

**WEATHER FORECAST**

YESTERDAY'S TEMPERATURES	DHAKA	MYMENSINGH	CHITTAGONG	SYLHET	RAJSHAHI	RANGPUR	KHULNA	BARISAL	COX'S BAZAR
	H 29.1 L 18.0	H 28.7 L 15.0	H 29.7 L 17.0	H 28.8 L 16.9	H 28.1 L 15.0	H 28.0 L 15.5	H 29.5 L 17.0	H 29.3 L 15.4	H 29.7 L 17.7

Weather may remain dry with temporary partly cloudy sky over the country till 6:00pm today, reports UNB quoting Met office. Night temperature may fall slightly over Rangpur and Rajshahi divisions and it may remain nearly unchanged elsewhere over the country. **The sun sets in the capital today at 5:11pm and rises tomorrow at 6:19am.**

## 143 more new assistant judges appointed

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT**  
 One hundred and forty-three new assistant judges have been appointed for the lower courts, increasing the number to 1,844. The law ministry has recently issued a gazette notification in this regard. The new judges have qualified in the 11th Bangladesh Judicial Service (BJS) examinations, Deputy Secretary of the law ministry Mahbub Rahman Sarker, who signed the notification, told The Daily Star yesterday. In the notification, the law ministry directed the new judges to join their offices on November 26. Following the appointment, the rate of disposal of pending cases will increase and the backlog of the pending cases will be reduced, Supreme Court's Special Officer Md Saifur Rahman told this correspondent.

## Promoting reading habit among youths

### 3-day Bidyapeeth book fair begins in Dhaka

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT**  
 Speakers at a discussion yesterday stressed the need for encouraging reading habit among youths to overcome social, political and cultural crises persisting in the society. Developing reading habit among all ages, especially youths and children, will help create a knowledge-based society, they told the discussion prior to opening of a three-day book fair. Gyantapas Abdur Razzaq Bidyapeeth, a specialised library featuring books from the collection of National Professor Abdur Razzaq, arranged the book fair "Bidyapeeth Boi Mela" on its premises in the capital's Dhanmondi. Some 12 leading publishing houses and bookshops including University Press Limited, Academic Press and Publishers Library, Sahitya Prakash, Bengal Publications, Omni Books, Pathak Samabesh Kendra, Daily Star Books and Prothoma Prokashan are participating in the book fair. It is open to all from 10:00am to 8:00pm till Sunday, said organisers. Addressing the programme as chief guest, noted columnist Syed Abul Maksud said although this



**Guests and bookworms visit the Bidyapeeth Boi Mela, which began on the premises of Gyantapas Abdur Razzaq Bidyapeeth in Dhaka yesterday. The three-day fair is open for all from 11:00am to 8:00pm till tomorrow.**

book fair is small in terms of arrangement, it has greater significance as it provides a scope of collecting quality books. He stressed the importance of building more small-scale libraries, consisting of quality books. Abul Maksud also spoke about National Professor Abdur Razzaq and his passion for reading. Speaking as special guest, Sohrab Hasan, associate editor of Prothom Alo, said in order to ensure an enlightened nation, reading is imperative. Luva Nahid Choudhury, director general of Bengal Foundation, and Ahrar Ahmad, director general of Gyantapas Abdur Razzaq Foundation, among others, spoke at the event. Bidyapeeth is an initiative of Gyantapas Abdur Razzaq Foundation.

## LPG an alternative fuel source for Rohingyas

**DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT**  
 Though the Bangladesh government and UN agencies have enhanced distribution of alternative fuels among Rohingya refugees, it has been insufficient for their cooking needs. Until now, Rohingya refugees and many from host communities have been almost entirely dependent on firewood for cooking, and refugee families spend much of their day collecting it, said UNHCR spokesperson Andrej Mahecic at a press briefing in Geneva yesterday. The environmental impact of the refugee influx since August 2017 has been significant. The estimated 900,000 refugees in Cox's Bazar have needed 700 tonnes of wood every day for cooking alone, said the spokesperson. A pilot distribution of the new fuel earlier this autumn to 6,000 refugee families demonstrated how the use of LPG can gradually end these practices. The switch will also aid the protection of refugees because most of those collecting firewood are women and children, according to a briefing note of UNHCR yesterday. The alternative fuel initiative is being supported by the government and other UN agencies. The spokesperson said the UNHCR with its partners, including International Union for Conservation of Nature and Brac, is also providing saplings in the settlements to help reforest the area and improve the environment. Refugees will also be entitled to regular refills at monthly periods. Most of the stoves are being produced locally, creating jobs in the local economy. In addition, every sixth stove and gas cylinder will be delivered to the vulnerable Bangladeshi families, hosting Rohingya refugees.



**The ruins at the Laurer Garh archaeological site unfold the history of what experts presume to be the seat of an ancient kingdom in greater Sylhet region.**

## Locals obstructing excavation of Laurer Garh

### Work will continue, say archaeology dept and local admin

**OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet**  
 After a few days of excavation, archaeologists have become hopeful about the re-emergence of "Laurer Garh", the seat of a long-lost kingdom of greater Sylhet region. A team of the Department of Archaeology started excavating the historic site on November 14, but after a week of excavation, some locals allegedly started hindering the work. The department – along with local administration – however, is willing to continue the excavation, despite the obstacles. According to history, the ancient Laur kingdom's capital was situated here – sprawling over 30 acres of land of Halhalia and nearby Brahmanagan village under Tahirpur upazila in Sunamganj. Ruins of a fort, palace and other structures are still visible. According to the Department of Archaeology, this site has other historical marks which clearly demonstrate that several civilised societies lived on the same land. People started living in the ruins and formed a village after the Liberation War and they are now trying to stop the excavation work in fear of being evicted, the upazila administration and archaeology department



officials said. On November 18, some of them verbally abused and threatened local union parishad member Abdur Rouf for assisting the excavation. Rouf later filed a general diary with Tahirpur Police Station. Nandan Kanti Dhar, officer-in-charge of the police station, said police are ensuring security at the excavation site and will take actions against people trying to obstruct the work. Purnendu Deb, upazila nirbahi officer of Tahirpur, said the excavation will continue with the help of local administration as this will put the locality on the map. Dr Ataur Rahman, regional director of the archaeology department, said that no local will be evicted from their land. "They will be delighted when people from all over the world start coming here. Tourists and researchers will come to visit the site. We will continue our work," he said.

## Rab seizes 7kg gold

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT**  
 Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) yesterday arrested four members of a gold smuggling gang and recovered 56 gold bars weighing 7kg in Kalyanpur area of Dhaka. On information of gold smuggling to Satkhira from the city, a Rab team carried out a raid in the bus stand area around 4:00pm and made the arrest and seizure, said Saiful Malik, operations officer of Rab-2. The arrestees are Liton Hossain, 30; Aminur, 23; Shah Alam, 32; Ayesha Begum, 40, all from Jashore. The bars hidden inside their bodies are worth around Tk 3 crore, Rab said. The arrestees in primary interrogation told Rab that they were engaged in gold smuggling to the neighbouring country for a long time, the officials said. They also said these four only carry gold across the border, but they were searching for the gang leader. Four mobile phones were also seized from their possession.

## 'We want employment opportunity'

**Hijras say at seminar**  
**OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh**  
 Hijras should be given employment opportunities for the country's overall development, said speakers at a seminar in Mymensingh. The community is still neglected and treated negatively, they said. Two NGOs -- Bandhu Welfare Society and Right Here Right Now -- Bangladesh -- organised the seminar titled "Joining the Cause: Social Integration of 3rd Gender/Hijra and Role of Journalists" at a city hotel. Journalists and leaders from Alor Pathy Hijra Sangha, a local organisation of hijras, addressed the programme, among others. If people show a dignified attitude towards hijras they could be an important part of the mainstream economy, they said. The real development of a country depends on social, economic and political developments, they said. So, there is no scope to keep hijras away from the society, the speakers stressed at the seminar.

## AG's comment arbitrary, politically motivated

### Says Barrister Mahbub rejecting his claim of Hawa Bhaban's involvement in Niko graft case

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT**  
 BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia's lawyer Barrister AM Mahbub Uddin Khokon yesterday said the attorney general's statement about Hawa Bhaban's involvement in the Niko corruption case is illegal, arbitrary and politically motivated. Attorney General Mahbubey Alam, as a public prosecutor, is supposed to conduct corruption cases at the trial court according to the laws of the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC). However, he, in violation of the law, is making statements about the Niko case in his attempt to influence the case proceedings, Barrister Mahbub alleged. Khaleda's lawyer made the remarks at a press briefing at his chamber in the capital's Dhanmondi area. The night before, Attorney General Mahbubey Alam at a press briefing claimed that investigations conducted by both FBI of the US and police of Canada have found the involvement of Hawa Bhaban (then political office of the BNP chief) in the Niko corruption case. Earlier that day, in a petition submitted to a Dhaka court, the AG sought permission to produce three witnesses, including an FBI special agent, before it in connection with the Niko corruption case that was filed against BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia and 10 others. Judge Md Mahmoodul Kabir of the Special Judge's Court-9 of Dhaka fixed December 9 for hearing on the petition. Yesterday, Barrister Mahbub Uddin

Khokon told the media that the attorney general made the move regarding the Niko case in order to damage BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia's reputation ahead of the upcoming parliamentary elections. Mahbub also claimed that the Niko deal was signed when Sheikh Hasina came to power and became prime minister for the first time (1996-2001) and the relevant file was approved later on by the government of Khaleda Zia. Contacted, Attorney General Mahbubey Alam told The Daily Star that according to the constitution, he can move any case before any court of the country as the attorney general of the state. He also said he obtained the investigation reports from FBI and Canadian police with the help of mutual legal assistance laws. On December 9, 2007, the ACC filed the Niko graft case with Tejgaon Police Station, accusing Khaleda Zia, prime minister from 2001 to 2006, and 10 others of abusing power to award a gas exploration and extraction deal to Canadian company Niko. In 2011, FBI investigator Debra Laprevotte helped the ACC in its probe against Tarique Rahman, son of Khaleda, and Giausuddin Al Mamun, Tarique's associate, in a money-laundering case. The same year, Debra also testified before a Dhaka court against Tarique and Mamun in the money laundering case. The duo were later sentenced to different terms of imprisonment.

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