

World unites for Mandela

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with enthusiasm by the rest of the stadium.

Some 80,000 had been expected, but the venue was two-thirds full as the ceremony got underway under a curtain of rain that had been falling since the early morning.

Despite the profound sense of national sorrow triggered by Mandela's death last Thursday, the mood was upbeat, with people determined to celebrate the memory of one of the 20th century's towering political figures.

"His long walk is over, he can finally rest," African National Congress Vice President Cyril Ramaphosa said in an opening address.

On several occasions, Ramaphosa felt forced to admonish boisterous sections of the crowd for chanting during the speeches.

In his tribute, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon noted that Mandela had managed to unite people in death, much as he had in life.

"Look around this stage ... we see leaders

representing many points of view ... all here, all united," he said.

Before taking to the stage, Obama shook hands with Raul Castro, leader of long-time Cold War rival Cuba.

The handshake was seen by millions watching the memorial being broadcast live around the world, and comes as Obama tries to make good on his vow to reach out even to the most implacable of US foes.

Crowds had begun gathering at the Soweto stadium before daybreak and, as the gates opened, they swarmed inside the venue where Mandela made his last major public appearance at the 2010 World Cup final.

Wrapped in the South African flag or yellow-green coloured shawls printed with the slogan "Mandela Forever," they danced and sang -- oblivious to the constant drizzle.

Mandela's widow, Graca Machel, received a huge ovation as she took her seat on the main

stage constructed at one end of the pitch.

News of Mandela's death at his home in Johannesburg resonated around the world, triggering a wave of loving admiration from political and religious leaders, some of whom agree on little else.

In a nod to Mandela's extraordinary global reach, popularity and influence, the Indian, Brazilian and Namibian presidents, as well as Castro and the vice president of China all delivered eulogies.

In his tribute, Obama took a swipe at authoritarian leaders who spoke of embracing Mandela's legacy without acting upon it.

"There are too many leaders who claim solidarity with Madiba's struggle for freedom, but do not tolerate dissent from their own people," he said.

The memorial event was part of an extended state funeral that will culminate in Mandela's burial on Sunday in the rural village of Qunu

where he spent his early childhood.

South African President Jacob Zuma, who was roundly booed by sections of the crowd in a reflection of growing public dissatisfaction with the current generation of ANC leaders, hailed Mandela as "fearless freedom fighter."

"In his honour, we commit ourselves to continue building a nation based on democratic values, of human dignity and democracy," Zuma said.

Although Mandela had been critically ill for months, the announcement of his death was a body blow for this recently reborn nation.

He had been out of public life for more than a decade, but South Africans looked to his unassailable moral authority as a comforting constant in a time of uncertain social and economic change.

Ahead of the burial in Qunu, Mandela's body will lie in state for three days from today in the amphitheatre of the Union Buildings in Pretoria

where he was sworn in as president in 1994.

Each morning, his coffin will be borne through the streets of the capital in a funeral cortege.

British Prime Minister David Cameron, French President Francois Hollande and Afghan President Hamid Karzai were among the leaders attending the memorial ceremony.

"We were told it was appropriate to wear a black tie," Cameron said after arriving at the stadium in Soweto.

"But when you come and your hear this great noise and this great atmosphere of celebration, it is clear that people here in South Africa want to, yes, say goodbye to this great man, yes commemorate what he did, but also celebrate his life and celebrate his legacy," he said.

Singer-activist Bono and South African actress Charlize Theron were among the celebrity mourners.

EXECUTION OF MOLLAH UN official calls for a stay EU, UK worried at govt move

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay yesterday called for staying the execution of Jamaat leader Abdul Quader Mollah.

The UN human rights chief has written to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to halt the execution.

The European Union and the United Kingdom expressed concern at media reports that the government has moved to execute Mollah.

The EU delegation to Bangladesh in a statement said the EU has followed the judicial proceedings in Bangladesh concerning the crimes committed during the war preceding the independence of Bangladesh in 1971.

From the start of the trial, the EU had repeatedly expressed concern about the possible application of the death penalty under the International Crimes (Tribunals) Act, read the statement.

The EU notes the concerns that have been expressed by the United Nations special rapporteurs on independence of judges and lawyers and on summary executions regarding the lack of opportunity for appeal or review of the sentence. The EU called for addressing these concerns before taking the process further, mentioned the release.

The union of the European countries also reiterated its position regarding the recent death penalties issued by the International Crimes Tribunal and the Supreme Court as well as the 152 death sentences that were recently handed down in the trial following the BDR mutiny in 2009.

It also called on the Bangladeshi authorities to commute these sentences and to introduce a moratorium on executions as a first step towards definitive abolition of capital punishment.

Meanwhile, in another press statement yesterday, Senior Foreign Office Minister Baroness Warsi said the UK opposes the death penalty in all circumstances as a matter of principle

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BLOCKADE-HIT SCHOOLS Nahid rules out promotion without exams

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Ruling out the possibility of giving automatic promotion to school pupils, Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid has said students must appear at and pass the annual examinations in order to be promoted to the next grades.

"There will be no such promotion; the examinations will be held soon," he told reporters at a hurriedly called press conference at his secretariat office yesterday.

Nahid's comment came following some media reports that said the authorities of several schools were mulling over promoting their students to the next grades without taking exams, as they had to reschedule the final examinations for several times due to the ongoing political situation. The reports also said the guardians were making such demands on the issue as well.

Terming the reports as based on rumours, the minister said: "Giving promotion without exams will set a bad example."

The ongoing political turmoil has been taking a heavy toll on students, as it has messed up the academic calendar of all educational institutions, from primary schools to universities. Even after taking some exams on Friday, the school authorities find it difficult to reschedule other tests.

Around three crore students and their guardians are worried over the examinations, which are pending owing to the opposition's agitation programmes, the minister told the press.

Mentioning that many schools across the country had already completed the annual exams, Nahid, who is also minister for primary and mass education, said examinations of some subjects were going on in high schools in the capital and some big cities elsewhere.

The minister hoped that the schools would find a way out to complete the exams and announce the results.

He urged the opposition parties to refrain from calling any programmes for a week so that the embattled schools could finish the exams.

Despite the disruptions caused by blockades, Nahid said students would be provided with new



Jamaat-Shibir activists pelt law enforcers, out of frame, with brick chunks and homemade bombs during their clash at Rajshahi College yesterday morning. One of the activists, marked in red, is carrying a pouch for the bombs. Officer-in-Charge Abdul Majid of Motihar Police Station, inset, lies at a hospital with a broken leg after Jamaat-Shibir activists snatched his shotgun and beat him up with it.

PHOTO: STAR

Two more killed in blockade violence

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Police said the clash erupted when Jamaat-Shibir man hurled crude bombs at police vans.

AKM Shamsuddin, general secretary of district unit Jamaat, claimed Salman was a Shibir activist and he was injured when police opened fire. Bullet-hit Salman was rushed to a nearby private clinic where doctors declared him dead.

Police deny shooting at the activists.

In Rajshahi city, Shibir activists beat up four policemen, leaving two of them severely injured during the daylong hartal that coincided with the BNP-enforced blockade.

Abdul Mazid, officer-in-charge of Motihar Police Station, and constables Rezaul Karim and Meraj Ali were admitted to Rajshahi Medical College Hospital, while Kabil Hossain, a police van driver, was admitted to Rajshahi Police Lines Hospital, reported our Rajshahi correspondent.

The OC suffered three fractures below the right knee, said Prof BK Dam, chief of the orthopaedic surgery department of the hospital. Mazid's two fingers of the right hand also broke during the

assault.

Constable Rezaul Karim's head fractured at three points in the attack at Binodpur Bazar of the city, while Meraj was wounded in the head by brick chips, the doctor said.

The policemen came under attack around 8:00am when they tried to resist Shibir activists marching on the Dhaka-Rajshahi highway from Mondol's Intersection towards Binodpur Bazar and blasting crude bombs, said Proloy Chichim, deputy commissioner (east) of Rajshahi Metropolitan Police.

The marauding activists beat them up with a shotgun they snatched from police and left the place before additional forces could reach there.

Two broken pieces of the weapon were later recovered from different spots.

In another incident in Rajshahi city, three people, including two schoolchildren, were injured during a clash between police and Shibir activists in the afternoon.

Abdullah Al Mamun Ratul, 11, class VII student of Rajshahi Police Lines School, and Robin, 13, class VI student of Dasmari School, were

admitted to RMCH with at least 25 splinters in their head, chest and back, said Monirul Islam, sub-inspector of Motihar Police Station.

Another victim, Iftekharul Islam Sujon, 25, was also rushed to RMCH as he received a rubber bullet in his left leg.

Ratul said he had been playing with Robin at the Radio Centre playground in Mirzapur when the clash began.

The clash erupted around 6:00pm when some Shibir activists tried to block the Rajshahi-Dhaka highway blasting cocktails, said Sujon.

Earlier on Monday night, a college teacher was hacked to death allegedly by Jamaat-Shibir men on Chokjadu road in Bogra town.

The deceased, Ziauddin Jakaria Babu, 45, was a mathematics teacher of Sherpur Degree College of Bogra and joint convener of Bogra district Sector Commanders Forum.

He was also one of those who led the Bogra district Gonojagoron Mancha demanding capital punishment for war criminals.

Police and witnesses said a gang riding two to three motorbikes had stabbed him.

As on previous days of blockade, opposition activists yesterday clashed with law enforcers, blasted crude bombs and torched buses, cars and vehicles in different districts, reported our district correspondents.

In Gazipur, a woman and her minor daughter were burnt dead when Jamaat-Shibir activists set fire to a covered van the two were in.

Two buses in Demra and a truck in Narayanganj were also torched, fire service sources say.

In Dinajpur, at least 20 people were injured as BNP and Jamaat-Shibir men clashed with policemen at Nimnagar Balubari around 12:30pm.

A clash between blockaders and police at Kachua in Chandpur left 10 people injured.

Meanwhile, around 100 Bangladeshi pilgrims have been stuck in Benapole since Monday afternoon due to the Jamaat-called hartal. They had gone to India on a pilgrimage.

Incidents of vandalism and arson also took place in Chittagong, Satkhira, Madaripur, Narsingdi, Sylhet and Narayanganj.

'Who will protect us?' asks his wife

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Sayedee and security to our family as well as justice for the killing of my husband," she said, tears streaming down her face.

Earlier, she said her husband had often been intimidated by Jamaat-Shibir men in the area.

Despite such threats and incidents, State Minister for Law Quamrul Islam claims existing laws are enough to protect witnesses. He also said that witnesses could not be protested by any law if people did not resist the attackers.

"It is not possible to provide a witness with police protection at his bedroom," he told reporters at his Minto Road residence yesterday.

Hearing the state minister's statement, a relative of Mostafa flew into a rage. "Mr Minister! You only beefed up the security measures in the capital. You do not know how insecure we are in Pirojpur," he said.

International Crimes Tribunal-1, which delivered the verdict against Sayedee, yesterday wondered how witnesses would come to the tribunal if they were not provided with security.

"It is not acceptable in an independent country that a person will die for giving testimony," Justice ATM Fazle Kabir, chairman of the tribunal, said hours after Mostafa breathed his last early yesterday.

Additional Home Secretary Kamal Uddin Ahmed told The Daily Star yesterday that the ministry would hold a meeting today or tomorrow to review security measures taken for witnesses and complainants in war crime cases.

The ministry today would receive intelligence report on the security provided for Mostafa, he said. The report would be assessed to know whether there was any negligence.

State Minister for Home Shamsul Hoque

Tuku said, "District committees headed by deputy commissioners are active but the witnesses rarely inform local police stations on threats.

He, however, said all the district committees had been directed to intensify security measures for the witnesses.

District committees also include the superintendent of police and representatives from NSI and Rab.

Asked, both the DC and SP of Pirojpur said they had no information regarding security of Mostafa.

SP SM Akhteruzzaman said, "We deployed police at Mostafa's residence to provide constant security to him, but around two years back we withdrew it at his request."

Mostafa sought patrol police only at nights and police accordingly made an arrangement.

Police made rounds even on the night when he came under attack, he claimed.

Mostafa's enemies in nexus with local Jamaat-e-Islami might have committed the murder, he said. Six persons, including three Jamaat activists, have been arrested.

Deputy Commissioner AKM Shamimul Huq Siddique noted a total of 68 witnesses, including the complainant of the case against Sayedee, are residents of Pirojpur district.

Sanaul Huq, a senior member of the war crimes investigation agency, said there was a central committee led by the additional home secretary for ensuring security of the war crimes witnesses.

"Amid the ongoing political turmoil, I think there has been a slide in security, as the law enforcers are loaded with tasks," he added.

"However, we asked the government and law

AL, BNP talk finally

FROM PAGE 1

an accord between the AL and the BNP, keeping Sheikh Hasina as prime minister. "The news is politically motivated and false."

Contacted, top AL leaders told The Daily Star that they saw little prospect of any amicable solution to the impasse centring on the election, slated for January 5.

Moreover, the AL leaders rejected Taranco's proposal for limiting the prime minister's powers during the polls in efforts to build the confidence of the opposition, meeting sources said.

"We sat together for the sake of sitting," said an AL leader, who was at the meeting.

Meanwhile, the UN envoy extended his tour by a day, apparently to ensure that the two parties sit and talk.

Taranco, assistant secretary general for political affairs at the UN, was originally scheduled to have a meeting with the PM at 4:00pm yesterday and wrap up his four-day visit by holding a press conference later. But the AL-BNP dialogue itself ended around 4:00pm.

"I have decided to extend my stay here in Bangladesh given the very positive developments that have been taking place," he later said in a statement.

According to his rearranged schedule, he will meet the PM at 10:30am today and brief the media in the afternoon.

Lauding yesterday's talks, Taranco said in the statement: "At the invitation of the United Nations Secretary-General, representatives of both parties have met and engaged in dialogue. Both parties have agreed to continue their

dialogue in a spirit of goodwill and compromise, and to work constructively together to decrease tensions and build confidence.

"Today represents an important moment in the current context."

According to him, the dialogue was "an answer to the expectations of the people of Bangladesh".

After the meeting, senior BNP leaders sat at party Chairperson Khaleda Zia's Gulshan office to discuss developments before issuing a statement dealing with the prevailing political situation.

The AL leaders too sat with party chief Hasina to brief her about the meeting.

Later in the evening, it issued a statement saying the meeting discussed the overall situation of the country.

On the BNP's demand for the release of its leaders, the AL said such a situation would arise only if the opposition men stopped their destructive activities, including killing, burning and other acts of sabotage, the statement said.

The BNP also raised in the meeting the issue of the polls-time cabinet, to which the AL said all issues, including the election-time government, would be discussed if the opposition stopped calling hartals and blockades and shunned violence, it added.

AL General Secretary Syed Ashrafur Islam led his party's delegation. Other members were Amir Hossain Amu, Tofail Ahmed and Gowher Rizvi.

Fakhrul led the BNP team that included Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain, Moyeen Khan and Shamsher Mobin Chowdhury.