Lankans vote for first post-war parliament

AFP, BBC ONLINE, Colombo

Voting ended yesterday in Sri Lanka's parliamentary elections after nine hours of polling with observers reporting a low

President Mahinda Rajapakse, who won re-election in January, is expected to tighten his grip on power when the final results to elect the 225-member legislature are announced.

The first results are expected on Friday.

Sri Lankans had been voting for a new parliament amid heavy security, months after President Mahinda Rajapakse was re-

elected by a substantial margin. Monitors reported a number of minor incidents of violence.

The president is expected to triumph over a split opposition. He is seeking a twothirds majority in parliament. Results are poll.

due on Friday. His main presidential rival and ex-army chief, Gen Sarath Fonseka, is also standing

despite being in jail. Gen Fonseka denies charges of participating in politics while still in uniform and

illegal arms procurement. The main opposition coalition he presided over during the presidential cam-

paign has since split up into three main

Fonseka. Also standing is Sri Lanka's main opposition party and the main ethnic Tamil alliance, which is expected to get most

But Rajapakse still enjoys much popularity because of last year's crushing defeat of the Tamil Tiger rebels after a 26-year civil

The BBC's Charles Haviland in Colombo

But in the northern Tamil-majority city voted, two hours into the poll. And in large refugee camps, turnout seemed to be higher than in the January presidential

The Centre for Monitoring Election Violence (CMEV) reported 160 incidents of poll-related violence during the first four

told the AFP news agency.

The campaign has been marked by lowlevel violence similar to that which marked the run-up to the presidential poll.

Our correspondent says the run-up to the elections saw vindictive, personalised politics and constant breaches of electoral rules, causing the election commissioner to express his concerns.

The president has denied opposition complaints that the run-up to the vote has not been free and fair.

And analysts say the charges are unlikely to have any major impact on voter intentions, which show a clear preference for the

president's United People's Freedom Party. They say that the president's aim of a two-thirds majority in parliament - or 150 seats - would allow him to change the constitution.

If that happens, Rajapakse has spoken of adding a second chamber of parliament to accommodate minorities better - but he has ruled out the federalism many Tamil politicianswant.

Many people predict he would also try to scrap the current limit of two presidential

History suggests his coalition is unlikely to get two-thirds of the seats.s

Nepal SC summons PM over Indian deal

INDO ASIAN NEWS SERVICE, Kathmandu

AFP, Bangkok

state of emergency.

minister said.

The controversy triggered by dozens of websites and a television channel Nepal's coalition government signing a passport contract pied Bangkok's commercial hub, defying a with an Indian company continued to grow yesterday with the country's top court summoning the prime minister and foreign minister.

Nepal's Supreme Court asked the government to freeze the deal till it resolved the row and asked Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal to appear before it for an explanation Monday.

51 BDR men

it was found that all the 51

accused were involved in the

he said the accused soldiers

revolted at Thakurgaon 20 Rifle Battalion to express their

solidarity with the mutineers

of BDR Pilkhana headquarters

looted arms and ammunition

breaking into the armoury of

the battalion on February 26

around 9:00am and kept those

with them violating discipline

They fired 739 blank shots

and set up barricades with

logs and electrical polls on

Thakurgaon-Dinajpur

Highway, he went on to say.

They also threatened BDR

officers and their family mem-

bers and forced them to leave

the battalion headquarters.

They brought out processions

chanting slogans in support of

The prosecutor then

described allegations brought

against each of the accused.

He also presented video clips

tor's speech and looking at the

evidence, the court accepted

allowed the accused an hour

to consult with their family

members as an accused asked

for it when he was told to

defend himself. The families

met the accused 51. Most of

After the "consult", 44

After lunch, the court

accused confessed to their

recorded deposition of

Deputy Assistant Director

(DAD) Nurul Islam Fakir,

The then commanding

officer of 20 Rifle Battalion Lt

complainant of the case.

involvement in the mutiny.

them were in tears then.

After hearing the prosecu-

After a tea break, the court

the Pilkhana mutiny.

and stills as evidence.

charges against the 51.

of the force, he said.

The accused soldiers

In his opening argument,

FROM PAGE 16

mutiny.

in Dhaka.

cent Thursday on fears of a protracted bout of political turmoil.

Thai govt holds Red Shirts' TV station

Abhisit cancelled his attendance at a Southeast Asian summit in Hanoi, where fellow premiers expressed concern about Thailand's deep political rift, which pits Bangkok's ruling

Leaders of the tens of thousands of supporters of ex-premier Thaksin Shinawatra, ousted in a 2006 military coup, have refused to halt their protests but the authorities have avoided using force to break up the rallies.

elite against the mainly poor and rural Reds.

Meanwhile, a Thai court on Thursday issued arrest warrants for seven people involved in the Instead, they targeted media loyal to the redstorming of parliament a day earlier, including one anti-government protest leader, the prime Thai stocks slumped more than three per-

clad movement, shutting down its satellite TV channel showing rolling coverage of the demonstrations, along with 36 websites, and vowing to clamp down on pro-Red radio stations.



Thailand's government yesterday shut down

loyal to "Red Shirt" protesters who have occu-

Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva is under

increasing pressure to end the mass anti-

government rallies, which have disrupted traffic

and caused major shopping centres to close.

Obama (L) laughs with his Russian counterpart Dmitry Medvedev as they sign the new Strategic Arms **Reduction Treaty** (START) in Prague yesterday. Under this treaty, the former Cold War foes will be allowed a maximum of 1,550 deployed warheads, about 30 percent lower than a limit set in 2002.

US President Barack

200 feared dead in Brazil mudslides

AFP, Niteroi

Some 200 people were feared dead after being buried in mudslides near Rio de Janeiro, officials said yesterday, bringing new tragedy to Brazil following massive floods which have killed more than

"From what the neighbors said, some 200 people may be buried, but it is not clear, there could be more," local fire chief Pedro Machado told AFP vesterday as crews battled to dig through mudslides in Niteroi, a city across the bay from the city of Rio.

Twenty-five people, including eight small children, were pulled out alive early yesterday after spending hours buried under mud and debris.

The rescues fueled new hope for anxious relatives desperate to find their loved ones, as 150 rescue workers -soldiers, firefighters and civil defense workers -- searched for more survivors.

Six bodies had been recovered following the mudslide lateWednesday.

The six confirmed deaths raised the death toll to 151 in floods and mudslides around Rio since it was hit Monday by the worst rains in half a cen-

Most of the casualties were trapped in landslides in the slums around Rio.

The toll was likely to rise as dozens of people were reportedly still missing after the rains, which displaced more than 1,400 people and destroyed scores of homes.

Various officials and President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva criticized decades of negligence, which allowed shoddy home construction in high-risk zones.

The killer floods wreaked havoc with air traffic, delaying most international flights in and out of Rio's Antonio Carlos Jobim airport and forcing the cancellation of many domestic services.

China, Nepal end Everest height row

AFP, Kathmandu

China and Nepal have found a solution to a longstanding dispute over the height of Mount Everest in the giant peak's rock and snow.

The world's highest mountain lies on the border between the two countries and they have disagreed for years over its exact height, which Nepal puts at 8,848 metres (29,029 feet) -- nearly four metres more than the measurement used by China.

Officials from the two neighbours reached a compromise at talks in Kathmandu this week by agreeing the two measurements referred to different things -- one to the height of Everest's rock and the other to

the height of its snow-cap. "The Chinese side -- led by Li Qingyuan -- accepted Nepal's claim that the snow height of Mount Everest is 8,848 metres, while the Nepali side recognised the Chinese claim that the rock height of the mountain is 8,844.43 metres," a senior official at Nepal's Department of Surveys told the Kathmandu Post daily.

One is a new political alliance led by Gen

support in the north and east of the country.

reported a good flow of voters in one polling station in multi-ethnic inner-city Colombo.

of Jaffna local residents said very few had another northern town, Vavuniya, close to

hours of balloting across the country. The centre said that most complaints

were against the president's ruling party.

"Pro-government supporters are reported to have intimidated voters," a spokesman for the centre, DM Dissanayake,

Kyrgyz opposition forms interim govt

Ousted president refuses to resign

AP, AFP, Bishkek

An opposition coalition proclaimed a new interim government yesterday in Kyrgyzstan after clashes left dozens dead and said it would rule until elections are held in six months. It also urged the president, who has fled the capital, to resign.

Kyrgyzstan President Kurmanbek Bakiyev said in a statement published Thursday that he would not resign despite fleeing the capital after a violent revolt in the Central Asian state.

"I declare that as president I have not abdicated and am not abidicating responsibility," Bakiyev said in the statement published by local news website 24.kg, considered the Internet mouthpiece of the Bakiyev administration.

The new interim defence minister said the armed forces have joined the opposition and will not be used against protesters.

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon called for calm and said he would immediately send an envoy to Kyrgyzstan, which he had criticized just last week for its human rights violations.

China on Thursday said it was "deeply concerned" about the violent uprising in its small western neighbour, echoing comments by Russia and the United States. The impoverished Central Asian nation is home to a key US military base supporting the fighting in Afghanistan that the opposition has said it wants to close. It also hosts a Russian military

Kyrgyzstan, which shares a 533-mile (858kilometer) border with China, is also a gateway to other energy-rich Central Asian countries where China, Russia and the US are competing fiercely for dominance.

Opposition leader Roza Otunbayeva, the former foreign minister, said parliament was dissolved and she would head the interim government. She said the new government controlled four of the seven provinces and called on President Kurmanbek Bakiyev to resign. She said he had fled the capital of Bishkek to seek support in the central Jalal-Abad region.

"His business in Kyrgyzstan is finished," she saidThursday.

Chinese imperial works

AFP, Hong Kong

A selection of Chinese imperial works of art smashed world records after fierce bidding at Sotheby's sales yesterday, as China's rise sparked international interest in objects of its glorious past.

An imperial white jade seal commissioned by Emperor Qianlong of the Qing Dynasty in the 18th century went to an Asian buyer for 12.29 million US dollars, breaking the world auction record for both white jade and imperial seals.

The price was almost double its estimate of lars.

Another star lot, a ceremonial pearl necklace believed to have belonged to Qing Emperor Yongzheng in the early 18th century, smashed the world record for any impe-



A Chinese imperial white jade seal commissioned by Emperor Qianlong of the Qing Dynasty which fetched 12.29 million USD is shown by a model at the Sotheby's sale in Hong Kong yesterday.

about 6.4 million dol- rial jewel at auction after a can easily capture our clitelephone bidder snapped it up for 8.7 million dollars. The price was more than five times its highest esti-

"They are objects that crystallised imperial power. These are something that

ents' imagination," said Nicolas Chow, Sotheby's international head of Chinese ceramics and works

He said interest in Chinese works of art was

Col S Shahed Kamal also gave his deposition.

Witness accounts of nine were recorded. The court resumes 8:30am Saturday to record statements of another 75 witnesses.

> The trial of the accused BDR mutineers is being held under the Bangladesh Rifles Order, 1972.

Police not yet finding violent stalker open the small window of their

During a visit to Pinky's school by these correspondents, a number of her classmates recalled how Pinky used to live in absolute terror because of Tabarak. But none of the girls dared to talk on record.

"Pinky did not dare to come to school alone as Tabarak used to wait for her on the way, and harass her," said one of Pinky's classmates in Purura High School of Tarail upazila. "Pinky used to stand in front of her house and wait for us to accompany her to school. But we ourselves are scared of Tabarak, and often avoided Pinky." But when contacted, OC Ali,

quoting from the case statement, said constant stalking by Tabarak over the last two years led Pinky to commit suicide.

He said, "I visited the spot and talked to the locals, but no one said they had seen Tabarak harassing Pinky. Tabarak is an illiterate person and a farmer.

He does not have any previous criminal record." He added that he also went to Pinky's school. But her teach-

ers and classmates also did not say anything about Tabarak stalking Pinky.

BIDTODIVERTTHECASE Meantime, the stalker's family is trying hard to give a new spin to the murder case by assassinating the character of the dead girl's mother. They are claiming that the girl committed suicide because of her mother's extramarital relationship with a man. And the officer-in-charge of the police station is also readily

dishing out the same allegation,

saying he had also heard the

same thing from the "locals".

PINKY'S MOTHER'S DESCRIPTION

Pinky's mother Latifa alleged that Tabarak and his family members are trying to divert the direction of the murder case by saying that Pinky was not murdered, rather she committed relation with a neighbour.

suicide after a quarrel with Latifa over Latifa's alleged illicit Latifa said over the last two years Tabarak used to start throwing brickbats on the tin

roof of her house with nightfall,

and sometimes he would pry

house with a knife from outside. and then she with her two daughters including Pinky, and a minor son would take shelter

Tabarak on numerous occasions threatened Pinky that he would abduct her or throw acid on her as she had been persistently resisting his unwanted advances, Latifa said adding, as Tabark hails from a well off family and is very ferocious, local residents do not dare to stand up against him.

under the bed in fear.

"My husband and his two brothers have been staying away from home for the last 15 years, as they work as day labourers in Dhaka and Sylhet. Pinky's father comes back twice or thrice a month, and his brothers do the same," Latifa

Taking the chance, Tabarak continued harassing her family, she said adding, she went to Rauti union parishad members, and to the parents and brothers of Tabarak, and pleaded with them that they did something to refrain Tabarak from harassing Several village arbitrations

were also held to put an end to the stalking, but Tabarak's family always influenced the efforts, claiming Tabrak's inno-

Latifa said even after Pinky's killing, Tabarak's elder brother Mubarak, who works as a guard in Narsinghdi Jail, harassed Pinky's uncle Munaiem Bhuiyan over the cellphone saying that they would not be able do harm Tabarak in any way, even if they file cases against him.

Latifa said in the two nights preceding the incident, Tabarak kept banging on the tin fence of their house, and pried open the windows with his knife, the horrifying harassment went on almost all through the nights, but none came to their aid, fearing Tabarak.

The alleged murderer was still not arrested at the time of filing this report late last night despite a murder case being filed against him by the victim's mother, and no body seemed to know his whereabouts.

Australian Government

Australia Awards AUSTRALIAN LEADERSHIP AWARDS

Announcement for the 2011 Intake Australian Development Scholarships (ADS)

Applications for qualified individuals to study in Australia under the Australian Development

Scholarships (ADS) are open now and will close on 16 May 2010.

ADS places are targeted for the candidates from the following institutions only: a. Government of Bangladesh*

b. ICDDR,B

*Candidates from all Government departments such as autonomous, public service commission, corporate and constitutional institutions are also eligible to apply for ADS. However, public university employees are not eligible to apply for ADS.

From Intake 2011, Australia Awards in the South Asia region are administered through the South Asia Scholarships Program (SASP). For detailed information on all matters relating to AusAID scholarships in Bangladesh (i.e. candidate registration, full eligibility criteria, counselling session, IELTS requirements, application form), please visit our website www.southasiascholarship.org or contact SASP Dhaka Office during business hours 9:00 -5:00 pm, Sunday through Thursday.

South Asia Scholarships Program (SASP)

5th Floor, Plot # 4, Road # 12, Block-J, Baridhara, Dhaka-1212, Telephone: (02) 8824416/ 8826154, Mobile: 0173 0338495, Email: info@southasiascholarship.org

Note: AusAID actively encourages enquiries from females, people with disability, applicants working outside Dhaka and indigenous applicants.





Announcement for the 2011 Intake Australian Leadership Awards (ALA) Scholarship

The Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID) is pleased to invite applications to study in Australia under the 2011 Intake of the Australian Leadership Awards (ALA) program from interested candidates who are committed to contribute to the development of Bangladesh.

ALA Scholarships are academically prestigious awards, offered to high achievers having the potential to assume leadership roles that can influence social and economic policy reform, development and governance in their home countries and region. The purpose of ALA scholarships is to develop leadership in the Asia Pacific region. ALA scholars are expected to return to their home country after they have completed their studies. Recipients should also be willing to make a commitment to the exclusive AusAID alumni programme.

Scholars can apply for the following fields of study for a Masters or a Ph. D degree:

Disability, Economic Growth, Education, Environment, Food security, Gender, Governance, Health, Human rights, Infrastructure, Regional stability, Rural development, Water and sanitation.

Mandatory requirements for eligibility for ALA Scholarships:

Must have an IELTS score of 6.5 or above (with no band less than 6) taken no longer than

two years prior to the date of application; · Must have an unconditional offer letter from an Australian university for entry into full time studies in the nominated subject area for masters or doctoral studies;

You will not be eligible if you: (a) Are holding or have been nominated to receive another Australian Government scholarship;

(b) Have held a foreign scholarship in the 24 months preceding the application;

(c) Are a permanent resident or have applied for permanent residency in Australia; (d) Are married or engaged to be married to a person who holds or who is eligible to hold Australian or New Zealand citizenship or permanent residence status.

Please note that the deadline for receiving hardcopy and online applications is 30 June 2010. To apply online and for further information please visit the following website http://www.ausaid.gov.au/scholar/ala.cfm.

Applications are now open for commencement at an Australian university from January 2011.

From Intake 2011, Australia Awards in the South Asia region are administered locally through the South Asia Scholarships Program (SASP). Hard copy applications can also be submitted at the SASP office. For any assistance or enquiries, please contact SASP Dhaka Office during business hours 9:00 - 5:00 pm.

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