

## DOWN TO EARTH

# Tale of Unclaimed Death Casualties in City

By A S M Nurunnabi

Every day from the four corners of the country, numerous persons come to the metropolitan city of Dhaka on various business. If any of them meets a sudden unnatural death in the city, he is liable to become an unclaimed corpse if he does not bear any identification paper. It has been seen that in such cases where no identification of the victims of accidents is available, they were buried as unclaimed bodies. It is alleged that due to faulty systems at hospital morgues and city graveyards, which preclude effective enquiries subsequently by concerned relatives, the number of unclaimed corpses has been increasing day by day in the city.

According to Anjuman-e-Mafidul Islam sources, their statistics for the last few years show that they receive seven to eight unclaimed bodies every day on the average.

The authorities that are associated with the task of recovering and burying unclaimed bodies are the police administration, Anjuman-e-Mafidul Islam and the Azimpur and Jurain graveyards authorities controlled by the Dhaka City Corporation.

The police normally get information about unnatural deaths through the people present at the places of occurrence. Besides, unidentified bodies recovered as a result of accidents from trains, launches, buses or on roads are first recovered by the police of the concerned police stations and then made over to hospital morgues for post-mortem. After the preparation of post-mortem and necessary reports, the police hand over the bodies to Anjuman-e-Mafidul Islam.

As a matter of formality, the Detective Branch of the police also take photographs of the bodies, but in case the corpses are mutilated or badly disfigured, no photographs are taken. Unidentified bodies from railway accidents are recovered by the railway police of the concerned area and thereafter the usual formalities are followed.

Anjuman-e-Mafidul Islam is a well-known social service organization. It came into being back in 1947. From that time, the organization, along with its other social welfare services, has been associated with the

work of carrying and supplying shrouds for the unclaimed deadbodies. Till 1958, the organization used to recover such bodies when informed by local people, and then carried them to the graveyards for burial after necessary formalities. It was, however, learnt that due to some legal complications, Anjuman withdrew from such work about fourteen years ago. At present the unclaimed bodies are received by Anjuman through the police.

As regards corpses belonging to other religions, no problem for their disposal arises in the cases of males. If the body happened to be of a Hindu, the Hindu Cremation Society is approached which claims three to three thousand and five hundred taka for cremation of each body. In many cases, it was seen that, since neither the police nor the morgue was able to provide the required fund, such bodies are disposed of on the basis of death certificate showing the deceased as a Muslim.

The Dhaka City Corporation has under its control four graveyards, namely, Shaheed Buddhijib graveyard at Mirpur, Banani graveyard, Azimpur graveyard and Jurain graveyard. But only in Azimpur and Jurain graveyards, the unclaimed corpses are allowed to be buried. The shrouds for such corpses are supplied by Anjuman and the balance of the cost of burial is borne by the City Corporation. The cost of each burial is said to be between Tk 400 and 450. It was learnt from City Corporation sources that 600 and 400 unclaimed bodies were buried last year in the Azimpur and Jurain graveyard respectively.

The issue of unclaimed bodies was raised recently in a Bangla daily. It was learnt that in two cases of deaths from accidents, the corpses were buried as unclaimed ones in circumstances which somewhat showed lack of prompt action on the part of the relatives of the deceased in making necessary enquiries. In one case, the person was a retired old man out for a morning stroll. Through carelessness perhaps, he was run over at a railway level crossing at Banani. For two days, his body lay in the morgue of the Dhaka Medical College, but none of his relatives made enquiries

about him, as they supposed that he might be staying with some of his relatives. After two or three days when the body was already made over to Anjuman for burial, his relatives started making enquiries, but initially they could make no headway. Then after a lapse of 15 to 20 days, a son of the deceased came to know from the registers of the Dhaka Medical College and the records of the police that a body with clothes fitting the description of those which his dead father wore was already buried in the Azimpur graveyard by Anjuman.

A similar fate awaited one Mukhlisur Rahman of village Baruna under Dumuria P.S. of Khulna district. In June last he came to Dhaka to purchase some stocks for his business. He went out of his brother's residence at Khilkhet and afterwards became traceless. After some days, his relatives came to know from Cantonment P.S. and post-mortem report of the Dhaka Medical College that a person fitting the description of their missing relative was run over by a train at the Khilkhet railway crossing and his deadbody was buried at the Azimpur graveyard on June 11 last as an unclaimed body.

In both these cases, as there was no burial plot number in the records of the graveyard authority for the graves of the unclaimed corpses, their near and dear ones would never know the exact location of the graves of their dead relatives.

There are humane implications in the issue. Since deaths from accidents frequently take place in the city and in order to avoid being labelled as unclaimed corpse, some observers suggest that city dwellers should always carry with them particulars of their own name and address so that relatives of the victims of accidents can be promptly contacted. Where such particulars are wanting, especially in the cases of illiterate persons, the unclaimed corpses might be kept in cold storage of mortuaries for a couple of days and publicity of such deaths given through radio and TV. If, thereafter, no response is received, such unclaimed bodies might be buried through Anjuman-e-Mafidul Islam.



Seen from left, Sri Lankan Foreign Minister ACS Hameed, the Tourism & Civil Aviation Minister of Nepal Ram Hari Joshi and Indian Minister of State for External Affairs R L Bhatia who arrived in the city yesterday to attend the 14th SAARC Council of Ministers meeting beginning today.

## SAARC FMs meet begins today

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to fix the date for the next summit, originally slated to be held in New Delhi by next December. The hosts later proposed to hold the summit sometime in April '95. This would require the unanimous approval of the Council of Ministers.

The two-day meeting will review the progress made in the 12 areas of cooperation now existing under the umbrella of SAARC. The areas so far identified are: agriculture, communications, education and culture, environment, health and population, meteorology, prevention of drug trafficking and drug abuse, rural development, science and technology, tourism, transport and women in development.

The Council of Ministers will review poverty alleviation programmes, and also consider the feasibility of setting up a South Asian Development Fund (SADF).

The ministers will also endorse the proposals of the recent Dhaka SAARC Finance and Planning Ministers' conference.

Meanwhile, the Standing Committee comprising the Foreign Secretaries concluded their three-day deliberations in the city yesterday. After reviewing the entire gamut of the association's activities the Committee has prepared a 20-point agenda.

In its deliberations the Standing Committee agreed to finalise trade concessions under the South Asian Preferential Trading Arrangement (SAPTA) at the next meeting of the Inter-governmental Group (IGG) scheduled to be held in Islamabad in September.

The SAPTA agreement is an umbrella framework of rules providing for step-by-step liberalisation of inter-regional trade. It envisages periodic rounds of negotiations for ex-



Foreign Minister ASM Mostafizur Rahman received at the Zia airport Pakistani Foreign Minister Sardar Aseff Ahmad Ali (R) who arrived yesterday to attend the 14th SAARC Council of Ministers meeting beginning in the capital today.

change of trade concessions on tariff, para-tariff and non-tariff lines. The SAPTA agreement is due to be implemented by the end of 1995 after ratification by the seven member states.

The Foreign Secretaries also discussed matters relating to the welfare of children and decided that national committees should be set up for the preparation of country reports on the state of children.

A press release issued at the end of the Standing Committee meeting said the Committee had accorded recognition to SAARC Law, an association for persons of the legal communities of the member countries as the regional apex body like the SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industries.

The Standing Committee also endorsed the project proposal for promotion of 'bio-villages' in the region.

The Committee, while approving the recommendations of some technical committees under the integrated pro-

gramme of action, welcomed the proposals under the agriculture sector entitled 'Reaching the Millions - Training of Farmers and Farm Women in the SAARC region by 2000 AD.'

Foreign Minister Mostafizur Rahman as chairman of the council is also expected to place a report on his consultations with two other regional groups, the ASEAN and the European Union (EU) relating to common matters of cooperation.

The visiting delegates will also be taken for a river cruise on board the MV Ostrich on July 31 during which they will hold informal consultations.

The Council of Ministers will adopt the final report on its proceedings the same day in the evening.

Mostafizur Rahman is scheduled to brief the press on the outcome of the conference on July 31 at 8 pm at the Sheraton Hotel.

## The Midnight File

### US recognises new Rwandan govt

WASHINGTON, July 29: The United States has recognised the new government in Rwanda and will now work with it to carry out humanitarian aid efforts, the State Department announced today, reports Reuter.

### DPRK has no N-arms : Russia

MOSCOW, July 29: North Korea 'has no nuclear weapons,' a Russian Foreign Ministry spokesman said Thursday quoted by the news agency Itar-Tass. 'According to our information, North Korea has no nuclear weapons in place,' Mikhail Demurin said, reacting to a statement on Wednesday made by the North Korean Prime Minister's son-in-law, a refugee in South Korea since the end of May, claiming Pyongyang had 'five nuclear bombs,' reports AFP.

## Jamaat slams govt's policy

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icised India for patronising Taslima Nasreen for her comments against the national sovereignty.

Referring to the demand for national elections under a caretaker administration, he warned of a mass agitation to unseat the government if it failed to concede the demand.

This government can very well take pride by setting up a new, healthy trend in the country's democratic development by arranging elections under a non-party caretaker administration,' he believed.

Azam also urged his followers to strengthen the campaign for establishing Islamic laws in the country and rule by 'honest and Allah-fearing people' and to work relentlessly for the revival of Islam.

Secretary General of the party, Matur Rahman Nazami, MP, announced a two-month-long agitational programme

beginning August 1 to press the demands for enacting a blasphemy law, punishing the 'apostates', stopping anti-Islamic activities by the NGOs and declaring the Ahmediyas or Qadianis non-Muslims.

Central leaders would visit and address rallies in different parts of the country during this period to intensify the agitations, he added.

Jamaat central leaders including Abbas Ali Khan, Shamshur Rahman, Abdul Kader Molah, Abdus Sobhan, MP, Quamaruzzaman and Abul Kalam Md Mujahid also addressed the rally.

Earlier, police arrested six people and seized a Jeep for carrying iron rods in the afternoon near the venue of the Jamaat meeting.

Police intercepted the vehicle bearing number Dhaka Metro Bha-5146, arrested its six passengers and recovered iron rods from it, police said.

The arrested persons were detained at the Ramna Police station and a case was lodged against them.

## Quake damages Delhi Jama Mosque

NEW DELHI, July 29: A minaret atop India's largest mosque, the Jama Masjid, was toppled by a mild earthquake that rattled New Delhi on Thursday, mosque officials said Friday, reports AP.

The 17th century mosque, built during the reign of the Mogul king Shahjahan, has a capacity of 25,000.

## Maldives

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High Commissioner to Sri Lanka Shamsheer Mobin Chowdhury and Sri Lankan High Commissioner in Dhaka Dr A N Haniffa were also present.

'I am happy to be back here to pursue the goals of SAARC,' Sri Lankan Foreign Minister A C S Hameed told newsmen at the Zia International Airport on arrival.

He appreciated the role played by Bangladesh in promoting the cause of SAARC.

Replying to a question with regard to holding SAARC summit timely as prescribed in its charter, Hameed said 'This is a coalition of states. We are not rigid or dogmatic and the matter can be considered as and when necessary' to maintain the schedule.

Maldives Foreign Minister Fatullah Jameel said he was enthusiastic about the meeting as 'We are a small country but we have been working very hard with the partners to maintain the momentum of SAARC.'

'We have a good chairman (of council of ministers). We have total confidence in him and we are going to have a productive session putting things in the right perspective,' he told newsmen.

## Aseff Ali

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Nazimuddin A Sheikh who is already in the capital in connection with the SAARC meeting was present.

Aseff told a questioner that during his stay in Dhaka he would try to seize the opportunity of having a bilateral parley with Indian State Minister of External Affairs R L Bhatia who will represent his country at the SAARC Ministers meeting.

Earlier, the Pakistan Foreign Minister in his opening statement described the Saturday's SAARC Minister's meeting as important, as it will be their last meeting before the next summit.

'Our expectation is always optimistic on the future of the SAARC,' he observed, responding to a question.

Asked if the Jordan-Israel peace treaty will undermine the OIC's stand on the holy city of Jerusalem, Pakistan Minister said 'Jordan can protect its interest in its own way. Every sovereign country has got their rights to safeguard its interest.'

He replied in the negative when asked if his country was considering to accord diplomatic recognition to Israel. In view of the changing circumstances, The OIC has yet to take any collective decision on the issue, he added.

## Pakistan may close Indian consulate in Karachi

ISLAMABAD, July 29: Pakistan may order the closure of the Indian consulate general in Karachi in the next few days, a newspaper reported today, says PTI.

There was no official confirmation of the report in 'The Nation'.

The newspaper, quoting intelligence sources, said intelligence agencies had been supplying reports to the government for quite some time, but now finally the government was likely to take appropriate action and close down the Indian consulate.

## 14 injured

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deputy commissioner, an assistant commissioner and four havildars. All were admitted to the Rajarbagh Police Hospital.

The injured UAC activists were taken to the Al-Markazul Hospital in Shyamoli where three of them were admitted and the rest released after first aid. Those admitted are Giasuddin, 20, Nizamuddin, 22, and Badal, 10.

BSS adds: A group of people after attending a rally at the Manik Mia Avenue had attacked the MP Hostel No 1 at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar yesterday afternoon and damaged four vehicles parked there.

The attackers also seriously injured Abdur Rob, an employee of the hostel. They were carrying lathis and lethal weapons, witnesses said.

Alamgir Khand Khan and Khademul Islam, members of Parliament in a joint statement last night condemned the attack and demanded legal actions against the culprits.

Meanwhile, Speaker Shaikh Razzak Ali and Chief Whip Khandkar Delwar Hossain visited the spot and expressed their condemnation for the incident. Some members of Parliament and senior officials of the Parliament Secretariat were present during the Speaker's visit.

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## BNP has lost credibility: Hasina

From Our Correspondent

MAJDEE COURT, Noakhali, July 29: Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina today said that the BNP government has lost all credibility and no elections were acceptable under this government.

She said that three and half years of BNP rule had given the nation a culture of corruption and violence.

Sheikh Hasina said: 'To unseat Khaleda Zia's government I come, to you first of all. My father Sheikh Mujib announced his six-point demand for East Pakistani people when he addressed his first meeting at Noakhali and today I announce my one-point demand.'

The Awami League chief was addressing a huge public rally at Begumganj government pilot high school ground.

Hasina said that the provision for holding election under a caretaker administration is absolutely necessary to re-establish the people's democratic right to vote.

In this connection, he referred to the rise and fall of Islamic rule in Spain.

The NDA leader, refusing to identify himself with the fundamentalists, however, said that President Bill Clinton and the Queen of Britain, who are now trying to brand us as fundamentalists, rather were themselves fundamentalists.

'The president of the United States is constitutionally obliged to swear an oath by the Bible while the Queen of Britain is under obligation to defend the Christian faith,' Zahid argued. He also felt that an honest and God-fearing government was imperative to enact an anti-blasphemy law and implement Islamic ideals in different spheres of national life.

Jatiya Jubo Command president Nazmul Huq alleged that 'Hindu-dominated India was sponsoring the anti-Islamic authors of the country.' He observed that another 'war of independence' was now necessary to free Bangladesh from both Indian agents and anti-Islamic forces.

The Jubo Command leader accused the government of co-operating with the Western world to deport Taslima Nasreen safely and warned that

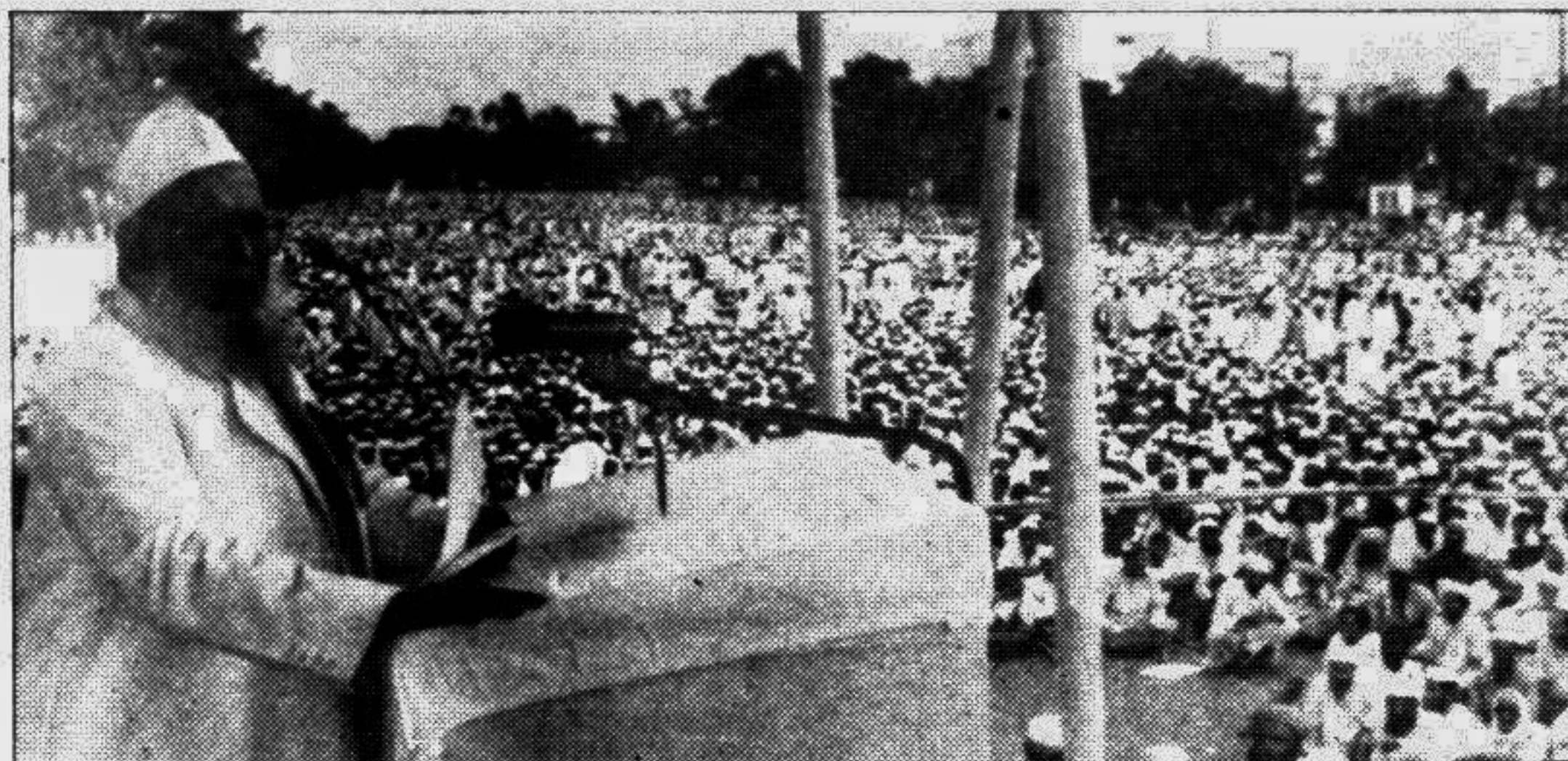
## Ex-Italian PM Craxi jailed for bank fraud

MILAN, Italy, July 29: Former prime minister Bettino Craxi, one of the most illustrious casualties of Italy's corruption probes, was sentenced to eight and a half years in jail today after being found guilty of fraud, court sources said, reports Reuter.

Craxi, who was not in court to hear the sentence, was convicted of fraudulent bankruptcy in connection with the collapse of Italian bank Banco Ambrosiano a decade ago.

It was the first trial involving a leader of one of Italy's disgraced traditional parties to come to the sentencing stage after a two years of corruption probes. His former number two at the Socialist Party, ex-justice minister Claudio Martelli, was given the same sentence.

Craxi faces three other corruption trials



Maulana Obaidul Huq, Khatib of Baitul Mukarram National Mosque addressing the 'Quran Day' rally organised by the United Action Council at Manik Mia Avenue in the city yesterday.

## Islamic groups vow

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tion but to fight for their existence as Muslims. 'The enemies of Islam have no power to destroy the Holy Quran and Islam, but the enemies can destroy the Muslims of the country,' Zahid observed.

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The Jubo Command leader accused the government of co-operating with the Western world to deport Taslima Nasreen safely and warned that

if that happened, the people would try Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia as a betrayer.

Maulana Fazlul Huq Amiri said the government was yet to accept any of their demands and threatened to wage a campaign against the government.

He said another long march would be organised to make Bangladesh an Islamic state and called for continuing a united struggle until an 'Islamic Hukumat' was established.

Maulana Azizul Haq alleged that the NGOs working here were taking advantage of the poverty of the Muslims and converting them to Christianity by giving them money, food and land.

Schools set up by the NGOs across the country were teaching Christianity to the children. Now all children are going to the NGO schools instead of the madrasahs and government primary schools, he alleged.

He further alleged that the NGOs had brought women out of their homes, giving them employment, changing the traditional society and teaching them to ignore their old values.

Shaful Alam Pradhan, Major (ret'd) Bazul Huda, Maulana Shamsuddin Quasemi, Maulana Ashraf Ali and Maulana Abdul Latif also spoke at the rally.

The Khatib of Baitul Mukarram mosque Maulana Obaidul Huq presided over the rally.

## JU students attack buses near campus

By JU Correspondent

Some 100 students of Jahangirnagar University yesterday pelted stones at nearly two dozen buses. The buses were carrying the activists of different parties from a rally at Manik Mia Avenue in the capital.

Sources said the students stoned the buses near the campus on the Dhaka-Aricha road when the activists were returning homes after attending the rally.

There was no report of any injury.

Later the students brought out a procession in support of today's hartal.

## Neil Kinnock Euro commissioner in Brussels

LONDON, July 29: British Conservative Prime Minister John Major today appointed former Labour Party leader Neil Kinnock as European Commissioner in Brussels, informed sources said here, reports AFP.

Kinnock was replaced as leader losing the 1992 general elections to Major.

Kinnock will take up his new job in Brussels alongside Sir Leon Brittan, a former Conservative Minister.

His wife, Glyns, has been elected to serve as a Euro-MP in Strasbourg.