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# The Daily Star

Today's issue  
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**Friendly ties with Dhaka to continue: Vajpayee**

NEW DELHI, Mar 25: The new Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee has said that his government is committed to sustaining a stable friendly and cooperative relationship with Bangladesh, reports BSS.

Replying to a message of felicitations earlier sent by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, Vajpayee said, "I am grateful for the warm personal sentiments which you have conveyed, and am happy to note, in turn, the deep and friendly sentiment your name evokes in my country."

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## Dhaka to host D-8 summit in Nov

By M Anwarul Haq

Dhaka is undertaking extensive preparations for organising the single biggest gathering of international leaders in November when it hosts the summit of the newly launched D-8 grouping.

Presidents or Prime Ministers of Egypt, Iran, Indonesia, Pakistan, Malaysia, Nigeria, Turkey and Bangladesh will meet here on a common platform to unveil the future course of action of the 'Developing Eight' or D-8 which was launched in Istanbul in June last.

The foreign ministers of the D-8 member states will also hold a conference in Dhaka, ahead of the summit.

Diplomatic observers feel that the Dhaka Summit of the D-8 will harness the real potential of the new economic alliance and set it rolling in a focused direction.

The D-8 comprises eight OIC countries having a combined population of nearly 800 million and commanding nearly 9 per cent of the global GDP.

The D-8 was launched as a global effort to forge closer ties for creating bigger markets for the common economic benefit of its peoples and to emphasise ten 'thrust areas' of cooperation.

The D-8 states will cooperate in the fields of trade, industry, communication and information, finance, banking and privatisation, rural development, science and technology, poverty alleviation and human resources development, agriculture, energy, environment, health, tourism and sports and culture.

Invitation letters from Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to the heads of government for

## Independence Award '98

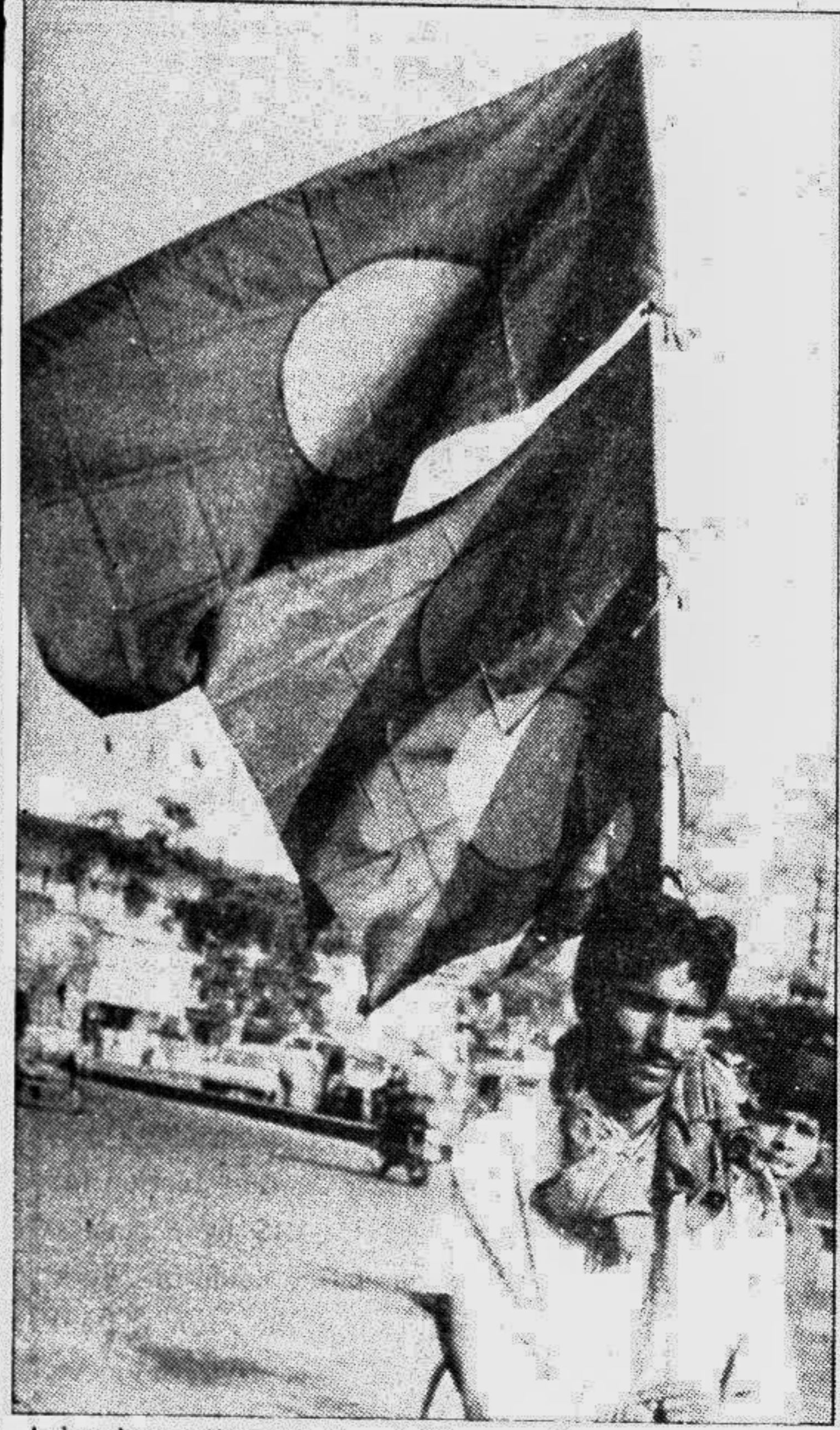
The government has decided to confer Independence Award, 1998 on 10 eminent personalities in recognition of their outstanding contributions to different arena of national life, reports UNB.

Late Sheikh Fazilatun Nesa, late Syed Nazrul Islam, late Tajuddin Ahmed, late captain M Mansur Ali, late AHM Quamruzzaman, late Abdur Rab Serriyat and late Sheikh Fazlul Huq Moni were awarded for their great contribution to independence and liberation war.

The other recipients are: Dr A M Chowdhury (Science and technology), late Shahidullah Kaiser (Literature) and late Sheikh Kamal (Sports and games).

Each recipient will receive a gold medal, cash Tk 25,000 and a citation, an official announcement said yesterday.

## 28th Independence Day



A hawkler selling National Flag on city streets on the eve of the Independence Day. — Star photo

By Staff Correspondent

The nation celebrates the 28th Independence and National Day today with a renewed pledge to uphold the spirit of the Liberation War and build an exploitation-free society.

On this day in 1971, the people of the country took up arms to fight the Pakistani occupation army following the declaration of independence by Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. On the previous night, the Pakistani forces had made the most barbaric crackdown on unarmed civilians that led to a war and emergence of independent Bangladesh on December 16, 1971.

Three million people sacrificed their lives for the independence. A grateful nation will pay homage to the brave sons of the soil who embraced martyrdom for the cause.

The day is a public holiday. A 31 gun salute will herald the day. National flags will fly atop all government and important private buildings.

All roads will lead to Savar where people, irrespective of age, sex and religion, will throng in their thousands to place wreaths at the National Memorial in tribute to the memory of the martyrs.

The first to place wreaths at the alter of the National Memorial will be President Shahabuddin Ahmed. He will be followed by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

In a message on the occasion, President Shahabuddin Ahmed yesterday urged all to utilize their talents and make efforts for peace and development of the country by sinking all differences.

"It is my sincere desire that people of all ranks would rise above personal and party interest and combine their talents and efforts for the progress of the country and welfare of the nation," the President said.

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### NOTICE

The rape of six-year-old Tania has left us speechless with horror. The number of rapes have reached frightening heights — 23 incidences in the first two weeks of March. It is as if rapists have gone on a rampage sparing no one, not even little children. So what is happening to our country? Is our system to blame?

Thursday March 26 being a public holiday, there will be no Star Weekend Magazine on Friday. It will come out on Saturday March 28. Inconvenience to our readers is regretted.

**Holiday**

The offices of The Daily Star will remain closed today on the occasion of Independence and National Day.

Therefore, there will be no issue of the newspaper tomorrow.

### Inside Today

**Article**

**Independence Day: A Contemplation**  
by Neeman A Sobhan  
Page 4

**Supplement**

Today's 16-page issue of The Daily Star contains a 4-page supplement on Independence and National Day on Pages 13-16

## 6-year-old rape victim's statement recorded

By Staff Correspondent

The six-year-old rape victim and her father's separate statements were recorded before a metropolitan magistrate yesterday.

CID investigators produced the girl, Maria (not her real name), and her father before the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's (CMM) court in the afternoon. The filing of statements ended at about 9:30 pm, sources concerned said.

Maria was raped near a police control room at the first floor of the CMM's court building on March 10. Obayedul Matbar, the lone accused in the rape, has already recorded a confessional statement in this regard.

## Tk 5 cr minimum funds for setting up pvt university

Parliament yesterday passed a bill raising the minimum required fund for setting up a private university from Tk one crore to Tk five crore, reports UNB.

Education Minister ASHK Sadeq piloted the Private University (Amendment) Bill which was adopted by voice vote with minor amendments.

Winding up discussion on the Bill, the Minister said the report on new education policy will be placed parliament shortly.

The committee has already submitted its report to the government. After revision, the report will be placed in parliament for discussion to adopt a new education policy, Sadeq said.

He told the House that 12 new universities will be set up in the country shortly.

Referring to BNP's criticism about the campus situation, Sadeq said terrorism in educational institutions was a regular phenomenon during the five-year rule of BNP.

The Education Minister suggested a full-dress discussion in parliament over the education system.

A total of 23 MPs took part in the discussion.

Criticising the provision for having a fund of Taka five crore for setting up a private university, the BNP members said this will commercialise the education system.

They suggested that the fund be of Tk one crore as before.

Some BNP members said the provision for huge fund will frustrate the genuine people in setting up private university.

## 'Cracks won't pose danger to JMB's durability'

By Staff Correspondent

"Cracks that occurred in the Jamuna Multipurpose Bridge does not pose any danger to the durability of the bridge structure. All major bridges involving such a superstructure in the world have cracks," said the Jamuna Multipurpose Bridge (JMB) Project Engineer RGR Tappin yesterday.

He was speaking at an open dialogue on the construction of the bridge and the problem of cracks developing in it.

While explaining apprehensions about the 'cracks' in the JMB structure, he said, "All concrete cracks under structural load. So, it is very natural that structures in some parts of the 900 million US dollar bridge will experience some degree of cracks. JMB is a first-class quality superstructure involving re-enforced and prestressed concrete.

About 50 participants comprising mostly of former engineers from various government departments, journalists and experts in bridge construction took part in the dialogue held at the auditorium of Bangladesh Institute of Administration and Management (BIAM). There were several queries from the floor about the cracks.

Asked what measures have been taken to fix the cracks, the Chairman of the Panel of JMB experts, Prof BC Gerwick said, "The level of cracking detected in the bridge is less than normally experienced on similar constructions elsewhere in the world. The cracks are covered in the specifications of the design codes."

He further said, "The cause of the cracking has been identified, understood and dealt with. The Korean contractor has sealed the cracks using 'super glue' or better known as injection of epoxy resin which restores durability of the concrete."

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## Sajeda accuses Obaid of making 'untrue' statement

By Staff Correspondent

Environment and Forest Minister Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury and front ranking BNP lawmaker KM Obaidur Rahman had a war of words in the Jatiya Sangsad yesterday over 'unauthorised extraction of timber' from the Sundarbans.

Making a statement in the House, the Minister said the BNP lawmaker's allegation that she had permitted unauthorised extraction of 50,000 maunds of timber from the Sundarbans to one Waliur Rahman was 'untrue' and made with the 'motive of undermining the government'.

She claimed that on receipt of an application from some one named Waliur Rahman through an Opposition MP, she referred it to the Chief Conservator of Forest (CCF) without making any recommendation.

See Page 12 Col 2

## 7-party grand rally after Eid

A meeting of the BNP-led seven-party alliance yesterday decided to hold grand rally after the Eid-ul-Azha, instead of April 1, reports UNB.

The meeting, held at the 29 Minto Road official residence of the Leader of the Opposition, was presided over by BNP standing committee member Abus Salam Talukder.

It was attended by M Shamul Islam and Anwar Zahid of BNP, Kamaruzzaman and ATM Azharul Islam of Jamaat-e-Islami, Oli Ahad and Saifuddin Moni of Democratic League, Mainuddin Bhuiyan, Shamim Al Mamun and Shah Shahid Sarwar of Jatiya Party, Dr AKA Aziz, Anisur Rahman and Sarder Shahjahan of JACPA, Sheikh Shawkat Hossain Nilu and ABM Golam Maola Chowdhury of PNP and Nurul Huq Mamon, Abdul Mobin and Alhaj Wali Ullah of NDA.

## Remain alert against conspirators: PM

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said the nation will have to move ahead towards prosperity by concentrating all its efforts on overcoming all the odds, reports UNB.

She called upon the people to work unitedly to build a happy and prosperous 'Sonar Bangla' by removing all injustice, exploitation, hunger and poverty.

Addressing a discussion meeting at the Ramna Batamul in the afternoon, the Prime Minister, however, cautioned that "you will have to remain vigilant against the conspirators."

She said, "There will be problems, resistance and many obstacles, but we'll have to go forward braving the thorns and thunders... we'll have to build up the nation as a dignified one, a prosperous one."

The discussion was organised by Bangabandhu Parishad on the occasion of the 78th birth anniversary of Father of the Nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and the Independence Day.

The topic of the discussion was "Non-cooperation Movement of Bangabandhu and the Great Liberation War."

Presided over by Parishad president Prof Kabir Chowdhury, the meeting was also addressed by its general secretary and Political Adviser to the Prime Minister Dr SA Maleq, Justice KM Sobhan, Prof Moinuzzuddin Ahmed, State Minister.

See Page 12 Col 4

## Speaker denies UNB report

By Staff Correspondent

Speaker Humayun Rashid Chowdhury yesterday questioned the objectivity of a news item created by UNB news agency and published in The Daily Star on the same day.

The UNB report said that during the Prime Minister's question hour in the House on Tuesday, only one BNP member, Shahidul Islam, was allowed to raise a question.

The Daily Star acknowledges that the UNB report was incorrect as three BNP legislators were allowed to raise supplementaries.

The Speaker mentioned the name of The Daily Star only, although another newspaper had carried the same news item.

See Page 12 Col 3

## AL ruining country's economy: Khaleda

BNP Chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia yesterday held the government responsible for ruining the economy and jeopardising the country's integrity at the best of its alien masters, reports UNB.

She called upon the people of all walks of life to forge unity for dislodging the government.

Speaking at a discussion meeting organised by Jatiyatabadi Muktiyuddha Dal, Begum Zia reminded the people of the misrule of Awami League during the post-independent period which is marked as a black chapter of the nation.

It was marked by loot, plunder, repression, famine and above all a subservient policy followed by the government. Bangladesh enclave of Berubari was handed over to India, added the BNP Chairperson.

The same policies were being followed by Awami League when it returned to power, she said and warned against handing over Chittagong Hill Tracts to the insurgents under the blueprint of its alien masters.

The discussion at the Jatiya Press Club was part of BNP's four-day programme to celebrate the Independence Day today.

Recalling the post-liberation 'misrule' of Awami League, the BNP chairperson said there was no independent policy on the economy, defence and foreign affairs during 1972 to 75.

Begum Zia alleged that assuming the power after 21 years, Awami League now engaged in ruining the country's economy at the direction of its alien masters.

See Page 12 Col 5

## Bangabandhu Murder Case

### Zobaida was found to be a conspirator in killing: IO

The investigation officer in the Bangabandhu Murder Case yesterday said that during investigation, he found Zobaida Rashid as a conspirator behind the killing of President Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and his family members, reports UNB.

During cross-examination, the IO, Abdul Kahhar Akhand, however, said Zobaida, wife of Lt Col (dismissed) Khandaker Abdur Rashid, an absconding accused in the case, was acquitted by the High Court from the charge.

Advocate Khan Saifur Rahman, defence lawyer for principal accused Lt Col (dismissed) Syed Farooqur Rahman, questioned Akhand, who is also the 61st prosecution witness, for the third consecutive day yesterday.

The Court of Dhaka District and Sessions Judge Kazi Golam Rasul was adjourned in the afternoon, keeping Akhand's examination incomplete. Khan Saifur will examine the IO when the court will resume on Monday morning.

Replying to a query, Abdul Kahhar Akhand, the ASP of CID, informed that during the investigation, he came to know that some 10 army personnel were sent to the Bangabandhu's house after his assassination to put it under lock and key and take charge of the house.

"But it was not possible to identify the army personnel for which I could not interrogate them," he told the court.

Replying to another query, Akhand said in his investigation, he didn't get any such information that the historic house was washed and scrubbed after the massacre.

The IO also submitted a bullet-stained 'pan-dan' (betel leaf pot) to the court as a material evidence in the case and said the sign of damage indicated that the 'pan-dan' was hit by bullet.

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Watch out for details on Saturday, March 28, 1998 in The Daily Star