

Teacher, NGO official

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that they wanted to abort the child as the victim was too young to carry a baby.

Doctors at the hospital referred her to Khulna Medical College Hospital but her family said they could not afford to move.

Contacted, Raihanul Ferdous, resident medical officer of Gonoshastha Nagar Hospital in Dhaka, it was possible for girl of her age to be pregnant but it was unusual. "In such cases, abortion is a very risky step to take and may kill the patient. Because of the patient's physical immaturity, normal delivery is equally risky. Delivery through caesarean-section is the safest option for the patient," he added.

ANOTHER SENT TO JAIL IN GAZIPUR
A Gazipur court yesterday sent a school-teacher to jail on charges of raping his six-year-old female student on Thursday.

Police arrested the accused -- Anwar Hossain, 22 -- early yesterday after the victim's father filed a case with Gachha Police Station on Thursday night, said Sub-Inspector Mosharrif Hossain, investigation officer of the case.

According to the case statement, Anwar raped the girl in the teachers' room of the school. The victim then shared her experience another teacher who asked her not disclose the matter.

Returning home, she fell sick and started bleeding. At one point, she told her mother about the rape who later admitted her to Shaheed Tajuddin Ahmad Medical College Hospital. Pronoy Bhushan Das, resident

medical officer of the hospital, said the girl was receiving treatment and they would submit the medical reports to the authorities soon.

Our Benapole and Gazipur correspondents contributed to this report

Russians to vote in polls after protests

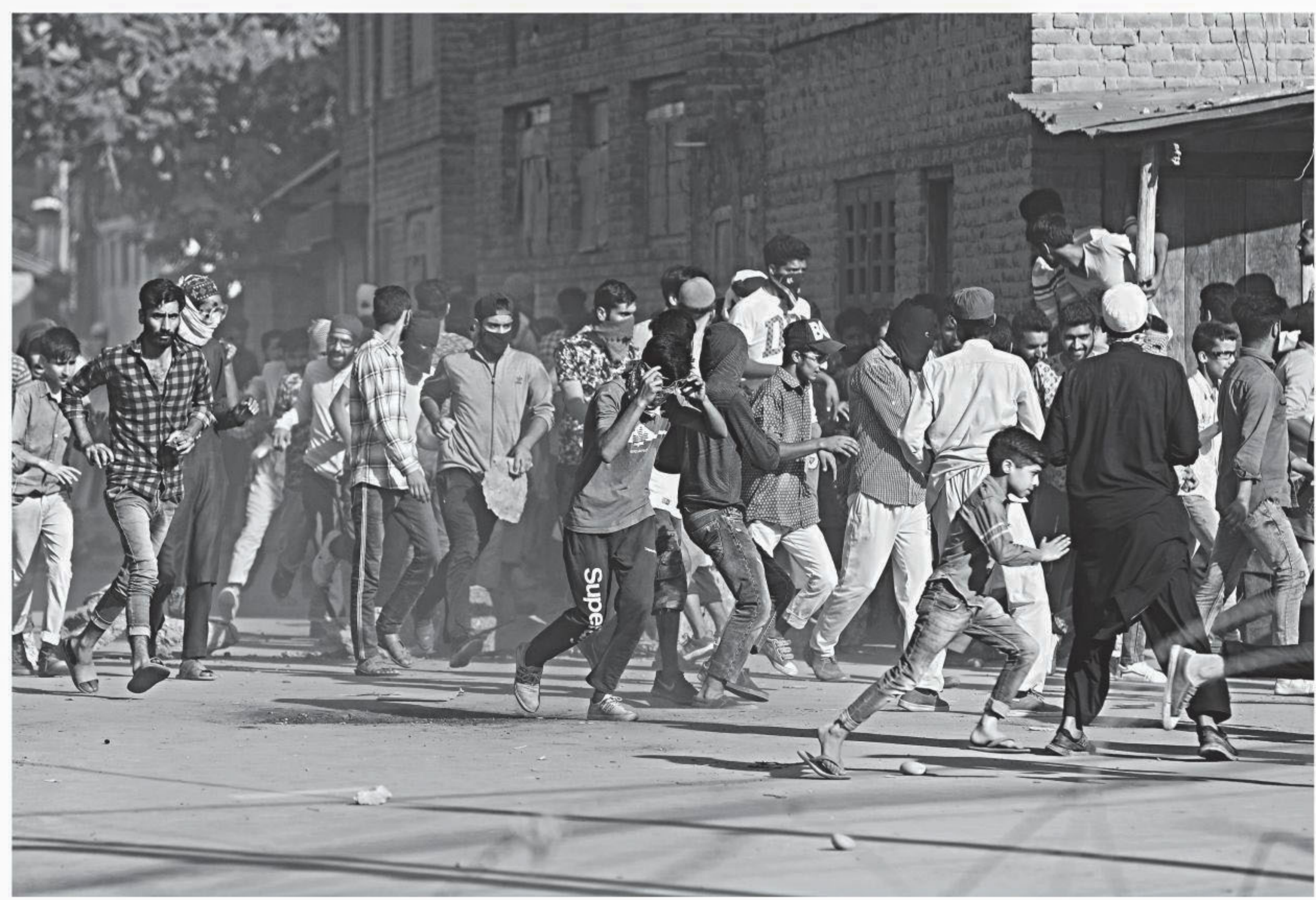
AFP, Moscow

Russians are set to vote in local elections yesterday following a hugely controversial campaign in Moscow that degenerated into the biggest police crackdown on protesters in nearly a decade.

Municipal and regional polls will be held across the vast country, but most attention will be focused on the Moscow parliament vote following the arrests and jailings of independent would-be candidates and their supporters.

Analysts say the results of the vote will be keenly watched ahead of parliamentary elections in 2021 and will help shape Russia's political future as President Vladimir Putin enters his third decade in power.

Over the past weeks tens of thousands have taken part in Moscow protests demanding a fair vote after allies of opposition leader Alexei Navalny were barred from the election. Rap stars and prominent bloggers backed the demonstrations.



Kashmiris run for cover as Indian security forces (not pictured) fire teargas shells during clashes, after scrapping of the special constitutional status for Kashmir by the Indian government, in Srinagar, yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Feud in JP

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said those who declared Raushan the chairman violated the party's constitution.

"Their activities are causing confusion among the people and the party leaders and activists. Steps will be taken against them as per the party's constitution," he added.

Speaking to The Daily Star, Presidium Member Hafiz Uddin Ahmed, who was present at the meeting, said show cause notices might be issued to Anisul and Fakhrul, also presidium members.

Wishing anonymity, another JP leader said most of the presidium members said Ershad's wife Raushan was misled by Anisul and Fakhrul over the issue.

The meeting also decided that the party would hold its council on December 28, subject to availability of a venue, said Presidium Member Ziauddin Ahmed Bablu.

On Thursday, a group of JP leaders and lawmakers declared Raushan the chairman. The move came amid rivalry between Raushan and Quader over the chairmanship and the post of the leader of the opposition in parliament.

Meanwhile, the Raushan-led JP faction will hold a meeting of the party's parliamentary board in the city today to pick its candidate for the October 5 by-polls to Rangpur-3, said party sources.

The seat fell vacant following the death of Ershad on July 14.

In a separate meeting of the JP parliamentary board yesterday, the Qader-led faction of the party picked its candidate for the by-election. It, however, did not declare the name of the nominee officially.

More than 100

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flex their muscles, establish supremacy or "draw respect" from the juniors.

These gang members often ride motorbikes recklessly with loud honks and paint graffiti in different walls of their areas, said police and locals.

Most of them are aged between 14 to 18 and they are involved in various petty crimes like ever-teasing, mugging and drug abuse.

In this year alone, the Rab arrested around 190 teenagers and youths of such gangs from different areas in the capital.

AL leader

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Additional Superintendent of Police of Special Branch in Khulna Anisur Rahman suspects the same. "Previous enmity might be the reason behind the killing," he said.

Police are trying to arrest the killers, he added.

Tools seized

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from the depot in Ukhia upaizla's Malbhitapara area.

A team, led by Executive Magistrate and Assistant Commissioner (land) Fakhrul Islam, conducted a drive at the depot, and recovered the locally-made tools kept in 20/25 sacks.

The IOM said an alarm was raised on social media that farming tools were potential weapons distributed to refugees.

100pc literacy still a far cry

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He further said, "The government didn't take proper initiatives to achieve the target."

"Bureau of Non-Formal Education is a weak organisation, and its officials lack skills. But no change was made in the organisation for achieving the target," noted Manzoor.

Against such a backdrop, the country will observe the International Literacy Day tomorrow.

Talking to The Daily Star, several BNFE officials said that though the AL government pledged to eradicate illiteracy by 2014, it failed to take up any project under the bureau until 2014 to further bring down the illiteracy rate.

The AL-led government in 1997 took up a major project titled "Total Literacy Movement" with state fund of Tk 682.9 crore. And the implementing agency was the Directorate of Non-Formal Education, they said.

But in 2003, the then BNP government discontinued the project over allegations of irregularities. It even dismantled the Directorate of Non-Formal Education and transformed it into the BNFE in 2005.

The BNFE didn't take up any major programme with focus on reducing illiteracy during the tenure of the BNP-led government.

Assuming power in 2009, the AL-led government planned to take up two Tk 3,000-crore projects and

sought assistance from donors. But it had to shelve the projects as none of the donors agreed to fund those, said the officials.

In 2014, the AL government took up a Tk 453-crore project under the BNFE with its own funds to make literate 45 lakh people aged between 15 and 45.

Experts say the government failed to achieve its goal due to a lack of long-term and sustainable planning in non-formal education and resource constraints for adult literacy programmes.

"Adult literacy didn't get due importance in terms of planning and financing," said Executive Director of Campaign for Popular Education Rasheda K Choudhury.

Expansion of formal education played a vital role in the increase in literacy rate for adults in the last 10 years, she said.

"The government activities were solely project-based, which implies that all activities under a project ended when its timeframe expired."

Programmes should be taken up, considering the socio-economic realities, Rasheda suggested.

Primary and Mass Education Secretary Akram-Al-Hossain and BNFE Director General Tapan Kumar Ghosh said they had no problems with planning.

"Eradication of illiteracy is a

continuous process. We have made some progress. The literacy rate has reached 74 percent... Isn't it a success?" Akram asked.

He said they are now shifting from short-term projects to long-term programmes.

"We have finalised the Non-Formal Education Development Programme in line with the Sector Wide Approach," he said.

Seeking anonymity, a top BNFE official told this newspaper that they have one office with only three staffers in every district to run literacy programmes.

"At least 20 posts of assistant director [the chief of BNFE office at the district level] are vacant now... Besides, we don't have any office at the upazila level," said the official.

Asked, Akram said his ministry has taken an initiative to set up BNFE offices in upazilas across the country.

He further said they already got approval from public administration and finance ministries in this regard. The proposal will soon be sent to the Cabinet Division for approval.

"We have some plans. Illiteracy rate will drop rapidly in the next five years."

Akram said they already took up a project to make another 21 lakh people literate by 2020.

British PM gets Brexit boost

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Opposition parties and the rebel Conservatives are now set to approve the delay bill when it returns to the Commons on Monday.

They are also widely expected to block for the second time Monday his attempt to schedule snap polls for October 15.

"Never in history has there been an opposition party that has been given a chance to have an election and has turned it down," Johnson said in Scotland.

"I think that they are making an extraordinary political mistake." **DEAL 'NOT POSSIBLE'**

The main opposition Labour Party is plotting a strategy with smaller groups that could leave Johnson with no other alternative but to resign.

Johnson has said he would rather die in a ditch than delay Brexit and has cast the opposition parties' bill aiming to stop a no-deal Brexit as a surrender to the EU that he would never go along with, reported Reuters.

"I'll go to Brussels, I'll get a deal and we'll make sure we come out on October 31, that's what we've got to

do," Johnson said. When asked if he would resign if he could not deliver that, he said: "That is not a hypothesis I'm willing to contemplate."

Labour Party is reportedly trying to make sure that an election is held only after Johnson is forced to go back on his word and seek a divorce delay.

This would happen if no new agreement is reached when Johnson attends an October 17-18 EU leaders' summit in Brussels.

None is expected and EU officials say they have heard no new proposals from Johnson's team.

Finnish Prime Minister Antti Rinne -- whose Nordic country holds the rotating EU presidency -- said a chaotic "no-deal Brexit" seemed unavoidable.

"I hope that we can reach a situation where this can be solved so that there is no mess, but it seems not possible now," Rinne said in Helsinki.

"We don't know what's happening there. It seems very obvious that we are not getting Brexit with an agreement," Johnson disagreed.

"I don't think we'll get a no-deal Brexit," he said in Scotland. "I am very confident I will get an

agreement at the summit on October 17."

'CUNNING WHEEZE'
Labour was yesterday negotiating with the pro-EU Scottish National Party (SNP) and smaller groups about an election date closer to the Brexit deadline.

Johnson was also set to meet his team over the weekend to prepare for what promises to be another momentous week in the Brexit saga.

Labour foreign affairs spokeswoman Emily Thornberry said lawmakers did not trust "this prime minister, who is as slippery as can be".

She accused Johnson of trying to use an election "as a distraction whilst they, by some cunning wheeze, bounce us out of the EU."

SNP's parliamentary leader Ian Blackford also signalled his party's refusal to back an October 15 poll, reported AFP.

"The idea that he is coming with a motion to try and force an election having lost one this week is insane," he said.

"He is not going to compel parliamentarians to give him a mandate to determine the timing -- we don't trust him."

Bangladeshis in S Africa

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Mobs suddenly attacked and looted nearly 40 shops in a neighbourhood of Johannesburg on Monday night. Some 18 of them are owned by the Bangladeshis, he said. "We tried to call police, but their phones were busy. Then we had to flee to save our lives."

The next day, people from the Bangladeshi community took them to a temporary shelter. From there, they went to the houses of their friends or relatives. "I don't know what to do now," Akhter, who comes from Noakhali, said over the phone.

Abdul Awal Tansen, general secretary of the Awami League chapter in South Africa, said Bangladeshis were affected by the violence and looting, mostly in the rural areas in Pretoria and Johannesburg.

As per their estimates based on reports from different parts of South Africa, several hundred shops owned by about 1,000 Bangladeshis were affected, he told this correspondent by phone from Johannesburg yesterday.

He added that the Bangladeshi community opened two camps for sheltering those affected in Johannesburg.

"We are looking at how we can help our fellow citizens so that they can start their business again," Tansen said.

As violence subsided since Thursday, some are opening their shops. But most of them are still fearful of further attacks. Therefore, they are guarding their shops at nights, he added.

South African President Cyril Ramaphosa on Thursday condemned the violence, which left at least 10 people dead and several hundred

others injured. According to the BBC, Ramaphosa in a video statement said: "There can be no excuse for the attacks on the homes and businesses of foreign nationals, just as there can be no excuse for xenophobia or any other form of intolerance."

Officials of Bangladesh High Commission in South Africa say there are around 3 lakh Bangladeshis there. A small number of them are professionals, and others are mostly engaged in business.

Shabbir Ahmad Chowdhury, Bangladesh's high commissioner to South Africa, on Thursday visited some areas in Johannesburg, where shops of Bangladeshis were looted. He also talked to the expatriates.

In a video message uploaded on Facebook, he asked the Bangladeshi expatriates to be careful when they went outside homes.

"Please call the police if you face problems. You also let us know in detail so that we can address your issues," Shabbir said.

Meanwhile, South Africa has temporarily closed its diplomatic missions in Nigeria following reprisal attacks by Nigerians triggered by xenophobic violence in South Africa, reports BBC.

In response to the violence in Johannesburg, two of Nigeria's top musicians, Burna Boy and Tiwa Savage, announced they were boycotting South Africa.

Air Tanzania, national carrier of Tanzania, has suspended flights to Johannesburg because of the violence.

Madagascar's football federation has announced that it will not be sending a team to play South Africa in a friendly today because of security concerns.

Zimbabwe dictator Mugabe

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for too long as a result of Mugabe's autocratic role," the foreign ministry said in a statement.

Mugabe died at 0240 GMT in Singapore, where he had been hospitalised in April, a Zimbabwean diplomat in South Africa told AFP, speaking on condition of anonymity.

The Singaporean foreign ministry confirmed that Mugabe had died at Gleneagles Hospital.

"The Ministry is working with the Embassy of Zimbabwe in Singapore on the arrangements for the late Mr Mugabe's body to be flown back to Zimbabwe," it said in a statement.

Mugabe had been battling ill health, and after his humiliating fall from office, his stamina seeped away rapidly.

"Mugabe was an icon of liberation, a pan-Africanist who dedicated his life to the emancipation and empowerment of his people. His contribution to the history of our nation and continent will never be forgotten," President Emmerson Mnangagwa tweeted after announcing the news.

Opposition party leader Nelson Chamisa said that despite "great political differences" with Mugabe's regime, he recognised the "contribution made during his lifetime as a nation's founding President."

'REVOLUTIONARY'
South African President Cyril Ramaphosa remembered Mugabe as a "liberation fighter" and a "champion of Africa's cause against colonialism".

Kenyan leader Uhuru Kenyatta hailed Mugabe as an "elder statesman, a freedom fighter and a Pan-Africanist who played a major role in shaping the interests of the African continent".

China lauded him as an "outstanding national liberation movement leader" while Russian President Vladimir Putin noted Mugabe's "great personal contribution" to Zimbabwe's independence.

The Mugabe years are widely remembered for his crushing of political dissent and policies that ruined the economy.

The former political prisoner turned guerrilla leader swept to power in 1980 elections after a growing insurgency and economic sanctions forced the Rhodesian government to the negotiating table.

In office, he initially won international plaudits for his declared policy of racial reconciliation and for extending improved education and health services to the black majority.

HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS
But that faded rapidly as Mugabe cracked down on his opponents. During the 1980s, he led an infamous campaign known as Gukuruhundi during which an estimated 20,000 dissidents were killed.

The violent seizure of white-owned farms turned him into an international pariah -- though his status as a liberation hero still resonates strongly across Africa.

Aimed largely at angry war veterans who threatened to destabilise his rule, the land reform policy wrecked the crucial agricultural sector, caused foreign investors to flee and plunged the country into economic misery.

All along, the Mugabe regime was widely accused of human rights violations and of rigging elections.

The topic of his succession was virtually taboo until he reached his 90s and became visibly frail.

Off-duty easyJet pilot

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"I phoned up easyJet and said 'Hiya, I'm standing in the terminal doing nothing. I have got my licence with me -- deliberately from being punched in the back of the head at 3am -- I have got my ID with me and I'd very much like to go on holiday. And if you need a favour I'm standing here ready to go."

Bradley said the airline phoned him back 38 seconds later, saying, "Please, please, please with a big cherry on top, can you fly the aeroplane to Alicante?"

Minus his uniform, Bradley finished by saying: "So if you're alright for one of your pilots to look like this today, we'll go to Alicante."

The announcement was greeted with cheers from those on board.

Passenger Michelle Potts uploaded the video to Facebook, commenting: "Get to boarding and asked the guy at the desk what's going on he said 'oh your pilot's gone missing but a guy that's going on your flight is going to fly the plane' REALLY CASUALLY!!!"

"Luckily the guy was actually a pilot!! Probably would have been cancelled if it wasn't for him! Legend."

An easyJet spokesperson commended Bradley for "going the extra mile" and emphasised that he was well rested, having had the previous four days off, and legally permitted to fly the aircraft.

"We are grateful to one of our pilots who was travelling on holiday from Manchester to Alicante on 2 September with his family and volunteered to operate the flight," they told The Independent.

"This meant customers could get to their destination and shows the commitment and dedication of our crew."

"This is fully in line with regulations as he had his licence and ID with him. Safety is always our highest priority."

The easyJet flight was delayed due to the knock-on effects of a French Air Traffic Control (ATC) failure on Sunday, which impacted on crew and made it necessary for airlines to call on standby resources.