

Free healthcare for the poor

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The fund for the pilot scheme would come from the Health, Population and Nutrition Sector Development Programme (HPNSDP), jointly financed by the government and development partners.
Green Delta Insurance Company Ltd will act as the insurer in the SSK and a cell at the health ministry's Health Economics Unit will supervise it.
The government has already set the costs and treatment protocols of the diseases, the statement said.
According to the "Health Care Finance Strategy (HCFS) 2012-2032", the government plans to bring all

citizens under the health insurance coverage by 2032. As part of the plan, those living below the poverty line will be provided the health cards first.
Some four crore people in Bangladesh live below the poverty line, according to the Planning Commission.
Based on the experience from the pilot project in Tangail, the SSK's coverage will gradually be expanded among different economic groups across the country. Arrangements for premiums for various professional or economic groups would be decided later, according to the HCFS.
As per the strategy, the health ministry aims to raise the health budget to

15 percent of the national budget by 2032, from less than 5 percent now.
The increased expenses will be covered by taxes from the tobacco business, premiums from the insured people, foreign aid, and the government's own fund, Director General (DG) Ashadul Islam of the Health Economics Unit told The Daily Star.
Dr Abdur Razzaque MP; Health Secretary Syed Monjurul Islam; Dr Deen Mohammad Noorul Huq, DG of the Directorate General of Health Services; and Waheed Hossain, DG of the Department of Family Planning, were present at the SSK inaugural programme.

Unesco team visits

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including deputy secretary M Mohiuddin, and researchers and teachers of Khulna University accompanied the Unesco team during its visit to the Sundarbans.
Unesco team coordinator and Senior Assistant Secretary Sheikh M Towhidul Islam said the team has already visited different points of the Sundarbans, including the Shela River.
The Sundarbans is situated about 14 kilometres away from the proposed 1,320-megawatt coal-based power plant

site, which is a joint venture of Bangladesh Power Development Board and the National Thermal Power Corporation Limited of India under the name of Bangladesh-India Friendship Power Company.
Environment experts warned that the Rampal Power Plant project will bring more harm to the country than good, destroying the Unesco World Heritage Site, since the climate, topography, land use pattern, wetlands, floral and faunal diversity and quality of air and water in the Sundarbans will be affected due to

the project.
According to the Environment Impact Assessment of the project, the power plant will produce 7.5 lakh tonnes of fly ash and 2 lakh tonnes of bottom ash per year. About 15 percent of the ash will be generated as a result of burning coal.
The Sundarbans is a habitat to the Bengal tigers and endangered Irrawaddy dolphin. The peripheral area of the forest begins within four kilometres from the power plant.

Awards for those work silently

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doorsteps of Bangladesh...our main goal is to ensure a beautiful life for all," she added.
Hasina said Bangladesh will surely move ahead overcoming all the barriers in the days to come to establish its position on the global stage as a victorious nation.
A nation must have a course of direction, vision and philosophy for development as the Awami League has floated the vision, outlining the nation's development by 2021 and 2041, she mentioned.
The PM said her government has been making relentless efforts for the socio-economic development of the country. Five crore people came out of abject poverty and graduated to lower middle-income class, she noted.
"We'll reduce the poverty rate further to make the country free from poverty, Insha Allah."

Extending her congratulations to the Independence Award recipients, the PM said these eminent persons and organisations have contributed a lot to different aspects of the national life, including the Liberation War, literature, culture and development.
She hoped the new generation will follow the footsteps of the Independence Award recipients.
The PM said some 55 eminent personalities and four organisations have been honoured with the award since 2009 for their outstanding contributions to independence, Liberation War and others fields of national life.
Besides, some 327 foreign friends and 11 organisations have been honoured over the years for their contributions to Liberation War.
"I think it is our duty to honour those who stood by us during our Liberation War.... I firmly believe we'll

be able to turn Bangladesh into a developed country. Let's repay the debts of the millions of martyrs," said the premier.
The PM handed over Swadhinata Purashkar 2016 to 15 individuals and Bangladesh Navy in recognition of their outstanding contributions to the nation.
The awardees are Finance Minister AMA Muhith, Textiles and Jute Minister Emaz Uddin Pramanik, Moulvi Achmat Ali Khan (posthumous), Squadron Leader Badrul Alam (ret'd) Bir Uttam, Shahid Shah Abdul Mazid, M Abdul Ali (posthumous), AKM Abdur Rauf (posthumous), KM Shehabuddin, Syed Hasan Imam, Rafiqul Islam (posthumous), Abdus Salam, Dr Maqsood Alam (posthumous), Dr MR Khan, Rezwana Choudhury Bannya and Nirmalendu Goon.

The day after the debacle

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before. I did not even feel like talking to anybody and only talked with them while we were travelling from Bangalore to Kolkata today," Papon told this reporter while checking in at the luxury hotel.
Opener Tamim Iqbal refused to talk about that three-ball horror show that denied Bangladesh a famous win against India on their home soil but reflected on the brighter side of a lost battle.
"It was a different atmosphere and a different feeling for us until those last three deliveries. We were playing in front of a crowd cheering the opposition team. They were applauding when their batsmen were scoring runs or their bowlers taking wickets. It was a similar case for us when we played against India in our home ground.
But when we hit a four and six a pin-drop silence gripped the ground yesterday. It was really something different for us," said Tamim while he was waiting for a car to arrive at the

hotel lobby.
When the Indian fans talk about rivalries they still talk about their team's battle against Pakistan. They are actually obsessed with that age-old rivalry. But on Tuesday, the Chinnaswamy crowd gave a different meaning to a different rivalry when they sang inspirational songs to lift the morale of their team, pleaded for a six when their idol Virat Kohli was batting, and rooted vociferously when Ravichandran Ashwin was bowling. In the middle it was the Indian team who were feeling the pinch of a big-match atmosphere against a more dominating 'younger brother'. And it was quite evident when they dropped a few catches from that match-fright syndrome.
Unfortunately for Bangladesh, who looked like the team to win till the 236th ball of the game, gifted India a lifeline in the competition.
But Tamim said that they would get many more opportunities to beat India

on their home turf and probably win a World Cup in five years' time.
"We are playing good cricket but we are still not a very good team in the T20 format. We could have been a very good T20 side had our BPL [Bangladesh Premier League] not been suspended for two seasons. Look at the players we have got from the BPL. Taskin and Sabbir and Rony are the products of BPL. And had we not missed two seasons we could have gotten more players," observed the exciting opener.
Four years ago when Bangladesh lost that Asia Cup final against Pakistan the whole nation cried with their sporting heroes. But after Wednesday's defeat against India an emotional yet more matured Tigers fans took little time to pardon their two sporting heroes -- Mushfiqur Rahim and Mahmudulh Riyad -- for the strong sense of dignity and pride that this brand of Tigers have injected into them.

The Black Night

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people were killed and 3,000 others arrested.
In the wake of the Pakistan army action, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman declared independence of Bangladesh through EPR wireless at 00:30 hours on March 26 (the night following March 25) in 1971 from his Dhanmondi-32 house.
The great leader also called upon the people to build a united resistance against the occupation forces. Later,

the military junta, in a bid to stop the legitimate movement of the Bangalees, arrested him on that night following his declaration of independence.
Later, Bangabandhu was taken to the then West Pakistan and kept in a prison for the entire nine-month period of the Liberation War.
Following the declaration, the whole nation, except a few pro-Pakistani elements, waged a total war against the Pakistan junta.

Ultimately, Bangladesh was liberated on December 16, 1971, when the Pakistan forces surrendered to the Bangladesh-India Allied Forces at the Race Course Maidan, now known as Suhrawardy Udyan.
Different political and socio-cultural organisations, including the Liberation War Museum, have chalked out elaborate programmes for today to observe the day and to pay deep homage to the martyrs.

Can we bring peafowls back?

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Peafowls have been successfully introduced to many other countries far away from its home.
Peafowls are terrestrial birds. They feed on seeds, fruits, insects and small reptiles including snakes. The males hold their flamboyant courtship displays on the ground and the females lay eggs and incubate on the ground. They thrive in forests where the density of large predators such as tigers, leopards, and jackals is not high. Bangladesh

has many forests with none or very few of those predators. If introduced now, the peafowls have a fair chance of colonising the forests like Bardhaman National Park, Baraiyardhala National Park, Chunar Wildlife Sanctuary, Dudhpukuria-Dhupchara Wildlife Sanctuary, Kaptai National Park, Khadimnagar National Park, Madhupur National Park, and even Lawachara National Park.
Green peafowl is a globally "endangered" species and its popula-

tion in the wild is not large. The Indian peafowl, however, is abundant in India. For a reintroduction in Bangladesh, it should be easy to corral sufficient number of this species from India. Before reintroduction we have to find what caused the extirpation in the first place, how many of those causes still persist, and how to remove those causes, especially the major ones. An initiative from our forest department may be necessary in this regard.

Redline staff deployed at airport

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
British company Redline Aviation Security Limited deployed a 29-member staff, including 20 screeners and security experts who arrived in Dhaka yesterday, to ensure a "flawless screening" of passengers and cargo at the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport.
The Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (Caab) signed a two-year agreement with Redline on March 21, under which the company will provide screeners to ensure foolproof security at the airport, train up its supervisors and other security staff and advise on overall improvement of security.
Of the 29 staff, 14 are experts while the rest are screeners, outgoing Caab Chairman M Sanaul Haque told reporters.
Since the UK department for transportation asked for ensuring foolproof security at the airport by March 31, the Caab asked the company to provide the screeners.

Caab screeners will take complete charge in a month, after being trained up and Redline will withdraw its screeners, he added.
On March 8, the UK government imposed a ban on direct cargo flights from Dhaka citing security concerns.
The same day, British Prime Minister David Cameron wrote to Sheikh Hasina, calling for a visible improvement of airport security by March 31 to avoid further measures like banning of Biman's direct passenger flights from Dhaka to London.
Against this backdrop, British envoy Alison Blake on March 13 suggested hiring a foreign company for security management at the airport.

All it took is fingerprints

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
It was the fingerprints that helped the police identify an unclaimed body of a woman and eventually arrest her killer.
The body was found in the capital's Gulshan area on March 5, and kept at the Dhaka Medical College mortuary for over a week until police identified her by going through the national identity card database of the Election Commission.

According to the EC database, the victim is Kajolee Akhter Kajol, 24, of Santoshpur village in Badarganj upazila of Rangpur.
After identifying Kajol, police contacted her family members and got her mobile number.
Yesterday, law enforcers arrested one Sujan Biswas in the capital's Dhanmondi area after locating his presence by tracking his mobile phone, police sources said.
Sujan, who claimed that he had a romantic affair with Kajol, admitted to stabbing her to death, said Abdul Ahad, additional deputy commissioner of Gulshan division of Dhaka Metropolitan Police.
Being informed, her family received the body from the mortuary on March 17, said Abdul Ahad, the police official said.
Sujan yesterday gave a confessional statement before a Dhaka court where he said he killed the woman because she had an illicit relationship with another man and left the body in Gulshan, Ahad said.

The DMP official claimed that it was the first time that the police identified an unclaimed body and arrest the killer by matching fingerprints.

Star editor gets

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Chaitanya Chandra Halder represented the Star editor.
Rejaur Rahim Lal, vice-president of Pabna Awami League, filed the libel suit on February 16.
It is one of the 84 lawsuits that have been filed against the editor in 56 districts since February 9. The cases include 17 pleas for bringing sedition charges against him.
The case spree began after the editor at a TV talk show on February 3 made an introspective comment about a lapse in his editorial judgment in publishing some reports, based on information given by the Taskforce Interrogation Cell during the 2007-08 caretaker government rule, without being able to verify those independently.
The cases have drawn condemnation from local and foreign journalists and their unions as well as human rights bodies.

Ministers offer resignations

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9-year sentence for armed robbery, was a criminal but not a militant.
"You can ask how it came about that someone was let out so early and that we missed the chance to seize him when he was in Turkey. I understand the questions," Jambon said. "In the circumstances, it was right to take political responsibility and I offered my resignation to the prime minister."
Islamic State posted a video on social media yesterday calling on its followers to claim victory and wage jihad after the deadly blasts which it claimed.
With pressure mounting on Europe to improve cooperation against terrorism, EU interior and justice ministers were meeting in Brussels on a joint response to Tuesday's bombings.
The Belgian blunders have implications for the rest of Europe, with evidence deepening by the day that both the Brussels and Paris cells were the work of a huge jihadist cell based out of Brussels.
The chief surviving suspect linking the Paris and Brussels attacks, French national Salah Abdeslam, 26, arrested in the Belgian capital last week, was remanded in custody until April 7 with two other suspects.
His lawyer, Sven Mary, who requested the adjournment, said Abdeslam had not been aware of the plan to attack Brussels that was carried

out four days after his arrest by men who had shared hideouts with him.
Bakraoui's brother Khalid, 26, a fellow convict, killed about 20 people at Maelbeek metro station in the city centre.
Security sources told Belgian media the other suicide bomber at the airport was Najim Laachraoui, a veteran Belgian Islamist fighter in Syria suspected of making explosive belts for November's Paris attacks.
The third suspect captured on airport security cameras pushing a baggage trolley into the departures hall is now the target of a police manhunt. He has not been named.
The bespectacled man wearing a cream jacket and a black hat ran out of the terminal, federal prosecutors said, and a third suitcase bomb, the biggest of the three, exploded later as bomb disposal experts were clearing the area causing no casualties.
Casualties from Tuesday's attacks came from about 40 nations, drawing an international outpouring of support for Brussels during three days of mourning. Washington said Secretary of State John Kerry would visit Belgium on Friday.
The case highlighted Belgium's problem with some 300 locals who have fought in Syria, the biggest contingent from Europe in relation to its national population of 11 million.

Had no option

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Aziz Ahmed said BGB men and election officials tried to calm them. But the appeal went in vain, and the force members fired warning shots.
As the mob attacked them with sharp weapons, the BGB men fired at the mob upon "a written permission" from the on-duty magistrate, he said.
About the incident in Teknaf, Aziz Ahmed said BGB personnel and police were left with no other option but to open fire as they had come under attack from all sides.

The BGB chief described the two incidents as very unexpected and unwanted.
He, however, said such incidents are not uncommon in case of maintaining law and order.
Meanwhile, Election Commissioner Brig Gen (ret'd) Mohammad Zayed Ali termed the incidents of violence unfortunate and asked law enforcement agencies to act more carefully in the second phase of election slated for March 31.
He was speaking at a view-exchange meeting on UP election in Chandpur.
"We took sufficient measures... The law enforcement agencies must remain alert next time so that they can avoid recurrence of such incidents in the areas that saw violence," he said.
Twelve people were killed in six districts, as violence broke out in many polling centres during Tuesday's election.
In the meantime, Shahjahan Mridha, 32, who was injured in pre-polls violence in Pataukhali's Dasmina Upazila on Monday, died at Dhaka Medical College Hospital yesterday morning.

Speaking at a programme in Tangail yesterday, Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal said Tuesday's election was held in a very free and fair manner. The situation in all parts of the country, except for one or two places, was normal.
Enquiry teams are going to be formed to probe the incidents of violence. And the Election Commission is taking action against the persons responsible, he said.
CASE FILED IN PIROJPUJUR
Mathbaria police sued around 1,300 anonymous people from Mathbaria and Bhandaria upazilas for obstructing government officials, attacking policemen and election officials, and trying to snatch ballot boxes at Safa Degree College centre.
Sub-inspector Sarwar Ali filed the case with Mathbaria Police Station.
Police, however, didn't include in the list of the accused the name of Mirajul Islam, vice chairman of Bhandaria Upazila Parishad and secretary of the upazila's AL unit, who was allegedly responsible for creating a situation that led the BGB men to open fire.
Contacted, Walid Hossain, superintendent of police in Pirojpur, said the names of the persons responsible would come up in the investigation, and then action would be taken against them.
No one was arrested in connection with the incident.

EC's denial won't bring

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during the polling and read extensive reports with photographs in all national dailies yesterday? If they still stick to his claim, they must be in denial.
The magnitude of violence and irregularities has surpassed records of anomalies and clashes in the previous elections to local government bodies held in the last two years.
Incidents of large scale violence and irregularities including capturing polling stations took place in the three phases-elections to the upazila parishes in early of 2014, three city corporations-Dhaka and Chittagong in April and municipality polls in December 2015. The police and local administration in many areas in those polls seemed to be helpless in front of violent ruling party men.
But after the close of voting, the EC every time claimed the elections were "peaceful except for some sporadic incidents."
Defending such flawed elections by the EC keeps diminishing people's hope for fair elections and electoral system.
The way it stood by Tuesday's UP polls has made uncertain the fairness of the elections in the remaining UPs. So far, 712 UPs went to polls on Tuesday. Elections to 643 UPs are slated for March 31 and 681 UPs on April 23. Around 2,200 unions will go to polls in three more phases until June.
In all the controversial polls held in last two years, the Awami League men

got landslide victories. But the flawed polls held since the one-sided parliamentary election on January 5, 2014 has dealt a severe blow to the country's electoral democracy, bulldozing people's voting rights.
The EC also appears to be helpless. Though the constitutional body enjoys great authority to ensure free and fair election, the authority could not be properly executed due to weakness in the leadership of the CEC and his colleagues.
Yet, it might deserve some sympathy for its helplessness.
Government political will is a must for holding free and fair elections, which was largely absent in the last two years.
Elections to five city corporations held under the current EC in 2013 have remained as shining examples of the government's political goodwill. The polls to city corporations of Gazipur, Rajshahi, Khulna, Barisal and Sylhet were largely free and fair. The government's role was lauded for this.
Due to the government's commitment to fair elections, ruling party men did not dare to resort to undue influence to manipulate the polls by capturing polling stations and stuffing ballot boxes.
The above examples prove the EC can not work in isolation. But the way the EC has kept justifying the flawed elections is nothing but denial of the truths. This will only keep eroding people's confidence in the EC and restoration of people's faith in it will be a Herculean task.

Hasina 10th greatest

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third position and Pope Francis the fourth.
Describing Hasina, the Fortune wrote, "As the only female leader among the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation member states, Hasina has deftly navigated the competing demands of Islamic tradition and women's rights."
"She has committed Bangladesh, the nation with the world's fourth-largest Muslim population, to securing legal protections for women and helping them attain more education, finan-

cial freedom, and political power.
"About 30 percent of adult women in Bangladesh now have at least a secondary education -- and the nation scores better on the World Economic Forum's Gender Gap Index than any other South Asian country," it added.
Hasina, chief of the Awami League and daughter of the nation's founding father Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, is ruling the country as prime minister for a third time now.
Last year, she ranked 59th on the Forbes list of 100 most powerful women in the world.