

BANGLADESH
UPDATE

**1,436**
New cases in 24hrs

**3,63,479**
Total cases

**5,251**
Deaths

**2,75,487**
Recoveries

GLOBAL
UPDATE

**1,014,337**
Deaths

**33,941,449**
Total cases

From key witness

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contacting the main accused of the murder case Nayan Bond before and after the killing.

Minni then became one of the accused and yesterday a court gave her the death penalty. The court observed that she was involved in the planning of the murder.

Barguna police was widely criticised in social media after they said they found proof of Minni's involvement.

Barguna police took Minni from her parents' house for quizzing on July 16 last year. After a 10-hour interrogation, police arrested her at 9:00pm.

Minni confessed her guilt before a court two days later. There was no lawyer for Minni that day. The court issued five days' remand and sent her to jail.

Superintendent of Police Maruf Hossain told a press conference the next day that Minni confessed her involvement in the killing.

Later, in the 614-page charge sheet Minni was made the seventh accused out of the 10 adults police found involved in the murder.

Several juveniles also took part in the killing. Separate charges were pressed against them.

She was rejected bail twice last July. Following a writ petition, the High Court on August 29 issued her bail on the condition that she would not talk to the media.

Minni was staying at her parents' house and used to appear in court with her father since then.

Minni, daughter of Mozammel Hossain Kishore got to know Rifat Sharif when she was admitted to Barguna Government College. Rifat was killed just two months after they got married.

During the trial it surfaced that Minni was married to Nayan Bond before she married Rifat. Besides, Nayan was a friend of both Rifat and Minni.

After the verdict was delivered yesterday, Assistant Public Prosecutor Mujibul Haque Kislul said the court specifically mentioned that Minni was directly involved in the planning of the killing. She had contacts with the killers over the phone. The court sentenced her to death as it was proved that Rifat was attacked by the killers led by Nayan Bond, he said.

Gallows for Minni and 5 others

Ayesha Siddika Minni

Md Hasan

Al Kaiyum Rabbi

Rezwan Ali

Rakibul Hasan Rifat

Mohaiminul Islam Sifat

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while reading the summery of the judgment in a packed courtroom in the southern district town.

All the accused involved in the heinous killing are youths. People of all ages, including youths at home and abroad, had witnessed the brutality via information technology and social media, he continued.

"In this given situation, if they are not handed down exemplary punishment, then there will be an apprehension that youths may take wrong paths following them [the convicts]. So exemplary punishment of the accused is a must," he added.

"..... they be hanged by the neck until they are dead," the court said.

The court, however, said the convicts could file appeals with the High Court within seven days, if they wished.

The four accused who got acquittal are Rafiul Islam Rabbi, 20, Mohammad Sagor, 19, Kamrul Islam Saimun, 21 and Md Musa, 22. Of them, Musa had not been arrested. He was absconding while the other nine accused were present at court yesterday.

THE MURDER

Rifat, 25, an internet service provider, was hacked by some youths, led by prime accused Nayan Bond, in front of Barguna Government College in broad daylight on June 26 last year. Rifat died at Barishal Medical College Hospital later that day.

A video clip of the barbaric attack, believed to be captured on a mobile phone, went viral on social media triggering public outrage, with many condemning bystanders for not coming forward to save Rifat.

The following day, the victim's father filed the murder case with Barguna Sadar Police Station, naming 12 as accused.

Minni, who was seen in the video

FROM FRONT PAGE

TIMELINE

JULY 2

Key accused Nayan Bond was killed in a 'shootout' with police.

JULY 16

Police arrested Minni after daylong interrogation.

AUGUST 29

The High Court granted bail to Minni.

SEPTEMBER 1

Police pressed charges against Minni and 23 others.

JANUARY 1, 2020

Barguna district judge court framed charges against the accused.

JANUARY 21

HC rejected a petition filed by Minni seeking cancellation of the trial proceedings against her.

SEPTEMBER 30

Minni and five other accused are sentenced to death.

clip screaming while desperately trying to stave off two men attacking her husband with sharp weapons, was made the first witness in the case.

But after some days, her father-in-law demanded her arrest claiming that she herself was involved in the murder.

Following investigation, she was named as the seventh accused in the charge sheet.

Nayan Bond was killed in a "gunfight" with police on July 2 last year.

Mujibul Haque Kislul, an assistant public prosecutor of the Barguna court, said the court came up with a special observation regarding Minni's direct link with her husband's murder.

"She was involved in the planning as she had conversations in this regard with other accused," Kislul said, citing the verdict.

Minni got married to Nayan Bond secretly before tying the knot with Rifat, said Kislul, adding that keeping two husband at the same time is illegal. She then hatched a plan with Nayan Bond and Rifat was killed according to that plan under the leadership of Nayan.

"For this reason, the court has handed down death penalty to Minni," he added.

CASE PROCEEDINGS

On September 1 last year, police submitted separate charge sheets to the court, accusing 10 adults and 14 juveniles of the murder.

The Barguna District and Sessions Judge Court framed charges against the 10 on January 1 this year.

The court recorded testimonies of 76 witnesses and heard closing arguments from both the prosecution and the defence counsels before fixing yesterday to deliver the verdict.

Security was beefed up in and around Barguna town, including on the court premises, Tuesday evening. Two police members were deployed for the security of Rifat's father.

Minni, who was in the custody of her lawyer Mahbulul Bari Aslam, was brought to the court around 9:00am yesterday by her father on a motorcycle. Eight other accused, who were in jail,

were taken to the court around noon.

Lawyers, fathers of both Minni and Rifat, and several journalists were allowed to enter the court building amid tight security before the judge started to pronounce the verdict around 12:30pm.

After the verdict, Minni was taken to jail in a microbus while the other convicts were taken there in a prison van.

Convict Rifat Farazi, relative of Barguna District Council Chairman Delawar Hossain, was seen laughing while being taken to the van. "The High Court will release us," he was heard yelling.

Some of the family members of the convicts were seen crying outside the court after the verdict was delivered.

REACTIONS ON VERDICT

Rifat's father Abdul Halim Dulal Sharif expressed satisfaction over the verdict.

"We are happy. My son's soul will get some peace ... we demand quick execution of the verdict," he told journalists.

Terming the verdict "historic," Public Prosecutor Bhuban Chandra Haldar expressed satisfaction at it. "The court has identified Minni as the mastermind behind the killing," he added.

"The verdict has proved that offenders, whoever they are, will be punished. None can get away after committing any offence," he said.

Minni's father Mozammel Hossain Kishore, however, said, "My daughter is innocent. We have been denied justice."

"The countrymen [through the video clip] saw how she tried to save Rifat from the attackers, risking her own life. Yet, the court has given her death penalty. We can't accept it," he said.

Minni's lawyer Mahbulul Bari Aslam said they would go to the High Court and hoped that she would be proved not guilty.

N Korea tells UN it now has 'effective war deterrent'

REUTERS, New York

North Korea has a "reliable and effective war deterrent for self-defence" and will now focus on developing its economy, North Korea's UN Ambassador Kim Song said on Tuesday, though he acknowledged that international sanctions were a hindrance.

Addressing the UN General Assembly, Kim also said the "anti-epidemic situation in our country is now under safe and stable control" as a result of measures taken to contain the spread of the novel coronavirus. North Korea has said it has no confirmed cases, though some US officials have cast doubt on that claim.

Already weighed down by tough international sanctions over its nuclear and ballistic missile programs, Pyongyang is also facing significant economic damage from strict border closures and other measures aimed at preventing a coronavirus outbreak and struggling to cope with damage from recent storms and flooding.

Act fast to get WHO-okayed antigen kits

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extremely good initiative. If the authorities want to do something for the people of the country, they should introduce antigen testing immediately."

Bangladesh was already late in this regard while its neighbour India introduced antigen tests a few months back, he told The Daily Star on Tuesday.

According to worldometers. info, Bangladesh is one of the lowly ranked countries in the world in terms of conducting Covid-19 tests considering its population of over 160 million. Besides, 39 district hospitals in the country do not have RT-PCR testing facility.

The WHO approved the rapid testing kits of SD Biosensor, a South Korean manufacturer, and USA's Abbott.

"The manufacturers Abbott and SD Biosensor had agreed with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to make 120 million of these new, highly portable and easy-to-use rapid Covid-19 diagnostic tests available over a period of six months," said WHO Director General Tedros

Adhanom Ghebreyesus in an official release.

Each kit will cost \$5, said the release.

Speaking to this correspondent, Prof Nazrul Islam, a member of the National Technical Advisory Committee (NTAC), yesterday said, "It is a very good progress. We had been facing difficulties in selecting the right kits. As the WHO has prequalified a kit, now it will be easy for us to make a decision."

He, however, warned that picking the right kit is very important.

"There are lots of issues. We have to know the details about the WHO prequalification of the kits as well as the results of the validation tests now in progress at the IEDCR," Nazrul said.

It would be the best if the WHO bought the kits from the company in bulks and supplied them to Bangladesh, he added.

Dr Abdullah Shahriar, head of pediatric cardiology at the National Institute of Cardiovascular Diseases in Dhaka, said detection of Covid-19 through rapid testing would be a great help to patients in getting

timely treatment.

He, however, stressed the need for ensuring the quality of rapid testing kits.

The government on September 17 permitted antigen rapid testing for Covid-19 at the public healthcare centres.

Officials at the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) said they have approached the WHO country office in Dhaka yesterday in this regard.

DGHS spokesperson Dr Habibur Rahman said, "We have told him that Bangladesh should have the similar benefits, which the other countries would enjoy, from this initiative."

He said the introduction of the antigen kits at 10 specialised and 39 district hospitals would take more than a month.

"We are at the final stage of testing a kit and testing of several others is going on. The validation may be completed within 7-10 days," Habibur said.

The SD Biosensor's testing kit is also among those being tested by IEDCR.

JS not as effective as expected: TIB

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He said, "The absence of an effective opposition party has been confirmed in the present parliament. The culture of boycotting parliament by the opposition was unacceptable to us. Parliament boycott culture has stopped because we do not have an effective opposition party in parliament."

32 MINUTES TO PASS BILLS

According to the TIB, nine percent of parliament's time during the five sessions was spent on law-making.

In 2019, the Lok Sabha of India spent 45 percent of its time on making laws.

It said 16 bills (excluding money bills) were passed in the five sessions. It took an average of 32 minutes to pass each bill, including the time minister concerned took for their statements.

The Lok Sabha took an average of 186 minutes to pass each bill.

The TIB said there was a lack of discussion on bills in most parliamentary committees. Relatively active participation of the main opposition party and other opposition

members was observed in proposing amendments and scrutiny of bills.

The main opposition parties spent 67 percent, other opposition members 17 percent, and ruling party members, including ministers who introduced the bills, spent 16 percent time in the law-making process.

Of the 350 MPs, only 14 discussed bills by submitting notices. Eight of them proposed amendments to bills.

The role of the rest was limited to voting "yes" or "no".

The TIB said the proposed amendments to the passed bill included sentence restructuring, rearrangement of clauses and subsections, and addition and subtraction of synonyms and punctuation.

TK 22CR LOST FOR QUORUM CRISIS

The money and time wasted due to quorum crisis was estimated to be Tk 22.8 crore and 19.26 hours, said the TIB. The lost hours accounted for 17.3 percent of the total time of the five sessions.

The average quorum crisis per working day

was 19 minutes. There were 61 working days in the five sessions.

The Sangsad requires at least 60 MPs present.

LACK OF EFFECTIVE ROLE OF SPEAKER Un-parliamentary behaviours and language towards some civil society members and opposition political parties in violation of the rules of procedure of parliament were observed sometimes.

The Speaker remained silent and rarely issued ruling to expunge those abusive and attacking comments.

The Speaker did not take adequate measures according to the Rules of Procedure.

TIB RECOMMENDATIONS

In its recommendations, the TIB proposed that Article 70 should be amended for the sake of allowing members to express their voice and take position against the party line, except no-confidence motion against the government and the budget.

The membership of any standing committee member with conflict of interest should be cancelled.

DEATH IN PBI CUSTODY

Victim's father unwilling to sue cops

Says he is not facing any intimidation

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bagerhat

The father of a young man, who died in police custody on Monday, said yesterday he would not sue police.

Babu Fakir told The Daily Star that he was in shock and that he was in no condition to file cases.

He alleged that his son Raja Fakir, 25, was tortured to death after he was arrested by the Police Bureau of Investigation (PBI).

He clarified that there was no pressure on him to refrain from filing a case.

PBI officers filed a case for the unnatural death with Bagerhat Police Station.

"Police as well as an executive magistrate will investigate the case," said K M Azizul Islam, officer-in-charge of Bagerhat Sadar Police Station.

Bagerhat Civil Surgeon KM Humayun Kabir told The Daily Star that he did not see any bruises on Raja's body during the autopsy, but added that the death was definitely not natural.

PBI Superintendent of Police Sheikh Zahidul Islam said Raja felt ill after he was arrested as the prime accused in a murder case and that he was a drug addict.

Priest lands in jail over rape of schoolgirl

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

A priest of the Catholic Christians' diocese in Rajshahi city's Urmopur area was sent to jail yesterday on charges of abducting and raping a school girl while confining her for three days inside a church.

The priest Pradeep Gregory, 41, was arrested by Rab at the diocese at 11:45pm, said Additional Superintendent of Police ATM Mynul Islam of Rab-5 in Rajshahi, adding Pradeep was handed over to police hours of the arrest.

Yesterday, police produced him before a court, which sent him to jail, said Iftekhyar Alam, an additional SP of Rajshahi.

Meanwhile, the 15-year-old victim was produced before the judicial magistrate Shahhaj Parveen, who recorded her statement, said Rakibul Islam, officer-in-charge of Tanore Police Station.

He said the girl told the magistrate she was raped by the priest. She was then admitted to the One-stop Crisis Centre of Rajshahi Medical College Hospital for tests and treatment.

Speaking to The Daily Star, the girl's elder brother said, "She had been missing since Saturday morning when she went out to get grass for our cattle."

The next day, he filed a general diary with Tanore Police Station saying she was missing.

On Monday morning, locals caught a glimpse of the girl on the roof of the priest's house inside the church compound and informed her family.

"When we went to the church [Mundumala Saint John Merry Tianni Church, where she was confined and raped for three days] to take my sister home, the church authorities refused to let us. They told us she would be 'safe' with them. So, I informed the police," he said.

On Tuesday, after the girl's brother filed a case with Tanore police accusing the priest of rape, law enforcers rescued the girl from the church and arrested Pradeep later that night.

Rajshahi district police's additional SP Mahmudul Hasan said the girl's brother also mentioned in the case statement that religious leaders and community leaders tried to settle through arbitration.

"We think churches are sacred. When we send our women and children to priests, we can never imagine they would be harmed by them. But my sister, who has not yet learned what is good or bad for her, was harmed. It's painful," the brother said.

Contacted, Gervas Rozario, Bishop of the Rajshahi Diocese, told The Daily Star that the priest was suspended on Tuesday.

"He is no more a priest. My heart is filled with pain. I cannot understand how a trained priest like Pradeep could get involved with such an incident," he said.

He said when his men talked to Pradeep over the issue, he refuted the allegation of raping the girl but admitted that he didn't inform the girl's family "when he learned about the girl's presence in his residence".

"For this reason, we decided that he committed a crime of exploiting the girl and this is a sin," he said.

Indian court acquits all 32 accused

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saying it held no one accountable even when the Supreme Court had called the demolition illegal.

The Babri mosque stood in Ayodhya and its razing on December 6, 1992 climaxed pan-India rath yatra by Advani in what came to be known as the Ram temple movement that changed India's politics and catapulted BJP to the centre stage.

Besides Advani, Joshi and Bharti, the accused in the case included senior BJP leader Kalyan Singh who was the chief minister of Uttar Pradesh when the mosque was demolished. But none of the four high-profile

accused were present in the court yesterday when the ruling was delivered.

Advani, Joshi and Uma Bharti were allegedly on a dais near the mosque at the time of the demolition. The investigating agencies alleged they had instigated the crowd with their speeches.

Reading out the judgment, the judge did not accept the newspapers as piece of evidence as the originals of them were not produced. He also did not rely of the photos of incident as their negatives were not produced.

"The video cassettes were not sealed and even the videos were not clear and as such the same cannot be relied upon", observed judge

Yadav.

The Kalyan Singh government in Uttar Pradesh was dismissed by the federal Indian government led by Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao as riots broke out across India in which around 3,000 people died.

A total of 48 people were accused in the case but 16 of them died during the trial.

Advani, 92, and Joshi, 86, are exempted from attending the court on health grounds. Uma Bharti has contracted coronavirus and Kalyan Singh is recuperating from the virus.

In a landmark verdict in November last year, India's Supreme Court ordered the construction of a temple at the site. The

foundation-laying ceremony took place earlier this year in which Prime Minister Narendra Modi was present.

Advani had recorded his statement in the case before the special CBI court through video conference on July 24 while Joshi did so a day before. Both have denied all charges against them.

In April 2017, the Supreme Court had asked the special court in Lucknow to complete the trial within two years with daily hearings. Later, it was given several extensions and when special judge SK Yadav asked for more time, the court extended the deadline to September 30.