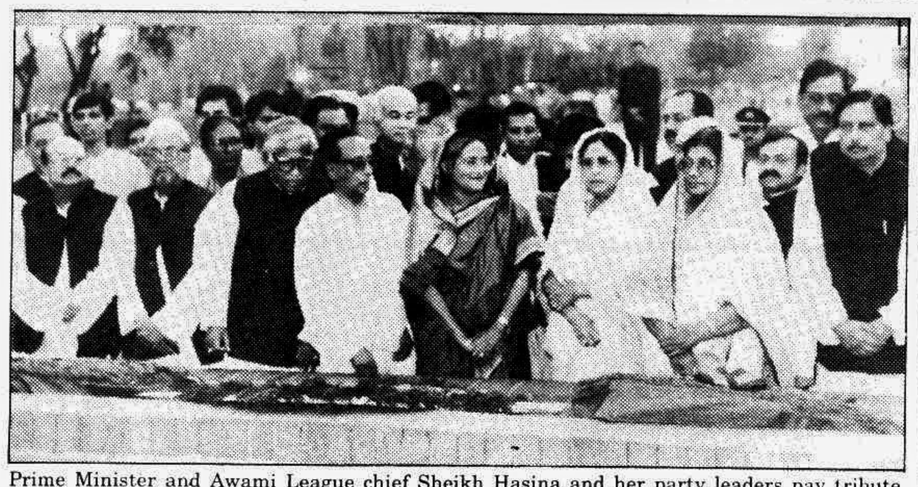

Prime Minister and Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina and her party leaders pay tribute to Liberation War martyrs by placing wreaths at the National Memorial in Savar on Friday. —Star photo

Hasina tells Washington Post

Govt striving to meet basic needs of people

The prestigious Washington Post on Friday published a special supplement featuring an interview of the Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on her government's relentless effort to alleviate poverty ensuring common man five basic needs like food, shelter, clothing, education and healthcare, according to a message received yesterday, reports BSS.

In her interview with renowned freelancer Lekha Rai, the Prime Minister also listed measures the government has taken for mother and childcare programme, old-age pension, fair price cards for the low income groups, programme for providing the homeless with basic housing and the unemployed educated youths with funds to run business or begin small industries.

Sheikh Hasina also said her government was laying emphasis on education as it was the key to poverty alleviation. She said the literacy rate in Bangladesh has improved a lot and that illiteracy will be wiped out from the country by the year 2006.

Replying to a question, Prime Minister said, "I believe in peace and human rights." She said the government was determined to protect the human rights of the people. In this regard she said, "my whole family was brutally murdered and those killers have not been punished. These killers have violated basic human rights — the rights to life — but they remain free."

Replying to a question about Bangladesh-US relations, Sheikh Hasina said Bangladesh's relations with United States were at its best now, she said the relation was "very warm, very cordial and friendly".

When asked about the natural calamities in her country, she said floods occur here every year and the last year's flood was most disastrous ravaging the country for the longest period ever. She, however, said that the situation was managed efficiently. "There was a prediction that 20 million people would die, but thanks to Allah, we managed to save them," she added.

As regards the availability and exploration of gas in Bangladesh, she said our national interests must get priority.

40 asst secys promoted

By Special Correspondent

Forty senior assistant secretaries have been promoted as deputy secretary's and made OSD in the Establishment Ministry until further order, according to a government notification on Thursday.

The officials are Mohammad Zahirul Huq, Ranjitkumar Gharai, Mohammad Shamsul Alam, Arun Kanti Chanda, Mohammad Shahidul Huq, Mohammad Nurul Huq, Asit Kumar Mukut Moni, AKM Salehuddin, Mollah Waheduzzaman, Mohammad Ataharul Islam, Mohammad Abdul Bari Khan, Badrul Alam Tarafder, Syed Hasinur Rahman, Abdul Hakim Mondol, Mohammad Mukhlesur Rahman, Mohammad Kamrul Alam Rabbani, Khandaker Rashedul Huq, Elias Ahmed, Abdur Razzak, Sheikh Abul Kalam, Mohammad Wajed Ali Khan, Mohammad Abul Hashem, Mohammad Arfan Ali, Mohammad Abdul Mannan Hawlader, Mohammad Abdul Malek, Mohammad Abul Kashem, SH Mollah, Mohammad Shahabuddin, Jamil Osman, Sunil Kanti Bose, Ranjit Kumar Biswas, Mohammad Mamunur Rashid Choudhury, Mohammad Raisuddin, Mohammad Abdul Hannan, Kazi Hamiduddin, Mostafa Mohiuddin and Narayan Chandra Rajbangshi.

New endoscopy machine at DMCH

By Staff Correspondent

The new endoscopy machine installed few days back at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) will begin functioning from first week of April. The machine goes into operation one and a half years after the previous one ran out of order.

Dr Miah Mashud Ahmed, consultant gastroenterologist at the DMCH said that the new machine cost Tk five lakh and is capable of performing at least 5000 endoscopy.

Patients will have to pay Tk 250 and Tk 500 for each endoscopy and colonoscopy respectively, Dr Ahmed said. Private diagnostic centres charge at least Tk 500 for endoscopy and Tk 2,000 for colonoscopy, he added. The charge was fixed at a meeting attended by experts, administrators and various departmental heads of the hospital, he said.

Patients have been asked to contact medicine department at the DMCH for the facilities.

Role of govt in empowerment of women praised

Bangladesh government's efforts to promote women's participation in all progressive and development activities from village to national level were vindicated at an international seminar on 'Women Empowerment' which concluded in New Delhi on Friday, according to a message received here.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) organised the seminar at a workshop in which Bangladesh Minister of State for Women Affairs, Prof Zinnatunnessa Talukder at a group discussion elaborated the steps taken by the government of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to promote the cause of women as well as their participation in the nation building activities.

Prof Zinnatunnessa gave a resume of various steps taken by the present government to ensure participation of women right from lower levels to national level in order to remove gender discrimination.

Leader of the Opposition in Parliament and BNP chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia along with party leaders placing wreath at the National Memorial on Friday. —Star photo

Refuse of sacrificial animal

Removal from Eid-ul-Azha afternoon

Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) has decided to remove the refuse of sacrificial animals from the afternoon of the Eid-ul-Azha day, reports BSS.

On the occasion more than hundred of trucks and adequate number of cleaners have been kept ready in addition to regular cleaning trucks of the city corporation.

A 20-member task force of the corporation under the directive of Mayor Mohammad Hanif will supervise the cleaning activities.

Meanwhile, city corporation authority has requested city dwellers to dump refuse of sacrificial animals in dustbin or keep it under the ground. If refuse is seen anywhere, city dwellers have been requested to contact Nagar Bhaban control room at 9556014, Mirpur control room 9004734 and 011-857868, 019-340880.

Independence day observed in Rajshahi, Khulna

RAJSHAHI, Mar 27: Independence and National Day was celebrated here as elsewhere in the country in a gala atmosphere today, reports BSS.

The day's programme was heralded with the booming of gun salute, national flags were hoisted atop all public and private buildings in the morning to mark the occasion.

Different political and socio-cultural and educational institutions of Rajshahi city celebrated the day through separate programmes. Bangladesh Awami League, Rajshahi city unit, Rajshahi University, Rajshahi City Corporation, Joy Bangla Sangskritik Jote, Shishu Academy, Shilpakala Academy, Bangabandhu Sangskritik Jote, Rajshahi district administration, Mukti Joddha Sangsad and other organisations chalked out elaborate programmes in celebration of the day.

"Combined parade of police, ansars, BNCC, boy scouts and other juvenile organisations were held at the local stadium in the morning. A large number of people including children witnessed the parade.

Special prayer was offered after the Juma prayers at all mosques for continued peace and progress of the country. Improved diets were served among the inmates of jails, hospitals and orphanages.

Rajshahi University Teachers' Association (RUTA) organised a discussion at Juberi Bhaban in the morning highlighting the significance of the day.

A friendly football match between Rajshahi University teachers and officials was held at the university stadium. A cultural function was also held in the Kazi Nazrul Islam auditorium to mark the occasion.

Important buildings of Rajshahi city were illuminated.

Khulna

The 29th National and independence Day was observed in Khulna with a renewed pledge to build the country as a 'Sonar Bangla' as dreamt of by Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Twenty-eight years ago on this day the Father of the Nation declared independence of the country and called upon the countrymen to free the nation from the clutches of the Pakistani occupation forces.

The day was heralded with the placing of wreaths at the Gallamari Shaheed Smriti Soudha at five minutes past midnight Thursday and with the booming of 21 gun salute at dawn today.

Different political parties, socio-cultural and student organisations, trade bodies and other organisations observed the day in a befitting manner amid elaborate programmes.

Awami League and its front organisations observed the day through hoisting the national and party flags at its office and placing wreaths at he portrait of the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in the morning and held a discussion marking the significance of the day.

The day's programmes also included feeding the destitute and serving improved diets to the inmates of jail, orphanages and vagrant homes.

Special prayers were held at different mosques and all other places of worship for the continued peace, prosperity and progress of the country.

Local daily newspapers brought out special supplements while Bangladesh Betar of Khulna station aired special programmes marking the significance of the day. Documentary films on the progress and achievements of the government were shown.

Narayanganj

The 29th Independence and National Day was observed in Narayanganj on Friday in a befitting manner.

The highlights of the day's programme included placing of wreaths at Chashara Shaheed Minar paying tributes to the martyrs. Booming of guns salute in the morning, hoisting of national flag atop all public and private buildings, children and juvenile rally at Osmany Stadium, improved diets were supplied to hospitals and orphanages, discussion, musical soiree and illuminations also included the programme.

Rangamati

The Rangamati district administration and different political and social organisations on Friday celebrated the 29th Independence Day in a befitting manner.

In the morning, chairman of Rangamati Hill District Council, Ching Kew Roaza accompanied by other high officials placed wreaths at the Shaheed Minar in memory of the martyrs of the Liberation War.

A smart march-past was staged on the old court building ground by the students of local schools, boy scouts and girl guides, ansars and police, Chairman Ching Kew Roaza took the salute.

As part of the celebration of the day, Ching Kew Roaza met the freedom fighters and the family members of the Liberation War martyrs.

A discussion meeting was held in the evening in the local town hall.

Improved diets were served in the orphanages, jail and hospital.

Special prayers were offered in mosques seeking peace for the martyrs and prosperity of the nation. Milad mahfil was also held in the mosques.

Cultural programmes were held in the tribal cultural institute and Shilpakala Academy in the evening marking the day.

Beximco

From Page 1

honesty and fraudulent activities in the bank, the petitioner said.

The petitioner alleged that the entire process was illegally and fraudulently schemed to manipulate as the money was illegally deposited into the STD account of BCIL through what is known as Inland Bill Purchase (IBP). The IFIC branch bought a cheque, issued by Mallik Export Limited drawn on AB Bank's Cox's Bazar branch, in favour of BCIL Limited.

But prior to depositing the money in the STD account, the balance in the account was Tk 7.98 lakh, the petitioner pointed out.

The cheque issued by Mallik however returned "dishonoured" from AB Bank on November 11, 1996.

"And in order to cover up the fraud and to avoid detection, the accused then adjusted IFIC's own IBP account by creating a loan of Tk 1.75 crore in favour of BCIL," the shareholder said in the petition.

He also pointed out that account of Mallik Exports with AB Bank was operated by Md Nawaz and Md Sohel who were also signatories for operating AB Bank's Cox's Bazar account of Beximco Fisheries of which Sohel F Rahman and Salman F Rahman are chairman and vice-chairman.

He also said AKM Kutubuddin, a director of Beximco Fisheries Limited, introduced Mallik Export Ltd to the Cox's Bazar of AB Bank.

He also said that in a similar manner both the accused deposited two cheques of Tk 25 lakh and Tk 3.80 crore on November 5, 1996 and November 10, 1996 respectively in the same BCIL account with the IFIC Dhanmondi branch. "And a total amount of Tk 4.05 crore was credited into their account by debiting IFIC Bank's own IBP account without sending the cheques for clearances.

"And on sending the cheques for clearances they returned dishonoured. But in the meantime accused in collusion with the Abbas Uddin Ahmed and Chandra Shekhar Biswas took away Tk 4.05 crore from IFIC bank," the petitioner said.

He also said that by presenting fraudulent cheques issued by Mallik Exports the accused took away a further sum of Tk 24.57 crores from IFIC's IBP accounts.

The petitioner also said that "by using fraudulent cheques a total of Tk 8.80 crores by debiting IFIC Bank's own IBP accounts before clearance of the cheques so deposited in the BCIL account with the Dhanmondi branch and subsequently as the cheques were sent for clearance those returned dishonoured."

He said that the accused in collusion with the bank officials secured some Tk 155.53 crore from IFIC Bank by "using 261 fraudulent cheques by using various accounts of Beximco Group of companies" between January 1, 1996 and August 4, 1997.

The petitioner also said that accused Salman and Sohel F Rahman obtained huge sums of money from Motijheel Brach of IFIC Bank in the name of Baghkhali Fisheries Ltd. And after detection by central bank inspectors, the accused admitted their offences and involvement in the fraud.

Later, in their capacity as chairman and vice-chairman the BCIL, they gave a corporate guarantee that the BCIL would repay Tk 9.93 crore (on December 31, 1996) in loan liabilities of Baghkhali.

Eviction of hawkers from footpath

Steps to be taken after Eid vacation, says Nasim

Eviction of hawkers from the footpaths and pavements and clearing the slums from the capital city are being taken up next month in a bid to overcome the traffic jam and illegal drug trafficking, reports UNB.

Home Minister Mohammad Nasim told UNB yesterday that the steps would be taken after the Eid vacation.

"I have already talked to Mayor Mohammad Hanif about the possible eviction of hawkers from footpath to ease the traffic jam and clean slum areas to deal with illegal narcotic business," said Nasim.

He said extensive campaign would be launched through the electronic media 15 days ahead of going for evicting the hawkers from the city footpaths and pavements.

Slums will be removed in phases to curb terrorism and illegal trading of drugs in different parts of the city.

However, Nasim said alternative arrangements would be made for slum dwellers.

The Home Minister said steps would also be taken against illegal parking of vehicles on roadside and movement of rickshaws would be restricted in important city roads adjoining Farmgate, Pantho Path, Motijheel and Topkhana road.

Action would also be taken against illegal rickshaws plying on the streets.

About seven lakh rickshaws are plying in the capital city of which only 1,86,000 have licence.

Nasim noted with dissatisfaction at the mush room growth of hundreds of slums afflicting the city.

A fire fighter struggles to put out the blaze that broke out at a garments factory at Dhaka EPZ in Savar yesterday. — Star photo

Tofail says

UZ, city corporations polls to be held on time

Commerce and Industries Minister Tofail Ahmed yesterday said that the demand of BNP for holding local bodies elections — upazila and city corporation — under a caretaker government is "nothing but a pretext for not taking part in the polls," reports UNB.

"To hold the upazila and city corporation elections on schedule is a constitutional obligation for the government, and the elections will be held on time," he said when asked to comment about BNP's demand to hold elections under a caretaker administration.

BNP reiterated the demand during a meeting with the donors on Thursday.

Tofail, a front ranking leader of the ruling party, said that holding of elections for the local bodies and parliament on the same day or in close succession "is neither possible nor feasible." As per the Constitution, only general elections will be held under a caretaker government, he said.

He added: The previous BNP government made no mention about the local government elections when, accepting the Awami League's demand, it brought the constitutional amendment for holding general elections under a caretaker administration.

Tofail mentioned that it was the Election Commission that always conducted elections to the local bodies, and the government only provided necessary help to them.

He said that during the last municipal elections, the opposition demanded removal of the Chief Election Commissioner. Now they are demanding to hold the upazila and city corporation elections under a caretaker government.

"They (opposition) are inconsistent in their talks and demand," said the ruling party leader.

Independence Day observed in Nepal

The Independence and National Day of Bangladesh was celebrated in Nepal on Friday with great enthusiasm, according to a message received here Friday night.

In the morning, a flag hoisting ceremony was held in the embassy premises in presence of the officials of the embassy and local Bangladeshis. Followed by a discussion meeting on the significance of the Day.

Master of the Royal Ceremony of the Narayanhity Royal Palace accompanied by a team of protocol came to the Embassy Residence and conveyed the greetings of His Majesty the King of Nepal Birendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev to the Bangladeshi envoy.

A reception was held in the evening at Hotel Soaltee Holiday Inn Crown Plaza by Bangladeshi ambassador to Nepal Mohiuddin Ahmed.

Ershad returns

Former president and chairman of Jatiya Party Hussain Muhammad Ershad returned in the city yesterday morning from Saudi Arabia, where he had check up, reports BSS.

Chehlum of Kazi Aref held

The *chehlum* of Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD) leader and Liberation War veteran Kazi Aref Ahmed was held on Friday at his residence in the city, reports BSS.

Aref was gunned down in Kushtia last month.

JSD comrades, ruling party leaders including Home Minister Mohammad Nasim, Education Minister A S H K Sadique and Dhaka City Mayor Mohammad Hanif joined the *chehlum*.

Agreement signed

Tk 84 lakh Danish grant for BAU seed lab

The Danish government yesterday signed an agreement with the Bangladesh government committing Taka 84 lakh to strengthen the Seed Pathology Laboratory of Bangladesh Agricultural University (BAU) at Mymensingh, reports BSS.

The agreement was signed by Dr Mashiur Rahman, Secretary of the Economic Relations Division, and Finn Thisted, Charge d'Affaires of Royal Danish Embassy, on behalf of their respective governments.

The project aims at developing research and training facilities in the field of seed pathology in Bangladesh. It will make recommendations for control of seed-borne diseases, training researchers, extension workers and farmers on seed pathology and raising awareness at all levels of the importance of better seed health and quality.

Agriculture is one of the three priority areas to which Denmark is providing development assistance to Bangladesh. Denmark is planning to provide a total of 288 million Danish kroner, equivalent to about 207 crore Taka, in bilateral assistance to various projects of Bangladesh during the current year.

Summer schedule of Indian Airlines

The summer schedule of Indian Airlines Limited which operates five pairs of flights between Calcutta and Dhaka every week will become effective from March 29, Eid day, the airlines announced yesterday, reports BSS.

As per the new schedule, flight IC-723 which leaves Calcutta on Mondays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, Fridays and Sundays at 1430 hours local time will arrive here at 1550 hours local time. IC-724, the return flight, will leave at 1640 hours to reach Calcutta at 1700 hours local time, the announcement added.

Eid-ul-Azha

President, PM greet people

President Shahabuddin Ahmed has felicitated the people on the occasion of the Holy Eid-ul-Azha, reports APB.

"I convey my heartiest felicitations to the countrymen on the occasion of the Eid-ul-Azha," said the President in a message on the eve of the celebration of the festival.

"Fraternal ties and egality of Islam are strengthened through the festival which embodies ideal of sacrifice," he said.

The shining example of abnegation which Hazrat Ibrahim (A) set by the spirit of absolute trust and belief in Allah encourage the people to be imbued with the sense of sacrifice for greater welfare through ages, he added.

Shahabuddin Ahmed expressed the hope that the teachings of Hazrat Ibrahim (A) would inspire all to the noble ideals of selfless services for the betterment of the country and the mass.

"Let the Eid-ul-Azha usher in wellbeing and joy for all," the President wished.

In a separate message Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has felicitated the countrymen, the Muslim Ummah and the people of the world on the same occasion.

The inherent teaching of Eid-ul-Azha is to attain the upbringing of sacrificing the dearest object in our life for the satisfaction of Allah by following the great examples of abnegation and benevolence of our dear Prophet Hazrat Ibrahim (A), said the Prime Minister.

The path directed by Allah Almighty is not the path of indulgence, greed, lust and creating anarchy, but honesty, renunciation and welfare of the common people, she said.

Hasina urged the people to uphold the sanctity of the Eid-ul-Azha, cooperate with each other, share the joy of Eid with the poor and the destitute and to maintain cleanliness by not throwing entrails of sacrificial animals here and there.

Independence Day observed in missions abroad

The 28th anniversary of Independence and National Day was celebrated on Friday at different missions of Bangladesh abroad with enthusiasm and patriotic fervour, reports BSS.

National flag was hoisted with the playing of the national anthem. One minute of silence was observed in memory of the martyrs of the War of Liberation. Receptions were also hosted. Special article were brought out in different dailies.

United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan attended a reception at the premises of Bangladesh mission in New York on Friday hosted by Bangladesh permanent representative to the UN Ambassador Anwarul Karim Chowdhury.

The UN secretary general expressed his warm appreciations for the efforts of the Bangladesh government in making the happy prosperous. State Minister for Health Dr Amanullah, Dr Abdul Moyeen Khan MP and 15 members of parliament from other countries, diplomats, UN officials and journalists attended the reception.

In Washington DC, Bangladesh mission's celebration programmes included the hoisting of the national flag, a discussion meeting and milad mahfil. Ambassador K M Shehabuddin hosted a reception.

The day was observed with patriotic fervour in Bangladesh High Commission in Kuala Lumpur. Malaysian Minister for Youth and Sports Tan Sri Muhyiuddin Bin Haji Mohd Yassin attended the reception hosted by Bangladesh High Commissioner Wajid Ali Khan Panni.

Bangladesh mission in Tokyo observed the day and in the afternoon a photographic exhibition titled "nature and life of Bangladesh" was opened at the chancery.

In Beijing, the main features of the celebrations were cultural programme and colourful reception. Vice chairperson of Chinese people's political consultative conference Sun Fuling represented the Chinese government at the Bangladesh mission's reception.

Obituary

Abida Khatun, a retired Head Mistress of Shibalaya Government Girls' High School, died in the city on last Tuesday afternoon. She was 61, says a press release.

She leaves behind her husband Golam Kibria, a former Airport Manager at ZIA, son Saif Kibria, president of Kabco Inc. of New York, a leading drug manufacturing company in USA, daughters Lia Kabir and Lija Asif and grand-children. Her body has been kept in the ICDDR,B mortuary for the return of her husband from Saudi Arabia on Tuesday next, where he had gone to perform the Hajj. Her namaz-e-janaza will be held at the Gulshan Central Mosque after Asr prayers and she will be buried at Banani graveyard on March 30.

Late Abida Khatun was a dedicated educationist throughout her life starting her teaching career at Karachi Bangla School. She later taught at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar Girls' High School as Vice-Principal and Bindubashini Girls' School at Tangail.

More cooperation between Ctg WASA and PDB stressed

CHITTAGONG, Mar 27: Deputy Minister for Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives Saber Hossain Chowdhury, today called for better coordination between Chittagong WASA and the Power Development Board to ensure uninterrupted supply of water in the port city, a PID hand out said here, reports BSS.

The deputy minister while presiding over a coordination meeting of the two agencies at WASA office here said that if power supply is not regularised, supply of water would be interrupted.

The coordination meeting was attended by high officials of Chittagong WASA and PDB.

The deputy minister was apprised that LGRD had proposed a Tk 3.25 crore project for construction of power extension line for round-the-clock power supply to 24 deep tubewells in Mohra area of the city.

The deputy minister was also informed that water supply in the port city would improve substantially when the proposed project is implemented.

Ammunition seized in Rangamati

RANGAMATI, Mar 27: Army troops posted at the remote Sajek valley in this hilly district today seized a large number of ammunition used in point two-two bore rifle from a tribal man, police said, reports BSS.

Army experts

From Page 1

Police is looking for Gopal while Abul Lais has been shown as arrested in the hospital, a police official said.

Meanwhile, Muhibur Rahman Manik at a press conference at the Sylhet Circuit House today demanded a judicial enquiry into the incident.

He reiterated that the incident was pre-planned and designed to kill him.

Manik alleged that the SP of Sunamganj, Assaduzzaman Miah, had long been involved in the conspiracy against him.

"I lodged a number of complaints against police officer with different authorities including the Prime Minister in the last few years. But, mysteriously, no action has been taken. Rather, he has been posted in the same district after being promoted from the post of Additional SP. I will raise the issue in the Jatiya Sangsad when the session resumes on April 4," he said.

Replying to a question the ruling party MP said, "I got the message in Dhaka and rushed to Chhatak same night. I saw a contingent of police on the premises of my house. The seizure of bomb-making material by police and the magistrate after 22 hours of the incident is mysterious.

"The SP joined hands w a strong group with the common intention to ruin me politically as well as physically. Now, they are trying to prove my house as a weapons store. Recovery of live bombs as well as bomb-making materials, inoperative bombs etc. after 11 days of the incident from the house which was under police custody is also mysterious," he said.

After the Eid vacations, Chhatak and Doarabazar thana units of Awami League will hold a meeting and announce programmes against all conspiracies, said Manik, vice-president of district unit of the ruling party.

The press conference was also attended by six Union Parishad chairmen, Chhatak thana AL president and a good number of local leaders and workers of the party.

Meanwhile, the Chhatak thana unit of BNP at a public meeting yesterday gave a 15-day ultimatum to the government for arrest of the persons responsible for the incident and their punishment.