

Nepal opposition asks Maoists to declare truce

Rebels reject king's offer, skip celebration, opposition parties nominate Koirala as new PM

AFP, Kathmandu

Nepal's capital was filled with jubilant crowds yesterday celebrating a dramatic victory against humbled King Gyanendra as opposition leaders urged Maoist rebels to declare a ceasefire.

Tens of thousands took to the streets to celebrate the king's climbdown late Monday after weeks of violent protests as they waved party flags and chanted "Long live democracy" and "Clear the royal

palace". Many, brandishing photographs of some of those killed during the 19 days of strikes and violent protests, massed at the home of three-time former premier Girija Prasad Koirala.

Koirala, now in his 80s, was nominated by the opposition Tuesday to be the new prime minister in the parliament when it sits in Kathmandu for the first time in four years on Friday.

But a united front against

Gyanendra was shaken when Maoist rebels flatly rejected the monarch's offer to reinstate parliament and warned of new violence.

Gyanendra snatched outright rule of the Himalayan kingdom 14 months ago, accusing the government of failing to tackle a bloody 10-year insurgency that has left more than 12,500 people dead.

"It's a new ploy to break Nepalese people and save his autocratic monarchy," Maoist leader Prachanda, known as the "Fierce

One", said in a statement.

The Maoist leader vowed to blockade the capital Kathmandu and other major centres.

But members of a seven-party opposition alliance said they expected the Maoists to come on board when their key demand for an elected assembly to write a new constitution was addressed by parliament. The assembly would decide on the future fate of the monarchy.

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Marma Singh Tripura and Didar Boli wrestle in the final of the traditional Jabbarer Boli Khela at Laldighi Maidan in Chittagong yesterday.

Marma, Didar share Jabbarer Boli Khela title

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Marma Singh Tripura, 27, of Khagrachhari and Didarul Alam Didar, 27, of Cox's Bazar retained their joint championship in the century-old wrestling competition 'Jabbarer Boli Khela' in the port city yesterday afternoon.

Of the 50 participants, 46 bolts (wrestlers) took part in the first round and four competed in the challenge bout of the competition organised by Jobbar Smriti Boli Khela O Baishakhi Mela Parishad in the city's Laldighi Maidan.

Marma Singh and Didar then moved to the final or championship round defeating Kamal of Rajshahi and Alam of Teknaf in the challenge bout.

In the keenly contested hour-long championship round

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Robbers in guise of Rab loot house, kill 1

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

A gang of robbers disguised as Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) personnel shot a person dead and robbed valuables worth Tk 40,000 at a house in Kamathgram of Nandigram upazila in the district Monday night.

Sources said the gang, consisting seven to eight robbers wearing black cloths and claiming themselves to be Rab members, raided the house of Ahsan Uddin around 11:00pm.

The robbers shot Abul Hossain of the same village after the robbery as they were leaving. Abul

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Tehran issues oil warning

Threatens to suspend ties with IAEA

AFP, REUTERS, Tehran

Iran's national security chief yesterday refused to rule out using oil as a weapon in a dispute over the Islamic republic's nuclear drive, saying any "radical measures" against the country would have "important consequences" for energy supplies.

"Iran will not start a crisis," Ali Larjani told reporters when asked if the country would use its vast oil reserves as a weapon in the nuclear standoff.

"But if we are subjected to radical measures, that will automatically have important consequences for oil," he added.

Iran's chief nuclear negotiator said yesterday his country would suspend ties with the UN nuclear watchdog and speed up its atomic programme if targeted by sanctions, as advocated by the United States.

Ali Larjani also said Iran would

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Bangla Bhai's wife sent to jail

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Netrakona

Fahima Chowdhury, wife of JMB second-in-command Bangla Bhai, was sent to jail on Monday following her confessional statement to a court in Netrakona.

The police produced Fahima before the first class magistrate court one day before the expiry of her 15-day remand. Magistrate Aminul Islam ordered to sent her to jail after recording her statement under section 164.

In her confessional statement, Fahima said that December 8 blast in Netrakona was planned at

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POWER OUTAGE IN CAPITAL

2m suffer for dead cable

Desa lacks expertise to fix it

JULFIKAR ALI MANIK

Already battered by severe lack of uninterrupted electricity supply because of the government's failure to generate adequate power, at least two million people of the capital are victims of additional sufferings due to a recent increase in load shedding everyday in a vast area from Dhanmondi to Kamrangirchar and from Adabor to Chawkbazar.

Just because the government has been stalling to repair an underground 132kv power cable in the

Ulan-Dhanmondi grid since March 19, the two million people are suffering around 12 hours of load shedding a day on an average.

Dhaka Electric Supply Authority (Desa), which is in charge of the cable, does not even know when it might be repaired as the job needs intervention by foreign experts.

Desa also needs a scanning device, which it does not have, to locate exactly where the cable is falling.

The cable remains completely dead for unknown reasons and

Desa is now supplying power to the affected areas with an alternate power line which is inadequate and inappropriate.

Due to this cable fault, five out of 34 divisions of Desa have been rendered partially functional. The affected divisions are Jhigatola, Satmasjid, Lalbagh, Dhanmondi and Paribagh. These five divisions cover Kamrangirchar, Chawkbazar, Lalbagh, Dhanmondi, Kalabagan, Jhigatola, Mohammadpur, Adabor,

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Satkhira BNP men grab land to set up club

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

A group of local leaders and activists of the ruling BNP forcibly occupied a schoolteacher's land by building a club and naming it after the prime minister's son Tarique Zia.

The incident took place at Jhnapaghat in Kalaroa upazila on April 14.

Sources said the Assistant Headmaster of Tujalpur High School Sirajul Islam of Sadar upazila built a house on his land on April 7 and had been residing there along with his family.

A group of local BNP cadres led by Abdur Rashid and Ahsan Habib demanded toll from him. As Sirajul refused to pay, the BNP cadres confined his family to their home by closing the entrance road.

Failing to get the toll the cadres forcibly occupied a portion of Sirajul's land and built a club with a signboard saying "Tarek Zia Sangsad" on April 14.

While talking to The Daily Star locals said a group of BNP leaders and activists led by Abdul Latif, Abdur Rahim, Ziarul Islam and

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Transport strike observed in southern region

Workers damage buses

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Transport workers damaged three passenger buses of Bangladesh Road Transport Corporation (BRTC) and another passenger bus of Comfort Transport Agency at Katakhal and Srighat under Bagerhat Sadar upazila during a daylong strike enforced by them yesterday.

Bus and minibus owners associations of Khulna, Barisal, Bagerhat, Pirojpur, Jhalakathi, Barguna and Patuakhali jointly called the strike on 50 routes of the southern region demanding cancellation of BRTC bus services on 50 routes of the seven districts.

According to witnesses, the unruly transport workers put up

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Sewage flows into Gulshan Lake in the capital's posh area polluting its water with Dhaka City Corporation turning a blind eye to this. The picture was taken yesterday.

'GRABBING' OF SHITALAKHYA

Foreshore's width at Kanchpur point to be surveyed

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA) is to survey a one-kilometre stretch of the river Shitalakhya at Kanchpur point to demarcate the exact width of its foreshore, part of which has been allegedly grabbed by the local ruling BNP lawmaker.

The directive for this came from a meeting of the inter-ministerial task force held at the Ministry of Shipping yesterday. The BIWTA has to complete the survey within two weeks.

Ministers and top officials of at

least 10 ministries, environmentalists and the lawmaker, Mohammad Gias Uddin, were present at the meeting chaired by Shipping Minister Akbar Hossain.

Members of the task will visit the site after the survey is completed and then decide how to free the area from encroachments, mainly by stone and brick traders.

Gias Uddin said at the meeting people of his area do not know the actual width of the river. It is quite normal that they use public land lying vacant for long to create employment opportunities. Rivers

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Prayer Timing		
April 26		
	Asan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-20	4-55
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-45	5-00
Maghrib	6-29	6-34
Esha	8-00	8-30

Source: Islamic Foundation