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"Some people want evaluation without any exams [HSC] ... the option remains open. We are keeping a range of options open."
EDUCATION MINISTER DIPU MONI



"You're the worst president America has ever had. ... It's hard to get any word in with this clown, excuse me, this person"
JOE BIDEN DURING THE FIRST US PRESIDENTIAL DEBATE AFTER A HEATED EXCHANGE WITH TRUMP ON HIS TAXES PAGE 8



I was struggling to walk. That's a telltale sign that I should try to recover.
SERENA WILLIAMS SAYS AFTER WITHDRAWING FROM THE FRENCH OPEN BEFORE HER 2ND-ROUND MATCH PAGE 15

SENSATIONAL RIFAT MURDER CASE

Gallows for Minni and 5 others

Widow of the victim found guilty of involvement in murder plan; 4 acquitted

SOHRAB HOSSAIN and TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

Ayesha Siddika Minni, the widow of slain Rifat Sharif, and five others were sentenced to death yesterday for killing the youth in broad daylight in Barguna in June last year.

A court in the district also fined the six Tk 50,000 each after it found them guilty of committing the murder -- an incident which caused public outcry across the country and beyond.

Besides, it identified Minni as a mastermind behind the killing, said the prosecution, citing the verdict.

Judge Md Asaduzzaman of Barguna District and Sessions Judges Court, however, acquitted four other accused as their involvement in the incident was not found.

Trial of 14 other accused is underway at the Barguna Children's Court.



Rifat Sharif

Apart from Minni, 19, the five other convicts are: Rakibul Hasan Rifat alias Rifat Farazi, 23, Al Kaiyum alias Rabbi Akan, 21, Mohaiminul Islam Sifat, 19, Rezwan Ali Khan Hridoy alias TikTok Hridoy, 22, and Md Hasan, 22.

"From the discussions [based on the evidence], it has been proved beyond reasonable doubt that accused Rifat Farazi, Rabbi Akan, Sifat, TikTok Hridoy, Md Hasan, and Minni have committed punishable offence under Sections 302 and 34 of the penal code by killing victim Rifat Sharif on the mentioned time, date, and place to fulfil their same purpose in a pre-planned way," the court said.

"This brutal murder committed by hacking with a traditional machete in broad daylight beats the barbarity of medieval ages," observed Judge Md Asaduzzaman,

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Ayesha Siddika Minni, in white, is being taken to Barguna jail from the court premises after she was sentenced to death yesterday. The court observed that she was involved in the planning of her husband Rifat Sharif's murder. Inset, a screenshot from a viral footage that showed Minni trying to save Rifat from the attackers.

PHOTO: SOHRAB HOSSAIN

From key witness to a convict

SOHRAB HOSSAIN, from Barguna

Video footage that went viral in social media clearly showed Ayesha Siddika Minni was trying to save her husband Rifat Sharif from the group of young men who killed him.

The incident that took place in Barguna on June 26 last year became one of the most talked-about issues in the media. Twelve youths were accused in the case.

Initially, Minni was the main witness of the case filed by Rifat's father Abdul Halim Dulal Sharif. But police investigation later found proof of her

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TIMELINE

JUNE 26, 2019
Rifat Sharif was murdered in broad daylight.

Rifat's father filed a murder case against 12 people. Minni was made the main witness.

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A-LEVEL EXAMS TODAY Covid worries weigh on many students, parents

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

Advanced Level examinations of the October and November session are set to begin today amid the coronavirus pandemic, leaving many candidates and their guardians in utter dismay and anxiety.

A group of candidates alleged that they heard that the British Council Bangladesh, which administers the exams in the country, will take signatures in a consent form stating that candidates will bear "responsibilities if they get infected with Covid-19".

"We are worried about what will happen. We have to take part in the exams during the pandemic. I cannot concentrate on my study," said an A-level candidate.

Another examinee said her parents were worried about how she would be able to complete the exams in this situation. She added that her parents allowed her to take exams because she would otherwise lose an academic year.

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JS not as effective as expected: TIB

Standing committees do little to hold ministries accountable

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Jatiya Sangsad was not as effective as expected in terms of legislation passed, representation of the people, and ensuring accountability of the government, Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) yesterday said.

Most of the parliamentary committees also did not play their due roles to ensure accountability of ministries concerned.

It recommended making the national parliamentary elections participatory, fair, and neutral in the real sense to make the House more effective.

The anti-graft watchdog said this in a webinar while unveiling its study report "Parliament Watch", which is based on the five sessions of the first year (January to December 2019) of the 11th parliament.

It observed that the absolute majority of the ruling party obtained through the questionable 11th parliamentary elections further strengthened the power monopoly of the party in parliamentary activities, especially in law-making, budget formulation, and parliamentary standing committees.

A strong role of the main opposition in ensuring accountability of the government was missing as they took part in the polls under the banner of the grand alliance and became the main opposition as a formality, it said.

"The culture of questionable and controversial elections has been established in our country. The possibility of a change of power in a peaceful and normal democratic electoral process has been ruled out. We can see its effect on the Jatiya Sangsad. Following this, an absolute majority of one party has been created in the 11th parliament," TIB Executive Director Iftekharuzzaman said at the programme.

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Act fast to get WHO-okayed antigen kits

Experts urge govt

MOUJID AHMED SUJAN

Bangladesh should take an aggressive initiative to obtain effective yet low-cost antigen testing kits approved by the World Health Organization, said healthcare experts.

The WHO on Monday announced that 120 million of those rapid diagnostic kits for Covid-19 would be made available to low- and middle-income countries at a cheaper price.

The experts suggested the Bangladesh authorities step up efforts to make sure that the country gets antigen kits under the WHO plan at the earliest.

Terming the WHO initiative outstanding, they said it would increase the testing capacity of poor and developing countries where access to expensive and time-consuming RT-PCR test is limited.

Infectious disease specialist Prof Ridwanur Rahman said, "This is an

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Help the stranded migrant workers

Dhaka urges KSA, other countries

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday requested Saudi Arabia and other major labour-receiving countries to address the problems of Bangladeshi migrant workers desperately waiting to go back to their workplaces.

The requests were made in a meeting between delegations of missions of Gulf countries and Malaysia and two Bangladeshi ministers at the state guesthouse Padma.

"We have discussed [problems regarding] iqama and visa. We did not get any immediate result. We have to wait a bit," Expatriates' Welfare Minister Imran Ahmad told reporters after the meeting.

Migrant workers, who had been stranded at home since coming back from Saudi Arabia for holiday, recently took to the streets out of concern over renewal of their work permit (iqama) and visa, despite repeated assurance from the Bangladesh government.

Imran Ahmad said the Bangladesh government has urged the foreign missions to address the problems of the Bangladeshi workers with their respective governments.

He said he is hopeful of a positive outcome.

However, there should be alternative plans if the result is not as expected, he added.

Talking to reporters, Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen said, "We have requested that they [the missions] tell their governments to help them [workers]."

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Pay Jaha Alam Tk 15 lakh in compensation

HC asks Brac Bank, says ACC has to be careful in probe

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday directed Brac Bank Ltd to pay Tk 15 lakh in compensation to jute mill worker Jaha Alam, who had been wrongly imprisoned for three years in place of the real accused in several corruption cases.

The HC ordered the bank to make the payment within a month of receiving the verdict copy as two of its officials -- Faisal Kayes and Sabina Sharmin -- supplied the photo and information of

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Unbridled price hikes are forcing people to queue up and buy onions of less than ideal quality from a truck of the Trading Corporation of Bangladesh. The photo was taken on Abdul Gani Road in the capital yesterday afternoon.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

BABRI MASJID DEMOLITION CASE Indian court acquits all 32 accused

Advani, Murli Manohar Joshi, Uma Bharti among them; action was not pre-planned, observes court



OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

A special CBI court in India yesterday acquitted all the 32 accused, including Bharatiya Janata Party veterans Lal Krishna Advani, Murli Manohar Joshi and Uma Bharti, in the 28-year-old case relating to the demolition of Babri Masjid in Ayodhya, saying "there is no conclusive proof" against them.

Special Judge SK Yadav pronounced the verdict in his court in Lucknow, capital city of India's most populous state of Uttar Pradesh.

The judge said there was no conclusive evidence against the accused and the demolition of the 16th century mosque was "not pre-planned."

Advani, Joshi and Bharti were among the 32 surviving accused in the case who faced the charges of criminal conspiracy and promoting enmity.

India's main opposition party Congress slammed the special court's decision to acquit all the accused in the case,

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