

Nepalese celebrate new era of republic

Flag of Shah dynasty taken down

AFP, Kathmandu

Nepal celebrated a new era as the world's youngest republic yesterday after consigning its centuries-old monarchy to the history books and ordering god-king Gyanendra to quit his palace in two weeks.

"The royal flag was replaced by Nepal's national flag inside the palace," a palace official said on condition of anonymity. "The flag has been changed as part of the government decision to implement a republic."

They have repeatedly warned King Gyanendra he faces "strong punishment" if he refuses to bow out gracefully. "The Nepalese people have been freed from centuries of feudal tradition and the doors have now opened for a radical social and economic transformation," Maoist spokesman Krishna Bahadur Maharaj told AFP after the vote.

There was no development under the monarchy, said Prakash Karki, 26, a businessman, as he bought a newspaper. "There will be now that the people will run the country." United Nations chief Ban Ki-moon welcomed the vote, saying Nepalese "have clearly spoken for peace and change."



Nepalese gather to celebrate outside the royal palace in Kathmandu yesterday, a day after the constituent assembly abolished the monarchy and declared Nepal a republic.

Musharraf loyalist army commander replaced

PTI, Islamabad

Armed speculation that President Pervez Musharraf may step down, a top Pakistan army commander seen as his protegee has been replaced. Brig Asim Bajwa, the top officer of the army's 111 Brigade, which has played a key role in military coups in the past, was replaced but a military spokesman said this was part of routine transfers and postings.



Pakistani lawyers and political activists shout slogans as they march during an anti-Musharraf protest rally in Lahore yesterday demanding reinstatement of Supreme Court Chief Justice Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry and other judges.

Is Musharraf planning to call it a day?

PTI, Islamabad

Political circles in the Pakistani capital were today abuzz with reports that President Pervez Musharraf might opt to step down in the wake of a meeting with the army chief though the Presidency said he had no plans to quit. Musharraf held a meeting with army chief Gen Ashfaq Parvez Kayani at the Army House in Rawalpindi late last night that lasted over three-and-a-half hours. The meeting came in the wake of Kayani's consultations with key commanders.

saying that Musharraf has "made up his mind to call it a day" and that he could make an announcement in this regard "at any time". Musharraf's closest aides were quoted as saying that the President has made up his mind to lead a retired life "after losing all hope of survival in power". However, presidential spokesman Maj Gen (retired) Rashid Qureshi dismissed reports about Musharraf's plans to quit this morning. He told reporters that such speculation was "just rumours".

Tigers kill 13 in Lankan navy camp raid

AFP, Colombo

Separatist Tamil fighters launched a pre-dawn attack early yesterday against a naval camp on an island off northern Sri Lanka, killing at least 13 sailors, a pro-rebel website said. The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) said its Sea Tiger wing also seized weapons, including a radar, from the camp on Chirathivu islet, close to the Jaffna peninsula.

returned to their base" after destroying the navy camp. However, Sri Lanka's defence ministry said army and navy personnel successfully repulsed the rebels, killing at least 16 LTTE cadres and destroying three enemy boats. "Troops have also mounted heavy artillery attacks towards the fleeing terrorists as enemy fatalities were expected to soar," the ministry said.

civilians were killed and six injured in the pre-dawn "indiscriminate LTTE artillery attack". In the northern town of Vavuniya, three policemen were injured when the LTTE triggered off a roadside mine targeting police vehicles, the ministry said. It said air force planes stepped up attacks against suspected rebel positions in the north, providing air cover for ground troops and bombing a rebel training facility.

Myanmar approves visas for UN aid workers

AP, Yangon

Myanmar's military rulers have approved visas for dozens of international relief workers and were allowing more foreigners into areas devastated by a cyclone that left millions in need of aid, the United Nations said yesterday. It was an apparent sign that the isolationist regime planned to keep its promise to allow in humanitarian workers from all countries and give them access to the Irrawaddy delta, which took the brunt of the cyclone that lashed May 2.

ers in recent days into the delta region, a UN statement said. Japan, which has so far donated \$13 million in aid, sent a 23-member medical team to the country Thursday, the Foreign Ministry said in Tokyo. "I went to some areas where no international relief personnel had been to, and the priorities for these people are food and shelter. We're going to be working very hard to deliver these items to them," Tony Banbury, regional head of the UN World Food Programme, told AP Television News Thursday.

Myanmar's leaders are leery of foreign aid workers and international agencies, worrying they could weaken the junta's grip on power. The generals also don't want their people to see aid coming directly from countries like the US that the junta has long treated as a hostile power. They only allowed foreign aid workers in after UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon met with junta leader Senior Gen. Than Shwe last weekend.

Corruption fears as world gives billions for China quake

AFP, Beijing

People around the world have reached deep into their pockets to help survivors of China's devastating earthquake, but fears are growing corruption will mean not all donations reach the millions in need. In the two weeks since the quake that rocked southwestern Sichuan province, leaving more than 87,000 people dead or missing, a staggering 34.79 billion yuan (five billion dollars) in donations has been collected at home and abroad.

scams being launched to grab a piece of the largesse. Corruption is rampant in China, both in government ranks and throughout society, as the country ploughs through its development boom without a free press or an independent judiciary. President Hu Jintao has repeatedly warned that corruption is one of the biggest threats to the legitimacy of the ruling Communist Party. With the eyes of the world on China's relief effort, the government has repeatedly warned that any corruption involving the relief money would be dealt with harshly.



Chinese medical personnel carry an earthquake survivor arriving at the railway station in Beijing yesterday. The death toll from China's earthquake rose to 68,109 with another 19,851 missing, a government spokesman said.

40 survivors rescued 16 days after quake

AFP, Beijing

Forty half-starved earthquake survivors have been rescued from a remote area in southwestern China a full 16 days after the disaster, state press reported on Thursday. They were flown out by helicopter on Wednesday from the quake-shattered village of Yangjiagou in Sichuan province, the West China Metropolitan Daily said. The survivors had been prevented from escaping by landslides triggered by the 8.0-magnitude earthquake on May 12, which had blocked roads in the rugged region, it said.

HSC exams

FROM PAGE 1 The problem becomes acute as purchasing capacity of the general people has tremendously reduced, while prices of education materials and different types of fees have sharply shot up in the last two years. Academicians observe that most families of the low-income group are forced to reduce their children's educational expense thanks to persisting skyrocketing prices of essentials. Dhaka Secondary and Higher Secondary Education Board Chairman Prof Manirul Islam said a huge number of HSC students dropped out this year. "The main causes are family financial inability, poor results in the test examinations, marriage of girl students, fear in English, forging registration, going abroad, involvement in politics and in some cases, students' carelessness," Manirul Islam told The Daily Star. Academicians say education has become a commodity where investment gets maximum priority, but most of the people have lost their previous purchasing capacity. They also say most schools in rural areas don't have sufficient teachers, especially for English and math, and the students don't do well in these subjects. "To do well in English and math, students now have to take help from private tuition, but most families in rural areas cannot afford this," a teacher told The Daily Star. "Students have to depend on private tuition because schools have failed to provide proper education. For this reason students from poor families, especially in rural areas, are being deprived of education," said renowned academician Prof Dr Zillur Rahman Siddique, former vice-chancellor of Jahangirnagar University. Education Watch Report-2006, a survey conducted by Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE), also points finger at the tendency for

depending on private tuition. According to the report, 88 percent students of government institutions and 78 percent of non-government institutions in urban areas have private coaching or tutors. Parents spend Tk 16,894 on an average annually on a child's private tuition. Expressing deep anxiety, Education Adviser Hossain Zillur Rahman said some steps and efforts are being taken to cut the dropout rate down to zero. "We are trying to review related matters and introduce the clustering efforts to reduce the dropout rate," he said. He however said achievement in checking dropout would not be seen overnight and all officials and people concerned should take additional efforts to that end. Dropout rate under the technical education board is the highest among all the boards - 41.4 percent. On the other hand, Barisal has the highest dropout rate among the seven education boards, the board statistics say. In Dhaka Board, the highest number dropout occurred in Shariatpur, insiders say. Gatco Case FROM PAGE 16 The accused in the case also include former ministers of the four-party coalition government Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, M Saifur Rahman, Amir Khasru Mahmud Chowdhury and Jamaat-e-Islami Ameer Motiur Rahman Nazami. The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) on May 13 pressed charges against Khaleda Zia and the 23. The ACC filed the case with Tejgaon Police Station on September 2 last year against 13 people, including Khaleda and her son, or corruption in awarding Gatco container handling work at depots in Dhaka and Chittagong.

DCC typists

FROM PAGE 1 individuals involved in the anomalies. The DCC, in order to hire new typists, arranged written examination on March 11, 2006 and oral examination on April 28 the same year, the sources said adding that 131 candidates took the oral exam and 88 among them were awarded employment. However, in the tests given by the taskforce, all but one of these recruits failed to prove themselves qualified for the job, said the taskforce sources. Although five of them typed over 30wpm in Bangla, they could not pass the English typing test, they added. When DCC officials were asked to present the exam sheets from the written exam given by the DCC in 2006, the taskforce was told that the exam sheets have gone missing, said taskforce officials. The taskforce officials contemplate that the DCC officials who took bribe from the recruits must have destroyed or disposed of the exam sheets. The Daily Star Wednesday contacted DCC Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka for his comments over the findings of the taskforce. He said he was not aware of the matter. Asked about missing files of exam sheets, he said, "I do not (personally) preserve the files. And therefore, it is not possible for me to know whether any file has gone missing." Regarding the re-examination of typists, Khoka said, "I don't recall whether the taskforce officials have arranged any examination."

Nato airstrikes on a militant fort kill 30

AFP, Kabul

A suicide attack targeting US-led troops killed three Afghans here yesterday, as officials reported that Nato airstrikes on a militant fort in the remote southwest of Afghanistan left 30 Taliban dead. The insurgent Taliban movement claimed responsibility for the car bombing in the capital, which also damaged vehicles carrying soldiers from the US-led military coalition helping Afghanistan defeat an extremist insurgency. The blast, which happened during the morning rush hour, blew a big crater into the road, which was littered with pieces of mangled metal and shattered glass, an AFP reporter at the scene said. "Three of our compatriots were martyred and two were wounded," a Kabul police chief, General Alishah Paktiawal, told reporters at the site. Another policeman said earlier the dead included a truck driver and two youths. "It was busy and all I heard was a big explosion," said Mir Khan, a road construction worker. "I came out and saw civilian vehicles rushing bloodied people away from the site." Lieutenant Colonel Dave Johnson from the US-led coalition confirmed the attack and said it had damaged two vehicles, but the four occupants were not badly hurt. "The four suffered no serious injuries. The vehicles were both disabled and are being evacuated," he told AFP. He could not immediately give the nationalities of the soldiers.

US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said yesterday the Bush administration was "not alone" in believing Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction as she fended off new charges about the reasons for invading Iraq. Speaking before the start of a conference on Iraq in Stockholm, Rice said she would not specifically comment on charges in a harsh new book by Chief of State George W. Bush's former chief spokesman that the war was unnecessary. But she reiterated the administration's defence against a long litany of such charges. "It was not the United States of America alone that believed he had weapons of mass destruction," Rice told a press conference with Swedish Prime Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt, whose country is organising the conference. "It was not the United States alone that knew Saddam Hussein used weapons of mass destruction against his own people and against the Iranians," Rice said.

US was 'not alone' in belief Iraq had WMDs Says Rice

AFP, Stockholm

US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said yesterday the Bush administration was "not alone" in believing Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction as she fended off new charges about the reasons for invading Iraq. Speaking before the start of a conference on Iraq in Stockholm, Rice said she would not specifically comment on charges in a harsh new book by Chief of State George W. Bush's former chief spokesman that the war was unnecessary.

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