

Thai parliament begins overhaul of constitution

BANGKOK, May 25: Parliament began an overhaul of the constitution Monday to reduce the power of the military, a day after the despised, army-backed prime minister was ousted by a popular uprising, reports AP.

By an overwhelming margin, lawmakers gave initial approval to reforms demanded by hundreds of thousands of Thais who demonstrated on the streets last week against six decades of military dominance.

Prime Minister Suchinda Kraprayoon, a former army chief, resigned Sunday because of public outrage over the military's bloody suppression of the rallies. At least 48 people died as troops clubbed and shot demonstrators.

Suchinda, who toppled an elected government in 1991, was named prime minister April 7 by a coalition of pro-military parties formed after parliamentary elections in March. He did not run in the election.

The constitutional amendments approved Monday say the prime minister must be an elected politician; bar the military-appointed Senate from voting on legislation; and require that the Parliament president come from the elected lower house and not the Senate, the current practice.

Three votes are required for passage of the amendments. The process normally takes more than a month. But because of public pressure, Parliament held two votes Monday and will hold the final vote June 10.

The reforms almost certainly will be passed because

Beximco offices stormed, drug truck burnt

By Staff Correspondent

A group of unidentified persons exploded crackers at two offices of Beximco Pharmaceuticals Limited in Dhanmondi residential area in the city Monday, according to police.

The hurled crackers at a godown of Beximco at Dhanmondi Road No-7 and set ablaze a truck carrying medicines near the office at around 1:15 pm.

A Fire Service team rushed to the spot and brought the fire under control immediately, according to fire service officials.

Immediately after the incident the group of musclemen exploded at least seven crackers at the head office of Beximco, at Dhanmondi Road No-2 at around 2 pm.

The attackers also damaged a private car near the office and managed to escape by auto rickshaws.



DU Vice-Chancellor Prof Moniruzzaman Miah along with teachers and employees of the university placing wreaths at the mazar of National Poet Kazi Nazrul Islam yesterday. —Star photo

Masood, Hekmatyar agree to end war, hold poll in 6 months

KABUL, May 25: Two rival rebel chiefs on Monday agreed to put behind them their long-standing differences that have weakened the month-old Islamic interim government in war-weary Afghanistan, reports AP.

Guerrilla leader Gulbuddin Hekmatyar and Defense Minister Ahmed Shah Masood, following a seven-hour meeting, vowed to end the fighting from 14 years of civil war. They also called for national election within six months and for the withdrawal of all militia forces from the capital.

"This is a historical occasion," Masood said at the end of the meeting held at Hekmatyar's base 20 kilometers (12 miles) east of Kabul. Hekmatyar, leader of the Hazb-e-Islami, or Party of Islam, has refused to join the interim government until the Uzbek militia, headed by Gen. Abdul Rashid Dostum, is pulled out of the capital.

Despite Monday's agreement, it was uncertain if Dostum's fighters can be forced to leave the city.

While the two longtime en-

emies talked about peace, Hekmatyar's forces clashed with the Uzbek militia on the southern edge of Kabul in fighting that witnesses said left at least 18 people dead.

The thud of rockets and heavy artillery and blasts of machine-gun fire erupted late Sunday, echoing for several hours through the curfew-bound capital.

Sporadic blasts began after sunrise Monday and continued until sunset.

A column of tanks was seen moving through the city streets toward southern Kabul, where the fighting was concentrated.

The fighting resumed just hours before Hekmatyar and Masood met for the first time since the Islamic government replaced the Communist regime of ousted President Najibullah.

The two rival chiefs had aside their differences to battle a succession of Kremlin-backed governments. The Red Army ended its more than nine-year occupation in February 1989.

But leaders had been seek-

ing to dominate the interim rebel government that took power April 28.

Earlier, interim President Sibghatullah Mojaddidi had refused to give in to Hekmatyar's demands, calling Dostum "a great Islamic warrior" and praising him to help topple Najibullah.

The president last week promoted Dostum to a full rank of general in the new Islamic army, a gesture that prompted sharp criticism from Hekmatyar and other fundamentalist leaders.

At a news conference Monday, Mojaddidi released an April 5 letter from Hekmatyar to Dostum, backing the militia commander's attempt to topple Najibullah's government and restore peace and order to Afghanistan.

"Your courageous attempts are praiseworthy," said the letter on Hekmatyar's official stationery and signed the Amir of Hezb-e-Islami.

"I pray for your further successes to end the war and restore peace," it said.

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PM: Nazrul

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Quazi and Durjoy, granddaughter and grandson of the late poet. She was also presented with a golden crest on Nazrul's emblem.

Noted Nazrul singer Firoza Begum conducted the inaugural song at the function.

Later, the Prime Minister visited a fair, organised by the Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation, at Trisal Nazrul (Degree) College here and went round some of the 100 stalls set up there.

Begum Zia also visited a book fair arranged on the occasion of the anniversary of birth of the poet.

At another function in Comilla Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia said the ideals and thoughts of national poet Kazi Nazrul Islam provide us with a sense of direction to establish cultural democracy.

Inaugurating a three-day national level programme to celebrate the 93rd birth anniversary of the National Poet Kazi Nazrul Islam, Begum Zia said: "Poet Nazrul was a source of inspiration in our struggle during the War of Liberation as well as the anti-autocracy movement."

She said although the totalitarian rule has been driven away from our soil, the vices of the 9-year autocratic rule like erosion of moral values and distorted culture still remained in our mind.

"We shall have to strike hard to eliminate those," the Prime Minister said and called upon all to work with utmost sincerity and dedication in orienting our culture with the essence of nationalism.

The poet will always remain as a jewel in the fabric of our literature and culture, she said adding that his works could propel vigour and endeavour in changing the lot of the commonman.

Begum Zia said Comilla would remain a permanent witness to the chequered career of the rebel poet as the town was very dear to him.

"The rebel poet derived much inspiration from the lively activities of his town to compose many of his poems and songs," she said.

The Prime Minister lauded the Nazrul Institute for playing an effective role in the preservation and collection of the works of the rebel poet.

The inauguration session of the programme at the local stadium was also addressed among others by Commerce Minister MK Anwar, Works Minister Barrister Rafiqul Islam Miah, State Minister for Cultural Affairs Professor Jahannara Begum and Rabeya Chowdhury MP.

Later the Prime Minister inaugurated a book fair.

Day in city

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cultural function at the 'batamul' of the Academy which followed the discussion. Chhayanan, a leading cultural organisation of the country, also arranged musical and dance programme at the Shilpakala Academy auditorium at 7 pm to celebrate Nazrul's birth anniversary.

Bhasani Jaitiya Sangsad held a rally at the road island near the Dhaka University TSC and brought out a procession to mark the day. Abbasuddin Academy, Bangladesh Krishak Sramik Mukti Andolan and Janadal also organised separate programmes to celebrate the day.

Myanmar

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was led by Mr Dauduzzaman Chowdhury, Deputy Commissioner, Cox's Bazar, while a 10-member Myanmar team was led by Director of Immigration — U Aung Sein.

Both sides noted that some specific rules should be followed in preparing the list of Rohingya refugees to avoid any complication after their repatriation. The names, address and other particulars of each refugee to be repatriated should be clearly mentioned in the lists.

The sources also said that Myanmar side assured the Bangladesh team of full security of the Rohingyas after their repatriation.

Both sides also agreed to complete at the shortest possible time necessary formalities connected with preparation of the Rohingyas refugee lists in order to expedite repatriation works.

Workers Party demand week begins

By Staff Correspondent

The General Secretary of Bangladesh Workers Party, Rashed Khan Menon on Monday demanded improvement of law and order situation for the economic development of the country. He said, development and terrorism can not go hand in hand.

Menon was speaking on the occasion of the launching of 14-point demand week of the Bangladesh Workers Party in Dhaka.

The Midnight File

Iran warns of fresh crackdown on 'social vices'

NICOSIA, May 25: An Iranian official has warned of a new crackdown on "social vices", the Islamic Republic News Agency reported Monday.

The crackdown is expected to end a brief relaxation of strict Islamic laws, which demand that women cover themselves head to foot in public and prohibit socializing between the sexes, reports AP.

14 more killed in Punjab violence

CHANDIGARH, May 25: Five junior engineers, a deputy chief and a Lt Gen of separate faction of the Khalistan Commando Force were among 14 people killed in Punjab since last night. Militants shot dead five junior engineers of an electricity company at Ralla village in Mansa district last night. Two others were injured in the incident. According to police all the victims were from Tamil Nadu, reports PTI.

Hasina: Corruption

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tune through illegal means, making the poor poorer."

The Awami League chief further alleged that misuse of the inefficient government has deepened problems in every sphere of national life — political, economic and social.

Quoting statistics, she said prices of essentials, including rice, flour, pulses and clothes, have increased 6 to 27 times in last 15 years of rule by "autocratic regimes."

Sufferings of the poor and the limited income groups have aggravated as the people lost their buying capacity because of continued price-hike, Hasina said, adding that the present government has no control over the market.

The Awami League chief outlined her party's new economic policy and said it was designed to generate employment, increase agricultural and industrial production and set up export-oriented industries as well as small and cottage industries in rural areas.

"The people-oriented economic policy of Awami League is to attain a self-reliant economy and an exploitation-free society," she said.

Presided over by Jhikargachha Thana Awami League President Rabul Alam, the meeting was addressed, among others, by Dr Mohammad Selim, Mansur Ahmed Gazi, MP, Khan Tipu Sultan,

Zohora

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hora Tajuddin who, among other elderly leaders of the AL, is known to be an advocate of 'collective leadership' in the party, and favours 'democratic practices' within the party.

According to sources, the younger section of the party's Working Committee would propose disciplinary action against her.

Mostafa Mohsin Mantu, the General Secretary of the Dhaka district unit of the AL and Chairman of the party's youth front, was suspended from the party by a unanimous decision of the AL Working Committee on March 5 last on charge of involvement in the killing of Maniruzzaman Badal, organising secretary of the party's student wing, on January 9 this year.

Meanwhile, sources said the Working Committee meeting would approve the Khan Majlish led faction of the Dhaka district unit which held its council session at Savar on the same day the Mantu led faction had their council session at the Engineers Institution, in Dhaka.

An AL leader having sympathy for Zohora Tajuddin told this correspondent yesterday on condition of anonymity that despite the fact that Zohora Tajuddin was right in criticizing the AL high command for its undemocratic attitude, she made the remarks in a 'wrong place'.

He, however, told The Daily Star that the elderly leaders of the party sharing some of her views would defend her in the Working Committee meeting.

But the younger section of the AL leadership believes that letting Zohora's remark go unchallenged will encourage others to make further aspersions on the party high command, sources say.

Biman

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passengers but in vain. As a result the flight had to leave for Dhaka without picking up any passenger.

The Biman had to pay over 10 thousand US dollars for the landing and refueling which it would not have had to pay, had the plane flown direct to Dhaka.

Biman management sources explained the landing saying that Karachi always gave permission to board passengers even on extra flight operations. They said earlier, permission had sometimes even been obtained after boarding the passengers. They explained the attitude of Karachi airport authorities this time as 'unbusinessmen' like.

Shantibahini

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Section 144 was imposed following violence between two student groups Wednesday, gripped the town again following the latest killings, residents told The Daily Star over telephone.

The killings touched off protests by leaders of various local organisations. Those who protested the killings included Convenor of the Chittagong Human Rights Preservation Committee, President of the Bangladesh Human Rights Commission, Presidents of district Awami League and BNP, the Coordinator Rangamati Oikya Parishad and former Presidential and Adviser B K Dewan.

UNB adds: a meeting to review the overall situation at Rangamati town following last week's trouble was held with Deputy Commissioner Aftab Uddin Ahmed in the chair, reports UNB.

The meeting urged the residents of the town not to pay heed to any rumors and asked them to guard against all sorts of propaganda.

It was attended among others by former presidential advisers — Subimal Dewan and Bonoy Kumar Dewan, Raja Debashis Roy, BNP leader Nazimuddin, Awami League leader Rehan Uddin, local government representative Gano Bikash Chakma, president of Pahari Chhatra Parishad Prishtish Khisha and the elite of the town.

Today's meeting, called by the Deputy Commissioner, decided to form a "Communal Harmony Restoration Committee", with prominent leaders and the elite, to maintain peace and harmony in the town.

The meeting asked the town-dwellers to help the inquiry committee, recently formed to probe into the May 20 incident in the town and urged the government to send more relief goods for the victims of the area.

It also told the members of the Pahari Chhatra Parishad to refrain from giving misleading statements. Central leaders of the Parishad were present at the meeting.

Later in the evening, Chakma King Debashish Roy held a press conference at which he sought all out cooperation from the community in maintaining peace.

He expressed his surprise at recent press reports that said the Pahari Chhatra Parishad reportedly held meeting at his residence. He said no such meeting was held at his residence.

"I will work my level best to restore the communal harmony in the town", he said, adding "I am ready to work shoulder to shoulder with the local leaders for the improvement of situation here."

Meanwhile, Section 144 imposed by the authorities, continued for the sixth consecutive day today when no untoward incident was reported.

It was found by the committee that the required number of students did not obtain the qualifying 60 per cent marks in the written test.

Considering all aspects, the handout said, it was decided unanimously that no justifiable proofs had been found about the leakage of question papers and the allegations were thus totally unfounded.

The government has accepted the report of the committee and re-fixed 55 per cent marks for qualifying in the test, in view of the fact that the required number of students had not obtained the 60 per cent marks.

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Teachers and employees of Dhaka City College yesterday brought out a silent procession protesting assault on college teachers and demanding punishment to the persons responsible. —Star photo

Ershad, Mosharraf face fresh corruption charge

Former President HM Ershad and his industries secretary AKM Mosharraf Hossain were Monday brought to the dock on a new charge of sustaining Tk 35 lakh loss to Shilpa Bank by abusing their powers, reports UNB.

They were charged in the Special Court of Mohammad Ali Khan under Section 5 (1) (d) and 5 (2) of the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1947. The offence is punishable by a maximum of seven years in jail.

The 62-year deposed president has already been sentenced to 13 years in jail for keeping illegal arms and amassing wealth beyond known sources of his income. Ershad and Mosharraf are also facing about a dozen other corruption cases.

According to the charges in the present case, Firoz Kabir, former upazilla chairman of Savar, his brother Jahangir Kabir and Borhanuddin of Messrs Three Star Poultry Farm took a loan of Tk 20,39,327 from Bangladesh Shilpa Bank in September 1979. The loan burden mounted to Tk 54.86 lakh by the middle of 1988.

Begum Nurunnahar Shelly, wife of Jahangir Kabir, directly applied to President Ershad in January 1990 seeking exemption of interest accrued on the loan.

Former industries secretary Mosharraf Hossain, who was chairman of the BSB Board of Directors, forwarded the application to the Managing Director with a note that "the proposal was given to me by the Honourable President, put up in the next Board meeting," the charge said.

Debarred from seeking

Tinbigha

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Guha exhorted the 15,000 strong crowd to take a pledge to sacrifice their lives to save Tinbigha, and described the move as a conspiracy to give away Indian land to Bangladesh on the pretext of perpetual lease and international commitments.

He warned that a single bullet on the anti-Tinbigha activists would paralyse West Bengal and put an end to Jyoti Basu's 15 year regime in the state.

Earlier, he told newsmen that he had sent his reply to the showcase issued to him by the Forward Bloc chief, Ashok Ghosh, for allegedly violating party lines on the Tinbigha issue. However, he refused to divulge the contents of the letter saying that it would be a breach of party discipline.

The Forward Bloc MP, Amar Rai Pradhan, addressing the gathering said that Jyoti Basu who was the worst critic of the centre's policies, had now become the yes man of the Congress-I government at the centre, particularly on the Tinbigha issue.

Meanwhile the West Bengal government has requested the union Home Ministry to send additional central forces to ensure law and order during the leasing out of the Tinbigha corridor to Bangladesh on June 26, official sources said Monday.

A letter to this effect had already been sent to the Home Ministry, the sources said.

The state has decided to publish a booklet containing the governments' stand on Tinbigha and the views expressed by political leaders at the recently held all party meeting. The booklet, which was being processed, was expected to be released by the end of this week, the sources added.

Business man stabbed to death

By Staff Correspondent

A businessman was stabbed to death at West Dhanmondi in the city late Sunday night. After closing his shop "Bismillah Store" the victim, Haji Nazimuddin Chowdhury, 47, was going back home Sunday night, when a group of armed people attacked him near his residence at West Dhanmondi, Road No 10 A. The attackers severely beat him up and repeatedly stabbed him and escaped immediately. Fatally injured Nazimuddin was rushed to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital where doctors declared him dead. The body was sent to the hospital morgue for autopsy.

Meanwhile, the victim's relatives said, a group of extortionists demanded money from Nazimuddin few days back but he refused to pay. Dhanmondi police said, they are yet to round up any one of the murderers till last night.