


BANGLADESH UPDATE  **277** New cases in 24hrs  **15,78,288** Total cases  **28,016** Deaths  **15,43,204** Recoveries  **GLOBAL UPDATE**  **5,290,948** Deaths  **267,630,694** Total cases

BGB-BSF talks can settle small issues

Visiting Indian foreign secretary says on incidents along border, meets Hasina

UNB, Dhaka

Visiting Indian Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla yesterday said some small issues along the Bangladesh-India border can be settled by holding meetings between the border forces of the two countries. "Bangladesh and India have settled all major issues through discussions; some small incidents happening along the border between the two countries can be solved through holding meetings between BGB [Border Guard Bangladesh] and BSF [Border Security Force]," Shringla said when he met Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at the Gono Bhavan, her official residence. PM's press secretary Ihsanul Karim briefed reporters after the meeting. "We want this issue to be resolved," he quoted the Indian foreign secretary as saying. The PM agreed with Shringla, said Karim. Shringla said normalcy is returning in India after the setback of the Covid-19 pandemic. He conveyed the greetings of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Sheikh Hasina. Hasina also greeted her

Indian counterpart through the Indian foreign secretary. Shringla appreciated the economic progress of Bangladesh despite the Covid-19 pandemic. He added that India will commemorate the birth centenary of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Golden Jubilee of Bangladesh's Independence and the 50th anniversary of establishment of Bangladesh-India diplomatic relations in their missions across the world and will project Bangabandhu among the people of respective countries. Hasina said Bangladesh is also returning to normalcy gradually after the shock of the pandemic. She also recalled the days of her and family members' captivity during the Liberation War and mentioned that the recognition by India had overwhelmed them. Indian High Commissioner to Bangladesh Vikram Kumar Doraiswami and India's Policy Adviser to the Ministry of External Affairs Ashok Malik were present from the Indian side. Principal Secretary Dr Ahmad Kaikaus was present from the Bangladesh side.

Ray of hope in eye healthcare

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Blindness means inability to count fingers from a distance of 10 feet in day light while visual impairment means vision related problems.

However, the country's population has increased significantly in the last two decades and the average life expectancy has also increased, the study said. "Spectacle coverage was found to be 26 percent among the people aged over 30 years," it added. The survey recommended that a planned approach be taken for managing eye diseases to reduce eye health morbidity. It also said eye care services could be expanded through establishing community vision centres in all upazila health complexes across the country. The government had initiated National Eye Care programme in 2005 with a target to reduce blindness by 50

percent aligning with the global target of Vision 2020, aimed at eliminating avoidable blindness around the world. Dr AHM Enayet Hussain, an ophthalmologist and director general (Medical Education) of the Directorate General of Health Services, said, "Blindness decreasing in the country is a great news. Our progress in this regard is very satisfactory. Still there is a concern about impairment of vision, but it is not a threat to public health. We can easily prevent it." Globally, three out of every 10 people are living with some forms of visual impairment, which equates to a staggering 2.2 billion people with impaired vision. There are 43.3 million blind people worldwide and another 295 million people with moderate to severe visual impairment. Besides, 258 million people experience mild vision impairment, according to the report.

Defence chief, wife

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to broken pieces under the impact of the crash, flames from the chopper engulfing the wooden logs resulting in billowing smoke and personnel scurrying to douse the fire, including using buckets and water hose. Prime Minister Narendra Modi expressed deep grief over the demise of Gen Rawat, his wife and other personnel of the armed forces in the helicopter crash, reports our New Delhi correspondent.

Home Minister Amit Shah tweeted: "A very sad day for the Nation as we have lost our Chief of Defence Staff, General Bipin Rawat Ji in a very tragic accident. He was one of the bravest soldiers who has served the motherland with utmost devotion." Indian Army Chief Gen M M Naravane and all ranks of the Indian Army expressed their deepest grief and sorrow over the untimely demise of Gen Rawat, Madhulika Rawat and 11 other military personnel in the unfortunate air accident. In a tweet, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh called Rawat's death "an irreparable loss to our armed forces and the country." Congress party President Sonia Gandhi, who turns 75 today, has decided not to celebrate her birthday in view of the death of Gen Bipin Rawat, his wife and 11 others in the helicopter crash. In a condolence message sent to

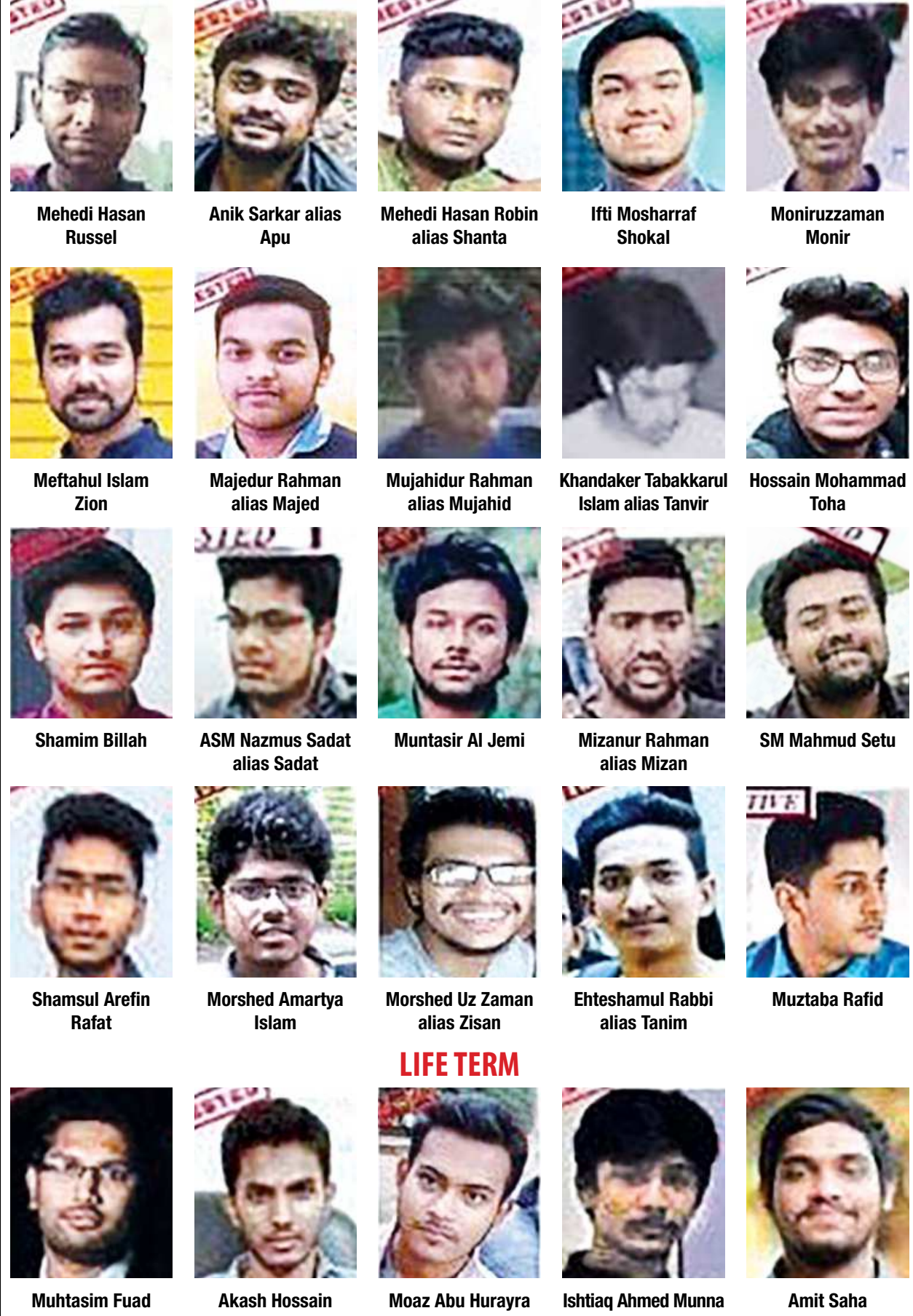
the Indian External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, Bangladesh Foreign Minister Dr AK Abdul Momen expressed deep shock and sorrow over the death of Gen Rawat and his wife at the tragic crash. Pakistan Army's spokesman in a short statement posted on Twitter said Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee (CJCS) General Nadeem Raza and Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Qamar Javed Bajwa expressed condolences over the "tragic death" of Gen Rawat, his wife and 11 others. Gen Rawat, 63, was appointed as India's first Chief of Defence Staff by Modi's government in late 2019. The position was set up with the aim of integrating India's three military services - the Army, the Navy and the Air Force. An infantryman with over four decades of military service, Rawat served along India's border with China, the disputed Kashmir region and on a United Nations mission in Africa, before taking charge of the Indian army in late 2016. He left behind two daughters. Gen Rawat and his wife will be cremated in Delhi Cantonment tomorrow. Their mortal remains are expected to arrive in the national capital in a military plane by this evening, reports TOI. India has dozens of Mi-17s in service. They are widely deployed to transport senior army personnel and government ministers.

Scholz takes reins from Merkel

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us firmly in its grip for another year" as a fourth wave of the coronavirus outbreak rages. The former finance minister, who won 395 of the 707 votes cast in the Bundestag lower house, has vowed broad "continuity" with the popular Merkel while making Germany greener and fairer. Asked by parliament speaker Baerbel Bas whether he accepted the election, a beaming Scholz removed his black corona mask to say "yes" and then received bouquets of flowers from all parliamentary groups except the far-right AfD. Scholz led his Social Democrats to victory in the September 26 election -- an outcome considered unthinkable at the start of the year given the party's then festering divisions and anaemic support. The 63-year-old, who tumbled emulating Merkel in style and substance into a winning strategy, has now cobbled together Germany's first national "traffic light" coalition with the ecologist Greens and the liberal Free Democrats, nicknamed after the parties' colours. Their four-year pact sealed late last month is called "Dare for More Progress", a hat tip to Social Democratic chancellor Willy Brandt's historic 1969 pledge to "Dare for More Democracy." "We have a chance for a new beginning for Germany," Scholz told his party at the weekend as it gave its blessing to the coalition agreement with 99-percent support.

The alliance aims to slash carbon emissions, overhaul decrepit digital infrastructure, modernise citizenship laws, lift the minimum wage and have Germany join a handful of countries worldwide in legalising marijuana. French President Emmanuel Macron congratulated Scholz, pledging "we will write the next chapter together" while EU chief Ursula von der Leyen said she looked forward to cooperation for a "strong Europe." Scholz's office announced his first official visit would take him to Paris and Brussels Friday for talks with Macron, von der Leyen and Nato chief Jens Stoltenberg. Vladimir Putin said Russia was offering "constructive ties" with the new government, while China's Xi Jinping said Beijing was willing to work with Scholz to "promote bilateral ties to a new level." GENDER BALANCED The new foreign minister, Annalena Baerbock, has pledged a tougher line with authoritarian states such as Russia and China after the business-driven pragmatism of the Merkel years. Greens co-leader Baerbock is one of eight women in Germany's first gender-balanced cabinet. "That corresponds to the society we live in -- half of the power belongs to women," Scholz, who describes himself as a "feminist", said this week. Scholz and his team promise stability just as France braces for a bitterly fought presidential election next year and Europe grapples with the enduring aftershocks of Brexit.

DEATH PENALTY



20 students get death

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prompted the Buet administration to ban political activities on campus. The court yesterday said it was proved beyond reasonable doubt that the accused colluded with each other and beat Abrar, saying that the latter was a Shibir man and making false allegations against him. Circumstantial and ocular evidence, confessions of the accused and CCTV footage have proven their involvement in the killing, said Judge Abu Zafar Md Kamaruzzaman of the Speedy Trial Tribunal-1. "The incident hurt all the people of Bangladesh. The tribunal decided to award the highest punishment to all the accused to prevent recurrence..." reads the verdict. Death penalty to such a large number of students in a single case is quite uncommon. Conviction for campus killing is also quite rare. According to the charge sheet, the accused held meetings for two consecutive days with the sole intention to beat Abrar to death. And they did what they intended to do. They beat him 50 to 60 times inside the Sher-e-Bangla Hall of Buet. Although Abrar threw up and

urinated, they beat him 40 to 50 times again. The murder prompted the United Nations to express grave concern over the pattern of campus violence in Bangladesh. Amid protests, Buet authorities in less than a week of the murder banned all political activities on campus and suspended 19 students, mostly BCL leaders. Abrar's father Barkat Ullah filed a murder case with Chawkbazar Police Station on October 7. In November 2019, the Detective Branch of police pressed charges against 25 Buet students. The tribunal framed charges against them in September last year. The trial proceedings concluded last month after several months' delay caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. Yesterday morning, police brought 22 accused from Dhaka Central Jail in Keraniganj and took them to the court around 11:40am. Some of them were seen talking to their lawyers while others remained quiet. The judge arrived at 11:57am in a packed courtroom. While reading out a summary of

LIFE TERM

the judgment, the judge cited rulings from India and Bangladesh's courts. The judge then announced the punishments. As the judge left the courtroom at 12:14pm, the convicts were seen talking with their lawyers and each other. They were later taken to jail in a prison vehicle. After the verdict, Abrar's father Barkat told reporters: "We will get justice when this verdict is executed after being upheld by the higher court." Chief Public Prosecutor Mosharruf Hossain Kajol also expressed satisfaction over the verdict. However, Monjur Alam Monju, lawyer for Amit Saha, who was given the prison sentence, said his client was out of campus at the time of the incident to celebrate Puja and thus was not involved with the incident. Amit will file an appeal with the High Court, he said. Besides, Law Minister Anisul Huq yesterday said, "Natural justice and rule of law have been ensured in the verdict." The government cooperates with the High Court for quick disposal of the case and its documents will reach the HC in seven days, he told reporters at his office in Gulshan.

Strong message to offenders

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involved in this servile politics, he added. MOHAMMAD TANZIMUDDIN KHAN Dhaka University Professor of international relations Tanzimuddin Khan said, "The Abrar murder is the manifestation of mal-politics practised in the name of politics. Teachers in universities are so lenient towards leaders of the ruling student organisations that they often incite the misdeeds of the student leaders by supporting them. The Abrar murder has proved the kind of miserable situation that has been created for the students. "The teachers assuming different posts in the administration are severely unaware. This culture will change when there will be a qualitative change in the degenerated culture that has taken hold in the name of politics." MIZANUR RAHMAN Prof Mizanur Rahman, director of student welfare at Buet, said the verdict is a strong message to those who live in residential facilities not only in Buet but all other universities and colleges across Bangladesh. "It now becomes clear that one has to undergo a trial process if he or she tortures a student mentally or physically in a

dormitory and gets involved in such malpractice," he told this newspaper. "In the future, those who are thinking of committing such acts will think twice. Overall, the verdict is a strong message to all," he added. Hasina 43rd FROM PAGE 1 the history of Bangladesh, is currently serving her fourth term. She won the fourth term, which is also her third consecutive term, after her party, Bangladesh Awami League, won 288 of the 300 parliamentary seats. "During what she believes will be her final term, Hasina plans to focus on issues such as food security and access to education and healthcare," the magazine adds. It also mentions that an ongoing struggle for Hasina has been establishing a firm democracy in Bangladesh. Every year, Forbes releases a list of 100 powerful women of the world. This year, the 18th annual list of powerful women included 40 CEOs, the most since 2015, who, according to the magazine, "oversee a record \$3.3 trillion in revenue." The list also included 19 world leaders, and an immunologist.

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MUNIA MURDER CASE

Submit report by Dec 28

Court directs PBI COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday asked the Police Bureau of Investigation to submit its report by December 28 in the case filed over the rape and murder of college student Munia. Bashundhara Group Managing Director Sayem Sobhan Anvir and seven others were sued in the case. Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Begum Yasmin Ara passed the order after Investigation Officer Golam Mokter Ashrafuddin, also an inspector of PBI, failed to submit the report yesterday, said court sources. With the latest, PBI took four dates but was yet to complete the probe report. Earlier on November 21, the same court asked PBI to submit the report by yesterday. Bashundhara Group MD was made prime accused in the case while the group's Chairman Ahmed Akbar Sobhan alias Shah Alam and six others were accused of assisting Anvir in committing the offence. The six others are Shah Alam's wife Afroza Begum, Anvir's wife Sabrina Sayem, model Faria Mahbub Piyasha, Saifa Rahman Mim, Ibrahim Ahmed Ripon and his wife Sharmim. The High Court on September 29 refused to grant anticipatory bail to Anvir in the case. After police recovered the body of 21-year-old Munia in a Gulshan flat on April 26, her elder sister had filed a case with Gulshan Police Station against Anvir on charge of suicide abetment. On July 19, Abul Hasan, the investigation officer of that case and also Gulshan Police Station's officer-in-charge, submitted the final report to the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court of Dhaka. On August 18, a Dhaka court accepted the final report and relieved Anvir from the case. However, the victim's sister on September 6 filed another case with the Women and Children Repression Prevention Tribunal-8 of Dhaka against Anvir over the rape and murder of the victim and seven others for assisting Anvir in committing the crime.

Schoolgirl raped in Cox's Bazar

2 Rohingya sued, say police OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

A schoolgirl in Cox's Bazar has been raped allegedly by two Rohingya youths in the district town. Six days after the incident, the victim's mother filed a case with Cox's Bazar Sadar Police Station on Tuesday, said police. The victim, a student of grade-III, was gang-raped by Kefayet Ullah, 20, and Imran, 19, of the district's Muthuripara area, read the case statement. Bipul Chandra De, officer-in-charge (investigation) of the police station, said the accused were on the run but the law enforcers trying to arrest them within the shortest possible time. According to the case statement, the victim was first abducted from the town on December 1. The duo picked her up as she went out of her home to buy food in the evening.

Khaleida Zia

FROM PAGE 1 when she was in jail for two years. He said physicians clearly said Khaleida should be sent abroad immediately for better treatment. "From the very beginning, the government did not take the issue of her treatment seriously. As you [people] may remember, she [Khaleida Zia] walked to the jail." He said that when Khaleida was sent to an abandoned jail, she was denied treatment and when she was taken to BSMMU, it was too late. "She was pushed towards death." Khaleida was sent to jail on February 8, 2018, in a corruption case. Due to the coronavirus pandemic, she was given temporary release on certain conditions on March 25 last year. The term of her release has been extended four times so far.

Inequality rising

FROM PAGE 1 "But since 2016, things have been stable on the inequality front. But we are trying to reduce the gap by connecting the country through roads and highways, providing electricity facility, internet-mobile phones," he said. The gap will not increase as the government is trying to create more employment through emphasising industries. "We are trying to reduce the corruption, which was a historical problem in our country. But we made a free and fair Anti-Corruption Commission, where lots of pro-government people are also facing cases," he added. The report also said in Bangladesh, Myanmar and South Africa, full-time employees work around 2,100 hours per year compared with 1,600 in rich countries.