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Laboratoire des frondeurs.org



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Police, students clash ahead of anti-Royal protests in Nepal

Kathmandu, Apr 04: Police fired tear gas, used batons and arrested at least 12 students during clashes in Kathmandu today, two days before an anti-Royal general strike.

Security forces moved in to disperse demonstrations on two campuses in the city centre. A news reporter saw students throwing rocks at police at one of the protests.

"At least a dozen students were detained and several others injured in clashes with riot police," Mahendra Sharma, president of the Nepal Students Union, told news agencies.

Political parties ousted by King Gyanendra 13 months ago have called for a four-day general strike starting on Thursday, with a large anti-Royal demonstration slated for Saturday.

Students have begun demonstrating to show their support for the strike and protest programme, Sharma said.

At Shanker Dev Campus in Kathmandu, around 100 students burnt tyres, shouted anti-royal slogans and lobbed stones at police.

Indra Karki, a student leader from the capital's tri-chandra college, said at least seven students were hurt when police baton-charged around 40 protesters this morning.

By lunchtime the protests had ended.

Maoist rebels, yesterday, called a temporary halt to hostilities around the capital in support of political parties in their protest.

King Gyanendra took direct control of the troubled nation after blaming the government for failing to stem a decade-long Maoist insurgency.

Nepal bans public protest in capital

By Binaj Gurubacharya, Associated Press Writer | April 4, 2006

KATMANDU, Nepal --Nepalese authorities banned all forms of public protest in the capital Tuesday in anticipation of this week's nationwide strike aiming to pressure King Gyanendra to restore democracy in his Himalayan nation. The opposition vowed to defy the ban.

The country's seven major opposition parties have planned protests, marches and rallies during the four-day strike that begins Thursday.

The government said in a statement that it had banned "mass meetings, protest rallies and demonstrations in Katmandu."

The ban came a day after the government widened the sweep of its anti-terrorism law, saying anyone who disseminates information about anti-monarchy communist rebels could face up to three years in prison and fines of up to \$700.

Political leaders said Tuesday they fear the amended law would be used against them because they support the rebels' strike.

Still, the two main opposition groups, the Nepali Congress and the United Marxist-Leninist parties, said the protest campaign would continue as planned.

"This is completely illegal. We will defy this. We will go to the streets," UML leader K.P. Oli told The Associated Press. "We are responsible political parties, and the government can't put a ban 36 hours before the rallies. We cannot accept this."

The government said it would reimpose a state of emergency if the situation got out of control.

The government has struggled to control the spiraling Maoist insurgency that has killed some 13,000 people since 1996. The rebels' influence has increased dramatically in recent years, prompting the king to seize absolute power and sack the prime minister last year.

A senior U.N. official said the government was not giving the parties enough political space for opposition.

"What I hear is not the message I would like to hear from the government, that peaceful protests is a right and should be upheld," Ian Martin, the Nepal representative of the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights, said Monday.

The Terrorists and Disruptive Activities Control and Punishment Ordinance was amended Monday to define "terrorist accomplices" as those who have any contact with the rebels.

The changes are an attempt to "threaten and terrorize the opposition parties and the media," said Arjun Narsingh of the Nepali Congress, the largest party in Nepal.

There are concerns the law could be used against party activists, civilians often coerced into supporting the guerrillas, and journalists who cover rebel gatherings and interview their leaders.

Human rights groups say hundreds of people already have been detained under the law, which allowed for the detention without charge for up to a year of anyone suspected of sympathizing with the rebels.

"This will be another weapon for the government to strike against the media, which is already under many restrictions," said Bishnu Nisthuri, president of the Federation of Nepalese Journalists.

Smaller demonstrations already have started. Twenty students were detained Tuesday after police fired tear gas and beat pro-democracy protesters with batons, according to student leader Suresh Gautam and a police officer who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak to the media.

Meanwhile, the opposition hailed an announcement by rebels to halt attacks in Katmandu.

The rebel chief, who goes by the assumed name Prachanda, said Monday the guerrillas had decided not to target the capital during the pro-democracy protests, a decision made in response to concerns of political parties and civil society groups.

Political parties said the rebel promise left the government with no excuse to use force against them.

"It is a very positive development," the Nepali Congress' Ram Sharan Mahat said. "The Maoists, who believe in violence, are supporting our peaceful protests."

http://za.today.reuters.com/news/NewsArticle.aspx?type=topNews&storyID=2006-04-06T063418Z_01_BAN623588_RTRIDST_0_OZATP-NEPAL-20060406.XML

Nepal shuts down for strike, rebel raid kills 10

Thu Apr 6, 2006 8:33 AM GMT

By Gopal Sharma and Y.P. Rajesh

KATHMANDU (Reuters) - At least 10 people were killed in Nepal when Maoist guerrillas attacked a district town hours before a strike against the monarchy shut down the troubled nation on Thursday, witnesses and authorities said.

The leftist rebels, fighting for the last decade to topple the monarchy, struck Malangwa, a town 350 km (220 miles) southeast of Kathmandu, late on Wednesday.

They stormed through the town, firing at soldiers guarding government offices and security posts and attacked a local jail and freed more than 100 inmates, among them some of their comrades, before fleeing.

Five policemen and two guerrillas were killed in the fighting, Rajesh Mishra, a local journalist said. But authorities said they could not confirm the casualties.

"The body of a Maoist in combat dress is lying in front of my house," Yadav Subedi, a Malangwa resident, told Reuters by phone. Some policemen and senior bureaucrats were missing after the fighting, Subedi and Mishra said.

An army helicopter sent to the area crashed and three unidentified bodies were lying near the aircraft, the army said.

"I saw the helicopter broken into three pieces in a field. Many government buildings are on fire or are smouldering. Unexploded bombs are strewn around," Mishra said.

"People are terror struck. No one has come out."

News of the rebel raid came as a four-day nationwide general strike called by opponents of King Gyanendra closed down the Hindu kingdom, tucked in the Himalayan mountains between Asian giants India and China.

Nepal's seven main political parties have called for the strike and have vowed to defy a government ban on protests to launch what they expect to be a decisive campaign for democracy.

Although the guerrillas, who are fighting to establish a communist state, are supporting the political groups as part of a pact against the king, they are not participating in the protests and the rallies are expected to be largely peaceful.

BURNING TYRES, SMASHED CARS

Roads across the country of 26 million people were deserted as the strike began. Businesses and schools were shut despite the government urging people not to support the strike call.

In the capital Kathmandu, the centre of the campaign, hundreds of riot police and soldiers patrolled deserted streets and activists burned tyres on roads to enforce the closure.

Police said at least four cars were smashed by protestors for defying the strike.

"I support the parties because they are fighting for democracy but I don't like to join them in the protests," said Sanjiv Rauniyar, a Kathmandu shopkeeper who was standing outside his shuttered shop.

The king's government detained activists and politicians on the eve of the strike in a bid to scuttle it and imposed a night curfew in the capital region saying the Maoists could infiltrate the protests and spark violence.

"About 300 people have been arrested so far," Subhash Nemwang, a senior leader of the Communist Party of Nepal (UML), the country's second largest party, told Reuters.

"We will defy the ban on protests and take out rallies today from different places in the capital," he said.

Although pro-democracy protests have become a regular feature in the country since the king's coup, this week's rallies are expected to be the biggest so far.

The United States condemned the detention of politicians and called for their release, saying talks between them and the king were the only way out of the political crisis.

Nepal, which has been struggling to contain the Maoist revolt, sunk into deeper turmoil after King Gyanendra sacked the government and took power in February 2005, saying politicians had failed to quell the insurgency and hold national elections.

The revolt has killed more than 13,000 people so far and wrecked the economy of one of the 10 poorest countries in the world, which lives off aid and tourism.

The royal move triggered international outrage, sparked anti-monarchy rallies and led to a loose alliance between the Maoists and political groups against the king.

<http://www.timesleader.com/mld/timesleader/14274042.htm>

Posted on Thu, Apr. 06, 2006

Nepal's opposition defends rebel alliance

NEELESH MISRA

Associated Press

KATMANDU, Nepal - With no letup in street protests or a rebel insurgency, opposition politicians argued Thursday that their unlikely alliance with guerrillas was the best way to force the king to restore democracy and end the violence.

King Gyanendra took total power Feb. 1, 2005, saying the government of interim Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba proved unable to bring the Maoist rebels under control. His action returned Nepal to the days before 1990, when it was an absolute monarchy.

Gyanendra claimed the move was necessary to defeat the Maoists, whose fight for a communist state has cost 13,000 lives since the insurgency started in 1996. But the fighting has persisted in the Himalayan land of 27 million people.

The Communist militants and the parties reached their pact last December to pressure the king to restore parliamentary democracy.

As a four-day nationwide strike called by the country's major political parties and backed by the insurgents began Thursday, police arrested more than 170 protesters in Nepal's capital chasing them down narrow lanes and beating them with batons.

Communist rebels, meanwhile, took 28 hostages in a raid in a southern town that left at least 13 people dead, and a helicopter gunship flying in for a counterattack crashed, killing 10 soldiers. The defense ministry blamed engine failure; the rebels claimed they shot it down in Malangawa, about 75 miles south of Katmandu.

"Our liberation army has been able to shoot down the sophisticated night vision helicopter. This ... has taken our fighting to a new level," a rebel statement said

About 300 people - including students leaders, women's activists and members of Nepal's seven main political parties - were among those arrested in Katmandu, protest leader Khadga Prasad Oli

told The Associated Press. He said at least 16 different protests took place in the city. He said they would resume Friday.

Home Ministry spokesman Gopendra Pandey confirmed only 177 arrests, saying the protesters attacked police.

The government argues that the politicians' agreement with the Maoists gives legitimacy to the rebels' violent methods, but the political parties say it is the only hope to end the insurgency.

Working with the Maoists "is a gamble," said Ram Sharan Mahat of the Nepali Congress, the largest opposition party.

"But you have to recognize that the Maoists are a political force and no political solution will come without bringing them on board," he said. "There might be many 'ifs' and 'buts', but we want to give them an honorable political exit (from violence)."

Information Minister Shrish Shumshere Rana dismissed the claim.

"We are not quite convinced that the agreement is going to stop terrorism, in fact it will encourage it," Rana said in an interview. "It is just a convenient rug under which terror hides."

Since allying with the political parties, the militants have promised to end human rights abuses, and no longer insist on the immediate creation of a communist state.

The alliance wants an elected constituent assembly to decide on a future political structure. The militants say they support multiparty rule and have promised to give up their arms after a new constitution is written.

But in the interim, they've refused to renounce violence - in fact, they've stepped up attacks on government forces. Human rights groups and diplomats say the rebels also still regularly commit rights violations and use child soldiers.

Critics of the alliance fear the rebels are simply using the opposition.

If the king fell, "the Maoists would be armed; the parties would be unarmed," U.S. Ambassador James Moriarty said in a speech earlier this year. "This stark scenario leaves the parties, and the people, defenseless against ideological 'partners' long used to settling arguments with a gun."

calls for a restoration of democracy.

Nepal rebels kill 22 as protesters defy ban

Staff and agencies

06 April, 2006

By Y.P. Rajesh and Gopal Sharma 9 minutes ago

KATHMANDU - Police fired tear gas to break up stone-throwing anti-monarchy protesters in Nepal on Thursday after a fierce overnight attack on a town by Maoist rebels left 22 people dead, witnesses and authorities said.

The demonstrations came on the first day of a four-day nationwide strike called by the Himalayan nation's seven main political parties against King Gyanendra's absolute rule.

Activists in the ancient temple town of Lalitpur, neighboring Kathmandu, as well as in Kalanki, an area on the outskirts of the national capital, took to the streets in defiance of a government ban on protests.

"Gyanendra leave the country," "Monarchy is falling, the people are rising," the protesters, a few hundred youths, shouted as they marched through the narrow, winding streets of Lalitpur.

Some carried red flags of communist parties and one had an image of Argentine guerrilla leader and Marxist revolutionary Che Guevara, which they waved at riot police before hurling bricks at them.

In Kalanki, tear gas was fired at hundreds of protesters who had gathered at a major intersection shouting slogans against the king and hurling stones at security forces, police said.

Political parties hope the protests will be decisive in their quest for democracy since King Gyanendra sacked the government and took full control of the poor Hindu kingdom in February 2005.

The Maoist rebels, who have been fighting for the last decade to topple the monarchy and establish a communist state, support the political groups as part of a pact against the king. But they are not joining the protests.

The main rally is due in Kathmandu on Saturday, April 8, the day multi-party democracy was established 16 years ago.

Pro-democracy protests have become routine since King Gyanendra's took power saying politicians had failed to quell the Maoist insurgency and hold national elections.

Political parties have said this week's rallies are expected to be the biggest so far, but tight security seemed to be preventing them from mobilizing large crowds. Besides, the royalist government detained activists and politicians on the eve of the strike and imposed a night curfew in the capital region.

Hours before the nationwide strike began on Thursday, rebels struck Malangwa town, 350 km (220 miles) southeast of Kathmandu.

They fired at soldiers guarding government offices and security posts and attacked a jail, freeing more than 100 inmates -- among them some of their comrades -- before fleeing.

Six policemen, six guerrillas and two civilians were killed in the fighting, police said. Some policemen and senior bureaucrats were taken hostage, they added.

An army helicopter sent to the area with troops crashed near Malangwa, killing eight of the 10 soldiers on board, an army officer said. The fate of the other two was not known.

The Maoists said rebels shot down the helicopter, but the army said the cause of the crash was being investigated.

"I saw the helicopter broken into three pieces in a field. Many government buildings are on fire or are smouldering. Unexploded bombs are strewn around," local journalist Rajesh Mishra said. "People are terror-struck. No one has come out."

The strike left roads elsewhere across the country of 26 million people deserted, and businesses and schools were shut.

In Kathmandu, hundreds of riot police and soldiers, some of them in armored vehicles, patrolled empty streets, while activists burned tyres on roads to enforce the closure.

Police said at least eight cars were smashed by protesters for defying the strike and more than 120 activists were detained. Political parties said about 400 were held.

The Maoist revolt has killed over 13,000 people and wrecked the economy of a country that scrapes by on aid and tourism.

http://www.outlookindia.com/pti_news.asp?id=376161

LD NEPAL

SHIRISH B PRADHAN KATHMANDU, APR 6 (PTI)

Over 1,000 protestors, including journalists, were arrested on the first day of the four-day nationwide general strike called by opposition parties against King Gyanendra's direct rule in Nepal, where Maoists attacked government offices and security camps leaving 11 people dead.

Some 500 political activists were arrested from different parts of the capital Kathmandu as they took out protest rallies, Nepali Congress (NC) Office Secretary Sobhakar Parajuli said.

Among those arrested were NC central members Dinbandhu Shrestha, Mina Pandey and Sujata Koirala, Nepal Communist Party-UML's central member Vidya Bhandari, veteran Communist leader Mohanchandra Adhikari, former MP Jagrit Bhetwal, central members of Peoples' Front Nepal Sashi Shrestha and Yamuna Bhual and NC (Democratic) central member Shivchandra Mishra, he said.

Over 500 more activists were arrested from various other parts of the Himalayan kingdom during the strike called by the seven-party opposition alliance, Nepali Congress sources said.

Clashes broke out between the riot police and protestors in different places in Kathmandu, Lalitpur district, Kirtipur Municipality, Kalanki, Gongabun and Bhaktapur in which over a dozen activists were injured, two of them seriously.

Police resorted to baton-charge and also fired tear gas shells on protestors in different places, party sources said.

On the eve of the strike, police yesterday arrested 300 activists from across the country.

The general strike will continue till Sunday, Parajuli said, adding that the agitation is aimed at ending the direct rule of the King and restoring full-fledged democracy. He said the movement will not end without fulfilling these objectives. Police also arrested over a dozen journalists from Birgunj as they took out a rally in protest against the arrest of their colleagues during yesterday's demonstrations in Kathmandu, the Federation of Nepalese Journalists (FNJ) said in a statement.

Those arrested from Birgunj today included FNJ Parsa district Chairman Satrugan Nepal and journalists Krishna Khanal, Dipendra Chauhan, Sriram Rayamajhi and Sanjay Shah.

The security personnel also "manhandled" and arrested journalists Somnath Suseli, Devi Chhetri, Ashok Bantawa and Rohitchandra Bantawa from Ilam district while they were collecting news of the opposition agitation, the FNJ said. Half a dozen journalists were injured when police baton-charged protestors at a rally.

The FNJ condemned the government's crackdown on media persons during peaceful rallies and demanded immediate release of the scribes who were arrested. It also warned the government against any crackdown on media in future.

Hundreds of security personnel were deployed in each corner of the capital, where the otherwise crowded roads remained silent due to the strike which paralysed normal life. Half a dozen vehicles were also vandalised in some places.

International flights were not much affected by the strike, but many domestic flights were cancelled. There was a very thin presence of tourists in hotels and casinos in Kathmandu during the strike. Also, 32 Terai leaders belonging to the seven-party alliance, who were arrested two days ago during a peaceful rally, today went on an indefinite hunger strike to oppose the "ill treatment" of the detainees at Maharajgunj police station.

Meanwhile, at least five policemen and six Maoists were killed in the fierce fighting that followed the overnight rebel raids on government and security establishments in Malangawa, the district headquarters of Sarlahi near the Indian border.

The rebels also set free some 100 prisoners after bombing the district jail, and took at least 20 hostages, including a dozen policemen. Those abducted included Chief District officer Bodh Raj Adhikari, eyewitnesses said.

The rebels also targetted offices of administration, land revenue and police besides an army barrack.

In a related incident, at least eight soldiers were killed when a Nepal Army helicopter crashed while on its way to fight Maoists in Malangawa.

Royal Nepalese Army spokesman Nepal Bhushan Chand said bodies of eight soldiers, including that of a Major, were found from the site where the night vision helicopter crashed.

Maoists rebels had claimed responsibility for downing the chopper, but the army official denied it saying "this was a technical fault and we have already sent an investigation team to look into the matter.

Arrests Continue in Nepal Capital as Anti-Monarchy Strike Begins

Updated Apr.6,2006 23:44 KST

Nepalese police have detained hundreds of opposition leaders and activists in the capital, Kathmandu, at the start of a four-day national strike that aims to pressure King Gyanendra to restore democracy. While the capital was gripped by the political showdown, nine people were killed in a provincial town raided by Maoist rebels engaged in a violent, decade-long insurgency. Hundreds of security personnel in riot gear stood guard in the near-empty streets of Kathmandu Thursday, to thwart mass protests planned by an alliance of seven opposition parties.

But small groups of pro-democracy demonstrators emerged on the streets during the day, prompting a second wave of arrests. Many opposition leaders and activists had been detained a day ahead of the strike.

The government has vowed to crush the anti-monarchy protests, citing threats of violence by Maoist rebels. Authorities have banned public rallies, imposed a night-time curfew, and urged people to ignore the strike.

But businesses and schools shut down Thursday, and vehicles stayed off the roads in the city and on surrounding highways.

Prakash Man Singh, a spokesman for the Nepali Congress Democratic Party, says the government's tough measures did not deter people from supporting the opposition's demand that the king give up the powers he seized more than a year ago.

"The people have taken seriously the call given by the seven-party alliance. We do not want an autocratic monarch over here in Nepal, and we want to restore peace. We want total democracy. We want sovereignty back to the people," said Prakash Man Singh.

The United Nations and the United States have criticized the ban on rallies and the arrests of political leaders and activists.

The political confrontation is not the only problem facing the royalist government. Hours ahead of the strike, Maoist rebels, who have waged a decade-long campaign to turn Nepal into a communist republic, struck at security forces in the south of the country.

Police say the rebels bombed government buildings and fired at security posts in the district town of Malangawa.

Several policemen and rebels were killed in the ensuing fighting. The rebels also claimed responsibility for shooting down a military helicopter.

The crisis in Nepal has deepened since King Gyanendra grabbed power, saying he wanted to crush the Maoist revolt. Both the political parties he dismissed and the rebels have now joined in an informal pact to dislodge the king.

In fact, the four-day shutdown is backed by the rebels, who have called for a cease-fire in Kathmandu to facilitate public participation in a mass rally planned for Saturday. Party leaders say engaging the rebels will help bring them into the political mainstream.

Over 400 protesters arrested; dozens injured in 7-party protests

nepalnews.com mk/pb Apr 06 06

Over 400 pro-democracy protesters and journalists were arrested while dozens others were injured on the first day of the four-day nationwide general strike called by the seven-party alliance (SPA) on Thursday.

The seven parties took out rallies in different parts of the Kathmandu Valley from early in the morning. Police arrested over 250 SPA activists including some central leaders in Kathmandu while dozens of protesters were beaten up by the riot police, according to SPA sources.

Violent protests were reported in Kalanki, Naya Baneshwor, Chabahil and Kirtipur areas where the protesters burned tyres on the streets and threw brickbats while the police baton-charged and fired several rounds of tear gas shells to disrupt the protests.

According to a statement issued by the CPN (UML), security men carried out search operation at the residence of acting general secretary of the party, Amrit Kumar Bohara and other party leaders. An UML activist, Darshan Yadav, who was injured in police action during a torch rally in Rajbiraj, the district headquarter of Saptari district, on Tuesday died while undergoing treatment at Rajbiraj hospital, according to the party.

Over 150 of seven-party protesters were arrested in Hetauda, Bharatpur, Birgunj, Pokhara, Ilam and several other districts. Similarly, over two dozen journalists were arrested in different parts of the country during rallies organised to protest the arrest of journalists yesterday.

Marketplaces, industries, schools and colleges remained closed in the capital and no vehicles except for the diplomatic and UN vehicles, ambulances and police vans plied on the road throughout the day.

A hugh number of riot police and Armed Police Force were deployed to control the protests.

The Home Ministry, meanwhile, said 167 persons were taken into control while defying the prohibitory orders effective within the Ring Road area in Kathmandu and Lalitpur. The situation in the capital and the district was normal with no major violence taking place, the ministry said.

The SPA announced a four-day long nationwide general strike to restore peace and complete democracy in the country. Protest rallies took place in more than 50 districts across the country today, according to the alliance.

<http://www.hindu.com/2006/04/07/stories/2006040704721600.htm>

Hundreds arrested in Nepal

Hindu, India - Apr 6, 2006

Maoists shoot down army helicopter; mass rally on Saturday

Kathmandu: Over 1,000 protesters, including journalists, were arrested on the first day of the four-day nationwide general strike called by Opposition parties against King Gyanendra's direct rule in Nepal, where Maoists attacked Government offices and security camps leaving 11 persons dead.

Some 500 political activists were arrested from different parts of the capital Kathmandu as they took out protest rallies, Nepali Congress (NC) office secretary Sobhakar Parajuli said.

Among those arrested were Nepali Congress central committee members Dinbandhu Shrestha, Mina Pandey and Sujata Koirala, Nepal Communist Party-UML's central member Vidya Bhandari, veteran Communist leader Mohanchandra Adhikari, former MP Jagrit Bhetwal, central members of Peoples' Front Nepal Sashi Shrestha and Yamuna Bhual and NC (Democratic) central member Shivchandra Mishra, he said.

Over 500 more activists were arrested from various other parts of the Himalayan kingdom during the strike called by the seven-party opposition alliance, Nepali Congress sources said.

Clashes broke out between the riot police and protesters in different places in Kathmandu, Lalitpur district, Kirtipur municipality, Kalanki, Gongabun and Bhaktapur in which over a dozen activists were injured, two of them seriously.

Police resorted to baton-charge and also burst tear gas shells on protesters in different places, party sources said.

An army helicopter sent to help security forces in the south-east of the country was shot down, the Maoist rebels said on their website, marking "the first time the People's Liberation Army has shot down an army helicopter." According to sources, the helicopter was carrying at least 10 securitymen. - Agencies

<http://www.elcomercio.com/noticia.asp?seccion=5&id=34911>

Protestas en Nepal dejan un saldo de 19

El Comercio (Ecuador) - 6 Abr 2006

Katmandú, EFE

Cerca de mil líderes políticos y activistas fueron detenidos hoy en Nepal, según fuentes de la oposición, durante la primera de cuatro jornadas de huelga general destinada a presionar, todavía más, al régimen del rey Gyanendra.

Fuentes de los partidos opositores, convocantes de las movilizaciones, aseguraron que unos 500 arrestos se practicaron sólo hoy en Katmandú.

"Nuestras protestas continuarán hasta el 9 de abril a pesar de esas detenciones y en los próximos días incluso crecerán", dijo hoy a EFE Krishna Sitaula, portavoz del principal partido opositor, el Congreso Nepali.

"El primer día de huelga ha sido un éxito y la población ha apoyado nuestra convocatoria", indicó.

La huelga general paralizó hoy gran parte de Nepal, donde se registraron algunos enfrentamientos en las calles y también ataques de la guerrilla maoísta, que causaron la muerte de 19 personas en el sur del país, entre ellas ocho soldados y cinco policías.

Las calles de Katmandú se encontraban desiertas y las tiendas y fábricas permanecieron cerradas.

Hoy se celebró la primera de las cuatro jornadas de huelga convocada por los siete partidos de la oposición para protestar contra la "monarquía autárquica" de Gyanendra, que culminará este sábado

con una manifestación que se prevé masiva, pese a la prohibición de concentraciones públicas realizada por el Gobierno.

El monarca nepalí ha gobernado el país con mano de hierro tras destituir, hace poco mas de un año, el Gobierno elegido y asumir el poder absoluto, entre las críticas de la comunidad internacional.

El secretario general de la ONU, Kofi Annan, volvió a expresar en las últimas horas su "preocupación" por la creciente confrontación que vive Nepal y las masivas detenciones de dirigentes políticos.

"Aunque el mantenimiento de la ley y el orden es responsabilidad del Estado, las preocupaciones de seguridad no deben ser la base para denegar a los ciudadanos su derecho a manifestarse pacíficamente", dijo Annan en un comunicado divulgado en Nueva York.

Durante el día de hoy se registraron manifestaciones en gran parte del país, según fuentes de los partidos políticos opositores.

Rajendra Pandey del Partido Comunista de Nepal (Unido Marxista Leninista), la segunda fuerza política del país, indicó a EFE que muchos centenares de activistas fueron detenidos hoy en distintas zonas del país.

En varias zonas de la capital se han producido también enfrentamientos entre las fuerzas de seguridad y los manifestantes y, en algunos casos, los agentes fueron apedreados por la multitud.

La guerrilla maoísta anunció el lunes pasado una tregua unilateral en el valle de Katmandú después de que el Gobierno declarara que temía que los rebeldes aprovecharan la huelga general para llevar a cabo ataques.

Pero en el sur del país la jornada ha estado marcada por enfrentamientos entre los agentes de seguridad y los rebeldes.

Durante la pasada noche se produjo un ataque de presuntos maoístas contra el pueblo de Malangwa, a unos 150 kilómetros al sureste de Katmandú y cerca de la frontera india, en el que murieron 19 personas.

Los rebeldes atacaron un helicóptero militar en el que viajaban tres tripulantes y siete soldados nepalíes.

En total, según fuentes de las fuerzas de seguridad, en este incidente fallecieron ocho soldados, cinco policías, cuatro rebeldes y dos civiles, mientras resultaron heridos 27 militares.

Tras el ataque, los maoístas secuestraron a unas 16 personas, entre ellos el principal administrador del distrito de Sarlahi, donde se produjo el enfrentamiento, mientras pusieron en libertad a cien presos de la cárcel local, entre los que se encontraban varios de sus partidarios.

Protests continue in Nepal

From correspondents in Kathmandu

April 07, 2006

HUNDREDS of anti-king protesters took to the streets of Nepal today, burning tyres, hurling stones at police and chanting pro-democracy slogans, as a four-day nationwide general strike entered its second day.

The strike and protests have been called by the Himalayan kingdom's seven main political parties in what they hope will be a definitive campaign against King Gyanendra, who sacked the Government and grabbed control of the nation last year.

Riot police fired tear gas shells at protesters in Lalitpur town in the capital region, where the Government has banned protests.

Protesters also set fire to a post office, which was doused.

Tyres were thrown on the road and set on fire at one place.

"Vacate Narayanhiti, Democratic Republic is arriving," some activists shouted, referring to the royal palace in Kathmandu.

"We want Democracy", "Down with Gyanendra", "Gyanendra leave the country", others chanted while some student activists whistled and taunted riot police.

Scores of riot police dressed in blue camouflage and armed with batons, rifles and tear gas guns stood ready to charge at the protesters if trouble erupted.

In Kirtipur, an ancient town outside Kathmandu, protesters blocked roads to prevent police reinforcements before marching through the town shouting slogans against the king.

"We are being peaceful and we will do everything peacefully to get our rights back," said Om Thapliyal, a Kirtipur activist.

Although pro-democracy protests have become routine since King Gyanendra took power in February 2005, political parties say the latest demonstrations will be the largest so far and hope they will be decisive in bringing democracy back.

The latest campaign is backed by Nepal's Maoist insurgents, who have been waging a bloody battle since 1996 to topple the monarchy and establish communist rule.

But the rebels are not taking part in the protests and have announced an indefinite ceasefire in the Kathmandu region to help the political demonstrations.

The main rally is due in Kathmandu tomorrow, April 8, the day multi-party democracy was established 16 years ago.

"There will be massive demonstrations on Saturday.

This movement will not stop until the people's rights are restored," Shobhakhar Parajuli, a top official of the biggest political party, Nepali Congress said.

The royalist government says it does not trust the guerrillas and has thrown a security blanket over the hill-ringed capital of 1.5 million people, including stationing armoured vehicles on some main streets.

The Maoist revolt has killed more than 13,000 people, wrecked the economy of one of the 10 poorest countries in the world and forced thousands of people to flee the fighting in the countryside, largely controlled by the rebels.

The king justified his takeover saying political parties had failed to crush the Maoists and hold elections.

<http://www.kantipuronline.com/kolnews.php?&nid=70571>

Over 200 arrested, dozens injured; police open fire in Patan, Dang

Kantipur Report

KATHMANDU, April 7 - Police Friday morning rounded up over 200 demonstrators from dozens of places inside the Ring Road area of the Kathmandu Valley as protestors took out rallies chanting anti-monarchy slogans defying the government ban order on day two of the general strike.

Seven-party alliance leaders Astalaxmi Shakya, Krishna Gopal Shrestha Bachaspati Devkota, Yogendra Sangraula and Gobinda Koirala are among the arrested.



Sources at the Nepali Congress party said that around 100 leaders, party activists and students have been arrested during the protests.

Shukra Raj Sharma, Sushil Man Sherchan and Ram Chandra Adhikari were among the NC leaders arrested in the morning, party sources said.

Clashes between protestors and riot police were taking place in Patan, Bhaktapur, Kirtipur and Kalanki till late evening.

In Patan, situation remained tense as the protestors torched a motorcycle, vandalized a temporary police booth, set fire to the post office and hurled stones at police, who in turn fired rubber bullets and dozens of tear gas shells to disperse the protestors. Nepal Students Union (NSU) activist Anil Khanal was hit by a rubber bullet in the leg. He is undergoing treatment at Patan Hospital.

In the same incident Ravi Maharjan and Umesh Kumar Paudel of the NSU were seriously injured in baton charge and



Demonstrations in Pokhara.
Photo: Kulchandra Neupane

tear gas shell firing by the police.

Demonstrators in Patan also torched the post office at Patan Dhoka and two motorcycles. Protestors vandalized a private car and set on fire a taxi for defying the general strike.

In Gongabu, a student activist of Nepal Students Union-Democratic was injured in police baton-charge. They have locked the Gongabu VDC office.

In the Central Campus at Kirtipur, police entered the student's ladies' hostel and resorted to baton-charge. Student leader Pranaya Singh Munna said that half a dozen students were injured in the police action. Police arrested seven students from the hostel.

This is the first time that the policemen forcefully entered the ladies' hostel and beat-up the students indiscriminately.

The students vandalised two statues in Tribhuvan University premises. Two students were hit and injured by a police van.

The protestors have locked up the Kirtipur Municipality Office and took two security men under control for a while.

In Bhaktapur, the protestors entered the Municipality Office, set fire to documents and locked the office. They have also vandalised the Land Revenue and Education offices.

In Butwal, teargas shells fired indiscriminately by police at the Pushpa Lal Chowk landed in the nearby Lumbini Nursing Home leaving some half a dozen patients unconscious.



Demonstrations in Narayanghat.

Civil servants join protests

Meanwhile, expressing their solidarity with the ongoing agitation of the seven-party alliance, civil servants have joined in the protests.

On the second day of the general strike today, employees at Nepal Rastra Bank, the central bank of Nepal, stopped banking operations and staged a demonstration in the premises of the office at Thapathali. Official works were also halted in all the other branch offices of the bank.

Likewise, protest demonstrations were staged at Rastriya Banijya Bank, Nepal Bank, Nepal Telecom, Agricultural Development Bank, Nepal Electricity Authority, Food Corporations, among others. The employees halted their works throughout the day today.

Doctors' demonstrations

Doctors today staged protest demonstrations at TU Teaching Hospital and Kanti Hospital at Maharajgunj, Ayurved Hospital, Naradevi and B.P Koirala Institute of Health Sciences, Dharan.

Dozens of health professionals at Teaching Hospital observed a silent rally within the premises of the hospital.



Dipak Gharti, 15, was injured in police firing in Dang.
Photo: Sudarsan Rijal

Fresh protests in Nepal against king's rule

07 Apr 2006 14:43:01 GMT

Source: Reuters



Nepali police arrest a pro-democracy protester at Patan in Kathmandu April 7, 2006. Hundreds of anti-king protesters took to the streets of Nepal on Friday, burning tires, hurling stones at police and chanting pro-democracy slogans, as a four-day nationwide general strike entered its second day.

REUTERS/STR/NEPAL



A woman watches pro-democracy activists scuffling with the police at Patan in Kathmandu April 7, 2006. Hundreds of anti-king protesters took to the streets of Nepal on Friday, burning tires, hurling stones at police and chanting pro-democracy slogans, as a four-day nationwide general strike entered its second day.

REUTERS/STR/NEPAL

By Y.P. Rajesh and Gopal Sharma

KATHMANDU, April 7 (Reuters) - Hundreds of Nepali students fought pitched battles with police on Friday, braving tear gas, hurling stones and chanting pro-democracy slogans as a four-day general strike against the king's rule entered its second day.

The strike and protests have been called by the Himalayan kingdom's seven main political parties in what they hope will be a definitive campaign against King Gyanendra, who sacked the government and took control of the nation last year.

Students shouting "Death to Gyanendra" charged at riot police in the Tribhuvan University campus in the capital, as dozens of tear gas shells were fired at them.

Carrying a Communist Party flag, hundreds of students hurled stones at police. Some beat up a constable who got separated from his comrades while others destroyed two statues of the king's grandmother on the campus.

Riot police also fired tear gas shells and rubber bullets at protesters in Lalitpur town in the capital region, where the government had banned protests.

Protesters set fire to a post office, which was doused. Tyres were thrown on the road and set on fire at some places.

"Vacate Narayanhiti, Democratic Republic is arriving," some activists shouted, referring to the royal palace in Kathmandu.

"We want Democracy", "Down with Gyanendra", "Gyanendra leave the country", others chanted.

Large but peaceful protests were held elsewhere across the country, political parties said, adding that about 200 activists were detained in the capital region on Friday.

CURFEW LIKELY

Although pro-democracy protests have become routine since King Gyanendra took power in February 2005, political parties say the latest demonstrations will be the largest so far and hope they will be decisive in bringing democracy back.

The latest campaign is backed by Nepal's Maoist insurgents, who have been waging a bloody battle since 1996 to topple the monarchy and establish communist rule.

But the rebels are not taking part in the protests and have announced an indefinite ceasefire in the Kathmandu region to help the political demonstrations.

The main rally is due in Kathmandu on Saturday, April 8, the day multi-party democracy was established 16 years ago.

"There will be massive demonstrations on Saturday. This movement will not stop until the people's rights are restored," said Shobhakhar Parajuli, a top Nepali Congress official.

But the government was likely to impose a curfew in and around Kathmandu on Saturday to thwart the rally, one senior government official told Reuters.

"The government has been restrained. We want to maintain law and order by using as little force as possible," Home Minister Kamal Thapa later told a news conference.

"The government has several options provided by the constitution and law. It can be curfew, imposition of an emergency and there are others," he said without elaborating.

The royalist government says it does not trust the Maoist guerrillas to stay out of the picture and has thrown a security blanket over the hill-ringed capital of 1.5 million people, including stationing armoured vehicles on some main streets.

The Maoist revolt has killed more than 13,000 people, wrecked the economy of one of the 10 poorest countries in the world and forced thousands of people to flee the fighting in the countryside, largely controlled by the rebels.

The king justified his 2005 takeover saying political parties had failed to crush the Maoists and hold elections. But his arguments have failed to convince leading nations, who want him to hold talks with the parties and restore democracy.

"There is no logic to support the king, there is no reason to support the king, he's done a travesty to democracy," U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Richard Boucher said at a business conference in

New Delhi. (Additional reporting by Himangshu Watts in NEW DELHI)

<http://www.newkerala.com/news2.php?action=fullnews&id=38386>

Over 1,000 arrested, Indian among 21 killed in Nepal strike

Posted on 07 Apr 2006 # PTI

Shirish B Pradhan, Kathmandu: Over 1000 protestors were arrested in Nepal on the first day of an opposition-sponsored general strike against King Gyanendra's direct rule even as 21 people including an Indian were killed in clashes between Maoists and security forces and a subsequent Army chopper crash.

An opposition activist also died after being brutally beaten by police ahead of the four-day strike called by the seven-party alliance for restoration of democracy.

Besides many journalists, those arrested from the capital included Nepal Congress central members Dinbandhu Shrestha, Mina Pandey and Sujata Koirala, Nepal Communist Party-UML's central member Vidya Bhandari and Communist veteran Mohanchandra Adhikari, party sources said.

Over a dozen people were injured, two of them seriously, when riot police clashed with demonstrators in Kathmandu, Lalitpur, Kirtipur, Kalanki, Gongabun and Bhaktapur. Police baton-charged and tear-gassed protestors in different places.

Nepal Communist Party-UML sources said an activist who was badly beaten by police during a demonstration on the eve of the strike succumbed to his injuries last night.

Maoists, who had declared support to the strike, raided government and security establishments in Malangawa, district headquarters of Sarlahi, 120 km south of here.

An Indian working in a hotel was among those killed in the fierce firing that followed in the town bordering India. Five policemen, four rebels and a local trader also died.

Later, at least 10 Royal Nepal Army soldiers died when a chopper sent to carry out aerial raids on the rebels crashed in a river two km west of the town.

The rebels also freed 108 prisoners from the district jail and abducted 10 security personnel

<http://www.zeenews.com/znnew/articles.asp?aid=286823&sid=SAS>

Over 750 held on 2nd day of anti-King strike in Nepal

Kathmandu, April 07: Tightening its grip on pro-democracy activists, Nepal's Royal government today arrested over 750 people on the second day of the nationwide opposition strike as police opened fire and lobbed tear gas shells leaving around 60 protestors injured amid a call for peace by an embattled King Gyanendra.

Home Minister Kamal Thapa said that 751 protestors were arrested with 115 among them sent to prison under a strict public safety law allowing government to jail people without charge for 90 days. However, the opposition claimed that more than 200 activists have been handed down three months' jail term under the Public Security Act.

The authorities yesterday arrested over 1,000 protestors on the first day of the four-day general strike.

"The government is using minimum force to control the situation," Thapa claimed at a press conference here, adding that adequate arrangements have been made to ensure the security of the people. "There is no need for people to be scared and we are doing what we can to foil the protest."

Thapa claimed that demonstrations here turned violent in which government properties and some vehicles were damaged.

He alleged that Maoists' special task force was involved in attacking government property and that the seven-party alliance's agitation against the King's direct rule has gone out of the control.

But the opposition denied the allegation, claiming that it was government itself which infiltrated into the peaceful movement and turned it violent. "Our agitation was peaceful but the government provoked in some places, which caused sporadic incidents of violence," said the alliance leaders.

Nepali Congress office secretary Sobhakar Parajuli alleged that government infiltrated into demonstrations and turned them violent in some places, otherwise the agitation was peaceful.

The government itself is responsible for inviting violence, he claimed and rejected Thapa's allegation that Maoists infiltrated into peaceful rallies.

In many cases, civil-dress policemen were deployed to suppress the movement besides mobilisation of armed police force and riot police, he alleged.

Police indiscriminately baton charged protestors, lobbed tear gas shells and even resorted to firing during today's pro-democracy agitations joined by various professional groups, financial institutions' staff and also government officials, according to party sources.

Some 50 to 60 people were injured in police action during peaceful demonstrations in Kirtipur, Lalitpur, Ason, Baneshwor, Gongabun and New Road, Parajuli said.

A student belonging to Nepal Students Union was seriously injured when police opened fire at Patandhoka in Kathmandu. Some half a dozen government vehicles were also damaged during the agitation.

The employees belonging to government banks, telecommunication and electricity offices also joined the general strike and came to the street halting their work, party sources said.

Some 250 employees of Nepal Rastra Bank, the National Bank, and other financial institutions assembled in front of Singh Durbar secretariat and shouted anti-government slogans demanding

democracy.

The doctors and lawyers have already joined the peaceful agitation aimed at ending autocratic regime and restoring complete democracy, the opposition parties said.

Massive demonstrations are expected in Basantapur, the heart of the capital Kathmandu, tomorrow when Nepalese will observe the anniversary of restoration of democracy 16 years back.

Various countries, including the US, Japan and the European community, have voiced concern over the government's crackdown against peaceful demonstrations.

Bureau Report

http://www.nytimes.com/2006/04/07/world/asia/08nepalcnd.html?_r=1&ei=5094&en=ea39e5fddd9a7893&hp=&ex=1144468800&partner=homepage&pagewanted=print&oref=slogin

April 7, 2006

Nepalis Attack Police and Invite Arrest

By TILAK P. POKHAREL and SOMINI SENGUPTA

KATMANDU, April 7 --- Flouting a government ban on political demonstrations, hundreds of Nepalis took to the streets of the capital today demanding a restoration of democracy, pummeling police with stones and inviting arrest on the second of a four-day nationwide strike.

The strike has been called by a coalition of Nepal's seven largest political parties demanding a return to parliamentary rule. It is endorsed by Maoist rebels who have fought a bruising decade-long war to topple Nepal's monarchy. The rebels say they are not taking part in the demonstrations and have pledged to refrain from violence in the capital during this time. The government has dismissed the rebels' promise and banned all political rallies in the capital, on suspicion of Maoist infiltration.

At least 200 people had been taken into custody by Thursday night, according to monitors from the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. Rally organizers said riot police arrested another 142 demonstrators today, but those claims could not be verified. The protests were considerably larger today than the day before, but the number of arrests smaller.

King Gyanendra today issued an unusual call for calm. "To establish permanent peace in the true sense is the need of the day," he said in a televised speech from Birgunj, about 125 miles southwest of the capital. "Let us all pledge to dedicate some of our time towards this noble cause."

Nearby, protesters burned a gate erected to welcome the King to Birgunj. In another display of anti-monarchy sentiment, demonstrators on the Tribhuvan University campus here in the capital tore down statues of two of Nepal's former queens. "Down with autocracy," the protesters shouted across the city. Riot police used tear gas to disperse the crowds.

The United Nations, the European Union, Japan and India have condemned the crackdown on political demonstrations and arrests.

"There is no logic to supporting the King," Richard Boucher, the United States undersecretary of state for south Asia told reporters in the Indian capital, New Delhi, this afternoon. "He has done a travesty to democracy."

"While maintenance of law and order is the responsibility of the state, security considerations should not be the basis for denying citizens their right to peaceful protest," the United Nations Secretary General, Kofi Annan, said in a statement issued Wednesday on the situation in Nepal.

This week's arrests echoed a crackdown on a similar protest called two months ago. Seven top party leaders remain in custody.

The rallies this week are designed to build up to a massive protest here on Saturday to mark the 16th anniversary of democratic rule. Nepal won a parliamentary democracy in April, 1990, but democracy has hard time sustaining itself in this Hindu kingdom. The elected parliament was ousted in 2002. King Gyanendra installed and removed prime ministers of his own choosing. In Feb., 2005, the King assumed total control of the government, imposing emergency rule and limiting a broad range of civil liberties in an attempt to quash a debilitating Maoist insurgency.

That insurgency has shown no signs of abating. In ten years, 13,000 Nepalis have been killed in the conflict, the majority of them during Gyanendra's tenure.

Maoist violence outside of the capital kept up at a steady clip. Late Wednesday in southern Sarlahi district, some 2,000 Maoists stormed government buildings and security posts, taking hostage two dozen police officers and a local government official. During the fighting, a Russian-made MI-17 government helicopter crashed, killing 10 soldiers. Another 13 people, including several rebels, were killed in the Sarlahi clash.

Tilak P. Pokharel reported for this article from Katmandu, and Somini Sengupta from New Delhi

http://today.reuters.co.uk/news/newsArticle.aspx?type=topNews&storyID=2006-04-07T222346Z_01_HO780587_RTRUKOC_0_UK-NEPAL.xml&archived=False

Nepal parties set for decisive rally against king

Fri Apr 7, 2006 11:23 PM BST

By Y.P. Rajesh

KATHMANDU (Reuters) - Nepal's main political parties were set for a showdown with King Gyanendra on Saturday when they mark the 16th anniversary of democracy with a rally to demand that he give up power.

Tensions have been rising in the troubled Himalayan nation in the runup to the planned show of strength in the capital Kathmandu, with activists clashing with police in defiance of a government ban on protests.

The rally and the protests are part of a four-day nationwide strike which began on Thursday and has completely shut the country down.

Nepal's seven main political parties hope their latest campaign will force the king to step down, 14 months after he shocked the world by sacking the government and seizing power, saying politicians had failed to tackle a bloody Maoist revolt.

"We will have small protests in the morning and the big one will be held in the afternoon," said Shobhakar Parajuli, a senior leader of the Nepali Congress, the largest party.

Asked about government plans to extend a night curfew through the day on Saturday to scuttle the protests, Parajuli said: "The protests will go ahead. If they impose curfew, we will break it."

April 8, 1990, was a milestone in the history of the world's only Hindu kingdom, which is sandwiched between Asian giants China and India.

Multi-party democracy was established on that day after days of violent protests against the then King Birendra, Gyanendra's elder brother, and the killings of dozens of activists.

Sixteen years on, political parties hope they can recreate that mood and oust Gyanendra, whose move to take power has isolated him globally.

"EMOTIONS BUILDING"

The United States, Britain and giant neighbour India have repeatedly urged the monarch to hold talks with the political parties and restore democracy. The 58-year-old king has remained unmoved.

U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Richard Boucher was strongly critical on Friday. "There is no logic to support the king, there is no reason to support the king, he's done a travesty to democracy," he said in New Delhi.

This week's pro-democracy campaign is backed by the Maoists, who have been waging a bloody battle since 1996 to topple the monarchy and establish communist rule. They formed a loose alliance with political parties against the king in November.

The Maoists are not taking part in the protests but have announced an indefinite cease-fire in the Kathmandu region to help the political demonstrations.

The royalist government has put hundreds of riot police and soldiers on the streets, some in armoured vehicles.

Hundreds of students on Friday burnt tyres, hurled stones and chanted pro-democracy slogans as they fought pitched battles with police firing tear gas.

Analysts said Saturday's protests would be crucial.

"Emotions are building up and more and more people are coming out and openly opposing the king," said Yubaraj Ghimire, editor of the popular magazine Samay.

"One section of the royalist government feels the king should reach out to political parties and hold talks while another feels they should be crushed," he said.

"There may be a breakthrough soon if political parties succeed in their current plans."

(Additional reporting by Gopal Sharma)

<http://www.alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/IRIN/752debea947ae74868773ada984e425d.htm>

NEPAL: Violence takes toll during Friday demonstrations

08 Apr 2006 07:08:21 GMT

Source: IRIN

KATHMANDU, 7 April (IRIN) - Violence took its toll on Friday in several major cities and towns in Nepal during peaceful demonstrations on the second day of a nationwide strike, called by the seven main opposition parties against King Gyanendra, who assumed direct rule in February 2005 after sacking the democratic government.

Human rights observers monitoring the mass political rallies both inside and outside the capital said that the violence erupted following a heavy crackdown by security forces to prohibit demonstrators from making any anti-king slogans.

"The repressive attitude of the state authorities is becoming worse. The aggression of the security forces is going out of control against the peaceful demonstrators," said Bhola Mahat, a prominent human rights activist in Nepalganj, a key border city of western Nepal, 570 km southwest of the capital.

In another major western city, Butwal, 300 km west of Kathmandu, several hospital patients were injured after the riot police fired tear gas towards the Lumbini Anchal Nursing Home while targeting the demonstrators, local journalists reported.

"Many patients had to go for emergency treatment adding more injury to their already sick conditions," said journalist Jai Bahadur Pun in Butwal, where the country's largest demonstration took place with nearly 5,000 people.

In the capital, demonstrations also became violent as the police severely beat up student activists and political workers. In the nearby town of Patan in the capital, demonstrators burnt down government offices and vehicles after police fired tear gas and battered protestors with their batons. According to the local human rights group, Insec, over 100 political workers were arrested today. Defying the government's prohibitory orders to organise rallies, even the civil servants working with the state-run organisations joined the demonstration. "The state's authoritarian system is also affecting our own morale and job security," said Rakesh Thapa, a government worker.

Condemning the arrests of democratic leaders and the state ban on peaceful protests, the diplomatic community in Nepal jointly criticised the king's government on Thursday. "These actions go against the freedom of assembly and freedom of expression stipulated in international conventions, to which Nepal is signatory," said a joint statement by the European Heads of Mission.

Even the government of Japan, which rarely makes political comments on Nepal, said that there should be no more arrests.

"We strongly deplore such incidents," added India's External Affairs Ministry.

But more violence is expected, with huge rallies planned throughout the country for Saturday.

Meanwhile, the government has promised that additional security personnel will be mobilised to control the demonstrations. "We will be taking more appropriate measures to avoid violence," said Home Minister Kamal Thapa, during a press conference in the capital. He added that his government could be forced to impose a curfew and state of emergency if the situation gets out of hand.

http://ca.today.reuters.com/news/newsArticle.aspx?type=topNews&storyID=2006-04-08T103415Z_01_SP262376_RTRIDST_0_NEWS-NEPAL-COL.XML&archived=False

Nepali protester said shot dead by troops at rally

Sat Apr 8, 2006 6:34 AM EDT

By Y.P. Rajesh and Gopal Sharma

KATHMANDU (Reuters) - Nepali troops opened fire on Saturday on activists protesting against King Gyanendra's rule, killing one man, a political party said, as tight security elsewhere prevented big demonstrations in the troubled nation.

The man was shot dead in the resort town of Pokhara, about 200 km (125 miles) west of the capital Kathmandu, during a pro-democracy rally, Yogesh Bhattarai, a senior leader of the Communist Party of Nepal (UML), told Reuters.

"He was shot in his head and he died instantly," Bhattarai said. More details were not immediately available.

Pokhara was hit by massive protests through the day with activists fighting pitched battles with troops who fired dozens of tear gas shells to quell them, witnesses said by phone.

The violence came on the 16th anniversary of democracy in the Himalayan kingdom, sandwiched between Asian giants India and China, where mainstream political parties began a four-day nationwide general strike and protests on Thursday.

The parties had planned a massive show of strength with a big rally in the heart of Kathmandu on Saturday.

But stringent security, which included armored personnel carriers with machine gun-wielding soldiers, blocked access to the venue and foiled their plans.

Soldiers and baton-wielding policemen patrolled the deserted streets of Kathmandu and ordered people indoors as an 11-hour curfew began at 10 a.m. (0415 GMT).

"We have changed our plans and are taking out smaller protests away from the main venue because of the curfew," Bhattarai said.

"We will use the Pokhara killing and hold a large protest in Kathmandu on Sunday," he added.

Dozens of young activists elsewhere on the outskirts of the capital tried to defy the curfew and clashed with riot police.

"Gyanendra leave the country," "Death to Gyanendra," "Long Live Democratic Republic," the youths shouted before pelting stones at riot police. The police responded by charging at them with batons and firing tear gas shells to disperse them.

"PEOPLE RISING"

The main political parties have formed a loose alliance with Maoist rebels to remove the monarch and the insurgents have announced an indefinite ceasefire in the Kathmandu region to help the demonstrations.

The monarch says he was forced to take power because the parties had failed to crush the Maoist revolt, which has killed more than 13,000 people since it started in 1996.

Kathmandu residents said mobile phone and some Internet services were disrupted, although there was no official announcement about links being cut.

"Residents should not come out of their houses. Security forces could shoot violators or police could arrest them and jail them up to one month," the government said in a statement about the curfew.

armored personnel carriers, mounted with heavy machine guns, were stationed at several main thoroughfares of the city while security vehicles carrying dozens of armed forces drove through main streets.

"This is the defeated mentality of the government. How long will they impose curfew and arrest people?" said Amrit Kumar Bohara, another top leader of the Communist Party of Nepal (UML), the country's second largest political group.

"The protests will continue. We can't stop them. If not in Kathmandu, we'll hold them in other cities," he told Reuters.

On Friday, hundreds of students burned tires, hurled stones and chanted pro-democracy slogans as they fought pitched battles with police firing tear gas.

"You can't solve the problem with curfew. It hurts ordinary people," said Suraraj Bhattarai, who works in a Kathmandu restaurant.

"People are rising against suppression and they cannot be crushed like this," he said.

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/1482462.cms>

Day-time curfew imposed in Kathmandu

[Saturday, April 08, 2006 09:53:09 amPTI]

KATHMANDU: Nepal's royal government on Saturday clamped a day-time curfew in the Kathmandu valley and suspended mobile phone services in a bid to thwart a major protest show by opposition parties on the third day of their nationwide anti-King strike.

The administrations in all three districts of the valley - Kathmandu, Lalitpur and Bhaktapur - imposed the curfew from 10 am to 9 pm, according to a government notice broadcast on the state-run 'Radio Nepal'.

The curfew has been imposed to protect life and property as there is a possibility of terrorists and anti-social elements attacking public property and the general people, it claimed.

The government also cut all mobile phone services from early this morning to foil the agitation.

Security has been further tightened in Kathmandu with heavy mobilisation of army and riot police. Security personnel are authorised to open fire if any one defies the curfew order, according to the government notice.

Home Minister Kamal Thapa had warned yesterday that the government could impose an emergency rule or curfew to control the situation, claiming that Maoists were infiltrating into the demonstrations organised by the seven-party opposition alliance against King Gyanendra's direct rule during their ongoing four-day general strike.

<http://permanent.nouvelobs.com/etranger/20060408.REU21741.html?0833>

Couvre-feu diurne au Népal

REUTERS | 08.04.06 | 09:22

par Y.P. Rajesh et Gopal Sharma

KATMANDOU (Reuters) - Les autorités népalaises ont imposé un couvre-feu diurne samedi dans la capitale Katmandou et dans les environs, menaçant d'ouvrir le feu sur les contrevenants, à quelques heures d'un grand rassemblement organisé par l'opposition contre le pouvoir du roi Gyanendra.

Le couvre-feu devait rester en vigueur pendant 11 heures, à partir de 10h00 locales (04h15 GMT), a déclaré le gouvernement royaliste dans un communiqué.

"Les habitants ne doivent pas sortir de chez eux. Les forces de sécurité tireront sur les contrevenants, la police pourra les arrêter et ils seront passibles d'une peine allant jusqu'à un mois de prison", lit-on dans le communiqué.

Les partis politiques qui ont appelé à manifester samedi ont tenu une réunion extraordinaire pour tenter de contrer la dernière mesure en date du gouvernement.

Selon des habitants, les services de téléphonie portable et d'internet étaient perturbés avant la tenue du grand rassemblement organisé par les sept grandes formations politiques du pays.

Le gouvernement a déployé des centaines de policiers anti-émeutes et des soldats dans les rues de Katmandou, dont certains à bord de véhicules blindés.

Les partis politiques entendent manifester samedi à l'occasion du 16e anniversaire de l'instauration du pluralisme dans le royaume et demander au souverain de renoncer au pouvoir.

PLURALISME

Le 8 avril 1990 avait marqué un tournant dans l'histoire du royaume himalayen. Le pluralisme politique avait été instauré ce jour-là après plusieurs journées de violentes manifestations contre le roi d'alors, Birendra, frère aîné de Gyanendra. Des dizaines d'opposants avaient péri dans ces manifestations.

La tension a monté ces derniers jours dans le pays à l'approche de cette épreuve de force dans la capitale Katmandou, des militants de l'opposition affrontant les forces de l'ordre qui tentaient de faire respecter l'interdiction de toute manifestation.

Le grand rassemblement prévu ce samedi et les manifestations des jours derniers participent d'une grève nationale devant durer quatre jours et qui a débuté jeudi, paralysant l'activité du pays.

Les sept grands partis politiques du pays espèrent que leur opération "pays mort" contraindra le roi à abdiquer, 14 mois après sa prise de contrôle de la totalité des pouvoirs et le limogeage du gouvernement en corollaire.

Parallèlement au mouvement de grève générale, la guérilla maoïste poursuit sa lutte et deux villes de l'ouest du Népal, Butwal et Taulihawa, ont été attaquées dans la nuit de vendredi à samedi. Au moins cinq personnes ont été tuées dans ces affrontements, ont déclaré les autorités.

350 held, 12 injured in Nepal protest

Web posted at: 4/8/2006 1:39:51

Source ::: AFP



Nepali police using tear gas at students in Kathmandu yesterday. Hundreds of students fought pitched battles with police, braving tear gas, hurling stones and chanting pro-democracy slogans as a four-day general strike against King Gyanendra's rule entered its second day.

KATHMANDU: Hundreds more protesters were arrested yesterday in Nepal on the second day of a general strike calling for King Gyanendra to restore democracy as several demonstrations left two dozen injured.

“Some 200 protesters from the Nepali Congress Party and more than 150 from the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist Leninist) have been arrested and 12 injured during protests,” said Nepali Congress Party secretary Shovarkar Parajuli. He vowed the protests, which have seen more than 750 people officially detained since Tuesday, would go on.

Twelve policemen also were injured as around 300 students at Tribhuvan University on the outskirts of Kathmandu battled riot police during the afternoon.

The students hurled stones and chanted slogans against Gyanendra. Police responded by firing dozens of tear-gas canisters and baton-charging the protesters.

“Around a dozen vehicles including two police vans were vandalised and about 12 policemen have been injured in clashes with protesters,” a police officer said.

International criticism of the government has mounted, with the United States, the European Union, India and Japan all expressing concern and urging the government to release those detained.

Nepal's home minister dismissed the new wave of international criticism at a press conference yesterday. “The government takes any kind of reaction from the international community very seriously but the reactions were not based on ground realities,” said Home Minister Kamal Thapa.

Despite the arrests and clashes, the royal government remained confident it can contain the protests.

“The government has several options including curfews and the imposition of emergency rule,” Thapa said. Similar anti-royal protests in January were thwarted when the government rounded up hundreds of activists, banned demonstrations, cut mobile phones and called an around-the-clock curfew.

“Since April, 751 people have been arrested out of these 393 have been released, and for 253 investigations are still going on and 115 are being held in custody,” Thapa said.

The streets of the capital were deserted again apart from the heavy security presence and sporadic protests usually by small numbers of people.

Defying a ban on public meetings, opposition parties have called a four-day general strike against the royal power grab and have paralysed the Himalayan kingdom. The government has locked up dozens of politicians and arrested hundreds for breaking the ban.

http://actualidad.terra.es/nacional/articulo/muerto_heridos_jornada_protesta_825273.htm

nepal-protestas (previsión) 08-04-2006

Un muerto y cuatro heridos en jornada de protesta

Una persona resultó muerta y otras cuatro heridas cuando las fuerzas de seguridad nepalíes dispararon hoy contra una manifestación en la ciudad de Pokhara convocada por la oposición para protestar contra el rey Gyanendra.

Según fuentes de la oposición, un soldado disparó desde el segundo piso de la oficina de telecomunicaciones en esa ciudad, situada a unos 200 kilómetros al oeste de Katmandú, y causó la muerte de uno de los manifestantes y heridas a otros cuatro.

Rajendra Pandey, activista del Partido Comunista de Nepal-

Unificado Marxista Leninista (CPN-UML), afirmó que la medida fue 'innecesaria'.

Como represalia, los manifestantes quemaron unas oficinas municipales en Pokhara, mientras que en el resto del país también se producían enfrentamientos con las fuerzas de seguridad.

En Katmandú, la alianza opositora no pudo celebrar la protesta masiva que había previsto debido a la imposición del toque de queda.

Aunque los manifestantes salieron a las calles violando el toque de queda con intención de congregarse en una protesta multitudinaria, las fuerzas de seguridad dispararon al aire y utilizaron gases lacrimógenos para dispersarlos.

Alrededor de 300 manifestantes fueron detenidos en distintas partes del país, un centenar de ellos en Katmandú, según Pandey.

Varios grupos de defensa de derechos humanos se unieron a las protestas y, según las fuentes de los grupos políticos, varios de ellos también han sido detenidos.

Pese a que el número de manifestantes ha sido menor del previsto, K.P. Oli, dirigente del CPN-UML, consideró que la oposición había alcanzado su objetivo ya que mucha gente violaba el toque de queda, impuesto durante el día de hoy por el Gobierno.

Los siete partidos de la oposición habían convocado cuatro días de huelga general, desde el jueves pasado, como medida contra el Gobierno monárquico y para instar la restauración de la democracia.

Las comunicaciones por teléfonos móviles fueron cortadas desde esta mañana en Katmandú, donde sólo funcionan las líneas fijas.

Según argumentaron las autoridades, la imposición del toque de queda se debía a la necesidad de 'mantener la paz y evitar la pérdida de vidas', pues aseguraron tener datos de que podían producirse infiltraciones de la guerrilla maoísta.

'Decir que los maoístas estén implicados en las protestas pacíficas de los siete partidos e imponer el toque de queda y cortar algunas líneas de telecomunicación, reflejan una mentalidad perturbada', señaló en un comunicado Amit Kumar Bohara, secretario general del CPN-UML, el segundo partido de la oposición.

En ese comunicado, Bohara pidió a la guerrilla maoísta que declare una tregua unilateral en todo el país, al igual que hizo hace varios días en el valle de Katmandú, a fin de que el Gobierno no pueda utilizar esa excusa para imponer más medidas de represión.

Pocas horas antes de que entrara en vigor el toque de queda, presuntos maoístas atacaron simultáneamente las poblaciones de Butwal, un centro de comercio importante en la región de Lumbini, y Taulihawa.

En los enfrentamientos al menos nueve rebeldes maoístas y tres agentes nepalíes resultaron muertos.

En Taulihawa, los rebeldes liberaron a 104 presos de la cárcel de Kapilavastu y quemaron varias oficinas gubernamentales.

Mañana, se celebra en Nepal el Día del Movimiento del Pueblo, ya que en esa fecha en 1990, fue levantada la prohibición sobre los partidos políticos después tres meses de manifestaciones por parte del pueblo.

Nepal vive un fuerte crisis político desde que el rey Gyanendra destituyó el Gobierno elegido y asumió el poder absoluto, hace poco más de un año, pese a la insistencia de la guerrilla maoísta, la oposición y la comunidad internacional, para que restaurara la democracia.

Terra Actualidad - EFE

<http://www.edicom.ch/fr/news/international/index.php?idIndex=270&idContent=988952>

08 avril 2006 - 14:41

25.000 manifestants dans une ville du sud du Népal

BHARATPUR, Népal (AP) -- Plus de 25.000 personnes ont manifesté samedi dans le sud du Népal, réclamant au roi Gyanendra de rétablir la démocratie. La police a ouvert le feu, blessant au moins trois manifestants, a-t-on appris de sources officielles.

A Pokhara, à 200 km à l'ouest de Katmandou et non loin du lieu de villégiature du roi, une personne a été tuée et deux autres blessées, la police ayant également tiré sur les manifestants.

Les manifestants ont incendié une demi-douzaine de bâtiments gouvernementaux de Bharatpur (140 km au sud-ouest de Katmandou), déclenchant l'intervention de la police anti-émeutes, a précisé un responsable officiel sous couvert d'anonymat.

Cette manifestation est pour l'instant la plus importante du mouvement à l'échelle nationale qu'on convoqué les principaux partis du pays pour protester contre la politique royale, avec une grève générale déclenchée jeudi. Des manifestations prévues à Katmandou ont été reportées, le gouvernement ayant imposé le couvre-feu et menacé d'ouvrir le feu sur toute personne le violant.

AP

nc/v

Protest In Nepal Turns Violent; 3 Wounded

POSTED: 11:05 am EDT April 8, 2006

UPDATED: 11:05 am EDT April 8, 2006

KATMANDU, Nepal -- Thousands of pro-democracy activists went on a rampage Saturday in southern Nepal, burning government offices and charging at police before officers opened fire, wounding at least three people, a government official said.



AP Photo/Saurabh Das

Nepalese students chant anti king slogan as they burn his pictures in papers in an effort to defy a government imposed curfew in Katmandu, Nepal, Saturday, April 8, 2006. Curfew was imposed on the third day of a four-day strike to thwart an attempt by opposition parties to hold a large demonstration against King Gyanendra.

The protesters set fire to at least a half-dozen government offices and forced riot police to retreat from the main town square at Bharatpur, about 90 miles southwest of Katmandu, a government official said on condition of anonymity because he is not authorized to speak to the media.

The protest at Bharatpur is the biggest so far in the ongoing four-day anti-monarchy protests nationwide by the country's main political parties.

Protesters postponed a Katmandu rally that had been expected to draw thousands Saturday after the king imposed an all-day curfew and ordered violators shot on sight.

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Rassemblement contre le roi au Népal, un manifestant tué

REUTERS | 08.04.06 | 14:25

par Y.P. Rajesh et Gopal Sharma

KATMANDOU (Reuters) - L'armée népalaise a ouvert le feu samedi sur des militants qui protestaient contre le roi Gyanendra, tuant un homme selon le Parti communiste, alors que des mesures de sécurité très strictes empêchaient la tenue de grandes manifestations en d'autres points du pays.

Le manifestant a été abattu à Pokhara, à 200 km environ à l'ouest de Katmandou, au cours d'un rassemblement pour la démocratie, a déclaré à Reuters Yogesh Bhattarai, l'un des dirigeants du Parti communiste du Népal (UML). "Il a été atteint à la tête et a été tué sur le coup", a-t-il dit. D'importantes manifestations ont eu lieu toute la journée dans la ville de Pokhara, où des batailles rangées ont opposé des activistes à des soldats qui ont fait usage de grenades lacrymogènes pour les refouler, ont indiqué des témoins.

Ces violences coïncidaient avec le 16e anniversaire de l'instauration du pluralisme dans le royaume himalayen, où les sept principaux partis politiques ont lancé jeudi une grève générale de quatre jours.

Les partis avaient prévu samedi une démonstration de force dans la capitale pour demander au souverain de renoncer au pouvoir. Mais ils ont été tenus en échec par des dispositifs de sécurité draconiens, avec déploiement de blindés transport de troupes et de mitrailleuses.

Soldats et policiers quadrillaient les rues désertes de Katmandou, dont les habitants avaient pour instruction de rester chez eux pendant le couvre-feu de onze heures décrété à partir de 10h00 (04h15 GMT).

"Nous avons révisé nos projets et organisons des manifestations plus petites, loin du lieu de rassemblement principal, en raison du couvre-feu", a dit Bhattarai.

MANIFESTATION PREVUE DIMANCHE

"Nous invoquerons l'incident mortel de Pokhara et tiendrons une grande manifestation dimanche à Katmandou", a-t-il ajouté.

A la périphérie de la capitale, des dizaines de jeunes activistes affrontaient la police anti-émeute en violation du couvre-feu.

"Gyanendra, quitte le pays", "Mort à Gyanendra", "Vive la République démocratique", criaient les jeunes manifestants avant de lancer des pierres sur les policiers. Ceux-ci ont chargé en faisant usage de matraques et de grenades lacrymogènes.

Les partis ont formé une alliance plus ou moins viable avec les rebelles maoïstes pour évincer le monarque, et les insurgés ont annoncé un cessez-le-feu sans limitation de durée dans la région de Katmandou pour faciliter les manifestations.

Le roi dit avoir été contraint de s'arroger tous les pouvoirs parce que les partis ne parvenaient pas à écraser un soulèvement maoïste qui a fait plus de 13.000 morts depuis 1996.

Le 8 avril 1990 avait marqué un tournant dans l'histoire du royaume. Le pluralisme politique avait été instauré ce jour-là après plusieurs journées de violentes manifestations contre le roi d'alors, Birendra, frère aîné de Gyanendra. Des dizaines d'opposants avaient péri dans ces manifestations. Selon des habitants, les services de téléphonie portable et d'internet ont été perturbés avant le grand rassemblement qu'avaient envisagé les sept grandes formations politiques. Aucune coupure n'a toutefois été officiellement annoncée.

La tension avait monté ces derniers jours dans le pays, où des opposants avaient affronté les forces de l'ordre chargées de faire respecter l'interdiction de manifester.

Les grands partis politiques espèrent que la grève nationale obligera le roi à abdiquer, 14 mois après sa prise de contrôle de l'ensemble des pouvoirs et le limogeage du gouvernement.

12 dead in clashes in west Nepal

Kathmandu, Apr 08: Nepal's royal government today imposed a curfew in the capital with a warning that violators would be shot and also cut mobile phone services ahead of a massive anti-King rally by the Opposition as clashes between Maoists and security forces left at least 12 people dead in the kingdom's west.

The activists of the seven-party alliance defied curfew at various places in Kathmandu on the third day of their four-day nationwide anti-monarchy general strike.

The alliance's movement against King Gyanendra's direct rule would not be deterred by the curfew order or restrictions imposed by the government, Nepal Sadbhawana Party central member Anil Jha told news agencies over phone.

Rejecting some media reports that the Opposition's protest programme planned for today has been postponed due to the curfew order, he cautioned people against such a "misinformation" campaign spread by the government to "sabotage" the agitation which is reaching its climax.

Earlier, the administrations in Kathmandu, Lalitpur and Bhaktapur districts imposed curfew from 10 am to 9 pm, according to a government notice broadcast on the state-run 'Radio Nepal'.

The curfew has been imposed to protect life and property as there is a possibility of terrorists and anti-social elements attacking public property and the general people, it claimed.

Security has been further tightened here with heavy mobilisation of army and riot police. Security personnel are authorised to open fire if any one defies the curfew order, according to the government notice.

Bureau Report

King of Nepal orders protesters shot

BINAJ GURUBACHARYA

Associated Press - 0408

Katmandu —

Security forces fired on anti-monarch demonstrators in separate marches Saturday, killing one and wounding five as the government escalated its crackdown on those seeking a return of democracy.

Thousands of activists rampaged in the southern town of Bharatpur, burning government offices and forcing riot police to retreat from the town square before officers opened fire, a government official said on condition of anonymity because he is not authorized to speak to the media.

Police fired bullets and tear gas to disperse the protesters, who are demanding that King Gyanendra restore democracy in this Himalayan kingdom. Three women bystanders were injured, the official said.

The protest at Bharatpur, about 150 kilometres southwest of Katmandu, was the biggest in the ongoing four-day anti-monarchy protests nationwide by the country's main political parties.

In the resort town of Pokhara, protester Gangadhar Baral said he was among a group of people pelting stones at security forces when the soldiers shot at them.

"We were protesting, and some of us were throwing stones at the soldiers. Suddenly, the soldiers fired shots at us. One of my friends was killed instantly," Mr. Baral said at the hospital in Pokhara, west of Katmandu. A hospital doctor confirmed the death.

In Katmandu, the government crushed opposition plans for a massive anti-monarchy rally with a daylong curfew and shoot-on-sight orders, emptying the roads and sending demonstrators indoors after two days of violent protests.

Streets quickly emptied, and soldiers patrolled the streets in vans, pickup trucks and armored cars. Tourists were only allowed to travel to or from the airport.

A key protest organizer objected to the curfew.

"The imposition of a curfew is unnecessary, illegal and illogical. There is no ground for this," said Khadga Prasad Oli, deputy leader of the Communist Party of Nepal.

The rally in the capital was intended to be the high point of a four-day general strike called by Nepal's seven main opposition parties to pressure King Gyanendra to restore democracy.

King Gyanendra seized power in February last year, claiming the government failed to quell a growing communist insurgency. Some 13,000 people have been killed since the Maoists launched their insurgency in 1996.

Authorities have cracked down forcefully on the protests. On Friday, police battled protesters in the narrow alleys of Katmandu, using batons and tear gas to beat back stone-throwing students. The number of pro-democracy advocates arrested swelled to 751, a government minister said.

King Gyanendra called for calm in a speech broadcast live Friday on national radio and television.

The rebels had promised not to wage attacks in Katmandu during the strike but have stepped up their attacks elsewhere. Hundreds of communist rebels fought a fierce battle against government troops in two southwestern towns, and at least nine guerrillas and three security personnel were killed, officials said.

The strike, which runs through Sunday, shut down public transport, shops and schools.

Le 8 avril 2006 - 13:23

Couvre feu imposé dimanche à Katmandou pour la deuxième journée consécutive

Presse Canadienne

Le gouvernement népalais a annoncé sa décision d'imposer un couvre-feu dimanche à Katmandou, pour la deuxième journée consécutive, afin de contrecarrer un rassemblement prévu contre le roi Gyanendra.

Selon un avis diffusé par la télévision publique népalaise, le couvre-feu sera effectif de 7h à 20h dans la capitale et des secteurs voisins, après l'annonce par des partis de l'opposition de la tenue d'un rassemblement dimanche. Les forces de sécurité ont ordre de tirer sur les contrevenants.

Samedi, le gouvernement a imposé un couvre-feu de 10h à 22h à Katmandou, et dans les faubourgs de Lalitpur et Bhaktapur, jugeant la mesure nécessaire pour assurer la sécurité des personnes et des biens.

Il a également déclaré que toute personne violant le couvre-feu pourrait être la cible de tirs, au troisième jour d'une grève générale de quatre jours organisée à l'appel d'une alliance de sept partis politiques opposés à la prise du pouvoir l'an dernier par le roi Gyanendra.

Des affrontements ont éclaté entre des protestataires et des policiers à Katmandou et dans d'autres villes du Népal jeudi, vendredi et samedi. Des centaines de personnes ont été interpellées.

Samedi, plus de 25.000 personnes ont manifesté à Bharatpur, dans le sud du Népal, réclamant au roi Gyanendra de rétablir la démocratie. La police a ouvert le feu, blessant au moins trois femmes, a-t-on appris de sources officielles.

A Pokhara, à 200km à l'ouest de Katmandou et non loin du lieu de villégiature du roi, une personne a été tuée et deux autres blessées, la police ayant également tiré sur les manifestants.

A Bharatpur (140km au sud-ouest de Katmandou), les manifestants ont incendié une demi-douzaine de bâtiments gouvernementaux, déclenchant l'intervention de la police anti-émeutes, a précisé un responsable officiel sous couvert d'anonymat.

Cette manifestation est pour l'instant la plus importante du mouvement à l'échelle nationale convoqué par les principaux partis du pays pour protester contre la politique royale, avec une grève générale déclenchée jeudi.

Nepal opposition, rebels vow more action

By NEELESH MISRA, Associated Press Writer



AP Photo/SAURABH DAS

A policeman kicks a suspected opposition party supporter after opposition activists pelted stones at policemen to defy a government imposed curfew in Katmandu, Nepal, Saturday April 8, 2006. Curfew was imposed on the third day of a four-day strike to thwart an attempt by opposition parties to hold a large demonstration against king Gyanendra.

Saturday, April 8th, 2006 10:40 PM (PDT)

KATMANDU, Nepal (AP) - The crisis in this Himalayan nation deepened Sunday as angry crowds demanding the restoration of democracy took to the streets across Nepal in defiance of a daytime curfew, throwing stones at security forces and burning government offices.

Security forces have killed three protesters, including one in Sunday's gunfire, and jailed more than 800 during four days of demonstrations that for the first time brought thousands of workers, professionals and business people into the streets alongside students and political activists.

With King Gyanendra and his swelling opposition both refusing to back down, the situation appeared to be reaching its most volatile point since he seized absolute power more than a year ago. The well-armed communist insurgency has allied itself with the political opposition, which vowed Sunday to continue demonstrations indefinitely. The government warned of harsher measures in response.

"Even the parties didn't expect such a massive public participation across the country," said Lok Raj Baral, executive chairman of the Nepal Centre for Contemporary Studies and a retired diplomat.

Across the country and throughout the day, Nepalis protested in defiance of a daylight curfew and official orders to shoot violators on sight.

There were protests in at least four different parts of the capital, Katmandu. Some demonstrators threw stones at police before being forced back by tear gas. The private Kantipur television station broadcast footage of police shooting rubber-coated bullets, hitting at least one protester.

The station also showed protesters burning cars in Katmandu and looting city council buildings in a suburb.

The protests, part of a four-day nationwide strike, were to end Sunday but instead the king's opponents announced that they would continue, with no end in sight. The daytime curfew was extended through Monday, although its hours were shortened in the capital and surrounding areas.

The Maoist rebels' were supporting a strike by the political opposition for the first time, although the two sides struck an alliance late last year. The rebels' leader, Prachanda, on Sunday announced a nationwide campaign to include defying curfew orders, blockading highways, breaking royal statues and punishing all those who pay taxes.

The demonstrations will be "long-drawn. I can't say how this will end," said Ram Sharan Mahat of the country's largest party, the Nepali Congress, one of seven parties that have banded together to oppose Gyanendra. "The king must restore democracy," he said.

Saturday was the 16th anniversary of the introduction of democracy in Nepal, which came about after dozens of pro-democracy demonstrators were shot by police, prompting a surge of anti-royal sentiment and forcing the late King Birendra to yield much of his authority.

Gyanendra abruptly ended the democratic experiment last year when he reclaimed absolute power from other parts of the government, arguing he needed to bring order to a chaotic and corrupt political scene and end a communist insurgency that has killed nearly 13,000 people in the past decade.

Many Nepalis at first welcomed the king's move. But the insurgency has only worsened and the economy has faltered.

The latest death came in the town of Banepa, just east of Katmandu, when security forces fired on protesters hurling stones and shouting slogans, said an official who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to talk to the media.

A day earlier, two demonstrators were shot and killed in separate incidents by security forces that were also being pelted with stones.

"The government has no support base ... so the use of force is its last resort," said Baral, the Nepal expert and retired diplomat. "But force has not been able to scare the protesters."

More than 2,000 people rallied in the southern town of Bharatpur, about 90 miles southwest of Katmandu, angered by the shooting of a demonstrator there by security forces a day earlier.

The government on Sunday said it was cracking down on the protests because communist militants had fired on security forces from among the crowds, despite the rebels' pledge not to launch attacks in the capital during the opposition strike.

Four known Maoists were among the 800 people arrested, and they had told authorities that militants had infiltrated the protests and planned to carry out attacks, Home Minister Kamal Thapa told reporters.

The government's crackdown on the opposition has prompted condemnations from the United States, Japan, the European Union and neighboring India, all of which have been critical of the king's seizure of power.

Nepali protesters fired on; 2 killed

Binaj Gurubacharya

Associated Press

Apr. 9, 2006 12:00 AM

KATMANDU, Nepal - Nepali security forces fired on stone-throwing protesters Saturday, killing two people and wounding at least five as increasingly violent demonstrations against King Gyanendra spread across the Himalayan nation.

Protesters ransacked government buildings and attacked security forces in provincial cities, but a curfew and a threat by authorities to shoot anyone violating it spared the capital, Katmandu, further violence after two days of protests.

However, political parties pledged to renew demonstrations in the capital, raising fears of a deepening crisis as the clearly emboldened opposition pressed Nepal's embattled yet uncompromising king to restore democracy.

Saturday's violence came on the 16th anniversary of the introduction of democracy in Nepal, an experiment that Gyanendra abruptly ended last year when he reclaimed absolute power for the royal dynasty.

At the time, he said the move was needed to bring order to a chaotic and corrupt political scene and to end a communist insurgency that has killed nearly 13,000 people in the past decade.

In the southern town of Bharatpur, a demonstration by more than 25,000 pro-democracy supporters erupted into riots Saturday. It was the largest protest since a four-day nationwide strike called by the opposition, and backed by the rebels, began Thursday.

The protesters set fire to at least a half-dozen government offices and forced riot police to retreat from the town's main square, an official said, requesting anonymity because he was not authorized to speak to the media.

Police fired bullets and tear gas to disperse the protesters, injuring three women, including two sisters who were watching the melee, the official said.

Thousands defy curfew in Kathmandu

SHIRISH B PRADHAN KATHMANDU, APR 9 (PTI)

Unfazed by the royal government's warning that curfew violators would be shot, tens of thousands of people today rallied in the Nepalese capital against King Gyanendra's direct rule, leading to the arrest of nearly 50 opposition activists and injuries to scores following clashes with police who opened fire and used batons.

A woman, who sustained bullet injuries in yesterday's firing by the army during demonstrations in Bharatpur municipality of Chitawan, died this morning while undergoing treatment, activist said.

She was among the three women, who were shot at while standing in the balcony of their houses, during the peaceful protests in the southern Nepal town. Earlier yesterday, an activist was killed in the Army firing in the western resort town of Pokhara during demonstrations.

The government clamped day-time curfew in Chitawan and also in the Rupandehi district in western Nepal to control the situation. It also imposed a curfew in Pokhara, according to an official notice.

Southwest Nepal's Butwal, Taulihawa and Bharatpur areas were also under curfew.

Some 5,000 demonstrators vandalised the Party office of Home Minister Kamal Thapa at Anaam Nagar, according to a local journalist. The protestors broke into the office of Rastriya Prajatantra Party's breakaway faction known as RPP (Thapa).

The royal government imposed the 13-hour curfew from 7 am for the second consecutive day today in a bid to foil the seven-party alliance's protest shows against the King.

<http://www.liberation.fr/page.php?Article=373628>

Nouvelles manifestations au Népal malgré le couvre-feu

09 avril 2006 (Reuters - 09:32)

par Y.P. Rajesh et Gopal Sharma

KATMANDOU - Des milliers de Népalais ont tenté dimanche d'envahir un hôpital public, tandis que d'autres ont brûlé des véhicules du gouvernement et ont affronté la police anti-émeutes en dépit d'un couvre-feu visant à empêcher les manifestations en faveur de la démocratie.

Une passante blessée samedi par une balle perdue tirée par l'armée à Narayanghat, à 150 km au sud de Katmandou, est décédée dimanche, a rapporté un médecin. Trois personnes, dont cette femme, ont été blessées à Narayanghat.

"Elle est morte ce matin", a déclaré à Reuters par téléphone le docteur Bhojraj Adhikary.

Samedi, un manifestant a été tué par balle par l'armée à Pokhara, dans l'ouest du royaume, ce qui a accru la colère des activistes à l'origine du mot d'ordre de grève de quatre jours qui a débuté jeudi pour dénoncer l'autoritarisme du roi Gyanendra.

La tension était palpable à Naryanghat, ont précisé des témoins, selon lesquels le couvre-feu n'a pas dissuadé les gens de descendre dans la rue.

A Pokhara, des milliers de personnes ont tenté d'entrer dans l'hôpital où avait été transporté le corps du manifestant tué samedi.

La foule a brûlé des postes des forces de sécurité et s'est confrontée à la police anti-émeutes.

"Des milliers de personnes sont dans les rues. La tension est très forte", a dit Keshav Lamichhane, un journaliste népalais.

L'armée affirme avoir ouvert le feu samedi à Pokhara en situation de légitime défense.

"LE REGIME EST DEJA DEFAIT"

Les sept principaux partis politiques du Népal avaient prévu une grande manifestation contre le roi samedi à Katmandou, mais les importantes mesures de sécurité ont fait que seules quelques petites manifestations ont pu brièvement défier le cessez-le-feu.

"Les gens ne se laisseront pas intimider de la sorte. Cela montre que le régime est déjà défait", a déclaré Arjun Narsinght K.C., dirigeant du Congrès népalais, premier parti politique.

"Nous essaierons encore de défiler vers le centre-ville et de manifester. Nous continuerons jusqu'à ce que nous réussissions. Nos manifestations ne cesseront pas", a-t-il dit à Reuters.

Des activistes sont parvenus à braver le couvre-feu dans certaines parties de la capitale, où ils ont incendié des véhicules du gouvernement et des pneus.

Le ministère de l'Intérieur a lancé une mise en garde.

"Si quelqu'un sort de sa maison en dépit du couvre-feu, le personnel de sécurité fera d'abord une sommation de s'arrêter. Mais si la personne n'obéit pas à la sommation et ne s'arrête pas, le personnel de sécurité pourra même tirer sur elle".

Samedi marquait le 16e anniversaire de l'instauration du pluralisme au Népal.

Le roi dit avoir été contraint de s'arroger tous les pouvoirs parce que les partis ne parvenaient pas à écraser un soulèvement maoïste qui a fait plus de 13.000 morts depuis 1996.

<http://www.mercurynews.com/mld/mercurynews/news/world/14302496.htm>

Posted on Sun, Apr. 09, 2006

One killed, five hurt in Nepali protests CURFEW ANNOUNCED IN KATMANDU

By Binaj Gurubacharya

Associated Press

KATMANDU, Nepal - Nepali security forces fired on stone-throwing protesters Saturday, killing one person and wounding at least five as increasingly violent demonstrations against King Gyanendra spread across the Himalayan nation.

Protesters ransacked government buildings and attacked security forces in provincial cities, but a curfew and a threat by authorities to shoot anyone violating it spared the capital, Katmandu, further violence after two days of protests.

However, political parties pledged to renew demonstrations in the capital, raising fears of a deepening crisis as the clearly emboldened opposition pressed Nepal's embattled yet uncompromising king to restore democracy.

Saturday's violence came on the 16th anniversary of the introduction of democracy in Nepal, an experiment that Gyanendra abruptly ended last year when he reclaimed absolute power for the royal dynasty.

At the time, he said the move was needed to bring order to a chaotic and corrupt political scene and to end a communist insurgency that has killed nearly 13,000 people in the past decade.

Many Nepalis at first welcomed the king's move. But the insurgency since has worsened and the economy has faltered, fueling the discontent that has been on display in recent days as thousands of workers, professionals and business people have for the first time joined students and political activists at protests.

In the southern town of Bharatpur, a demonstration by more than 25,000 pro-democracy supporters erupted into riots Saturday. It was the largest protest since a four-day nationwide strike called by the opposition -- and backed by the rebels -- began Thursday.

The protesters set fire to at least a half-dozen government offices and forced riot police to retreat from the town's main square, an official said, requesting anonymity because he was not authorized to speak to the news media.

Police fired bullets and tear gas to disperse the protesters, injuring three women, who were watching the melee, the official said.

In the resort town of Pokhara, Gangadhar Baral said he was among a group of protesters throwing stones at security forces when soldiers opened fire.

"One of my friends was killed instantly," Baral said at the hospital in Pokhara, about 125 miles west of Katmandu.

A doctor reached by phone at the city's Gandaki Hospital confirmed the death and injuries but declined to give his name because he was not authorized to talk to the news media.

Witnesses and Nepali media reported protests in dozens of other towns and cities, although there was no word of deaths or injuries.

In Katmandu, protesters hurled bricks, shouted slogans and clashed with police in scattered incidents before the curfew took effect. Once the curfew was imposed, people scurried home, leaving streets empty even of tourists, who were permitted only to travel to and from the airport.

In many parts of the city dotted with ancient Hindu temples and Buddhist shrines, the only sounds were the sirens of military vehicles, police cars and ambulances.

The curfew began at 10 a.m., and officials said later Saturday it would stay in effect through today. They also repeated warnings on state television and radio that violators would be shot.

The curfew and threats prompted the opposition -- an alliance of seven political parties, nearly all of Nepal's major ones -- to put off a planned protest in Katmandu till today. But with the extension of the curfew, it appeared the rally would again be delayed.

"If the government imposes curfew on Sunday, then we will hold it on Monday. But we will not give up," said Dip Kumar Upadhaya of the Nepali Congress Democratic party. He spoke before the curfew was extended.

http://www.nytimes.com/2006/04/09/world/asia/09nepal.html?_r=1&ei=5087&en=725ea8176ee44178&ex=1144728000&pagewanted=print&oref=slogin

April 9, 2006

Protester Is Killed in Nepal During Third Day of Strikes

By TILAK P. POKHAREL and SOMINI SENGUPTA

KATMANDU, Nepal, April 8 — The Royal Nepalese Army shot dead a pro-democracy protester and wounded another in the Himalayan resort town of Pokhara on Saturday, as thousands of Nepalis poured into the streets, defying a curfew and ban on political rallies.

By the end of the day — the third of a four-day strike called by a coalition of Nepal's seven largest political parties demanding a return to parliamentary rule — more than 500 people had been detained, according to monitors with the United Nations human rights agency.

In a statement issued Saturday evening, the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights described the Pokhara killing to be "in clear violation of international standards for law enforcement."

The three days of rallies have been by far the most powerful displays of antigovernment sentiment since King Gyanendra took absolute control of the country in February 2005, in an attempt, he said, to quash a Maoist rebellion in the countryside. Since then, once-feuding politicians, student groups and, most recently, Maoist guerrillas have linked arms to restore democratic rule.

On Saturday, armored personnel carriers, mounted with heavy machine guns, were posted at key street corners here in the capital, and riot police and Nepalese soldiers fanned out across the city. In

some places, security forces clashed violently with protesters pelting stones, burning tires and shouting, "We will burn the crown." Elsewhere, crowds of protesters dispersed as soon as security forces approached.

By evening, with flashlights in hand, protesters moved through the capital's narrow, dark alleys, tempting police and soldiers before scattering. Witnesses said government buildings had been burned in the capital and in a nearby town.

With a daylong curfew in effect since Saturday morning, shops and businesses kept their doors shuttered. As it has done before in its attempts to quell antipalace demonstrations, the government blocked the cellphone network, making it more difficult for protesters to mobilize. The protests are scheduled to continue Sunday.

This week's rallies coincide with the 16-year anniversary of Nepal's first pro-democracy movement, when the current king's brother and predecessor, Birendra Bikram Shah, conceded to popular demands for parliamentary elections.

King Gyanendra assumed the throne in 2001, after a bizarre attack in the country's palace in which Crown Prince Dipendra shot and killed his parents, King Birendra and Queen Aishwarya, and eight other members of the royal family before shooting himself.

Two years later, the elected Parliament was ousted; prime ministers were removed and installed at the king's choosing. In February 2005, the king assumed total control of the government, imposing emergency rule and limiting a broad range of civil liberties in an attempt to quash a debilitating Maoist insurgency.

In 10 years, 13,000 Nepalis have been killed in the conflict, a majority of them during King Gyanendra's tenure.

Tilak P. Pokharel reported from Katmandu for this article, and Somini Sengupta from New Delhi.

<http://www.swissinfo.org/eng/swissinfo.html?siteSect=143&sid=6616469&cKey=1144576340000>

April 9, 2006 - 5:50 AM

Nepal protests mount despite curfew, three killed

Nepal protests mount despite curfew, three killed

By Y.P. Rajesh and Gopal Sharma

KATHMANDU (Reuters) - Violent protests against the king spread across Nepal on Sunday as a third person was shot dead by troops and thousands of activists defied a curfew to burn government

vehicles and clash with police.

Nepal's seven main political parties, who began a four-day nationwide general strike and protests on Thursday, said they were extending the campaign indefinitely to pile pressure on King Gyanendra to end his absolute rule and restore democracy.

Maoist rebels, fighting since 1996 to topple the monarchy, said the campaign so far by the parties was a success and vowed to back the extension as part of a loose alliance between them.

Sunday's protests came despite stringent security across the mountainous nation, wedged between Asian giants India and China.

One protester was killed on Sunday when police opened fire in Banepa, about 30 km (20 miles) east of the capital Kathmandu, when demonstrators tried to storm a police post, a Home Ministry official told Reuters.

It was the third death from firing by troops since Saturday.

A woman bystander, wounded in police firing on Saturday in a town south of the capital Kathmandu, died on Sunday. Another protester was shot dead by the army in the western tourist resort town of Pokhara, also on Saturday.

Nepal's seven main political parties, who had called the nationwide strike and protests that shut down the country said they were extending the campaign indefinitely.

"Our protest movement is reaching new heights. We will intensify it further," said Gyanendra Bahadur Karki, a top leader of the Nepali Congress (Democratic) party.

The move was expected to cause the government to extend the curfew in Kathmandu and many other towns and keep mobile phone services suspended, government sources said.

The royalist government warned of tough measures to curb the demonstrations.

"So far, we have been restrained even during the curfew. We will get stricter now to preserve law and order and keep the situation normal," Home Minister Kamal Thapa told a news conference without elaborating.

MAOIST CAMPAIGN

Maoist rebels are for the first time supporting the campaign by the political parties and have declared a cease-fire in and around Kathmandu. But they have not joined the protests.

The insurgents would launch a parallel campaign against the king as part of which they would destroy statues of royalty in Nepal and signboards with the words 'His Majesty's Government', Maoist chief Prachanda said in a statement.

The seven political parties had planned a big rally against the king in Kathmandu on Saturday but tough security meant that only a handful of small protests could be held.

But hundreds of protesters defied the curfew and demonstrated at several places on the outskirts of Kathmandu, burning tyres on roads, blocking them with rocks and logs, and pelting riot police with stones and bricks.

Large demonstrations involving thousands of people were also staged in many towns across the country, witnesses said.

"Police, army and people, we are all brothers, help us", "We don't accept monarchy", they shouted, waving party flags as thick black smoke from burning tyres rose into a cloudy sky.

At Gongabu, a Kathmandu suburb, police baton-charged men throwing stones, injuring at least four who were later dragged off to security vehicles.

"We are not afraid of bullets," said protester Prajwal Sharma. "We have to get democracy at any cost and we will get it. People are taking over district towns and we will soon take over Kathmandu."

Security was tight with soldiers and armed police patrolling the streets and armoured personnel carriers mounted with heavy machine guns stationed at some intersections.

Nepal, which has been battling a bloody Maoist revolt for a decade, was pushed deeper into turmoil after King Gyanendra grabbed power in February 2005, saying political parties had failed to crush the rebellion which has killed thousands.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/worldlatest/story/0,-5744112,00.html>

Nepal Opposition Extends Nationwide Strike

Sunday April 9, 2006 2:46 PM

AP Photo XSD102

By BINAJ GURUBACHARYA

Associated Press Writer

KATMANDU, Nepal (AP) - Nepal's main opposition parties said Sunday that a nationwide general strike and anti-monarchy protests would continue ``indefinitely."

Representatives of the seven parties issued a statement after a meeting in Katmandu amid a police crackdown and curfew.

``The nationwide general strike and protests will continue until further notice," the statement said.

The actions were to end Sunday.

Meanwhile, Nepal's home minister said that Maoist militants who joined protesters clashing with police in the capital, Katmandu, have started shooting on security forces.

Home Minister Kamal Thapa did not say whether there had been any injuries. Rebel chief Prachanda, whose organization is backing the ongoing anti-monarchy protest campaign, promised not to carry out attacks in Katmandu.

“The terrorists have fired despite their pledge not to carry out violence in the capital,” Thapa said.

He said security forces recovered cartridges in the Gangabu neighborhood, where a curfew was not imposed but several protests were reported.

Witnesses and Nepali media reported protests in dozens of other towns and cities.

On Saturday, security forces killed at least two protesters and wounded five in provincial cities. Saturday was the 16th anniversary of the introduction of democracy in Nepal, an experiment that Gyanendra abruptly ended last year when he reclaimed absolute power for the royal dynasty.

At the time, he said the move was needed to bring order to a chaotic and corrupt political scene and to end a communist insurgency that has killed nearly 13,000 people in the past decade.

Many Nepalis at first welcomed the king's move. But the insurgency since has worsened and the economy has faltered, fueling the discontent that has been on display in recent days as thousands of workers, professionals and business people have for the first time joined students and political activists at protests.

More than 2,000 people protested in the southern town of Bharatpur on Sunday, angered by the death of demonstrator shot by security forces a day earlier. On Saturday, protesters set fire to at least a half-dozen government offices and forced riot police to retreat from the town's main square.

The government extended the daylong curfew Sunday to the resort town of Pokhara, where the king was vacationing and clashes erupted a day earlier.

Gangadhar Baral said he was among a group of protesters throwing stones at security forces when soldiers opened fire in Pokhara on Saturday, killing one of his friends. A doctor reached by phone at the city's Gandaki Hospital confirmed the death and injuries but declined to give his name because he was not authorized to talk to the media.

The curfew began at 10 a.m. Saturday and officials said it would stay in effect through Sunday. They repeated warnings on state television and radio that violators would be shot.

Apart from Saturday's shootings, the government has arrested more than 800 people since Wednesday. Police were seen Saturday detaining another 20 rights activists for defying the curfew.

The crackdown on the opposition has prompted condemnations from the United States, Japan, the European Union and neighboring India, all of which have been critical of the king's power grab.

For the first time, the parties' protest has the backing of the communist rebels, with whom they formed a loose alliance in December.

<http://www.newsonline.ca/westfallweeklynews/stories/index.php?action=fullnews&id=173169>

Nepalese Rebels Back Opposition Parties

Staff and agencies

09 April, 2006

By BINAJ GURUBACHARYA, 28 minutes ago

KATMANDU, Nepal - Security forces fired at anti-monarchy demonstrators in eastern Nepal on Sunday, killing at least one man, as the main opposition parties and communist rebels said a nationwide general strike and protests would continue indefinitely.

Representatives of the seven main opposition parties met in the capital, Katmandu, amid a daylight curfew and police crackdown and decided to continue actions that were scheduled to end Sunday — the fourth day of increasingly violent demonstrations that saw thousands of emboldened protesters defy the curfew and clash with police.

Nepal's Maoist rebel chief on Sunday announced a new nationwide campaign against Gyanendra, including defying curfew orders, capturing highways and breaking royal statues.

"We support the decision by the seven parties to continue the protests and general strike, and announce we will join the general strike as part of our programs," the rebel statement said.

The royal government issued a threat Saturday to shoot anyone breaking curfew. It justified its crackdown by saying it had intelligence, based partly on the interrogation of arrested militants, that communist rebels had infiltrated protests and would attack government targets.

"We are not going to allow massive public gatherings in the city as it has been verified that there is Maoist infiltration," Information Minister Shrish Shumshere Rana told The Associated Press.

"This is just an excuse. They are trying to tar this uprising with the Maoist brush, and to question its legitimacy," Mahat said.

In Katmandu, police fired tear gas at stone-throwing youths as at least 1,000 people assembled in one neighborhood, said a witness who declined to be named for fear of police reprisal. Police also fired rubber bullets, private Kantipur Television reported, showing footage of at least one injured protester.

More than 2,000 people protested in the southern town of Bharatpur, angered by the death of a demonstrator shot by security forces a day earlier as protesters set fire to at least a half-dozen government offices and forced riot police to retreat from the town's main square.

At the time, he said the move was needed to bring order to a chaotic and corrupt political scene and to end a communist insurgency that has killed nearly 13,000 people in the past decade.

Many Nepalis at first welcomed the king's move. But the insurgency since has worsened and the economy has faltered, fueling the discontent that has been on display in recent days as thousands of workers, professionals and business people for the first time joined protesting students and political activists.

The government extended the daylong curfew Sunday to the resort town of Pokhara, where the king was vacationing as clashes erupted Saturday.

Gangadhar Baral said he was among a group of protesters throwing stones at security forces in Pokhara on Saturday when soldiers opened fire, killing one of his friends. A doctor reached by phone at the city's Gandaki Hospital confirmed the death but declined to give his name because he was not authorized to talk to the media.

The government has arrested more than 800 people since Wednesday. Police were seen Saturday detaining another 20 rights activists for defying the curfew.

The crackdown on the opposition has prompted condemnations from the United States, Japan, the European Union and neighboring India, all of whom also have been critical of the king's power grab.

http://today.reuters.com/news/articlenews.aspx?type=worldNews&storyID=2006-04-10T073202Z_01_SP289868_RTRUKOC_0_US-NEPAL.xml&pageNumber=2&imageid=&cap=&sz=13

Fresh trouble erupts as Nepal strike extended

Mon Apr 10, 2006 3:32am ET



By Gopal Sharma and Y.P. Rajesh

KATHMANDU (Reuters) - Fresh protests against the king erupted across Nepal on Monday, in defiance of curfews in some places, with hundreds of activists taking to the streets on the fifth day of a campaign seeking the restoration of democracy.

The latest series of demonstrations are the most intense since King Gyanendra sacked the government and took control of the impoverished nation 14 months ago. Three protesters were killed by troops over the weekend, more than 100 have been wounded and 1,000 people detained, political parties said.

On Monday hundreds of protesters defied a curfew in the west Nepal resort town of Pokhara, where one demonstrator was shot dead by the army on Saturday, witnesses said.

Waving party flags and shouting slogans against the king, they taunted riot police and soldiers to take them on. Protests were also held in the towns of Biratnagar in the east and Butwal in the west.

In Kalanki, on the outskirts of Kathmandu, riot police beat up protesters with batons to break up a rally of about 500 people.

Casualties could mount as the government has vowed to get tougher with the demonstrators, analysts said.

But the protesters, mostly activists owing allegiance to Nepal's seven main political parties, said they were undeterred.

"We will establish a democratic republic soon. I think the king will melt if we continue protests like this for another 15 days. Otherwise he is not going to relent," said Krishna Prasad Bhandari, a 17-year-old Kathmandu resident

"TIRED OF KING"

The latest round of protests -- backed by a general strike -- was originally due to end on Sunday, but the parties said they were extending it indefinitely to put pressure on the king to end his absolute rule.

The government responded by imposing a curfew in the capital and surrounding areas on Monday for a third day, warning people to keep off the streets for seven hours from 11 a.m. (0515 GMT).

State-run mobile phone services remained disrupted on Monday, in an apparent attempt by the royalist government to scuttle coordination among protest organizers.

A big pro-democracy rally planned in Kathmandu for Saturday failed to materialize after the government imposed a curfew and deployed armored personnel carriers in the city.

The protests lack a charismatic leader or figurehead, with most of the country's aging political leaders either detained or in hiding coordinating the campaign. The parties also lack widespread popular support, with many people accusing them of corruption and misrule when they ran the country.

Some Kathmandu residents said support for the parties was growing as the protests gathered pace, but others said the general strike, which has completely shut the country down, was taking its toll on their popularity.

"People are tired of the king. They are also tired of the parties. So the seven parties must do some good work," said Shyam Singh Pariyar, a newspaper vendor.

Maoist rebels, who have been fighting to topple the monarchy since 1996, are supporting the latest campaign under a loose alliance with political parties.

The Maoist revolt has killed more than 13,000 people in one of the world's poorest countries, wrecking its aid-and-tourism dependent economy and forcing thousands to flee the violence in the countryside.

The turmoil worsened after King Gyanendra took power.

State-run newspaper the Rising Nepal defended the government crackdown on protesters and the daily curfews.

"The government had given assurances that the parties would be permitted to conduct their program if they broke their alliance with the Maoist terrorists," it said in an editorial.

"But the parties did not grasp the opportunity. Instead they were hell-bent on creating chaos."

<http://www.thehimalayantimes.com/fullstory.asp?filename=6a4Za6ra.9amal&folder=aHaoamW&Name=Home&dtSiteDate=20060410>

Demonstrations Continue in Valley Despite Curfew

Kathmandu, April 10

Thousands of protestors staged rallies in different parts of Kathmandu Valley today despite daytime curfew.

Around 1,500 people gathered in Kirtipur and blocked a major road with boulders. A large number of people have been demonstrating in Lalitpur and Bhaktapur as well when this report was filed.

Demonstrators fought pitched battles with riot police at a number of places elsewhere in the city too, with the number of agitators in Samakhusi area in Kathmandu swelling to over 5000. The agitators refused to let the riot police take control of the main road. Nearly one dozen protestors were injured in confrontation with police in Gongabu area. Police fired a dozen rounds of blank shots in Dhumbarahi area.

Kalanki, Maharajgunj, Chabahil and Koteshwor saw pitched battles between the riot police and the demonstrators, forcing the police to shoot tear gas shells at many places. Ring Road was guarded by police at a number points, as the demonstrators defied curfew and burnt tyres on the roads.

<http://www.iht.com/articles/2006/04/10/news/nepal.php>

New clashes erupt in Katmandu on 3rd day of curfew

The Associated Press

TUESDAY, APRIL 11, 2006

KATMANDU, Nepal Police officers fired rubber bullets at anti-monarchy protesters as new street fighting erupted Monday in Nepal's capital, while most residents spent the bulk of the daylight hours cooped up at home on the third day of a government curfew.

The police fired tear gas and beat protesters with batons to break up rallies in Katmandu's Kalanki, Gangabu and Dhumbarahi neighborhoods, while demonstrators staged other rallies around the city to demand that King Gyanendra relinquish control over the government. No major injuries were immediately reported.

The Himalayan nation's crisis has deepened in recent days, with demonstrators rampaging in cities throughout the country and a crackdown by security forces leaving three protesters dead and about 800 in prison, most without charge. Most Nepalis are staying in their homes.

Gyanendra dismissed an interim government and seized power more than a year ago, and an alliance of the country's seven major political parties - with vocal backing from the country's Maoist rebels - are demanding he restore full democracy.

Neither side has shown any willingness to back down, and the government said it may have to use even more force to restore order, contending that Maoist rebels had infiltrated political protests over the weekend and fired on security forces.

Four suspected rebels were arrested along with other protesters and spent gun cartridges were discovered at protest sites, Home Minister Kamal Thapa said Sunday.

The seven-party opposition rejected the allegation. "This is baseless," Ram Sharan Mahat, leader of the Nepali Congress party said Monday. "He says he found cartridges. Anyone could have thrown them there. This is a peaceful movement. By alleging that Maoists have become part of it, the government is trying to legitimize its oppression."

But the protesters have not been entirely peaceful. Thousands of youth have thrown bricks and stones at police officers, wounding many and prompting Information Minister Srish Shumshere Rana to call the protesters "hooligans."

"Ideally, I would have preferred an entirely peaceful movement," Mahat said. "But these are young people. If you provoke them, they will hit back. We have all done it."

Many Nepalis initially welcomed Gyanendra's takeover, but the insurgency has since only worsened and the economy has faltered, fueling discontent that has for the first time brought hundreds of workers, professionals and business people into the streets.

"The crisis has deepened. Even the parties didn't expect such a massive public participation across the country," said Lok Raj Baral, executive chairman of the Nepal Center for Contemporary Studies.

The government imposed an almost round-the-clock curfew in Katmandu over the weekend, and extended it Monday, but with reduced hours. Day curfews also continued in the towns of Pokhara and Bharatpur. The opposition's four-day general strike ended Sunday, but the alliance vowed to continue protests.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/worldlatest/story/0,-5746474,00.html>

Nepal Protesters Continue Democracy Push

Monday April 10, 2006 9:01 PM

AP Photo KAT108

By MATTHEW ROSENBERG

Associated Press Writer

KATMANDU, Nepal (AP) - Police fired rubber bullets and tear gas and beat back stone-throwing Nepalese protesters, who defied curfews and took to the streets of this Himalayan nation for a fifth straight day Monday to demand that democracy be restored.

Nepal's crisis showed no signs of easing as angry mobs again marched through major cities and far-flung towns, burning tires and hurling bricks at police wielding batons and shields. King

Gyanendra's government remained steadfast in its refusal to reach out to the political opposition, now allied with Nepal's communist insurgents in a campaign to force the king to relinquish control.

The result was another day of ragged and bloody protesters - some of them young children - facing riot police through clouds of tear gas in a Nepal as volatile as it has been in the 14 months since Gyanendra seized total power.

The U.S. State Department said the king's decision to impose direct palace rule had been "an abject failure," and the events of the past few days show it had only increased insecurity.

"The king's continuing failure to bring the parties back into a process to restore democracy has compounded the problem," State Department spokesman Sean McCormack said. "The United States calls upon the king to restore democracy immediately and to begin a dialogue with Nepal's constitutional political parties."

Security forces have killed three protesters and jailed more than 1,000 people during the five days of demonstrations.

Authorities have threatened even harsher measures if the protests do not end, and on Monday they extended curfews in Katmandu and two other cities overnight. The curfews were first imposed Saturday.

"Unless the situation improves immediately, there are chances of civil war," said Dr. Vijay Sharma, a senior surgeon who was among doctors at 17 hospitals who briefly protested against the king Monday.

The demonstrations have, for the first time, brought thousands of workers, professionals and business people into the streets alongside students and political activists.

"It's no longer simply a movement of the urban political class, the students," said Dhruva Adhikary of the independent Nepal Press Institute.

"You are seeing people in rural areas - doctors, teachers - joining in on their own. It's not going to stop here and we can't rule out more clashes. The authorities' measures appear harsher by the day."

Nepal's seven-party opposition alliance, perhaps sensing its moment has arrived, has vowed to press on indefinitely with a general strike and anti-monarchy protests.

The last mass democracy movement in 1990 only gained steam after dozens of pro-democracy demonstrators were shot by police, prompting a surge of anti-royal sentiment that forced the late King Birendra to yield much of his authority.

Gyanendra abruptly ended the democratic experiment last year when he reclaimed absolute power, arguing he needed to bring order to a chaotic and corrupt political scene and end a communist insurgency that has killed nearly 13,000 people in the past decade.

While many Nepalis at first welcomed the king's move, the insurgency has worsened and the economy has faltered, fueling the discontent.

On Monday, thousands of people again defied a curfew in Katmandu to hold protests in the Kalanki and Dhumbarahi neighborhoods. Those actions escalated into violent clashes with security forces.

Demonstrations also were held in towns and cities across the country, including a rally in the western town of Dhangadhi that reportedly ended with police beating protesters.

Officials have justified the crackdown by saying communist rebels have infiltrated the demonstrations, including four suspected rebels arrested along with other protesters.

A leader of the Nepali Congress, the country largest opposition party, called the allegations "baseless."

"By alleging that Maoists have become part of it, the government is trying to legitimize its oppression," Ram Sharan Mahat said Monday.

He did, however, acknowledge that protests had repeatedly turned violent.

"Ideally, I would have preferred an entirely peaceful movement," Mahat said. "But these are young people. If you provoke them, they will hit back. We have all done it."

Information Minister Srish Shumshere Rana was less forgiving, calling the protesters "hooligans."

While most of Katmandu's 1.5 million people have been cooped up at home because of the curfews, police and soldiers patrolling the streets do not seem to be enforcing the measure against Western tourists, who were seen strolling and even cycling down the city's empty roads.

"For the first time, I am on the other side of the curfew," said Ishay Waldman, 22, a former Israeli Army soldier from Moshav Kfar Aviv, a village in central Israel.

http://www.thepeninsulaqatar.com/Display_news.asp?section=World_News&subsection=Philippines+%26+South+Asia&month=April2006&file=World_News2006041115249.xml

Anti-King protests intensify in Nepal

Web posted at: 4/11/2006 1:52:49

Source ::: Agencies

KATHMANDU: Fresh protests against the king erupted across Nepal yesterday, in defiance of curfews in some places, with thousands of activists taking to the streets on the fifth day of a campaign seeking the restoration of democracy.

The latest series of demonstrations are the most intense since King Gyanendra sacked the government and took control of the impoverished nation 14 months ago. Three protesters were killed by troops over the weekend, more than 100 have been wounded and 1,000 people detained, political parties said.

About 5,000 people sat on a road in the ancient town of Kirtipur outside Kathmandu Yesterday, defying a curfew and cheering activists who made speeches against the king. The residents had



Demonstrators throwing stones at police at Gongobu in Kathmandu. Fresh protests against the king erupted across the country yesterday, in defiance of curfews in some places.

placed huge boulders on the road to prevent soldiers easily accessing the area and breaking up the assembly.

“I think the king should back out,” said HiraKaji Maharjan, 50. “The question is whether he does it on his own or is forced.”

In Kalanki, also outside Kathmandu, riot police beat up protesters with batons to break up a rally of about 500 people. Police also fired tear gas to disperse stone-throwing protesters in several places outside Kathmandu.

“People are getting killed anyway. I am not afraid of death,” 20-year-old Ashok Rana said, standing next to smouldering tyres on the road in Kalanki. Six soldiers in green camouflage stood atop an armoured personnel carrier nearby, pointing machine guns at the crowd.

“The king has pushed the country into a deep ditch,” said Raj Kumar Chhetri, 17, another protester. Casualties could mount as the government has vowed to get tougher with the demonstrators, analysts said.

But it was not yet clear if the protests were on a sufficient scale to force the king to give in or open talks with political parties, they said.

http://in.today.reuters.com/news/newsArticle.aspx?type=topNews&storyID=2006-04-11T121006Z_01_NOOTR_RTRJONC_0_India-244383-3.xml&archived=False

New violence as Nepal anti-king protests unabated

Tue Apr 11, 2006 12:19 PM IST

By Y.P. Rajesh and Gopal Sharma

KATHMANDU (Reuters) - Nepali troops opened fire and baton-charged protesters who burned tyres, chanted slogans and clashed with government forces on Tuesday before a fresh curfew took hold on the sixth day of mass protests against the king.

Tuesday's protests came as international pressure increased on King Gyanendra to end his crackdown, which has killed three people and wounded hundreds of demonstrators.

The street campaign is the most intense since 58-year-old Gyanendra sacked the government and grabbed power 14 months ago.

Some analysts say it is only a matter of time before the king runs out of options. They say five days of protests and clashes, in many places where shoot-on-sight curfews were in force, showed more ordinary people were coming out openly against him.

But sources close to the palace said the king, whom some analysts describe as a stubborn ruler, was unlikely to relent.

Riot police opened fire at a meeting called in the western tourist resort town of Pokhara to mourn a protester shot dead by the army there on Saturday, wounding two people, witnesses said.

In a Kathmandu suburb, about 500 youths burned tyres on the road, chanting "We want Democracy" and "Gyanendra leave the country". Riot police charged at them with batons and beat them up, wounding at least two people before the crowd was dispersed.

But groups of protesters gathered in another suburb nearby. The situation was tense there before a fresh, five-hour curfew was due to take hold from 12 p.m. (0615 GMT).

The latest series of demonstrations and a nationwide general strike began last Thursday in an attempt to force Gyanendra to step down and hand power to an all-party government.

The campaign, backed by Maoist insurgents, had been due to end on Sunday but was extended indefinitely as stringent security measures prevented big rallies against the king.

U.S. REBUKE

So far, more than 300 people have been wounded and about 1,500 protesters detained during protests, the parties said.

Paris-based media watchdog Reporters Without Borders said 97 journalists had been detained and 24 wounded across the country.

While the mass campaign has plunged the nation deeper into turmoil, the king has stayed away from the capital for nearly two months, making an extended tour of the countryside.

The king says he was forced to take absolute power after politicians failed to quell a violent Maoist revolt aimed at toppling the monarchy, which has killed more than 13,000 people in the impoverished Himalayan country.

The revolt has also wrecked the economy of one of the poorest countries in the world which lives off aid and tourism.

The U.S. State Department issued a sharp rebuke to the king on Monday for his handling of the protests, saying the decision to impose palace rule had failed "in every regard".

"The king's continuing failure to bring the parties back into a process to restore democracy has compounded the problem," spokesman Sean McCormack said in Washington. "The United States calls upon the king to restore democracy immediately."

Rights group Amnesty International urged the royalist government to rein in the security forces, saying it feared an increase in violence in the coming days.

"Restricting peaceful demonstrations by ban orders and curfews and arbitrarily arresting hundreds of people only inflames an already volatile situation," it said in a statement.

But the state-run newspaper Rising Nepal said the campaign was not peaceful and Maoist rebels had infiltrated the protests to create trouble, a charge the political parties have denied.

"The seven political parties would be responsible for any unfortunate event that may occur during their protests," it said in an editorial on Tuesday.

http://www.belleville.com/mld/belleville/news/breaking_news/14312892.htm?template=contentModules/printstory.jsp

Posted on Tue, Apr. 11, 2006

Activist: Police fire on Nepal protesters

BINAJ GURUBACHARYA
Associated Press

KATMANDU, Nepal - Police fired on pro-democracy protesters Tuesday in Nepal's capital, leaving at least 12 people injured, a human rights activist said. It was not clear if the police fired rubber bullets or live ammunition.

The clash came amid days of increasingly violent confrontations between security forces and protesters demanding that Nepal's king give up absolute power, and just hours after police fired on stone-throwing protesters in the resort town of Pokhara, wounding two people, an official said.

The royal government, meanwhile, has responded to the continuing protests by imposing a daytime curfew in Katmandu and two other towns at the center of the rallies.

Details were scarce on Tuesday's Katmandu clash, but it came in a neighborhood on the city's edge, when protesters marched toward a line of police from an area not covered by the strict curfew rules.

When the protesters didn't retreat, the police first beat them and then opened fire on them, said Poshraj Adhikari, of the rights group INSEC-Nepal.

Jagat Basnet, a local resident, said by telephone that police had fired several times at the protesters. "I saw one running man get hit and collapse," Basnet said.

Adhikari, the human rights activist, said the army was beginning to move into the neighborhood to take control of the situation.

The government also announced it would launch a search of houses across Katmandu in search of terrorists who they say have infiltrated the pro-democracy protests.

"The security forces are searching for these terrorist for which there will be a massive search of private homes," a Home Ministry statement said, urging residents to cooperate.

The U.S. State Department, meanwhile, called on King Gyanendra to restore democracy, declaring that 15 months of direct palace rule "has failed in every regard."

"The demonstrations, death, arrests and Maoist attacks in the past few days have shown there is more insecurity, not less," State Department spokesman Sean McCormack said in Washington on Monday.

Some 10,000 people marched Tuesday through the center of Pokhara, about 125 miles west of Katmandu, when some began throwing stones at police, who responded first with tear gas and rubber bullets and then with live gunfire when the protesters refused to disperse, according to a town official who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak to the press.

The king has been vacationing in Pokhara, a resort town popular with foreign tourists, for the past few weeks, even as the protests have spread from Nepal's major cities to its far-flung towns.

There have been daily protests and clashes with security forces throughout the country since Thursday, when the country's seven major opposition parties called a strike. Security forces have killed three protesters and put more than 1,000 in jail.

The parties are demanding the king relinquish the power he seized last year, when he said he needed to crush the Maoist insurgency and enable the country to hold elections that had been delayed due to the violence.

The strike has continued into this week, shutting down roads, schools, and stores in most parts of the country.

On Tuesday morning, many of Katmandu's 1.5 million people scrambled during a short window in the curfew to get food and other supplies. The current curfew ordered everyone off the streets from noon to 5 p.m., and again from 10 p.m. to 4 a.m.

"My son and daughter and their children, we are all stuck in our house," said Priya Ranjit, a 58-year-old woman buying rice and other food in Katmandu. "This can't go on, we need to go to work for our money."

Up the road, a few hundred protesters had gathered, chanting "Democracy! Democracy! Down with autocracy!" Behind them, a small pile of tires burned, sending a plume of black smoke into the air.

Dozens of riot police armed with batons and shields watched until the protesters stopped a motorcycle, pulled off the driver off and tried to burn the bike. The officers then charged in, swinging their batons and sending the protesters scrambling to the safety of side streets.

The crisis has shown no sign of abating, with police firing rubber bullets and tear gas at stone-throwing protesters who have defied curfews and taken to the streets for five straight days.

While Nepal has been shaken by protests repeatedly since the king took power, this has been the first time that thousands of workers, professionals and business people have marched alongside students and political activists.

Despite the violent crackdown, Nepal's seven-party opposition alliance has vowed to press on indefinitely with the strike and its protests against the king.

Police open fire at demonstrators in Gongabu, over a dozen critically injured

nepalnews.com mk Apr 11 06

More than a dozen protesters were injured when security personnel opened fire at a demonstration in Gongabu in Kathmandu Tuesday evening.

TV footages showed several injured demonstrators being rushed to hospital as violent clashes between the police and the protesters went on. Red Cross officials, some foreign volunteers and police personnel carried the injured persons to police vans and other vehicles to be rushed to hospital.

According to human rights monitors present on the scene, more than a dozen agitators were shot by the riot police and the Armed Police Force (APF) officials as angry demonstrators threw stones at the residence of police AIG Roop Safar Moktan at Gongabu after unidentified persons reportedly opened fire at the crowd from inside the house.

APF Senior Superintendent Madhav Thapa who was leading the security forces refused to order his men to halt fire despite several requests after a number of protesters were shot at, the rights activists said.

Several rights activists and journalists were also injured as police indiscriminately charged batons at the crowd while dozens others were arrested from the protest that started soon after the daytime curfew ended at 5:00 p.m.

The condition of a number of persons who have been undergoing treatment at Tribhuvan University Teaching Hospital is said to be critical.

Nepal relaxes curfew, fresh protests break out

12 Apr 2006 09:27:48 GMT

Source: Reuters

CRISIS PROFILE: What's going on in Nepal?

By Gopal Sharma and Y.P. Rajesh

KATHMANDU, April 12 (Reuters) - Nepal's government said on Wednesday it was relaxing a daytime curfew in the capital for the first time in five days as violent pro-democracy protests flare across the country.

The restrictions had been imposed for several hours a day since Saturday in a bid to quell protests called by Nepal's seven main political parties against King Gyanendra's power grab 14 months ago. But state television said the curfew would not be imposed on Wednesday, without citing any reason for the move.

Demonstrators calling for the restoration of democracy took to the streets, with about two dozen activists defying a ban on protests in the heart of Kathmandu.

They shouted slogans and waved party flags before being stopped by riot police. About half-a-dozen were arrested, while the others were chased away by police waving batons and protected by riot shields.

"Long live the democratic republic!" and "Down with autocracy", they had shouted before police moved in.

Earlier, Tirtha Ram Dangol, a leader of the Nepali Congress party, told protesters: "You will not run away. You will not throw stones. This will be a non-violent protest."

Witnesses said 30 journalists who had joined the protests were arrested on Wednesday morning. Businessmen, doctors and lawyers also vowed to join the pro-democracy campaign, but despite the protests, there were no immediate indications of the king trying to defuse the crisis beyond the curfew relaxation.

Instead, the royalist government has only hardened its position and promised tough action against demonstrators, accusing them of colluding with Maoist rebels and attacking government forces.

HOSPITALS OVERFLOWING

The campaign, backed by Maoist insurgents, had been due to end on Sunday but was extended indefinitely as stringent security measures prevented big rallies against the king.

Professional groups have protested against the king in the past but they have rarely joined hands to demonstrate together. Their plans to unite showed that opposition to the king was growing, analysts said.

Protests were also staged in towns and districts outside Kathmandu and residents reached by phone said thousands of people had taken to the streets against the king, ignoring curfews in several places.

Doctors said hospitals were flooded with patients, some needing treatment for bullet wounds.

On Tuesday, troops shot at activists, wounding many, after they burned tyres, chanted slogans and clashed with police in Gongabu, a Kathmandu suburb.

It was the first time troops had opened fire in the capital during the latest anti-king campaign and some of the wounded were feared dead, Nepali newspaper Kantipur reported.

The report could not be confirmed immediately. Three people have died so far since the latest round of protests began on Thursday, all of them outside of the capital.

Reuters reporters who visited one Kathmandu hospital late on Tuesday where activists wounded in Gongabu had been brought, saw 39 people being treated in an overflowing emergency hall.

Political parties say hundreds of protesters have been injured in the crackdown on the latest demonstrations so far and more than 1,500 detained.

A government notice published in state-run Rising Nepal newspaper on Wednesday said the authorities had banned strikes in 15 sectors including banking, insurance, telecommunications, hospitals, hotels, electricity and water supply.

Violators could be jailed for up to six months, it said.

Gyanendra justified taking power in February 2005 saying politicians had failed to crush a raging Maoist revolt. But the turmoil in the troubled nation has only worsened since.

The Maoist conflict has killed more than 13,000 people so far and wrecked the aid-and-tourism dependent economy of one of the 10 poorest countries in the world.

International pressure has mounted on the king to end his crackdown and restore democracy.

The European Union, one of Nepal's largest donors, urged the king "to take an urgent initiative to resolve the present problems by restoring democracy and by reaching out to all political forces to initiate a dialogue for peace".

<http://www.nepaleyes.com/read.php?topic=headlines&id=1910>

Heavy clashes erupt in Gongabu Nepaleyes Report

Kathmandu, April 12

The neighborhoods of Gongabu and Chabahil were tense on Tuesday, the sixth day of the seven-party general strike the whole day, with demonstrators involved in pitched street battles which left scores injured and as many arrested.

According to an Associated Press report, police opened fire on pro-democracy protesters, leaving at least 12 people injured in Gongabu.

Police entered into houses to ferret out demonstrators on the run, resulting in even housewives facing the brunt at places.

Other places which witnessed demonstration by large number of people include Kalanki, Kirtipur, Patan, Bhaktapur, Sanothimi, Chuchhepati and Koteshwor.

Towns like Madhyapur Thimi also saw demonstrations and police intimidation and arrests with over 200 arrested in the capital alone.

The injured were being ferried to hospitals by Red Cross teams, while hospitals are finding it tough to cope with rising numbers of patients.

Demonstrators defied curfew while riot police reinforced by army troops either tried to contain the irate crowd or fired rubber bullets leaving many injured.

While the riot police had to cope with over ten thousand demonstrators in Kirtipur and Gongabu, there were over five thousand people, including housewives who had assembled at Chabahil with local leaders addressing them while police looked on.

The day also saw army and police trucks ferrying riot police and army troops along Ring Road and inner parts of the city. Things were quite explosive at Maitidevi intersection in the morning with protesters burning the effigies of regression defying the curfew.

Nepal Students' Union activists defied curfew and took out rallies from Maitidevi, Baneshwor, Chabahil, Gongabu, Kirtipur, Mangal Bazaar, Bhaktapur and organized series of effigy burning street protest programs.

Kshitiz Bhandari, central vice-president of NSU central committee was injured in the scuffle with police. In a protest rally organized in Bhaktapur, Dharma Karki and Dipendra Budhathoki were arrested while Ramesh Dangol, Krishna Bista and Kamal Raj Tamang were seriously injured. Himal Shrestha, central member of NSU, students Krishna Aryal, Bhuvan Magar and Om Thapa were injured when cops intervened in the effigy burning program and protest rally in Kirtipur.

<http://www.asiamedia.ucla.edu/article-southasia.asp?parentid=42864>

NEPAL: Crackdown in Nepal

Police arrest at least 30 journalists and 5 human rights activists who were peacefully protesting for press freedom and human rights

Times of India

Wednesday, April 12, 2006

Kathmandu --- The Nepal police on Wednesday made more arrests, including some 24 politicians who were condoling the death of colleagues and 30 journalists, despite lifting of day-time curfew in the capital on the seventh day of the indefinite anti-King strike.

Police in riot gear stormed a meeting called by the Seven Party Alliance for restoration of democracy at Ratnapark in the heart of Kathmandu to mourn four people killed in firing and other violence in the course of the strike.

They also blocked the main entrance of Tundikhel Open Ground, half a km north of the Royal Palace, where the agitators were supposed to organise the condolence meeting.

King Gyanendra was not in the Narainhiti Palace and is vacationing in the tourist spot Pokhara.

Those arrested include: Nepali Congress central member Shashanka Koirala, Nepali Congress Kathmandu district president Tirtha Ram Dangol and Nepal Communist Party UML leader Ramnath Adhikari, party sources said.

Police also baton-charged and fired tear gas shells at Ashon and Indrachowk when groups of agitators shouted anti-King slogans demanding democracy and civil rights.

They created obstacles at various places for activists who were heading towards the condolence meeting venue.

After State-run television announced the lifting of the curfew, imposed last Saturday, the number of security personnel deployed in the capital was reduced.

Earlier in the day, police arrested at least 30 journalists and 5 human rights activists from peaceful demonstrations to demand press freedom and human rights.

Nepal's King Gyanendra calls for dialogue

By Matthew Rosenberg, Associated Press Writer | April 13, 2006

KATMANDU, Nepal --Nepal's King Gyanendra broke his silence Friday after more than a week of pro-democracy protests in which four people have died, calling for dialogue with opposition political parties.

Thousands have filled the streets daily calling for the restoration of democracy and ouster of Gyanendra 14 months after he seized power. Many of the demonstrations have deteriorated into bloody clashes between stone-throwing protesters and security forces, who have responded with tear gas, rubber bullets and, in some cases, live ammunition.

In a message for Nepal's new year, Gyanendra called for "the active participation of all political parties committed to peace and democracy," and he again said the country should hold a general election, although he did not specify a date.

The king's call for elections is in line with a roadmap back to democracy he announced shortly after seizing power in February 2005. It has been roundly rejected by his opponents, who demand that a special assembly be convened to rewrite the constitution and possibly limit his role, if he is given one at all.

One opposition leader immediately dismissed the king's overtures as "meaningless."

"It follows the same roadmap he had last year and he has not moved an inch from it," said Minendra Risal of Nepali Congress Democratic party, adding that these were his personal views.

Nepal's opposition -- along with a well-armed communist insurgency -- argue that any elections held under Gyanendra's rule would be neither free nor fair..

In the speech, Gyanendra did not mention the opposition protests that have gripped the Himalayan nation for eight days, or the insurgency, which has left nearly 13,000 people dead in the past decade.

Sentiment in this Himalayan nation is apparently hardening against the king.

Police on Thursday fired rubber bullets and tear gas at lawyers protesting royal rule in the capital of Katmandu while thousands of other demonstrators marched to chants of "Hang King Gyanendra!"

Gyanendra said he took control of the country 14 months ago to stamp out political corruption and end the communist insurgency.

Many of Nepal's 27 million people at first welcomed the move. But the insurgency has since intensified and the economy has worsened, fueling the discontent seen in the protests that have gripped Nepal since its alliance of seven main political parties called for a general strike starting April 6 to demand the king restore democracy.

The government has responded harshly, and the Himalayan haven has been transformed by scenes of bloody, ragged protesters hurling bricks at police and soldiers through clouds of tear gas.

Four people have been killed by security forces firing at the protesters and hundreds have been injured. The U.N. has condemned Nepalese security for excessive use of force.

At an opposition rally on the outskirts of Katmandu on Thursday, speaker after speaker called for Gyanendra's ouster. A banner hung over the stage from which opposition leaders spoke read "Long live the democratic republic of Nepal" -- a strong message from an alliance of political parties that only months ago said they would settle for a constitutional monarchy.

Thousands of people then marched up and down a stretch of the ring road that skirts Katmandu, chanting, "People and police come together! Hang King Gyanendra!"

"We're going to march to the palace," said one protester, 23-year-old university student Gopal Chandra "We're going to tear the palace down."

Earlier in the day, when about 500 lawyers came out of the Nepal Bar Association's office, in the heart of the Katmandu and just a few steps from a compound of high-level government offices, waving banners and shouting anti-government slogans.

The lawyers marched just a few yards before police stopped them, beat them with bamboo batons, and fired tear gas and rubber bullets.

Two lawyers were hit by the rubber bullets and one with a tear gas canister, said Radhika Ghimire, a nurse at Model Hospital, where dozens of wounded lawyers were taken. At least 70 were also arrested, the bar association said.

Peaceful protests that attracted thousands also took place in other towns and cities. The opposition vowed more demonstrations on Friday.

In New York, High Commissioner for Human Rights Louise Arbour said she planned to notify the U.N. peacekeeping department about abuses by Nepalese forces, who have taken part in peacekeeping operations around the world.

The authorities, however, have begun easing off in the past two days, and on Thursday lifted a night curfew in Katmandu and restored cell phone service, which was cut seven days earlier to keep protests from being organized. The government lifted the daytime curfew Wednesday

<http://www.alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/SP338037.htm>

Nepal hopes king will act to defuse crisis

13 Apr 2006 04:04:37 GMT

Source: Reuters

By Y.P. Rajesh

KATHMANDU, April 13 (Reuters) - Nepal's embattled king returned to the capital after a nearly two-month vacation and there are hopes he might make the first move to defuse a violent campaign against him, officials said on Thursday.

King Gyanendra returned to Kathmandu late on Wednesday from the western tourist resort town of Pokhara, a week after the Himalayan country came to a standstill after his opponents launched mass protests seeking restoration of democracy.

The king is due to give his traditional message to the nation on Nepali New Year day on Friday and analysts and political foes hoped he might use the occasion to reach out to his opponents.

Protests against him are at their most intense since he grabbed power 14 months ago and he has taken a hardline against demonstrators.

"If the king is getting his information correctly and if he is watching the situation correctly, the common denominator in all the opposition against him is that it is he who needs to take the initiative to end this crisis," a Kathmandu-based diplomat said.

"That is the opinion of the people, the political parties and the international community," he said.

Some analysts said that the 58-year-old king, in a bid to buy time, could announce cosmetic changes to his royalist cabinet or even a timetable for national elections he has said will be held before April 2007.

But that was unlikely to satisfy the seven-party alliance against him, which wants multi-party democracy restored and executive powers returned to an all-party government.

That appears unlikely for now.

Street protests against the king would continue for the eighth day on Thursday, the parties said, adding their movement was growing stronger with more ordinary people taking part and urged businessmen, troops and government employees to join.

"If they are punished by the government for joining the protests the new government will protect them," the alliance said in a statement.

"WOUNDED PROTESTERS MISSING"

Interest on bank loans of businessmen would also be waived for the period of the pro-democracy campaign, they said.

"We appeal to hospitals to treat wounded protesters and their expenses will be paid by the government after the restoration of democracy," they said.

"The democratic government will take care of the families of those killed during the protests," they added.

Four people have been shot dead by troops and hundreds wounded across the country over the past week in clashes with riot police.

In one of the most violent incidents, more than 100 people were wounded, several of them seriously, when troops opened fire and used rubber bullets in a Kathmandu suburb on Tuesday, the first time protesters had been shot at in the capital during the latest campaign.

One leading Nepali newspaper said on Thursday that 15 people wounded in the incident were missing while another put the number at 37.

Nepal, which has been battling a violent Maoist revolt since 1996, was pushed deeper into turmoil in February 2005 when King Gyanendra sacked the government and took power saying politicians had failed to tackle the insurgency.

More than 13,000 people have been killed in the revolt, which aims to topple the monarchy, and Nepal's economy has been wrecked under its impact.

The rebels and the seven political parties formed a loose alliance last November under which the Maoists are backing the latest anti-king campaign. (Additional reporting by Gopal Sharma)

http://ca.today.reuters.com/news/newsArticle.aspx?type=topNews&storyID=2006-04-14T071123Z_01_SP73123_RTRIDST_0_NEWS-NEPAL-COL.XML

Fresh protests in Nepal

Fri Apr 14, 2006 3:11 AM EDT

By Gopal Sharma and Y.P. Rajesh

KATHMANDU (Reuters) - Fresh pro-democracy protests broke out in Nepal on Friday despite King Gyanendra's pledge to hold elections in the Himalayan kingdom, as activists said he offered nothing new or substantive.

Groups of protesters took to the streets of the capital Kathmandu hours after the king's midnight message, chanting "Gyanendra, thief, quit the country" and "Down with autocracy, end police repression."

Riot police arrested about 20 demonstrators, but there was no violence.

Political parties leading the movement against the king were quick to reject his offer for elections, saying the monarch's message -- broadcast at the start of the Nepali Hindu New Year -- would not defuse the fierce campaign in which four people have been killed and hundreds wounded in the past week alone.

"If the king doesn't listen to the voice of the people, I can only say, 'god save the king'," Girija Prasad Koirala, president of Nepal's largest political party, told Reuters in an interview.

Nepalis had hoped the king's traditional new year message would contain some new steps to ease tensions but it was largely a repeat of earlier promises to hold elections by April 2007. He sacked the government and assumed total power in February 2005.

"It is our wish that in order to re-energize multi-party democracy there should not be any delay in reactivating all representative bodies through elections," the king said.

"May the efforts at ensuring sustainable peace and meaningful democracy in the interests of the nation and the people bear fruit during the new year."

Although an alliance of Nepal's seven main political parties has yet to formally react to the king's overtures, senior leaders said his offer was too little, too late.

"He did not address the problem of the nation, he should have done that," said Koirala, 84, a four-time prime minister.

"There is no change (in his stance), all he has changed are only his words. We will start our agitation as usual and it will go on till the sovereignty of the people is not returned."

NOTHING NEW

Sher Bahadur Deuba, who the king sacked as the prime minister, said he had offered nothing new.

"He is not willing to reconcile with the opposition," he told Reuters. "The battle will go on. There will be chaos, violence, riots, for a few months or a few years."

That sentiment was echoed on the streets. "I didn't like the king's speech," said taxi driver Keshav Khatiwada, who was watching one of the protests. "He has only raised false hopes, there will be no peace."

In his message, the 58-year-old monarch made no reference to the mass campaign against his rule, which has brought the impoverished country, wedged between India and China, to a standstill.

He also made no mention of Maoist rebels who have been fighting since 1996 to topple the monarchy and have joined hands with mainstream political parties to form a loose alliance against the king.

More than 13,000 people have been killed in the Maoist revolt which has wrecked the aid and tourism dependent economy.

In New York, the top U.N. human rights official said she was shocked by the "excessive" use of force by Nepal's security forces against pro-democracy protesters, warning the government its participation in U.N. peacekeeping missions could be affected.

"I remind the government of its international obligation to respect the right of peaceful assembly, and I remind its security forces of their obligation to use only minimum necessary force," Louise Arbour, the U.N. high commissioner for human rights, said in a statement.

Nepal currently has some 3,500 troops and police in 12 U.N. peacekeeping missions around the world, making it the fifth largest contributor after Bangladesh, Pakistan, India and Jordan.

King Gyanendra sacked the government and seized power in February 2005 saying political leaders had failed to quell the Maoist insurgency and hold long-delayed national elections.

Nepal, the world's only Hindu kingdom, traditionally considers its monarch as a reincarnation of the Hindu God Vishnu. But King Gyanendra is regarded by many as one of the most unpopular rulers in the history of the country for his crackdown on pro-democracy campaigners.

Fresh protests in Nepal

Fri Apr 14, 2006 8:13 AM BST

By Gopal Sharma and Y.P. Rajesh

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Un peuple contre un roi : manifestations et émeutes se succèdent au Népal

LE MONDE | 15.04.06 | 13h03 • Mis à jour le 17.04.06 | 07h26
KATMANDOU ENVOYÉ SPÉCIAL

Un roi de droit divin, muré dans ses certitudes, féru d'astrologie, obsédé par le tantrisme hindou et la magie noire et qui refuse de céder aux injonctions de son peuple lui demandant de rétablir la démocratie : Sa Majesté Gyanendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev, roi du Népal, ci-devant réincarnation de Vishnou régnant sur le royaume himalayen, fait aujourd'hui l'unanimité contre lui alors que se sont multipliées depuis une semaine de violentes manifestations destinées à le faire plier.

Le Népal est un vieux pays dont le calendrier est en avance sur le reste du monde : après ces jours de grèves, de couvre-feu à répétition et de violents affrontements avec les forces de sécurité qui ont fait au moins quatre morts et des centaines de blessés dans tous le pays, les habitants de Katmandou avaient cependant pu souffler un peu, vendredi 14 avril, en fêtant l'entrée du royaume dans l'année 2063...

Samedi 15 avril au matin, lendemain du Nouvel An, Katmandou était de nouveau paralysée. L'opposition a appelé à la poursuite "*illimitée*" du mouvement. Des taxis ont été brûlés en ville par des militants s'efforçant de faire respecter les consignes de grève générale. Tout le monde prévoit ici une nouvelle semaine "chaude". La démocratie est entre parenthèses depuis que Gyanendra s'est emparé des pleins pouvoirs, le 1^{er} février 2005. Le Parlement a été dissous, l'activité des partis politiques suspendue, et leurs responsables régulièrement emprisonnés ou placés en résidence surveillée.

Depuis des mois, la situation ne cesse de se détériorer et les partisans du mouvement pro-démocratique, emmenés par une alliance des sept principaux partis du pays, sont passés à l'offensive.

Ils réclament une nouvelle Constitution, exigent que le monarque réinstaure les libertés politiques et le Parlement dans ses droits avant l'organisation de nouvelles élections législatives. Pour ce faire, ils se sont mêmes alliés, depuis novembre 2005, avec leurs ennemis de la guérilla maoïste qui, il y a exactement dix ans, ont commencé à mettre en coupe réglée la plupart des campagnes du royaume.

Mais 13 000 morts plus tard, et en dépit de leurs succès militaires, les chefs maoïstes semblent avoir compris qu'ils ne pourraient pas s'emparer du pouvoir par la force. Aujourd'hui, ils ont changé de tactique et font cause commune avec leurs adversaires des partis démocratiques, qu'ils avaient combattus lorsque ces derniers étaient encore au pouvoir. Si personne ici ne fait trop confiance en leur parole, l'espoir ténu d'une réconciliation avec des extrémistes qui ont juré de renverser la monarchie pour établir un "*gouvernement du peuple*" fait malgré tout son chemin.

Le roi Gyanendra a promis qu'un scrutin législatif aurait lieu en 2007, mais n'offre aucune garantie aux partis politiques quant à l'impartialité de la consultation. Vendredi, dans son discours du Nouvel An, il a appelé "*tous les partis politiques au dialogue*" en ajoutant que "*notre souhait est que la démocratie multipartite soit mise en pratique à travers des élections générales*". L'appel du souverain, dont la formulation vague induit qu'il ne cède rien sur le fond, a été aussitôt rejeté par ses adversaires : Arjun Narsingh, l'un des responsables du parti du Congrès népalais, la principale formation politique, a estimé que cette déclaration "*n'a aucun sens et ne répond pas aux problèmes auxquels fait face le pays*".

Jeudi, dans le faubourg de Gangapu, théâtre de violentes échauffourées et de très brutales répressions policières en début de semaine, les responsables du parti du Congrès et les communistes de l'Union marxiste-léniniste avaient organisé un meeting qui a réuni plusieurs milliers de personnes. Là, dans un terrain vague dominé par les carcasses de maisons en construction, la foule a hurlé, comme elle le fait depuis des jours : *"Vive la démocratie ! A bas l'autoritarisme ! A bas le roi !"* Non loin, sur le petit périphérique ceinturant Katmandou, police armée en uniforme bleu et militaires en tenue camouflée s'étaient déployés en force. Un véhicule blindé stationnait à l'entrée du quartier.

"IL NE COMMET JAMAIS D'ERREUR"

"La tactique du pouvoir est d'empêcher la formation de cortèges pouvant marcher vers le centre et le palais royal", explique Prakash Sharan Mahat - membre du parti du Congrès et ancien ministre des affaires étrangères du dernier gouvernement démocratique avant le *"coup d'Etat royal"*. *"Si le peuple atteint le coeur du pouvoir, le roi sait que c'en sera fini de la monarchie !"*

Assis sous un dais de toile protégeant les orateurs, M. Mahat ajoutait : *"Il faut prendre conscience que ce mouvement réunit toutes les couches de la société, toutes les professions, du secteur privé aux fonctionnaires en passant par les professeurs, les commerçants, les ingénieurs, les avocats, les journalistes. Le problème est que ce roi arrogant et ambitieux risque de vouloir tenir jusqu'à la dernière minute."*

Gyanendra est arrivé au pouvoir par hasard en juin 2001, après que son frère aîné, l'ancien roi Birendra, eut été massacré au fusil d'assaut avec une grande partie de sa famille par son fils, le prince héritier, au terme d'une soirée bien arrosée dans le palais royal. L'actuel souverain, un ancien homme d'affaires que rien ne prédisposait pour assurer de telles fonctions, fait désormais l'unanimité contre lui. *"Voilà un roi qui s'était fait fort de se montrer l'homme de la situation pour combattre les maoïstes, et qui aujourd'hui prend pour cible la société civile et tous ceux qui croient en la paix et la démocratie. C'est incroyable !"*, tempête Kunda Dixit, rédacteur en chef de l'hebdomadaire *Népal Times*.

Diplomatiquement isolé, lâché par les Américains qui avaient armé ses troupes pour l'aider dans sa guerre contre les maoïstes, sous pression de l'Union européenne et des Nations unies, Gyanendra espère que le temps jouera pour lui et que le mouvement finira par s'éteindre. Vendredi, lors d'une conférence de presse, le ministre de l'information, Shrish Rana, a eu ces mots définitifs : *"Mon roi ne commet jamais d'erreur !"*

Bruno Philip

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<http://permanent.nouvelobs.com/etranger/20060415.OBS4111.html>

La contestation enfle contre le roi Gyanendra

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L'opposition a refusé de dialoguer avec le monarque Gyanendra, vendredi 14 avril. La situation reste critique, après neuf jours de manifestations.

Une malédiction légendaire veut que la dynastie Shah au Népal s'éteigne après 11 générations. Elle a pourtant atteint la douzième avec l'actuel monarque Gyanendra.

Mais après neuf jours de manifestations souvent violentes contre le souverain, qui ont vu des milliers de personnes scander "pendez le roi!", reste à savoir combien de temps Gyanendra pourra s'accrocher à sa couronne ornée de joyaux, plumes de paon et poils de yak.

La contestation pro-démocratique enflamme chaque jour dans le petit royaume himalayen de 27 millions d'habitants. Pourtant Gyanendra ne semble pas prêt à renoncer aux pleins pouvoirs dont il s'est emparé en février 2005, quinze ans après que son frère aîné eut rétabli la démocratie à la suite d'émeutes.

Offre de dialogue refusée

Vendredi 14 avril, alors que le Népal célébrait l'arrivée de 2063, Gyanendra a répété dans son message du nouvel An son offre d'un dialogue avec l'opposition et de la tenue d'élections. Des offres une nouvelle fois rejetées par ses adversaires, qui l'accusent, avec l'appui de la communauté internationale, de vouloir consolider son emprise sur le pouvoir.

Tard vendredi soir, les sept principaux partis d'opposition ont rejeté les appels au dialogue lancés par le souverain. "Nous avons décidé d'appliquer la grève générale. Le mouvement semblait se calmer ces deux derniers jours mais cela va changer à partir d'aujourd'hui", a souligné samedi 15 avril Subash Nemwang, du Parti communiste.

Assemblée extraordinaire

L'opposition à Gyanendra exige la réunion d'une assemblée extraordinaire chargée de réviser la constitution et de limiter, voire supprimer, les pouvoirs du roi.

"Nous ne sommes pas des paysans stupides qui vivent dans la boue", explique Yubaraj Baral, un commerçant de 34 ans, qui a participé aux manifestations. "Il pense qu'il peut ignorer le peuple", dénonce-t-il, rappelant que le souverain a passé les six premiers jours de manifestation en villégiature à Pokhara. "C'est pourquoi nous allons le tuer".

Gyanendra, frère du défunt roi Birendra, est monté sur le trône en 2001 quand le prince héritier Dipendra, a abattu son père et la majeure partie des membres de sa famille, avant de se donner la mort. Un drame qui a exacerbé l'aura mystique de la royauté.

Quatre ans plus tard, Gyanendra s'est emparé du pouvoir, affirmant vouloir remettre de l'ordre sur la scène politique et écraser l'insurrection maoïste qui a fait près de 13.000 morts au cours de la décennie écoulée. Il a fait dissoudre le Parlement, emprisonner ses adversaires, interdire toute critique du souverain, du gouvernement et de l'armée.

Quatre morts

La réponse violente aux manifestations des derniers jours n'a fait qu'alimenter le ressentiment populaire. Quatre personnes sont mortes sous les balles des forces de l'ordre et des centaines d'autres ont été dispersées sous les coups de matraque.

L'extrême richesse de Gyanendra dans ce pays en proie à la pauvreté n'a pas amélioré son image. Avant de monter sur le trône, il était un homme d'affaires impitoyable, impliqué dans le tourisme, le thé et le tabac. Après le massacre royal, il aurait hérité de la majeure partie de la fortune familiale. Le mouvement de contestation remet en cause une monarchie médiévale qui présente le roi comme une réincarnation du dieu hindou Vishnou.

Les traditions restent profondément ancrées, au palais comme dans le reste du royaume, et Gyanendra, élevé chez les jésuites, consulte régulièrement astrologues et oracles. "Mon roi ne fait jamais d'erreur", expliquait vendredi 14 avril, le ministre de l'Information Shrish Sumshere Rana devant les journalistes.

Mais la contestation va plus loin que l'opposition à Gyanendra, juge Yubaraj Ghimire, rédacteur en chef du respecté hebdomadaire "Samay". "Même s'il abandonne demain le pouvoir, la question de la nécessité de la monarchie restera posée". (AP)

<http://news.moneycontrol.com/india/news/topindianews/nepalprotestsintensifylittleviolence/resultsviewsipomfinsurance taxnriinterviewsceocommentspressreleases/market/stocks/article/608/999999>

Nepal protests intensify, little violence

2006-04-15 17:23

KATHMANDU (Reuters) - Thousands of people staged a pro-democracy protest in Kathmandu on Saturday, the largest turnout in Nepal's capital since the latest campaign against King Gyanendra was launched.

About 8,000 people gathered in the Kalanki suburb on the western outskirts of the city, chanting slogans as they sat cross-legged on the road.

"Down with autocracy, restore democracy," they shouted, waving red flags of protest as riot police watched. Onlookers in nearby shops and houses cheered.

At another place in the city, police charged with batons to break up a protest by local journalists and arrested at least a dozen people, witnesses said. Several journalists were hurt, they said.

Just hours earlier, one of the top leaders of the movement vowed to step up protests but said activists would remain peaceful and non-violent.

At least four people have been killed and hundreds wounded since an alliance of seven political parties launched a general strike 10 days ago, bringing the impoverished Himalayan kingdom to a standstill.

Amrit Kumar Bohra of the Communist Party of Nepal (UML), who is wanted by police, said anger against the king had mounted after his Nepali New Year message to the nation on Friday repeated previous promises and contained no new initiatives.

"We will further intensify our strike," he told Reuters

at a hideout in the capital. "We will make it more effective and more people will come out on the street. We are not afraid of the suppression and the repression."

Asked what effect this could have on the people, he said: "The general strike will cause some inconvenience to the people, but the royalist regime is causing bigger problems.

"Therefore let's bear trouble for some more time and establish peace and democracy and that will usher in prosperity for ever."

Very little traffic was on the streets of Kathmandu on Saturday, but several shops were open.

Crowds thronged to vegetable and fruit sellers in the city of about 1.5 million, stocking up for what could be a long drawn-out campaign.

"We are trying to make our protests more and more peaceful," said Gagan Thapa, a student activist on the street in Kalanki. "We have to be careful because we are being infiltrated by government-sponsored vigilantes."

Asked how long the campaign could last since both sides appear unlikely to back down, he said:

"This is the people's movement and history shows people never lose. We have the confidence we are going to win, but it may take time."

Gyanendra, who sacked the government and seized absolute power 14 months ago, promised on Friday to hold elections by April 2007. But he has said so before, and has made no response to demands that he immediately allow a representative government to take charge and end the crackdown on political parties.

Nepal, the world's only Hindu kingdom, launched multi-party democracy only in 1990, after a sustained campaign against Gyanendra's predecessor and brother, King Birendra.

Gyanendra came to the throne in 2001 after then Crown Prince Dipendra shot dead nine royals including his parents in a drug and drink fuelled rage before turning the gun on himself. In February 2005, the current king sacked the government, saying corruption was rampant, and that it had not been able to counter a spiralling Maoist rebellion. At least 13,000 people have been killed since the Maoists launched an armed movement in 1996 against the monarchy. They have now formed a loose alliance with the political parties opposed to the king.

<http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2006/04/16/ap/world/mainD8H1AIQ01.shtml>

Nepal Capital Short on Food and Fuel

KATMANDU, Nepal, Apr. 16, 2006



(AP) The Nepalese capital ran low on fresh food and fuel

Sunday because of a general strike that shut down the city, and thousands of angry pro-democracy demonstrators clashed with police firing rubber bullets.

The emboldened opposition urged Nepalis to stop paying taxes to the government of King Gyanendra, who responded by further banning protests on the capital's outskirts.

Sunday's pro-democracy rallies across the Himalayan kingdom attracted tens of thousands of people and were the biggest since opponents of Gyanendra's royal dictatorship began their campaign of protests and a nationwide strike that has cut off Nepal's cities for 11 days.

The rallies included small protests in Katmandu's tourist hub and commercial heart _ the first in the capital's center, where rallies are banned.

Still, Gyanendra appeared unready to relinquish power over this mountain kingdom that has long attracted Western hippies in search of Eastern spirituality and mountain climbers looking to scale peaks like Mt. Everest.

His government extended the ban on demonstrations to the outskirts of Katmandu and the suburb of Lalitpur, where many rallies have been held.

In Katmandu, many of the capital's 1.5 million residents struggled to find everything from fresh vegetables to gasoline.

"I pushed my motorcycle all the way here. I have no choice but to wait for hours to get petrol," said Sundar Thapa as he lined up at one of the few open gas stations.

Customers could only buy about \$4 worth of gasoline, enough for about a gallon. At most stations, signs read: "No petrol, no diesel."

The prices for what few vegetables could be found have risen fivefold since the strike started April 6, and the prices of chicken and mutton have doubled.

"We have not had a single truck come in the past 11 days. Whatever we are selling was what we had in stock, or grown locally in Katmandu," vegetable vendor Raj Maharjan said at the city's Baneswor market.

He had no green vegetables and was running low on potatoes and onions. There also was a scarcity of water buffalo meat, popular with Hindu Nepalis who do not eat cows because they are considered sacred.

Gyanendra seized power in February 2005, saying he needed control to restore political order and end a communist insurgency that has killed nearly 13,000 people in the past decade. The rebels are backing the opposition campaign.

The protests are the worst since Gyanendra's move, and the opposition sought to increase the pressure Sunday, appealing to Nepalis to stop paying taxes, custom duties, interest on loans from state banks and even their electricity, phone service and water bills with state-run utilities.

They also urged the estimated 1.6 million Nepalese working abroad to stop sending money home. The \$1.2 billion in remittances have in large part kept the economy afloat.

Sunday's biggest rallies took place in two neighborhoods on the outskirts of Katmandu. One attracted 15,000 people and was peaceful.

However, the second, in the Balkhu neighborhood, degenerated into a running battle between protesters and police.

About 10,000 people marched along the ring road skirting Katmandu for hours when riot police massed to stop them. The protesters then charged the officers, who responded with a volley of tear gas and rubber bullets that sent most people fleeing.

But a hardcore group, mainly students, retreated onto the hills overlooking the road, hurling stones and shouting obscenities at police in a skirmish that stretched across terraced rice patties and lasted into the night.

"I'll find you and kill you in seven generations!" one officer shouted after firing rubber bullets at a protesters about 20 yards away.

The demonstrators responded with an obscene gesture and more rocks.

The opposition said 13 people were wounded by rubber bullets and dozens of others were injured by baton-wielding police. About 30 people were arrested.

Thousands participated in at least a half-dozen others protests in Katmandu, while marches in the cities of Pokhara and Bharatpur attracted about 10,000 people each, officials and Nepali media reported.

Police also arrested about 20 journalists who were protesting to demand press freedom and the

release of about a dozen journalists detained in similar demonstration the day before.

In Thamel, the capital's ordinarily throbbing tourist hub, dozens of shop owners, hotel workers and trekking guides burned tires and taunted police along streets lined with shuttered stores that usually sell trinkets, traditional fabrics and pirated DVDs.

"The king is killing our work, we have not enough customers," said C.V. Shrestha, a 36-year-old trekking guide.

Tourism is Nepal's second-largest foreign exchange earner, but visitor numbers have dropped from an estimated 500,000 in 1999 to 275,000 last year.

Four people were arrested at the protest, which attracted dozens of curious backpackers, many of whom snapped photographs.

Associated Press reporter Binaj Gurubacharya contributed to this report.

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<http://www.liberation.fr/page.php?Article=375254>

Au Népal, le roi n'est plus sacré

16 avril 2006 (Reuters - 09:52)

par Raju Gopalakrishnan

KATMANDOU - Pendant des siècles, les rois issus de la dynastie des Shah, au Népal, ont oscillé entre monarque absolu et figure tutélaire respectée, tout changement survenant en général après des périodes de violence effrayante.

Aujourd'hui le roi Gyanendra, 12e de cette dynastie au pouvoir depuis la moitié du XVIIe siècle, est confronté à des manifestations quotidiennes d'hostilité à son pouvoir, et beaucoup en sont à se demander s'il va rester sur le trône.

"Gyanendra, voleur, quitte le pays", est le cri de ralliement de dizaines de milliers de personnes qui manifestent sans relâche pour dénoncer sa mainmise sur le pouvoir. Un tel slogan aurait été impensable il y a quelques années: les membres de la dynastie des Shah étaient vénérés, dans le royaume himalayen, en tant que réincarnations du dieu hindou Vichnou.

"Ce genre de respect dû à la tradition est fini", estime Yubaraj Ghimire, rédacteur en chef de l'hebdomadaire népalais Samay. "Quelque chose est en train de se produire."

Gyanendra n'est peut-être pas le seul fautif. L'aura mythique qui entourait auparavant le roi a été malmenée en 2001 par le massacre lors duquel le prince héritier Dipendra a tué, au palais, neuf membres de la famille royale, dont ses parents, avant de retourner son pistolet contre lui. Il agissait sous l'emprise de la drogue et de l'alcool.

"Cet incident signifie clairement que les gens que nous vénérons comme des dieux prennent de la drogue et tuent leurs parents", estime Ghimire. "Qu'est ce qui les distingue des criminels de droit commun ? Ca a été un tournant."

Le roi Gyanendra n'était pas en ville à ce moment-là, et il a succédé à son frère, le très respecté roi Birendra.

Malgré une réputation d'homme d'affaires implacable ayant des intérêts dans le tabac et le jeu - il possédait, à ce moment-là, le plus grand hôtel-casino du pays - le roi Gyanendra semblait bénéficier d'une relative bienveillance, à son égard, de la population, qui était apparemment prêt à lui donner une chance de rétablir le prestige de la monarchie.

UN MYSTERIEUX MASSACRE

Mais en quatre ans, il a limogé le gouvernement et pris les pleins pouvoirs en invoquant la nécessaire lutte contre l'insurrection maoïste. Ce faisant, il est revenu sur la décision de son frère d'autoriser différents partis et de faire du Népal une monarchie constitutionnelle, en 1990, à l'issue de manifestations où quelque 300 personnes ont trouvé la mort.

La colère contre le roi Gyanendra est attisée en outre par des soupçons sur son absence de Katmandou au moment d'un massacre qui, bizarrement, a épargné son fils, le prince héritier Paras.

"Ce fut une occasion manquée", estime Ghimire au sujet du roi. "Il appartenait à la famille royale mais il ne s'attendait pas à devenir roi, donc c'était aussi un roturier. Il aurait pu donner une nouvelle impulsion à la monarchie."

Le Premier ministre qu'il a limogé, Sher Bahadur Deuba, brosse de lui un portrait peu amène.

"Par nature, ce n'est pas un démocrate", dit-il au sujet du monarque et de sa promesse d'organiser des élections avant avril 2007. "Il dit une chose mais il en fait une autre. J'ai fait ce que j'ai pu mais son plan n'était pas de s'en tenir à un rôle de monarque dans une monarchie constitutionnelle."

Pour lui, les troubles, les émeutes et les violences pourraient se poursuivre encore pendant des années. Quatre personnes au moins ont été tuées et des centaines d'autres blessées lors des manifestations de ces dernières semaines, et les forces de l'ordre ont procédé à des centaines d'arrestations.

Selon lui, le seul moyen de mettre fin au régime du roi Gyanendra serait d'obtenir pour cela le soutien de l'armée, qui l'appuie actuellement.

"Je ne souhaite pas que l'armée serve d'arme politique contre le roi", assure l'ancien Premier ministre. "Mais, après tout, ils sont responsables devant le peuple."

L'armée est réputée fatiguée de lutter contre les rebelles maoïstes, dont l'insurrection a entraîné la mort de 13.000 morts depuis 1996.

Six blessés par balles

AP

Mis en ligne le 16/04/2006

La police népalaise a tiré dimanche des balles en caoutchouc contre des manifestants pro-démocratie qui défilaient dans les faubourgs de Katmandou, faisant au moins six blessés. La manifestation rassemblant environ 10.000 personnes se déroulait sans incidents depuis plusieurs heures quand la police est soudainement intervenue. Des manifestants ont jeté des pierres sur les policiers qui ont répliqué à coups de bâtons et en tirant des balles en caoutchouc. Six personnes se sont effondrées après avoir été touchées, a constaté un photographe de l'Associated Press. Les blessés ont été rapidement évacués vers les hôpitaux.

Une dizaine de rassemblements ont par ailleurs été signalés dans la capitale ainsi que dans d'autres villes du pays, selon les autorités et la presse locale. La police a interpellé une vingtaine de journalistes qui réclamaient le rétablissement de la liberté de la presse. La grève générale à l'appel de l'opposition est entrée dimanche dans son onzième jour et la capitale Katmandou est confrontée à des pénuries de produits frais, de gaz et d'essence. Aucun camion de ravitaillement ne peut rentrer dans la ville. Selon les commerçants, les légumes frais ont disparu de leurs étals. Seuls quelques magasins sont encore ouverts.

"Nous n'avons pas vu un seul camion au cours des onze derniers jours. Nous vendons ce que nous avons déjà en stock ou qui peut être cultivé à Katmandou", explique Raj Maharjan, en vendant quelques oignons au marché de Baneswor. Les prix des fruits et légumes ont de fait été multipliés par cinq, tandis que ceux du poulet et du mouton ont doublé. En outre, il devient de plus en plus difficile de se procurer du gaz. Seuls quelques véhicules circulaient dans les rues de la capitale dimanche. La gare routière centrale était déserte. "Nous n'avons aucun départ pour les longs voyages. Des milliers de passagers sont bloqués et nous ne savons pas quand la grève se terminera", confie un chauffeur de bus, Ramesh Gurung, en jouant aux cartes avec ses collègues. Selon l'aviation civile, la majorité des vols intérieurs et internationaux sont maintenus, mais peu de Népalais ont les moyens d'acheter un billet d'avion.

La contestation pro-démocratique enfle chaque jour dans le petit royaume himalayen de 27 millions d'habitants et les manifestations contre le roi Gyanendra sont quotidiennes depuis le 6 avril, date à laquelle une alliance regroupant sept partis d'opposition a lancé un mot d'ordre de grève générale. Mais Gyanendra ne semble pas prêt à renoncer aux pleins pouvoirs dont il s'est emparé en février 2005, quinze ans après que son frère aîné eut rétabli la démocratie à la suite d'émeutes.

Nepal king's image takes a beating

Posted on 17 Apr 2006 # IANS

By Sudeshna Sarkar, Kathmandu: Time was when the photographs of the king and queen of Nepal adorned the homes of their loyal subjects, hotels and shops. But following the 16-month, iron-hand rule of Gyanendra, the king's public image has taken a beating.

Besides the photographs of security forces clashing with angry protesters, demonstrators burning

tyres on streets and hurling stones at policemen, and thousands of people raising anti-king slogans, a new image is being circulated through Nepal today.

Called "King Gyanendra's real face", it depicts him as a huge figure towering over a scene of violence and unrest. A man lies bleeding on the street while riot police lead a charge. The scene is watched with horror by an injured child whose face is smeared with blood.

Smoke from teargas shells and fire billows over the battlefield-like scene and against this backdrop, the gigantic figure of King Gyanendra watches the chaos with a pleased smile, playing a large flute that could also be a truncheon.

The image is all the more shocking when one considers that Nepal's constitution puts the royal family above the law - they cannot be tried in any court of justice - and traditions dictate that they would not be depicted in any cartoon.

Though a mass uprising in 1990 ended absolute monarchy and established a multiparty democratic system in which the government was chosen through elections, it was still known as 'Shree Panch ko Sarkar' - the government of Shree Panch, the title of the king.

About two years ago, when a Nepali magazine used a computer-manipulated image of King Gyanendra, it was the first graphics of its kind and was strongly criticised by royalists.

However, the image of the king in people's minds has changed rapidly in the time that King Gyanendra has ruled Nepal after seizing power with the help of the army.

The new image of the king's "real face" comes after several scathing statements by the independent media and protesters likening Gyanendra to Roman emperor Nero, who according to legend was playing the fiddle when Rome burned.

As anti-king protests started mounting this month, the slogans have also been increasingly attacking the king and not just autocratic monarchy.

Placards and banners wielded by protestors accuse the king of looting the nation and stashing away state money in Swiss banks and call him a murderer.

At the same time, Maoist insurgents have declared a fresh war on the monarchy.

Leknath Neupane, the underground leader of the rebels' banned student union, said his organisation would intensify its attacks on the statues of kings, present and past.

He said the group would also replace all signboards saying "His Majesty's government" with the "Nepal government" and launch an agitation to change the names of all educational institutions named after kings and queens.

Tribhuvan University, the oldest and best known university in Nepal named after the king's grandfather, Mahendra Sanskrit University, the oldest Sanskrit university named after the king's father, and Ratna Rajyalaksmi Campus, named after the king's mother, are some of the institutions the rebels want to re-christen.

17 avril 2006 - 16:11

La police tire contre des manifestants dans le sud du Népal: un mort, cinq blessés

KATMANDOU (AP) -- La police népalaise a ouvert le feu lundi sur des manifestants à Nijgadh dans le sud du Népal, faisant un mort et cinq blessés, selon un responsable local.

Les manifestants défilaient le long de la principale avenue de la ville située à 120km au sud de la capitale Katmandou lorsque les forces de sécurité ont ouvert le feu pour disperser la foule, a ajouté le responsable qui a requis l'anonymat. Un manifestant a été tué et cinq autres ont été blessés gravement.

A Katmandou, la police a tiré des balles en caoutchouc et des gaz lacrymogènes lors d'une manifestation qui a rassemblé quelque 10.000 personnes, faisant plusieurs blessés, a-t-on constaté sur place.

La contestation pro-démocratique enfle chaque jour dans le petit royaume himalayen de 27 millions d'habitants et les manifestations contre le roi Gyanendra sont quotidiennes depuis le 6 avril, date à laquelle une alliance regroupant sept partis d'opposition a lancé un mot d'ordre de grève générale. Mais Gyanendra ne semble pas prêt à renoncer aux pleins pouvoirs dont il s'est emparé en février 2005, quinze ans après que son frère aîné eut rétabli la démocratie à la suite d'émeutes. AP
ll/v

http://www.examiner.com/a-80031~Nepalese_Forces_Fire_on_Demonstrators.html

Nepalese Forces Fire on Demonstrators

By BINAJ GURUBACHARYA, The Associated Press

Apr 17, 2006 8:43 AM (4 days ago)

KATMANDU, Nepal - Security forces in a southern town shot into a crowd marching on the main highway to protest Nepal's royal dictatorship Monday, killing one and wounding five, a local administrator said.

The shooting was the fifth time in recent days that security forces have opened fire on demonstrators demanding that King Gyanendra restore parliament. Five people have been killed.

Few details were available about the bloodshed in Nijgadh, which is about 75 miles south of Katmandu, the capital of this Himalayan nation. The local official, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak to reporters, said the wounded were in serious condition.

The official said the Nijgadh area is a stronghold of Maoist rebels who have been fighting since 1996 for a communist state and have lately have thrown their support behind the protest campaign begun April 6 by seven major opposition parties.

Demonstrations have spread to most cities and towns in Nepal. A general strike has kept most trucks off the roads, leaving Katmandu low on fresh food and causing the government to ration fuel.

The king was scheduled to meet with former prime ministers at the royal palace Monday to discuss the crisis, independent Kantipur Television said. The meetings came a day after the king talked with ambassadors of the United States, India and China.

Opposition parties involved in the protests said they had not been invited by the king.

"We have not been asked by the palace, and even if we are called for the meeting we will not go," said Krishna Sitaula, a senior member of one party, Nepali Congress.

The government expanded a ban on demonstrations in Katmandu to include the outskirts of the capital and the suburb of Lalitpur, where many rallies have been held. But thousands defied the order and took to the streets in the suburban areas Monday.

There was a heavy police presence but no reports of clashes. Earlier, police fired several rounds of tear gas and beat up protesters at the tourist hub of Thamel in Katmandu.

With many markets closed by the lack of truck deliveries, the government said Monday that it was deploying armed escorts for trucks carrying food into the capital and offering cash incentives to drivers who defy the strike in Katmandu.

Officials also forced several Katmandu service stations to open and distribute rationed gasoline and diesel fuel.

Some 50,000 people joined demonstrations across Nepal on Sunday in the biggest outpouring since opponents of Gyanendra's seizure of power began a campaign of protests and a nationwide strike April 6.

The biggest rallies took place in two neighborhoods outside Katmandu. One attracted 15,000 people and was peaceful. Another, in the Balkhu neighborhood, degenerated into running clashes between protesters and police.

About 10,000 people marched along the ring road that skirts Katmandu for hours but then riot police massed to stop them. The protesters charged the officers, who responded with a volley of tear gas and rubber bullets.

The opposition said 13 people were wounded by rubber bullets and dozens more were injured by police clubs. About 30 people were arrested.

In Thamel, the capital's ordinarily throbbing tourist hub, dozens of shop owners, hotel workers and trekking guides burned tires and taunted police along streets lined with shuttered stores that usually sell trinkets, fabric and pirated DVDs.

"The king is killing our work. We have not enough customers," said C.V. Shresthra, a 36-year-old trekking guide.

Many of the capital's 1.5 million residents struggled to find fresh vegetables, gasoline and other goods.

"I pushed my motorcycle all the way here. I have no choice but to wait for hours to get petrol," said Sundar Thapa as he lined up at one of the few open gas stations.

The prices for what few vegetables could be found had risen fivefold since the start of the strike, and prices for chicken and mutton doubled.

"We have not had a single truck come in the past 11 days," said Raj Maharjan, a vegetable vendor at the city's Baneswor market.

Gyanendra seized power in February 2005, saying he needed control to restore political order and end the communist insurgency that has killed nearly 13,000 people in the past decade.

The protests over the past two weeks have been the worst since Gyanendra's move, and the opposition sought to increase the pressure Sunday by appealing to Nepalese to stop paying taxes, custom duties, interest on loans from state banks and even their utilities.

They also urged the estimated 1.6 million Nepalese working abroad to stop sending money home. The \$1.2 billion in remittances have in large part kept the economy afloat.

<http://rwor.org/a/044/nepal-mass-upsurge.htm>

Nepal: Mass Upsurge Against the King

Revolutionary Worker Online, IL - Apr 17, 2006

U.S. Up To No Good

by Li Onesto

Revolution #044, April 23, 2006, posted at revcom.us

Tens of thousands of people have taken to the streets in Nepal. An alliance of seven political parties called for a four-day *bandh*, a general strike, starting on April 6, aimed against King Gyanendra's autocratic feudal monarchy. And as we go to press on April 17, there have now been daily days of demonstrations in the capital city of Kathmandu and in towns and cities throughout the country.

Leading up to April 6, the government tried to stop the strike by banning rallies and public gatherings and arresting hundreds of people. Dozens of people were arrested at a rally in defiance of the ban on April 5. And the police attacked a rally of journalists and physically disabled people, organized by the Nepal Journalist Association. Security forces also carried out raids on the homes of opposition leaders and arrested many opposition activists.

But despite such repression, thousands took to the street on the first day of the strike, in Kathmandu and in other cities and towns. Normal life was completely paralyzed, with shops, commercial centers, schools, and other businesses closed and very few vehicles in the streets. A thousand people were arrested across the country on this first day of the strike.

Tens of thousands continued to take to the street, even after the end of the four-day strike that had been called for. In the first five days of protests, there were demonstrations in over 70 districts. On April 7, more than 50,000 people took to the streets in Chitwan, in the Terai area near the Indian border. In different areas, roads have been blocked by burning tires and tree logs. Huge numbers of riot police have been deployed against the protests and there have been daily clashes with protesters burning cars and hurling stones and bricks at security forces. The police are using tear gas, rubber bullets and regular bullets, injuring many. At least four people have been killed and dozens have been injured by bullets. Thousands have been arrested, including children.

Fourteen months ago, on February 1, 2005, King Gyanendra declared a state of emergency, dissolved the parliament, sacked the prime minister, and suspended many constitutional rights. This was a desperate move by Gyanendra, who has been unable to crush the People's War led by the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist). The CPN(M) began their armed struggle against the government in 1996, now control some 80 percent of the countryside, and have set up base areas ruled by new revolutionary forms of government. (For more on the People's War in Nepal go to revcom.us/s/nepal.htm).

In spite of a brutal counterinsurgency by Gyanendra's Royal Nepalese Army—backed by political, financial, and military support from the United States, India, and the UK—the People's War has continued to grow and expand and this is what has set the stage for the current demonstrations called for by the parliamentary parties.

The Maoists supported the four-day strike and for those days, suspended armed operations in and around Kathmandu. The third day of the strike, the Maoist People's Liberation Army (PLA) assaulted a Royal Nepal Army base in the central Terai region. About a dozen army barracks were destroyed and some two dozen Royal Army personnel were killed and a large quantity of weapons were seized.

The CPN(M) reports that there have been dozens of recent military actions by the PLA, including the seizure of district headquarters, commando attacks, and frontal battles—carried out in the western, central, and eastern regions of the country. On April 6, the PLA took over Malangwa, the district headquarters of Sarlahi in the eastern Terai (plains) region. The action left dozens of security personnel dead, and dozens injured. All of the government offices were destroyed and some of the officers including the security forces were taken into custody. Some 125 prisoners, most of them political prisoners, were released from the prison.

Throughout the world—whether in Iraq or Los Angeles, helicopters are used against the people, and in Nepal, the RNA has been using them to drop bombs and fire on PLA soldiers and ordinary people. On April 6, when an RNA helicopter flew into Malangwa, ground fire from the PLA brought it down in flames, killing 10 Royal Army officers. This is the first time the PLA has taken out an RNA helicopter.

The growing protests throughout the country are a powerful indication of how much King Gyanendra is isolated and widely hated by a wide spectrum of people in Nepal. And it is significant that the government's increasing brutality has only fueled the anger and determination of the people who have continued to defy the ban on protests and the palace's "shoot on sight" warnings.

Students have been a big part of the demonstrations all over the country. Dozens of journalists have been arrested at rallies organized to protest the arrest of journalists. Human rights activists monitoring demonstrations have been arrested. When writers, actors, musicians, comedians, and poets staged a march against the atrocities of the government and performed anti-government skits, they were attacked by the police with bullets, tear gas, and batons.

Farmers and workers are joining the protests, with peasants traveling from their villages to towns and cities to demonstrate. In one town a list of police, soldiers and vigilantes engaged in violent repression has been circulated and residents are urged not to rent to such persons.

Women's groups, professors, and lecturers have organized protests. The Nepal Medical Association mobilized doctors to demonstrate. Engineers, lawyers, and accountants have taken to the streets in the thousands. Government office workers have staged work stoppages and sit-ins.

The police attacked a sit-in of white collar professionals, arresting and beating more than 50 people. When a memorial was held for protesters killed by the government, thousands of security were deployed to arrest and beat people.

Security forces are firing indiscriminately at demonstrators, attacking with teargas, wounding hundreds. In Kathmandu alone, on one day, more than 200 were injured, including people hit by bullets. After security forces entered the dormitories of student doctors at a teaching hospital and beat them, doctors and health workers across the country protested by wearing black armbands.

Students at Kanchanpur's Siddhanath Science Campus boycotted classes, set up burning tire barricades around the campus and declared they would not take exams until the andolan (movement) succeeds. The students took over the roads into the campus and declared the campus off limits to the police.

Right now in Nepal, there is a very complex situation in which there are various forces—with different interests and agendas—contending and maneuvering. And throughout all this, the United States has continued to act on its staunch position that “the Maoists must not be allowed to win.” The U.S. has officially put the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) on their “terrorist list,” despite the fact that the politics and practice of the CPN(M) clearly has nothing in common with groups like Al Qaida. The United States has backed a brutal counterinsurgency against the People's War, with millions of dollars, thousands of automatic weapons and military training. U.S. Ambassador to Nepal James Moriarty has repeatedly urged the mainstream parliamentary parties to unite with the King to defeat the Maoists. And he has harshly criticized them for working together in any way with the Maoists.

Now, in a situation where Gyanendra may not be able to hold on to power, the U.S. is maneuvering to ensure an outcome that will be in its interests—continuing to agitate that the Maoists are an illegitimate political force. News reports say that Moriarty has been meeting with leaders of the two main parliamentary parties, the Nepali Congress and CPN-UML. And on April 10, the U.S. urged Gyanendra to hold talks with the opposition parties.

On April 7, Richard A. Boucher, Assistant Secretary for South and Central Asian Affairs, addressed the Confederation of Indian Industries. In a response to a question about the U.S. position on Nepal, Boucher said: “These are nasty people, the Maoists are. And I think we need to work as much as we can to pressure the King to restore democracy, to encourage the parties to stay together and to come up with a workable, functioning democracy. And to be able to expunge the Maoists from Nepali society. I think it's very much the attitude of governments in the region including India, and we've had some very good discussion today about how to advance those goals.” Later Boucher added, “Our diplomats are in touch with everybody in Kathmandu, all the players, the political parties and the King, delivering very strong messages I think every day and coordinating with other countries who are represented there.”

In such a situation, there is the real possibility of even more direct intervention by the United States, in some form—which would be very bad for the masses of people in Nepal.

The involvement and efforts by U.S. in Nepal are not about “restoring democracy.” They are about maintaining a state rule, in whatever form and by whatever political parties, which is subordinate to foreign domination and will enforce the underlying economic and social relations of oppression in Nepalese society that serve the interests of imperialism.

Nepal parties call halt to tax payment

Web posted at: 4/17/2006 2:2:49

Source ::: AFP

KATHMANDU:Nepal's sidelined political parties called for a massive pro-democracy protest in the capital on Thursday and urged citizens to stop paying taxes and utility bills to help bring down the royal government.

"We appeal to people from all walks of life to participate in the mass demonstration on April 20," a coordinating committee for seven major parties said in a statement.

"As a part of a non-cooperation movement against the autocratic royal government, we call upon the tax payers not to pay any kind of taxes to the government and also for consumers not to pay anything for water, electricity, telephone or other services."

The call was made on the 11th straight day of strikes and protests against King Gyanendra's seizure of power 14 months ago. The stoppages have created shortages of food and fuel in the capital and sent prices soaring.

The parties also called on Nepalis working abroad to halt remittances to family members for the time being.

In the last fiscal year, Nepalis officially sent back one billion dollars and another billion dollars through informal channels. The remittances are crucial for the economy along with tourism and farming.

The parties also urged a boycott of businesses owned by the king and the royal family, including a five-star hotel and a tobacco company, and asked donor countries to halt aid which accounts for a major portion of the annual budget. They asked Maoists rebels with whom they have formed a loose alliance to join the latest move to force the king to restore democracy.

Yesterday, gasoline was scarce and there were long lines at the army and police-run pumps, the only ones still open. Prices for vegetables have soared on dwindling supplies.

The parties ousted when Gyanendra sacked the government started the latest strike on April 6. It included a unilateral ceasefire by the rebels in the capital.

The protests have since snowballed into daily clashes even though riot police have used tear gas, rubber bullets and baton charges against demonstrators.

The government initially tried to prevent large-scale protests by banning public gatherings, calling day and night curfews, cutting mobile phones and rounding up hundreds of political activists.



A Nepalese policeman injured during a clash between government security forces and protesters is being carried away in Kathmandu yesterday.

Under the sustained pressure, the king last Friday called for elections and police have shied away from enforcing a ban on all gatherings.

Around a dozen hotel and restaurant workers were arrested after more than 1,000 protesters took to the streets in the tourist area of Thamel. Other small rallies were staged in the capital and on the main ring road. Opposition parties said the demonstrations were growing.

“Our movement will continue until we achieve our goals. People across the country have shown their support to our ongoing movement,” said Yogesh Bhattarai, a spokesman for the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist Leninist).

The call for a general strike meant public transport was unavailable yesterday, with inter-city and local bus stands deserted and almost all businesses closed. Housewife Rajnai Kumar said the price of onions rose to Rs.100 a kg from Rs.25 two days ago.

http://challengestempsreel.nouvelobs.com/international/arti_35063_18511.html

Un cinquième manifestant tué par l'armée au Népal

Challenges.fr | 17.04.2006 | 14:31

KATMANDOU (Reuters) - Un manifestant a été tué par des tirs de l'armée népalaise lors d'une manifestation contre la monarchie dans la ville de Nijagadh, 200 km à l'est de Katmandou.

Il s'agit de la cinquième personne à trouver la mort depuis le début, il y a 12 jours, des émeutes contre le pouvoir absolu du roi Gyanendra. Des centaines d'autres manifestants ont été blessés.



REUTERS - Danish Ismail

Des manifestant jettent des pierres sur des policiers à Katmandou. Un manifestant a été tué par des tirs de l'armée népalaise lors d'une manifestation contre la monarchie dans la ville de Nijagadh, 200 km à l'est de Katmandou.

<http://www.nepaleyes.com/read.php?topic=headlines&id=1960>

Protester killed in Bara, hundreds injured in nationwide protests Nepaleyes Report

Kathmandu, April 18

Hiralal Gautam, 28, of CPN-UML was killed while more than six others were injured, two of them seriously, as police opened fire against protestors in Bara on Monday.

Among the critically injured are Shiva Hari Rimal, who received a bullet in his eye and Sudhir Aryal who was hit in the abdomen. All the injured are undergoing treatment in Narayani Sub-regional Hospital.

According to a press release issued by Defense Ministry on the same day, the security personnel had opened the fire against protestors as they continued vandalizing government and public property and tried to torch Agricultural Development Bank even after security personnel fired seven blank shots to control the mob.

In the scuffle four Royal Nepalese Army, one Armed Police Force personnel, eight Nepal Police personnel were also injured.

Meanwhile at least ninety protestors were injured at Chabahil-Chuchepati area as riot police baton-charged and tear gassed demonstrators, and fired rubber bullets to disperse them for defying the government's prohibitory order.

The injured are receiving treatment at Om Hospital and Medicare Hospital. Police have rounded up over 12 protestors from the rally.

Similarly, clashes between security personnel and protestors in front of the CPN-UML office at Balkhu left some agitators injured. Protestors vandalized two taxis and a motorbike. Police arrested protestors, Ram Chandra Tiwari, Deepak Khatri, Rishi Tiwari and Dev Timilsina from there.

In Itahari, Simara, Kalaiya, Narayangarh, Birgunj, Ramechhap, Bhairahawa, Rautahat, Pyuthan, Lamjung, Hetauda, Lekhnath and Nepalgunj also protestors and security personnel clashed which left hundreds of people injured.

<http://www.alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/DEL630.htm>

Nepal events reaching a climax, say diplomats

18 Apr 2006 17:10:52 GMT

Source: Reuters



Nepali riot police take shelter from the rain near a closed shop in Kathmandu April 18, 2006.

Nepal's political parties urged people on Sunday to stop paying taxes and international donors to halt aid to the royalist government as an anti-monarchy campaign widened dramatically.

REUTERS/GOPAL CHITRAKAR

(Adds international rights groups))

By Gopal Sharma

KATHMANDU, April 18 (Reuters) - Anti-monarchy protesters kept up the pressure in the Nepali capital on Tuesday despite bad weather as diplomats said the movement against King Gyanendra appeared to be reaching a climax.

It was the 13th day of a general strike and protest campaign launched by a seven-party political alliance which wants the king to restore multi-party democracy.

Hundreds gathered in various parts of Kathmandu and tried to start a procession, but police blocked them. No one was hurt.

Outside the capital, police fired rubber bullets to break up protests in two towns, injuring about a dozen, witnesses said.

At least five people have been killed and hundreds wounded in police action against protesters during the campaign, which has brought the impoverished nation to a standstill.

Food and fuel in the capital is running short and anger against Gyanendra is mounting.

Diplomats said time appeared to be running out for the monarch.

"We could see him toppled if he doesn't do something in the next few weeks or days," said one. "I am very afraid we are moving into a revolutionary situation."

One flashpoint could come on Thursday at mass rallies called for by the parties, which have vowed to bring out hundreds of thousands of people on the street.

On Sunday, the king held talks with the U.S., Chinese and Indian ambassadors and indicated he could meet some of the protesters' demands. Diplomats said they knew of no specifics.

"He has to hand over power to the political parties," the diplomat said. "And if he does not, it's not looking good."

Although the powerful army remains loyal to the king, protests are spreading from the street to the civil service. Home Ministry officials held a demonstration at their offices on Tuesday and about a dozen were arrested, witnesses said.

The United States and India, Nepal's giant neighbour, have both called repeatedly for the restoration of democracy.

Gyanendra came under further pressure on Tuesday when three top human rights groups called for international sanctions against the monarch and top Nepali officials, accusing them of being "impervious to the suffering" of the Nepalese people.

"He (the king) and his officials have been responsible for serious human rights violations, including the arbitrary arrest and detention of thousands of critics, torture and ill-treatment of detainees ...," Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and the International Commission of Jurists said in a statement.

INDIAN ENVOY

In another sign of mounting pressure, New Delhi said Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh was sending a special envoy to Kathmandu on Wednesday.

The envoy, Karan Singh, a member of parliament and former ambassador to the United States, was expected to meet with the king, an Indian Foreign Ministry statement said.

"The purpose of my going there really is to meet with the king, to meet with the leaders of the political parties, to assess the general situation which, as you say, is deteriorating very rapidly," Singh, who is related to Gyanendra by marriage, told the Indian TV channel NDTV.

"It is not our intention to interfere in the internal affairs of another country but the last thing that we would want is for Nepal to dissolve into chaos because India's vital security interests are involved, our human interests are involved, there's an open border between Nepal and India and our commitment to parliamentary democracy is there."

The president of the Asian Development Bank (ADB), Haruhiko Kuroda, urged the international community to remain engaged with Nepal and said it would be premature for donors to consider any suspension of aid to the impoverished kingdom.

"We have to be very careful because people are suffering," Kuroda told Reuters in Manila.

King Gyanendra sacked the government and assumed full power in February 2005, vowing to crush a decade-old Maoist revolt in which more than 13,000 people have died.

He has offered to hold elections by April next year, but activists say he cannot be trusted and should immediately hand over power to an all-party government.

The Maoists have formed a loose alliance with the political parties and have not launched any attacks in the Kathmandu Valley since the start of the protests.

Under a deal with the parties, the Maoists have agreed to join the political mainstream once the royalist government is overthrown.

"It is no more a movement by the seven political parties or anybody, it has become a popular movement," Maoist chief Prachanda and his deputy, Baburam Bhattarai, said in a joint statement on Monday. "All it needs is a final push." (Additional reporting by Y.P. Rajesh in NEW DELHI and John O'Callaghan in MANILA and Richard Waddington in Geneva)

<http://www.asiamedia.ucla.edu/article-southasia.asp?parentid=43433>

NEPAL: One protestor killed, over 100 injured in nationwide pro-democracy demonstrations on Monday

Security personnel injure journalists at pro-democracy demonstrations

Nepal News

Tuesday, April 18, 2006

AsiaMedia Editor's Note: Reports are unclear as to whether the lifting of the state of emergency on April 30 allows for press freedom, and thus Nepalnews may still be operating under the directives of King Gyanendra.

One protestor was killed and over 100 injured when security forces intervened pro-democracy demonstrations in various parts of the country on Monday, the 12th day of the general strike called by the seven party alliance (SPA) demanding restoration of complete democracy bringing an end to the autocracy.

One CPN-UML activist Hiralal Gautam was killed and about half-a-dozen protestors injured, two critically, after security personnel opened fire against demonstrators who were organizing a protest rally in Nijgadh of Bara district.

In the capital, protestors defied the government's prohibitory orders by organizing rallies, gatherings and sit-ins in various parts of the Valley on Monday.

At least 90 protesters were injured at Chabahil-Chuchepati area as riot police baton-charged demonstrators, teargassed them and fired rubber bullets to disperse the protestors for defying the government's prohibitory order.

The injured have been admitted to nearby Om Hospital and Research Centre and Medicare hospital. Police have taken into custody dozens of protestors from the protest rally. The NC said over a dozen of its workers were rounded up.

In an attempt to foil the rally, the government issued a prohibitory order on Sunday banning protest, procession and sit-ins within the Ring Road and 200 meters from the Ring Road.

Demonstrations and torch rallies were also taken out at Bhimsengola, Bouddha, Kapan, Maharajgunj, Balaju, Ason, Sitapaila, Kirtipur, Patan, Kupandol, Thimi, Sitapaila and Kalanki.

Clashes in front of the CPN-UML office at Balkhu left some of the agitators injured. Protestors vandalized two taxis and a motorbike there. Police arrested four leaders, Ram Chandra Tiwari, Deepak Khatri, Rishi Tiwari and Dev Timilsena from the protest programme.

In Buddhanagar and Ghattekulo, women took out a rally banging steel plates.

Civil servants of various ministries also joined the pro-democracy movement and organized protest programme inside the ministry premises on Monday. The employees of Supreme Court also joined the stir by organizing sit-in at the court premises for one and half an hour.

In Itahari, at least fifty demonstrators and half a dozen policemen were injured during the clash between security forces and the protestors. Even the Nepal Red Cross volunteers, who were involved in the treatment of the injured, were manhandled by the police.

Meanwhile, the police manhandled journalists reporting on the police intervention in a torch rally. Half a dozen journalists were injured.

In Simara, two dozen protestors were injured after police intervened in a protest rally.

In Kalaiya, at least 24 agitators were injured when police intervened in a rally and beat up protestors. The police also fired four rounds of rubber bullets. Around 300 women staged a rally carrying plates, brooms and ladles.

Meanwhile, security forces escorted some vehicles along the highway.

A report from Narayangarh said four agitators were injured when security forces fired bullets at them at Ratnanagar municipality. The RNA men who were escorting vehicles from Hetauda, opened fire at Tandi Bazaar while clearing the Mahendra Highway. A security source said the forces opened fire after agitators stoned the RNA vehicle.

In Birgunj, over a dozen activists were injured when police intervened in a demonstration. Police also beat up civilians at Mina Bazaar, Ghantaghar and Adarsha Nagar.

In Ramechhap, the agitating parties staged a massive rally at Manthali. Three agitators were hurt when the police intervened.

Women in Sindhupalchowk also staged a rally.

In Bhairahawa, students burnt an effigy of regression at Buddha Chowk. Employees of the Nepal Electricity Authority, Bhairahwa, staged a pen down strike.

Rallies were also held in Nawalparasi. In Rautahat, people from different walks of life took out a rally at Gaur.

In Pyuthan, the Nepal Ranger Association, Nepal Forest Guard Association, Civil Servants' Association and Local Development Employees Association staged a sit-in at the District Forest Office premises.

In Lamjung, a rally was led by former Indian and British Army personnel at Besi Sahar. Rallies were also held in Hetauda.

In Lekhnath, the RNA used loudspeakers to warn civilians against taking out rallies saying Maoists had entered the municipality. However, thousands of people staged a rally at Sisuwa.

In Nepalgunj, 20 demonstrators, including UML's office secretary Hem Raj Giri and district president of People's Front Nepal Mahendra Bahadur Mahat, were injured in police action. The police also fired blank shots to disperse the crowd in Jumla.

The Panchthar chamber of commerce and industry also organised a protest rally.

<http://www.canada.com/topics/news/world/story.html?id=b78e7988-f986-42d2-b592-8413cde3b54a&k=3185&p=2>

Nepal imposes curfew in resort town, police arrest 250 university professors

Binaj Gurabacharya, Canadian Press

Published: Wednesday, April 19, 2006

KATHMANDU, Nepal (AP) - Police arrested some 250 university professors Wednesday for demonstrating against Nepal's king in defiance of a curfew imposed to quell pro-democracy protests that have plunged the Himalayan country into crisis.

The royal government imposed the curfew in the western resort town of Pokhara, a day after thousands of protesters clashed with police. State-run Radio Nepal said anyone violating the daylong curfew would be shot.

Elsewhere Wednesday, protests erupted in a southwestern town where a woman died after being hit by a tear gas shell a day earlier, an official said. She was the sixth person to be killed by security forces in two weeks of violent protests to against King Gyanendra's rule.

The crisis began April 6 when an opposition alliance launched a general strike to demand the king restore democracy. Gyanendra seized direct power last year, arguing the move was needed to restore political order and crush a Maoist insurgency that has left nearly 13,000 people dead.

In Pokhara, the professors were rallying peacefully when police stopped them, loaded them into trucks and drove them to detention centres, said Krishna Adhikari, who was among the professors arrested. He said police did not open fire despite the order to shoot curfew violators.

"We condemn the police breaking our peaceful rally," Adhikari said by cellular phone from the detention centre.

The woman who died was among thousands of protesters who stormed a monument being built for King Gyanendra in the town of Nepalgunj. She died in a hospital Tuesday evening, said Binod Adhikari, the chief government administrator in the area.

Adhikari said security forces were compelled to use some force to bring the situation under control. Two policemen were also critically hurt in the clash.

He said there were fresh protests Wednesday to protest the woman's death.

White House Press Secretary Scott McClellan renewed U.S. appeals on Gyanendra to restore democracy, warning the unrest in the country "will only worsen."

"Arrests and violence accompanying the pro-democracy demonstrations only add to the insecurity and compound the serious problem facing Nepal," he told reporters.

On Tuesday, Nepal's royal government summoned U.S. Ambassador James Moriarty to protest comments the envoy has made on the crisis.

The strike has forced shops to close and vehicles to stay off the streets for 14 straight days in the Himalayan kingdom, causing shortages of food and other necessities in the capital, Kathmandu.

Drivers on Wednesday lined up at gas stations in the city, and shoppers searched for cooking gas after armoured military vehicles escorted a convoy carrying the capital's first supplies since the unrest began.

Twenty-three trucks and buses on Tuesday brought in badly needed salt, bananas, potatoes and onions, as well as kerosene and gasoline.

In a sign that government workers have also begun to publicly defy Gyanendra, 25 Home Ministry employees walked out of work Tuesday, chanting anti-king slogans. All were arrested, along with three journalists covering the protest, an official said on condition of anonymity for fear of retribution.

The strike and protests form the worst unrest Gyanendra has faced since his power grab. Although many of Nepal's 27 million people at first supported his power seizure, an increasing number are frustrated by the intensifying insurgency and faltering economy.

Huit morts en deux semaines d'émeutes au Népal

mercredi 19 avril 2006 (Reuters - 15:00)

KATMANDOU - Les émeutes antiroyalistes ont fait au moins trois nouveaux morts ces dernières 48 heures au Népal, portant à huit morts le bilan total depuis deux semaines.

Au moins deux manifestants ont été tués lors d'échanges de tirs avec la police mercredi à Chandragai, à 600 km à l'est de Katmandou, apprend-on de source officielle. Selon un journaliste local, il y aurait eu quatre morts au total dans cette ville.

La veille, une femme atteinte au visage par une grenade lacrymogène lors d'une manifestation à Nepalgunj, à 500 km à l'ouest de Katmandou, avait succombé à ses blessures.

Plusieurs centaines de personnes ont été blessées et des centaines arrêtées depuis le début des manifestations contre l'absolutisme du roi Gyanendra et pour le rétablissement du multipartisme.

Le roi du Népal a limogé le gouvernement et assumé les pleins pouvoirs en février 2005, en promettant d'écraser une insurrection maoïste qui a fait plus de 13.000 morts en dix ans.

Les sept partis politiques militant contre la monarchie ont promis de faire descendre jeudi des milliers de personnes dans les rues.

Le monarque fait l'objet de pressions internationales l'engageant à céder à leurs revendications. Les Etats-Unis et l'Inde figurent parmi les puissance ayant appelé le roi à rétablir la démocratie.

Signe que le monarque pourrait céder à ces pressions, les leaders de deux des sept partis impliqués dans les manifestations - le Parti communiste et le Congrès népalais - ont été libérés mercredi à Katmandou.

jeudi 20 avril 2006, mis à jour à 13:42

Les manifestants antimonarchistes dispersés à coups de feu

Reuters

La police népalaise a ouvert le feu sur des milliers de manifestants antimonarchistes descendus dans les rues de Katmandou à l'appel de sept partis d'opposition, en dépit du couvre-feu diurne destiné à les en empêcher, faisant trois morts et une quarantaine de blessés, rapportent témoins et secouristes.



© Reuters

"La police a tiré aveuglément", a rapporté Kundan Aryal, un militant des droits de l'homme qui a aidé à transporter les victimes à l'hôpital. "Ce fut un tir nourri", a-t-il ajouté.

Une dizaine de manifestants au total ont été tués depuis le début, il y a deux semaines, des manifestations contre le roi Gyanendra, qui a supprimé la démocratie pluraliste et s'est attribué tous les pouvoirs en février 2005 en jurant d'écraser une guérilla maoïste qui a fait 13.000 morts en 10 ans.

Avant de tirer à balles réelles, les policiers ont fait usage de balles de caoutchouc et de gaz lacrymogènes pour tenter d'empêcher une dizaine de milliers de manifestants de marcher sur le centre de la capitale à partir de sa banlieue ouest de Kalanki, faisant au moins une dizaine de blessés, rapportent des témoins.

"Le roi a peur du peuple, c'est pour cela qu'il a imposé le couvre-feu. Si nous ne violons pas le couvre-feu, il ne va pas céder. Nous tenterons allons tenter de le faire", déclarait une manifestante de 47 ans, Gaura Prasai.

La mesure est en vigueur depuis 02h00 du matin et jusqu'à 08h00 du soir, heure locale, et les forces de sécurité ont pour consigne de tirer à vue sur tout contrevenant. Journalistes et diplomates, y compris les ambassadeurs, ont reçu l'ordre de ne pas sortir dans les rues.

De ce fait, le centre de la capitale était désert jeudi et seules y circulaient des patrouilles de policiers et de militaires. En revanche, des rassemblements d'opposants se sont formés en divers points de la banlieue.

"PAS UN CHAT"

Dans le faubourg de Maharajgunj, des policiers anti-émeutes et des soldats armés de fusils faisaient face sous un soleil de plomb à une vingtaine de milliers de manifestants scandant: "Que veut le peuple? Il veut une république démocratique!".

Aucune violence n'y était immédiatement signalée, mais la situation demeurait extrêmement tendue. On apercevait dans la foule des femmes avec des enfants dans les bras. Des balcons en surplomb, des habitants jetaient de l'eau pour rafraîchir les manifestants

Devant le palais royal de Narayanhity, dont les grilles étaient closes, une automitrailleuse était en faction. Dans l'artère habituellement la plus animée de la capitale, Durbar Street, tous les magasins étaient fermés. Les clients des hôtels se sont vu interdire de sortir. "Je ne vois pas un chat dans la rue", a témoigné un habitant de New Road, le quartier des affaires.

A Bhaktapur, une ville proche de Katmandou également sous couvre-feu, des centaines de personnes sont descendues dans les rues mais on ne signalait aucun incident.

Bien que le régime ait libéré mercredi deux responsables politiques, rien n'indique qu'il soit prêt à céder à la rue et l'un des deux bénéficiaires de la mesure, le chef du Parti communiste Madhav Kumar, a appelé à la poursuite du mouvement "jusqu'à ce que le peuple retrouve sa pleine souveraineté".

Le roi a offert d'organiser des élections avant avril 2007 mais les partis d'opposition ont dit ne pas lui faire confiance et réclament la mise sur pied immédiate d'un gouvernement représentatif de tout le spectre politique.

Des pressions extérieures s'exercent aussi sur le monarque pour qu'il rétablisse la démocratie, notamment de la part de l'Inde voisine, dont le Premier ministre Manmohan Singh a dépêché à Katmandou un émissaire personnel.

<http://www.latribune.fr/News/News.nsf/AllByID/ofrwr-nepal-20060420txt?OpenDocument>

Dépêche reçue le 20/04/06 à 19:09

Trois morts et une centaine de blessés à Katmandou



Manifestants népalais dans rues de Katmandou. Photo prise le 20 avril 2006. REUTERS. Adrees Latif.

KATMANDOU (Reuters) - La police népalaise a ouvert le feu pour empêcher des dizaines de milliers de militants antimonarchistes de manifester dans le centre de Katmandou, faisant trois morts et une centaine de blessés.

Onze manifestants au moins ont été tués en 15 jours de manifestations contre le roi Gyanendra, qui s'est attribué tous les pouvoirs en février 2005 en accusant les partis politiques d'impuissance devant la guérilla maoïste qui a fait 13.000 morts en dix ans.

La police, qui avait jeudi des consignes strictes pour faire respecter un couvre-feu diurne dans le centre de la capitale, "a tiré aveuglément", a rapporté Kundan Aryal, un militant des droits de l'homme qui a aidé à transporter les victimes à l'hôpital.

Le couvre-feu, qui a été prolongé jusqu'à vendredi à trois heures du matin (21h15 GMT jeudi), avait été décrété pour tenter de faire échec à la manifestation géante prévue dans le centre de Katmandou par sept partis d'opposition.

Plus de 100.000 manifestants ont réussi à se rassembler dans les diverses banlieues de Katmandou malgré ce couvre-feu et le dispositif policier.

"C'est une indication que notre mouvement réussit. Nous en attendons seulement les fruits. Nous continuerons jusqu'à ce que le peuple les recueille", a-t-il ajouté.

ESPOIR DE L'EMISSAIRE INDIEN

Libéré la veille, le chef du Parti communiste Madhav Kumar, a appelé lui aussi à la poursuite du mouvement "jusqu'à ce que le peuple retrouve sa pleine souveraineté".

Les dirigeants de l'alliance ont d'ores et déjà annoncé une nouvelle manifestation pour vendredi dans le centre de Katmandou afin de maintenir la pression.

Le roi a offert d'organiser des élections avant avril 2007 mais l'opposition ne lui fait pas confiance et réclame la mise sur pied immédiate d'un gouvernement représentatif de tout le spectre politique.

Inquiet de la tournure des événements chez son voisin, le Premier ministre indien Manmohan Singh a dépêché ces dernières heures auprès de Gyanendra un émissaire qui a jugé que "la balle est carrément dans le camp du roi".

Cet émissaire, le député Karan Singh, a dit avoir "très clairement fait part" des inquiétudes de l'Inde, qui "est évidemment favorable au rétablissement de la démocratie pluraliste et profondément préoccupée par les difficultés que connaît le peuple népalais".

"J'ai l'espoir que le roi fera très prochainement une annonce qui contribuera considérablement à désamorcer la crise", a-t-il ajouté à son retour à New Delhi.

Nepal capital deserted, protesters gather outside

Thu Apr 20, 2006 5:10 AM BST

By Gopal Sharma

KATHMANDU (Reuters) - Anti-monarchy protesters gathered outside the city limits of the Nepali capital Kathmandu on Thursday where a strict curfew has been imposed to block a pro-democracy rally.

Security forces have orders to shoot violators. Activists have said they will bring out hundreds of thousands on the street to force King Gyanendra to restore multi-party democracy.

The city of 1.5 million people was deserted except for police and troops on patrol but about 200 people carrying red banners of protest had gathered in the suburb of Kalanki, a few hundred yards (metres) outside city limits, witnesses said.

A squad of riot police was on hand, but had made no move to break up the gathering, they said.

The gates of Narayanhity Palace, the king's city residence, were closed and an armoured car with a machine gun on top was on patrol. All shops on the usually busy Durbar Street leading to the palace were shuttered and guests were barred from leaving hotel premises.

"I can't even see a dog on the street," said Manohar Acharya, a resident of the New Road business district.

Political parties said they would defy the curfew later in the day.

"To protest peacefully is the fundamental and natural right of the people," said Krishna Prasad Sitaula, a senior leader of the Nepali Congress, the country's biggest political party.

"The ban and curfew orders are undemocratic and unconstitutional. We will disobey and will hold our peaceful protest programme."

Unlike previous times when curfews were imposed, journalists too have been told to stay indoors. The ban came into effect at 2 a.m. (2015 GMT Wednesday) and will last until 8 p.m. (1415 GMT).

At least eight people have been killed and hundreds wounded in police action against demonstrators since a seven-party alliance launched crippling protests against King Gyanendra 15 days ago to demand the restoration of multi-party democracy.

Tens of thousands have attended protests every day in Kathmandu, but many more have demonstrated in district towns. A general strike, part of the campaign, has prevented the movement of goods and people across the impoverished landlocked nation.

The latest deaths came in the town of Chandragadi, 600 km (375 miles) east of Kathmandu, where security forces opened fire on protesters on Wednesday, killing two people. Witnesses said dozens of others were wounded and more might have died.

GESTURE

The government freed the two top political prisoners in the country on Wednesday, but there was no other sign the king was considering meeting any of the demands of the alliance.

One of them, Madhav Kumar Nepal of the Communist Party of Nepal (UML), immediately called for continuing the campaign.

"The movement will continue in an effective and forceful manner," Nepal said. "We will continue until full sovereignty is returned to the people."

Analysts said the king needed to do more than freeing political prisoners.

"This is too little too late," said Lok Raj Baral, executive chairman of the Nepal Centre for Contemporary Studies, a private think tank.

"The arrests and release of political leaders are not significant. How the demands put up by the opposition are fulfilled will determine the course of events."

Gyanendra sacked the government and assumed full power in February 2005, vowing to crush a decade-old Maoist revolt in which more than 13,000 people have died.

He has offered to hold elections by April next year, but activists say he cannot be trusted and should immediately hand over power to an all-party government.

India, which shares a long, porous border with Nepal, is leading international pressure on the king to restore democracy.

A special envoy and India's foreign secretary, the country's top diplomat, were scheduled to call on the king on Thursday.

April 20, 2006



Police baton charge protestors during a demonstration in Kathmandu today (Shehab Uddin/AP)

Three shot dead as activists defy curfew in Nepal

By Simon Freeman and agencies

At least three people were shot dead and dozens more injured as Nepalese police opened fire on anti-monarchy protesters who defied a shoot-on-sight curfew to march on the capital Kathmandu.

Witnesses described how live ammunition, rubber bullets and tear gas were fired into the ranks of 30,000 flag-waving activists as they breached the city-wide exclusion zone from several directions.

Doctors in the capital had earlier expressed fears that the showdown could turn into a massacre: a dozen casualties were said to be critically ill. The strict 18-hour curfew, which came into force at 2am local time, led to a shortage of paramedics and doctors at the city's hospitals.

"Three of at least 40 injured protesters brought into the hospital have died," said Dr Deepak Regmi from Kathmandu's Model Hospital. "Most of the injured had bullet wounds. About 12 are in a serious condition."

"We are struggling to treat so many people. Because of the curfew we do not have many doctors. More injured are coming in but they are having to lie on the floor."

Some 35 people were injured in the northern suburb of Gongabu when police beat back a huge crowd with bamboo sticks, an AFP reporter said.

At Kalanki, a western suburb, police fired automatic rifles towards the massed protesters, a photographer said. Witnesses said a woman and child appeared to be among the dead. At least three men had been beaten unconscious.

There were also violent confrontations at Chabahil to the northeast, where an estimated 10,000 people rallied to join the demands for the restoration of democracy, chanting "King Gyanendra must go!"

Today's demonstration followed two weeks of protests, strikes and civil unrest aimed at ending King Gyanendra's self-imposed dictatorship and restoring democracy in the Himalayan kingdom.

The 18-hour curfew backed with lethal force was imposed as the protests escalated in violence. Today, only tourists catching departing planes were allowed to leave their hotels. Shops and markets were closed and the centre was deserted apart from soldiers on foot patrol.

Kathmandu's chief administrator Shushil Ghimire said that the curfew had been ordered because Maoist rebels have infiltrated the ranks of the seven peaceful pro-democracy groups. He said that explosives and weapons had been found at the homes of rally organisers.

King Gyanendra grabbed absolute power in February 2005, blaming his politicians for failing to tackle the Maoist insurgency and to hold elections.

As the internal demonstrations continued, Nepal's republican neighbour India also added to the pressure.

Karan Singh, India's special envoy, was given military escort to Narayanhity Palace, the King's city residence, to deliver a letter demanding the restoration of democracy. They met for two hours and were photographed shaking hands, although Mr Singh cancelled a scheduled night's stop-over and returned to Delhi.

"Now the ball is squarely in the court of the King. I am hopeful that very shortly some sort of announcement will be made by him which will help considerably defuse the situation," he told reporters on his return.

As evening fell, organisers began preparations for another rally tomorrow. "We appeal to all people to participate in the massive demonstration on Ring Road on Friday at 12 noon," a statement said, warning that the royal government might enforce another curfew.

"Our movement is successfully moving forward despite the state's excessive use of force during demonstrations nationwide."

<http://permanent.nouvelobs.com/etranger/20060420.REU23107.html?1146>

Les manifestants antimonarchistes dispersés à coups de feu

REUTERS | 20.04.06 | 13:42

JKATMANDOU (Reuters) - La police népalaise a ouvert le feu sur des milliers de manifestants antimonarchistes descendus dans les rues de Katmandou à l'appel de sept partis d'opposition, en dépit du couvre-feu diurne destiné à les en empêcher, faisant trois morts et une quarantaine de blessés, rapportent témoins et secouristes.

"La police a tiré aveuglément", a rapporté Kundan Aryal, un militant des droits de l'homme qui a aidé à transporter les victimes à l'hôpital. "Ce fut un tir nourri", a-t-il ajouté.

Une dizaine de manifestants au total ont été tués depuis le début, il y a deux semaines, des manifestations contre le roi Gyanendra, qui a supprimé la démocratie pluraliste et s'est attribué tous les pouvoirs en février 2005 en jurant d'écraser une guérilla maoïste qui a fait 13.000 morts en 10 ans.

Avant de tirer à balles réelles, les policiers ont fait usage de balles de caoutchouc et de gaz lacrymogènes pour tenter d'empêcher une dizaine de milliers de manifestants de marcher sur le centre de la capitale à partir de sa banlieue ouest de Kalanki, faisant au moins une dizaine de blessés, rapportent des témoins.

"Le roi a peur du peuple, c'est pour cela qu'il a imposé le couvre-feu. Si nous ne violons pas le couvre-feu, il ne va pas céder. Nous tenterons allons tenter de le faire", déclarait une manifestante de 47 ans, Gaura Prasai.

La mesure est en vigueur depuis 02h00 du matin et jusqu'à 08h00 du soir, heure locale, et les forces de sécurité ont pour consigne de tirer à vue sur tout contrevenant. Journalistes et diplomates, y compris les ambassadeurs, ont reçu l'ordre de ne pas sortir dans les rues.

De ce fait, le centre de la capitale était désert jeudi et seules y circulaient des patrouilles de policiers et de militaires. En revanche, des rassemblements d'opposants se sont formés en divers points de la banlieue.

"PAS UN CHAT"

Dans le faubourg de Maharajgunj, des policiers anti-émeutes et des soldats armés de fusils faisaient face sous un soleil de plomb à une vingtaine de milliers de manifestants scandant: "Que veut le peuple? Il veut une république démocratique!".

Aucune violence n'y était immédiatement signalée, mais la situation demeurait extrêmement tendue. On apercevait dans la foule des femmes avec des enfants dans les bras. Des balcons en surplomb, des habitants jetaient de l'eau pour rafraîchir les manifestants

Devant le palais royal de Narayanhity, dont les grilles étaient closes, une automitrailleuse était en faction. Dans l'artère habituellement la plus animée de la capitale, Durbar Street, tous les magasins étaient fermés. Les clients des hôtels se sont vu interdire de sortir. "Je ne vois pas un chat dans la rue", a témoigné un habitant de New Road, le quartier des affaires.

A Bhaktapur, une ville proche de Katmandou également sous couvre-feu, des centaines de personnes sont descendues dans les rues mais on ne signalait aucun incident.

Bien que le régime ait libéré mercredi deux responsables politiques, rien n'indique qu'il soit prêt à céder à la rue et l'un des deux bénéficiaires de la mesure, le chef du Parti communiste Madhav Kumar, a appelé à la poursuite du mouvement "jusqu'à ce que le peuple retrouve sa pleine souveraineté".

Le roi a offert d'organiser des élections avant avril 2007 mais les partis d'opposition ont dit ne pas lui faire confiance et réclament la mise sur pied immédiate d'un gouvernement représentatif de tout le spectre politique.

Des pressions extérieures s'exercent aussi sur le monarque pour qu'il rétablisse la démocratie, notamment de la part de l'Inde voisine, dont le Premier ministre Manmohan Singh a dépêché à Katmandou un émissaire personnel.

http://in.today.reuters.com/news/newsArticle.aspx?type=topNews&storyID=2006-04-20T135719Z_01_NOOTR_RTRJONC_0_India-245516-5.xml&archived=False

Protesters prepare to defy Nepal curfew

Thu Apr 20, 2006 2:04 PM IST

By Gopal Sharma

KATHMANDU (Reuters) - Tens of thousands of anti-monarchy protesters gathered outside the city limits of the Nepali capital Kathmandu on Thursday preparing to defy a strict curfew imposed to block a pro-democracy rally, witnesses said.

Security forces have orders to shoot violators but activists said they would not be prevented from holding the rally to force King Gyanendra to restore multi-party democracy.

The city of 1.5 million people was deserted except for police and troops on patrol. But at various places on the outskirts, activists had gathered, shouting "Long live democracy, down with autocracy," witnesses said.

In the Maharajgunj suburb, riot police backed by soldiers armed with automatic rifles faced about 20,000 people singing revolutionary songs and chanting "What do the people want? We want a democratic republic".

There was no violence but the situation was extremely tense, witnesses said.

Women with children in their arms were in the crowd and residents were throwing water from balconies overhead to cool down the demonstrators on a hot sunny day.

"The king is afraid of the people, that's why he has imposed a curfew," said Gaura Prasai, a 47 year-old housewife. "Unless we break the curfew, he is not going to give in. We will try to break it."

The gates of Narayanhity Palace, the king's city residence, were closed and an armoured car with a machine gun on top was on patrol. All shops on the usually busy Durbar Street leading to the palace were shuttered and guests were barred from leaving hotel premises.

"I can't even see a dog on the street," said Manohar Acharya, a resident of the New Road business district.

Unlike previous times when curfews were imposed, journalists too have been told to stay indoors. The ban came into effect at 2 a.m. (2015 GMT Wednesday) and will last until 8 p.m. (1415 GMT).

Diplomats, including ambassadors, and even government ministers were also not allowed outdoors. Police were carrying out emergency services.

At least eight people have been killed and hundreds wounded in police action against demonstrators since a seven-party alliance launched crippling protests against King Gyanendra 15 days ago to demand the restoration of multi-party democracy.

Tens of thousands have attended protests every day in Kathmandu, but many more have demonstrated in district towns. A general strike, part of the campaign, has prevented the movement of goods and people across the impoverished landlocked nation.

CURFEW DEFIED

The latest deaths came in the town of Chandragadi, 600 km east of Kathmandu, where security forces opened fire on protesters on Wednesday, killing two people. Witnesses said dozens of others were wounded and more might have died.

On Thursday, several hundred people took out a procession in the town of Bhaktapur, near Kathmandu, where a curfew had also been imposed, witnesses said. There was no violence.

The government freed the two top political prisoners in the country on Wednesday, but there was no other sign the king was considering meeting any of the demands of the alliance.

One of them, Madhav Kumar Nepal of the Communist Party of Nepal (UML), immediately called for continuing the campaign.

"The movement will continue in an effective and forceful manner," Nepal said. "We will continue until full sovereignty is returned to the people."

Analysts said the king needed to do more than freeing political prisoners.

"This is too little too late," said Lok Raj Baral, executive chairman of the Nepal Centre for Contemporary Studies, a private think tank.

"The arrests and release of political leaders are not significant. How the demands put up by the opposition are fulfilled will determine the course of events."

Gyanendra sacked the government and assumed full power in February 2005, vowing to crush a decade-old Maoist revolt in which more than 13,000 people have died.

He has offered to hold elections by April next year, but activists say he cannot be trusted and should immediately hand over power to an all-party government.

India, which shares a long, porous border with Nepal, is leading international pressure on the king to restore democracy.

A special envoy sent by Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh called on the king on Thursday, but there were no immediate details on what was discussed.

<http://www.alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/SP91172.htm>

Nepali police kill 3 protesters; king may relent

20 Apr 2006 17:48:48 GMT

Source: Reuters

(Adds U.N. rights investigators' statement, paragraphs 12-13)

By Gopal Sharma

KATHMANDU, April 20 (Reuters) - Nepali police opened fire to block tens of thousands of pro-democracy protesters marching into Kathmandu on Thursday to confront King Gyanendra, killing at least three people and wounding up to 100.

But there were signs the embattled monarch was looking for a way to end the showdown with a seven-party alliance spearheading a campaign against his rule, said an Indian envoy who visited him to urge a speedy reconciliation.

"I am hopeful that very shortly some sort of announcement will be made by him which will help considerably defuse the situation," Karan Singh, an Indian lawmaker, told reporters in New Delhi on his return from Kathmandu.

"Now the ball is squarely in the court of the king."

Officials confirmed that three people had been killed in police firing to enforce a strict curfew in the capital, a clampdown ordered to prevent protesters marching on the palace.

Over 100,000 people gathered at various suburbs around the capital's ring road and police opened fire with rubber bullets and live rounds at three or four places to push back the crowds, witnesses said. Army helicopters flying overhead appeared to be monitoring the crowds.

Three bodies with gunshot wounds and about 40 injured people were brought to the Kathmandu Model Hospital from the western suburb of Kalanki, doctors said.

Scores of other injured were taken to other hospitals. In all, about 100 people were wounded, witnesses said.

"Police opened indiscriminate fire," said Kundan Aryal, a human rights group volunteer who helped take wounded to the Model Hospital from Kalanki.

"They used batons and fired rubber and live bullets. They chased the fleeing protesters. It was a massive firing."

At least eight people had been killed previously and hundreds wounded in police action against demonstrators since the alliance launched crippling protests 15 days ago to demand restoration of multi-party democracy.

In Geneva, United Nations human rights investigators on Thursday condemned "excessive and deadly use of force" by Nepal's security forces against protesters and called for the government to exercise restraint.

In a joint statement, the five special rapporteurs also asked demonstrators to act peacefully, noting some had attacked police with stones and other projectiles.

A general strike has prevented the movement of goods and people across the impoverished and aid-dependent nation.

The parties had planned massive rallies on Thursday to bring the movement to a head, but the royalist government clamped a curfew to prevent people from going outdoors.

"So many people have come out on the street despite the curfew and crackdown," said Krishna Prasad Sitaula, a leader of the Nepali Congress, the largest party in the coalition.

"It's an indication that our movement has succeeded. Only the result has to be announced. We will continue this until the result comes in favour of the people."

The parties said the momentum would be kept up and a similar attempt to march into the city would be made on Friday.

KATHMANDU DESERTED

Tens of thousands protested in other parts of the landlocked kingdom, aid workers and activists said. An army officer said at least 26 people were wounded in the western town of Bardiya when troops opened fire to disperse protesters.

But the interior of Kathmandu, a city of 1.5 million people, was deserted except for police and troops on patrol.

The gates of Narayanhity Palace, the king's city residence, were closed and an armoured car with a machinegun was on patrol. All shops on the usually busy Durbar Street leading to the palace were shut, and guests in hotels were barred from leaving.

"I can't even see a dog on the street," said Manohar Acharya, a resident of the New Road business district.

Unlike previous curfews, journalists too were told to stay indoors. The ban took effect at 2 a.m. (2015 GMT Wednesday) and was extended until 3 a.m. on Friday (2115 GMT).

Diplomats, including ambassadors, and even government ministers were not allowed outdoors. Police were carrying out emergency services.

Gyanendra sacked the government and took full powers in February 2005, vowing to crush a decade-old Maoist revolt in which more than 13,000 people have died.

Gyanendra, who came to the throne after the 2001 palace massacre when his elder brother, Birendra, was killed by his own son, the Crown Prince Dipendra, is now under tremendous international pressure to restore democracy.

Singh, the envoy, said he had made India's position clear.

"Obviously, India is for democratisation, for the restoration of multi-party democracy and is deeply concerned over the difficulties that the people of Nepal are facing ... economic difficulties, political difficulties and a general breakdown of law and order, so all those concerns were very clearly expressed," he said. (Additional reporting by Y.P. Rajesh in New Delhi)

<http://www.asianews.it/view.php?l=en&art=5953>

20 April, 2006
NEPAL

Troops shoot on crowd, killing three

by Prakash Dubey

Soldiers opened fire on the crowd for the second day running. 14 people have been killed since the start of the strikes. The king today declared an 18-hour curfew .

Kathmandu (AsiaNews) – The 15th consecutive day of strikes against King Gyanendra in Kathmandu ended tragically with three dead and 40 wounded. Thousands of people gathered on the outskirts of the capital and entered the city, violating the day curfew. They were met by hundreds of police who fired to disperse the crowd. According to hospital sources, 12 injured people were in very critical condition.

Also yesterday, soldiers opened fire on demonstrators in Jhapa district in the east of the country, killing four people. Since the start of the protests, the death toll has risen to 14.

An eyewitness told AsiaNews that a crowd of 50,000 people was marching peacefully in the streets of Chandragarhi city yesterday afternoon, when soldiers opened fire. "There was no provocation from the demonstrators and when the soldiers opened fire, panic broke out."

Sandeep Kumar, a health worker said that nearly 200 people had been admitted to hospital. "Most of them have been wounded very grievously and 15 of them are in real danger. Bullets have pierced their vital organs. Only prayers and miracles can save them. I find it contradictory that the king should invite opposition leaders to talk while his soldiers open fire on the crowd."

Last week, King Gyanendra invited political parties to dialogue with a view to returning to a multi-party democracy, and he held talks with four former prime ministers: Krishna Prasad Bhattarai, Surya Bahadur Thapa, Lokendra Bahadur Chand and Marich Man Singh Shrestha. But Ramesh Bista, a local political observer, said the king's overtures cannot remedy the situation. "It is a useless but astute political move. The king wants to draw the sympathy of all the people who have been badly affected by the strikes and protests."

Meanwhile, the opposition has announced it will press ahead with protests and strikes today. Doctors, university professors and officials are joining the protests even if they know they may face repercussions at work. Today, the government declared an 18-hour curfew in Kathmandu and other areas to prevent today's rallies. Not even ministers and diplomats, including ambassadors, are allowed to go out, and security forces have the order to shoot on sight anyone violating the curfew.

This morning, demonstrators gathered on the outskirts of the city, saying they wanted to march onto the forbidden areas. A group of anti-riot police is lined up and watching them, but so far has shown no sign of moving to disperse the protesters.

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<http://www.startribune.com/722/story/383797.html>

AP Blog: Nepal Protests Vs. King Gyanendra

AP Correspondent Matthew Rosenberg is in Nepal to cover protests against King Gyanendra, who has grown increasingly unpopular since seizing power 14 months ago and is under intense pressure to restore democracy.

By The Associated Press, Associated Press

Last update: April 20, 2006 – 7:31 PM

Thursday, 8:30 p.m. local

KATMANDU, Nepal

Getting out of Kalanki turned out to be easier than getting in. I linked up there with a few photographers, and by the time we were ready to leave, it was after dark. The curfew meant there were no taxis on the road. Besides, an opposition strike that has been called along with the protests

means that any taxis that make it past an army or police checkpoint (an unlikely event) would probably be stoned by the angry mobs that are now roaming the edge of the city.

We beg the army and police for a ride back to our hotel. One army officer, a man who had repeatedly told me to leave the protest, now says: "You came here on your own, now you leave on your own."

But we are in luck - three of the photographers have motorcycles with them (how they got them through the curfew earlier in the day, I do not know). Four of our group get on two of the bikes and head for a nearby hotel where they are staying.

The remaining three of us get on one bike for the long ride back to our hotel. The only way we know to go is along the ring road, and as we set off, we can see burning tires ahead of us, and the road barricaded with logs and rocks.

It's a scene we encounter throughout our journey. Where there are no police, there are mobs angry enough to attack anyone they think is violating the opposition strike accompanying the protests.

As we approach each barricade, young men come running at us. I shout from the back of the bike "Press, Press!" and suddenly violent faces break into broad smiles. There are cheers and applause. Young men quickly clear a path for us through the flaming piles of tires and sticks blocking the road.

Only once do we get stones thrown at us, and thankfully they are off the mark. We can hear them slamming into the pavement behind us as we speed away.

The army and police checkpoints are less dramatic. Usually just a few police or soldiers standing on the side of the road. They wave us down as we pass, ask where we are going and then tell us to move on.

"It is very dangerous out here tonight," warns an army officer, who identifies himself as Mahindra.

Thursday, 6:30 p.m. local

KATMANDU, Nepal

I've managed to make my way through some muddy paths to get around the back of Katmandu's most violent protests in the past two weeks. The road is littered with bricks, stones, broken bottles. Hundreds of angry young man and three bonfires are between me and the police.

It's wild back here. There's screaming, shouting and chants calling for King Gyanendra's head. "Burn the crown, burn the crown!" chant a group of boys as they pile tires and sticks onto a bonfire.

Here's what I filed in our story out of Nepal today:

Witnesses said the shooting in Kalanki began when a senior police officer drew his pistol and shot a protester in the head, an act followed by gunfire from police and soldiers.

The security forces "aimed straight for the (protesters)," said Ankul Shresthra, a 28-year-old throwing bottles at police in Kalanki. Numerous witnesses confirmed his account, and protesters showed reporters fresh bullet casings.

Doctors at Katmandu's Model hospital said three people were killed in Kalanki, and that police took the bodies away. More than 40 people were in critical condition, most with head injuries. Thursday's shootings brought the death toll to 13 since the demonstrations began.

Hundreds more were reportedly injured around the city, including 13 police officers whose clearly exhausted colleagues were, by the end of the day, being forced against demonstrators by senior officers swatting them with rattan poles.

Thursday 5:30 p.m. local

KATMANDU, Nepal

After what really was an incredibly tense two-hour hike, I've made it to Kalanki. The place is wild. The road leading out of Katmandu - the center of the protest - is lined with bonfires, around which young men hurl bricks, rocks and bottles at police, who are firing tear gas and charging in with rattan poles, only to retreat back up the road.

The wisps of white tear gas vapor mingle with the black smoke of burning tires. It's a striking sight.

Hours earlier, police and soldiers used live ammunition on this protest, killing three people. I've walked miles to find out what happened.

But looking at the protests from behind police lines - bricks, rocks and bottles being showered upon us - I'm not even sure I can get over to the protesters side.

Thursday, April 20 4 p.m. local

KATMANDU, Nepal

We're walking straight up the ring road that skirts Katmandu, navigating rows of burning barricades and sporadic street battles between police and protesters. Thankfully, the police seem to be busy with the demonstrations to bother escorting us back to our hotel, as they have with most of the other foreign journalists that they have caught violating today's curfew.

On one street corner, 22-year-old G.R. Sharma, tells me he's not afraid of the police. "They are nothing. They are thugs for King Gyanendra," he says, smiling broadly.

Within seconds, a police van comes screaming down the road, and Shresthra takes off running into a side street.

Thursday, April 20, 3:30 p.m. local

KATMANDU, Nepal

Hearing that police and soldiers have fatally shot protesters in another part of the city, me and my two colleagues set off again on the back roads for a two-hour hike. We're headed for Kalanki, the center of the violence. We're going to try and make our way on back roads to avoid the police, but suspect we'll have to do the last half of the hike on the ring road - a route thick with police and army.

Thursday, April 20, 2:30 p.m. local

KATMANDU, Nepal

Sure enough, the protests has now degenerated into young men hurling bricks at police, who are responding with tear gas and baton charges. Each time the police fire off a cylinder of tear gas, a protester picks it back up and throws it at them. On the rooftops, thousands of supporters cheer and pour down buckets of water so the young men can wash the noxious vapor from their eyes.

Thursday, April 20 12:30 p.m. local

KATMANDU, Nepal

Myself and two colleagues have been walking up the ring road that skirts Katmandu - a route clearly inside the curfew zone - and we have not even been threatened with being shot. So clearly, the shoot-on-sight curfew does not apply to foreign journalists. Or Russian Buddhists. Or Dutch trekkers.

But we were hassled by the police, who tried to take us back to our hotel, which is looking increasingly like it's going to be far from the action. Luck and a bit of craftiness instead got them to drop us much closer to where we think the action will be, and after an hour of hiking through muddy back roads and dodging a few police who wanted to haul us away, we've ended up on the roof of a building with a clear view of the main street in Gangabu, a Katmandu neighborhood that has repeatedly been the flash point of violence since the demonstrations against King Gyanendra started more than two weeks ago.

Most of the other foreign journalists caught out on the roads were sent back to the Hyatt. In fact, we were forced to push our way past some police as colleagues of ours were down the road being shoved into their cars and ordered away from the scene by officers.

Thousands of protesters are already gathering on the street below us, blocked by a line of riot police from making it onto the ring road that skirts Katmandu.

Why a rooftop? Because it affords a clear view of the action for reporters, who, frankly, don't need to risk their lives by standing in the middle of a violent protest.

Thursday, April 20, 9 a.m. local

KATMANDU, Nepal

Another foreigner, this one a barrel-chested Dutch man. We spotted him walking up the ring road - deserted apart from three journalists and police and soldiers. With him, he had four porters carrying backpacks, bags and even a pot. He, however, wasn't carrying a thing. Traveling in true old-world style, heading out for the mountains.

"I am getting away from the city," he told us before marching off, his porters in tow.

Thursday, April 20 8 a.m. local

KATMANDU, Nepal

Woke up early, grabbed a quick breakfast, and then headed out with a few colleagues - safety in numbers - to check out the scene on the edge of the curfew zone.

We did, and among the first people we encountered were two Russians headed to a Buddhist monastery near our hotel. They'd been dropped off in front of the Hyatt by a special tour bus that was being allowed to make a loop of the hotels and airport.

Wednesday, April 19, 11 p.m. local

KATMANDU, Nepal

We're into the 15th day of protests and a general strike against the rule of King Gyanendra - the latest in a line of Hindu monarchs once regarded as god-kings in Nepal.

But those days appear to be fading fast. Two weeks of protests have echoed with chants of "Hang the King!" and Thursday's demonstration is supposed to be the big one - the day of reckoning when the opposition brings 100,000 people into the streets of Katmandu to show, once and for all, that king no longer has any popular support.

Of course, the government is trying to head off the protest. Tonight, it announced there will be a curfew from 2 a.m. until 8 p.m. Thursday.

Journalists here frantically tried to get curfew passes, which were readily available in the past. But this time - nada. Not even diplomats, like the U.S. Ambassador got one.

Obviously, we need to get out and report regardless of the curfew. So, much of the press corps has decamped to a Hyatt hotel on the edge of Katmandu. It's just outside the curfew zone, and we're hoping it'll provide a good base.

TUESDAY, April 11, 4:15 p.m., local

KATMANDU, Nepal

In Gangabu, on the outskirts of Katmandu, police and soldiers have been facing off against protesters for five days. Gunfire that we'd heard earlier in the neighborhood, it turns out, started after protesters tried to set fire to a senior police official's house. His security guards shot into the air to scare them off.

In the two hours since, the police have opened up with rubber bullets, allowing them to push the protesters back and move into the side streets, now littered with shards of glass and broken bricks.

Police are still battling holdouts holed up between the tightly packed three-and four-story buildings.

Walking down an alley, three injured civilians are rushed passed us, carried by medics and volunteers to ambulances on the main road. The lingering tear gas sting our eyes.

We see six police officers on a roof beating someone who's down and not getting up. They're kicking and whacking the victim with bamboo polls.

Further into the neighborhood, there's a rundown community clinic. Up the dark staircase, we find two rooms full of injured. One man, 21-year-old Avil Moktan, is lying on a gurney while doctors and medics pull a rubber bullet from his back and suture the baton gashes on his head.

All around us are angry people. They're promising more protests until King Gyanendra restores democracy.

TUESDAY, April 11, 2:30 p.m. local

KATMANDU, Nepal

Hundreds of police and soldiers are positioned on a main road in Katmandu's Gangabu neighborhood, facing off on the city outskirts against protesters hurling bricks from side streets. Burning tires, tear gas, occasional charges by riot police with shields and batons. Tense, to be sure, but manageable as long as you stay out of the range of the bricks.

A burst of gunfire sends hundreds of police and soldiers scurrying for cover. No one knows where the fire is coming from or what's being fired. Rubber bullets? Live ammunition? Not even the security forces know.

TUESDAY, April 11, 1 p.m. local

KATMANDU, Nepal

Tourists are biking around downtown Katmandu, the streets completely empty apart from well-armed police and soldiers enforcing a daytime curfew. As we drive past the seven of men and woman - all Westerners, all pedaling away - one of the guys grins broadly at me and waves.

TUESDAY, April 11, 11:55 a.m. local

KATMANDU, Nepal

The curfew in Katmandu was lifted for a few hours this morning, and throughout the city people poured out of their homes to stock up on supplies. Even amid the anger over the curfew, people seemed to want to soak in the freedom and try to enjoy themselves for a little while.

It's amazing how quickly the mood changes. The curfew's kicking back in at 12 p.m. - five minutes from now - and as we cruise down streets now largely deserted of people or traffic, we see police brandishing batons at stragglers who have not yet made it inside.

A middle-aged woman who stopped to pick up some dropped groceries is pushed along by an officer. A young man hanging out in an open doorway gets whacked by a cop's bamboo poll.

A soldier on patrol sees us and marches over, demanding to see our curfew pass, which allows us to move around the city freely. Unimpressed, he orders us to move on, waving the barrel of his assault rifle at us and then down the road.

MONDAY, April 10, 2 p.m. local

KATMANDU, Nepal

A group of Australian school girls are collecting their bags at Katmandu airport just as I'm arriving to cover the country's surprisingly quick descent into a full-blown crisis. And I thought the gaggle of Canadian retirees coming through immigration looked a bit out of place.

It's Monday afternoon, and protests against the royal dictatorship of King Gyanendra are into their fifth day. It doesn't seem like a good time for a two-week trekking tour of Nepal, where a decade-long communist insurgency has left nearly 13,000 people dead.

In recent days, three people have been shot dead by security forces who opened fire with live ammunition at stone-throwing protesters over the weekend. The dead include a bystander.

Three cities, including Katmandu, are under curfew.

And angry young men across the country are burning tires and hurling stones and broken bricks at police, who are firing tear gas and rubber bullets and charging in to beat them with batons.

On Saturday, some 25,000 protesters took over the southern town of Bharatnagar. They burned government buildings and started calling the place "the kingdom's first republic" before security forces regained control.

Dr. Vijay Sharma, a senior surgeon in Katmandu, told AP just hours before I arrived Monday that "unless the situation improves immediately, there are chances of civil war."

http://today.reuters.co.uk/news/newsArticle.aspx?type=worldNews&storyID=2006-04-21T083109Z_01_L1969978_RTRUKOC_0_UK-NEPAL.xml

Tyres burn in Nepal capital, protesters on street

Fri Apr 21, 2006 9:31 AM BST

By Gopal Sharma

KATHMANDU (Reuters) - Anti-monarchy protesters in Nepal burnt tyres and threw logs and barbed wire across the streets of the capital Kathmandu on Friday as a curfew imposed to prevent a march on King Gyanendra's palace came into force.

Black smoke rose from several places in the city of 1.5 million people as protesters, angry at the king's sacking of the government last year, tried to block the movement of police and troops.

The 11-hour curfew began at 9 a.m. (0315 GMT), but was only being enforced within the city limits. On the Ring Road surrounding Kathmandu, tens of thousands marched, waved party flags and chanted slogans demanding the king leave the country.

Riot police, troops with automatic weapons and armoured cars stood at major intersections to prevent protesters from entering the city.

On Thursday, police opened fired on tens of thousands of demonstrators trying march into the city from the outskirts. At least three people were killed and up to 100 injured.

Political parties have vowed to try to march to the palace on Friday.

"So many people have come out on the street despite the curfew and crackdown," said Krishna Prasad Sitaula, a leader of the Nepali Congress, the country's largest political party.

"It's an indication that our movement has succeeded. Only the result has to be announced. We will continue this until the result comes in favour of the people."

Gyanendra sacked the government and took full powers in February 2005, vowing to crush a decade-old Maoist revolt in which more than 13,000 people have died.

BALL IN KING'S COURT

A seven-party alliance has been agitating since April 6 to force Gyanendra to restore multi-party democracy. In all, 12 people have been killed and hundreds wounded in police action against protesters since then.

He has vowed to hold elections by April 2007, but the alliance says he is not to be trusted.

Local reports say the king is likely to appoint a former prime minister, Krishna Prasad Bhattarai, to the post again in an effort to appease the protesters.

But Bhattarai has apparently indicated he will only take the position if it is acceptable to the seven-party alliance.

Thursday's crackdown on the protesters appeared to have focussed even more anger on the monarch.

"This way the king cannot rule," said Goma Parajuli, a woman selling vegetables from a basket as residents flocked to stalls and markets in the capital to stock up on food.

Some protesters taunted armed police who stood nearby.

"You live on the people's taxes," shouted one man. "You can't kill the people."

Away from Kathmandu, demonstrations involving 100,000 people and above have also been staged in district towns, bringing the landlocked kingdom to a standstill.

An Indian envoy who visited the king on Thursday said the monarch would try to defuse the situation.

"Now the ball is squarely in the court of the king," Karan Singh, an Indian lawmaker, told reporters in New Delhi on his return from Kathmandu.

Nepal imposes new curfew, protests continue

ISN SECURITY WATCH (Friday, 21 April 2006: 11.31 CET) – The Nepali government imposed a new 11-hour curfew in the capital Kathmandu on Friday after a day of mass protests on Thursday.

City residents hurried to stock up on essential supplies after the curfew was lifted briefly on Friday morning. The strictures, including a shoot-on-sight order, were re-imposed at 9am as the royal government sought to prevent an outbreak of popular protests in the city itself.

Around 115,000 attended mass rallies on Thursday which were held on the edge of the city limits after the earlier imposition of an 18-hour curfew in Kathmandu.

Security forces killed three protestors and wounded over 100 in a series of clashes throughout the kingdom on Thursday. In the capital, riot police successfully blocked demonstrators from marching on the center of the city.

A spokesperson for the office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ian Martin, told CNN on Friday morning: "It's clear that [the protests] will continue today as well [...] We're already getting reports of numbers of people gathering at some of the same places as yesterday."

Around 200 demonstrators had gathered in the Kalanki district, which has been a focal point for protests, on Friday morning. The district lies just outside of Kathmandu.

Seven opposition parties have united for a fortnight of protests that have seen a general strike and repeated clashes between marchers in burgeoning protest rallies and security forces.

King Gyanendra has ruled as absolute monarch since 1 February 2005 when he dissolved the democratically-elected government for the second time since assuming the throne in June 2001.

Protests continue in Nepal

21apr06

PROTESTERS in Nepal burned tyres and threw logs and barbed wire across the streets of the capital Kathmandu today as a curfew imposed to prevent a march on King Gyanendra's palace came into force.

Black smoke rose from several places in the city of 1.5 million people as anti-monarchy protesters, angry at the king's sacking of the Government last year, tried to block the movement of police and troops.

The protests started two weeks ago but an Indian envoy said he hoped there would be a "major announcement" by the end of the day to help bring the crisis to an end.

"I do not want to pre-empt or predict what the announcement may be," envoy Karan Singh said in New Delhi. "But we are hoping that there will be some major step in reinstating democracy. I think it will defuse the crisis."

The 11-hour curfew in Kathmandu began at 9am (1315 AEST), but was only being enforced within the city limits. On the Ring Road surrounding Kathmandu, tens of thousands marched, waved party flags and chanted slogans demanding the king leave the country.

Riot police, troops with automatic weapons and armoured cars stood at major intersections to prevent protesters from entering the city.

Yesterday, police opened fired on tens of thousands of demonstrators trying to march into the city from the outskirts. At least three people were killed and up to 100 injured.

Political parties have vowed to try to march to the palace today.

"So many people have come out on the street despite the curfew and crackdown," said Krishna Prasad Sitaula, a leader of the Nepali Congress, the country's largest political party.

"It's an indication that our movement has succeeded. Only the result has to be announced. We will continue this until the result comes in favour of the people."

Gyanendra sacked the Government and took full powers in February 2005, vowing to crush a decade-old Maoist revolt in which more than 13,000 people have died.

A seven-party alliance has been agitating since April 6 to force Gyanendra to restore multi-party democracy.

In all, 12 people have been killed and hundreds wounded in police action against protesters since then.

The king has vowed to hold elections by April 2007, but the alliance says he is not to be trusted.

Local reports say the king is likely to appoint a former Prime Minister, Krishna Prasad Bhattarai, to the post again in an effort to appease the protesters.

http://today.reuters.com/news/articlenews.aspx?type=worldNews&storyid=2006-04-21T120508Z_01_SP67336_RTRUKOC_0_US-NEPAL.xml

Nepal king to address nation as protests mount

Fri Apr 21, 2006 8:05 AM ET

By Gopal Sharma

KATHMANDU (Reuters) - Nepal's King Gyanendra will address the nation at 7 p.m. (9:15 a.m. EDT) on Friday, state television said, amid widespread speculation that he would hand over political power to an all-party government.

After more than two weeks of violent street protests demanding he restore democracy, the embattled monarch has come under tremendous international pressure to relent.

At least 12 people have been killed and hundreds wounded in the pro-democracy campaign, which was launched on April 6.

On Friday, protesters burned tires and threw logs and barbed wire across the streets of the capital, Kathmandu, as a curfew imposed to prevent a march on the palace came into force.

Black smoke rose from several places in the city of 1.5 million people as protesters, angry at the king's sacking of the government last year, tried to block movement of police and troops.

Protesters burned a government revenue office on the outskirts of the capital and fought street battles with police elsewhere in the city. There was no word of serious casualties.

The 11-hour curfew in Kathmandu began at 9 a.m. (11 p.m. EDT), but was only being enforced within the city limits. On the ring road outside, tens of thousands marched, waved party flags and chanted slogans demanding the king leave the country.

Riot police, troops with automatic weapons and armored cars stood at major intersections to bar entry to protesters.

On Thursday, police opened fire on tens of thousands of demonstrators trying to march into the city. At least three people were killed and up to 100 injured.

"So many people have come out on the street despite the curfew and crackdown," said Krishna Prasad Sitaula, a leader of the Nepali Congress, the country's largest political party.

"It's an indication that our movement has succeeded. Only the result has to be announced. We will continue this until the result comes in favor of the people."

Gyanendra sacked the government and took full powers in February 2005, vowing to crush a decade-old Maoist revolt in which more than 13,000 people have died.

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But Bhattarai has apparently indicated he will only take the position if it is acceptable to the seven-party alliance.

Thursday's crackdown on the protesters appeared to have focused even more anger on the monarch.

"This way the king cannot rule," said Goma Parajuli, a woman selling vegetables from a basket as residents flocked to stalls and markets in the capital to stock up on food.

Some protesters taunted armed police who stood nearby.

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Away from Kathmandu, demonstrations involving 100,000 people and above have also been staged in district towns, bringing the landlocked kingdom to a standstill.

[http://www.plenglish.com/article.asp?ID=%7B27FF49ED-5150-48A0-ACCC-C3093E3877C3%7D\)&language=EN](http://www.plenglish.com/article.asp?ID=%7B27FF49ED-5150-48A0-ACCC-C3093E3877C3%7D)&language=EN)

Teetering Nepal King Drags Down 15

Kathmandu, Apr 21 (Prensa Latina) The Nepali monarchy extended the emergency state Friday in Kathmandu, Nepal's capital, and surrounding areas to avert pro-democracy demonstrations, in which 15 people have been killed by anti-riot police in the past days.

On its second consecutive day, the measure warns people to remain home or risk being shot by the police.

Meanwhile, five people died and hundreds were injured Thursday when the police opened fire at several rallies in the capital and other areas.

So far 15 Nepali activists have been killed during the 16-day anti-King Gyanendra protests to force the monarch to end his absolute rule and restore democracy.

A statement from the seven party opposition alliance, the strike

organizer, said that protests will continue despite suppression and called the population to go on.

http://today.reuters.co.uk/news/newsArticle.aspx?type=topNews&storyID=2006-04-21T142007Z_01_L1969978_RTRUKOC_0_UK-NEPAL.xml

Nepal king says handing power to the people

Fri Apr 21, 2006 3:20 PM BST

By Gopal Sharma

KATHMANDU (Reuters) - Nepal's King Gyanendra, facing sweeping anti-monarchy protests, said on Friday he was handing over political power to the people and asked a seven-party alliance to choose a new prime minister.

There was no immediate reaction from the parties which have spearheaded more than two weeks of violent protests to force the restoration of democracy.

But the king appeared to rule out any change of the constitution to curb his powers, which has been one of their demands.

"Executive power of the kingdom of Nepal, which was in our safekeeping, shall from this day be returned to the people," he said in an address to the nation in the Nepali language.

"We ask the seven-party alliance to recommend the name for the post of prime minister at the earliest for the constitution of a council of ministers, which will bear the responsibility of governing the country in accordance with the constitution."

Looking serious and dressed in a Nepali cap and black jacket, Gyanendra said he was making the move "in keeping with the tradition of the Shah dynasty to reign in accordance with the popular will, in the greater interest of the nation and the people, and our unflinching commitment towards constitutional monarchy and multi-party democracy".

The reactions of local residents were mixed.

"The king has given all he can," said Bobby Singh, a pilot with Royal Nepal Airlines. "Now the ball is in the seven-party alliance's court."

Prominent women's rights activist Prabha Thakar said: "It's the best news in a while. It's not the be-all and end-all, but at this point in time, I think there is definitely a light at the end of the tunnel."

The constitution issue was troubling, said Uttam Ghimire, a teacher. "I don't think the seven political parties will agree with him because their main demand is a constituent assembly and he has not addressed this demand."

Burnt TYRES

At least 12 people have been killed and hundreds wounded in the pro-democracy campaign, which was launched on April 6.

On Friday, protesters burnt tyres and threw logs and barbed wire across the streets of the capital, Kathmandu, as a curfew imposed to prevent a march on the palace came into force.

Black smoke rose from several places in the city of 1.5 million people as protesters, angry at the king's sacking of the government last year, tried to block movement of police and troops.

Protesters burnt a government revenue office on the outskirts of the capital and fought street battles with police elsewhere in the city. There was no word of serious casualties.

The curfew in Kathmandu began at 9 a.m. (4:15 a.m. British time) and was to continue until midnight (1815 GMT), but was only being enforced within the city limits. On the ring road outside, tens of thousands marched, waved party flags and chanted slogans demanding the king leave the country.

Riot police, troops with automatic weapons and armoured cars stood at major intersections to bar protesters planning to march on the palace.

On Thursday, police opened fired on tens of thousands of demonstrators trying to enter the city. At least three people were killed and up to 100 injured.

Gyanendra sacked the government and took full powers in February 2005, vowing to crush a decade-old Maoist revolt in which more than 13,000 people have died.

U.S. ambassador James Moriarty, speaking to Reuters Television just two hours before the address, said the king had no choice but to relent to the parties' demands.

"If he doesn't do that, I think the monarchy will not last and ... we are going to see a revolution inside Nepal.

"It would mean wider chaos and it would mean a good chance for the Maoist insurgents to take over this country."

The rebels have a loose alliance with the political parties and have vowed to join the mainstream if there is a representative government in Kathmandu.

<http://www.couriermail.news.com.au/story/0,20797,18891493-954,00.html>

Opponents suspicious of King's plan

By Gopal Sharma in Kathmandu

April 22, 2006

This article from : Reuters

NEPAL'S King Gyanendra said overnight after weeks of violent anti-monarchy protests he would restore political power to the people but the largest party said he had not gone far enough and vowed more demonstrations.

At least 12 people have been killed and hundreds wounded in police action against protesters since a seven-party alliance launched a campaign on April 6 to demand restoration of multi-party democracy.

King Gyanendra sought to ease the crisis overnight, announcing in a national address in the Nepali language that he would give the alliance the power to name a prime minister.

"Executive power of the kingdom of Nepal, which was in our safekeeping, shall from this day be returned to the people," said the king, looking serious and dressed in a Nepali cap and black jacket.

"We ask the seven-party alliance to recommend the name for the post of prime minister at the earliest for the constitution of a council of ministers, which will bear the responsibility of governing the country in accordance with the constitution."

The King appeared to rule out any change of the constitution to curb his own powers, which has been a primary demand of the political parties. They have said elections to a constituent assembly, which would make such changes, was critical.

Krishna Prasad Sitaula, a spokesman for the Nepali Congress, a key constituent of the alliance, said the king had not "addressed the road map of the protest movement."

"Our protest campaign will continue," he said.

The parties were to give a joint response later, possibly on Saturday.

King Gyanendra sacked the government and took full powers in February 2005, vowing to crush a decade-old Maoist revolt in which more than 13,000 people have died.

Maoist rebels, who have a loose alliance with the seven-party alliance, have insisted on a new constitution prepared by a constituent assembly as a precondition to joining the mainstream.

King Gyanendra, who came to the throne after the 2001 palace massacre when his elder brother, Birendra, was killed by his own son, the Crown Prince Dipendra, has been under tremendous international pressure to restore democracy.

The European Union and India both welcomed the king's pledge to hand over power.

U.S. ambassador James Moriarty, speaking to Reuters Television just two hours before the address, said the king had no choice but to relent to the parties' demands.

"If he doesn't do that, I think the monarchy will not last and ... we are going to see a revolution inside Nepal."

The White House urged Nepal's political parties to act quickly and form a government in response to King Gyanendra's vow to restore political power to the people.

"We are pleased that King Gyanendra's message today made clear that sovereignty resides with the people of Nepal," said Frederick Jones, spokesman for the White House National Security Council.

Yesterday, protesters burned tyres and threw logs and barbed wire across the streets of the capital, Kathmandu, as a curfew imposed to prevent a march on the palace took effect.

Black smoke rose from several places in the city of 1.5 million people as protesters tried to block movement of police and troops. Protesters burned a government revenue office on the outskirts of the capital and battled with police elsewhere in the city. There was no word of serious casualties.

The curfew in Kathmandu began at 9am (1315 AEST) and was to continue until midnight (0415 AEST), but was only being enforced within the city limits. On the ring road outside, tens of thousands marched, waved party flags and chanted slogans demanding the king leave the country.

Riot police, troops with automatic weapons and armoured cars stood at major intersections to bar protesters planning to march on the palace.

On Thursday, police opened fire on tens of thousands of demonstrators trying to enter the city. At least three people were killed and up to 100 injured.

The reactions of local residents to the king's address were mixed.

"The king has given all he can," said Bobby Singh, a pilot with Royal Nepal Airlines. "Now the ball is in the seven-party alliance's court."

Prominent women's rights activist Prabha Thakar said: "It's the best news in a while. It's not the be-all and end-all but at this point in time, I think there is definitely a light at the end of the tunnel."

<http://www.tsr.ch/tsr/index.html?siteSect=200002&sid=6649663&cKey=1145722278000>

Népal: manifestation bravant le couvre-feu réprimée brutalement

22.04.2006 18:11

KATMANDOU - Une centaine de personnes ont été blessées à Katmandou où la police a tiré sur des manifestants pro-démocratie. Les partis d'opposition et les rebelles maoïstes ont rejeté des concessions proposées par le roi Gyanendra.

Plus de deux semaines après le début du mouvement de contestation, 200 à 300'000 personnes ont défié le couvre-feu et la police anti-émeutes lors de cette nouvelle journée de protestation dans la capitale népalaise.

Les manifestants sont allés samedi plus loin dans le centre de Katmandou qu'à aucun autre moment depuis le début du mouvement de protestation contre le roi il y a plus de deux semaines. La police a ouvert le feu à au moins deux endroits, à un kilomètre seulement du palais royal, pour disperser les manifestants.

Cent cinquante personnes ont été blessées, ont rapporté les partis politiques. Au moins une centaine de manifestants ont été admis à l'hôpital avec des blessures provoquées, souvent à la tête, par des balles, des tirs de gaz lacrymogènes ou des coups, a déclaré le Dr Sarita Pandey, du Kathmandu Model Hospital. Douze d'entre eux étaient dans un état critique, a-t-il ajouté.

Les manifestants ont brûlé des pneus et jeté des pierres avant de marcher vers le centre de Katmandou. "Nous devons faire partir le roi du Népal. C'est ce que nous exigeons", s'est exclamé un manifestant, un sympathisant des maoïstes qui a requis l'anonymat.

De très nombreux habitants s'étaient massés le long des artères pour encourager les protestataires et les asperger d'eau afin de les aider à supporter la chaleur, bravant le couvre-feu avec ordre de tirer à vue de nouveau imposé samedi à Katmandou, de midi à 20h00 (08h45 à 16h45 en Suisse). Mais la pluie qui tombait dans l'après-midi a obligé la foule à se mettre à l'abri.

"Nous ne pouvons en aucun cas nous rallier au gouvernement et la grève générale et les manifestations pacifiques vont se poursuivre", a averti l'alliance des principaux partis politiques de l'opposition.

Les maoïstes, qui combattent le pouvoir depuis 10 ans dans une guérilla ayant fait 12'500 morts, ont eux aussi opposé une fin de non-recevoir à ce qu'ils ont qualifié de "conspiration féodale".

Le roi Gyanendra, qui s'est arrogé en février 2005 les pleins pouvoirs, avait annoncé vendredi qu'il voulait rendre le pouvoir au peuple et avait demandé aux partis de désigner un premier ministre.
(ATS)

<http://www.asianews.it/view.php?l=en&art=5971>

22 April, 2006

NEPAL

Police fire on crowds as protests rage

by Prakash Dubey

Dozens of people have been wounded. The opposition described the king's overture yesterday as "ambiguous" and the "umpteenth attempt to fool" the people. More than 200,000 people are marching on the royal palace, in defiance of the daytime curfew. Police are prepared to prevent their march on the royal palace that is protected by tanks and helicopters. Fear and discouragement prevail among the people.

Kathmandu (AsiaNews) – Yesterday's overture by King Gyanendra to "restore power to the people" has not served to placate tension in Nepal. According to latest reports, around 200,000 people are out on the streets protesting against the monarchy, defying the daytime curfew that expired at midday (local time). It is feared that they are headed for the royal palace in Kathmandu, protected by tanks and helicopters. The police, who had orders to shoot on sight, opened fire on the protesters. According to provisional tolls, there are around 80 people injured, including 12 with critical injuries.

Anti-riot police have formed a cordon around the centre of Kathmandu. Many protesters were brandishing tree branches and communist flags.

For more than two weeks, the capital has been the venue of huge rallies organized by an alliance of seven main opposition parties (SPA). Just this morning, the alliance officially rejected the king's offer and pledged to go ahead with the protests. In a joint statement, they said: "In his proclamation, the king did not address issues raised in the opposition's roadmap and in the agreement reached with the Maoist rebels." Shortly beforehand, the former premier Girija Prasad Koirala – chairman of the largest party of the alliance, the Nepali Congress – had said: "The declaration of the king does not make sense." On TV last night, the monarch invited the opposition to form a government and to appoint a prime minister.

Gyanendra seized full powers on 1 February 2005, justifying the decision by citing the need to stop the revolt of Maoist rebels that has claimed around 15,000 victims since 1996. The opposition is

calling for the reopening of Parliament, closed since 2002, for the creation of a multi-party government and for elections for a Constituent Assembly.

Meanwhile, anxiety is high in Kathmandu. Indra Kishore, a fruit vendor, did not dare to open his shop today because of “the fury of the protests”. Kishore, with a note of desperation in his voice, said: “Even if the SPA leaders had decided to form the government, the agitating masses would not have approved and violence would have proliferated. I can’t predict what this country’s destiny is. Perhaps more curfews and violence?”

Reactions from politicians reveal that they cannot stomach Gyanendra’s “arrogance”. “He is behaving like a victor and showing magnanimity by giving power to the people,” said Ram Ekbal Choudhary, a human rights activist. “He has lost the bloody battle he waged against the people 14 months ago. He should now rather seek mercy from the people; only then will they allow him to live in peace.”

Opposition representatives said the initiatives of the king were too ambiguous.

Sher Bahadur Deuba, of the Nepali Congress, said he was “skeptical about the honesty of the king.” He added: “How power will be transferred to the people is not clear.” Subash Nemwang of the Communist Party of Nepal, described Gyanendra’s move as “yet another attempt by the king to fool the people and save the regime”

<http://www.channel4.com/news/content/news-storypage.jsp?id=242276>

Nepali police open fire on protestors

Last Modified: 22 Apr 2006

Source: ITN

Nepali police have shot and injured anti-monarchy protestors as tens of thousands defied a curfew in Kathmandu.

Witnesses say that at least eight people were wounded by gunfire, while others suffered from tear gas injuries.

Truckloads of armed police trying to hold huge numbers of demonstrators back from the centre of the Nepali capital opened fire in two places, dispersing crowds which later re-grouped.

On Friday, in the face of increasing civil unrest, King Gyanendra broadcast to the nation offering to share power with Nepal's seven-party alliance.

But former Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala refused to co-operate, saying the proclamation had no meaning, and protestors made it clear they rejected the King's offer.

At least 12 people have been killed and hundreds injured since protests began on April 6.

Demonstrators burned tyres and threw logs onto the streets of the city over anger at the sacking of the government last year by King Gyanendra.

On Thursday 20 April, three people were killed when police opened fire on demonstrators trying march into the city from the outskirts.

An 11-hour curfew was introduced within the city limits where riot police, armed troops and armoured cars lined major junctions to stop protesters entering.

King Gyanendra sacked the government and took full powers in February 2005, vowing to crush a decade-old Maoist revolt in which more than 13,000 people have died.

He has vowed to hold elections by April 2007, but the Nepali Congress, the country's largest political party, said that offer was not enough.

http://in.today.reuters.com/news/NewsArticle.aspx?type=topNews&storyID=2006-04-23T105050Z_01_NOOTR_RTRJONC_0_India-246018-2.xml

Nepal troops impose curfew as more protests planned

Sun Apr 23, 2006 10:58 AM IST

KATHMANDU (Reuters) - Nepali soldiers and police enforced a daytime curfew in the capital Kathmandu on Sunday, with orders to shoot to kill to prevent a planned march by anti-monarchy protesters to the palace of King Gyanendra.

Riot police carrying shields and batons fanned out across the city, backed by troops wielding submachineguns and automatic rifles, and people rushed home through streets littered with burnt tyres and smouldering logs placed to block the troops.

Small groups of protesters gathered on the outskirts of the city before the curfew took effect, and political parties said they planned to defy the curfew and march towards the centre later, on the 18th consecutive day of protests.

Over 100,000 people broke the curfew to enter the capital from the outskirts on Saturday and police opened fire in at least two places to beat them back. Just a kilometre from the palace, they repeatedly fired teargas at protesters.

At least 150 people were wounded in the police action and a stampede that broke out when the marchers were dispersed, witnesses and political activists said.

Sunday's curfew -- the latest in a string of restrictions to try to halt protests -- began at 9 a.m. (0315 GMT) and would last until 8 p.m. (1415 GMT), state radio and television announced.

On Friday, King Gyanendra offered to hand over executive power to a seven-party alliance that has led more than two weeks of protests, but the parties rejected the overture.

He did not address a key demand of the parties and protesters -- that the constitution be changed to curb his powers. That is also a demand of Maoist rebels who control vast swathes of the countryside and entered a loose alliance with political parties last year to curb the monarch's power.

"The king is looking for a safe landing, but what he has offered is not enough," said Naresh Thapa, a 30-year-old driver wearing a blue baseball cap and standing with a group of protesters in western Kathmandu before the curfew took effect.

Using a special constitutional provision, the king sacked the government and took full powers in February 2005, vowing to crush a decade-long Maoist revolt in which more than 13,000 people have died.

Political parties also want parliament, dissolved in 2002, to be revived and the army -- which is loyal to the king -- put under its control.

The seven-party alliance has been agitating since April 6 to force Gyanendra to restore multi-party democracy. At least 12 people have been killed and hundreds wounded in police action against protesters since then.

The impoverished kingdom has been virtually at a standstill with the movement of goods and people blocked by a general strike and crippling street protests across the nation.

<http://www.heraldnewsdaily.com/stories/news-00180101.html>

Nepal protesters defy curfew

Staff and agencies

23 April, 2006

By Simon Denyer and Gopal Sharma 12 minutes ago

KATHMANDU - Thousands of protesters defied a daytime curfew in the Nepali capital on Sunday, chanting slogans against the king on the 18th consecutive day of protests.

At least three people were injured when police opened fire on one group of protesters in an eastern suburb of Kathmandu, witnesses said, although they were not sure if live rounds or rubber bullets were used.

King Gyanendra's offer on Friday to hand over power to an alliance of seven political parties has failed to quell the demonstrations against his rule, if anything emboldening the protesters still further.

A movement which started out with the aim of restoring democracy has, for some of its participants at least, more radical goals.

"Police and soldiers, you are our brothers -- shoot Gyanendra," one group chanted at rows of padded and helmeted riot police wielding sticks and shields.

Behind the police, soldiers in green camouflage uniforms gripped submachine guns and automatic rifles, with orders to shoot to kill if the crowd broke through the police ranks and barbed wire barricade.

"We will burn the crown and we will run the country," the crowds chanted. "Gyanendra, thief, leave the country."

Sunday's protests were largely confined to the ring road surrounding the capital. Although the road lies within the curfew zone, large stretches are in the hands of the protesters, with burning logs and tires blocking access to security forces.

In the north of the city, a group of protesters carried a wooden stretcher with an effigy of a dead Gyanendra, ostensibly on its way to cremation.

Others hung a rat from electricity wires, a banner hanging from its body saying "Gyanendra is dead, God is great." In a country where many people traditionally revered the monarch as a Hindu god, the sentiments break a centuries-old taboo.

On Saturday more than 100,000 people broke into the city center from the outskirts and police opened fire in at least two places to beat them back. Just a kilometer (half a mile) from the palace, they repeatedly fired teargas at protesters.

At least 150 people were wounded in the police action and a stampede that broke out when the marchers were dispersed, witnesses and political activists said.

Sunday's demonstrations seemed more peaceful, with the crowd mostly content to chant slogans and the police and army content to watch, but determined to block their way into the city center.

The seven-party alliance which has led the protests has rejected Gyanendra's offer to hand over executive power to a prime minister of their choosing.

The parties do not trust the king, and want the constitution to be changed to curb his powers. That is also a key demand of Maoist rebels who control much of the countryside and entered a loose alliance with the parties last year against the king.

"The king is looking for a safe landing, but what he has offered is not enough," said Naresh Thapa, a 30-year-old driver wearing a blue baseball cap.

Using a special constitutional provision, the king sacked the government and took full powers in February 2005, vowing to crush a decade-long Maoist revolt in which more than 13,000 people have died.

Given the mood on the streets the parties are wary of being seen to compromise with the monarch. They want parliament, dissolved in 2002, to be revived and the army -- which is loyal to the king -- put under its control.

The invisible hand of the Maoists may also be fuelling and radicalizing the protests, analysts say.

The seven-party alliance has been agitating since April 6 to force Gyanendra to restore multi-party democracy. At least 12 people have been killed and hundreds wounded in police action against protesters since then.

The impoverished kingdom has been virtually at a standstill with the movement of goods and people blocked by a general strike and crippling street protests across the nation.

(Additional reporting by Raju Gopalakrishnan)

http://za.today.reuters.com/news/newsArticle.aspx?type=topNews&storyID=2006-04-23T105337Z_01_ALL330167_RTRIDST_0_OZATP-NEPAL-20060423.XML&archived=False

Nepal protesters defy curfew, call for republic

Sun Apr 23, 2006 12:52 PM GMT

By Simon Denyer and Gopal Sharma

KATHMANDU (Reuters) - Thousands of protesters defied a daytime curfew in the Nepali capital on Sunday, chanting slogans against the king on the 18th consecutive day of protests.

At least three people were injured when police opened fire on one group of protesters in an eastern suburb of Kathmandu, witnesses said, although they were not sure if live rounds or rubber bullets were used.

King Gyanendra's offer on Friday to hand over power to an alliance of seven political parties has failed to quell the demonstrations against his rule, if anything emboldening the protesters still further.

A movement which started out with the aim of restoring democracy has, for some of its participants at least, more radical goals.

"Police and soldiers, you are our brothers -- shoot Gyanendra," one group chanted at rows of padded and helmeted riot police wielding sticks and shields.

Behind the police, soldiers in green camouflage uniforms gripped submachine guns and automatic rifles, with orders to shoot to kill if the crowd broke through the police ranks and barbed wire barricade.

"We will burn the crown and we will run the country," the crowds chanted. "Gyanendra, thief, leave the country."

Sunday's protests were largely confined to the ring road surrounding the capital. Although the road lies within the curfew zone, large stretches are in the hands of the protesters, with burning logs and tyres blocking access to security forces.

In the north of the city, a group of protesters carried a wooden stretcher with an effigy of a dead Gyanendra, ostensibly on its way to cremation.

Others hung a rat from electricity wires, a banner hanging from its body saying "Gyanendra is dead, God is great". In a country where many people traditionally revered the monarch as a Hindu god, the sentiments break a centuries-old taboo.

PARTIES WARY OF KING

On Saturday more than 100,000 people broke into the city centre from the outskirts and police opened fire in at least two places to beat them back. Just a kilometre (half a mile) from the palace, they repeatedly fired teargas at protesters.

At least 150 people were wounded in the police action and a stampede that broke out when the marchers were dispersed, witnesses and political activists said.

Sunday's demonstrations seemed more peaceful, with the crowd mostly content to chant slogans and the police and army content to watch, but determined to block their way into the city centre.

The seven-party alliance which has led the protests has rejected Gyanendra's offer to hand over executive power to a prime minister of their choosing.

The parties do not trust the king, and want the constitution to be changed to curb his powers. That is also a key demand of Maoist rebels who control much of the countryside and entered a loose alliance with the parties last year against the king.

"The king is looking for a safe landing, but what he has offered is not enough," said Naresh Thapa, a 30-year-old driver wearing a blue baseball cap.

Using a special constitutional provision, the king sacked the government and took full powers in February 2005, vowing to crush a decade-long Maoist revolt in which more than 13,000 people have died.

Given the mood on the streets the parties are wary of being seen to compromise with the monarch. They want parliament, dissolved in 2002, to be revived and the army -- which is loyal to the king -- put under its control.

The invisible hand of the Maoists may also be fuelling and radicalising the protests, analysts say.

The seven-party alliance has been agitating since April 6 to force Gyanendra to restore multi-party democracy. At least 12 people have been killed and hundreds wounded in police action against protesters since then.

The impoverished kingdom has been virtually at a standstill with the movement of goods and people blocked by a general strike and crippling street protests across the nation.

<http://www.liberation.fr/page.php?Article=377129#>

Offensive maoïste au Népal

Les rebelles maoïstes ont lancé une attaque contre une ville à l'est du pays • A Katmandou, l'opposition appelle de nouveau à manifester mardi contre le roi.

lundi 24 avril 2006 (Liberation.fr - 13:01)

L'ambassade des Etats-Unis à Katmandou a demandé lundi aux familles des diplomates en poste et à certains membres du personnel de quitter le Népal. Le pays est secoué depuis plus de deux semaines par de violentes manifestations contre le roi Gyanendra, qui a pris les pleins pouvoirs le 1er février 2005.

Plusieurs centaines de rebelles maoïstes ont lancé lundi une offensive à Chautara, dans l'Est du pays. «Il semble qu'il s'agisse d'une offensive assez importante, mais nous n'avons aucun détail. Les autorités locales ont demandé le soutien d'hélicoptères et nous avons dépêché des renforts», a déclaré un haut fonctionnaire ayant requis l'anonymat.

Cette reprise de l'action des maoïstes – engagée dans une guérilla contre la monarchie qui a fait 12500 morts en dix ans – intervient à la veille d'une nouvelle manifestation à l'appel des sept principaux partis d'opposition. Ceux-ci avaient lancé le 6 avril, en accord avec les rebelles, un appel à la grève générale illimitée accompagnée de manifestations quotidiennes, souvent violentes. Ils réclament le rétablissement de la démocratie pluraliste, le despote ayant, lors de sa prise de pouvoir en 2005, instauré l'état d'urgence, suspendu les droits fondamentaux et limogé le gouvernement de coalition. Vendredi, Gyanendra a tenté de désamorcer le conflit en proposant aux partis d'opposition de nommer un Premier ministre. Une solution immédiatement rejetée, ces derniers réclamant l'abolition des pouvoirs du roi et l'instauration d'une république, ou d'une monarchie à l'anglaise. Au moins quatorze personnes ont été tuées et des centaines d'autres ont été blessées par des tirs et charges des forces de l'ordre depuis le début de la mobilisation.

<http://www.liberation.fr/page.php?Article=377066#>

100 000 opposants au roi du Népal de nouveau dans la rue

par Pierre PRAKASH

QUOTIDIEN : lundi 24 avril 2006

à Katmandou

Près de 300 personnes ont été blessées, ce week-end à Katmandou, lors des manifestations antimonarchiques qui se poursuivent malgré la proposition du roi Gyanendra de rendre le pouvoir aux partis. L'opposition a rejeté son offre et réclame à la place la réouverture du Parlement, afin de préparer l'élection d'une Assemblée constituante. Samedi, 100 000 manifestants ont encore défié le couvre-feu, provoquant la riposte des forces de l'ordre qui ont tiré sur la foule.

<http://www.indianexpress.com/printerFriendly/3071.html>

Gyanendra silent, Nepal-7 fears mob may take over

Yubaraj Ghimire

Posted online: Monday, April 24, 2006 at 0000 hrs IST

KATHMANDU, APRIL 23

As protests continued in Nepal for the 18th straight day, the seven-party alliance, which has demanded the reinstatement of parliament as the first condition for government formation, waited for a response from King Gyanendra.

The political parties and the Maoists have demanded that the King use Article 127 to revive parliament, which in turn can pass a resolution to form an interim government.

“Let the King reinstate parliament on condition that the government formed after that can even call for election to the constituent assembly and we will take the offer,” said Arjun Narsingh K, a member of the Congress working committee. “Of course, the Maoists will have to agree for a ceasefire and settle the issue of their arms management as a pre-condition for elections,” he added. But with only silence emanating from Narayanhiti Palace, political leaders are increasingly worried about the prospect of demonstrators resorting to violence.

Yesterday, thousands of SMS messages made the rounds of Kathmandu, urging people to come and “gherao” the royal palace. Some protesters even attempted to set ablaze the house of a senior police officer.

While the government has stopped SMS services, alliance leaders, who felt that such incidents could discredit the movement and ruin chances of an early solution, held a meeting to discuss the issue.

Today, as the protests continued in defiance of the curfew, three people were injured when police opened fire.

“Police and soldiers, you are our brothers. Shoot Gyanendra,” one group chanted at the riot police. “We will burn the crown and we will run the country.” —(*With Reuters*)

http://www.nzherald.co.nz/section/print.cfm?c_id=2&objectid=10378737

Nepali protesters continue to defy curfew

24.04.06 1.00pm

By Simon Denyer and Gopal Sharma

KATHMANDU - Thousands of protesters defied a daytime curfew in the Nepali capital today to chant slogans against the king, but the demonstrations seemed less intense and more peaceful than in recent days.

Nevertheless, at least 23 people were injured in clashes between police and protesters in different parts of the city, some hit by rubber bullets, according to an official at a private hospital.



Protesters gather around a barrier at Kalanki in Kathmandu. Picture / Reuters

King Gyanendra's offer on Saturday to hand over power to an alliance of seven political parties has failed to quell protests against his rule, which entered an 18th day today.

Instead, a movement which started out with the aim of restoring democracy has, for some of its participants at least, now more radical goals.

"Police and soldiers, you are our brothers -- shoot Gyanendra," one group chanted at rows of padded and helmeted riot police wielding sticks and shields.

Behind the police, soldiers in green camouflage uniforms gripped submachine guns and automatic rifles, with orders to shoot to kill if the crowd broke through.

"We will burn the crown and we will run the country," the crowds chanted. "Gyanendra, thief, leave the country."

Today's protests were largely confined to the ring road surrounding the capital. Although the road lies within the curfew zone, large stretches are in the hands of the protesters, with burning logs and tyres blocking access to security forces.

In the north of the city, a group of protesters carried a wooden stretcher with an effigy of a dead Gyanendra, ostensibly on its way to cremation.

Others hung a rat from electricity wires, a banner hanging from its body saying "Gyanendra is dead, God is great". In a country where many people traditionally revered the monarch as a Hindu god, the sentiments break a centuries-old taboo.

In the interior of Kathmandu, streets were devoid of traffic and shops shuttered, but tension appeared to have considerably eased. Children played football and badminton on the street and people came out of their houses, chatting in small groups.

Elsewhere in the country, about 200,000 people took part in a rally in Dang, a government-held town in western Nepal. Tens of thousands also marched in the southern town of Narayanghat, which has seen some of the largest protests against the king.

Another major rally is planned for Kathmandu on Wednesday, activists said, with party leaders

vowing to take to the streets themselves for the first time since the latest protests began.

Yesterday more than 100,000 people broke into Kathmandu's city centre and police opened fire in at least two places to beat them back.

At least 150 people were wounded in the police action and a stampede that broke out when the marchers were dispersed, witnesses and political activists said.

The seven-party alliance which has led the protests has rejected Gyanendra's offer to hand over executive power to a prime minister of their choosing.

The parties do not trust the king, and want the constitution to be changed to curb his powers. That is also a key demand of Maoist rebels who control much of the countryside and entered a loose alliance with the parties last year against the king.

"The king is misleading the people," said Akkala Gurung, 36, a finance company worker and protests regular who wants Nepal to become a "democratic republic". "We are not afraid to die, we have to die one day anyway," she said.

The king sacked the government and took full powers in February 2005, vowing to crush a decade-long Maoist revolt in which more than 13,000 people have died.

Given the mood on the streets, the parties are wary of being seen to compromise with the monarch. They want parliament, dissolved in 2002, to be revived and the army -- which is loyal to the king -- put under its control.

The invisible hand of the Maoists may also be fuelling and radicalising the protests, analysts say.

The alliance has been agitating since April 6 to force Gyanendra to restore multi-party democracy. At least 12 people have been killed and thousands wounded in protests since then.

- REUTERS

<http://www.thenewstribune.com/news/nationworld/story/5687159p-5097732c.html>

Nepali police use rubber bullets on protesters

The Associated Press

Published: April 24th, 2006 01:00 AM

KATMANDU, Nepal – Nepali police fired rubber bullets at thousands of protesters Sunday, struggling to enforce a curfew imposed to keep persistent pro-democracy demonstrators off the streets in the Himalayan country's deepening crisis.

The protesters were trying to enter the city limits of Katmandu, the capital, when police fired tear gas, then rubber bullets, independent Kantipur television reported. Doctors at a hospital said they treated three people hurt by rubber bullets.

Later, communist rebels attacked security bases and government buildings in Nepal's mountainous north-central region, officials said today. There was no immediate information on injuries or the extent of damage in the attacks overnight in Chautara.

Katmandu was under a daylong curfew for the fourth straight day. On Saturday, clashes between security forces and demonstrators injured more than 200.

The protesters have refused to quit despite King Gyanendra's offer to allow the alliance of seven opposition parties behind the protests to nominate a prime minister and form a government.

In other areas of unrest around the world:

[...]

http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/tm_objectid=16985409&method=full&siteid=94762&headline=3-hurt-in-nepal-riot--name_page.html

24 April 2006

3 HURT IN NEPAL RIOT

AT least three people were injured as police fired rubber bullets and tear gas at anti-monarchy protesters in Nepal yesterday.

Thousands defied an 11-hour daytime curfew to try to get into the capital Katmandu but were dispersed.

Thousands also marched in the city's Kalanki and Gangabu areas - the focal point of recent protests.

In the city centre, which was patrolled by soldiers in armoured cars, only small groups were defiant.

Opposition leaders and Maoists have rejected King Gyanendra's offer of a multi-party democracy, saying it does not allow for the return of parliament and election of an assembly to write a constitution.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/newsitems/200604/s1622928.htm>

Monday, April 24, 2006. 10:03pm (AEST)

Six die as Nepal rebels raid town

At least five Maoist rebels and a Nepali soldier were killed when hundreds of rebels stormed an eastern town overnight, the army said, while thousands defied a curfew in the capital in anti-king protests.

Sunday night's attack by the insurgents - fighting to overthrow the monarchy since 1996 - was among the biggest in nearly three weeks since a mass pro-democracy campaign erupted across the impoverished Himalayan kingdom.

The attack may have been designed to increase pressure on the king and engage security forces already struggling to quell protests around the country, analysts said.

It took place in Chautara, about 100 kilometres east of Kathmandu, when the rebels attacked a police station, district administration office, a telecommunications tower and a jail in the town, authorities said.

"We have found bodies of five Maoists in combat dress. One soldier also died," an army officer told Reuters, adding that four civilians were wounded in the cross-fire.

"We have foiled their attempt to overrun the town," he said.

Chautara lies in the hills of Sindhupalchowk district, a stronghold of the rebels.

A Reuters reporter on his way to the area said that the rebels had blocked the road about 30 kilometres short of Chautara town with fallen trees and boulders, apparently to prevent troops from rushing in reinforcements.

District authorities had requested helicopter support and reinforcements, one government official said, while some locals near the area said the fighting could still be on.

News of the attack came as an alliance of seven political parties held protests on Monday for the 19th consecutive day, and vowed to bring hundreds of thousands of people onto the streets of Kathmandu for a major rally on Tuesday.

Curfew, protests

Thousands demonstrated, largely peacefully, along the 27-kilometre ring road that circles the capital on Monday, kept out of the city centre by rows of padded and helmeted riot police wielding sticks and shields.

Behind them, soldiers carrying submachine guns and automatic rifles stood at the ready.

Political parties have reasserted their control over the protests in the last two days, leading largely peaceful demonstrations after two weeks of fierce confrontations with security forces.

But there were isolated clashes on Monday. On Kathmandu's northern outskirts at least one person was injured when police fired rubber bullets and tear gas on a stone-throwing crowd of around 150 people.

"We are preparing for a massive rally, to fill the entire ring road with people," Kashinath Adhikary, an official from the Communist Party of Nepal (UML), the country's second biggest political party, told Reuters.

He said top leaders would lead the demonstrations on Tuesday for the first time since this round of protests began on April 6.

Although the ring road lies within the curfew zone, large stretches are in the hands of the protesters, with burning logs and tyres blocking access to security forces.

Authorities clamped a fresh daytime curfew on the capital in a bid to thwart Monday's planned protests.

On Friday King Gyanendra, who seized power last year, offered to hand it over to the seven-party alliance, but his offer was rejected by the parties and has failed to quell the protests.

The country's main political parties entered a loose alliance with Maoist rebels to end royal rule last November.

The rebels, who control vast swathes of the countryside, seek to establish a communist republic in a conflict that has cost more than 13,000 lives.

Maoists are demanding elections for a special assembly to write a new constitution and curb the king's powers, a demand which the political parties have now taken up.

Rejecting Gyanendra's offer to hand over power, party leaders said they did not trust the king and want him to revive parliament, dissolved in 2002.

That in turn would give them the authority to call elections for an assembly to prepare a new constitution and could pave the way for the Maoists to rejoin the mainstream.

The alliance has been agitating since April 6 to force Gyanendra to restore multi-party democracy.

At least 12 people have been killed and thousands wounded in protests since then.

-Reuters

<http://www.nepalitimes.com/issue/295/Update/11725>

A day in the life of riot police

24 April | 5.30 PM NST

From Issue #295 (21 April 06 - 27 April 06) | TABLE OF CONTENTS

A group of parched and famished armed police wait impatiently in Maharajganj, Ring Road for their potato chips and bottled water. "It's finally here," exclaims a constable rushing to open a packet of potato chips. As he is munching away, the group hears screams of people chanting slogans coming from far away, "Oh no, not again. This job's so annoying," he tells his friends.

The officer holding his loud speaker nods his head and agrees. "If I have to curse anyone, then I would curse him to be a police in the next birth," the officer's loud remark is met with a roar of laughter from his juniors including the RNA soldiers standing nearby. "Well boys, keep your cool and be nice," the officer tell his group who take position and get nervous when they see that they are outnumbered.

"How about I shoot only once?" asks a police aiming his tear gas gun towards the sky and ends up dropping on his own friends. But the protesters are moving too close to Nirmal Nibas, King Gyanendra's residence. The officer in charge moves his team one step further and request the leaders of the protestors to stop right away.

"You want to kill us? Go ahead, shoot right through my heart," a protester challenges as he takes off his shirt and points to his chest. The police start pushing the group back but they are so strong those even tear gases don't affect them anymore. "All we want is to pass through to Ring Road. If anyone throws stones at you, we will hand the person to you," shouts the group leader.

"Please try to understand. We're merely doing our job," pleads the officer in charge and tells us softly that if he didn't have his family to feed he would have joined the protestors.

Just then a group of RNA soldiers arrive with their senior officers. "What are you doing? They're still here? Push them back," says one of the officers. "You even let the press pass here? Chase them out," says another officer near the roundabout of Maharajganj.

The offended police officer loses his temper and tells his troop to rush and start charging the protestors with their batons. All the protestors, mostly young, run screaming anti-king slogans. By the end, over 15 are injured, half of whom fall down while trying to flee and bleed on the floor.

“Long live Loktantra. We’ll get you soon,” shouts the pro-democracy protestors as they disperse and head back to Gongabu carrying their injured friends.

-*Naresh Newar*

http://in.today.reuters.com/news/NewsArticle.aspx?type=topNews&storyID=2006-04-24T202141Z_01_NOOTR_RTRJONC_0_India-246184-2.xml

Nepal talks aimed at finding way out for king

Mon Apr 24, 2006 8:29 PM IST

By Simon Denyer and Gopal Sharma

KATHMANDU (Reuters) - Diplomats tried to broker a compromise between Nepal's king and political parties on Monday that could end 19 days of massive street protests as Maoist rebels renewed their revolt in the countryside.

Thousands of demonstrators defied a curfew to shout slogans against the king in Kathmandu ahead of a major rally planned for Tuesday, which will be led by two former prime ministers and is expected to attract hundreds of thousands of people.

As tensions rose, the U.S. embassy ordered non-essential staff and family members to leave the country. It also recommended American citizens should consider leaving Nepal.

Maoist rebels waging a decade-long insurgency against the monarchy flexed their muscles by staging a raid on a district capital just a few hours drive from Kathmandu.

Hundreds stormed the town of Chautara, 100 km east of the capital and fought a six-hour gunbattle that left at least five rebels and a soldier dead.

In Kathmandu, rumours swirled that the king might agree to revive parliament, dissolved in 2002, addressing a key demand of the seven-party alliance leading the street protests.

"The king is in a corner and he is looking for a way out," said one diplomat. "The name of the game is compromise, but it has to come in the next day or so -- otherwise it is down to the streets."

Parliament could in turn use its moral and legal authority to call talks with the Maoists and, provided they lay down their arms, call elections for an assembly to rewrite the constitution. That would satisfy the key demand of the rebels who control vast swathes of the countryside.

"Very intense behind-the-scenes talks are going on," said Kunda Dixit, editor of the Nepali Times. "Indian brokering has gone into high gear and a plan is going back and forth."

On Friday, King Gyanendra offered to hand over executive power to the seven-party alliance, but the parties rejected the offer.

The king, they said, had not addressed their demands for parliament to be reconvened and for elections to be held for an assembly to write a new constitution.

He failed to offer any guarantees he would not use the constitution in future to dismiss the government, just as he did in February 2005. Nor did he show any signs of willingness to surrender his strongest card, control of the Royal Nepalese Army.

As diplomats tried to broker a deal, thousands of people demonstrated, largely peacefully, along the 27-km ring road that circles the capital, kept out of the city by rows of padded and helmeted riot police wielding sticks and shields.

Political parties have reasserted their control over the protests in the last two days, leading largely peaceful demonstrations after two weeks of fierce confrontations with security forces.

But there were isolated clashes on Monday, with at least a dozen people injured, after police fired rubber bullets and tear gas on stone-throwing crowds and beat protesters with sticks.

MAOIST ATTACK

Sunday night's rebel attack -- on key government buildings in Chautara -- was the biggest in nearly three weeks since a mass pro-democracy campaign erupted across the Himalayan kingdom.

The attack may have been designed to increase pressure on the king and engage security forces already struggling to quell protests around the country, analysts said.

The country's main political parties entered a loose alliance with the Maoists to end royal rule last November.

The parties have been agitating since April 6 to force Gyanendra to restore multi-party democracy. At least 12 people have been killed and thousands wounded in protests since then.

<http://www.dailyindia.com/show/19921.php/Nepal-protestors-march-closer-to-palace>

Nepal protestors march closer to palace

KATHMANDU, Nepal, April 23 (UPI) -- Barbed wire was erected to block off central Kathmandu Sunday as thousands of protesters marched on the ring road around Nepal's capital.

More than 100,000 anti-royal protestors defied a daytime curfew on Saturday to demonstrate in the city center, the BBC reported. At least 150 people were injured when riot police used tear gas and rubber bullets.

Protestors are calling for the removal of King Gyanendra, who assumed direct powers in February 2005. The opposition groups, who have rejected the King's offer to form an all-party government, want a new constitution formed by a popular elected assembly, the BBC said.

Nepal's Maoist rebels have also joined protesters. The sea of people on the streets proves that the Nepali people want to get rid of the feudal regime forever, the rebels said in a statement.

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http://today.reuters.co.uk/news/newsArticle.aspx?type=worldNews&storyID=2006-04-24T190347Z_01_L1969978_RTRUKOC_0_UK-NEPAL.xml

Nepal's king reinstates dissolved parliament

Mon Apr 24, 2006 8:03 PM BST

By Simon Denyer and Gopal Sharma

KATHMANDU (Reuters) - King Gyanendra on Monday announced he would reinstate Nepal's dissolved parliament, prompting political parties to say they might call off the mass protests that have paralysed the country.

The parties had vowed to stage a major rally led by two former prime ministers on Tuesday, which had been expected to attract hundreds of thousands of people.

"We, through this proclamation, reinstate the house of representatives which was dissolved on May 22, 2002," the king said on national television, adding the first session would be held on Friday.

"We call upon the seven-party alliance to bear the responsibility of taking the nation on the path to national unity and prosperity, while ensuring permanent peace and safeguarding multi-party democracy."

Last week, the king offered to hand over power to a prime minister nominated by the seven political parties, but the parties said this was not enough.

His brief statement on Monday made no explicit mention of elections to an assembly that would write a new constitution, which has been another key demand of the protesters and of Maoist rebels who control large swathes of the countryside.

But the king said his proclamation was being made "according to the road map of the agitating political parties".

Arjun Narsingh K.C., a senior leader of the Nepali Congress, the largest political party, said the alliance would respond formally on Tuesday but was likely to postpone a major rally planned for the capital on that day.

"It is the victory of the people's movement," he said.

The king, looking sombre and wearing a traditional Nepali cap and black jacket, also offered his sympathy for the first time to the victims of 19 days of street protests.

"We extend our heartfelt condolences to all those who have lost their lives in the people's movement, and wish the injured a speedy recovery," he said.

There was no immediate word from the Maoist rebels, who entered a loose alliance with the parties last year to end royal rule. But analysts said the parliament was likely to start a peace process with the Maoists that would lead to elections for the constituent assembly.

Diplomats had been trying to broker a compromise between the king and political parties.

PROTESTS, ATTACK

Earlier on Monday, thousands of people demonstrated in Kathmandu, largely peacefully, along the 27-km (17-mile) ring road that circles the capital, kept out of the city by rows of padded and helmeted riot police wielding sticks and shields.

The parties have reasserted their control over the protests in the last two days, leading largely peaceful demonstrations after two weeks of confrontations with security forces.

There were only isolated clashes on Monday, with at least a dozen people injured, after police fired rubber bullets and teargas on stone-throwing crowds and beat protesters.

Earlier the U.S. embassy ordered non-essential staff and family members to leave the country. It also recommended American citizens should consider leaving Nepal.

A U.S. State Department official gave the proclamation a guarded welcome, saying Washington wanted the king to give up the power to be able to dissolve parliament again.

"What's important is not only that power be restored and handed over to political parties but that some commitments be made that would prevent a repeat of the events of 2005," the official told reporters.

Maoist rebels waging a decade-long insurgency against the monarchy flexed their muscles by staging a raid on a district capital just a few hours drive from Kathmandu.

Hundreds stormed the town of Chautara, 100 km (60 miles) east of the capital, and fought a six-hour gun battle that left at least five rebels and a soldier dead.

The parties have been agitating since April 6 to force Gyanendra to restore multi-party democracy. At least 12 people have been killed and thousands wounded in protests since then.

http://today.reuters.com/business/newsarticle.aspx?type=tnBusinessNews&storyID=nB164965&imageid=2006-04-24T202214Z_01_NEP111_RTRIDSP_2_NEPAL.jpg&cap=Nepali%20pro-democracy%20activists%20celebrate%20on%20the%20streets%20after%20a%20televised%20statement%20by%20King%20Gyanendra%20in%20Nepal's%20capital%20Kathmandu%20early%20morning%20April%202006.%20%20REUTERS/Adrees%20Latif

UPDATE 9-Part victory, part protest on Nepal streets

Tuesday 25 April 2006, 11:22am EST (Recasts, adds colour, comments from India and China)

By Gopal Sharma

KATHMANDU, April 25 (Reuters) - Hundreds of thousands of people flooded the streets of Nepal's capital on Tuesday after King Gyanendra announced a deal to end weeks of unrest, but the rally was part victory celebration and part continued protest.

Gyanendra announced on Monday night that he had reinstated the country's dissolved parliament, meeting a key demand of the seven-party alliance, which swiftly welcomed the decision and called off their protests.

Maoist rebels, who control vast swathes of the countryside, denounced the king's concession as a sham.

On Tuesday, the ring road around Kathmandu turned into a sea of people waving party flags and chanting slogans, some of them heralding the rebirth of democracy, others still angry at the monarch.

Tens of thousands marched into the city centre and crowded near the palace, demanding the King leave the country and punishment for those responsible for firing on and beating demonstrators during 19 days of mass protests that left at least 12 dead and thousands wounded.

Rows of riot police blocked the demonstrators less than 500 metres (550 yards) from the palace, but there was no violence.

The crowds made no attempt to break through but tore down metal signboards carrying excerpts from the king's speeches and shouted "Gyanendra, thief, leave the country".

In the evening, police fired teargas to disperse a few thousands demonstrators listening to speeches in a stadium.

But elsewhere, most of the crowds had dispersed, and the streets were thronged with shoppers and people out for a stroll. Youngsters played football in parks and Western tourists were out bicycling as trucks took riot police back to barracks.

REACHING OUT TO MAOISTS

The seven parties that have led the crippling anti-monarchy campaign named former Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala, 84, as the new head of government and said the first job would be to ensure the Maoists, fighting a decade-long rebellion, joined the political mainstream.

But the rebels, who insist on elections for a special assembly to write a new constitution, rebuked the king and the parties.

Maoist leader Prachanda said the parties had committed "another historic mistake" and encouraged the people to continue protesting until the parties declared elections for an assembly.

"The proclamation is a sham and a conspiracy against the Nepali people," Prachanda said in a statement. "Our party firmly rejects this."

He also called for a blockade of Kathmandu, a city of 1.5 million people, and district capitals.

In a nod to the Maoists, who have a loose alliance with the seven parties, leaders said work on an assembly was a priority.

"We will be doing all we can to bring Maoists to the mainstream of peace and democracy. Now we have to create an environment for an interim government that will have Maoist participation," said Minendra Rijal, an alliance leader.

The Maoists have been trying to end the monarchy and establish a communist republic and more than 13,000 people have died in the insurgency since 1996.

Giant neighbours India and China welcomed the king's move.

"This is a victory for the people of Nepal, who have displayed extraordinary courage and reaffirmed their faith and commitment to freedom and democracy. The future of Nepal is safe in their hands," the Indian Foreign Ministry said in a statement.

A Chinese foreign ministry spokesman said the government welcomed efforts by the King and parties to achieve political reconciliation and restore stability.

Nepal's parliament has been dissolved since 2002, and Gyanendra assumed absolute power last year, declaring a state of emergency and vowing to crush the escalating Maoist rebellion.

Speaking on national television late on Monday, the king said he was calling back the assembly.

Gyanendra had offered last week to give power to a prime minister nominated by the seven parties, but they said this was not enough.

(Additional reporting by Simon Denyer)

Nepal parties stop protests, Maoists press on

Tue Apr 25, 2006 12:46 PM IST

By Gopal Sharma

KATHMANDU (Reuters) - Nepal's seven-party alliance called off crippling pro-democracy protests on Tuesday after King Gyanendra announced he was reinstating the dissolved parliament, but Maoist rebels denounced the king's speech as a sham.

The seven parties, speaking as thousands of people cheered and danced on the streets, named former Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala as the new head of government and said the first job would be to ensure the Maoists, fighting a decade-long rebellion, joined the political mainstream.

But Maoist leader Prachanda said that the seven parties had committed "another historic mistake" and encouraged the people to continue their protests until the parties declared elections for a assembly to write a new constitution.

"The proclamation is a sham and a conspiracy against the Nepali people," Prachanda said in a statement in the Nepali language. "Our party firmly rejects this."

He also called for a blockade of the capital Kathmandu, a city of 1.5 million people, and district capitals.

The seven parties planned to convert a protest rally called for Tuesday into a celebration, and hundreds of thousands of people were expected on the streets of the capital Kathmandu later in the day.

"We have called off the general strike and protest," said Krishna Prasad Sitaula, spokesman for the Nepali Congress, the largest party in the alliance.

"Today's planned protest has been converted into a victory rally. This will go down in history as a new example of how peaceful protests are held. This will determine the future of the country."

The alliance named Koirala as the new head of government.

"All parties have a consensus for him," Madhav Kumar Nepal, general secretary of the Congress Party of Nepal, told Reuters after a meeting of the alliance.

BACK TO NORMAL

Life returned to normal in Kathmandu after almost three weeks of curfew, protests and closures in which 12 people have been killed and hundreds wounded. Many buses and taxis were running for

the first time since April 6, and mobile phone connections, cut at the height of the unrest on Saturday, were restored.

But riot police were still deployed on street corners and soldiers with automatic weapons were on patrol.

In a nod to the Maoists, with whom the seven parties have a loose alliance, Sitaula said work on an assembly to write a new constitution would be the first priority.

Minendra Rijal, another alliance leader, said: "We will be doing all we can to bring Maoists to the mainstream of peace and democracy. Now we have to create an environment for an interim government that will have Maoist participation."

Maoists control vast swaths of the countryside and have been trying to end the monarchy and establish a communist republic. More than 13,000 people have died since 1996.

It was a dramatic end to the weeks of protests that have brought the impoverished kingdom to a standstill.

Nepal's parliament has been dissolved since 2002, and Gyanendra assumed absolute power last year, declaring a state of emergency and vowing to crush the escalating Maoist rebellion.

Speaking on national television late on Monday, the king said he was calling back the assembly.

Impromptu victory celebrations erupted in Kathmandu and in other towns almost immediately.

"This victory is the people's victory, long live democracy," hundreds chanted on the streets, whistling and cheering.

The United States welcomed the move and urged a "ceremonial role" for the king.

Gyanendra had offered last week to hand over power to a prime minister nominated by the seven parties, but they said this was not enough. Monday's address went much further in content and in tone.

The king said he was reconvening parliament "convinced that the source of state authority and sovereignty of the kingdom of Nepal is inherent in the people of Nepal, and cognisant of the spirit of the ongoing people's movement".

"For him to even acknowledge there was a people's movement, that really shocked me," said Kunda Dixit, editor of the Nepali Times.

(Additional reporting by Simon Denyer)

Thousands rejoice in Nepal; Maoists reject king's speech

By TIM SULLIVAN

April 25, 2006

KATMANDU, Nepal (AP) - Tens of thousands of people flooded Katmandu's streets Tuesday, celebrating the end of bloody anti-monarchy protests that forced the king to restore Parliament.

But with Maoist insurgents dismissing the king's move as a ploy _ and warning the political parties that their acceptance of it was a betrayal _ it was clear that the Himalayan nation's political crisis was far from over.

For a few hours, though, celebration was the focus, as opposition leaders nominated a former prime minister to head the new government and the capital city came back to life.

"The king, his army and their guns were no match against the strength of the people," said Sangita Karki, an office worker attending the victory rally in central Katmandu. "We won, he lost."

Hundreds of riot police were lined up to stop demonstrators from marching toward the royal palace just a few hundred yards (meters) away. Witnesses said there was one minor clash, with a brief exchange of rocks and tear gas. One person was taken away in an ambulance.

While thrilled the king had given in to a key opposition demand and restored Parliament, many demonstrators remain wary of the incoming political leaders _ most of them from the core of Nepal's bickering and often-corrupt political clique.

"We are here not just to celebrate the king's defeat but also to warn the leaders that if they betray the people, this very crowd will not leave them alive," said Shree Ram, who closed his small shop to join the protest.

Late Monday night, King Gyanendra appeared on state television to announce the reinstatement of Parliament he dissolved four years ago, a pivotal concession which effectively returned authority to elected politicians. It was also the first step in a series of political maneuvers expected to lead to the election of a special assembly to write a new constitution.

That constitution will very likely reduce the king's role to a ceremonial status, or even eliminate the monarchy entirely, party leaders say.

The king's announcement followed weeks of mass protests, organized jointly by the opposition's seven-party alliance and the Maoists, that had threatened to force him from power. The protests sparked clashes with security forces that left 14 demonstrators dead and the country dangerously volatile.

For much of the crisis, Gyanendra had remained silent behind the walls of his heavily guarded palace in central Katmandu, kept in power because of the loyalty of his army and police.

While most observers saw the king's move as a complete surrender to opposition demands, the Maoists quickly rejected it.

"By accepting the so-called royal proclamation the leaders of these seven political parties have once

again made a blunder," said a statement from the Maoists, whose 10-year campaign for power has left more than 13,000 people dead and given them control over much of the countryside.

The statement, signed by rebel leader Prachanda and his deputy, Baburam Bhattarai, called the speech "a conspiracy to protect the regime."

The communist insurgents vowed to press ahead with a campaign to block the country's roads until the election of the assembly.

Opposition leaders, though, dismissed the divisions, insisting they would bring the Maoists into the political mainstream.

"These are only temporary differences," said Minendra Risal, a top official of the Nepali Congress Democratic. "Once the election for the constitutional assembly is announced, we are sure they will cooperate with us again."

Opposition leaders, meanwhile, announced that former Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala, an ailing, aging politician was their choice to be the new prime minister.

Koirala, who has been one of the most powerful forces in Nepal's political scene for decades, has long made it known that he wanted to be prime minister again. However, he did not respond publicly to the nomination.

Koirala is a four-time prime minister. His last term ended when he resigned in 2001, with his government beset by the Maoist insurgency, a bribery scandal and recriminations that lax security at the royal palace had allowed a massacre that wiped out much of the royal family.

By early Tuesday morning, life was almost normal in Katmandu, where the crisis had alternately filled streets with protesters or emptied them because of curfews. Mobile phones, switched off by the government in an attempt to disrupt protest organizers, were back on, stores reopened, volunteers passed stones hand-to-hand, clearing the roads of blockades.

Gyanendra dismissed an interim government 14 months ago and seized direct control over the government, saying he needed to bring order to the country's chaotic politics and crush the Maoists, who were preventing elections from being held.

<http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2006/04/26/world/main1549987.shtml>

Nepal's Communists Declare Cease-Fire

KATMANDU, April 25, 2006

Rajan Sreshta

(AP) Nepal's communist rebels, who backed the opposition protests that forced King Gyanendra to restore parliament, declared a three-month, unilateral cease-fire Thursday in their violent campaign against the monarchist government.

The announcement came a day before the reinstated parliament convenes in Katmandu. It is expected to elect a new prime minister and initiate the process for electing a special assembly that would write a new constitution.

"We declare a unilateral cease-fire for three months," the elusive rebel leader Prachanda said in a statement. He said the rebels would hold their fire "to express deep commitment to people's desire for peace."

The rebel decision follows a meeting between Prachanda and Girija Prasad Koirala, who is likely to be named prime minister. Their talk cleared up misunderstanding between the alliance of seven opposition parties and the rebels.

The rebels initially had been angered by the alliance's acceptance of Gyanendra's offer to hand over power and reinstate parliament that would form a new government, saying it was a betrayal of an understanding between the alliance and the rebels.

The Maoist insurgents had backed the opposition's nearly three-week campaign of protests against the royal dictatorship.

However, the politicians called off the demonstrations Tuesday after the king agreed to hand power back to elected officials and apologized for the 15 people killed by security forces during the unrest.

On Wednesday, the rebels lifted a weeks-long blockade of highways connecting the major towns and cities in the Himalayan kingdom. The blockade had cut off major transport routes, including the nation's key highway between Katmandu, the capital, and the resort town of Pokhara, witnesses said.

Also Wednesday, soldiers opened fire on a crowd of thousands of villagers angry about the death of a local woman at an army base in southwestern Nepal, killing six and wounding at least 11, officials said.

Versions why the shooting occurred differed dramatically.

Both the military and rights activists agree that thousands of angry civilians marched on the camp in the village of Belbari, angry about the woman's death there the night before.

But while Bhupendra Poudel, the defense ministry spokesman, said the crowd tore down the camp's barbed wire, sought to snatch soldiers' guns and tried to storm the small base, Kunjan Aryal of the rights group INSEC-Nepal said the villagers were protesting peacefully.

"They were not trying to storm in," he said. "They were simply protesting."

Poudel also said the woman — a suspected Maoist — had been shot when she tried to slip into the base. Aryal, though, said the villagers believed the woman had been raped and killed by the soldiers.

Poudel said 11 villagers had been injured, while Aryal put the total at 29.

The rebels declared a ceasefire in September 2005 that lasted for four months. They pulled out earlier this year accusing the royalist government of failing to show initiatives to resolve conflict peacefully. The rebels then escalated attacks against government targets and troops.

The rebels, who claim to be inspired by Chinese revolutionary Mao Zedong, began their campaign to replace the monarchy with a communist state in 1996. The insurgency has left more than 13,000 dead.

The parties called off their protest campaign Tuesday after Gyanendra agreed to hand power back to elected officials and reinstate Parliament by Friday.

Norway, meanwhile, which suspended aid to Nepal after Gyanendra seized power 14 months ago, said late Tuesday it would resume its financial assistance because Parliament had been reinstated.

In Washington, U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Richard Boucher said the United States will consider renewing military aid to Nepal, but the move will depend on the army supporting the return of multiparty democracy.

Gyanendra seized power in February 2005, saying he needed to restore political order and crush the insurgency.

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<http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/articleshow/1504808.cms>

Protesters want Gyanendra to leave country

AGENCIES [WEDNESDAY, APRIL 26, 2006 03:12:06 AM]

KATHMANDU: Hundreds of thousands of people held a victory rally in Nepal's capital on Tuesday after King Gyanendra announced he was reinstating parliament, but tens of thousands crowded near the palace, demanding he leave the country.

Rows of riot police blocked the demonstrators less than 500 metres from Kathmandu's Narayanhity Palace, but there was no violence. The crowds made no attempt to break through but tore down metal signboards carrying excerpts from the king's speeches and shouted "Gyanendra, thief, leave the country."

Earlier, the seven parties called off their protest campaign. "Today's planned protest has been converted into a victory rally. This will go down in history as a new example of how peaceful protests are held. This will determine the future of the country," said Krishna Prasad Sitaula, spokesman for the Nepali Congress, the largest party in the alliance.

Much of the demonstrators' anger near the palace seemed to be aimed at home minister Kamal Thapa, who they blamed for a harsh crackdown on the protest campaign. "Hang Kamal Thapa, destroy the monarchy," they shouted. At least 12 people have been killed and thousands wounded in police action against protesters in the campaign.

Alongside the rallies, life returned to near normal in Kathmandu after almost three weeks of curfew, protests and closures. Shops were open and many buses and taxis were running for the first time since April 6. Mobile phone connections, cut at the height of the unrest on Saturday, were restored.

In a nod to the Maoists, with whom the seven parties have a loose alliance, Sitaula said work on an

assembly to write a new constitution would be the first priority. Minendra Rijal, another alliance leader, said: "We will be doing all we can to bring Maoists to the mainstream of peace and democracy. Now we have to create an environment for an interim government that will have Maoist participation."

The Maoists have been trying to end the monarchy and establish a communist republic and more than 13,000 people have died in the insurgency since 1996. Nepal's parliament has been dissolved since '02, and King Gyanendra assumed absolute power last year, declaring a state of emergency and vowing to crush the escalating Maoist rebellion.

Speaking on national television late on Monday, the king said he was calling back the assembly. Impromptu victory celebrations erupted in Kathmandu and in other towns almost immediately. "This victory is the people's victory, long live democracy," hundreds chanted on the streets, whistling and cheering.

The US welcomed the move and urged a "ceremonial role" for the king. Gyanendra had offered last week to give power to a prime minister nominated by the seven parties, but they said this was not enough. Monday's address went further in content and in tone.

The king said he was reconvening parliament "convinced that the source of state authority and sovereignty of the kingdom of Nepal is inherent in the people of Nepal, and cognisant of the spirit of the ongoing people's movement".

"For him to even acknowledge there was a people's movement, that really shocked me," said Kunda Dixit, editor of the Nepali Times.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/04/26/AR2006042600516.html>

6 Nepalese Villagers Killed by Soldiers

By *BINAJ GURUBACHARYA*

The Associated Press

Wednesday, April 26, 2006; 8:06 AM

KATMANDU, Nepal -- Soldiers killed six villagers Wednesday after thousands of civilians tried to overrun an army camp in southwestern Nepal, a military official said. The killings were not believed to be connected to the political turmoil that has gripped Nepal for weeks.

Local media reports said the civilians were angry because they believed soldiers at the camp, in the village of Belbari, had raped and killed a village woman.

The military official, however, would only say that the incident began when a woman was killed Tuesday as she tried to enter the camp. He spoke on the condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak to the media.

An unknown number of villagers were wounded, the official said. No soldiers were injured.

He could not say why the woman was trying to enter the camp, but said villagers angry over her killing tried to storm the camp Wednesday.

Belbari is about 300 miles southeast of Katmandu, the capital.

Dans les rues de Katmandou, une foule immense a salué la décision du roi de convoquer vendredi le Parlement dissous. Mais l'opposition reste vigilante.

Dégelée royale au Népal

Par Pierre PRAKASH
mercredi 26 avril 2006

Katmandou envoyé spécial

Des centaines de milliers de Népalais sont descendus hier dans les rues de Katmandou pour fêter la victoire du mouvement antimonarchique, après l'annonce par le roi, la veille au soir, de la réouverture du Parlement. A la surprise générale, Gyanendra a cédé à la principale revendication de l'alliance des sept grands partis politiques en convoquant dès vendredi la Chambre des représentants, dissoute en 2002 sur ses conseils. La journée de mobilisation prévue par l'opposition s'est transformée en une gigantesque fête, la capitale étant littéralement envahie par une foule en liesse.

Tout au long de la journée, une véritable marée humaine défile sur le boulevard périphérique, devenu le symbole de la contestation contre le pouvoir royal ces dernières semaines. *«C'est la victoire du peuple !» «Vive la démocratie !» «Vive la République !»* scandent les manifestants, venus à pied ou juchés sur des camions. Jeunes et vieux, riches et pauvres dansent, chantent, laissant éclater leur bonheur après dix-neuf jours de manifestations souvent réprimées avec violence : on a relevé au moins 14 morts et plus de 5 000 blessés. *«C'est un peu notre révolution à nous, les Népalais, explique Parashar Rizal, un instituteur. Nous sommes fiers d'avoir gagné, nous avons la démocratie.»*

Feuille de route. Malgré le soulagement général, tous les manifestants rencontrés affirment que la réouverture du Parlement n'est qu'un *«premier pas»*. *«Nous sommes là pour célébrer, mais aussi pour maintenir la pression sur les partis politiques, explique Shyam Shrestha, étudiant en sociologie. Nous n'arrêterons pas tant que les élections pour l'Assemblée constituante ne seront pas annoncées.»* *«La seule solution définitive, c'est la République»*, ajoute un autre, tandis que quelques jeunes arrachent les panneaux affichant des citations prodémocratiques du souverain, dans le centre-ville, à des centaines de mètres du palais royal. *«Ce n'est que le début»*, peut-on lire sur une pancarte qui dépasse de la foule.

Hier, l'alliance des sept partis d'opposition a levé la grève générale, appelé à la fin des manifestations et désigné le nouveau chef du gouvernement intérimaire : Girija Prasad Koirala, 85 ans, ancien Premier ministre et chef du Congrès népalais, la première formation politique du pays. *«C'est un jour historique, qui marque la victoire du peuple sur la monarchie, se félicite Ram Sharan Mahat, l'un des leaders de l'alliance, rencontré à moto en train de saluer la foule sur le périphérique. Le roi a dû accepter notre feuille de route, qui prévoit à terme des élections pour une Assemblée constituante, comme le réclame la population.»*

Alors que l'issue à la crise politique semble enfin en vue, la composante maoïste est cependant venue compliquer la donne. Dans un communiqué, le leader des maos, Prachanda, a accusé les partis d'avoir commis une *«erreur historique»* en acceptant de mettre fin au mouvement

antimonarchique. *«Il s'agit d'un nouveau stratagème pour briser le peuple népalais et sauver sa monarchie autocratique [...]. Notre parti appelle vivement le peuple à poursuivre les manifestations pacifiques, jusqu'à ce que les élections pour une Assemblée constituante soient annoncées»*, affirme le texte, qui menace d'organiser un blocus de Katmandou et des grandes villes de province.

Pourparlers. Conformément à leur feuille de route, les partis d'opposition avaient pourtant annoncé, le matin même, que leur premier geste, une fois au gouvernement, serait d'ordonner un cessez-le-feu avec la guérilla pour engager des pourparlers de paix. S'ils acceptent de déposer les armes, les maos doivent être intégrés au gouvernement intérimaire pour pouvoir participer aux élections de l'Assemblée constituante. Alors qu'une bonne partie des manifestants insiste pour la création d'une république, les rebelles semblent vouloir forcer la main aux partis politiques.

Après le bras de fer sanglant entre le roi et les partis, la situation pourrait donc tourner à l'affrontement entre les partis et les maoïstes. Une perspective bien peu réjouissante pour ce pays qui, aujourd'hui plus que jamais, a besoin de stabilité politique.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/worldlatest/story/0,-5796548,00.html>

Nepalese Cabinet Declares Cease-Fire

Wednesday May 3, 2006 3:16 PM

AP Photo KAT101

By BINAJ GURUBACHARYA

Associated Press Writer

KATMANDU, Nepal (AP) - Nepal's Cabinet declared a cease-fire with communist rebels Wednesday and will no longer designate them as a terrorist group, the deputy prime minister said.

All terrorism-related charges will be dropped against the insurgents, Deputy Prime Minister Khadga Prasad Oli added, and he urged the rebels to open peace talks with the government.

The moves came in response to a unilateral truce recently declared by the rebels after three weeks of violent protests forced King Gyanendra to yield control of the government.

The Maoist rebels played a key role in the protests and appear headed for a role in the political mainstream. They have been fighting since 1996 to create a communist state, and 13,000 people have been killed.

``The government decided to declare a cease-fire," Oli said. ``All terrorist charges on the Maoists have been removed. We are urging the Maoists to come forward for peace talks."

Added Finance Minister Ram Sharan Mahat: ``We expect the Maoists to come to the talks."

Two previous mutual cease-fires - in 2001 and 2003 - both broke down after a few months.

In a worrying sign, Prachanda, the Maoists' leader, has accused the seven-party alliance that led the protests of engaging in a power struggle. He said the parliament, which convened Friday for the first time in four years, isn't up to the tasks at hand.

``This is not the solution to the problems and the demand of the Maoists," he wrote in a pro-Maoist weekly newspaper. ``The House has no fresh mandate and cannot solve the problems."

Earlier in the day, U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Richard Boucher said Washington isn't ready yet to drop the Maoists from its list of terrorist groups.

“We can't forget the issue of the Maoists in Nepal, what they have done in the villages, what they continue to do in the villages,” he told a news conference.

“They killed people, they extorted money. So our removing them from the terrorist list is not going to happen until they stop that behavior.”

Mahat said the Cabinet also invalidated February's municipal elections for mayors and city and town council members. No date was immediately set for new balloting.

It was the first move to rescind all of the legislation, decrees, appointments and other actions taken since the king grabbed power in February 2005.

Mahat, sworn in Tuesday with the rest of the new seven-man Cabinet, also said the government will give about \$14,000 to each of the families that died in three weeks of protests that forced the king to yield power last week.

At least 17 protesters died when riot police tried to quell the demonstrations, opening fire with live rounds and rubber bullets.

A media rights group said police arrested 231 journalists during protest-packed April, up from just six in March. In addition, 87 journalists were attacked last month, the Federation of Nepalese Journalists reported. All but three of those arrested have been freed.

Boucher vowed that Washington will help the Himalayan country.

“Through their efforts for democracy, the people of Nepal have won a great victory for themselves and for future generations,” Boucher said after a 20-hour visit in which he met with most top officials except the king.

“Now it is up to the reinstated Parliament, in close contact with the people, to lead the way forward to form an effective, responsive and lasting democratic government, and to chart a way forward to bring peace to your country.”

Still, the list of critical issues facing the new government is long and rife with difficulties to overcome while trying to maintain at least a semblance of unity.

The fight for Cabinet appointments already has sparked serious grumbling. In addition, about 200 protesters tried to force their way through the iron gates outside Parliament on Tuesday, demanding action on many key issues.

The Cabinet must try to negotiate peace with the Maoists, rejuvenate the economy and determine who gave the orders for security forces to crack down brutally on demonstrations.

Parliament has to set up the process for the election of an assembly to rewrite the constitution. The king is expected to be stripped of much of his authority, including control of the military.

Associated Press Writer Paul Alexander contributed to this report.

Families protest against Nepal "disappearances"

Tue Sep 5, 2006 3:31 PM IST

KATHMANDU (Reuters) - Hundreds of people protested in the Nepali capital for the second straight day on Tuesday demanding information about friends and relatives they say disappeared during a decade-old fight against Maoist rebels.

Dozens of protesters, whose demonstration has been backed by the rebels, were wounded late on Monday when police beat them with rattan sticks as they gathered outside the high security army headquarters in the capital.

"We will continue to protest until the government provides information about the people who are missing after being arrested by troops," said Sonu Pokharel, an official of a group set up by the families of those missing after being detained.

Nepal's state-funded National Human Rights Commission said last week at least 936 people were missing in the conflict and blamed both the security forces and Maoists for disappearances.

The United Nations also called on both sides to give information on those who have disappeared during the conflict.

But this week's protest was supported by the rebels and aimed squarely against the security forces.

On Tuesday, demonstrators carried pictures of their relatives -- mainly rebel sympathisers -- and chanted anti-government slogans as they gathered in front of a temple at a major road junction in Kathmandu.

"Give information about the disappeared people," some placards read in Nepali.

Hundreds of riot police stood by but there was no violence.

The rebels and interim government have been observing a ceasefire since street protests forced King Gyanendra to hand power to political parties in April.

The government has formed a panel to investigate complaints of disappearances and says it is awaiting the outcome of the inquiry. More than 13,000 people have been killed in a Maoist revolt since 1996.