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Show of political strength Pro-Koirala activists flood Kathmandu

KATHMANDU, July 28: Thousands of supporters of interim premier Girija Prasad Koirala poured into the Nepalese capital today in a show of political solidarity after he crushed attempts to have him expelled from his own party, reports AFP.

Supporters of Koirala — under attack for convincing King Birendra to dissolve Parliament and call for mid term elections in November — arrived in Kathmandu after a crucial Nepali Congress (NC) Party meeting late Wednesday.

During the meeting party officials forged a unity pact and agreed that Koirala, NC President Krishna Prasad Bhattarai, and General Secretary Mahendra Narayan Nidhi should not contest the polls.

Koirala resigned as Prime Minister after a humiliating defeat in Parliament of his government's annual plan on July 10.

Twenty-four hours later, on his advice, the King dissolved the House of Representatives, called mid-term polls and named Koirala as interim prime minister, triggering political chaos.

"One of the main conditions for the compromise was Koirala's agreement for not contesting the November mid-term polls," Rana Bhatt, spokesman for the party's central working committee, told AFP.

An estimated 16,000 pro-Koirala NC activists were brought today to Kathmandu from the premier's native Morang, 290 kilometers away, party sources and state radio said.

The sources said Koirala might attempt an 11th-hour comeback before the elections but still faced grave challenges from the left after neutralizing his opponents within the NC.

Six communist factions



The Awami League yesterday held a *gaebana janaza* at the South Gate of the Baitul Mukarram for those killed in Chittagong on Tuesday. — Star photo

Govt to relax control over shipping business

Star Report

The rules related to maritime shipping business will be liberalised and for this amendments to the relevant laws are now in process.

According to well-placed sources in the Ministry of Shipping, the draft of the amendments to Bangladesh Merchant Shipping Ordinance 1991 has already been finalised with the vetting from the Ministry of Law. The draft will be placed before Parliament as a bill for passage.

The proposed amendments, okayed by the Cabinet, will substantially reduce government control over the maritime shipping business. Under the new regulations, government permission will not be required to buy, sell or hand over the ocean-going vessels.

The 'age-limit' of the old ships that can be procured will also be relaxed and extended to 20 years from 15 years.

The import duty, permit fees and VAT for the ships having a capacity of over 3000 tonnes will be waived. However, VAT will be imposed if such ships are broken in Bangladesh for commercial use.

The government has already decided to recognise maritime shipping as an industry and provide credit facilities accordingly.

Official sources said the measure will facilitate expansion of country's merchant shipping and also encourage foreign investment in the sector.

Amendments to the law have also been proposed to facilitate employment of foreign nationals in the shipping companies set up under joint venture with foreign firms.

Under the proposed rules, the government will not intervene in fixing freight of ocean-going ships while the ship owners will have the opportunity to recruit personnel of their own choice from the sailors enlisted at government's shipping office.

Gear up agitation to oust BNP, says Hasina

Opposition leader Sheikh Hasina yesterday called for strengthening the current agitation to force the 'corrupt' BNP government to quit and realise parliamentary elections under a non-party caretaker administration, reports UNB.

Addressing the newly-elected leaders of the Pirojpur Govt College students union at her 29 Minto Road residence she said the victory of the Chhatra League in the college would accelerate the present agitation.

The Awami League president advised the student leaders to work for the welfare of general students.

An AL press release said more than 200 leaders and workers of different organisations from Moulvibazar district met Hasina at her Minto Road residence and joined the Awami League.

US congratulates Bangladesh

The United States has congratulated Bangladesh for despatching a team of cholera experts to Rwanda to combat the cholera epidemic there, reports BSS.

"We are heartened by the response Bangladesh gave this week to President Clinton's initiative to help Rwanda's refugees," J Brian, Atwood, Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), said in a message to Foreign Minister A S M Mostafizur Rahman.

Students shift hartal to July 30

By Staff Correspondent

The Sampradayikata Birodhi Chhatra Samaj has now decided to observe hartal on July 30 instead of July 31 as announced earlier.

The decision was taken at a meeting of the central committee held at the office of the Samajtantrik Chhatra Front yesterday.

The leaders of the Chhatra Samaj said they can strengthen the agitation by observing their hartal unitedly with the Awami League on the same day.

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Hartal observed in Chittagong

By Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, July 28: A complete half-day hartal was observed here today in protest against the BNP government's incidents at Lalighi maidan in which six persons were killed and over 200 injured.

Both Jamaat and the All-Party Students Unity (APSU) gave the call for hartal blaming each other for the armed clash between their supporters over the holding of a public meeting at Lalighi maidan.

Barring some cocktail blasts and picketing no untoward incident was reported during the hartal hours. The two sides also held rallies and brought out processions.

All kinds of vehicles stayed off the roads and highways while shops and markets remained closed.

Most of the offices could not function because of poor attendance. Mills, and factories could not operate.

According to official sources, normal work in the Chittagong port was also hampered.

20 hurt as police, Maitree clash in Rajshahi

By Staff Correspondent

RAJSHAHI, July 28: At least 20 persons were injured in a clash between policemen and workers of the Chhatra Maitree at the C&B crossing in the city today.

Five of them, including two policemen, were admitted to the Rajshahi Medical College Hospital.

Witnesses said, the Chhatra Maitree Rajshahi New Degree College unit, brought out a procession to protest Tuesday's killings in Chittagong. At on stage, the students attacked a parked truck at the C&B crossing. Police rushed to the spot and lobbed eight to 10 teargas shells and resorted to lathicharge to disperse the mob.

Police claimed that the students fired 10 round of bullets.

Quake jolts New Delhi

NEW DELHI, July 28: The Indian capital was hit by an earthquake Thursday, forcing tens of thousands of residents out of their homes in fear, reports AP.

Police reported at least two cases of house collapse in the old district.

"It is too early to access the damage, but the first report of damage says that at least two houses have collapsed," said police spokesman Jagbir Malik. There was no immediate report of casualties.

Seismological Department chief SN Chatterjee said the epicenter was just southwest of New Delhi.

BNP terms AL demand self-contradictory

By Staff Correspondent

The ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) has termed the so-called one-point demand of the opposition Awami League (AL) 'contradictory' to its previous demand for a caretaker government.

"If they unseat the BNP government, how can they form a caretaker government with the minority parties in Parliament?" posed Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, Joint Secretary General of the BNP and Labour Minister.

"Until yesterday, their main demand was to press the ruling party to bring a bill in the House providing for a caretaker government," the BNP leader told The Daily Star last night.

"But suddenly their demand has changed."

AL chief Sheikh Hasina, at a public meeting in the city Wednesday, called for a one-point agitation to unseat the BNP government.

Mannan Bhuiyan said that if their (opposition's) aim was to ensure holding of fair elections then they could join Parliament sessions to discuss the bill brought by the ruling party to strengthen the Election Commission.

"I am not sure how seriously they want fair elections. Their activities indicate they only want power," the BNP Jt Secretary General said.

"Their present campaign is part of a conspiracy," Mannan Bhuiyan said that

Businessmen concerned at political situation

Star Report

The country's business community is watching the political situation with a degree of concern.

They feel that the politicians should be more cautious in their actions and utterances so that the economy is not hurt for the sake of politics.

This correspondent contacted a number of business leaders in the city yesterday only to learn that business leaders had been discussing the political developments in the country and were very much concerned at the situation.

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Ctg situation terrible: Dr Kamal

Resist Jamaat-Shibir axis unitedly

By Staff Correspondent

Gano Forum chief Dr Kamal Hossain has urged all pro-liberation elements both in government and the Opposition to forge a greater unity against the designs of the 'anti-liberation' Jamaat-Shibir axis to jeopardise the country's independence.

"The Chittagong massacre by the Jamaat-Shibir group has put national independence and sovereignty under serious threat," Dr Kamal said.

Addressing a news conference at the Jatiya Press Club yesterday, the GF leader accused the Jamaat of deploying its armed goons and the government of misusing the police and BDR personnel against the freedom-loving people of Chittagong. He also demanded a judicial investigation into the July 26 incident in Chittagong in which six people died.

Narrating his experiences after visiting Chittagong, Dr Kamal said a "terrible" situation was prevailing there due to the Jamaat-sponsored atrocities that left half a dozen dead and hundreds other injured.

"The Chittagong massacre reminds us of the Jamaat's genocide during the Liberation War and the party has again become active against the pro-liberation forces."

The people of all walks of life in Chittagong unitedly stood against the massacre.

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Relocation of leather industries stressed

By Staff Correspondent

Speakers at a seminar yesterday stressed the need for relocating the country's leather industries in separate industrial zones to attract foreign investment in the form of joint venture and also to check environmental pollution.

They said relocation of leather industries would also help improve the quality of leather and leather goods and increase their export.

The seminar on 'Export of Leather and Leather Goods: Problems and Prospects' was organised by the Export Promotion Bureau (EPB) yesterday at the conference hall of the Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DCCI).

Commerce Minister M Shamsul Islam inaugurated the seminar. Chaired by FBCCI president Mahbubur Rahman, the inaugural function was addressed by, among others, DCCI president Abdur Rob Chowdhury, MCCI vice president Azimur Rahman, Commerce Secretary Mofazzal Karim and EPB vice chairman Anisul Huq Chowdhury.

The Commerce Minister stressed the need for improving the quality of leather and responding quickly to the changing style and design of leather goods in the international market. Timely shipment of leather products is also a vital factor for increasing export, he added.

The minister said the demand for leather goods is increasing in the western world, but the leather processing units are not increasing to that extent because of increased awareness about the environmental aspects. Bangladesh

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SAARC FM's arrive today

The ministers of the countries of South Asia arrive in Dhaka today to attend the 14th SAARC Council of Ministers meeting beginning tomorrow, reports UNB.

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia, the current Chairperson of the SAARC, will open the two-day meeting at the International Conference Centre (ICC).

Pakistan Foreign Minister Sardar Asaf Ahmed Ali, Indian State Minister for External Affairs R L Bhatia, Nepalese Minister for Tourism and Civil Aviation Ram Hari Joshi, Foreign Minister of the Maldives Fatullah Jameel and Sri Lankan Foreign Minister ACS Hameed are due to fly in the capital today.

Bhutanese Foreign Minister Lynopo Dawa Tsering and Indian Foreign Secretary K Shrinivasan will arrive tomorrow.

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Women must get their due place in society: PM

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia yesterday said if necessary, her government would undertake more development programmes and allocate money for the self-reliance of women, ending the legacy of their deprivation in society, reports UNB.

"No more to be repressed. No more to be neglected. We (women) have to capture our due place in society," she told a gathering of women and stressed the need for their participation in nation-building activities.

She said her government had been implementing massive programmes for the development of the women community, and as a result, women were attaining self-reliance throughout the country.

Once the women of our villages were totally dependent on men, she said.

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Ban on religion based politics demanded

By Staff Correspondent

Some 100 teachers of Dhaka University in a joint statement yesterday called for necessary amendments to the Constitution to ban religion based politics in the country.

The statement said, "The Constitution of 1972 upholds secularism as one of its fundamental principles. This principle separates religion as one's personal belief from the affairs of the state."

The statement noted with concern that a certain quarter was inciting conflicts and violence in society in the name of religion and by giving fatwas.

"We believe, it is necessary to reestablish secularism, and ban religion based politics and politics in places of prayers," the statement said.

They urged the members of Parliament to take initiatives to amend the Constitution.

The statement was issued by Dr Sayed-ur-Rahman, Dr Arisuzzaman, Dr Humayun Azad, Dr Mohammad Muniruzzaman, Dr Sirajul Islam Chowdhury, Dr Shawkat Hossain, Dr Ahmed Kamal, Dr Parvin Hasan, Dr Mamtazur Rahman Tarafdar, Dr Aminul Islam, Dr Golam Rahman, Jamil Ahmed, Mridul Kanti Bhattacharyya and

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Religious groups hold 'long march' today

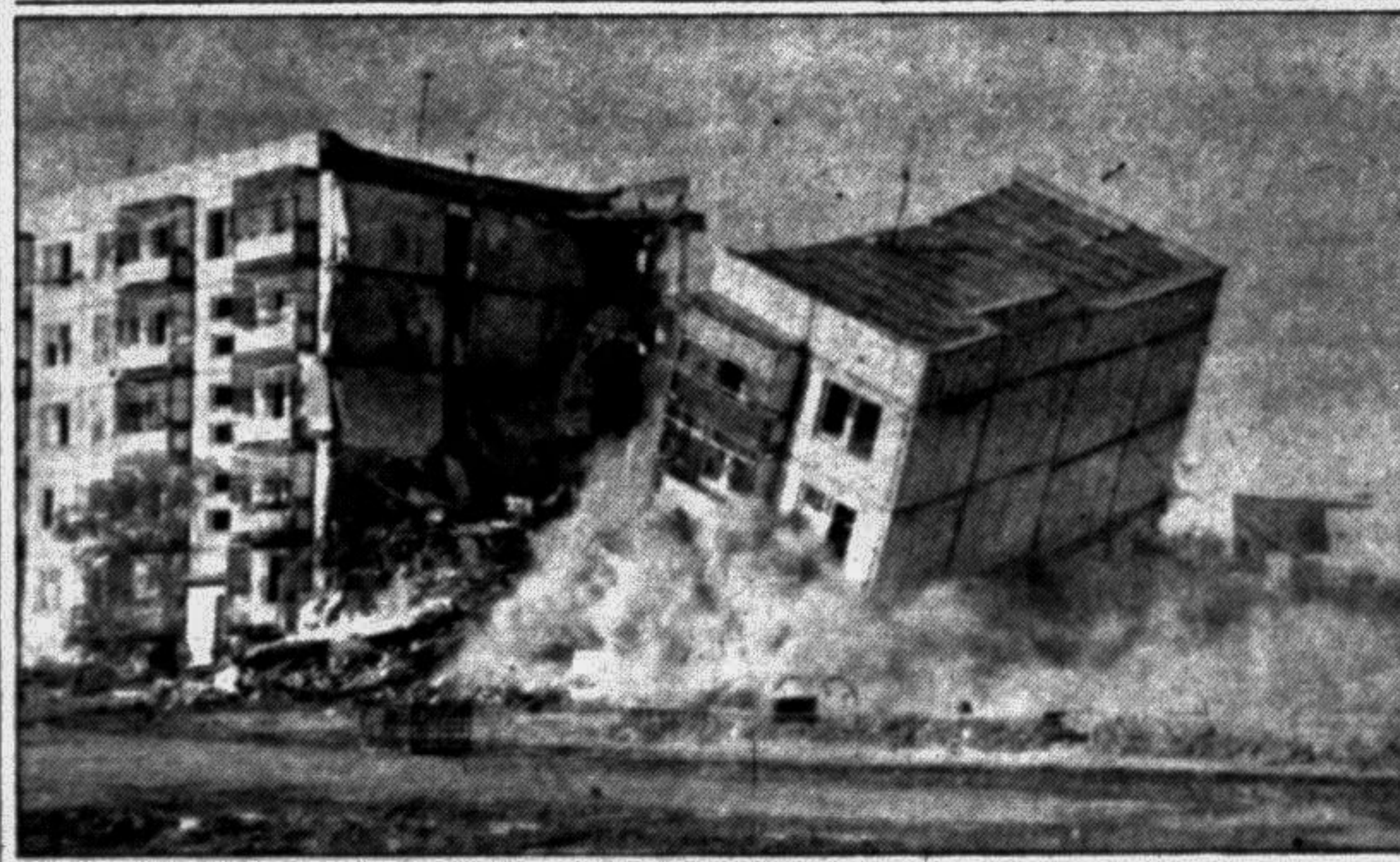
Long-marchers started converging on the capital for 'staging a demonstration today against what they called, blasphemous acts and utterances of 'murtads' or apostates, reports UNB.

An alliance of religious organisations is sponsoring a 'grand rally at the Manik Mia Avenue in observance of 'Quran Day'.

A source in the alliance told UNB last night that all preparations had been made for holding the rally and receiving and providing accommodation to the marchers from different parts of the country.

They were being given shelter at different city madrassahs and mosques.

The long-marchers will say their Jum'a prayers at Manik Mia Avenue before the rally organised to protest anti-religion activities in the country and demand punishment of controversial writer Taslima Nasreen, the introduction of a blasphemy law and closing down of some newspapers.



Part of the building, which was rocked by an explosion collapses during rescue work in Leninsk, a residential town near the Baikonur cosmodrome in Kazakhstan Wednesday. — AFP photo

Pakistan urges US to restrain India from building missiles

ISLAMABAD, July 28: Pakistan urged the United States here today to restrain India from building long-range missiles.

"The US must exercise her influence to stop India from manufacturing long-range missiles," President Farooq Ahmed Leghari told a top US military official, during a meeting here, an official statement said, reports AFP.

The Commander-in-Chief of the US Central Command, General Joseph P Hoar arrived here Tuesday on a three-day visit to Pakistan.

The statement quoted Leghari as saying that if India continued its missile programme all the countries in the region would be compelled to review the whole range of their security systems.

"Instead of forcing the neighbouring countries into a mad arms race which would certainly be at the expense of the economic betterment of the people on either side, India should try to adopt a positive attitude towards the issue like Kashmir and nuclear proliferation," he said.

On the Kashmir dispute between India and Pakistan, Leghari said that the "stubborn" attitude of the Indian government and "inhuman acts of the Indian troops have left the Kashmiri people with no option but to fight for their right to self-determination."

"This is a revolt, absolutely internal and indigenous and pointing fingers at Pakistan would in no way help India side track the real issue involved," the President said.

Pakistan supports the separatists campaign in Indian-

controlled Kashmir, calling it a legitimate self-determination movement. It denies Indian charges that it is providing arms and training to Kashmir militants.

The dispute over Kashmir, which is divided between the two countries and is claimed by both, has been the catalyst for two wars between them since their independence from Britain in 1947.

According to the statement, Hoar said during the meeting that Pakistan and US could be good friends as both sides were sincerely "struggling to remove the irritants" in bilateral relations.

The US has been urging Pakistan to agree to a "verifiable freeze" on its nuclear programme which led to the stoppage of US aid to Islamabad in 1990.

NEWS BRIEFS

Hasina goes to Noakhali today

Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina goes to greater Noakhali district today on a four day organisational tour. She will address public meetings in Noakhali on July 29, Lakshipur on July 30 and Fenl on July 31. From Fenl, Hasina will go to Chittagong to meet the families of those killed and wounded in Tuesday's violence in the port city, reports UNB.

SSIMCSP polls August 2

The elections of the Sir Salimullah Medical College Students' Union scheduled on July 31 has been postponed for 'unavoidable reasons, a press release signed by election commissioner of students union elections of the college said. According to new schedule, the elections will now be held on August 2 and voting will be held from 8 am to 1 pm, reports BSS.

NU exams dates deferred

The examinations of first part of MA, MSc, and M Com of the year 1992 under the National University which were scheduled to be held on July 30, will now be held on September 1, 1994 due to 'unavoidable circumstances', reports BSS.

Jamaat rally in city today

Jamaat-i-Islami will hold a rally today at the north gate of the Baitul Mukarram Mosque at 3 pm demanding passage of its blasphemy act bill in Parliament. Party chief Prof Golam Azam will be the chief guest at the rally, reports UNB.

DU exams postponed

Examinations under course system of the Dhaka University scheduled on July 30 and 31 at the Arts Building and Curzon Hall centres have been postponed due to 'unavoidable circumstances. The date for the postponed examinations will be announced at the earliest, reports BSS.