



SULTAN FOREVER

Today is 90th birth anniversary of the legendary painter

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BLOW TO BROTHERHOOD

Egyptian court orders dissolution of the Islamist group's political wing

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PALESTINIAN CRISIS

The actual situation is far worse now, says Mideast expert Ussama Makdisi

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Health insurance for all by 2032?

Govt embarks on ambitious 20-year scheme; financial details not clear yet

PORIMOL PALMA

In a major move to reform the country's health sector, the government has taken up an ambitious plan to bring all citizens under national health insurance coverage by 2032.

The plan envisages quality healthcare for all without financial hardship to any, say officials of the Health Economics Unit (HEU) of the health and family welfare ministry.

"The first target will be people below the poverty line, some 48 million now. The government will pay their premiums as subsidy," HEU Director General Ashadul Islam has said.

For this programme, the HEU has designed the Healthcare Finance Strategy 2012-2032. And the government is now drafting a law.

However, the government is yet to come up with details of how it will finance health insurance for the entire population.

The scheme will be mandatory for those having regular jobs in the formal sector. They will pay premiums but the government might provide partial financial support depending on their income, the HEU director told The Daily Star recently.

People in the informal sector or those having no regular jobs and income may voluntarily join the scheme. For their insurance coverage, they could be given incentives based on their financial status.

"The health insurance will not necessarily cover treatment of all diseases, but it will ensure everyone gets certain health services, like the treatment of most common diseases."

Before the launch of the insurance programme, a four-year scheme, Shasthyo Suroksha Karmashuchi (SSK), will be run as a test case in Kalihati, Madhupur and Ghatail upazilas of Tangail from the end of the year.

Under the scheme, free health cards will be issued to around one lakh households living below the poverty line. If one falls sick and shows the card to the SSK booth at the upazila health complex, one will get treatment either at the complex or at the district sadar hospital.

"This scheme will cover the treatment of 50 most common diseases," said Ashadul Islam. For each household, the government will pay Tk 1,000 as annual premium.

The health ministry is also working with the German cooperation agency GIZ to start a social insurance scheme for readymade garment workers in January next year with contributions from workers, employers, buyers and the government.

The lessons learned from these pilot projects will be applied to determine the exact mode of operation of the nationwide health insurance scheme.

Ashadul Islam said the health ministry had targeted raising the health budget to 15 percent of the

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The smell of death is in the air and the crows know it too as do the families of the missing. At Mawa, a vessel on the horizon is seen searching for Pinak-6 that went down on Monday taking scores of lives with it. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Flicker of hope in hunt for Pinak-6

Signals picked up from metal object of similar length; 6 more bodies recovered; death toll now 46

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A ray of hope flickered on the sixth day of hunt for sunken launch Pinak-6 yesterday as rescuers claimed to have detected signals from a "metallic object" in the Padma.

"The metallic object has similarity with Pinak-6 in length," said Manjurul Karim Chowdhury, a navy official involved in the operation. The ill-

fated double-decker was 16/17 metres long.

After rescue vessel Kandari-2's side-scan sonar detected the object around a kilometre off Mawa launch terminal. Rescue officials had been working on several possible locations within 20 kilometres downstream from the capsized site.

The side-scan sonar sends a beam of sound waves down to the ocean bed, measures how loud

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WATCH ON VESSELS

It improves after tragedy, then slackens

PANKAJ KARMAKAR and TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

While the salvage operation for capsized launch Pinak-6 continues in the Padma, the authorities consider it high time to do some "monitoring", a task which usually remains neglected.

The Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA), the shipping department and law enforcement agencies have

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Palestinians offer Juma prayers in the shadow of a toppled minaret at a mosque hit by Israeli strikes in Gaza City, as Israel and Gazan militants resumed cross-border attacks after a three-day truce expired. The photo was taken on Friday. Story on page 16.

PHOTO: AP

Tackling Iraq's insurgency will take time: Obama

Vows to stop genocide of minorities; Iraqi forces eye offensive to gain lost ground

AGENCIES

President Barack Obama yesterday said US airstrikes had destroyed arms that Islamic State (IS) militants could have used against Iraqi Kurds, but warned there was no quick fix to a crisis that threatens to tear Iraq apart.

Speaking the day after US warplanes hit militants in Iraq, Obama said it would take more than bombs to restore stability, and criticised Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki's Shia-led government for failing to empower Sunnis.

"I don't think we're going to solve this problem in weeks. This is

going to take some time," Obama told a news conference in Washington.

Obama also vowed to help rescue thousands of civilians besieged by jihadists on an Iraqi mountain.

US and Iraqi aircraft have air dropped food and water to the thousands of people, many of them

members of the Yazidi minority, who have been stranded on Mount Sinjar since they fled Islamic State attacks on their homes a week ago.

Amid reports that the children and elderly among them were already dying, Obama justified the decision to intervene Thursday with

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Food courts there but not functional

ASHUTOSH SARKAR

Each district has a food court to act on complaints of food adulteration. But the government has shown little sincerity in making them functional since it set them up 16 months back on High Court orders.

Zahirul Kabir, assistant secretary of the law ministry, who deals with the courts, told The Daily Star last month that his office had not received any information about the filing of a case with any food court, let alone punishing any trader for using toxic chemicals in food items.

This is because the government has not created public awareness about the food courts and their functions, said Manzill

Mushrid, president of Human Rights and Peace for Bangladesh (HRPB), who had moved a petition seeking HC directives on the government to set up the food courts.

Responding to his plea, the HC in June 2009 ordered the government to set up a food court and appoint an adequate number of food analysts in each district and metropolitan city within two years.

The law ministry in March last year formed a Pure Food Court in every district and metropolitan city and issued a gazette notification in November, asking the judicial magistrates concerned to conduct the court proceedings.

The courts can fine anyone up to Tk 3

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Form independent commission first

Journalist group demands over govt's broadcast policy

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists (BFUJ) yesterday urged the government not to implement the national broadcast policy on its own and right away, but rather have it done by an independent commission.

The commission, which must be formed as soon as possible, should be given a deadline to formulate a policy in consultation with all stakeholders, the leaders of the pro-ruling party union said at a press conference at the Jatiya Press Club.

The union was of the opinion that it was not a fully-fledged policy and that it was a guideline to formulate the policy.

The union leaders expressed concern over the fact that there was no timeframe given in the policy to form the commission and the information ministry was giving the job of implementing the policy before the commission was even formed.

"... the information ministry will decide everything

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Mohsin at it again

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Social Welfare Minister Syed Mohsin Ali has done it again. He exploded at the media once more. If one were to go by his opinion, newsmen did not have the qualifications to do their jobs.

Journalists are "dirty chaps and of bad character", he said at a discussion in Sylhet yesterday.

At one point, he told the photojournalists not to take

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