

Holy Ashura on June 26

Muharram moon sighted

UNB, Dhaka

Holy Ashura, commemorating the martyrdom of Hazrat Imam Hussain (RA), will be observed in the country on June 26 as the Muharram moon was sighted in Bangladesh sky yesterday.

The decision was taken at a meeting of the National Moon Sighting Committee held at the conference room of Islamic Foundation's Baitul Mukarram office with Additional Religious Affairs Secretary Md Fazlur Rahman in the chair, according to a press release.

Holy Ashura is observed on 10th of Muharram in the Hijri year commemorating the martyrdom of Hazrat Imam Hussain (RA), grandson of Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH).

On this day in the Hijri year of 61, Hazrat Imam Hussain (RA) along with his family members and 72 followers embraced the martyrdom in the hands of soldiers of Yazid at the desert of Karbala to uphold the teachings of the Prophet (SM).



Ukrainian workers repair the roof of the Dormition Cathedral at the Kyiv Pechersk Lavra after it was damaged in Russian missile and drone strikes yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

60% of all loans distressed

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In 2024, the amount stood at Tk 85,679 crore, meaning loan rescheduling nearly doubled within a year, according to the report.

The overall picture emerging from the report is alarming, Mujeri said.

"A weak banking sector does not affect banks alone—it has consequences for the entire economy," he said, noting that banks play a central role in channelling credit to businesses and households.

If credit flows are disrupted, investment slows, production weakens and employment opportunities shrink, he added.

AKM Waresul Karim, dean of the School of Business and Economics at North South University, attributed the surge in distressed loans to regulatory failures, politically influenced lending and concentrated ownership.

The report also showed that asset quality across the banking sector

deteriorated significantly in 2025, driven largely by a sharp increase in gross defaulted loans.

Bankers said businesses linked to the Awami League-led government, including S Alam Group, Nassa Group and Beximco Group, defaulted heavily following the government's fall in 2024, adding to the sector's bad loan burden.

However, several Bangladesh Bank reports suggested that a significant portion of the money had already been siphoned out of the country.

With distressed loans generating no income and recovery remaining weak, the capital base of many banks has slipped into negative territory.

"This is alarming and deeply concerning," said Syed Mahbubur Rahman, managing director and chief executive officer of Mutual Trust Bank.

The current government assumed office at a difficult moment, and the severe stress in the financial sector has added to its challenges, said

Rahman, also a former chairman of the Association of Bankers, Bangladesh.

"There appears to be no alternative to recapitalisation, but the government itself lacks the necessary funds," he said, urging authorities to treat the issue with urgency.

The policy prescriptions needed to address the crisis are already well known, Mujeri said.

"What is needed now is political commitment, institutional capacity and urgency in implementation. Delaying action will only make the problems more complicated and more costly to resolve."

Without decisive reforms, the banking sector is unlikely to recover and may continue to deteriorate, he warned.

He also cautioned that persistent public criticism of the financial sector is sending negative signals to the market and eroding depositor confidence.

"As a result, people are becoming increasingly reluctant to keep their money in banks," he said.

Returned home

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He stressed that his decision was not intended to create a retaliatory or hostile situation.

"I felt a message needed to be sent both at home and abroad that this is not Sheikh Hasina's government – this is a government with a public mandate."

Emphasising that Bangladesh does not seek hostility with any country, he said, "We do not want a bad situation with any country under any circumstances. I hope this incident will not affect future relations between the two countries."

His comments came a day after he returned to Dhaka via Colombo following what Foreign Minister Khalilur Rahman described as an "unexpected and regrettable" incident. Zahed travelled to India to attend the 28th Meeting of the Committee of Senior Officials of the Indian Ocean Rim Association, held in New Delhi on June 15-16 and organised by India's Ministry of External Affairs.

The Bangladesh foreign ministry had informed the MEA of his visit through a note verbale.

Despite this, the immigration authorities at Delhi's Indira Gandhi International Airport kept him waiting for about two hours after he landed there around 3:30pm on Sunday.

Following intervention by the Bangladesh High Commission, Indian authorities cleared him for entry. However, Zahed declined to enter India and flew back home via Colombo on Monday.

The same day, the foreign ministry summoned Indian Deputy High Commissioner Pawan Badhe and conveyed its displeasure over the matter.

The ministry is investigating the incident and will take appropriate measures after establishing the facts, Khalilur said.

The Indian authorities had been informed in advance about his participation in the event.

At the weekly press briefing, Zahed said, "If they had any concerns about me, they could have addressed them before my visit."

Asked why he travelled on a regular passport rather than a diplomatic one, he dismissed the suggestion that it had any bearing on the incident.

"I was carrying a Saarc visa, which also has diplomatic significance. I don't think this is a passport issue. A diplomatic passport is a privilege, not a requirement."

He rejected allegations that the Bangladesh High Commission in Delhi had been negligent, saying High Commissioner Riaz Hamidullah had actively engaged with Indian officials throughout the episode.

"Our high commissioner was with me from the beginning to the end," he said, adding that Hamidullah remained at the airport until his departure around midnight.

The foreign ministry is in communication with the Indian High Commission in Dhaka, and the government will decide its next course of action after reviewing the matter, he said.

The episode appears to be a fresh irritant in Bangladesh-India relations, which have shown signs of improvement after the BNP-led government took office.

Responding to a question, Zahed said he would have no objection to visiting India in future if proper procedures are followed.

Quoting the proverb "Friends may change, but neighbours cannot", he said it applied equally to Bangladesh and India.

The Daily Star last night contacted Randhir Jaiswal, spokesperson for India's Ministry of External Affairs, for official comments on the incident.

He said he was in Geneva and could not speak at the time. However, he advised sending questions, which this correspondent did via WhatsApp.

Jaiswal did not respond as of 12:40am today.

Iran fight back in tense

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match, with Iran coach Amir Ghalenoei revealing his squad had been ordered to return to Mexico immediately after the game rather than remain in the United States for recovery.

"They delayed our arrivals, and now they are forcing us to go back early without time for recovery," Ghalenoei said.

"They are making the situation more and more difficult, facing us with more hurdles, but we're not going to let that stop us from doing our best."

The coach went further, describing Iran as "the most oppressed team in the World Cup" and saying his staff had been forced to take on additional responsibilities because of the absence of key personnel who were unable to travel.

The tense atmosphere surrounding the team was also evident inside and outside Los Angeles Stadium. Hundreds of anti-government protesters gathered outside the venue, arguing the team did not represent the Iranian people, while some spectators inside displayed political symbols despite FIFA's regulations prohibiting political messaging. The Iranian national anthem was met with a mixture of cheers and boos.

On the pitch, however, Iran showed resilience after twice falling behind against the tournament's lowest-

ranked team.

New Zealand took an early lead in the seventh minute when veteran striker Chris Wood held up a long pass before setting up Elijah Just, who finished a flowing move with a powerful volley.

Iran responded through Ramin Rezaeian in the 32nd minute after a goalmouth scramble before New Zealand restored their advantage in the 55th minute, with Just completing his brace following a neat exchange with Wood.

But Iran struck back again nine minutes later as Mohammad Mohebi rose highest to convert Rezaeian's superb cross with a header that clipped the inside of the post.

The final half hour saw Iran dominate possession and create several opportunities, but poor finishing and determined New Zealand defending denied them a winning goal.

The draw leaves Iran's hopes of reaching the World Cup knockout stage for the first time still hanging in the balance, although fellow Group G rivals Egypt and Belgium also played out a draw.

Iran striker Mehdi Taremi later described his team's treatment at the tournament as a "disaster" and called on FIFA to provide greater assistance.

"We just want peace, which is the centre of FIFA – peace, joy, and those things," Taremi said.

Criticise, don't sensationalise

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Citing an example, he said, "Our Matiur Rahman bhai from Prothom Alo came to meet us and said they were bringing out a magazine [Rosh Alo] and wanted to publish a cartoon.

"I told him, 'Go ahead, there is no problem.' He then said the cartoon would be quite harsh. I asked what kind of cartoon it would be. "He said it would depict me during my speech in parliament on the last day of the previous session, sitting on a chair that was emitting fire."

"I said, 'No problem, publish it. A cartoon is a cartoon'," the PM added.

Asked about his experience as prime minister so far, Tarique said he has been feeling "extreme pressure" while discharging his duties since taking office nearly four months ago.

"Of course, there is the pressure of responsibility. There are many problems and many limitations. At the same time, the expectations of people from different classes and professions are very high.

"I don't even realise when evening comes. I'm not getting time to catch my breath.... I feel it would have been better if a day were 48 hours long instead of 24."

About the government's challenges, he said the administration had to deal with several major issues in its first few months.

"We began our journey with Tk 30 lakh crore in loans. At the start, Ramadan began and we naturally had to get through the month. After Ramadan, the war [the US-Israel war on Iran] started."

Asked about incidents of disorderly behaviour by some BNP leaders and activists, he admitted that such incidents were taking place but said action was being taken.

"It's not that such things are not happening. Even before forming the government, if any of our party leaders or activists behaved in an unwanted way anywhere, we took action.

"Now, as we are in government, if such incidents still happen anywhere, we are taking two steps – from the party's position, we are taking the action that should be taken, while at

the same time, we are trying to take action in accordance with the law."

The PM urged journalists to focus more on media coverage that encourages children.

"The government is trying to take several initiatives in education, including curriculum-related activities, professional training and foreign language education. Some of the initiatives are already underway," he said, adding that a major sports programme had been launched for school students.

The programme, which included around 22 lakh students from different districts across the country, has almost concluded, he said, adding, "Such a big event took place, and so many lakh children participated, but I did not see any appreciation or news coverage in the newspapers of Bangladesh.

"The programme was not limited to children from families linked to the BNP. Children from all kinds of families took part, regardless of party affiliation, opinion, or political or non-political identity."

Tarique also said another innovation programme for students was underway across the country. The competition is now being held at the district level and will later move to the divisional level, while the national event is scheduled for the 28th.

"Two days ago, my wife went to the innovation programme in Dhaka district [to see] what children are thinking and what they can innovate.... It is now being held at the district level. I did not see much news coverage of this either.

"The news was covered only because my wife went there. So, what kind of news are we doing?"

The PM added, "We are not covering children's sports. Again, we are also not covering children's innovation programmes. What are we actually covering? I think we need to think about this."

Stressing the need to stop moral decline and restore social values among young people, he said, "Awareness must start from schools."