



A passenger plane is seen on fire after an emergency landing at the Sheremetyevo Airport outside Moscow yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Stars back France’s ‘yellow vests’ as protesters march

AFP, Paris

Film stars Juliette Binoche and Emmanuelle Beart joined hundreds of people from the arts world in backing France’s “yellow vests” movement, as the latest anti-government marches took place Saturday.

Binoche and Beart joined more than 1,400 signatories to an open letter published in the left-leaning daily Liberation.

Entitled “Yellow Vests: we are not fooled!”, it denounced what it said were attempts to discredit the movement.

It also backed the demands of the protesters, which it said included calls for greater social and fiscal justice, and radical measures to tackle what they called an ecological emergency.

The open letter condemned what it said were the increasingly repressive measures taken against the movement, noting that international organisations such as United Nations and the European Union had already expressed their concern.

Binoche and Beart were among the most prominent signatories, which also included directors, scriptwriters and composers. Binoche won an Oscar for her role in “The English Patient” while Beart is perhaps best known internationally for her role in the first “Mission Impossible” film.

Official estimates suggested that turnout for Saturday’s marches was down, in the wake of the May Day rallies when yellow vest activists joined the traditional trade union march.

The interior ministry said 18,900 people demonstrated across France, 1,460 of them in Paris -- well down on their count for the previous weekend, when they said 23,600 turned up across the country.

The yellow vest organisers, who regularly dismiss the accuracy of the official count, put the turnout across France on Saturday at 40,291.

The day’s marches were relatively calm, with only a handful of arrests and eight people detained in Paris.

In the southwest city of Bordeaux, where support for the movement has been strong, 61-year-old teaching assistant Jose acknowledged that the movement was running out of steam a little.

“That’s 25 weeks that we have put our life on hold for a bit to at least get back a minimum of dignity,” he said.

At Charles de Gaulle airport, meanwhile, around 20 yellow vest protesters handed out leaflets objecting to government plans to privatise Aeroports de Paris (ADP), which runs the capital’s three airports.

Egypt

FROM PAGE 18

known as Chief of the Great State and “purifier” of the pharaoh Khafre. Khafre, known to the Ancient Greeks as Chephren, built the second of the three famous Pyramids of Giza.

“Many artefacts were discovered in the tomb,” the ministry said, including limestone statues of one of the tomb’s owners, his wife and son.

Ashraf Mohi, Director General of Giza Plateau, said the cemetery was re-used extensively during the Late Period, starting from the early seventh century BC.

The ministry also displayed what it said were Late Period wooden coffins with hieroglyphics inscribed on their lids, along with wooden and clay funerary masks.

Dodgy arms

FROM PAGE 18

But it never mentioned buying or selling any firearms in its yearly reports to the deputy commissioner’s office.

Begh renewed his arms dealership licence every year by paying a fee of Tk 20,000, added the official on the condition of anonymity.

“We kept an eye on the duo for the last couple of years after we learnt about the zero sale reports of a firearms dealer for the last nine years,” Jahangir Alam, additional deputy commissioner of the SAG of the CITC unit, told this correspondent.

On Friday, the duo came to the capital to hand over the revolver and bullets to a gang of criminals.

The law enforcers arrested the two from the scene but the gang members managed to flee, said Jahangir.

Investigators said the duo and the gang used “code words” for buying or selling firearms.

“Through interrogation of the arrestees and recorded phone conversation between them, we came to know that they used code word ‘motorbike’ for a shotgun, ‘lipstick’ for a shotgun bullet, ‘mobile’ for a revolver or a pistol and ‘battery’ for a bullet,” said a high official of the CITC unit involved in the investigation.

Asked about the price of the firearms, the official said Begh told them during grilling that he contacted Mukul for buying two revolvers, a pistol and 500 bullets for Tk 8.30 lakh.

“In the last three months, Begh sent Mukul Tk 11 lakh via courier services as payment for firearms,” the official said, quoting the arrestees.

During interrogation, Mukul further said he started working at Khaza Arms in 1999. He has been looking after the business after the shop owner fell sick.

In the sales reports submitted to the DC’s office, Mukul mentioned

that he sold firearms to Begh Arms Company, added the official.

“They not only sell legally imported arms to criminals, but also buy illegal firearms from Chapainawabganj border. They then sell those to criminals,” said another high-up of the CITC unit, seeking anonymity.

They charge Tk 35,000 to Tk 50,000 for an illegal firearm, and Tk 80,000 to 2 lakh for a legally imported firearm depending on model, the official claimed.

ADC Jahangir said they are now looking for Robi, 45, and Pagla Bhai, 42.

“We learnt that Begh supply firearms mostly to Robi, who then hands those over to criminals in bordering districts. Pagla Bhai is one of Begh’s customers,” he added.

The CITC unit yesterday filed a case with Darussalam Police Station against five people, including Begh, Mukul, and Robi.

ADC Jahangir said, “We will submit applications to the DC’s offices concerned, seeking details on the monthly reports of the shops and also statements of district magistrates in this regard.”

This was not the first time licensed arms dealers were arrested for selling firearms illegally.

Last year, CITC officials arrested three arms dealers and a manager, and recovered 28 firearms and 2,810 bullets from them.

In 2012, the detective branch of police arrested the owners of two firearms shops in Khulna and the capital, and seized illegal arms from them.

There are 69 authorised arms dealers across the country, according to the association of authorised arms dealers.

CITC officials claim they have information that at least 13 people are involved with the nexus that sells legally imported firearms to criminals.

Realtors made

FROM PAGE 18

Replying to realtors’ criticism that the government was a competitor instead of being a regulator and facilitator, the land minister said, “Nothing would be possible in the country had the government not been business-friendly.”

But the bureaucrats still have to be more business-friendly and they are surely becoming so, he said.

“I have private business experience and I know how to get things done,” Chowdhury said, adding that somehow Bangladesh’s development has been Dhaka-centric.

DCCI President Osama Taseer said the real estate sector now employed 28 lakh people and the number was projected to increase to 33 lakhs by the year 2020.

Decentralisation of Dhaka city was the only possible way to develop urban areas in other districts, but the sector remained trapped in the cycle of centralised urbanisation in the capital, he said.

He suggested that an independent rating system be used to assess the quality of real estate products.

Kazi Golam Nasir, chief architect of the Department of Architecture, in his keynote, said constant migration from rural areas was the main challenge to appropriate urbanisation, adding that it applied pressure on available utility services.

Citing that the country’s real estate businesses contribute eight percent to the GDP, he said the sector lacked adequate professionals and suggested offering developers some tax incentives in exchange for saving top soil, greenery and overuse of ground water.

Alamgir Shamsul Alamin, president of the Real Estate and Housing Association of Bangladesh, said real estate developers had so far delivered two lakh apartments and 70,000 plots since the association’s

inception.

Without creating housing, education and medical facilities outside Dhaka city, decentralisation is not possible, he said.

North Dhaka Mayor Md Atiqul Islam and Salim Akhter Khan, chairman of Asset Developments and Holdings Limited, among others also spoke during the seminar.

Two killed

FROM PAGE 18

recovered 10 yaba tablets, a firearm and a motorcycle having no registration number plate.

In Chattogram, an alleged robber was killed in a “shootout” between Rab and his cohorts in Banshkhali upazila.

The dead is Solaiman Bahadur alias Bahadur Dakat, 47, of the same upazila.

Mashkur Rahman, assistant director (media wing) at Rab-7, said the “gun battle” took place in Choto Chonuya village around 12:15am.

A patrol team of Rab went there on information that some robbers gathered on the spot for committing a robbery.

Sensing the Rab members’ presence, the criminals opened fire and the Rab personnel returned fire, triggering the “gunfight”, the Rab official claimed.

Mashkur said after the “gun battle”, Rab members found the bullet-hit body of Bahadur on the spot and took him to Banshkhali Upazila Health Complex where doctors declared him dead.

Rab said Solaiman stood accused in seven cases, including for murder and robbery.

Two firearms and 23 bullets were recovered from the spot, Rab claimed.

Our Cox’s Bazar correspondent and a staff correspondent in Chattogram contributed to this report.

S African president says ANC poll victory ‘certain’

AFP, Johannesburg

South African President Cyril Ramaphosa said victory was “certain” for his ruling ANC party in Wednesday’s general elections despite corruption, high unemployment and widening inequalities marring its 25 years in power.

“We’ve also met people without jobs, decent houses, proper education,” he told a crowd of some 50,000 gathered at Johannesburg’s Ellis Park stadium yesterday, closing the African National Congress’s election campaign.

“Today we say to the people of South Africa we have heard you,” he said. “Yes we have made mistakes but it is only those who are doing nothing who don’t make mistakes.”

Despite the emergence of a middle class in South Africa, the continent’s economic powerhouse, 20 percent of black households still live in dire poverty, compared with only 2.9 percent of white households, according to the Institute of Race Relations.

Between 2011 and 2015, three million South Africans have fallen into poverty, according to the World Bank.

The unemployment rate currently stands at 27 percent and the ANC has been dogged by corruption scandals during the tenure of Jacob Zuma, Ramaphosa’s predecessor.

“The era of immunity is over. We are now entering a period of accountability. We will fight with every needs at our disposal to ensure those who occupied positions of

authority serve only the public interest, not their own pockets and not themselves,” Ramaphosa said.

“We are determined that those found guilty of corruption or involvement in state capture will not be allowed to occupy positions of responsibility either in the ANC, in parliament or in government,” he said.

But despite all the party shortcomings, Ramaphosa said he was certain the ANC -- in power since the end of apartheid in 1994 -- would go on to win the elections.

“Comrades, our victory is certain. I can smell it, I can feel it, I can touch it,” he said.

Woman

FROM PAGE 18

“100 percent deep burn” and passed away three days after the incident, he added.

Police said they were investigating Wahedul’s involvement in his wife’s death.

The body was sent to RMC morgue for autopsy.

Rawshan Ara, mother of Wahedul, said Tonni was set ablaze on Thursday morning. Hearing her scream, neighbours rushed to the scene, doused the fire, and took her to Mithapukur Upazila Health Complex.

She was referred to RMCH as she was in critical condition, Ruposhree Pal, doctor at the hospital’s burn unit, earlier told The Daily Star.

Later, she was referred to Dhaka Medical College Hospital, but her family decided not to shift her as they could not afford the cost.

Diet deteriorating

FROM PAGE 18

for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME) at the University of Washington, said, “There is much that government officials and other key stakeholders can do to address this problem, including implementing food policies that increase the availability, affordability, and accessibility of healthy foods, such as fruits, vegetables, whole grains, nuts and seeds, and legumes.”

According to the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), Bangladesh ranked the 10th largest country in fruit production among the world’s fruit producing countries. Over the last 18 years, the country’s fruit production has increased by 11.5 percent on average.

Last year, the average fruit intake per head rose to 85 grams from 55 grams in 2006, said the FAO.

Experts said there has been a revolution in fruit farming in Bangladesh. Over the years, more and more fruit trees are being planted along roads and in yards; commercial cultivation has increased over the last 10 years too.

According to the agriculture ministry, 56 varieties of fruit were cultivated around a decade ago. This now stands at 72. Some 12 more varieties are being studied.

“Bangladesh is an over populated country. Our annual fruit production is around 1.21 crore tonnes. But almost all the fruit production is limited to only three months,” Mehedi Masood, project director of year-round fruit production for nutrition improvement project of

Department of Agriculture Extension, told The Daily Star.

A total of 35 percent of fruits produced rot because of poor storage systems and transport shortages, he added.

In 2017, more deaths in India, the US, Brazil, Pakistan, Nigeria, Russia, Egypt, Germany, Iran, and Turkey were caused by diets with a Low intake of whole grains, below 125 grams per day, fruits, nuts and seeds than by diets with high levels of foods like trans fats, sugary drinks, and high levels of red and processed meats.

Globally, people were eating only 12 percent as many nuts they should be, and only 23 percent as many whole grains. Whole grains have been linked to lower rates of chronic conditions including cancer, Type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular conditions, while nuts are packed with heart-healthy fats and plenty of vitamins and minerals.

In 2017, Israel had the lowest rate of diet-related deaths, at 89 per 100,000 people, followed by France, Spain and Japan. The UK ranked 23rd, with 127 diet-related deaths per 100,000 and the US was 43rd with 171. Uzbekistan was last, with 892.

Heart attacks and strokes are the main diet-related causes of death, followed by cancers and type 2 diabetes, said researchers.

“Our findings show that suboptimal diet is responsible for more deaths than any other risks globally, including tobacco smoking, highlighting the urgent need for improving human diet across nations,” study said.

Gaza violence

FROM PAGE 18

militant since the war five years ago. Israel had suspended such attacks in a bid to lower tensions.

SIRENS AND EXPLOSIONS

The sounds of sirens and explosions reverberated on both sides of the frontier, fraying nerves and keeping schools closed.

The latest round of violence began two days ago when an Islamic Jihad sniper fired at Israeli troops, wounding two soldiers, according to the Israeli military.

Islamic Jihad accused Israel of delaying implementation of previous understandings brokered by Egypt aimed at ending violence and easing blockaded Gaza’s economic hardship.

This time, Israeli strategic affairs analysts said, both Islamic Jihad and Hamas militants appeared to believe they had some leverage to press for concessions from Israel, where independence day celebrations begin tomorrow.

Israel is also hosting Eurovision Song Contest in Rehovot, southeast of Tel Aviv, in two weeks, and sirens sounded there yesterday.

In a statement announcing Israel would press on with its attacks, Netanyahu, who doubles as defence minister, also ordered forces around the Gaza Strip to be “stepped up with tanks, artillery and infantry”.

RAMADAN APPROACHING

For residents in Gaza, the escalation comes a day before the Muslim holy

month of Ramadan begins in the territory today. It is traditionally a time for prayer, family feasts to break a daylight fast and shopping.

Since Friday, 13 Palestinians of whom five were civilians have been killed in Gaza. They included a 14-month-old baby and the baby’s aunt in an air strike, the health ministry said.

Israel’s military said its intelligence information showed they were killed by a misfired Palestinian rocket.

A UN envoy said it was working with Egypt to try to end the fighting.

Israeli bombings in Gaza destroyed two multi-storey structures. Witnesses said the Israeli military had warned people inside to evacuate the buildings, which it alleged housed Hamas security facilities, before they were hit.

Saeed Al-Nakhala, owner of a clothing store in one of the buildings, said he had had no time to save his merchandise.

“I was together with my son in the shop, there was a big noise and then another and people started to run. We left everything behind and escaped,” said Nakhala.

Some 2 million Palestinians live in Gaza, whose economy has suffered years of Israeli and Egyptian blockades as well as recent foreign aid cuts and sanctions by the Palestinian Authority, Hamas’s West Bank-based rival.

Unemployment in Gaza stands at 52 percent, according to the World Bank, and poverty is rampant.