by AFP.

## Stampede in Nigeria kills 11

REUTERS, Port Harcourt

At least 11 people were trampled to death on Saturday in a stampede at an election campaign rally for Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan in the southern oil city of Port Harcourt.

Thousands of ruling party supporters crowded into a sports stadium to hear Jonathan speak and hundreds more gathered around the gates. There was a stampede after a policeman fired into the air to try to disperse the crush as people left, witnesses said.

"I can see the bodies of three women," one witness, Tonye Ben, told Reuters as he tried to escape the pandemonium.

## Independence

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nearly four decades. The special committee on constitution amendment will decide how to incorporate it in an appropriate place of the constitution, Suranjit Sengupta, co-chair of the committee, told The Daily Star yesterday.

"The proclamation of independence is a glorious achievement of our country. The next generation has the right to know about it. And we cannot deprive our future generation of it. So, we want to make it a part of the constitution," he said.

Public representatives elected in the elections held in 1970 and early 1971 adopted the proclamation of independence on April 10, 1971, at Baidyanathhala of Meherpur, through which the March 26, 1971 declaration of independence was approved.

The historic constitutional document also provided the first government of the country with the fundamental instrument of law as well as an interim constitution during the Liberation War, which was in effect even in liberated Bangladesh until the promulgation of the current constitution which went into effect on December 16, 1972.

When contacted over the telephone yesterday, barrister Amir-Ul Islam, who drafted the proclamation of independence, told The Daily Star that it is the genesis of the country's current constitution as announced by the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court in the eight amendment verdict... But the current constitution did not include the historic document in it, he said.

Asked about the special committee's move, he said if the parliament now wants to make it part of the constitution, it can certainly refer that in the preamble of the constitution, which will give a complete background and history of the constitutional document.

"In that case, the full historic document can be printed along with the constitution as an annex," he said explaining the significance and importance of this document.

The historic document was with the constitution as an annex during the last Awami League government rule. But it was dropped from the country's supreme charter during its printing by the last BNP-Jamaat-led alliance government. The then government argued that it was not a part of the constitution.

Unfortunately, the original copy of the country's proclamation of independence order and some other historic documents on formation of the first government and the laws' continuance enforcement order of 1971 are missing.

When the last caretaker government in April, 2008, handed over some historic documents to the National Archives for permanent preservation, the original documents of the country's birth could not be found.

The Daily Star published a news story on it on June 17, 2008. According to the news report, original copies of the documents were not in the cabinet division's custody and they had photocopies of those, which were handed over to the National Archives.

## Iran appoints new atom chief

AFP, Tehran

Iran has appointed nuclear scientist Fereydoon Abbasi Davani, who survived a bomb attack in November, as the country's new atomic chief, media reports said yesterday.

Abbasi Davani, reportedly a veteran of the eight-year Iran-Iraq war in the 1980s and a target of UN sanctions, replaces Ali Akbar Salehi who was endorsed as foreign minister last month.

## NEWS IN brief

### Italian police in Tunisia would block migrants: minister

AFP, Rome

Italy will make a formal request to Tunisia to deploy Italian police in the North African state to block a wave of immigration following recent unrest, Interior Minister Roberto Maroni said yesterday.

"I will ask Tunisia's foreign minister for authorisation for our forces to intervene in Tunisia to block the flux. The Tunisian system is collapsing," Maroni, a member of the anti-immigration

### At least 30 killed in Mexican drug-related violence

AFP, Monterrey

At least 30 people died in a staggering surge in drug-related violent crime in Mexico rocking the cities of Monterrey and Guadalajara, and the northern state of Chihuahua, police said.

The attacks were the latest deadly violence gripping Mexico's war on drugs, as the country's various criminal cartels struggle over turf and the government uses police and soldiers in an attempt to crush them.

More than 34,600 people have died in drug trafficking related violence since December 2006, when the government of President Felipe Calderon deployed soldiers and federal police in a widespread

### Car bomb injures 18 in Thai south: police

AFP, Yala

A car bomb exploded Sunday in a city in Thailand's insurgency-plagued far south, injuring 18 people, including four soldiers, police said.

The blast outside a bank started a large fire that swept through nearby shops in Yala, the main city in one of three provinces near the Malaysian border that have been under emergency rule since 2005.

"There was a bomb hidden in a fire extinguisher in a pick-up truck parked in front of a grocery shop near Siam City Bank," a local police officer said.

Of the casualties, four were seriously wounded, including three of the soldiers, authorities said.

### Gantz appointed new Israel military chief

AFP, Jerusalem

Israel's cabinet yesterday approved the appointment of Major General Benny Gantz as next chief of staff of the armed forces, ending months of infighting for the post among top generals.

A cabinet statement said Gantz had been unanimously approved for the position, which falls vacant on Monday when the term of incumbent military chief Lieutenant General Gabi Ashkenazi ends.

"General Benny Gantz is an excellent officer and an experienced commander," said Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu after the cabinet approved

### Death toll rises to 48 in Iraq suicide bombing

REUTERS, Samarra

The toll from a suicide bombing that targeted Shi'ite pilgrims near the city of Samarra, one of Iraq's worst in recent weeks, raised to 48 dead and 80 wounded, police and officials said yesterday.

The bomber detonated an explosives vest on Saturday at a bus depot at the entry to Samarra, where Shi'ites gathered last week to commemorate the death of one of their 12 revered imams.

The attacker managed to infiltrate a crowd of pilgrims at a security checkpoint where authorities used explosives-sniffing dogs to search vehicles

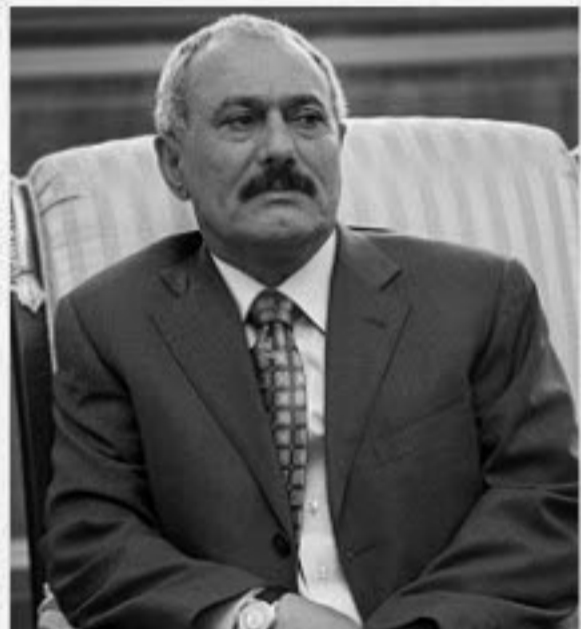
## THE AUTOCRATS IN TROUBLE

### Who is next?



Abdelaziz Bouteflika (Algeria)

Abdelaziz Bouteflika, 73, has been Algeria's President since 1999, a long-term operator within the ruling National Liberation Front. In the 1990s, the ruling regime fought a vicious war with Islamists, who had been denied their rightful place in the government after the army scrapped elections. During his tenure, Bouteflika has attempted to nurse relations with other parties and improve the country's poor record of democracy, but political freedoms remain checked while observers point to rampant corruption among the Algerian ruling class. Despite the country's natural-gas wealth, unemployment is high. After a citizens' uprising ousted Tunisian President Zine el Abidine Ben Ali in January, Bouteflika looks set to face a budding popular revolt as well.



Ali Abdullah Saleh (Yemen)

Few weeks of protests across Yemen has instilled fear in the heart of President Ali Abdullah Saleh. Saleh, who has ruled Yemen for 32 years, has long been criticized for his corrupt government and is seen as a pawn in the US's counterterrorism efforts. Saleh also has a history of cutting deals with Islamic militants and insurgents of many stripes in order to keep power, a fact that the international community has been paying closer attention to since al-Qaeda claimed responsibility for the 2009 attempted blast in the US. Earlier this year, Yemen's parliament gave approval to a measure that would allow Saleh to stay in power past his constitutional mandate. The news prompted protests in the country that have intensified since the Tunisian revolt.



Alexander Lukashenko (Belarus)

Often described as the "last dictator in Europe," Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko has ruled this East European country for 16 years. To prop up his rule, opposition voices are routinely stifled and there is little to no independent media. Political opponents are often monitored by Belarus' secret police, still known in this former Soviet republic as the KGB. Last December, the dictator was re-elected with 80% of the vote, but many independent observers reported widespread fraud. Since then, Lukashenko has led a brutal crackdown on political opponents, including some who ran against him in the presidential election. The international community has imposed sanctions against Belarus for his actions.



Mahmoud Ahmadinejad (Iran)

His 2009 landslide re-election to a second term caused an uprising in Iran. Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's main opponent, Mir-Hossein Mousavi, and his supporters cried foul, demanding a recount and later calling for the results to be thrown out. Dozens of people were killed in demonstrations that were quelled by paramilitary forces. After a week of intense protests, Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei declared the results to be valid and affirmed Ahmadinejad's victory. Ahmadinejad and Khamenei clashed on several political fronts, including who would be part of the President's Cabinet. That tension, coupled with a lingering, broad-based opposition to Ahmadinejad's administration has kept him on shaky ground.



House of Saud (Saudi Arabia)

With 25% of the world's oil reserves, accumulating wealth and powerful friends principally the US has not been hard for King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia. But while he and his estimated 7,000 royal family members thrive, enjoying his around \$20 billion in wealth, 1 in 7 adults in his country cannot read. Unemployment has topped 10% for years. Censorship is pervasive. Criticizing the government, royal family and the police, who enjoy absolute power, is not allowed. Women have precious few rights and are largely excluded from the workforce. The ruling family has enjoyed absolute power for the better part of 100 years, despite never having been elected.

## Ban fatwa, make it punishable offence

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Rabbani. The SC passed the stay order against the backdrop of killing of seven people in violent clashes between police and demonstrators, who took to the street following the verdict.

Prof Shahnaz Huda of Dhaka University suggested that a new provision can either be included in the penal code or in the Nari O Shishu Nirjatan Ain to ban fatwa.

The Daily Prothom Alo arranged the roundtable at its head office following death of Hena Akhter by

whipping under fatwa at Chamta in Naria in Shariatpur last month.

Bangladesh Mahila Parishad President Ayesha Khanam said the incident of Hena brings the status of our social system, state machineries and performance of law enforcers into question.

Additional Inspector General of police AKM Shahidul Huq, however, claimed police acted promptly in Hena's case and the first case police filed in this connection was right.

Prof Ayesha Banu of Dhaka University suggested reviewing the

laws related to family affairs and including the matter as a topic in textbooks.

"Fatwa does not mean what is happening in the name of fatwa now. Fatwa means making decisions by Islamic scholars, who know Islam and its laws well, over a dispute," said Prof Asif Nazrul of Dhaka University.

"I don't believe those involved in fatwa are doing all these due to ignorance or unawareness. Rather, they are doing this on a specific political, social and cultural agenda," said Ain

O Salish Kendra Executive Director Sultana Kamal.

Former deputy attorney general Nahid Mahtab, current Additional Attorney General Murad Reza, and actress Bipasha Hayat were also present at the roundtable moderated by Prothom Alo Joint Editor Abdul Quayum.

The speakers also observed that both the Information Commission and National Human Rights Commission can play an important role in creating awareness among people.