

## Holy Ashura today

STAR REPORT

Holy Ashura, commemorating the martyrdom of Hazrat Imam Hussain (RA), is being observed in the country today with due religious fervour and solemnity.

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 (SM).

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).

The day is a public holiday.

Shia community members will bring out Tazia processions in the capital marking the day.

Bangladesh Betar, Bangladesh Television and private TV channels will air special programmes while newspapers and online news portals will publish supplements highlighting the significance of the day.



Prime Minister Tarique Rahman and his Chinese counterpart Li Qiang witness the signing of a memorandum of understanding by Information and Broadcasting Minister Zahir Uddin Swapon and China's Xinhua News Agency President Fu Hua at Beijing's Great Hall of the People yesterday.

PHOTO: PMO

## China pledges full support for Teesta

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representatives of major corporations, including Chery Group, HANDA Group, and Chinatex Corporation.

During his meeting with Li Guoying, Tarique highlighted Bangladesh's ongoing river dredging and excavation programmes aimed at reducing flood risks, protecting the environment, and improving water resource management.

He sought Chinese technical assistance for river management projects, including the Teesta River Comprehensive Management and Restoration Project.

In response, the Chinese minister assured Bangladesh of Beijing's full cooperation in water resource management initiatives, according to BSS.

Bangladesh faces recurring water-related challenges, including dry-season shortages of irrigation water and rising salinity, as well as monsoon flooding. The problems particularly affect farmers in the northern and southeastern regions.

Since taking office in February, the BNP government has undertaken river and canal excavation projects and advanced plans for a proposed Padma Barrage.

The Teesta water-sharing issue with India has remained unresolved for a long time. Bangladesh later sought Chinese support for the Teesta management project, for which Chinese experts have already conducted a feasibility study.

Foreign ministry officials said the project should not create difficulties with India because it is located entirely within Bangladesh. However, they noted that a water-sharing agreement with India remains essential to ensure adequate dry-season flows.

Referring to a water management MoU signed by the two countries in 2005 and visits by Chinese experts to Bangladesh last year, Li Guoying said bilateral cooperation had become increasingly practical and research-oriented.

Tarique also requested Chinese assistance in preventing riverbank erosion, improving irrigation systems, and enhancing inland waterway navigation.

The Chinese minister, in turn, invited Bangladeshi officials and experts to undergo training in China on modern water-management techniques.

The 13 MoUs were signed following bilateral talks between Tarique and Li

Qiang at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing.

The agreements cover trade, investment, infrastructure development, and political cooperation.

Earlier in the day, Li Qiang accorded Tarique a red-carpet reception and a ceremonial guard of honour.

The BNP and the CPC separately signed an MoU aimed at strengthening ties between the two parties. BNP Joint Secretary General Humaiun Kobir and CPC International Department Minister Liu Haixing signed the agreement.

"They discussed long-term economic cooperation, and the Chinese side reaffirmed its support for Bangladesh's sovereignty, security, and economic development," Prime Minister's Adviser Mahdi Amin told reporters in Beijing.

According to BSS, Tarique also sought China's support for Bangladesh's development projects and the proposed China-Bangladesh Friendship Hospital during a separate meeting with Liu.

Liu expressed hope for expanding cooperation in media, think tanks, and people-to-people exchanges while reiterating China's support for Bangladesh's sovereignty, security, and development.

Briefing reporters, Mahdi said the two sides also discussed modernising Bangladesh's railway sector and moving toward domestic locomotive manufacturing instead of relying on foreign contractors.

At the Bangladesh Investment Forum, Tarique invited Chinese investors to expand their presence in Bangladesh, saying the country was ready to become a competitive and profitable partner.

He announced the formation of a special 180-day implementation cell to improve the investment climate and said new business licences could now be obtained within 15 days.

Tarique is scheduled to meet Chinese President Xi Jinping today before concluding his visit.

### GDI, OTHER MOUS

One of the 13 MoUs signed yesterday was under China's Global Development Initiative (GDI), covering cooperation in healthcare, education and human resource development, Mahdi told reporters. Proposed by Xi in 2021, the GDI aims to accelerate the achievement of the UN's 2030 SDGs.

China had long encouraged Bangladesh to join the initiative, but Dhaka had remained cautious. Officials said Bangladesh's growing

need for investment in socio-economic development made participation in the framework increasingly attractive.

The remaining agreements covered investment, green development, education, media, culture and language cooperation.

Foreign Minister Khalilur Rahman, Information and Broadcasting Minister Zahir Uddin Swapon and senior foreign ministry officials signed the deals on behalf of Bangladesh.

According to Mahdi, talks between the two premiers focused on expanding Bangladesh's export capacity, increasing exports to China and strengthening development cooperation.

"We also discussed concessional Chinese loans with lower interest rates and longer grace periods," he said.

The two sides also signed a separate cooperation plan on human resource development.

Mahdi said one MoU would facilitate the export of Bangladesh's national fruit, jackfruit, to China.

Two others laid the groundwork for introducing Mandarin language education, incorporating Mandarin into Bangladesh's school curriculum and expanding cooperation in technical and vocational education.

Four agreements were signed to strengthen collaboration in the media sector, including cooperation among think tanks and partnerships between state-owned television channels and newspapers of the two countries, he added.

On investment, Mahdi said that besides agreements involving the Bangladesh Investment Development Authority (BIDA), separate MoUs were signed to promote Chinese investment in Anwara in Chattogram and Mongla in Bagerhat.

"Through economic zones, we aim to attract new Chinese factories and production facilities to Bangladesh and create employment opportunities," he said.

PM's Adviser Humaiun Kobir said Tarique also raised the Rohingya crisis during his talks with Chinese leaders, who assured Bangladesh of their continued support on the issue.

"We are impressed, honoured, and delighted by the extraordinary respect and hospitality that China has extended to our prime minister," Humaiun said. "We believe this has further enhanced both the prime minister's stature and Bangladesh's image internationally."

## Mbappe, Haaland set for WC duel

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Haaland for Manchester City -- the pair have frequently crossed paths in the Champions League. Over the last two seasons, both scored four goals apiece in head-to-head meetings.

Mbappe, however, has often had the final say against Haaland's City. Yet this will be the first time the two superstars, at peak form, face each other on the international stage.

When it comes to the World Cup, Mbappe has consistently elevated his game. Making his tournament debut in 2018, he scored four goals and played a pivotal role in France's second World Cup triumph, including a goal in the final against Croatia.

Four years later, he became even more devastating, finishing as the tournament's top scorer with eight goals to win the Golden Boot. His only regret was not being able to help France defend the title despite a hat-trick in the final against Lionel Messi's Argentina.

If those numbers already seem extraordinary, his performances in North America have taken things to another level. Despite enduring two trophyless seasons with Real Madrid -- although he finished as the club's top scorer in both campaigns -- Mbappe appears to have arrived in the continent on a mission, determined to prove a point and join a select group of players with two World Cup titles.

The French captain opened his campaign in style, scoring twice in a thrilling 3-2 victory over Senegal before adding another brace in a 3-0 win against Iraq. His tally now stands at 16 World Cup goals from as many matches.

The 27-year-old currently shares

second place with Miroslav Klose on the all-time World Cup scoring chart, with only Messi ahead on 18 goals. Given his age and current form, it seems only a matter of time before he challenges that record -- perhaps even during this tournament.

For Haaland, meanwhile, simply appearing at a World Cup is a significant achievement. Norway qualified for football's biggest stage for the first time since 1998, ending a 28-year wait.

The 25-year-old striker was instrumental in that achievement, finishing as the top scorer in the qualifiers with 16 goals in eight matches as Norway progressed unbeaten to the finals.

For Haaland, however, qualification was only the beginning.

Norway opened their campaign with a 4-1 victory over Iraq, with Haaland scoring twice on his World Cup debut. He followed that with another brace against Senegal to inspire a 3-2 win that secured Norway's place in the knockout stage.

Meanwhile, despite suffering back-to-back defeats, both Senegal and Iraq remain in contention for qualification as one of the eight best third-placed teams. The two sides will meet in the other Group I fixture in Toronto.

As for Mbappe and Haaland, with four goals each, both find themselves in identical positions in the race for the Golden Boot alongside the likes of Messi and Vinicius Junior.

Yet these two stars are about far more than goals. For club and country, they have broken records at an astonishing rate while consistently delivering on the biggest stages. Their mere presence

on the pitch provides confidence to teammates and concern to opponents, as both possess the ability to change a match in an instant.

Despite being among the world's most feared goalscorers, Mbappe and Haaland remain very different players. The Frenchman's explosive pace, dribbling ability, creativity and unpredictability have made him one of football's most complete attacking threats since his teenage years.

Haaland, by contrast, is the ultimate penalty-box predator. Power, directness, efficiency and an insatiable hunger for goals define the Norwegian striker, whose pace often goes underappreciated.

Their styles may differ, but their statistics tell the same story -- two generational talents who continue to rewrite record books.

"He's an incredible player, one of the best in the world," Haaland said of Mbappe in 2021.

Despite the mutual respect they clearly share, the pair rarely speak publicly about one another.

"I'm not thinking about Haaland at the moment. Maybe they're thinking about us, but I'm focused on Iraq," Mbappe said before France's 3-0 victory in their second match.

A few hours later, Haaland responded.

"Honestly, I don't have any particular concerns about playing France. They'll probably beat us and go on to win the tournament."

While both strikers have carefully avoided fuelling any rivalry off the pitch, fireworks can be expected when they finally go head-to-head in this World Cup's one of the most anticipated group clashes.

## India to resume

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between our two sovereign nations."

According to an earlier statement by the Indian High Commission, security concerns forced Indian missions in Bangladesh to scale down visa services.

It said that on August 5, 2024, the Indira Gandhi Cultural Centre in Dhanmondi was ransacked and set on fire, while five Indian Visa Application Centres (IVACs) across Bangladesh came under attack.

Despite the security challenges, the high commission continued operating IVACs in Dhaka, Chattogram, Khulna, Sylhet, and Rajshahi for people travelling for treatment of serious medical conditions.

India has been issuing more than 1,500 visas a day across all categories except tourist visas, the statement said.

Dhaka-Delhi relations have remained strained since the fall of the Awami League government in August 2024.

India had largely suspended visa services in late December amid demonstrations in various parts of India, including outside Bangladesh missions in New Delhi, Kolkata, Mumbai, Guwahati, and Agartala.

Bangladesh resumed issuing all categories of visas to Indian nationals after the BNP government took office on February 17.

Trivedi, a politician-turned-diplomat who arrived in Dhaka on June 12, said the first question he was asked after entering Bangladesh was about the resumption of visas.

"It is good for us and good for the people here. It is the first thing I have done as high commissioner."

Meanwhile, during the courtesy call, President Shahabuddin told Trivedi that Bangladesh attaches special importance to its relationship with India as its closest neighbour and a significant trade and development partner.

"Bangladesh is committed to maintaining a respectful and forward-looking partnership with India while upholding sovereign equality, national interest, dignity, and public welfare," he said, expressing hope that Trivedi's tenure would help make bilateral relations even stronger, more fruitful, and welfare-oriented.

President's Press Secretary Sarwar Alam told the media that Shahabuddin emphasised the importance of increasing people-to-people contact and taking positive initiatives to resolve outstanding issues, including border-related ones.

Trivedi said a friendly and cordial relationship naturally exists between the two sovereign countries.

Regarding border issues, he noted that fruitful discussions were recently held between senior officials of the BSF and BGB, while stressing the importance of holding such meetings more regularly to ensure the swift resolution of border issues.

## Mother, 3 daughters

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The boy was not at home during the attack.

Hearing their screams, neighbours rushed to the scene. As Antar tried to flee, locals chased him, caught him and beat him.

He was later taken to a hospital, where doctors declared him dead.

Mamunur Rashid, resident medical officer of Raipur Upazila Health Complex, said Ikra and Shifa died before reaching the hospital, while their mother succumbed to her injuries during treatment.

Critically injured Saima was being taken to a hospital in Dhaka for treatment, but she died on the way around 5:00pm, said Raipur Police Station Officer-in-Charge Md Shaheen Miah.

The bodies were sent to Lakshmipur Sadar Hospital morgue for autopsies. Police are investigating the incident, the OC added.

At least six to seven police personnel were injured after being hit by bricks thrown by an agitated crowd while officers were trying to bring the situation under control, the SP said.

Police have yet to determine the motive and are investigating whether anyone else was involved.

## Trump teases F-35 access for Turkey

Says Erdogan will be 'very happy'

AFP, Washington

US President Donald Trump said his Turkish counterpart Recep Tayyip Erdogan will be "very happy" when asked Wednesday about giving Turkey access to F-35 fighter jets.

"I'm going to probably do something that's going to make him very happy," Trump said when a reporter inquired about Erdogan wanting the jets and whether he would be bringing a "big gift bag" with him to Ankara, Turkey, during the Nato summit there next month.

The F-35 fighter jet, a top-of-the-line stealth plane, was originally developed by the United States in partnership with other Nato countries -- of which Turkey is a member -- under a program called the Joint Strike Fighter.

However, the United States booted Turkey from development of the F-35 in 2019 after the Nato ally went ahead with purchases of missile defense from Russia.

But Trump has since warmed relations with Erdogan, though he did not say his attendance at the defense alliance summit would include a formal visit to Turkey.

Despite Trump's inclination, Vice President JD Vance clarified the sale of the Lockheed Martin F-35 fighter jets to Turkey would require approval from US Congress.

"This is really a congressional thing, and ensuring that Turkey has complied with American law, so they can get the F-35," Vance said.

## Neymar inspires

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was back. The Selecao secured top spot in Group C with successive convincing wins before the knockout rounds. But if there was one development that offered the greatest encouragement for Brazil's pursuit of an elusive sixth World Cup title, it was the continued brilliance of Vinicius.

For much of his international career, Vinicius has carried a reputation that followed him everywhere: a player capable of producing world-class performances for club, but unable to consistently replicate them in Brazil's famous yellow shirt.

The criticism was not entirely unfounded.

Despite starring for one of the world's most demanding clubs, Real Madrid, and playing decisive roles in many of Los Blancos' recent triumphs, Vinicius' international output stands in stark contrast, with only six goals in his first 39 appearances for Brazil.

That narrative, however, has changed dramatically since Carlo Ancelotti took charge of the national team.

The coach who oversaw the most productive period of Vinicius' club career has helped unlock a more decisive version of the winger at the international level as well.

After his brace against Scotland, Vinicius now has 13 goals in 52 appearances for Brazil. More significantly, he has already scored four times in three World Cup matches, placing himself firmly among the leading contenders for the Golden Boot alongside Lionel Messi, Erling Haaland and Kylian Mbappe.

His exploits have also earned him a place alongside some of Brazil's greatest World Cup performers. Vinicius is now tied for the most goals scored by a Brazilian during the group stage of a single World Cup, matching the achievements of Ronaldo in 2002, Neymar in 2014 and Jairzinho in 1970.

Across Brazil's last two World Cups, he has now been directly involved in eight of their last 15 goals.

Ancelotti, however, was quick to dismiss suggestions that he deserves credit for the transformation.

## Bribes rose 15.9%

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areas (58.5 percent).

Although the average amount of bribes paid per household declined by 9.8 percent, corruption became more widespread. The average bribe paid per household stood at Tk 5,124, including Tk 4,864 in rural areas and Tk 5,757 in urban areas.

Among individual sectors, judicial services recorded the highest average bribe amount of Tk 24,691 per household, followed by banking services at Tk 19,322, land services at Tk 11,311, law enforcement agencies at Tk 7,407, BRTA services at Tk 6,923 and passport services at Tk 4,532.

The survey also revealed the overwhelming dependence on conventional service delivery.

While 99.8 percent households received services from at least one public or private sector, 99.3 percent obtained services through direct, in-person interactions. Only 3.9 percent accessed services digitally or online.

"One notable finding is that 99.8 percent of service recipients received services from at least one sector. This clearly demonstrates the importance of these services in people's everyday lives," Iftekharuzzaman said.

He described the low rate of digital service delivery as a missed opportunity despite improvements in Bangladesh's digital infrastructure and governance.

"If we consider Bangladesh's comparatively strong performance in global digital governance indicators and the improvements in digital infrastructure, the continued dependence on physical service delivery is concerning," he said.

The survey found that bribery has become increasingly institutionalised.

Among those who paid bribes, 81.5 percent said they had no choice because services would not be provided otherwise. In 2023, about 77 percent gave this response.

"Bribery has effectively become

"It's very rewarding to see Vinicius like this. I had no doubt he could reach this level. I wasn't the one who discovered Vini -- he's a top-class player, one of the best in the world," the Italian said after the match.

Brazil themselves appear to be growing stronger with every outing.

Their opening draw against Morocco was far from convincing, but Vinicius' individual brilliance helped rescue a point. He maintained his scoring touch in a much-improved performance against Haiti and delivered again against Scotland.

In doing so, he became only the fifth Brazilian to score in all three group-stage matches of a single World Cup, joining Jairzinho (1970), Romario (1994), Ronaldo Nazario (2002) and Rivaldo (2002).

For Brazil supporters, there is another encouraging detail attached to that statistic: on each previous occasion, the Selecao went on to lift the trophy.

Vinicius could even have completed his first international hat-trick against Scotland had a VAR review not ruled out what remains a highly debated decision. Also, the Scottish defence looked unsettled whenever he received possession, while goalkeeper Angus Gunn was repeatedly called into action to deny him.

Perhaps the most intriguing moment came late in the match.

Neymar threaded a pass into the path of Vinicius, combining Brazil's most beloved figure with their most in-form player. It was only a fleeting glimpse, but one that hinted at what could lie ahead.

Neymar's return has restored excitement, belief and emotion around this Brazil side. Yet it is Vinicius who has been driving their resurgence on the pitch.

As the knockout stage approaches -- with a Round of 32 meeting against either the Netherlands, Japan or Sweden awaiting -- Brazil will hope their steady improvement continues.

If Neymar's comeback has made Brazil dream again, Vinicius' form is the reason those dreams increasingly feel realistic.

a reality that people are forced to accept in order to obtain services," Iftekharuzzaman said.

Corruption disproportionately affects vulnerable groups.

"People living in rural areas are more likely to become victims of corruption. The burden of corruption on lower-income groups is nearly three times higher than on middle- and upper-income groups."

In several service sectors, women are comparatively more vulnerable to corruption, while ethnic minorities, indigenous communities and other marginalised groups are disproportionately affected.

Referring to the broader political context, he said the report carries special significance following recent political changes in Bangladesh and the commitments made by political parties to strengthen governance and combat corruption.

"We believe this survey can serve as a baseline for evaluating the performance of the current government in implementing those commitments and provide a benchmark against which future corruption trends can be compared," he said.

The survey used a two-stage sampling method covering all eight divisions. A total of 1,149 Primary Sampling Units (PSUs) were selected nationwide, and 13, 26 or 34 households were sampled from each PSU through systematic random sampling.

At the press conference, TIB proposed a 10-point anti-corruption agenda, including an integrated anti-corruption strategy, stricter legal action, full digitalisation of public services, stronger complaint mechanisms and Anti-Corruption Commission hotline services, mandatory asset declarations for public officials, greater transparency, improved staffing in service sectors, and stronger grassroots anti-corruption movements.