

Gandhi's statue unveiled at London's Parliament Square

TNN, New Delhi

Mahatma Gandhi's statue was unveiled at London's Parliament Square. Finance minister Arun Jaitley and actor Amitabh Bachchan were present alongside British Prime Minister David Cameron.

The prestigious Parliament Square is a space packed with monuments to men who defended the British empire which Gandhi helped destroy. Jaitley, Bachchan and Cameron paid tributes to Gandhiji during the ceremony.

In an ironic twist, Gandhi's likeness will sit close to that of Britain's former wartime leader Winston Churchill, a man who strained to thwart Indian independence and who despised Gandhi and everything he stood for.

Churchill famously called Gandhi "a seditious Middle Temple lawyer, now posing as a fakir of a type well known in the East, striding half-naked up the steps of the viceregal palace."

But almost seven decades after India won independence from Britain in 1947, in large part thanks to Gandhi's peaceful civil disobedience campaign, relations between the two countries are strong with both nations keen to boost economic ties.

UK Prime Minister David Cameron and finance minister Arun Jaitley unveiled the statue, opposite the British parliament, to mark the 100th anniversary of Gandhi's return to India from South Africa to start the struggle for self rule.

"It also marks an important, historic moment celebrating the strong bond between our two nations," Jaitley said in a statement before the unveiling.

"India and the UK share the same values and we are a partnership of equals. This lasting friendship is just one of many legacies left by Gandhi."

British culture secretary Sajid Javid said his country's relations with India were those that Gandhi dreamed of - as friends and equals.

The bronze statue of Gandhi was crafted by British sculptor Philip Jackson and is based on a number of photographs and in particular one of Gandhi standing outside the London offices of the British prime minister in 1931.

The Final

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India will face Bangladesh in the quarterfinals in front of 90,000 people at the Melbourne Cricket Ground on March 19.

Saturday's other game sees four-time champions Australia seeking to take second spot in Pool A behind New Zealand by defeating Scotland in Hobart and set-up a quarterfinal in Adelaide on March 20 against either Pakistan or Ireland.

Australia made sure of their spot in the next stage after last weekend's 64-run win over Sri Lanka where they piled up 376-9.

That followed their World Cup record score of 417-6 to rout Afghanistan by 275 runs.

Australia will have little to fear from a Scotland side who have still to win a World Cup match in three appearances -- a run of 13 games.

The two sides have met four times with Australia winning by six wickets in 1999, 203 runs in 2007, 189 runs in 2005 and 200 runs in 2013.

Sunday's group stage conclusion sees Pakistan, having won three games in succession -- including over South Africa earlier this week -- after two opening losses, take on Ireland in Adelaide.

Veteran batsman Younis Khan, who played in the 2007 World Cup, wants victory over Ireland in honour of Woolmer.

"This is surely a very emotional game for me and all of us," Khan said, remembering the man who coached Pakistan from 2004 till his death.

"I remember Bob a lot, he contributed so much to Pakistan cricket. Hope we can win this game and some more in the World Cup. There would be nothing better to dedicate to Bob's memory."

In Napier, the West Indies will have one eye on the skies and the other on the scoreboard as they seek to keep their campaign alive in a must-win clash with the United Arab Emirates.

The two-time champions, who have lost to Ireland, South Africa and India so far, currently lie fifth in Pool B.

But a cyclone thousands of kilometres away in the South Pacific could blow away their chances if it brings heavy rainfall to New Zealand's North Island by Sunday.

A washout would send Jason Holder's men tumbling out of the tournament -- they need two points from a victory, the solitary point awarded for a no-result will not be enough.

Further complicating matters, the West Indies must soundly beat the UAE by 70 runs to ensure a place in the last-eight.

Ferguson mayor resists calls to resign

AFP, Ferguson

The mayor of Ferguson rejected growing calls Friday to resign in the aftermath of a blistering US government report into the fatal police shooting of unarmed black teenager Michael Brown.

Mayor James Knowles struck a defiant tone in a flurry of interviews with US news media as St Louis County police kept up the search for the gunman who wounded two officers amid an otherwise peaceful demonstration on Wednesday.

"Right now, this community needs leadership," Knowles, a white Republican in his early 30s who was re-elected mayor by acclamation four months before Brown was shot and killed on August 9, told NBC News.

He said he enjoys "continued support from a lot of residents" in his St Louis suburb of 21,000. Two-thirds of the population is African-American, but the city government and police force are predominantly white.

"This community needs someone who is going to stay around and work toward bringing us together, moving us forward. And I've committed to doing that. And so has the rest of the city council."

On CNN, Knowles -- a Ferguson native and one-time civilian employee of its police force -- said that if citizens really want him to go, a recall process exists for ousting disliked elected officials.

"There are ways to remove me if that is the will of the people," he told the all-news network, one of many in the United States giving saturation coverage to the story.

Tension has gripped Ferguson since August 9, when local police officer Darren Wilson shot and killed 18-year-

old Brown, a suspect in a petty corner-store shoplifting, after an altercation on a residential street.

Sometimes violent protests ensued, as Brown's death -- and the failure by a grand jury to indict Wilson -- ignited a heated national debate about race relations, law enforcement and excessive use of police force.

In the aftermath of a scathing Justice Department report last week that exposed racial bias in his department, Ferguson's embattled police chief Thomas Jackson submitted his resignation on Wednesday.

That night, however, Ferguson was back on a knife edge when shots rang out in the dark amid an otherwise peaceful march outside the local police station, wounding two officers -- one in the face, the other on the shoulder.

St Louis County police chief Jon Belmar, now in charge of policing Ferguson's nightly protests, who initially called the shootings an "ambush," said Friday that detectives working "around the clock" were chasing several leads.

"I cannot tell you at this point that an arrest is imminent. There is certainly nobody in custody," he told reporters, nearly 48 hours after the bullets flew.

It was the first time that any police officer had been hit by gunfire during a Brown-related protest, in a Midwestern state that has some of the most relaxed gun laws in the United States.

President Barack Obama, appearing on a late-night TV talk show, said people had a right to be angry about Brown's death, but added there was no excuse for "criminal acts."

Statement written

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BNP-led alliance since January 6, and the whole nation was waiting to hear what she had to say in her first appearance since January 19, they said.

"But we were not informed about the press conference even, let alone about the contents of Madam's statement," a BNP standing committee member told The Daily Star Friday night.

"I was curiously watching the TV when the chairperson [Khaleda] was delivering her speech in the press conference because I was not aware of any such programme beforehand. Like the common people, I too was waiting for what new move she would announce," he said, wishing anonymity.

This correspondent talked to eight of the 17 standing committee members of the BNP. Three of the 17 in jail and Tarique, who is in the forum as an ex-officio member, could not be contacted.

And those who talked to The Daily Star requested anonymity, fearing backlash from the party supremo.

Every one of them told this paper how they were left out of the whole process centring the press conference.

According to sources close to the BNP chief, Tarique Rahman gave instructions from London and Standing Committee Member Nazrul Islam Khan and Khaleda's Press Secretary Maruf Kamal Khan, who are staying at the office with Khaleda, prepared the draft of her speech.

"It was Tarique Rahman who convinced his mother, Khaleda Zia, to continue the movement at any cost," said one of the sources.

The key message in Khaleda's speech was that the movement would continue until it reached "a logical conclusion", which frustrated the people and party activists.

"We expected that Madam would say something new which might make

a breakthrough in the already over-stretched movement. To tell the truth, we are exhausted by the movement that has been going on for over two months now," said another standing committee member of the BNP.

"Our men in the grassroots are going through a very tough time. They are paying dearly for the movement."

"Some are in jail already and many more on the run. They haven't been able to meet their families for weeks and months now. But for how long? How many more days will they have to spend like this?" he said.

And his concerns were corroborated by what the BNP's grassroots leaders said.

"Police are filing cases against us on a wholesale basis," a leader of pro-BNP Jubo Dal's Khulna district unit told this paper yesterday.

"Two of my unit's men last week fled to India as they had information that police would put them in so-called crossfire and kill them," he said.

"Many of our party colleagues could not see their children in the past few weeks as they are hiding in remote areas to avoid police harassment," he added.

Another BNP leader of Naogaon said he was a businessman but could not run his businesses over the past two months as he had been on the run this whole time, fearing arrest "in some case for blockade violence".

"Against this backdrop, we wanted our party chief to give some directions that would ease our sufferings. But nothing as such happened," he told this correspondent over the phone yesterday.

The BNP and its allies are enforcing indefinite blockade and frequent hartals, marked by widespread violence that has claimed 83 lives already, to force the government to announce a fresh election under a non-party administration.

Farabi on fresh 5-day

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investigation officer of Avijit killing case, filed the case against Farabi with Ramna Police Station yesterday morning for issuing threats to kill Avijit through a number of posts on Facebook.

Farabi was arrested on March 2 and placed on a 10-day remand in connection with the Avijit murder case on March 3. During the remand that ended yesterday, detectives searched his blog and facebook account and found that Farabi issued threats to many people, which is an offence under the ICT act.

But Farabi denied his involvement in the murder, said Fazlur Rahman.

Yesterday, Metropolitan Magistrate Md Atiqur Rahman passed the fresh remand order when DB Inspector Wahiduzzaman, the IO of the new case, produced Farabi before the court with a 10-day remand prayer.

In the prayer, Wahiduzzaman said Farabi had given Avijit death threats on

Facebook and so he needed to be remanded to unveil the motive behind the threat.

Unknown assailants hacked and brutally killed the Bangladesh born American citizen and seriously injured his blogger wife Rafida Ahmed Bonya on the Dhaka University campus on February 26.

On March 5, a four-member team of FBI joined hands with the local investigators to help them probe the murder case. FBI officials were also handed some evidence for test in their lab.

Meanwhile, detectives are looking for about 50 persons involved in running Basherhella, a Facebook page that staunchly supports war criminals, propagates religious extremism and often attacks the state machineries through its posts.

KM Ziauddin Fahad, the alleged editorial administrator of the page, was shown arrested in an ICT case on Thursday. He is now on an eight-day remand.

Fresh 72-hr hartal

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countrywide indefinite blockade. In Dhaka, two people were injured in a crude bomb explosion in New Market area yesterday.

The victims Sadia Afrin, 32, and Abu Hanif, 35, were rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital, sources at the hospital said.

Criminals hurled several crude bombs in front of gate no 2 of New Market around 8:00pm, leaving the pedestrians injured.

In Cox's Bazar, at least four people suffered burn injuries in a petrol bomb attack on a bus in Chakaria upazila yesterday.

Criminals hurled a petrol bomb at the Chittagong-bound bus of Saudia Paribahan when it reached near Chakaria Degree College on the Chittagong-Cox's Bazar highway around 7:00pm, Nirupam Pal, a staff of the Paribahan told our Cox's Bazar correspondent.

Masud Alam, assistant superintendent of police in Cox's Bazar, said the bus skidded off the road after the driver lost control over the wheels following the attack.

"Criminals hurled petroleum-like substance at the bus, leaving four passengers injured," the police official added.

The victims were admitted to Cox's Bazar Sadar Hospital and Chakaria Upazila Health Complex.

In Barguna, criminals set fire to a BRTC bus in front of Sonia Cinema Hall in Sadar upazila yesterday, reports UNB.

Riaz Hossain, officer-in-charge of Barguna Sadar Police Station, said criminals torched the stationary bus on the Barguna-Jessore road around 4:00am.

On information, a firefighting unit rushed to the spot and doused the flame. However, no casualty was reported.

Meanwhile, Socheton Torun Projonmo, a pro-Awami League organisation, staged a demonstration in front of Khaleda Zia's Gulshan office yesterday, demanding immediate withdrawal of the ongoing nationwide blockade and hartal.

Around 100 activists of the organisation gathered in front of Khaleda's Gulshan office at about 11:30am and staged demonstration for 15 minutes. They also hung banners containing the photographs of the victims of arson attacks on the trees opposite to the office.

Elephants sniff

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there in the past.

To make their findings, experts gave elephants in Bela-Bela, a town north of the South African capital of Pretoria, smelling tests.

The remarkable animals were able to pick up TNT samples 73 out of the 74 times in a line of buckets, according to Ashadee Kay Miller, a zoology student at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, MailOnline reported.

They only failed 3.6 percent of the time over 502 buckets that contained the explosive, which was dissolved in acetone on filter paper. All other buckets were filled with acetone and filter paper only.

And in a second set of tests, the animals detected TNT in 23 out of 23 buckets when "distractor odours" such as tea, bleach, soap and gasoline were placed in the other buckets, she said.

The study received major funding from the US military. But Stephen Lee, head scientist at the US Army Research Office, said that despite their skills, the animals won't be put to work at war.

"There's never an intention that we're going to use elephants on the battlefield," Lee said.

Instead, researchers aim to learn how an elephant smells, and apply this to electronic sensors.

Other creatures which help to sniff out explosives include dogs, who can also be made sensitive to contraband and other illegal items; while a group called APOPO has deployed rats to detect mines in Angola and Mozambique. The rodents are also tasked with screening people for Tanzania for tuberculosis, which they do by evaluating sputum samples.

In Croatia, where mines were left from the 1990s Balkan wars, researchers noted that bees gathered at pots containing a sugar solution mixed with TNT, though the insects have not been used for de-mining.

Yemen political forces form anti-Huthi alliance

AFP, Sanaa

Yemeni political forces who oppose the Shiite militia that has seized control of Sanaa formed an alliance against it Saturday, saying they want to restore state authority and rebuild weakened security forces.

Yemen descended into chaos after the militia, known as Huthis, seized Sanaa in September and then began a push to spread their influence further afield.

US trio who 'vowed to kill Obama' deny plot to join ISIS

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

A man who allegedly vowed to kill President Barack Obama and plant a bomb in New York for Isis has denied plotting to join the group.

Abdurasul Hasanovich Juraboev, 24, appeared shackled and wearing a blue prison uniform at New York's federal court on Friday alongside Akhror Saidakhmetov, 19, and Abror Habibov, 30. They all pleaded not guilty to terror offences.

A statement from the FBI following their arrests said Juraboev offered to kill the President if ordered to do so by Isis in an internet post in August last year.

More recently, Saidakhmetov expressed his intent to buy a machine gun and shoot police officers and FBI agents if his plan to reach Syria was defeated, the agency said.

Prosecutors claim the trio conspired to support Isis and committed travel document fraud in their thwarted efforts to reach the so-called Islamic State in Syria.

Federal officials say Juraboev and Saidakhmetov had plane tickets to travel to Turkey but intended to travel onwards.

Saidakhmetov, a Brooklyn resident originally from Kazakhstan, was arrested at John F Kennedy International Airport last month while attempting to board a flight to Istanbul, authorities said.

Juraboev, a Brooklyn resident from Uzbekistan, also had a ticket to travel

to Istanbul this month and Habibov was arrested in Florida and extradited to New York this week.

He is accused of helping Saidakhmetov with his travel arrangements after his mother confiscated his passport. She appeared in court, weeping, but did not comment.

Adam Perlmutter, a lawyer for Saidakhmetov, said his client was "very frightened by what's happening to him" and maintained his innocence.

"Obviously he thinks he did nothing wrong," he added.

According to court documents, Juraboev first came to the attention of law enforcement in August, when he posted on an Uzbek-language extremist website that spreads Isis propaganda.

His plans allegedly included attacks on President Obama or planting a bomb on Coney Island, which houses a famous amusement complex and beach resort.

Federal officials said Juraboev identified Saidakhmetov as a friend with a shared ideology.

Prosecutors told the court they exchanged messages discussing how to get overseas, and Saidakhmetov and an informant watched videos of Isis training camps in Syria.

Saidakhmetov also threatened an attack in the US if he was unable to join Isis, they said, and told an informant in September that he wanted to travel to Syria for jihad but that his concerned mother confiscated his passport.

Prices up

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"As a result, they cut the number of birds for rearing in the next production cycle. What we see now is the effect of that move. Consumers are bearing the brunt of higher prices for reduced farming," said Mohsin of the Council that represents more than 8,000 poultry farmers.

Reduced production of one-day-old chicks (DOC) and consequent price spirals have also affected the farming, according to industry stakeholders.

Breeders had reduced production of chicks as they suffered loss for failing to transport DOCs amid risk of arson and bomb attacks since the beginning of the political unrest, said the stakeholders.

Weekly production of broiler DOCs had declined to nearly 90 lakh from 1 crore per week early January, said Kazi Jashim Uddin, business director of Sunny Group of Industries, which trades in poultry and feed segments.

As a result, prices of DOCs had increased and thereby affected farming, he added.

Jashim also linked the price spiral to seasonal spike in demand. During this period of the year, social ceremonies such as wedding increased, leading to a

rise in demand for chicken, he observed.

Saidur Rahman Babu, general secretary of Breeders Association of Bangladesh, has however claimed production has not declined.

He blamed disruption in supply chain for the spike in prices in Dhaka city.

"Political unrest is the prime factor. Many vehicles carrying live birds came under arson attacks near Dhaka in recent times. As a result, drivers are reluctant to transport birds. It has affected normal movement of poultry from one place to another," he said.

"Price is lower in many places although it is higher in Dhaka. Political unrest is the prime factor," he said.

However, increased prices of chicken had allowed farmers to get prices higher than their production cost now, said Mohsin.

"Farming has increased in recent days due to higher prices of chicken, said Mohsin, expecting that broiler chicken prices would decline in one and a half months.

Khokon Mia, a broiler chicken wholesaler at Kaptan Bazar, echoed the same.

Former Maldives president

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Maumoon Abdul Gayoom.

'DEMOCRACY JAILED'

"Democracy jailed for 13 years on March 13, 2015," said MDP spokeswoman Shauna Aminath. "Nothing good will come out of this. It's a sad, sad, sad day for the Maldives," she added.

Regional power India, whose prime minister cancelled plans to visit the Maldives over the unrest, said it was "deeply concerned" and was monitoring the situation closely, while Washington, London and the European Union also expressed concern.

Rights group Amnesty International said the trial was "deeply flawed" and called the conviction "unsound".

"Rather than responding to international calls to strengthen the impartiality of the judiciary the government of the Maldives has proceeded with this sham trial for political reasons," said the group's Asia-Pacific Director Richard Bennett.

Yameen's spokesman Ibrahim Muaz Ali on Saturday tweeted a denial of any "irregularities in the legal process", saying Nasheed could appeal the verdict and that the government would "not allow civil unrest" in the country.

The MDP said its lawyers would appeal Nasheed's conviction in the high court.

Nasheed resigned as Maldives leader in February 2012 after a mutiny by police and troops that followed weeks of protests over then-criminal court chief judge Abdullah Mohamed's arrest.

He was charged with corruption over the arrest three years ago but those charges were dropped last month. A few days later the prosecutor general had him re-charged and arrested under tougher anti-terror laws.

Nasheed, who was dragged to court on February 22 and appeared to be in

pain after being pushed and pulled by police, has maintained his innocence throughout.

His party said he was denied medical attention while in police custody.

INTERNATIONAL CONCERN

The United States said in a statement after the verdict it was concerned at the "apparent lack of appropriate criminal procedures during the trial" against Nasheed.

State Department spokeswoman Jen Psaki said the US called on Male to "restore confidence in its commitment to democracy and the rule of law".

"We urge the government to ensure former president Nasheed's safety and well-being in custody, and we hope all Maldivians will express their views peacefully," she said.

Britain's junior foreign minister, Hugo Swire, tweeted that he was "deeply concerned".

"Many questions over due process and transparency," he wrote.

The EU said Nasheed's conviction raised "very serious questions about due process".

Nasheed came to power after building a pro-democracy movement with local and foreign support in opposition to the 30-year autocratic rule of Gayoom -- Yameen's half-brother.

He formed the MDP in exile but then returned home to a hero's welcome, sweeping 54 percent of the vote in the 2008 elections.

He built a reputation as a campaigner against climate change, holding an underwater cabinet meeting in 2009 to press the world to cap the carbon emissions that cause global warming and threaten low-lying countries such as the Maldives.

But he was beaten to the presidency by Yameen in a run-off contest in 2013.

Current defence minister Moosa Ali Jaleel, who was head of the armed forces under Nasheed, is among four others facing terrorism charges.