

International

Mugabe finally laid to rest in rural Zimbabwe village

Zimbabweans mourn 'founding father', 'liberator' and 'torch bearer'

KUTAMA, Zimbabwe: The body of Zimbabwe's former president Robert Mugabe was buried yesterday in a low-key ceremony in his home village after weeks of wrangling over his final resting place. Family members threw white roses into the grave as the coffin of the liberation hero turned despot, draped in navy blue velvet, was lowered to its final resting place in the courtyard of his rural home about 90 km west of Harare. A boys choir from Mugabe's old high school sang in the background.

The burial in the village of Kutama came after the Mugabe family finally opted to reject government proposals that he be laid to rest at the National Heroes Acre in the capital. Mugabe died in a Singapore hospital on Sept 6, aged 95, almost two years after a military coup ended his autocratic 37-year rule. Hundreds of mourners assembled for the burial, which was initially intended to be a private family event.

Many wore white Mugabe-emblazoned T-shirts with the slogans "founding father", "liberator" and "torch bearer". Some sang and danced. Others sat quietly under two white tents. Mugabe's widow Grace and his children accompanied the coffin. Clad in black, they took their places in a VIP tent ahead of the service. The words "DAD" and "BABA", meaning "father" in the local Shona language were spelled out in white flowers.

"Our hearts are bleeding because we have lost our father," said the priest, standing next to a portrait of Mugabe framed by white carnations. "This is a man who made use of the gifts he was given by God. This man was an asset, he was not a liability." No senior government officials were among the audience.

'It's his wish'

A mausoleum was being constructed at the site in Harare reserved for heroes of Zimbabwe's liberation struggle. However the family said yesterday he would not have wished to have been buried there. "What we have done is his wish," said Grace's older sister Shuvai Gumbochuma, addressing mourners in Shona. "He (Mugabe) said with his own mouth that he didn't want to be buried at the heroes acre," she said. The ruling ZANU-PF party described the family's decision as "most unfortunate". "All patriotic Zimbabweans were shocked to learn that the remains of the former president had been surreptitiously taken yesterday to Zvimba for a private burial," said spokesman Simon Khaya-Moyo in a statement on Friday.

Former guerrilla leader Mugabe took power after independence from white minority rule in 1980. Initially hailed as a pan-African liberator, Mugabe's rule became increasingly repressive as he cracked down on his political opponents. This was combined with a series of disastrous economic policies that drove millions of Zimbabweans abroad. Mugabe was eventually toppled by his formerly loyal military generals in 2017.

Many in the family are bitter over his ouster and the role played by his deputy and successor Emmerson Mnangagwa, who was elected president in 2018. The army turned against Mugabe after he sacked Mnangagwa, a move many saw as an attempt to position Grace to succeed him. Zimbabwe remains deeply split over his legacy. "I was very comfortable that he be buried at the heroes acre," said local official Christopher Ndlovu before the ceremony. "That's what we wanted as local villagers. But since it's a family decision to bury him here, we will respect it." —AFP



KUTAMA: The coffin of former president of Zimbabwe Robert Mugabe arrives for his burial at his home village in Kutama yesterday. —AFP

The hearty food and handshakes: Chirac's countryside roots

CORREZE: Dominique Marchi shows off the table near the towering granite fireplace at his restaurant where Jacques Chirac always sat with his family in the village of Correze, deep in the heartland of central France where his family had its roots. "Every time he came for lunch, he would first say hello to everyone on the patio," Marchi told AFP after the former president's death aged 86 on Thursday. The young Chirac spent his holidays in the Correze region, where he would eventually win his first elected post as council president in 1970.

The lush rolling hills of farmland and stone-hewn villages would remain his political base throughout his career, helping cement an everyman image that made him a favorite of rural France. "You have to understand that when he discovered Correze in his youth, it was like living in the Middle Ages," Marchi said, amid photos of Chirac inside his restaurant, the "Pecheur de Lune" (The Nighttime Fisherman). "He told himself that he could do good things here - he felt useful," Marchi said.

Despite eventually moving on to becoming mayor of Paris, "he was quite at ease with people from the country, simple folks," he said. His restaurant was just a short drive the Chateau de Bity, which Chirac had bought in 1969, and Marchi quickly learned Chirac's favorites. "He liked rich cooking, meats in

sausages. Charcuterie too, and scallops once in a while," he recalled. "One Friday I suggested fish. He frowned and said, 'Oh, you know me, fish...!' So I said I could make him some veal sweetbreads, and he shot back: 'Perfect!'"

'A terrific memory'

"I've lost a friend," said Louis Jaubert, 93, a childhood friend of Chirac's in the nearby village of Sainte-Fereole, where Chirac often spent his summers as a boy. "We'd go fishing for crayfish at night, it wasn't allowed but there were so many of them!" Jaubert said, showing a picture from 2001, when Chirac famously ordered his motorcade to make a detour to visit his old friend.

"When he came to see me, he would stop to drink a beer, maybe two, he wouldn't say no to that," he said. It was Jaubert who drove Chirac around when he launched his first political campaign in 1967. "What made him such a force was the way he learned everyone's name, and addressed them by their first names. He had a terrific memory," he recalled.

"You saw that he was a human being," but despite the jovial tone, "If he wanted to tell you off, he'd do it. He wasn't one for niceties." And according to Jaubert, who eventually became a butcher, it was he who introduced Chirac to the dish that would become the symbol of his love for hearty French staples. "Jacques had just been elected to the local council of Sainte-Fereole. He told me to choose the meal. So I made his some calf's head," he said.

Some 50 kilometers northeast of Jaubert's vil-



PARIS: People wait to sign condolence registers for late former French President Jacques Chirac at the Elysee presidential palace in Paris yesterday. —AFP

lage, a condolence book set up at the Chirac Museum in Sarrahan had already garnered dozens of messages Friday. "A man who loved France AND people," one wrote, while another offered "a final message for a great man of the Republic, so accessible and so close to us, the little people." Inside the museum visitors admired the numerous gifts he received from dignitaries worldwide as president: sandals from former US president Bill Clinton, or a mask from the Bobo people of Burkina Faso. "We decided to make a detour to come and pay our little tribute," Martine Widowiak, who was returning from a camper-van vacation with her husband Bernard said. "We'll never forget his smile - he loved life," she said. —AFP

News in brief

7 drown as boat capsizes

RABAT: Seven Moroccan migrants were found dead yesterday off Morocco's Atlantic coast near Casablanca after their boat capsized, the interior ministry said. Three others were taken unconscious to hospital, while search operations are ongoing, the ministry said in a statement. The incident reflects a growing trend in illegal migration to Spain from the Atlantic coast following a government crackdown on Mediterranean routes. Morocco is only 14 kilometers south of the Spanish coast at the strait of Gibraltar and shares land borders with the small Spanish enclaves of Melilla and Ceuta on its Mediterranean coast. Moroccan authorities say they have stopped 57,000 migrants from illegally crossing to Spain between Jan 1 and Sept 1. —Reuters

Sicilian drug-infused food

ROME: A well-known Sicilian chef who was arrested with drugs at his home, justified their presence by saying he was looking for "new flavors" for contemporary cuisine, Italian media reported yesterday. Officers found two two-metre-high marijuana plants and 500 grams of Indian hemp inflorescences at chef Carmelo Chiamonte's home in Trecastagni, a village at the foot of Mount Etna. They also found cannabis flavored wine, olives, coffee and tuna. The 50-year-old chef, who has been released pending trial, told police he was an "agro-food consultant for third millennium cuisine". Chiamonte also said he was "researching new flavors". Famous on his native island, the iconoclast chef was known for his cuisine at the Katane Palace Hotel restaurant in Catania. He then made his name as a host on an Italian culinary TV show. —AFP

US ex-diplomat Wilson dies

NEW YORK: Joseph Wilson, a US diplomat who questioned the central underpinning for the invasion of Iraq under former President George W Bush, died on Friday at the age of 69, the New York Times reported. Wilson's ex-wife, Valerie Plame, a former CIA officer now running for Congress, told the Times his cause of death was organ failure. Wilson died at his home in Santa Fe, New Mexico, the Times reported. Wilson served in several diplomatic posts during a 23-year career that began in 1976. In 2002, the CIA asked Wilson to investigate claims that Iraq had attempted to buy uranium yellowcake, a nuclear material, from Niger. Bush, in his State of the Union address in January 2003, made a case for the Iraq war by saying the country's leader at the time, Saddam Hussein, had recently sought "significant quantities of uranium from Africa." —Reuters

Tanker blast sparks fire

SEOUL: A huge blast on an oil tanker in a South Korean port yesterday sparked a raging fire that spread to a nearby vessel, leaving 18 people injured, authorities said. A ball of fire shot up high above the ship and thick black smoke billowed into the air, dramatic images showed. Firefighters struggled to contain the blaze and prevent it spreading, shooting streams of water up onto the deck from beside the vessel in the southeast port of Ulsan. All 25 of those on board the Cayman Islands-flagged tanker and the 21 people on the second ship have been rescued, according to the Coast Guard. Twelve sailors and six rescue workers were injured, Yonhap news agency said, quoting local authorities. Nine of the injured were South Korean. The Russian vice-consul in Busan said the tanker crew comprised 10 Russians, including the captain, and none had been seriously injured. —AFP

British PM referred to police watchdog over businesswoman links

LONDON: The government of London said it had referred Prime Minister Boris Johnson to Britain's police watchdog for potential investigation over allegations of misconduct involving a US businesswoman while he was mayor of London. The Greater London Authority (GLA) said on Friday it had referred a "conduct matter" concerning Johnson to the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC), which investigates complaints connected to the police.

The referral follows allegations, first reported by The Sunday Times, that when Johnson was mayor, he failed to declare close personal links to tech entrepreneur Jennifer Arcuri who received thousands of pounds in public business funding and places on official trade trips. Asked about the referral, Johnson's spokesman said: "The prime minister as mayor of London did a huge amount of work when selling our capital city around the world, beating the drum for London and the UK.

"Everything was done with propriety and in the normal way," he added. Arcuri did not immediately respond to an emailed

request for comment. The matter has been referred to the police watchdog because Johnson was head of the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime, a role equivalent to a police commissioner, during his 2008-2016 term as mayor.

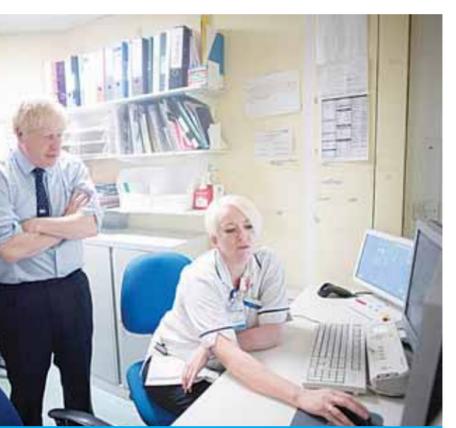
Under the referral, the authority will try to determine whether there are grounds for a full investigation that could lead to criminal charges of misconduct in public office. The GLA said in a statement: "The Monitoring Officer of the GLA has today recorded a 'conduct matter' against Boris Johnson and referred him to the Independent Office for Police Conduct so it can assess whether or not it is necessary to investigate the former Mayor of London for the criminal offence of misconduct in public office."

It said the action had been taken in accordance with the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011. In a letter to Johnson, the GLA said: "Subject to any explanation provided by you, these matters give rise to a suggestion that there has been a failure to safeguard the public purse and if so that amounts to a significant breach of public trust. "These are the ingredients of the offence of misconduct in a public office," said the letter from the office of the authority's monitoring officer, which was made public.

The letter said Innotech, Arcuri's then company, received 11,500 pounds (\$14,000) from London & Partners, the mayor's promotional agency, for two events in 2013 and

mining and smugglers. Another source who was part of a mission to visit the area also confirmed the new death toll. "There are 37 injured, including 21 seriously," the second source said. Tibesti is largely lawless and home to numerous gangs and traffickers seeking to profit from a gold rush in the area.

Clashes in January between Arab miners from Libya and miners from Chad's Ouaddai community left "dozens" dead, according to security and mining sources. Kouri Bougoudi has been the centre of clashes among ethnic, local and foreign groups since 2012 and 2013 after the discovery of gold deposits there. The



HARLOW: Britain's Prime Minister Boris Johnson reacts as he talks with staff during his visit to The Princess Alexandra hospital in Harlow, north of London. —AFP

2014. She was able to attend a trade mission to Singapore and Malaysia in 2014 through Playbox, one of her companies, even though an initial application through Innotech had been declined.

The letter said the Monitoring Officer was also aware "from media reports and elsewhere" that Arcuri also had been allowed to participate in events around two other trade missions - to New York and

Israel in 2015 - although she had not qualified for the New York mission and had been rejected for the mission to Israel. Johnson has vowed to take Britain out of the European Union by Oct 31. British opposition parties are discussing tabling a vote of no-confidence in Johnson as early as next week over his handling of Brexit, the Telegraph newspaper reported on Friday. —Reuters

Chadian government has authorized mining companies to exploit the deposits but rights groups accuse authorities of using Arab fighters to force a takeover of the area.

Chad, a huge impoverished country in the heart of the Sahel, has been chronically unstable since it gained independence from France in 1960. In March, the Chadian government decided to set up a joint security force in Tibesti and closed the border with southern Libya - a major source of trafficking and a haven for Chadian rebels. That move was followed in August by a decree by President Idriss Deby declaring a state of emergency in Tibesti and two other provinces. —AFP