

Khmer Rouge attacks provincial capital, takes over airport

PHNOM PENH, May 3: Khmer Rouge guerrillas attacked a strategic provincial capital in northwestern Cambodia with heavy guns Monday and seized control of the airport, a UN military officer said, reports AP.

The attack on Siem Reap town appeared to be one of the most serious since the main UN peacekeeping mission began in Cambodia a year ago. It came three weeks before national elections are to be held.

Several hundred government soldiers were repelling the attack with automatic rifles and rocket-propelled grenades, said a spokesman for Cambodia's Vietnamese-installed government, Khieu Kanharith. He said heavy fighting was continuing along the road from the airport to the town.

The UN officer, speaking on condition of anonymity,

said the guerrillas were using artillery and mortar-firing guns in addition to small arms.

He said they were not strong enough to hold the airport but had scored a significant symbolic victory by demonstrating that the UN mission could not provide security for elections later this month. The communist Khmer Rouge are boycotting the election.

"There's a lot of activity going on, so we're still not clear about the situation," the UN officer said. "I don't think we've taken any military action."

Kanharith said the Khmer Rouge also attacked two districts near the town with rocket-propelled grenades and mortars.

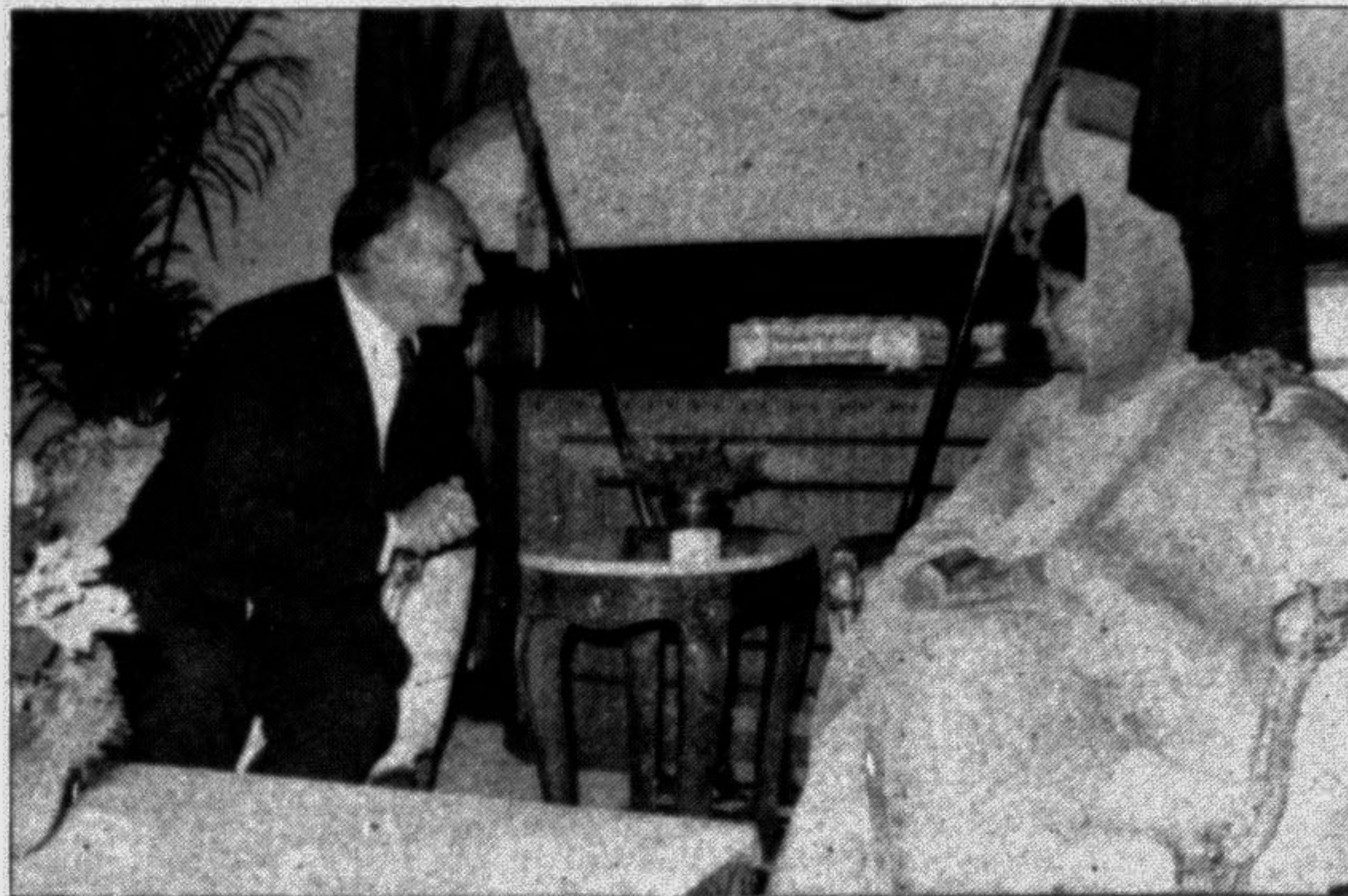
A Cambodian interpreter for UN military observers in Siem Reap, Ou Sovann, said the Khmer Rouge attacked the town at 5 am (2200 GMT Sunday) and fighting was

continuing at 9 am (0200 GMT Monday).

A Kampuchea Airlines commercial flight which many foreign tourists take from Phnom Penh to visit the famed temples of Angkor just outside the Siem Reap capital was cancelled. The capital has the same name as the province and is 225 kilometres (140 miles) northwest of Phnom Penh.

UN military observers in Siem Reap had been preparing for an attack for some time, building bunkers and erecting razor-wire barriers around their compounds.

Siem Reap, which borders Thailand, is one of the country's most troubled provinces. UN officers said UN workers who had been trained to supervise elections there this month might back out at the last minute because of fears of violence, or they might be withdrawn for their own protection.



Prince Karim Aga Khan, the leader of the Shia Ismaili community, paid a courtesy call on Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia at her office yesterday.

Premadasa's killers

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since the campaign for a homeland for the minority Tamil community turned violent a decade ago.

Meanwhile, acting President Dingiri Banda Wijetunga pledged today to stick with the economic policies of his slain predecessor.

Wijetunga, 71, who is almost certain to be confirmed as head of state for the 19 months remaining on Premadasa's term in office, said there would be no change in the policies of the government.

"I am aware that a certain amount of concern exists in the minds of the business community, both national and foreign, regarding the future of our economic policies."

"I take this opportunity to assure that there will be no change in the prudent fiscal policy of reducing our budget deficits and the stable micro-economic policy," he said in a statement.

Lankan parliament will meet tomorrow before it elects the country's new president to finish the tenure of late president Premadasa on May 8 or 10, reliable sources said today.

The nomination date has been fixed for May 7 and so far there have been two candidates, namely acting President

D B Wijetunga from the ruling United National Party (UNP) and Mrs Sirimavo Bandaranaike, former prime minister and president of the biggest opposition Freedom Party.

In the northeastern Lanka, at least 15 Tamil guerrillas and four soldiers were killed in fresh fighting, the military said Monday.

Army special forces commandos raided a suspected hideout of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in the Thoppigala jungles Sunday. Killed six militants and captured their weapons, a military spokesman said.

Meanwhile, the Indian parliament adjourned without conducting business today as a mark of respect to the slain President.

Prime Minister P V Narasimha Rao recounted his personal memories of Premadasa and touched upon their last meeting three weeks ago in Dhaka at the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) summit.

Rao said they had interacted closely at the meet. Describing the killing as "brutal, tragic and untimely," he said the Sri Lankan President had worked hard for better relations among countries in the region.

Aga Khan

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of 200 others clapping their hands also nodded in salutation.

Journalists at the airport were not allowed to talk to the Aga Khan on his arrival.

This is his fifth visit to Bangladesh since 1977. He last visited Bangladesh, where some 10,000 Ismailis live, in 1987.

Karim Aga Khan, the 49th Imam of the community, succeeded his grandfather in 1957 at the tender age of 20.

More than 15 million Ismailis live in 25 countries around the world.

During his stay the Aga Khan will hold talks with President Abdur Rahman Biswas, Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia and a number of ministers including Education Minister Jamiruddin Siraz and Industries Minister Shamsul Islam Khan.

He will also visit the AKDN-financed projects of BIRAC (the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Council) and the Grameen Bank in Manikganj, besides meeting with his community members.

The AKDN disburses about 100 million US dollar annually for economic, social and cultural development around the world.

Meets PM

From the airport the Aga Khan drove in a ceremonial motorcade to the Prime Minister's office where he was received by Begum Khaleda Zia.

The Prime Minister and the Prince exchanged greetings and had a brief informal discussion during the formal reception.

Foreign Minister A S M Mostafizur Rahman, Foreign Secretary Reaz Rahman and president of the Ismaili community in Bangladesh Hasan Ali Ajami were present.

Direct dialing

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be taken within the next couple of weeks.

Referring to expansion of telephone connections in the capital city, the source said 31,000 digital lines had already been established in new Dhaka while work for establishing 60,000 digital lines in old Dhaka would be undertaken from June this year with Japanese help.

Besides, he said, the government is considering expanding telephone facilities in the city by installing an additional 18,500 digital lines. In Chittagong, he also said, work for installing 20,500 digital lines has already started with French help. The ECNEC has already approved its expansion to 30,000 lines, he added.

The source referred to the telephone expansion programme under the private sector and said the Bangladesh Telecom Authorities, as per a revised agreement, was going to establish digital telephones in 199 thana headquarters in Sylhet and other northern districts from June this year.

Moreover, he said, all district headquarters will be provided with a total of 1.40 lakh digital telephone lines with 1995 subject to the availability of funds.

The T and T Board is expected to earn, after successful implementation of these projects, Taka 1,200 crore a year against the present Taka 600 crore.

Meanwhile, the work on the third earth satellite station at Mohakhali here has already started and its capacity is expected to be one and a half times higher than the combined capacity of the existing two stations at Talibabad and Betbunia.

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia recently inaugurated the card phone system at Kamalapur Railway Station here which has already got a positive response from the callers, he said.

A total of 95 card phones including 65 in Dhaka, 12 in Chittagong, six in Khulna, four in Rajshahi, four in Sylhet, two in Barisal and two in Narayanganj have already been installed, the source said.

The Midnight File

US ready to take part in Bosnian peacekeeping force

WASHINGTON, May 3: The United States would be willing to take part in a multinational peacekeeping force in Bosnia, but there is no question of sending US troops into a combat situation, President Bill Clinton said today. "We said several weeks ago that the United States would be prepared to support a United Nations effort, heavily engaged in by the Europeans to help enforce a peace if a peace was made," Clinton told reporters in the Oval Office before a meeting with Hong Kong Governor Chris Patten. But he said it would have to be as part of a peacekeeping force, reports AFP.

Second batch of Palestinian deportees returns home

ALLENBY BRIDGE (occupied West Bank), May 3: A second batch of 14 long-time Palestinian deportees, including the Mayor of East Jerusalem, returned home today to the occupied territories. Several hundred chanting and flag-waving supporters joined relatives to lay on a rousing, emotion-charged reception for the exiles, some of whom Israel has not allowed home in 25 years, at the Allenby Bridge crossing outside Jericho, reports AFP.

CIS peacekeeping plane shot down on Afghan border

MOSCOW, May 3: An Uzbek Sukhi-25 fighter plane was brought down over the Tajik-Afghan border today by a surface-to-air missile fired from Afghan territory, Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) peacekeeping forces said. The chief of staff of CIS border troops based in Tajikistan, quoted by the Interfax news agency, said the plane, which was serving with the CIS peacekeeping forces, came down in an area controlled by a unit of border troops from Moscow. It is the first time a plane belonging to the CIS peacekeeping forces has been shot down in the area, reports AFP.

Sino-Bangla ties are enduring: Hafiz

Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Mirza Gohar Hafiz said yesterday that Sino-Bangladesh relations were not only confined to economic development partnership, but also extended to other fields for mutual benefit and for peace and stability in our region, reports BSS.

He was addressing a reception accorded by him to the visiting Chinese law delegation led by Jin Jian, Vice-Minister for Justice at state guest house Padma, according to an official handout.

Social Welfare and Women's Affairs Minister Tariqul Islam, Information Minister Barrister Nazmul Huda, Energy Minister Dr Khondaker Mosharraf Hossain, Labour and Manpower Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, State Minister for Cultural Affairs Professor Jahanara Begum, State Minister for Social

Welfare and Women's Affairs Sarwar Rahman, State Minister for Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Barrister Aminul Haq and Ambassador of China Jhang Juglang were present at the reception.

Mirza Hafiz expressed his gratitude to the Chinese people for their economic assistance in a number of areas including the friendship bridges and the 210-megawatt thermal power project near Chittagong which would be opened shortly.

Jin Jian, in his speech, said relations between China and Bangladesh were very close and brotherly which would be strengthened further in the years ahead with the exchange of views in many fields, including law and judicial, economic and cultural areas.

CPB

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cisely express our stance on the proposal in the next central committee meeting of the party," he said.

The reformist group of the party, however, is optimistic about the outcome of the proposal it made yesterday.

A leader of the reformist faction, requesting anonymity, told The Daily Star last night, "The proposed sacrifice of our group would clearly indicate to the party activists across the country that we do not want the CPB to be divided."

This group is now even ready to maintain the political line adopted by the party's last congress. The last congress endorsed political pluralism as a party tactic without abandoning Marxism-Leninism as the party's guiding ideology.

Held in 1991, the congress had also authorised the party leadership to work for implementing ideals that included democracy, nationalism, development and social justice.

The hardline faction, however, believes in building a party purely for the communists with a view to ultimately establishing a socialist system in the country.

However, political analysts feel that the hardliners trying to cleanse the CPB of the 'non-communists' have been pushed into a difficult situation with the reformists' move for a compromise for the sake of party unity, specially with party's special council session approaching nearer.

FBCCI

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hotel today.

The Federation, in keeping with the government's liberalised trade policy, advocated allowing import of lubricants by the private sector.

It suggested restriction on import of sugar for protection of the domestic sugar industries, allowing import only to the extent of making up the deficit in supply.

The chamber recommended that machinery used in the construction industry should be considered as capital machinery.

To facilitate the small importers, the FBCCI pleaded for exemption of LCA and permit fees on imports valued up to Tk 150,000.

The Federation recommended bringing machinery used for testing the quality of tea in the free import list. For the interest of tea industry, it also suggested exemption of LCA and permit fees on import of machinery, raw materials and packaging items used in the sector.

ADB: Adjustment efforts

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The ADB Outlook pointed out that the overall fiscal deficit is likely to increase to 7.3 per cent of the GDP in 1993 and 7.9 per cent in 1994 while merchandise exports are projected to rise by about 12 per cent annually during the period and workers' remittances are also expected to be well sustained.

However, it added, the increases in receipts are expected to be offset by increased imports associated with higher private and public investment and the further liberalisation of industrial and trade policies.

The government needs to adopt rigorous measures to reform public administration and rationalise public enterprises, in addition to extending the reforms already initiated, to attain sustained growth and poverty alleviation.

The ADB report stressed the need for an accelerated pace of reforms on urgent basis saying that the objective of achieving sustained growth together with poverty alleviation is unlikely to be realised under the present scenario of modest policy changes.

"A poor public administration system and weak institutions have been major impediments to efficient project and policy implementation and effective service delivery, especially to the rural poor," the ADB says.

It, however, suggests that the overstaffing should be reduced, the public sector wage bill contained, and the incentive structure improved to enhance the efficiency and motivation of public servants.

Stressing the need for a comprehensive programme of enterprise reform, including liquidations and mergers, restructuring and privatisation, the ADB says no substantial progress is visible in this regard, although the 1991 industrial policy announced measures in this direction.

"Public enterprises account for only a small portion of output in Bangladesh. However, they have a far-reaching impact on the public finances and are dominant in the manufacturing sector," it says, adding that evaluation of public enterprise performance indicates a dismal picture of economic inefficiency and huge financial losses despite some effort to reform them.

"The government also needs to emphasize physical infrastructure and human resource development," the ADB says, and adds that the emphasis on human resource development implies not only giving greater priority to health and education but also addressing some major problems in the organisation and delivery of such services.

The report also mentions that the economy of Bangladesh is likely to grow by around five per cent annually during the next two years.

In 1993 and 1994, agricultural production is projected to grow by 4.5 and 4.3 per cent respectively with a significant improvement in food-grain production while the industrial output is expected to increase by 7.1 and 7.2 per cent respectively during the time, the document says.

The growth in the services sector is, however, projected to be 4.7 per cent during the two years.

The growth in the GDP (Gross Domestic Product) in 1992 is estimated by the ADB at four per cent while it was estimated at 2.0, 7.0 and 4.5 per cent for the agriculture,

Wet weather continues

By Staff Correspondent

A moderate storm lashed the capital Monday with heavy shower that submerged the city roads on the third consecutive day, the meteorological office and witnesses said.

Met office sources said the storm packing wind up to 52 kilometer per hour hit parts of the capital at around 8:30 pm but they could not confirm any damage or casualties.

A total of 6 mm of rain was recorded in the 12 hours till 6 pm Monday but the officials said the heavy downpour occurred after that period.

The present rain and cloudy weather was an outcome of the westerly low crossing over the country and under its influence most parts of the country experienced rain.

On Monday 62 mm of rain was recorded in Sylhet followed by 37 mm in Feni, 30 mm in Srimangal, 26 in Tangail and 17 in Rangpur.

The Met office forecast more rain and showers today.

PWD employees

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ident Abul Kashem Azad said that, although the employees of the Works Department were maintaining the utility services at all time with dedication the government had taken an "inhuman decision".

Azad said that while the Finance Minister declared the government decision to re-trench 2400 employees on April 26 yet, surprisingly, the Public Works Department had advertised in the newspapers for new recruitment.

The employees demanded immediate withdrawal of the decision and threatened to suspend utility services to important places.

Minibus kills rickshawpuller

By DMCH Correspondent

A rickshawpuller died on the spot and four others were injured when a minibus crushed several rickshaws near the Dholairpar bridge on the Dhaka-Narayanganj road Monday morning.

Majed Halder, 35, was killed instantly while three of the injured persons, Mazif Sheikh, 20, Taslim, 30, and Kamal, 18, were admitted to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH).

Witnesses said that the minibus bearing number Dhaka Metro-Ja-04-0240, lost control and ploughed through rickshaws parked on the roadside at around 6 am yesterday.

Navy supplies provisions to ship in distress

From Staff Correspondent

KHULNA, May 3: Bangladesh Navy after rigorous attempts, this morning replenished food and water to foreign ship MV Tony Best which has run aground.

A Naval ship BNS Khan Jahan Ali, reached the ship yesterday and after several attempts sent food and water for 23 crew of the ship today at about 11:30 am. The master of the vessel sent a radio message through Singapore today to the owner of the ship that a naval ship had supplied some provisions but those were inadequate.

Meanwhile, the ship's agents already sent two trawlers with food and water which sailed from Kuayala early today. But it was not known whether the trawlers could reach the ship till writing of this report at 8:30 pm.

MV Tony Best, with 23 crew on board, ran aground 70 miles east of the Mongla farway beacon and 20 miles south of Kuakata of Patuakhali in the Bay of Bengal on April 10. She is carrying 11000 metric tons of cement for Mongla Port.



Awami League chief and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina yesterday signing the condolence book opened at the Shri Lankan High Commissioner's residence following the tragic assassination of President Ranasinghe Premadasa. Awami League Secretary Zillur Rahman and High Commissioner Dr. A. N. Haniffa are looking on. —Star photo

SC vacation Sept 12-Oct 25

The annual vacation of the Bangladesh Supreme Court will commence on September 12 and will continue till October 25, an official handout said yesterday, reports BSS.

Courts of the High Court Division and Appellate Division of the Supreme Court will remain closed during the vacation.

DPRK, ROK troops exchange fire

SEOUL, May 3: North Korean soldiers on Sunday opened fire toward South Korean soldiers at the heavily armed border, the US military command in Seoul said Monday, reports AP.

A North Korean guard post fired two machine gun rounds toward South Korea, but there was no apparent damage," said Jim Coles, spokesman for the command.

The South Korean Defence Ministry confirmed the incident.

Janata Tower Case Cross examination of all PWs ends

With the completion of the cross examination of Mujibur Rahman, a Prosecution Witness (PW) in the Janata Tower Case, the deposition of all witnesses in this case ended yesterday, reports BSS.

Rahman, who is the investigating officer in this case, was the 35th and last PW. Hearing of the case began early last year. The PW, who is presently stationed at Police Headquarters as an ASP, was examined by five defence counsels over three days.

Deposed president HM Ershad, his wife begum Raushan Ershad and 18 others are accused in this case.

Additional Sessions and Special Judge Md Ansaruddin Sikder, fixed May 8 for examination of the accused persons under Section 342 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CR. PC).

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