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## **Nepal Chaos Gets Worse, As India Tries To Strike Deal**

**By SOMINI SENGUPTA**

The royal government struggled to dam a tide of pro-democracy protest on Thursday. But it broke through anyway, carnival-like in some places and violent in others, as emissaries from Nepal's most vital ally, India, met with King Gyanendra in an effort to defuse a hardening political impasse.

The demonstrations, which the government tried to head off with a strict 18-hour curfew, brought tens of thousands of people to rallies big and small on the edges of the heavily fortified city center in the largest turnout in two weeks of protests.

The deadliest event came at midday in the Kalanki neighborhood, where security forces fired on demonstrators, killing three people and wounding as many as 100, according to officials at two city hospitals where the wounded were treated. Two of the dead appeared to have been shot in the head, a hospital official said.

The clash came on the 15th day of protests called by a coalition of Nepal's seven largest political parties, demanding a restoration of parliamentary rule. As violent protests roil the country, the king has reiterated his call for dialogue with the political parties. The parties, meanwhile, vow to continue the agitation until he restores Parliament, which he suspended early last year, and gives up control of the government.

"We are people of the 21st century," shouted Prakash Muni Dahal, 60, a teacher who joined the throngs on the streets. "We will rule our country." Around him a boisterous crowd, in a brick-strewn eastern neighborhood known as Chabahil, burned the king's picture and brayed for his fall. "Gyaney!" they shouted, using the diminutive form of his name, once unthinkable here in the world's last Hindu kingdom. "Hang him!"

After a meeting with the king on Thursday morning, Karan Singh, the son of a former Indian maharaja and related by marriage to Nepal's royal family, hinted a deal was imminent. "Now the ball is squarely in the court of the king," Mr. Singh, a special envoy sent by the Indian government, said on his return to New Delhi, according to Reuters. "I am hopeful that very shortly some sort of announcement will be made by him, which will help considerably defuse the situation."

Representatives of the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Katmandu said they had been blocked from routine monitoring of demonstrations. The office denounced the restrictions as a "clear violation" of its agreement with the government.

Neither foreign diplomats nor the International Committee of the Red Cross could move freely in the streets. By evening the government announced that it would extend the 18-hour curfew by seven hours.

Nepal has had a fitful experiment with democracy since parliamentary elections in 1990. In 2002, with a Maoist insurgency in the hills and politicians squabbling, the elected prime minister dissolved Parliament, and scheduled elections were postponed. Several prime ministers were appointed and fired by the king. The last of them was deposed in February 2005, when Gyanendra assumed total control of the government and promised to finish off the insurgency. An estimated 13,000 Nepalese have been killed in the conflict.

In a deft political twist, the Maoists and the political parties have lately linked arms in an effort to overturn the king's control of the government. The protests have hampered ordinary life in the capital. Fuel is in short supply, vegetable prices have soared and the movement of trucks carrying goods into Katmandu has been frozen for two weeks. Thursday began with an eerie calm as the daylong curfew left shops closed, people inside their homes and police officers and soldiers guarding the roads.

Around midday, as the protests began, security forces aimed their assault rifles and fired above the heads of the protesters in the Kalanki district. Then, in circumstances that remain unclear, they killed a protester on a rooftop. A Nepalese journalist who saw the incident said a police superintendent had aimed his pistol at protesters and begun firing, killing the man on the roof.

As the body was taken away in a minivan serving as an ambulance, people in the crowd vented their grief at the police, yelling, crying and then, from the rooftops, throwing bricks, unleashing swift retaliation. The police picked up the bricks and hurled them at the crowd. They fired tear gas and rubber-coated bullets. The clash continued for hours. The Nepal Red Cross Society said it tended to 293 injured people across Katmandu on Thursday.