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WITH TODAY'S ISSUE

LIFE style



## CHRISTMAS SALES

Luxury hotels eye better business this year thanks to political calm

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## ROYAL TRIAL

Spanish princess to stand in the dock in royal first in tax fraud case

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# Costly healthcare adds to poverty

6.4m people in Bangladesh get poorer every year due to excessive cost of medical treatment; public healthcare facilities remain inadequate

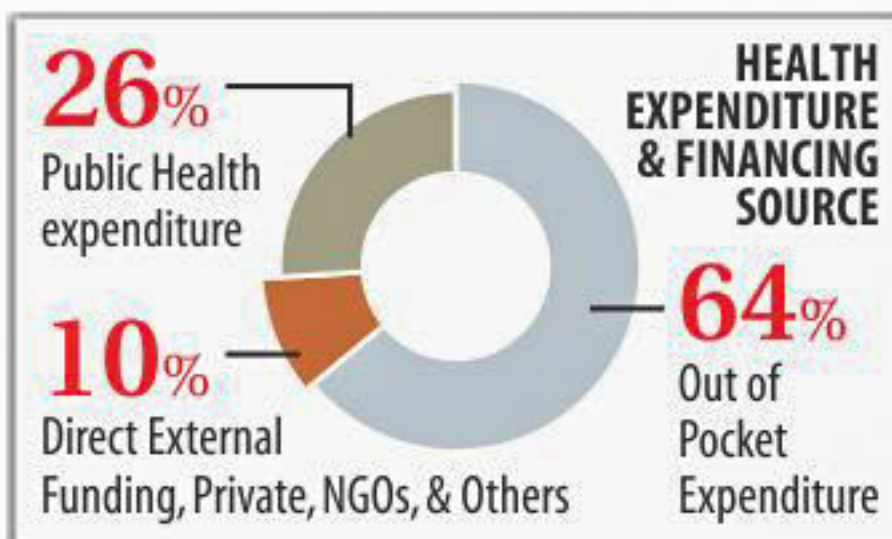
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government should give special attention to ensuring quality healthcare for the poor who become the worst victims of weak governance in the health sector, a number of experts said yesterday.

Around 6.4 million or 4 percent people of the country get poorer every year due to excessive costs of healthcare, they said referring to a study by the icddr,b.

"About five crore people are poor. They cannot pay for healthcare available in the private sector, while public healthcare facilities are inadequate," said Mohammad Iqbal, deputy project coordinator of Universal Health Coverage at the icddr,b.

Hossain Zillur Rahman, executive director of Power and Participation Research Centre (PPRC), said, "With poor health, our workforce cannot contribute to a dynamic



economy. Health is crucial for our development."

The observations came at a discussion titled "Universal Health Coverage: Bangladesh Perspective" at The Daily Star Centre in the capital.

It was jointly organised by Brac, International Centre for Diarrhoeal Disease Research, Bangladesh (icddr,b), the Centre

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Stacks of textbooks on the premises of Sundarganj Upazila Parishad in Gaibandha waiting to be dispatched to schools yesterday. With just days to go before the students are supposed to get the new books on New Year's Day, the authorities are in a hurry. The education ministry has been celebrating the day as "Textbook Festival Day" for the last few years.

PHOTO: STAR

## 2 fake freedom fighters at ACC

Finds anti-graft body probe

M RAHMAN

Two directors of the Anti-Corruption Commission resorted to cheating to obtain freedom fighters' certificate to defer their retirement by a year.

The anti-graft body found this while investigating its nine officials, including a director general, who have war hero's certificates.

The probe was launched on November 2 in the wake of government and media reports that some top bureaucrats fraudulently secured freedom fighter's certificates.

The ACC has completed investigating its Director Golam

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## OIL SPILL IMPACT UN team starts work today

STAFF CORRESPONDENTS

The United Nations team to help Bangladesh clean up the oil spill in the Sundarbans will start their work in the area from today.

Meanwhile, a separate investigation committee of the BNP that visited affected areas in the forest, alleged that even though foreigners were interested

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## EX-MINISTER QAISAR

# War crimes trial verdict today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A war crimes tribunal is set to deliver its verdict today in the case against former state minister Syed Mohammad Qaisar for his alleged crimes against humanity committed during the Liberation War.

Qaisar faces 16 charges of crimes including killing Bangladeshis, especially Hindus and freedom fighters, during the war in 1971.

An alleged local leader of anti-liberation forces Razakar and Peace Committee, the war crimes accused was charged

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# Pakistan to hang 500 militants

Intelligence hints at another major attack

AGENCIES

Pakistan plans to execute around 500 militants in coming weeks, officials said yesterday, after the government lifted a moratorium on the death penalty in terror cases following the school massacre.

Six militants have been hanged since Friday amid rising public anger over Tuesday's slaughter in Peshawar, reports AFP. "Interior ministry has finalised the cases

of 500 convicts who have exhausted all the appeals, their mercy petitions have been turned down by the president and their executions will take place in coming weeks," a senior government official told AFP on condition of anonymity.

A second official confirmed the information.

Meanwhile, Pakistan police said they had arrested several people suspected of

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## Stop gold smuggling

JS body asks Caab, Biman to take effective measures

RASHIDUL HASAN

Chairman of Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh and Biman high-ups came under fire yesterday from a parliamentary standing committee for their failure to stop gold smuggling through the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport.

The parliamentary standing committee on civil aviation and tourism asked the CAAB and Biman bosses to take effective measures immediately to stop gold smuggling and take punitive measures

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## Five killed under train wheels

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Five people, including two females, were found dead on railway tracks in the capital and Gazipur in 24 hours until yesterday noon.

One of them was identified as Mahabubul Haq, 60, of Bajitpur in Kishoreganj district. Identities of the remaining four could not be known immediately.

Autopsies were performed on the unidentified bodies at Dhaka Medical College morgue. They all had wounds in the head and other parts of the

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# EXCLUSIVE SATELLITE IMAGES OF OIL SPILL

The near infrared satellite images of the Shela river in the Sundarbans, provided by Digitalglobe, US, through The Decode Ltd, Dhaka, show dark, black oil slicks (circled) on the river and its banks. The first two images were taken on December 11, two days after an oil tanker sank in the river causing a spill that stretched over 60-70km. The images below, taken on December 20, show the same parts of the river with no oil slicks. Presumably, parts of the oil have by this time drifted away while some other parts have been collected by locals.

11 DECEMBER



20 DECEMBER



## Gazipur tense over rally of 20-party

BCL threatens to foil it unless Tarique apologises for his comments

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Tension runs high in Gazipur over Khaleda Zia's rally scheduled for December 27 as local leaders of Bangladesh Chhatra League have vowed to resist it unless BNP senior vice-chairman Tarique Rahman withdraws his remarks on Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

In a counter threat to the BCL, student wing of the ruling Awami League, Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal,

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## Robber killed in 'gunfight'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jhenidah

An alleged robber was killed in a "gunfight" with police in Magura Sadar upazila in the early hours of yesterday.

Deceased Uzzal Hossain, 33, was son of Awal Biswas of the upazila's Chandpur village.

According to police, Uzzal was the chief of an inter-district robber gang. He stood accused in four criminal cases, including robbery and snatching, with different police stations.

A gang of robbers attempted to commit a robbery at Mandartala by blocking Magura-Narail

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