



A protester kicks back a tear gas canister during clashes with police at a demonstration as part of a 20th consecutive Saturday of protests called by the "yellow vests" (gilets jaunes) movement yesterday, in Avignon, southeastern France.

PHOTO: AFP

Police arrest

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in connection with a case filed with Banani Police Station over Thursday's fire disaster at the tower that killed 26 people and left some 70 injured, police said.

Milton Dutt, a sub-inspector and also the in-charge of Banani Police outpost, filed the case against land owner Faruque, Liakat Ali Khan alias Mukul, 57, chairman of Rupayan Group, the builder company, and Tasvir, 62, and others who were part of the building management committee and some unknown persons, according to DMP's official news portal.

Shahjahan Sajú, ADC of DB (North) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, said Tasvir claimed that he was the owner of the top three floors of the 22-storey building.

The FR Tower had no permission for its top four floors and there was no fire-protected staircase in the 22-storey building that housed dozens of offices, Rajuk and fire service officials confirmed.

In 1996, its owner took permission to construct an 18-storey building, Abdur Rahman, chairman of Rajdhani Unnayan Kartripakkha (Rajuk), told The Daily Star on Thursday.

"But on February 23, 2005, they submitted a photocopy of the building's design showing 22 floors. But there was no document to support it," he said.

107 upazilas

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March 10, March 18 and March 24 respectively, in 78, 116 and 117 upazilas.

In this year's upazila polls, the political parties nominated aspirants for the first time.

According to EC Assistant Secretary (election management) Ashfaqur Rahman, two platoons of BGB would be deployed in all the 107 upazilas during the fourth phase of the election. Besides, two to three additional platoons would be deployed in 48 upazilas.

SM Asaduzzaman, EC joint secretary and director (public relations), yesterday said they had taken preparation for a free and fair election.

The EC has deployed 111 platoons of additional Border Guard Bangladesh members in 48 upazilas ahead of today's election and kept 48 platoons as reserve force.

The deployment of additional forces has been done keeping the upazilas' law and order situation in mind, he said, adding the BGB men would act as mobile striking forces.

According to the EC officials, Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) would be used in six upazilas -- Patuakhali Sadar, Cox's Bazar Sadar, Begherhat Sadar, Mymensingh Sadar, Munshiganj Sadar and Feni Sadar -- during the fourth phase of the election.

Meanwhile, the EC ordered three MPs -- Anwarul Abedin Khan of Mymensingh-9, Ranajit Kumar Roy of Jashore-4 and Mohammed Ekramul Karim Chowdhury of Noakhali-4 -- to leave the election areas following allegations that they breached rules by influencing the local government polls.

During the first three phases, the EC ordered at least 20 MPs to leave their areas because of the same allegation.

Facebook to tighten live

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The social network is also investing in improving software to quickly identify edited versions of violent video or images to prevent them from being shared or re-posted.

"While the original New Zealand attack video was shared Live, we know that this video spread mainly through people re-sharing it and re-editing it to make it harder for our systems to block it," Sandberg said.

"People with bad intentions will always try to get around our security measures."

Facebook identified more than 900 different videos showing portions of the streamed violence.

The social network is using artificial intelligence tools to identify and remove hate groups in Australia and New Zealand, according to Sandberg.

Those groups will be banned from Facebook services, she said.

Facebook this week announce it would ban praise or support for white nationalism and white separatism as part of a stepped-up crack-down on hate speech.

The ban will be enforced starting next week on the leading online social network and its image-centric messaging service Instagram.

"It's clear that these concepts are deeply linked to organized hate groups and have no place on our services," the social network said in a

statement.

Facebook policies already banned posts endorsing white supremacy as part of its prohibition against spewing hate at people based on characteristics such as race, ethnicity or religion.

The ban had not applied to some postings because it was reasoned they were expressions of broader concepts of nationalism or political independence, according to the social network.

Facebook said that conversations with academics and "members of civil society" in recent months led it to view white nationalism and separatism as linked to organized hate groups.

People who enter search terms associated with white supremacy will get results referring them to resources such as Life After Hate, which focus on helping people turn their backs on such groups, according to Facebook.

Amid pressure from governments around the world, Facebook has ramped up machine learning and artificial intelligence tools for finding and removing hateful content.

"We are deeply committed to strengthening our policies, improving our technology and working with experts to keep Facebook safe," Sandberg said.

"We must all stand united against hate and work together to fight it wherever and whenever it occurs."

An office numb

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A freight forwarding company on the same floor, Scanwell Logistics Bangladesh Ltd, too lost five employees in the fire.

The deceased employees of Heritage Air Express are Senior sales Officers Ataur Rahman, 62, Monir Hossain Sardar, 52, and Nahidul Islam, 35; Accounts Manager Abdullah Al Mamun, 47; Visa-coordinator Mizanur Rahman, 30; Senior Tour Operator Maksudur Rahman Jemi, 32; Accounts Officer Rumki Akter, 30; Tour Operator Tanjela Moule, 25; Visa-coordinator Jebunnesa, 30; and Hajj and Umrah officer Abu Hena Mostafa Kamal, 60.

Nine of them, including three women, died on Thursday while critically burnt Mostafa Kamal lost the battle for his life at the Combined Military Hospital (CMH) yesterday morning. With his demise, death toll from the fire rose to 26.

Anjon said it took him nearly 10 minutes to reach the roof and there he found only four of his colleagues, including Managing Director Faizul Islam Hiru.

"I asked them about the others and they said they were also coming. We somehow jumped to the roof of adjacent the Ahmed Tower," he said, adding that once going to the other side, they helped at least 60 to 70 people cross the roof but did not find anyone else from Heritage Air Express.

Anjon said as he got down, he saw a few policemen on the road. The fire fighters had not reached yet.

"As I looked up, I saw fire raging through floors and smoke engulfing others," he said.

"Right before my eyes, three of our colleagues -- Monir, Maksudur and Mamun -- fell to their death while trying to slide down cables," Anjon

said and broke down in tears.

He said there were around 30 employees in his office when the fire broke out.

In the 22-storey building, most of the floors were used as offices of companies like Aamra Networks Limited, EUR Service Ltd, Dird Group, Dentotal, and FR Properties Ltd (land owners office). Some other floors housed restaurants and cafes.

"Everything in our office has been razed to ashes," said another official of Heritage Air Express.

Heavy smoke and ash created black layers on the furniture, computers and documents of the 10th and several other upper floors, which remained outside the reach of flames, said firemen.

'EXIT' TOO NARROW'

Tarun Kanti Sikder, a member of the committee formed by the home ministry to probe the fire incident, said the width of the highrise's fire exit was only 24 inches.

After inspecting the eight to 12th floors, members of two probe bodies by the home and the disaster management and relief ministry briefed the media in front of the building yesterday morning.

They said the fire mainly damaged the 8th, 9th and 10th floors. The other two floors had smoke in it, they said.

Faizur Rahman, additional secretary of the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief, said they found some firefighting equipment on the affected floors but they were unused.

They would talk to those who worked at the eight to the 10th floor today to know the cause of the fire, he added.

Asked about the owner of the tower, Faizur said the developer company and the owner of FR Tower have been asked to appear at his ministry.

CANADA PM MEDDLING SCANDAL

New documents, recording released

AFP, Ottawa

A political meddling scandal threatening Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's re-election bid was given fresh impetus Friday with the release of messages and a secret recording supplied by his former attorney general.

The House of Commons justice committee, looking into the explosive allegations that Trudeau officials pressured attorney general Jody Wilson-Raybould to shield engineering firm SNC-Lavalin from trial, released the materials from the now former official.

The controversy comes just months ahead of a re-election bid that looks increasingly uncertain for Trudeau, whose progressive, golden boy image had previously been unblemished.

In the 43 pages of documents, Wilson-Raybould seeks to link her demotion to another portfolio in January to her resistance to allegedly undue pressure to settle the SNC-Lavalin case -- which Trudeau and his staff have denied.

And she hints about why, a month later, she resigned from cabinet, saying she had decided "that I would immediately resign if the new attorney general decided to issue a directive in the SNC-Lavalin matter."

Her replacement as attorney general, David Lametti, has so far only said he is considering the issue.

Montreal-based SNC-Lavalin was charged in 2015 with corruption over alleged bribes paid to secure contracts in Libya.

Wilson-Raybould, Canada's first indigenous attorney general, refused to ask prosecutors to settle, and the trial is set to proceed.

But she later testified to lawmakers that she had faced "consistent and sustained" political pressure to intervene, including receiving "veiled threats" over her stance.

Trudeau recently addressed the allegations, telling reporters in Ottawa that he had learned "lessons" from the crisis -- but denying any wrongdoing.

Another minister quit in protest, and two senior officials in Trudeau's office accused of bullying Wilson-Raybould also resigned since the scandal erupted in February.

The secret recording made by Wilson-Raybould of a 17-minute call in December with Canada's top bureaucrat, Clerk of the Privy Council Michael Wernick, supports her testimony to the justice committee last month.

On the tape, she says Trudeau's inner circle was on "dangerous ground" by attempting to interfere in the SNC-Lavalin prosecution.

Wernick says the prime minister is "in a pretty firm frame of mind about this."

"I am a bit worried," he goes on to say. "It is not a good idea for the prime minister and his attorney general to be at loggerheads."

Indira vows

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result of military action" since martial law began on March 25.

He also indicated that West Pakistan's objective to "hit hard and terrorise the population" has been fairly successful.

Apart from the cantonment areas, the whole of Jashore city was freed. And so was Dinajpur.

[Source: Liberation War Museum website and The Daily Star archive]

Alaska bakes under heat wave

AFP, Los Angeles

Alaska residents accustomed to subzero temperatures are experiencing a heat wave of sorts that is shattering records, with the thermometer jumping to more than 30 degrees Fahrenheit (16.7 Celsius) above normal in some regions.

"Both February and March have been exceptionally warm," Rick Thoman, a climate specialist with the Alaska Center for Climate Assessment and Policy, told AFP. "Many places are on their way to their warmest March on record."

He said that cities and towns in the northern half of the state, including Wainwright, Nuiqsut, Kaktovik and Barrow (also known as Utqiagvik), could see temperatures soar 25 to 40 degrees Fahrenheit (14 to 22 Celsius) above normal this weekend as the warm trend continues.

"At Barrow, through yesterday, they've had daily record high temperatures five separate days this month ... and that's quite an achievement," Thoman said.

"This is following on the heels of the very warm, and in some places record warm February," he added. "We now have April or May weather in March."

In Barrow, for example, the temperature jumped to 30 degrees Fahrenheit (-1 Celsius) on Thursday when the normal high is minus three Fahrenheit.

"Deadhorse, AK, is set to finish March about 23°F (12.7 Celsius) above normal for the month," Brian Brettschneider, a climatologist based in Alaska tweeted on Thursday.

Thoman predicts the warm streak to continue through April, with the highest temperature spikes expected in the western part of the state.

- Frozen rivers melting early -

He said the dramatic warming Alaska has experienced in recent years -- which is partly linked to a decline in sea ice and Arctic ocean warming -- had wreaked havoc on local communities, wildlife and the economy.

Many recreational sled dog races have had to be canceled this year and the routing of the famed Iditarod race had to be changed as what is normally solid sea ice was open water on part of the race route.

Crab fishing has also been affected as the sea ice used as a platform for fishermen was non-existent or too thin in some areas.

Thoman said the seal population is also likely to be affected in the coming months as some of the species give birth on solid ice.

Amy Holman, regional coordinator for Alaska at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, said the warmth has in addition had a deep impact on transportation as two thirds of communities in Alaska are not accessible via roads.

"In the winter, frozen rivers become major transportation corridors connecting villages," she told AFP. "The Kuskokwim River is a primary example of this."

"The warmer temperatures have melted the river ice to the extent it is no longer safe for truck or car travel."

A man with an unusal

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Pakistan Observer, the Awami Jamhooriat, The Telegraph and The Moscow Times.

Some of the newspapers in his collection have coverage of the 1956 speech of Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy in Pakistan parliament, Indo-Pak War of 1965, the return of US astronauts to the Earth in 1969, and the historic March 7 speech of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in 1971.

His passion for reading different publications and collecting those started in his boyhood, around 1956, and has grown ever since.

Stricken by poverty since childhood, Musleh managed to complete his graduation from Gauripur Government College in 1993. He was born in a local farmer's family.

"After that [completing graduation], I was appointed by different educational institutions at different times but none of them was a permanent job. In some cases, I was not even paid the salary mentioned in my contract," said Musleh, a man who earns his livelihood by teaching part-time at different local schools.

"But I have no complaint against anyone. I have always enjoyed teaching English and reading newspapers," a smiling Musleh told The Daily Star.

During a recent visit to Musleh's one-room house, our correspondent found newspapers piled up on one of his two beds. Some of those were partially eaten by insects. He also had a good collection of Bangla calendars.

Musleh fears his collection, which includes some important historical documents, might be lost if not preserved properly.

"I don't even have a shelf to keep these publications. Sometimes I put them under sunlight to avoid insects," he said.

"I am too old. My days are numbered but I want my collection to be preserved," the man insisted.

Musleh lost strength in his left leg

when he suffered typhoid at the age of eight. Since then he has not been able to walk normally. He gets government allowance for disability which is his regular income.

After finishing his everyday works, Musleh walks three kilometres from his home to reach the upazila headquarters and read newspapers.

Musleh says he has a dream to build a library in his village. But with his paltry income, he does not know whether it would ever be a reality.

Informed about Musleh's collection and dreams, Farhana Karim, upazila nirbahi officer of Gauripur, said, "I will see how I can help him. We will try to build him a room to store his collection."

'Drug dealer'

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He was accused in three criminal cases filed in connection with murder and other offences, claimed police.

Law enforcers also claimed to have recovered 2,000 yaba tablets, three locally-made weapons and 12 bullets.

On information that a gang of robbers was preparing for robbery in the hilly area near Habirchara, police raided the scene around 4:00am. Sensing the presence of police, the criminals opened fire on them, said Pradip Kumar Das, officer-in-charge of Teknaf Model Police.

The law enforcers returned fire in self-defence, he added. At one stage, the criminals retreated and the police recovered bullet-hit body of Mohammad Hossain. He was rushed to Teknaf Upazila Health Complex where on-duty doctors declared him dead, said the police officer.

Three policemen were also injured. They are ASI Farhad and constables Fahim and Masud, the police claimed.

At least 72 alleged drug dealers have been killed either in "gunfights" with law enforcers or infightings of drug gangs in Cox's Bazar since May 4 last year when law enforcers launched an anti-drug crackdown.

The 70-year-old

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about architecture and the arrangement of objects to ensure good fortune.

The Taiwanese grandfather, fondly called "Uncle Pokemon", was introduced to the game by his grandson. Soon he became so famous that it is hard for someone on the island not to recognise him. His entry into the Pokemon world was relatively late, at 66.

"It all began when my son gifted me a mobile on my birthday, and my grandson taught me how to play Pokemon Go. It was a discovery," Chen told Efe news.

From one smartphone, Chen kept growing his "arsenal" and had 11 of them a year ago. He has now raised the challenge and is equipped with 24 smartphones. Twenty-two are fastened to the handlebar of his bicycle and two in his pockets.

Chen said he began using several mobiles because more devices mean more captures and needed them to go up on the levels of the game.

During the day, Chen works as fortune teller and Feng Shui expert in Taiwan. In the evening, he rides on his

bicycle and moves across the streets of Greater Taipei, especially towards the parks, in search of Pokemon characters.

"Before keeping the mobiles on his bike, he could be seen in the parks with several mobiles on a tray. He had a great idea of taking the bike, because now he can move wherever the Pokemons appear," said Wang, one of Chen's neighbours.

He has such an expertise that he can use nine mobiles simultaneously to catch Pokemons. "Because we have only 10 fingers," Chen said.

He spends around 1,000 on telephone bills every month to play the game. But nothing deters him. Not even the physical strain or staying awake late into the night.

In February, Chen was named as the ambassador of Taiwanese brand ASUS. He not only participated in the presentation event of Zenfone Max Pro M2, but now carries more than 20 of those on his bicycle.

"In Taiwan now, it (Pokemon Go) is no longer a game for kids, but for people of all ages, and sometimes one could find groups of hundreds of people," said one of Chen's admirers.