

Opposition names new Kyrgyz acting president

REUTERS, Bishkek

Kyrgyzstan's opposition, after seizing power in what the ousted leadership called a coup, on Friday named a new acting president and appealed for calm in the capital after a night of violence, burning and looting.

President Askar Akayev fled the White House on Thursday -- the seat of government in the mountainous state -- before it was engulfed by thousands of people demonstrating against a disputed parliamentary poll and years of poverty and corruption.

"God forbid anybody would have to have such a revolution," Felix Kulov, freed from jail by supporters

on Thursday and appointed acting interior minister, told state television. "It was a rampage of looting, just like in Iraq."

The Kyrgyz ambassador to the United States called it a coup.

"This ... is an anti-constitutional coup," Baktybek Adrisaev told CNN. Impoverished Kyrgyzstan -- where the average person gets by on a dollar a day -- became the third ex-Soviet state in two years, after Georgia and Ukraine, where popular revolt after disputed elections has ousted the entrenched leadership.

But it is the only one where the protesters turned violent. Opposition leader Kurmanbek Bakiev, who played a central role in

Thursday's mass protests in the capital Bishkek where crowds took over the main government building, said he had been named acting president.

"Parliament today appointed me prime minister and gave me the functions of president," he told supporters in Bishkek.

Parliament had initially appointed another opposition leader Ischenbai Kadyrbekov as acting president.

Analysts say there is little love lost between the key opposition leaders with Kulov, freed from jail by protesters on Thursday, seen as more popular than Bakiev. No foreign government has yet recognised the new leadership.



A human chain at Shahbagh in the city yesterday demand of the government to shift the grave of Birsreshtha Flight Lt Matiur Rahman from Pakistan to Bangladesh.

PHOTO: STAR

New chiefs of EC

FROM PAGE 1

whole affair.

Some names have already been floated in the administrative and political corridors, the sources said.

Meanwhile, thanks to the increase in the retirement age of Supreme Court judges, it seems settled that the immediate past Chief Justice KM Hasan will lead the next interim government. But the extension has given rise to some sharp political controversies. The mainstream opposition parties question the motive of the government decision, alleging it was to ensure that Justice Hasan becomes the chief adviser to the next caretaker government.

The opposition leaders claimed Justice Hasan is biased to the ruling BNP, as he once was involved in its politics. They have been demanding appointment of the interim government chief through a consensus to make him acceptable to all.

officer to head the army.

During the caretaker government, the president looks after the defence ministry and the army plays a vital role in conducting the polls.

It is significant that two former army chiefs, who retired in recent times, joined the two major political parties. Of them, General (Retd) Mustafizur Rahman contested the last parliamentary election with Awami League ticket and Lt Gen (Retd) Mahubur Rahman was elected a BNP lawmaker.

NEXT AIR FORCE CHIEF

A number of senior air force officers are lobbying to succeed the present air force chief, Fakhru Azam, who is set to retire in April.

The role of air force is not that significant in domestic affairs including the elections. Only a few air force personnel are usually deployed along with other law enforcers during the polls to help maintain the law and order.

So, the appointment of a new air chief is not being seen as that important matter.

Meanwhile, the government recently has appointed a new chief of staff of the navy.

Highway robbery on rise in South-West

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Increased highway robberies in the South-Western regions have made transportation of passengers and goods especially at night risky.

Despite the anti-crime steps like installation of close circuit cameras and intensified patrol by law enforcers, robbers are conducting daring hold-ups, leaving passengers and drivers utterly helpless.

During the last three weeks, ten daring highway robberies were committed in the region, police said.

On March 12 night, robbers looted a truck-full of rice, money and wrist-watches from the driver, helper and rice trader. The same night, the gang looted Tk 15,000 from a filling station at Kaliganj in Jhenidah district.

On March 13 night, armed robbers snatched a Khulna-bound coach at Khajure on Jessore-Magura highway came under attack by armed robbers. An angry mob caught hold of six robbers and gouged out their eyes while four robbers of the same gang escaped with 30 cell phones, 30 tolas of gold ornaments, Tk 50 lakh and other valuables, leaving nine passengers injured.

To contain highway robbery, police patrol has been intensified, said a senior officer of Khulna police.

Besides, there is a plan to set up police camp every 40 kilometre on Dhaka-Khulna road, he added.

Anti-smoking law

FROM PAGE 1

station buildings, bus terminal buildings, ferries, cinema halls, covered exhibition centres, theatres, shopping centres, public toilets, and government and private owned children parks.

Motor vehicles, buses, trains, passenger ships, launches, all mechanised vehicles and aeroplanes are referred to as public transport under the law.

The law, however, does not prohibit smoking in open space, hotels and restaurants and parks.

The law suggests that the owner, caretaker, controlling authorities and management of public places and public transport could have an area within designated as smoking zone.

It prohibits advertisement of tobacco products in cinema halls, government and private TV channels, sale of films or videotape containing tobacco products, publication of tobacco advertisements in books, magazines, leaflets, handbills, billboards, newspapers, etc.

The law also said that other existing laws related to anti-smoking would also require compliance. Other laws include, a) The

Railway Act, 1890, b) The Juvenile Smoking Act, 1919, c) The Dhaka, Chittagong, Khulna and Rajshahi Metropolitan police ordinances.

The law also prohibits donation of any tobacco products, sponsoring in any ceremony or sports tournament and sponsoring scholarship to individuals by tobacco producers.

Violators of this clause of the law may be liable to three months' imprisonment or a fine of Tk 1000.

The law also prohibits installation of any vending machine from where tobacco products can be purchased through an automatic system.

All packets or containers of tobacco products must display, at least on 30 per cent of the total area, any of the health warnings: Smoking leads to death; Smoking can cause stroke; Smoking can cause heart diseases; Smoking can cause lungs cancer; Smoking leads to respiratory problems; Smoking is bad for health.

Meanwhile, to encourage tobacco farmers to cultivate alternative crops, the government has decided to provide them with soft loan support.

Suicide attacks

FROM PAGE 16

checkpoint in the east of the city, 68 miles west of Baghdad, at around 7 p.m.

Checkpoints were established at entrances to Ramadi last month to try to crack down on guerrillas who have mounted frequent attacks in the city.

In Baghdad, nine Iraqi soldiers were wounded when their patrol hit a roadside bomb on the capital's southern side at dawn Friday, said medical sources at Yarmuk hospital.

In further violence north of the capital, a mortar attack on an Iraqi army barracks in Suleiman Beg killed one soldier and wounded a man who had come to visit one of his soldier sons, said an army spokesman.

He added that four mortar rounds fell on the camp at about 7:00 am (0400 GMT) causing heavy damage.

Another mortar attack on a convoy near Tikrit, 180km north of Baghdad, destroyed a truck with Turkish license plates, said police sources in the area. The fate of the driver was unknown.

As the political drama played itself out, Iraqi troops battled insurgents in their former stronghold of Fallujah and five Iraqi policemen and soldiers died in a friendly-fire incident on Thursday.

Violence carried on Thursday as bullets flew in the former rebel stronghold of Fallujah, a Sunni town west of the Iraqi capital, a defence ministry official said, without giving a toll.

An AFP reporter said shots were heard from the city's northwestern Jolan district.

Elsewhere, a friendly-fire incident near the Syrian border between Iraqi police and army left five dead.

Iraqi police and army traded fire in Rabiya, 130km northwest of Mosul, leaving three soldiers and two police dead, Major General Mohamed al-Jaburi told AFP.

1100 fake mobile phone cards seized in Jessore

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jessore

Police on Thursday seized 1100 pieces of fake mobile phone cards from Eden Market in the town and arrested four people.

The arrestees are Shahidur Rahman Khokon, son of Tofazzel Hossain and Kamaluddin Rana, son of Hasan Ali of Shankarpur area in the town, Parvez Khan, son of Kader Khan of Karbala area in the town and Anisur Rahman, son of Raushan Ali of Chalnahati village under Monirampur upazila.

Acting on a tip-off, Kotwali police nabbed Anisur Rahman at a shop in the market at around 11:00am and seized the fake mobile phone cards from his bag.

On his statement, police later arrested the other three from BD Tel Sat.com Internet office at Garikhana road in the town.

EU asks Israel to stop expansion of settlement

AFP, Brussels/ Washington

EU foreign policy chief Javier Solana voiced concern at Israeli plans to expand settlements in the West Bank and urged Prime Minister Ariel Sharon to freeze construction, in a statement issued Friday.

Solana expressed "concern following the Israeli decision to grant a building permit for (expansion plans) at Maale Adumin," a key settlement just east of Jerusalem.

"This decision runs counter to the commitment by parties involved to abstain from any unilateral action which could affect a final solution" to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, he added.

Independence Day

FROM PAGE 1

After many years of political and economic exploitation, the Bangladesh' nationalist sentiments paved the way for the massive victory of the Awami League led by Bangabandhu in the 1970 Pakistan national elections.

The Pakistani junta in the then West Pakistan however refused to hand over power to the then East Pakistanis. They stalled installation of the newly elected parliament and started ethnic genocide aimed at extinguishing all signs of Bangalee nationalist movement.

In the face of this, the inevitable declaration of independence came on March 26.

Bangalee policemen and paramilitary and army personnel had defected from the West and trained the general public, who took up arms to fight for freedom.

They had fought without proper food, shelter, training and arms and ammunition. But it was their determination to free the motherland and the all-out support of the people that had led to victory.

But for the last three and a half years, Jamaat-e-Islami, which had opposed the Liberation War and helped Pakistani military forces kill freedom fighters and intellectuals, has been enjoying the state power.

Even two of its leaders, known to be involved in anti-liberation activities in 1971, are now in the cabinet.

entertain the public. Army band will perform at the Crescent Lake point, Navy at the Farmgate and Airforce at the Second National Stadium, Mirpur point from 3:00pm to 5:00pm.

A number of navy ships will remain open to public at Sadarghat in Dhaka, Chittagong, Khulna, Mongla port and Barisal from 2:00pm to 5:30pm.

To mark the day, the ruling BNP has taken up a 10-day programme that includes placing wreaths at the national memorial and mazar of late president Ziaur Rahman. The BNP also brings out an Independence Day rally from its party office at 4:00pm today.

The Awami League (AL) will bring out an Independence Day rally at 3:00pm in front of its party office at Bangabandhu Avenue.

Other political parties, social and cultural organisations have chalked out separate programmes to mark the day.

MESSAGES

President Iajuddin Ahmed, Prime Minister Khaleda Zia and Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina in separate messages have paid deep respect to the martyrs of the Liberation War.

The president in his message urged all to work selflessly from their respective positions to fulfil the public's basic needs such as food, clothes, shelter, education and healthcare to make independence meaningful.

The prime minister recalled with gratitude the supreme sacrifices of the freedom fighters and contributions of other people at home and abroad during the Liberation War.

She called upon all to be united to build a happy, prosperous, peaceful and free democratic society.

The opposition chief said the desire for achieving political and economic freedom and ensuring justice and democracy has grown among the people after the nation achieved freedom under the leadership of Bangabandhu.

"But the misrule of the BNP-Jamaat-led alliance government is taking the nation towards a disaster," Hasina, also Awami League chief, said. She called upon all to come forward unitedly against the government's 'misrule'.

(More on metropolitan page)

Back from Brunei

FROM PAGE 16

through legal documents he paid 1,10,000 Singapore dollars (about Tk 36 lakh) to Caresan Realty and Management, a company registered in Brunei, for providing jobs 88 Bangladesh workers in a construction firm in 2001.

But at the final stage of the process, Paradise International, another Bangladeshi recruiting agent, illegally gained the contract paying Caresan Realty and Management a higher sum, Rahman alleged.

He told journalists that he filed a case against the company with a magistrate court in Brunei and appealed to the Bangladesh High Commission there and Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training in Dhaka to look into the matter.

"But I was given no solution, no compensation; on the contrary, Paradise International continued its business without any interruption," Rahman said.

Rahman eventually left manpower business and began a department store in Brunei while running the case. "Since then I have always helped the Bangladeshi workers there and have been vocal against the malpractice of recruiting agencies, for which other recruiting agencies now consider me as their enemy," he added.

The hearing of the case was scheduled for June 16 to 20 this year. "Sensing that the verdict would go in my favour, the Brunei immigration, in connivance with Caresan, compelled me to come back home without giving any reason," he alleged.

The immigration even detained him for at least five hours, he said. "The Bangladesh Mission in Brunei did not provide me with any help despite my appeal."

MM Rahman demanded that the government take immediate measures and help him recover the huge financial loss.

Galib

FROM PAGE 16

with strict security and police protection.

Professor of Arabic department at Rajshahi University, Galib was brought to the district jail here from Gaibandha on the night of March 19.

A number of robbers, who were arrested in the Kotalipara Brac office robbery case on January 17, admitted that they were the followers of Dr Galib.

On their confessional statements, Galib was implicated in the case, police said.

CCC elections acid test

FROM PAGE 1

city better if they are elected to the office.

The EC is monitoring the situation and giving the necessary directives to the election officials concerned to conduct the polls in a free and fair manner. It is also considering taking unprecedented security measures through the home ministry to ensure a credible election, sources said.

They said the EC will hold a high-powered meeting next month to review the law and order situation and chalk out the security plan for the polls.

COALITION'S PLAN

The four-party coalition has decided to extend all-out support to its mayoral candidate and asked the local leaders to work for him, sources said.

They said a number of senior coalition leaders are expected to visit Chittagong ahead of the polls to campaign for Mir Nasir.

Nasir has set up his main election office at Nasiman Bhaban and formed a number of cells and committees to monitor and conduct the election campaign in a planned way.

The components of the coalition however are squabbling over candidature for the ward commissioners' posts.

"If the bargaining is settled peacefully then the coalition will be in a positive condition to face the candidate of the opposition combine," said a local BNP lawmaker wishing anonymity.

Besides, the internal feud in the local BNP will be a major problem for the coalition candidate, though the party has initiated steps to resolve the crisis, he added.

AL'S PREPARATIONS

A body named United Citizens' Committee has been formed to drum up popular support for Mohiuddin, the Awami League-backed mayoral candidate, twice elected as CCC mayor.

Mohiuddin also plans to set up a number of committees to keep watch on the polling centres to thwart any bid to rig the election.

Party sources said frontline AL

leaders will visit the port city to canvass for their candidate.

"We don't want to be defeated in this poll, as it will be the last showdown before the next parliamentary elections," a senior AL leader said.

The party will finalise its election plan in consultation with Mohiuddin, attaching due importance to his ideas, as he had contested and won the last two CCC polls.

The AL also has formed a sub-committee to monitor the election. The sub-committee headed by AL Presidium Member Suranjit Sengupta will visit Chittagong on March 28 to examine the pre-polls scenario. "We will [then] make a report on what should be done," Sengupta told The Daily Star yesterday.

He criticised the ruling coalition candidate for not resigning from the cabinet before participating in the local government election, alleging it was from an ill motive to influence the election by using the state machinery.

EC'S SECURITY PLANS

The EC next month will hold a meeting with the law enforcement agencies to review the law and order situation. It will also ask the government to deploy army personnel to help conduct a free and fair election.

The security plan will be finalised just before the election day, taking into account the prevailing situation, EC sources said.

The home ministry with the help of local police administration will identify the vulnerable polling stations and take appropriate security measures in line with the EC's recommendations, sources at the ministry said.

"We'll do every thing in our power to hold the election in a free and fair manner," Election Commissioner AK Mohammad Ali told The Daily Star.

Officials at the EC Secretariat said the budget of the polls will exceed Tk 50 lakh, of which a major portion will be allocated to maintain law and order at around 500 polling centres.

The city corporation has over 11.40 lakh voters.

Rab completes

FROM PAGE 1

Sultana Kamal of Ain o Salish Kendro told the BBC Bangla Service, "Which of the crimes will we accept when one is curbed by another?"

As many as 150 people have so far been killed in Rab 'crossfire', she said.

State Minister for Home Lutfuzzaman Babar yesterday told the BBC that the question of human rights does not come up when a criminal kills eight to 10 people on an average.

Even the question of human rights does not arise when 30 to 35 policemen are being killed on an average in the hands of criminals every year, he added.

"But questions of human rights come up when those criminals are being killed in encounters with the Rab," Babar said.

However, Abdul Jalil, general secretary of the main opposition Awami League, alleged the force is being used for political purpose, mentioning the death of a witness to AL lawmaker Ahsanullah Master killing in Rab custody.

He alleged the Rab kills criminals in the name of crossfire within 24 hours of their arrests. "Crossfire takes place when both sides trade fire, but this crossfire is one sided," the BBC quoted Jalil as saying.

5 joint venture hospitals

FROM PAGE 16

of poor patients," Health Secretary A F M Sarwar Kamal told The Daily Star.

The hospital with US doctors heading all its wings and nursing staff also from that country is likely to operate by the yearend, sources said.

Another 200-bed hospital is likely to open by mid-next year at Nikunja, Uttara, jointly managed by Escort Hospital of India and Japan-Bangladesh-Friendship-Hospital. Foreign and local investment for the project is estimated at about Tk 80 crore.

When the joint venture hospitals equipped with high-tech new generation equipment and apparatus start functioning, Bangladeshi patients will for the first time get treatment directly under foreign doctors, surgeons, physiotherapists, nurses and experts in various fields, sources pointed out.

Under strict foreign management, the joint venture hospitals will

BSF guns down

FROM PAGE 1

traders and shot them dead.

Some people of Gazipur, a frontier village under Sathkira Sadar upazila, said they found the two bodies lying in the beel (water body).

When contacted, Major Nomani, acting commanding officer of 41 Rifles Battalion, told this correspondent that the bodies of the two cattle traders were found lying inside the Indian territory, 500 yards off the zero point.

"We have sent a protest letter to the BSF authorities asking them to return the bodies," the commanding officer said.

Tata

FROM PAGE 1

region. "Ratan Tata told reporters on the sidelines of an extra-ordinary general meeting of the company in Mumbai on Thursday.

He said the Tata Group had undertaken a study for investments in Bangladesh and evinced keen interest in setting up fertiliser, power and steel plants in that country. "The investment plans would be finalised after we complete the study and submit it to Bangladesh government and they get back to us," he added.

The Tata Group chairman, whose proposed two billion dollar projects in Bangladesh would depend heavily on supply of natural gas, emphasised the importance of steady availability of raw materials like iron ore and coal and said Tata Steel was eyeing to own properties abroad for raw materials and not merely to source them from there.

Pak score

FROM PAGE 1

Youhana (37).

Off-spinner Harbhajan Singh finished with six wickets for 152, including the scalp of Younis.

India, who lead the three-match series 1-0, were 55 without loss at the close with Virender Sehwag lashing a 33-ball 39, including five fours and huge straight six off Danish Kaneria.

Paceman Lakshminpathy Balaji got India off to a dream start again on Friday, striking with his first delivery.

Balaji, who had removed opener Shahid Afridi with his first ball on Thursday, trapped Inzamam lbw with a good-length delivery that came in just enough to beat the bat.

That was the only time Inzamam, the fifth player to score a century in his 100th Test, was comprehensively beaten during his 264-ball knock.

BSF guns down

traders and shot them dead.

Some people of Gazipur, a frontier village under Sathkira Sadar upazila, said they found the two bodies lying in the beel (water body).

When contacted, Major Nomani, acting commanding officer of 41 Rifles Battalion, told this correspondent that the bodies of the two cattle traders were found lying inside the Indian territory, 500 yards off the zero point.

"We have sent a protest letter to the BSF authorities asking them to return the bodies," the commanding officer said.