

# Sudan to launch historic transition to civilian rule

AFP, Khartoum

Sudan's military rulers and protest leaders are scheduled to sign a landmark deal reached after a bloody uprising which is meant to pave the way for civilian rule.

Today's ceremony will officialise a constitutional declaration inked on August 4 between the country's Transitional Military Council and the opposition coalition of the Alliance for Freedom and Change.

The deal brought an end to nearly eight months of upheaval that saw masses mobilise against president Omar al-Bashir, who was ousted in April after 30 years in power.

The deal brokered by the African Union and Ethiopia was welcomed with relief by both sides, with protesters celebrating what they saw as the victory of their "revolution" and generals taking credit for averting civil war.

While the compromise meets several of the protest camp's key demands, its terms leave the military with ample powers and its future civilian government with daunting challenges.

With today's official signing of the transitional documents, Sudan will kick off a process that will include important immediate first steps.

The composition of the new

transitional civilian-majority ruling council is to be announced Sunday, followed two days later by the naming of a prime minister.

On Thursday, protest leaders agreed to nominate former senior UN official Abdalla Hamdok as prime minister. The veteran economist, who stepped down last year as deputy executive secretary of the UN's Economic Commission for Africa, is to be formally selected on August 20, a statement said.

The cabinet is to be unveiled on August 28, with the newly-appointed ministers due to meet the sovereign council on September 1 for the first time.

Elections must be held after the 39-month transitional period that began on August 4.

Until then, the country of 40 million people will be ruled by the 11-member sovereign council and a government, which will -- the deal makes clear -- be dominated by civilians.

However, the interior and defence ministers are to be chosen by military members of the council.

The move towards civilian rule could lead the African Union to lift a suspension slapped on Sudan in June after a bloody crackdown on a sit-in in Khartoum.



A young boy joins protesters holding placards at a rally against the Indian government's move to strip Jammu and Kashmir of its autonomy and impose a communications blackout, in Srinagar yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

## Trump wants US

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There was no official comment from the White House, and the Danish embassy in Washington did not immediately respond to AFP's request for comment.

Some Trump advisors say acquiring Greenland, which is northeast of Canada, could be good for the US, while others called it only a "fleeting fascination" from the president, The Wall Street Journal said.

Others outside the White House say Trump's interest could be a desire to secure a legacy achievement, the paper reported, and advisors wondered about the potential for research or greater military clout for the US.

## Gaibandha

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Deputy Police Commissioner of Khulna Metropolitan Police (KMP) Ehsan Shah said a special team of police is conducting raids to arrest the rapist.

The girl was treated at Khulna Medical College Hospital.

### WOMAN RAPED BY SUITOR

In Jhalakathi, a 22-year-old woman was raped by her suitor on Thursday night.

Shakhawat Hossain, OC of Nalchhity Police Station, said the families of the victim and the suspect, Sagar Hawladar, were recently having discussion about their marriage.

Around 8:30pm on Thursday, Sagar took the woman by motorbike to an orchard and raped her with the help of his aide Riaz, the OC said.

Locals caught Sagar hearing her screams, but Riaz fled.

The woman was first taken to Nalchhity Upazila Health Complex and then to Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital for excessive bleeding, said the victim's father.

A case was filed against the two, said the OC.

### NEIGHBOUR RAPES CHILD

Police arrested a man on Thursday for allegedly raping a five-year-old girl in Ja-shore's Chowgachha upazila.

The girl was home alone in the afternoon when neighbour Khairul Islam, 35, sneaked into the house and raped her, said her mother.

Locals caught Khairul hearing the child's screams.

A case was filed against him, said OC of Chowgachha Police Station Rifat Khan Raj-ib.

### MADRASA STUDENT RAPED AT HOME

A 13-year-old madrasa student was allegedly raped at her home by her cousin in Bhola's Borhanuddin upazila on Thursday night.

The victim's father filed a case with Borhanuddin Police Station yesterday evening.

According to the case statement, Shohag Hawladar, the victim's cousin, came to her home and raped her as she was staying alone at home.

The victim was sent to Bhola Sadar Hospital for treatment.

### WIDOW GANG-RAPED

A 35-year-old widow was allegedly gang-raped by three men in Bhola's Borhanuddin upazila yesterday.

According to the victim's sister, the woman went to feed poultry in the morning. As soon as she reached the poultry shed, adjacent to her house, three men caught her.

The men tied her up in a farm house and raped, she added.

Locals later rescued the woman from the farm house and admitted her to Bhola Sadar Hospital.

No case was filed till the time this report was filed.

## 251 noted citizens

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historical understanding between the people of Jammu and Kashmir and the Indian state.

On August 5, the Indian government not only abrogated Article 370, but also abolished the very statehood of Jammu and Kashmir, bringing the region under New Delhi's direct rule, it read.

"The manner in which the abrogation was accomplished, through executive order and in the absence of a state legislature, is a betrayal of the people of Jammu and Kashmir, whose elected representatives were never consulted."

"This is a sharp departure from democratic governance, and the constitutional validity of these decisions has been rightfully challenged," mentioned the statement.

The noted personalities condemned the curtailment of civil liberties in Jammu and Kashmir; the blackout of telecommunications and internet services; the severe restrictions on the media and on the freedoms of movement, peaceful assembly, and protest; and the violent suppression of demonstrations.

These are all violations of international human rights obligations, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which India ratified in 1979, they pointed out.

"We are alarmed by credible media reports of security forces having opened fire on peaceful protesters and disturbed by the denials issued by the authorities, who have gone on to accuse journalists of fabrication."

"We are gravely concerned by the government of India's silencing of voices of dissent, and detention of social activists, lawyers, journalists, and human rights defenders."

"We condemn the government of India's use of majoritarian populism to perpetuate a climate of fear across the country."

The eminent personalities said the actions of the Indian government exhibit a complete lack of respect for constitutionalism, secularism, and democratic values, which do not bode well for India's people, who have, uniquely in South Asia, benefited from decades of democratic rule.

"We are apprehensive of India's future as a democracy and the implications that this degeneration will have on its population of 1.2 billion as well as on the rest of the subcontinent."

They urged the Indian government to immediately end the "inhuman clampdown" in Jammu and Kashmir, to restore civil liberties as well as the flow of information, release all political detainees and prisoners, and to enter into dialogue with the people of Jammu and Kashmir.

"In the middle of August, when we

are meant to celebrate independence from colonialism, we condemn this regression towards despotic rule."

"We stand in solidarity with the people of Jammu and Kashmir, and with people across India and South Asia who aspire to peace, prosperity, and fundamental freedoms," they noted.

The signatories include Veena Das, professor of Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore; Partha Chatterjee, professor of Columbia University, USA; AS Panneerselvan, a journalist in Chennai; Ayesha Jalal of Tufts University, Massachusetts; Shahidul Alam, a photographer from Dhaka; Kul Chandra Gautam, ex-assistant secretary general of the UN; historian Gyanendra Pandey of Emory University; Chandra Talpade Mohanty, professor of Syracuse University, New York; Anu Muhammad, professor of eco-nomics at Jahangirnagar University; MV Ramana, professor of University of British Columbia, Vancouver; Meghna Guhathakurta, a researcher from Dhaka; Martha C Nussbaum, professor of University of Chicago; Farida Akhter, human rights activist from Dhaka; Pervez Hoodbhoy of Quaid-e-Azam University, Islamabad; Zia Mian of Princeton University; Sofia Karim, architect and artist from London; Sharmeen Obaid Chinoy, filmmaker from Karachi; and Sheldon Pollock, professor of Columbia University.

## Detained Nigerian cleric leaves Indian hospital

AFP, New Delhi

Nigerian Shia leader Ibrahim Zakzaky -- whose poor health in detention fuelled a wave of violent protests in Abuja -- has left the Indian hospital where he arrived for treatment this week, the clinic said yesterday, while his office said he was heading home.

The leader of the Islamic Movement in Nigeria (IMN) had been in custody in Nigeria along with his wife Zeenah Ibrahim since their arrest in December 2015 after violence that saw the army kill some 350 of his followers.

On Monday the cleric departed Nigeria to receive medical treatment in India but an official from the Medanta hospital in Gurgaon outside New Delhi told AFP that he had left the clinic late Thursday.

A statement from his office on Twitter on Thursday said he was due to take off from the Indian capital at 10:00 pm (0430 GMT) bound for Nigeria but there was no immediate

confirmation that he had left.

Fears over the couple's health had fuelled a wave of recent protests in Abuja that descended into bloodshed after a brutal crackdown from security forces.

A court last week granted permission for them to receive medical care in India under Nigerian government supervision.

But the authorities insisted they must return to Nigeria to stand trial once their treatment is completed.

Zakzaky, in his mid-sixties, was arrested after violence in the northern city of Zaria saw hundreds of his supporters gunned down by security forces and buried in mass graves.

The cleric's lawyers say he has lost his sight in one eye, is on the verge of going blind in the other and still has bullet fragments lodged in his body from the violence. His supporters say he has suffered a series of minor strokes.

## Bhola gangrape victim

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He added that rape accused Al Amin and Manjur Alam, who were killed in a "shootout" with officers on Wednesday, had links with many powerful people in the area.

Police also said the two had been accused earlier of drug dealing.

The 12-year-old girl was brought to the DMCH early Thursday after doctors at multiple hospitals in Bhola and Barishal failed to stop the bleeding from her private parts. Doctors said she needed 22 stitches for wounds to her private parts and there were numerous cuts in her toes and back.

The girl of Bhola town was raped at her neighbour and aunt's house when she went there to have mehendi on

her arms on the eve of Eid. As she was waiting at the veranda of the house for her aunt, Al Amin, 27, a ten-ant of the building, gagged her with a strip of cloth and forced her into his room, police said.

Amin and his associate Manjur Alam, 25, then tied her up and raped her, they added.

Another young man named Jamal Akand has been accused of assisting the duo in the crime, said Sagor Mia, officer-in-charge of Bhola Sadar Police Station.

Her father filed a case accusing the trio. Jamal was sent to jail.

Non-profit Coast Trust has been assisting the girl's family in bearing the treatment and legal costs.

## Greek fire crews make progress on island blaze

AFP, Athens

Firefighters in Greece yesterday made progress against a four-day wildfire on the island of Evia that has burned through a pine forest and threatened villages, officials said.

"The situation looks better today, there is no active front, but our forces remain in place," a fire department spokesman told AFP, adding that there are still "pockets of fire" smouldering in a ravine.

A massive force of nearly 400 firefighters backed by 110 vehicles, nine planes and four helicopters has been deployed against the blaze.

## Public exam

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He has pleaded not guilty and says the charges are politically motivated.

Prosecutors yesterday handed to the defence thousands of pages of documents related to the case, government lawyer Ahmad Akram Garib told Reuters.

"Under the rules, a trial can only begin at least two weeks after all the related documents are handed over," he said, adding that about 60 witnesses were expected to be called in the second case.

The first trial, which began in April and revolves around former IMDB unit SRC International, was adjourned on August 14 after Najib contracted an eye infection, halting the cross-examination of the prosecution's final witness.

That case is also expected to resume on Monday, and lawyers from both sides hope the second trial can be delayed to allow prosecutors to wrap up the first.

"The accused can only be at one place at a time," Najib's lawyer, Harvinderjit Singh, said. "We are hoping the judge will allow us some

## Iran must free women held over veil protests: UN experts

AFP, Geneva

A group of UN human rights experts yesterday called for the immediate release of three Iranian women given long jail terms for protesting laws compelling women to wear veils.

The trio were charged after a video posted online showed them handing out flowers on Tehran's metro on March 8, International Women's Day, according to a statement co-signed by five United Nations special rapporteurs and another expert.

The women -- named in the statement as Mojean Keshavarz, Yasaman Aryani and Monireh Arabshahi -- were not wearing veils.

They "peacefully protested against Iran's compulsory veiling laws and advocated for a woman's right to choose whether or not to wear the hijab," the statement said.

According to the experts, who are

independent and do not speak for the world body, the women were detained in April, "forcibly disappeared" for up to two weeks, and denied access to a lawyer through the initial investigation.

"Their legal representatives were also reportedly prohibited from representing them at their trial," the statement said.

Keshavarz has been sentenced to 23 and a half years in prison while Aryani and Arabshahi were both given 16-year terms.

All were convicted of national security violations, spreading anti-state propaganda and "encouraging and providing for [moral] corruption and prostitution," the UN experts said.

Keshavarz was convicted of the additional crime of "insulting the sacred".

## Tanners to start buying

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and also through agents appointed previously.

Before the Eid, the commerce ministry had fixed the prices of salt-applied rawhide of cows and buffaloes at Tk 45-50 per square foot in the capital and Tk 35-40 elsewhere.

The price of rawhide of castrated goats was fixed at Tk 18-20 per square foot. For un-castrated goats, the price was set at Tk 13-15.

The prices were fixed after consultations with ministries, different divisions and de-partments concerned, tanners, and merchants.

The rates were fixed for rawhide merchants and tanners. However, there was no fixed rate for small traders who collect rawhide at the field level.

Some 35 percent of more than 1.18 crore pieces of rawhide were thrown away by sea-season traders after the Eid-ul-Azha on Monday, mainly due to slack market monitoring by the government, a syndication of

some tanners and merchants, and merchants' lack of capital to buy rawhide.

### MERCHANTS EXPRESS DOUBT

Merchants yesterday expressed doubt whether tanners could buy rawhide from today.

Delwar Hossain, president of Bangladesh Hide and Skin Merchants' Association, said, "I have doubt that the tanners can start buying rawhide from tomorrow [today] as the commerce minister has already called a meeting at his ministry office for Sunday to dis-cuss the situation."

That's why the tanners may not start buying rawhide before tomorrow, he told this correspondent.

Delwar said they were waiting to get their arrears from the tanners. "Tanners have to clear the arrears before beginning fresh purchase of rawhide."

The present crisis in rawhide trade stemmed from non-payment of more than Tk 400 crore to merchants by tanners, he claimed.

## Najib Razak faces trial

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leeway in this matter."

After the shock election loss, Najib and his wife Rosmah Mansor were barred from leaving Malaysia and their luxurious lifestyle came under scrutiny, with the discovery of nearly \$300 million worth of goods and cash at properties linked to him.

Rosmah, known for her designer handbags and jewellery, has also been charged with corruption. She has pleaded not guilty.

Najib's lawyers say he had no knowledge of the transfers into his accounts and was misled by Malaysian financier Low Taek Jho and SRC's former chief executive, Nik Faisal Ariff Kamil, who are both at large.

Low, who faces charges in the United States and Malaysia over his alleged central role in the IMDB case, has consistently denied wrongdoing. A spokesman for Low did not respond to a request for comment.

Nik Faisal, who has never publicly commented on the matter, could not be reached for comment.