

**Tax cuts
poised to
boost EV
market**
B4



**Bigger gender
budget masks
weak funding
for women**
P3



**G7 pledges
to boost
Ukraine air
defences**
P5



**Lacklustre
Tigers
fall to
Australia**
P11

Fiscal reforms needed for LDC graduation delay

Says UN Committee for
Development Policy

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

Bangladesh will need to make substantial progress on domestic reforms aimed at addressing its deep-rooted structural weaknesses if it is to get a three-year extension to the timeline of its graduation from the least-developed country category, said the UN Committee for Development Policy.

"The Committee is of the view that an extension of the preparatory period by the General Assembly would be appropriate, provided that, during this period, Bangladesh advances significantly on domestic reforms aimed at addressing its persistent structural vulnerabilities," it said in its assessment report.

The report was handed over to the government earlier this month and the finance ministry held a meeting on it. Finance Minister Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury asked all ministries to submit plans for preparatory reforms in the case Bangladesh's graduation is delayed until November 24, 2029.

Priority areas for capacity-building would include domestic resource mobilisation for macroeconomic stabilisation and creating necessary fiscal space, as well as building trade negotiation capacity for ensuring effective market access, the report said.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

India unlawfully forcing 'ethnic Bengali Muslims' into Bangladesh

Says HRW

STAR REPORT

Human Rights Watch yesterday accused Indian authorities of forcibly expelling ethnic Bengali residents, mostly Muslims, from West Bengal to Bangladesh without due process.

In a statement, the rights group said actions by India's Border Security Force and efforts by Border Guard Bangladesh to prevent their entry have left dozens of families stranded in the border zone.

According to HRW, BGB has foiled 21 BSF push-in attempts involving more than 200 people, including children, since June 1.

West Bengal Chief Minister Suwendu Adhikari, whose party won the state's March elections, said the government's "detect, delete and deport" policy had led to the detention of hundreds of alleged "Bangladeshi

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4

RELATED STORY ON PAGE 3



Lionel Messi set the stage alight -- as he so often does -- with a scintillating hatrick that helped defending champions Argentina open their 2026 FIFA World Cup campaign with a 3-0 rout of Algeria in Group J at the Kansas City Stadium yesterday. Messi's first World Cup hatrick not only powered the Albiceleste to a statement victory in their title defence, but also saw the 38-year-old equal Germany forward Miroslav Klose's all-time World Cup goalscoring record of 16.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Clock ticks on Beximco Pharma's London listing

AHSAN HABIB

Beximco Pharmaceuticals is approaching a critical deadline on the London Stock Exchange, with its securities facing a possible cancellation of admission to trading after nearly six months of suspension due to delayed financial reporting.

Trading of the company's global depository receipts (GDRs) on the Alternative Investment Market (AIM) of the London Stock Exchange has remained suspended since January 2.

The suspension followed Beximco Pharmaceuticals' failure to publish its audited annual report and accounts for the financial year that ended on June 30, 2025, by the AIM deadline of December 31, 2025, along with subsequent financial disclosures.

Under Rule 19 of the AIM Rules for Companies, an AIM-listed issuer is required to publish its annual audited report

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4

ATTACKS ON STAR, PROTHOM ALO 6 months on, probe at a standstill

Several accused out on bail; police say
'new evidence still emerging'

TOUSIF KAIUM and EMRUL HASAN BAPPI

Six months after the arson attacks on the country's two leading dailies -- The Daily Star and Prothom Alo -- the investigation remains stalled despite a direct ministerial directive for its swift completion.

In the aftermath, police arrested 37 people, but many of them are now out on bail.

Despite scores of videos that surfaced during and immediately after the December 18 arson and vandalism and dozens of screengrabs collected by law enforcers, investigators say they are struggling to identify the perpetrators and have not detained any new suspects in the past six months.

The coordinated attacks targeted Prothom Alo before moving to The Daily Star, where 29 journalists and staffers were trapped inside as assailants vandalised property and set the office ablaze.

The Daily Star and Prothom Alo filed separate cases.

Filed on December 22, The Daily Star's case accused 350 to 400 unidentified individuals under the



Penal Code, the Anti-Terrorism Act, the Special Powers Act, and the Cyber Security Ordinance. The complaint also estimated the damage at Tk 40 crore.

Within days, police detained 11 in connection with the attack on The Daily Star and 26 over the attack on Prothom Alo.

On February 28, Home Minister Salahuddin Ahmed visited the newspaper offices and said the unprecedented attacks had tarnished Bangladesh's reputation globally. He directed police to conduct a fair investigation and submit charge sheets within two months.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

THE GREATEST SHOW ON EARTH



The superstar and his surreal satellite

KHALID HOSSAIN

History tells us that genius cannot exist safely in a vacuum, for to be completely unique is to be entirely alone. The grandest epics are never stories of a single soul, but of pairs. The ancient texts give us Rama, a legendary figure who could only endure his 14-year exile because Lakshman chose to walk the wilderness beside him.

Relatively modern mythology echoes this truth through Frodo Baggins, whose march into Mordor would have failed had Samwise Gamgee not been there to bear the weight of the world when the hero's knees buckled. Even the brilliant mind of Sherlock Holmes required the grounding presence of Dr. John Watson to keep him from spinning into chaos.

Back in 2014, when an 18-year-old Rodrigo De Paul was beginning his professional journey at Racing Club, watching Lionel Messi taste the bitter heartbreak of the World Cup final, his path was already aligning with this archetype. Breaking into a fractured national team of Argentina in 2018, De Paul entered the locker room with a singular focus: to protect the genius.

A symbiotic brotherhood took root, distinctly separate from the club-level friendships Messi had shared with Dani Alves, Neymar, or Luis Suarez at Barcelona. Those were bonds formed at the equal altitude of Europe's peaks, whereas De Paul's devotion was something rarer.

When Messi migrated to the United States to turn soccer into football, De Paul defied the conventional European career trajectory -- leaving a starting role at Atletico Madrid -- to follow him to Inter Miami,

SEE PAGE 5 COL 1



France the favourites but not flawless

NABID YEASIN

France arrived in North America as clear favourites to go all the way, tipped to become only the third team after Germany (1982/1990) and Brazil (1994/2002) to reach three consecutive World Cup finals.

Yet for the first hour of their Group I opener against Senegal, they looked anything but title favourites at the New York-New Jersey Stadium on Wednesday.

Then came the familiar turning point from Kylian Mbappe -- the kind that has defined his career on the grandest stages.

A player who has long treated World Cup nights as his personal theatre once again delivered when France needed it most. Mbappe -- World Cup winner at 18 in 2018, scoring in a World Cup final as a teenager, and a hatrick hero in the 2022 final in Qatar, joining Geoff Hurst as only the second player to achieve that feat -- broke the deadlock with a moment of pure precision. He evaded his marker inside the box to latch onto a crisp through ball from Michael Olise, adjusted his body in one fluid motion, and calmly slotted the ball past Senegal goalkeeper Edouard Mendy.

For all the pre-tournament hype

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

WC single-day attendance record broken

AGENCIES

Tuesday's four World Cup matches drew a combined 281,223 fans, breaking the 32-year-old single-day tournament record.

The previous mark of 277,070, also for four matches, was set in the United States on June 28, 1994.

Tuesday's total came on an action-packed day featuring matches between France and Senegal (80,545 fans in East Rutherford), Argentina and Algeria (69,045 in Kansas City), Austria and Jordan (68,527 in Santa Clara) and Iraq and Norway (63,106 in Foxborough).

The total attendance through six days sits at 1,309,652 (65,483 average), putting the tournament on pace to smash the 1994 cumulative attendance record of 3.5 million, according to FIFA.

"Wow! 281,223 fans in FIFA World Cup stadiums today -- the highest attended day in the history

SEE PAGE 5 COL 4



Rickety multistorey dwellings built with tin sheets, bamboo, and wood are a common sight in Islambagh of Lalbagh in Dhaka. Residents reach upper floors using steep bamboo or wooden ladders. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Teen found dead in school dorm

He had alleged torture by seniors
in complaint with school; family
says he was beaten to death

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Noakhali

After an eighth grader was found dead at a school dormitory in Lakshmipur's Ramganj upazila, his family has alleged that senior students beat him to death over accusations of stealing a mobile phone.

Police said they were investigating the incident.

The victim, Mehedi Hasan, 14, was a student of Farid Ahmed Bhuiyan Academy.

According to Mehedi's father, Zia Uddin of Raghavpur village in Ramganj, a group of senior students tortured his son for hours on Monday night after accusing him of stealing a mobile phone.

"The next day, my son filed a complaint with the school authorities. Then, the senior students tortured my son again in the afternoon and killed him," he alleged, adding that he would file a case and seek justice.

In a statement issued yesterday, the school authorities acknowledged that Mehedi had been physically and mentally tortured by a group of higher secondary students at the dormitory on Monday night "based on suspicion", although they did not specify the nature of the suspicion.

According to the statement, Mehedi filed a complaint with the school authorities on Tuesday over the alleged torture, prompting the school to launch an inquiry.

Later that day, around 6:00pm, Mehedi was found hanging in a corridor adjacent to Room No. 614 of the dormitory, the statement said.

The statement did not clarify whether Mehedi was alive when he was found.

SEE PAGE 5 COL 5