

Nepal rebels abandon unilateral ceasefire

AFP, Kathmandu
Nepal's Maoist rebels yesterday officially ended a four-month unilateral truce despite pleas from political parties and the United Nations, saying army attacks had forced them back on the offensive.

"The four-month ceasefire
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Rajshahi interns threaten strike from today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Interns at Rajshahi Medical College and Hospital yesterday threatened to start an indefinite strike from the afternoon today seeking implementation of their five-point demand.

They demonstrated on the campus and observed a three-hour token strike from 11:00am yesterday.

In a memorandum to the RMCH director, they warned of the strike.

Their demands include increasing interns' allowance and allocation of transport allowance in addition.

WB tags condition with \$2.89b loan

Asks govt to reduce graft, improve public procurement

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The World Bank will provide \$2.89 billion to Bangladesh in four years from the current fiscal under a new Country Assistance Strategy (CAS) on condition of 'reducing level of corruption' and improvement of the procurement process.

"We, the donors are very concerned about the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) in Bangladesh which is yet to operate and tackle corruption problem with specific cases," visiting World Bank Vice President Praful Patel told newsmen after a meeting with Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman.

"We all want the ACC to be a functioning body that takes up cases of corruption and publicise them to set example of reducing level of corruption," he said.

Patel was also critical about the existing procurement system in Bangladesh, saying, "Procurement is a big problem in Bangladesh that

needs reforms. It (Bangladesh) does not find fair procurement process like open and fair bidding as in other countries."

During the over two-hour long meeting at the Secretariat, Saifur and Patel discussed the WB's assistance to Bangladesh under the new CAS over the next three years.

Saifur said the WB Board will take the final decision about assistance to Bangladesh.

"But, the World Bank has indicated at providing \$500 million in the current fiscal, \$660 million in FY 07, \$830 million in FY 08 and \$900 million in FY 09," the minister said.

Asked about possible assistance to Bangladesh, Patel said, "It will be similar to last three years. Our desire is to increase the support as much as we can towards the growth and poverty reduction in the country."

He went on, "In the Country Assistance Strategy for next three

years, we will be including reforms for strengthening institutions like the ACC and auditing," he said.

"We will have to focus on making these bodies work, and during the meeting the minister also agreed with us," he added replying to a query about functioning of the ACC.

The WB vice president praised Bangladesh's performances in the macro economic sector. "In the last few months, Bangladesh has gone through a very difficult period because of oil price hike, and despite many other factors Bangladesh is doing very well to face the challenges."

He pointed out, "The growth rate here is very impressive when the current fiscal is projecting growth rate between 6 and 6.5 percent." There are also progress in the social sector and infrastructure development.

But Patel cautioned about



Local JCD activist Nezam Uddin, left, is seen accompanying EC-appointed enumerator Nepali Das, right, in making voter list at a house in Enayet Bazar in Chittagong yesterday. The controversial preparation of a fresh voter list began across the country on Sunday.

40pc of voters listed

Irregularities mark day 2

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The second day's work for controversial fresh voter list yesterday was marked by irregularities, people's ignorance of the ongoing process, and lack of coordination among the enumerators.

Due to these, enumeration in many places went on at a relatively slow pace yesterday, report our correspondents from different districts.

In the constituency of Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) MA Aziz in Barisal, names of many would-be voters regarded as supporters of the main opposition Awami League (AL) were reportedly excluded from the list.

In Chittagong, uncalled-for voluntary service of the ruling party activists hampered the information collection and the voter listing process. In the name of volunteering, they in fact tried to manoeuvre the enumeration process so that only the individuals with ruling alliance allegiance are enlisted as voters, alleged many intending voters in the port city.

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3,000 doctors to be recruited soon
PM tells BMA meeting, opens Saarc Medical Association

UNB, Dhaka

Some 3,000 physicians will be recruited through a special Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS) examination as the government wants to post one doctor in each of the unions of the country, Prime Minister (PM) Khaleda Zia announced yesterday.

The PM made the announcement while inaugurating the 18th medical conference and annual general meeting of Bangladesh Medical Association (BMA) at the Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre (BFCC).

Addressing physicians, she said the government has created 3,176 posts of physicians to recruit one doctor for each union to fulfil the ruling BNP's election commitment to ensure health service to rural people at grass-roots level.

Khaleda Zia, the current South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (Saarc) chairperson, also inaugurated Saarc Medical Association devoted to strengthening regional cooperation to provide better healthcare for some 1.5 billion people of South Asia.

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PHOTO: STAR

'Wanna', a three-day harvest festival of the Garo people, began yesterday at Madhupur in Tangail with traditional fervour.

Welcoming Wanna

EMRAN HOSSAIN EMON, from Madhupur

The three-day harvest festival, Wanna, arranged by the indigenous Garo people of Madhupur, began yesterday with a view to uphold the ancient religious rites and rituals.

Mandi, a community of the Garo people living in the Madhupur forest, has arranged the ancient festival for the third time since 2003, braving traumatic cultural conflicts between the tribal community and Bangales.

Members of the community

in colourful dresses started gathering at the venue as Rugala, welcoming session of the festival, began in the early hours yesterday.

According to their religious belief, Mishi Saljong, the supreme God, along with his daughter, son and other deities visit them after the harvest and the indigenous people start a fresh year through thanksgiving.

The Garo people from Chunia, Peergachha, Hagurakuri, Kyajai, Sainyamari, Thanarbaid and

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GIFT BOMB
2 JMB men remanded

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Two Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) members arrested on Saturday were placed on a seven-day remand yesterday. One of the suspects was caught with a bomb hidden in a sweetmeat box and a bouquet at Moghbazar in the city.

Ramna police produced the two arrestees -- Hafiz Ahmed Kadir

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Flash floods kill 31 in Indonesia

AFP, Jakarta

Flash floods triggered by monsoonal rains killed at least 31 people and swept away hundreds of houses in Indonesia's East Java.

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Prayer Timing		
January 3		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-30	6-05
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-00	4-15
Maghrib	5-27	5-30
Esha	7-00	7-30

Source: Islamic Foundation