

Bhutan opposition resigns amid vote row

AFP, New Delhi

Bhutan's first week as the world's newest democracy has been marred by the resignation of its opposition amid allegations of foul-play in historic elections that ended a century of absolute monarchy.

The People's Democratic Party, which won just two seats to a new 47-seat national assembly, said it will ask Bhutan's Election Commission to look into possible illegal last-minute campaigning by the winning party.

"We feel that in a number of constituencies the balance may have been tilted due to last-minute campaigning," Tashi Tsering, spokesman for the opposition People's Democratic Party told AFP from Thimpu by telephone Sunday.

Bhutan gave a stunning landslide victory in Monday's polls to the Druk Phuensum Tshogpa (DPT) or Bhutan United Party, led by ex-premier Jigmi Thinley, surprising analysts who had predicted a close race.

"We knew elections were going to be very competitive," said Tsering. "We knew there was a possibility of losing, but not by the margin we experienced."

The party told the state-run Kuensel newspaper on Saturday that it had received reports from several districts suggesting that campaigning took place in the 48 hours up to voting on March 24 in violation of election regulations.

Its two winning candidates resigned their seats in protest Friday, leaving the national assembly with no opposition, the Kuensel reported.

Tsering added that the party was

not trying to overturn the election results, "but to ensure that such things -- if they occurred -- do not happen again in the future."

The opposition party has until April 4 to file a petition.

The head of Bhutan's Election Commission, Kunzang Wangdi, said on Sunday that his office had yet to receive any complaints but added that the polls were viewed as "a free and fair election by the media, by everybody."

Some 42 international observers monitored the landmark vote to peacefully transform the tiny Buddhist nation, wedged between massive neighbours India and China, into a constitutional monarchy.

The EU and the United States hailed the elections this week and said they met international standards.

Husband, his accomplice get death penalty for killing wife

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday sentenced two people to death for killing the wife of one of them in September 2003.

Judge Mohammad Nurul Huda of the Speedy Trial Tribunal-3 handed down the verdict to Abu Yusuf, a medical assistant of the air force, and his colleague Habibur Rahman. The victim, Selina Akhter, was the wife of Abu Yusuf.

The convicts were tried in absentia.

The punishment of the convicts will be effective from the day of their arrest or surrender, the court said.

The judge, however, acquitted another accused, Mohammad Jasim Uddin, as the charges against him could not be proved.

According to the prosecution, Abu Yusuf along with his accomplice Habibur Rahman strangled his wife Selina, a final year student of Mirpur Government Bangla College, at the Botanical Garden at about 7:30pm on September 20, 2003 and dumped the body in a nearby pond.

The police recovered the body two days after the incident.

The police also arrested Yusuf and Habib on different dates the same year. But both of them obtained bail from the High Court through forged documents and went into hiding.

During the investigation, Yusuf had given a confessional statement to the magistrate.

Special Public Prosecutor Shahidul Islam Sarder appeared for the state while Advocate Abdus Sattar defended the accused.



Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed visits stalls after inauguraing 'Bari technology transfer workshop 2008' at Gazipur yesterday. Bangladesh Agricultural Research Institute (BARI) organised the workshop. (Story on page 1)

Campaign to promote safe migration launched

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit (RMMRU) yesterday launched its countrywide campaign to promote safe migration.

The slogan of the campaign is

'Nirapad Obhivasan Chai, Desh Gortey Bidesh Jai' (we are going abroad to build the nation, we demand safe migration) and its objective is to raise awareness among the people about safe migration. Manusher Jonno Foundation is supporting the campaign.

Lifting of emergency demanded

A CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Chhatra Union (BCU) observed Shaheed Aslam Day amid different programmes on Dhaka University (DU) campus yesterday.

Majaharul Haque Aslam, a BCU leader, was shot dead by a gang of terrorists in front of the arts building during an anti-autocratic procession on March 30 in 1986.

The day was observed through placing wreaths at his grave, rally and discussion.

BCU central leaders and university unit leaders spoke in the rally.

The student leaders said the fundamental and constitutional rights of the people could not be hampered imposing state of emergency. They also demanded lifting of state of emergency and holding free, fair and impartial polls to keep democratic process running.

Opposition slams Malaysia govt for refusing to free lawmaker

AFP, Kuala Lumpur

A Malaysian opposition party yesterday condemned the government for its refusal to free an ethnic Indian activist who was elected earlier this month as a state legislator while in detention.

Lawyer M. Manoharan, standing for the Democratic Action Party (DAP), soundly beat the incumbent in Selangor state while being held under the Internal Security Act (ISA), which allows for indefinite detention without trial.

DAP leader Lim Kit Siang said Manoharan and four other ethnic Indian activists should be freed.

"It shows that Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi's administration has not really heard the voice of the people in the March 8 political tsunami to change towards a more democratic and accountable Malaysian society," he told AFP.

"The ISA detentions are used as political instruments to suppress dissent. It has no relationship whatsoever with national security."

The five activists -- leaders of the rights group Hindraf -- were detained last December for organising an unprecedented mass rally the month before, claiming discrimination against ethnic Indians.

The Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC), part of the multi-ethnic ruling Barisan Nasional coalition, on Sunday made an about-face and said it would now ask Abdullah to free the activists.



Participants sing national anthem at a reception ceremony for Dalit freedom fighters at the Biam auditorium in the city yesterday.

Small jet carrying five crashes into house in SE England

AFP, London

A small jet aircraft carrying five people has crashed into a house in Farnborough, Kent, in southeastern England yesterday, police and fire brigade sources said.

"A jet with five people on board has crashed into a house," a spokesman for the London Fire Brigade said, adding that he was unaware if there were any casualties or fatalities.

"There is a fire. The operation is ongoing. There are 50 firefighters on the site and helicopters from the police," he said.

Sky News showed footage of black smoke billowing from a house that was destroyed by the crash, while another house next door was still on fire.

The television channel quoted a pilot named John, who said that as he was coming in to land at nearby Biggin Hill airport, he overheard a Mayday call on the radio from a plane carrying five passengers.

"He reported five passengers, including the pilot himself," said John.

While the pilot had said he was experiencing "severe engine vibrations," John said the prevailing weather conditions had been "nice and smooth" for flying.

Sky News said the crashed plane had been en route to France, though it did not reveal its source.

The television channel also reported that according to neighbours the residents of the destroyed house were on holiday at the time.

The plane crashed into a house in the Broadwater Gardens area of Farnborough, a spokesman for the Metropolitan Police said, adding that ambulance services were also at the scene.

'Awareness can help check diseases'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khagrachhari

Speakers in a discussion yesterday said media can play important role to create mass awareness to reduce the incidents of communicable, non-communicable and malnutrition-related diseases.

They were speaking at a workshop titled on 'Sensitisation workshop on health education and promotion' organised by Bangladesh Centre for Communication Programme at district Civil Surgeon's Office in hill town Khagrachhari.

Malaria, a serious infectious disease, has killed 74 people in last year while over 75 thousand were affected by the disease during the same period in eight upazilas in Khagrachhari district, they said.

If mass awareness can be created and media play their proper role, over 60% of diseases including malaria would be checked in the district, they said.

They urged creating awareness on tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS, highly pathogenic avian influenza, leprosy, dengue, cancer, cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, disabilities, blindness and some other communicable, non-communicable, and malnutrition-related diseases.

Khagrachhari Hill District Council (KHDC) Chairman Monindra Lal Tripura was present as chief guest at the discussion presided over by district Civil Surgeon Dr Abu Taher. Health Officer Mammong Marma delivered the keynote papers.

KHDC councillor Sanu Mong Marma, Deputy Chief of Health and Education Bureau

Mohammad Sajedur Rahman, District Ansar Adjutant Chowdhury Muhammad Hamid Al Mahmud, Bangladesh Centre for Communication Programme representative Meharab Ali Khan and Snigdhaspous.

Eviction of Jatiya Mukti Council office condemned

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Different organisations yesterday condemned the eviction of the office of Jatiya Mukti Council by some miscreants in presence of the law enforcement agency.

At a press conference in the city, Council leaders said in presence of police some criminals of MS Hossain Electric Industries and Karmochari Bahumukhi Samabay Samity vandalised their office and destroyed valuable documents, and hundreds of rare books.

The miscreants also looted computers, printers and scanners, said the leaders.

They said with the approval of the court and paying rent regularly they have been living in the holding for over 30 years.

Chittagong Hill Tracts Hill Students' Council, Gonosanghati Andolan, Bangladesher Samajtantrik Dal and Samajtantrik Chhatra Front also condemned the incident.

2 held for trying to commit robbery

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Two persons including a woman were held by the mob and handed over to police while they were trying to commit robbery in a house in the port city yesterday.

The arrestees were identified as Iqbal Majid, 34, son of late Kuddus Ali of Sandwip, and Ferdous Ara, 30, daughter of Abdus Sobhan.

Sources said Iqbal and Ferdous in the name of collecting data for birth registration entered the house of one Touhid Alam, an engineer of Karnaphuli Fertiliser Company (Kafo), on the second floor of a six-storied building at Amirbagh Residential area under Kotwali Police Station at around 12:00 noon.

Knowing that the housewife Nusrat Touhid was alone in the house,

they tried to get hold of the housewife who managed to escape and began shouting for help, they added.

Hearing her cry, the neighbours rushed to the spot and caught the two frauds red handed.

Police later arrested them.

Quoting Nusrat, Sub-Inspector Abdullah Al Harun of Kotwali PS said the two frauds identifying them as husband and wife went to the flat on Thursday and gave her a form of birth registration to fill up by yesterday.

Iqbal told reporters that he was the vice-president of Progressive Life Insurance Company and working for birth registration as a part-time job.

When contacted Chittagong City Corporation (CCC) Health Officer Dr Mohammad Ali said nobody is allowed to collect data through visiting door-to-door for birth registration.

A case was filed with Kotwali PS in this connection, police said.

Appeal for help



Saiful Islam, son of Monsoor Ali Khan of Birpasha in Baurhal, Patuakhali, has appealed for financial assistance for his treatment as he has been suffering from acute renal failure and hypertension, says a press release.

He is now undergoing treatment at Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

According to doctors, he needs regular dialysis. But his guardians are not in a position to bear the huge cost of his treatment.

So, Saiful has appealed to generous people to extend a helping hand to save his life.

Contributions can be sent to Mohammad Milon Khan, Savings A/C No. 3085-5, Pubali Bank, Elephant Road Branch, Dhaka. For further information, interested persons can call at 01672861837 to contact Milon.



An exhibition of artworks by 20 artists began at the Academy Gallery at Uttara in the city on Saturday, marking the inauguration of the Academy of Liberal Arts and Sciences and the Academy Gallery.

N Korean military hardliners seen behind N-deal deadlock

AFP, Seoul

Hardliners in North Korea's powerful military may be resisting a US-led deal for the hardline communist state to disband its nuclear weapons programme, according to US experts.

The military, the experts said, will be the most impacted by any surrender of atomic arms by North Korea, which on Friday fired a volley of missiles with a warning it might stop disabling its nuclear arsenal as part of an agreed multi-lateral deal.

Keith Luse, a senior US Senate official, suggested in a report on his return from a recent trip to Pyongyang that the North Korean military could possibly unravel the deal for disarmament which the administration of Kim Jong-il reached with the United States, China, South Korea, Japan and Russia.

In his report to the powerful Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Luse asked, "Is the North Korean military resisting MFA (ministry of foreign affairs) efforts to substantively engage with the US and the other five countries?"

He then replied, "Chairman Kim's best efforts to orchestrate a balance among competing interests within the North, may be a 'stretch too far' for North Korean

military hardliners.

"Declaring and discarding the jewel of their arsenal will be difficult for those viewing it as the ultimate deterrent," Luse said in the report, a copy of which was obtained by AFP.

Luse, a senior professional staff of ranking Republican Senator Richard Lugar, was in North Korea last month to determine, among other questions, why Pyongyang was reluctant to provide a full declaration of its nuclear programs and weapons as well as its alleged proliferation activities.

North Korea was to have submitted the declaration by the end of December under the deal, which so far had led to the shutdown and near disabling of a key plutonium-producing reactor in Yongbyon.

Pyongyang submitted a list last November but the United States says it has not accounted fully for a suspected uranium enrichment program and allegations of nuclear proliferation to Syria.

"Luse's observations are right on," said an American expert on North Korea, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

"It is generally thought that Kim Jong-il is on the side of the angels so to speak, the engagers, but he can't ram things down the throats of the military as the military rice bowl is the most endangered by this

action, by getting rid of the nuclear weapons," the expert said.

The assessments by Luse and the Korea expert preceded those of Christopher Hill, the chief US envoy to the six-party talks on the nuclear deal, who this week referred to some "people" in North Korea who were against ending the pursuit of nuclear weapons.

"I think it is fair to say that there are people in North Korea who really are not with the program here, really rather continue to be producing this plutonium for whatever reason," he said.

"North Korea is a country that has a very vertically oriented governing structure to be sure... but at the same time it is place for politics," Hill said.

Kim's administration had informed Washington on a number of occasions that it wanted to get the nuclear deal done before President George W. Bush left office in January 2009.

But after failing to give the full declaration of its nuclear arsenal, the exclusive state raised the stakes Friday by test-firing several missiles and warning it may slow down disabling its atomic facilities.

The White House criticized the missile tests as "not constructive" and urged Pyongyang to focus instead on dismantling its nuclear facilities.

Martyred FF's widow given reception

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

Muktijuddher Smriti Sangrakhkhon Committee on Saturday arranged reception for a widow of a martyred freedom fighter and the son of a deceased injured freedom fighter at Maligasa, a battlefield of 1971 Liberation War, in Sadar upazila.

Independence, the greatest achievement of the nation, came in 1971 through the supreme sacrifices by the freedom fighters, speakers said at a discussion held at Maligasa on the occasion.

The war criminals, who betrayed with the nation at that time, must be punished, they said.

Shukhjan Nesa, widow of martyred freedom fighter Goher, and Abdul Barez, son of injured freedom fighter Akmol Hossain, were given reception at the programme.

Several valiant freedom fighters borrowed martyrdom during a fight with Pakistan occupation army at Maligasa on March 29 in 1971.

The speakers urged establishing a memorial there in honour of the Liberation War heroes.

Muktijuddher Smriti Sangrakhkhon Committee Convenor freedom fighter Ebadat Ali chaired the meeting while Pabna Police Superintendent AFM Masum Rabbani was the chief guest.

Obituary

Syeda Sayera Khatun, mother of Mamun Miah, a social worker, passed away due to old age complications on Friday at the age of 100, says a press release.

She was buried at her family graveyard on Saturday.

Humayan Kabir, president of Amra Muktijoddhar Shantan, condoled her death.

Death anniversary

Today is the fourth death anniversary of Dr Noorunnahar Fyzennessa, a professor of the Institute of Education and Research (IER), Dhaka University, says a press release.

A widely respected personality in academic and liberal political circles, she was a front-runner in the movements for women's rights as well as independence of the country. She initiated Liberation War memorials on the DU campus and Rokeya Hall premises.

Dr Fyzennessa launched merit scholarship project styled as Rokeya Memorial Foundation and established a daycare centre, Chhayani, on the DU campus.

She was a member of DU Syndicate and Senate and the Pay Commission. She also served as provost of the Rokeya Hall.

Dr Fyzennessa was also the president of Dhaka City Mahila Parishad and Usha and vice-president of Women for Women.

On the occasion of her death anniversary, food will be distributed among underprivileged children at Deepshikha, Mouchak and at Dr Noorunnahar Fyzennessa Pre-primary School in Dharmrai.

Dr Mohammad Lutfar Rahman

Today is the 72th death anniversary of litterateur Dr Mohammad Lutfar Rahman, says a press release.

On the occasion, Dr Lutfar Rahman Academy organises essay competition, discussion and milad mahfils at Khalishpur in Khulna.

Qulkhwani of Prof Asaduzzaman today

Qulkhwani of Prof M Asaduzzaman, former chairman of University Grants Commission of Bangladesh and teacher of Public Administration department of Dhaka University (DU), will be held at DU Central Mosque after Asr prayers today, says a press release.

Relatives, friends, colleagues, students and admirers have been requested to attend the qulkhwani and pray for salvation of the departed soul.

Speaker Barrister Jamir Uddin Sircar and Deputy Speaker Akhtar Hamid Siddique expressed their deep shock at the death of Prof Asaduzzaman.

In separate condolence messages they said nation has lost a noted educationalist at his death.

Teachers and students of Public Administration department also condoled the death.

Poet Jaheda Khanum

Qulkhwani of poet Jaheda Khanum, wife of engineer Rafiqul Huq, will be held at her residence at House # 51, Road # 9/A (Old-19), Dhanmondi after Maghrib prayers today, says a press release.

Poet Jaheda, one of the pioneers of women's rights movement, passed away at Gonoshasthaya Nagar Hospital in the city on Friday at the age of 85.

Relatives, friends and admirers have been requested to attend the qulkhwani and pray for the salvation of the departed soul.

DHAKA TODAY

Seminar
ActionAid Bangladesh, Nijera Kori and ALRD jointly organise a seminar on 'Women's rights to land in Bangladesh: Roles, limitations and transformation'. Venue: Spectra Convention Centre. Time: 10:00am.

National convention
Jatiyo Mukti Joddha Parishad organises its national convention. Venue: Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre. Time: 10:00am.

Workshop
CGC and ActionAid Bangladesh jointly organise a national workshop on 'From curative treatment to prevention of water-borne diseases: Adaptation of climate change induced water quality degradation'. Venue: Spectra Convention Centre. Time: 9:30am.

Discussion
Bangladesh Muktijoddha Sangshad organises a discussion to mark the Independence Day. Venue: Moni Singh-Farhad Memorial Trust Building. Time: 3:30pm.

WEATHER TODAY

Thundershowers likely
UNB, Dhaka

Rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty or squally wind is likely at one or two places over all the six divisions of the country in the next 12 hours until 6:00pm today.

Day temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country. Met Office said.

Highest temperature 35.8 degrees Celsius was recorded yesterday at Rajshahi and lowest 18.7 degrees Celsius at Sylhet.

The sun sets in the capital at 6:14pm today and rises at 5:51am tomorrow.

Highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

City/Town	Temperature in Celsius		Humidity in percentage	
	Max	Min	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	32.9	23.5	50	60
Chittagong	30.9	24.5	81	78
Rajshahi	35.8	20.5	65	54
Khulna	33.3	21.0	78	63
Barisal	32.7	21.8	82	69
Sylhet	30.2	18.7	67	65
Cox's Bazar	33.8	24.4	71	73