

|| WEEKLY NEWS HIGHLIGHTS ||

BANGLADESH ENTERPRISE INSTITUTE (BEI)

|| Brief Highlights on Current Issues of South Asia ||

|| August 13, 2021 – August 19, 2021 ||

SOUTH ASIA: COVID-19 CRISIS: AT A GLANCE

Afghanistan has reported the total number of confirmed cases at 152441 as of August 19, 2021 since the beginning of the pandemic. The total death cases has been recorded 7047 as of August 19, 2021. WHO is worried about the spread of the coronavirus in Afghanistan as the upheaval caused by the Taliban advance and seizure of power has slowed vaccinations according to its spokesperson.

Bangladesh has recorded 172 death toll and 7,248 new cases of coronavirus on August 19, 2021. Till date, total number of cases has reached to 1,440,644 including total death toll 24,719. Bangladesh has administered a total of 21,767,854 doses of vaccines which covered country's total 3.49% population. On August 16, 2021 Bangladesh government, Incepta Pharmaceuticals Limited and Chinese government have inked a tripartite memorandum of understanding at Bangladesh College of Physicians and Surgeons in Dhaka to bottle, label and dispense five million doses of Sinopharm Covid-19 vaccines in Bangladesh.

Bhutan has reported no new cases and no death toll on August 19, 2021. In Bhutan, 2,577 cases of Covid-19 have been identified till August 19, 2021. 62.33% Bhutanese got vaccinated as of August 19, 2021.

India has reported 530 deaths and 36,401 fresh cases due to coronavirus as of August 19, 2021. Country's total number of cases has reached to 32,285,857 including total death toll 432,519. Till August 19, 2021, 9.01% of Indians have been vaccinated.

Maldives has reported 106 new cases on August 19, 2021 which makes the total number of confirmed cases at 79,525. No fatalities have been reported during the current month. 55.94% of the population is vaccinated. However, United Arab Emirates has removed Maldives from its 'green list' i.e. the travelers from the country will be subject to mandatory quarantine.

Myanmar's official report has stated 13,786 deaths and 3,63,169 confirmed cases as of August 19, 2021. Rohingyas are not included in the regime's national vaccination plan as they are not recognized as citizens. Thai government has started inculcating migrant workers of Myanmar near the Thai border on August 17, 2021. Myanmar has received over 400,000 COVID-19 vaccines from China, India and Russia.

Nepal on August 19, 2021 has reported 2,321 new coronavirus cases taking the nationwide infection tally to 742,228. The country has recorded 33 Covid-19-related fatalities till date. As such, the countrywide death toll has reached 10,429. The number of active cases stands at 40,500 as of August 19, 2021.

Pakistan has reported the total number of confirmed cases at 111,367 as of August 19, 2021 since the beginning of the pandemic. The current positive rate has been recorded at 7.8% on August 19, 2021.

Sri Lanka has recorded 369,359 active cases and 6604 deaths; 260 vaccination centers have vaccinated 22.73% of the population as of August 19, 2021. Children over 12 years of age are made eligible to receive vaccines. Health administration has started rapid PCR test facility for travelers. Hongkong and the Philippines have imposed travel restrictions from Sri Lanka. The government has accused Health Minister, Pavithra Wanniarachchi for endorsing misinformation and demoted to less important transport ministry. Health portfolio is given to former Media Minister, Keheliya Rambukvella.

Source: <https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/map.html>

Source: [John Hopkins University](#)

Inside this issue

- South Asia: Covid-19 Crisis: At a glance
- Business & Investment: Government plans for economic structural transformation for post-LDC graduation
- Business & Investment: Bangladesh's revenue collection increased by 21 percent, says NBR
- Afghanistan: Taliban returned to the power of Afghanistan; Taliban offered amnesty, promised women's rights and media freedom; EU, U.S. will work with Taliban only if rights are respected; Bangladesh to welcome Taliban government 'backed by people'
- Afghanistan: U.S. froze USD 9.5 billion Afghan reserves, Germany halted aid; Afghanistan's currency falls to record low amid ongoing turmoil; G7 foreign ministers called for 'united response' to prevent crisis from escalating in Afghanistan; Taliban's exiled leaders return to form new Afghan government
- Bangladesh: Commerce minister urges foreign investors, non-resident Bangladeshis to invest in Bangladesh
- Bhutan: Bhutan must grab e-commerce opportunities, study finding
- India: India's security challenges becoming complex, Defense Minister
- India: COP26 President Alok Sharma visits India; UK-India set to partner in green hydrogen
- Maldives: Maldivian Foreign Minister met President-Designate of COP-26
- Myanmar: China pledges to fund development projects in Myanmar
- Nepal: Petitions registered at Supreme Court against ordinance to amend political parties act
- Pakistan: Pakistan urged 'inclusive' political settlement in Afghanistan; Pakistani envoy met Karzai, Abdullah amid efforts to form afghan government; Pak-Afghan trade picked up as taliban seizes control
- Sri Lanka: Sri Lanka receives funds from international monetary fund; HSBC launches climate dedicated project 'core'

Inside this issue

- South Asia: Covid-19 Crisis: At a glance
- Business & Investment: Government plans for economic structural transformation for post-LDC graduation
- Business & Investment: Bangladesh's revenue collection increased by 21 percent, says NBR
- Afghanistan: Taliban returned to the power of Afghanistan; Taliban offered amnesty, promised women's rights and media freedom; EU, U.S. will work with Taliban only if rights are respected; Bangladesh to welcome Taliban government 'backed by people'
- Afghanistan: U.S. froze USD 9.5 billion Afghan reserves, Germany halted aid; Afghanistan's currency falls to record low amid ongoing turmoil; G7 foreign ministers called for 'united response' to prevent crisis from escalating in Afghanistan; Taliban's exiled leaders return to form new Afghan government
- Bangladesh: Commerce minister urges foreign investors, non-resident Bangladeshis to invest in Bangladesh
- Bhutan: Bhutan must grab e-commerce opportunities, study finding
- India: India's security challenges becoming complex, Defense Minister
- India: COP26 President Alok Sharma visits India; UK-India set to partner in green hydrogen
- Maldives: Maldivian Foreign Minister met President-Designate of COP-26
- Myanmar: China pledges to fund development projects in Myanmar
- Nepal: Petitions registered at Supreme Court against ordinance to amend political parties act
- Pakistan: Pakistan urged 'inclusive' political settlement in Afghanistan; Pakistani envoy met Karzai, Abdullah amid efforts to form afghan government; Pak-Afghan trade picked up as taliban seizes control
- Sri Lanka: Sri Lanka receives funds from international monetary fund; HSBC launches climate dedicated project 'core'

BUSINESS AND INVESTMENT: GOVERNMENT PLANS FOR ECONOMIC STRUCTURAL TRANSFORMATION FOR POST-LDC GRADUATION

Bangladesh government has taken an economic structural transformation agenda for the coming days to cope with the post-LDC graduation world as a developing country and to become a higher middle-income country by 2031. In an official budget document, the government expressed the need for accelerating the structural transformation of the economy. The structural transformation initiatives include mechanization of agriculture, development of the agro-processing sector, skill development and productivity enhancement, expansion of training and education related to fourth Industrial Revolution, online based outsourcing work, self-employment creation, and encouragement of basic and practical research at the university level. The government is currently preparing a detailed action plan for competitive export sector for the post LDC-era. According to the United Nations Committee for Development Policy (UNCDP) recommendation, Bangladesh's LDC graduation will be effective in 2026 although the country will enjoy duty-free and quota-free market access until 2029.

Source: <https://today.thefinancialexpress.com.bd/public/metro-news/bd-economy-under-plan-of-structural-transformation-1628871982>

BANGLADESH'S REVENUE COLLECTION INCREASED BY 21 PERCENT, SAYS NBR

The National Board of Revenue (NBR) data placed before its chairman on August 12, 2021 showed that the tax revenue collection has been increased by 21 percent in the fiscal year 2020-2021 compared to the previous fiscal year. The NBR made it possible through greater mobilization of corporate and withholding tax although it failed to collect the targeted amount set for the last fiscal year. The NBR collected Tk. 2.61 trillion in tax revenue in FY 2020-21 against the revised target of Tk. 3.01 trillion which was initially set at Tk. 3.30 trillion. Rising in goods consumption, use of services and implementation of development projects usually help increase tax collection. The fiscal measure taken by government also helped boost country's revenue collection.

Source: <https://thefinancialexpress.com.bd/economy/bangladesh/bangladeshs-revenue-receipts-increase-21pc-1628994728>

AFGHANISTAN: TALIBAN RETURNED TO THE POWER OF AFGHANISTAN; TALIBAN OFFERED AMNESTY, PROMISED WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND MEDIA FREEDOM; EU, U.S. WILL WORK WITH TALIBAN ONLY IF RIGHTS ARE RESPECTED; BANGLADESH TO WELCOME TALIBAN GOVERNMENT 'BACKED BY PEOPLE'

As the Taliban militarily took over the control of Afghanistan on August 15, 2021, it announced a "general amnesty" for government workers across Afghanistan and urged women to join its government amid chaos as thousands of Afghans rushed to Kabul airport to get out of the country. Enamullah Samangani, a member of the Taliban's cultural commission, on August 17, 2021 represented the first comment on governance on a federal level "The Islamic Emirate doesn't want women to be victims." He also added- "The structure of government is not fully clear but, based on experience, there should be a fully Islamic leadership and all sides should join." Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said "The Taliban won't allow territory to be used against anybody or any country." He also said Taliban wished for peaceful relations with other countries and that no group would be allowed to use Afghan territory for attacks against any nation.

An emergency UN Security Council meeting on Afghanistan was held on August 16, 2021 at the UN headquarters in New York and stressed the importance of combating "terrorism" in Afghanistan to ensure other countries were not threatened or attacked. It called for an immediate cessation of all hostilities and the establishment, through inclusive negotiations, of a new government that should include women.

Ned Price, US State Department spokesperson said on August 16, 2021 that the US and its international allies would be "watching closely" the Taliban. The US called for an inclusive new government in Afghanistan that would respect human rights, including women's rights, saying that the Taliban's behavior would determine whether Washington would recognize any new administration in Kabul. Iran's President Ebrahim Raisi said on August 16, 2021 that Iran encourages all groups in Afghanistan to work towards national unity as a "neighboring and brotherly" country, his website quoted him as saying. Hua Chunying, Chinese foreign ministry spokeswoman said "China is ready to deepen friendly and cooperative relations with Taliban's Afghanistan." Zamir Kabulov, Russian Foreign Ministry official said that Moscow will decide on recognizing the new Taliban government based "on the conduct of the new authorities." "We will carefully

see how responsibly they govern the country in the near future. And based on the results, the Russian leadership will draw the necessary conclusions," Kabulov said. Dominic Raab, UK Foreign Secretary said that the West would have to be pragmatic in its relations with the Taliban and try to see if it could moderate the new rulers of Afghanistan. "Our message is going to be this: Afghanistan must never be used to launch terrorist attacks against the West, we've had 20 years of success in that regard," Mr. Raab told.

Josep Borrell, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy outlined the EU's stance in a statement after an emergency meeting of European Union foreign ministers on August 17, 2021 to discuss the Taliban's quick seizure of the Afghanistan. "The European Union will only cooperate with the Afghan government following the Taliban's return to power if it respects fundamental rights, including those of women, and prevents the use of Afghanistan's territory by "terrorist organizations", the bloc's foreign policy chief says.

Bangladeshi foreign minister, Dr AK Abdul Momen on August 16, 2021 said "Bangladesh will welcome any government in Afghanistan on condition that it is supported by the people." He also said "Bangladesh believes in friendship to all countries and it wants to work with any government backed by people. Therefore, if Taliban forms the new government in Afghanistan, Bangladesh will work with them." The foreign minister added that "Bangladesh will extend support if any government seeks support from Bangladesh. As a friendly country and a member State of South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation (SAARC), Bangladesh wants development in Afghanistan."

Sources: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/8/17/transcript-of-talibans-first-press-conference-in-kabul>

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/8/17/taliban-announces-amnesty-urges-women-to-join-government>

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1640919>

Inside this issue

- South Asia: Covid-19 Crisis: At a glance
- Business & Investment: Government plans for economic structural transformation for post-LDC graduation
- Business & Investment: Bangladesh's revenue collection increased by 21 percent, says NBR
- Afghanistan: Taliban returned to the power of Afghanistan; Taliban offered amnesty, promised women's rights and media freedom; EU, U.S. will work with Taliban only if rights are respected; Bangladesh to welcome Taliban government 'backed by people'
- Afghanistan: U.S. froze USD 9.5 billion Afghan reserves, Germany halted aid; Afghanistan's currency falls to record low amid ongoing turmoil; G7 foreign ministers called for 'united response' to prevent crisis from escalating in Afghanistan; Taliban's exiled leaders return to form new Afghan government
- Bangladesh: Commerce minister urges foreign investors, non-resident Bangladeshis to invest in Bangladesh
- Bhutan: Bhutan must grab e-commerce opportunities, study finding
- India: India's security challenges becoming complex, Defense Minister
- India: COP26 President Alok Sharma visits India; UK-India set to partner in green hydrogen
- Maldives: Maldivian Foreign Minister met President-Designate of COP-26
- Myanmar: China pledges to fund development projects in Myanmar
- Nepal: Petitions registered at Supreme Court against ordinance to amend political parties act
- Pakistan: Pakistan urged 'inclusive' political settlement in Afghanistan; Pakistani envoy met Karzai, Abdullah amid efforts to form afghan government; Pak-Afghan trade picked up as taliban seizes control
- Sri Lanka: Sri Lanka receives funds from international monetary fund; HSBC launches climate dedicated project 'core'

Inside this issue

- South Asia: Covid-19 Crisis: At a glance
- Business & Investment: Government plans for economic structural transformation for post-LDC graduation
- Business & Investment: Bangladesh's revenue collection increased by 21 percent, says NBR
- Afghanistan: Taliban returned to the power of Afghanistan; Taliban offered amnesty, promised women's rights and media freedom; EU, U.S. will work with Taliban only if rights are respected; Bangladesh to welcome Taliban government 'backed by people'
- Afghanistan: U.S. froze USD 9.5 billion Afghan reserves, Germany halted aid; Afghanistan's currency falls to record low amid ongoing turmoil; G7 foreign ministers called for 'united response' to prevent crisis from escalating in Afghanistan; Taliban's exiled leaders return to form new Afghan government
- Bangladesh: Commerce minister urges foreign investors, non-resident Bangladeshis to invest in Bangladesh
- Bhutan: Bhutan must grab e-commerce opportunities, study finding
- India: India's security challenges becoming complex, Defense Minister
- India: COP26 President Alok Sharma visits India; UK-India set to partner in green hydrogen
- Maldives: Maldivian Foreign Minister met President-Designate of COP-26
- Myanmar: China pledges to fund development projects in Myanmar
- Nepal: Petitions registered at Supreme Court against ordinance to amend political parties act
- Pakistan: Pakistan urged 'inclusive' political settlement in Afghanistan; Pakistani envoy met Karzai, Abdullah amid efforts to form afghan government; Pak-Afghan trade picked up as taliban seizes control
- Sri Lanka: Sri Lanka receives funds from international monetary fund; HSBC launches climate dedicated project 'core'

AFGHANISTAN: U.S. FROZE USD 9.5 BILLION AFGHAN RESERVES, GERMANY HALTED AID; AFGHANISTAN'S CURRENCY FALLS TO RECORD LOW AMID ONGOING TURMOIL; G7 FOREIGN MINISTERS CALLED FOR 'UNITED RESPONSE' TO PREVENT CRISIS FROM ESCALATING IN AFGHANISTAN; TALIBAN'S EXILED LEADERS RETURN TO FORM NEW AFGHAN GOVERNMENT

The US has frozen nearly USD 9.5 billion in assets belonging to the Afghan central bank and stopped shipments of cash to the nation as it tries to keep a Taliban-led government from accessing the money, an administration official confirmed on August 17, 2021. The official said that any central bank assets that the Afghan government has in the US will not be available to the Taliban, which remains on the Treasury Department's sanctions designation list. Germany, one of the country's top donors, has also halted development aid. Berlin had been due to provide aid of USD 366 million this year. Afghanistan's currency extended losses to a record low as the departure of the acting central bank governor added to political turmoil weighing investor sentiment.

The Afghani fell as much as 4.6% on August 17, 2021 to 86.0625 per dollar, a fourth day of decline, according to data compiled by Bloomberg. The central bank was told there would be no more dollar shipments, which curtailed its ability to supply currency.

The G7 group of countries on August 19, 2021 called for a "united response" from the international community in response to the ongoing crisis in Afghanistan following the Taliban takeover. "The G7 Ministers call on the international community to come together with a shared mission to prevent the crisis in Afghanistan escalating," a statement by the British foreign minister Dominic Raab, after a meeting of the foreign ministers of the G7 nations, noted. The meeting was chaired by Raab, in which the foreign ministers of member nations the US, France, Italy, Germany, Japan and Canada, took part. In the statement, the G7 foreign ministers further said "The crisis in Afghanistan requires an international response including intensive engagement on the critical questions facing Afghanistan and the region: with the Afghans most affected, parties to the conflict, the UN Security Council, the G20, international donors, and with Afghanistan's regional neighbours." The group also said that the ministers would work towards an "inclusive political settlement, ena-

ble life-saving humanitarian assistance and support in Afghanistan and the region, and prevent any further loss of life in Afghanistan and to the international community from terrorism."

Meanwhile, Taliban exiled leaders including co-founder Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar and other key figures arrived at Afghanistan as of August 18, 2021, gathering at the group's longtime stronghold of Kandahar. Baradar heads the Taliban's political office in Qatar. Since 2016, the Taliban have been led by their third supreme leader, Hibatullah Akhundzada. The Taliban leaders have been holding talks with former Afghan President Hamid Karzai and chief peace envoy Abdullah Abdullah since their day of arrival in Kabul to form a new government.

The US forces will stay in Afghanistan until all US citizens are out of the country, even if that means staying beyond the August 31 deadline, President Joe Biden told in an interview on August 18, 2021. The president said he was committed to getting all Americans who want to leave Afghanistan out of the country. "If there are American citizens left, we're going to stay until we get them all out," he said.

Sources:

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/aug/18/taliban-face-financial-crisis-without-access-to-foreign-reserves>

<https://edition.cnn.com/2021/08/18/business/afghanistan-currency-taliban/index.html>

<https://www.reuters.com/world/g7-calls-international-shared-mission-limit-afghan-crisis-2021-08-19/>

<https://www.hindustantimes.com/world-news/mullah-abdul-ghani-baradar-returns-to-afghanistan-after-20-years-who-is-he-101629261443178.html>

BANGLADESH: COMMERCE MINISTER URGES FOREIGN INVESTORS, NON-RESIDENT BANGLADESHIS TO INVEST IN BANGLADESH

Mr. Tipu Munshi, Commerce Minister on August 13, 2021 has urged foreign investors and non-resident Bangladeshis (NRBs) to invest in Bangladesh in a seminar titled "Bangladesh the Next Investment Frontier" organized by Startup Bangladesh Limited in collaboration with the commerce ministry and the Consulate General's Office in Los Angeles in Silicon Valley, Los Angeles, USA. The seminar was organized to attract US-based NRBs, potential investors and representatives from the business community in Los Angeles to invest in Bangladesh. He also said Bangladeshi community in USA is already contributing to the development of the country and brightening the image of the country. A press release issued by the commerce ministry stated that the world now lauds Bangladesh seeing its development

initiatives. The press release added that the NRB businessmen in USA will be benefitted through investing in SEZs in Bangladesh as the country has already introduced one-stop service for investment in the country and announced attracting packages as well as numerous facilities to attract both local and foreign investment.

Source: <https://www.thedailystar.net/business/economy/industries/investments/news/tipu-munshi-urges-foreign-investors-nrbs-invest-bangladesh-2152776>

BHUTAN: BHUTAN MUST GRAB E-COMMERCE OPPORTUNITIES, STUDY FINDING

Diagnostic Trade Integration Study Update (DTISU) done by department of trade and UNDP Bhutan indicates that the Covid-19 pandemic brings opportunity for the country to build digital platforms and e-commerce. The study finds that Bhutan is still in early stage of digitalization. The study has stated that a big segment of Bhutanese are not well equipped and well aware about the concept of e-commerce. It has potential to engage with international community to digitization and e-commerce transformation. The study has recommended to take e-commerce campaigns to strengthen its e-commerce capabilities and to build foundation of digital platform. According to the study, the objective of the

campaign should focus on trust building among Bhutanese regarding e-commerce as there is low level of trust in e-commerce due to frequent disruption of internet connection while making an order. High postage, insurance cost and lack of digital payment solution discourage people from using e-commerce which should be taken into consideration.

Source: <https://kuenselonline.com/bhutan-must-grab-e-commerce-opportunities-dtisu/>

INDIA: INDIA'S SECURITY CHALLENGES BECOMING COMPLEX, DEFENSE MINISTER

Mr. Rajnath Singh, Defense Minister on August 19, 2021 said that India's security challenges are becoming complex due to changing global geopolitical situation. He made the statement amid growing security concern in India as the Taliban regained control over Afghanistan and is going to form government soon. To face the challenges, the defense minister said that India must have a strong, capable and self-reliant defense industry. Meanwhile, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar has met with British Foreign Minister Mr. Dominic Raab and exchanged views on the developments in Afghanistan and agreed to work together to tackle shared security threats, support

refugees and ease the humanitarian plight of ordinary Afghans. In the meantime, India has evacuated all Kabul embassy personnel including diplomats, officials, security personnel and some stranded Indians. India's foreign minister called the evacuation process a difficult and complicated exercise. Earlier, the Afghan Taliban announced that India could complete its unfinished infrastructure and reconstruction projects in Afghanistan as the Taliban had no objection if India continues to work in Afghanistan.

Source: <https://news.abplive.com/news/india/india-s-national-security-becoming->

Inside this issue

- South Asia: Covid-19 Crisis: At a glance
- Business & Investment: Government plans for economic structural transformation for post-LDC graduation
- Business & Investment: Bangladesh's revenue collection increased by 21 percent, says NBR
- Afghanistan: Taliban returned to the power of Afghanistan; Taliban offered amnesty, promised women's rights and media freedom; EU, U.S. will work with Taliban only if rights are respected; Bangladesh to welcome Taliban government 'backed by people'
- Afghanistan: U.S. froze USD 9.5 billion Afghan reserves, Germany halted aid; Afghanistan's currency falls to record low amid ongoing turmoil; G7 foreign ministers called for 'united response' to prevent crisis from escalating in Afghanistan; Taliban's exiled leaders return to form new Afghan government
- Bangladesh: Commerce minister urges foreign investors, non-resident Bangladeshis to invest in Bangladesh
- Bhutan: Bhutan must grab e-commerce opportunities, study finding
- India: India's security challenges becoming complex, Defense Minister
- India: COP26 President Alok Sharma visits India; UK-India set to partner in green hydrogen
- Maldives: Maldivian Foreign Minister met President-Designate of COP-26
- Myanmar: China pledges to fund development projects in Myanmar
- Nepal: Petitions registered at Supreme Court against ordinance to amend political parties act
- Pakistan: Pakistan urged 'inclusive' political settlement in Afghanistan; Pakistani envoy met Karzai, Abdullah amid efforts to form afghan government; Pak-Afghan trade picked up as taliban seizes control
- Sri Lanka: Sri Lanka receives funds from international monetary fund; HSBC launches climate dedicated project 'core'

Inside this issue

- South Asia: Covid-19 Crisis: At a glance
- Business & Investment: Government plans for economic structural transformation for post-LDC graduation
- Business & Investment: Bangladesh's revenue collection increased by 21 percent, says NBR
- Afghanistan: Taliban returned to the power of Afghanistan; Taliban offered amnesty, promised women's rights and media freedom; EU, U.S. will work with Taliban only if rights are respected; Bangladesh to welcome Taliban government 'backed by people'
- Afghanistan: U.S. froze USD 9.5 billion Afghan reserves, Germany halted aid; Afghanistan's currency falls to record low amid ongoing turmoil; G7 foreign ministers called for 'united response' to prevent crisis from escalating in Afghanistan; Taliban's exiled leaders return to form new Afghan government
- Bangladesh: Commerce minister urges foreign investors, non-resident Bangladeshis to invest in Bangladesh
- Bhutan: Bhutan must grab e-commerce opportunities, study finding
- India: India's security challenges becoming complex, Defense Minister
- India: COP26 President Alok Sharma visits India; UK-India set to partner in green hydrogen
- Maldives: Maldivian Foreign Minister met President-Designate of COP-26
- Myanmar: China pledges to fund development projects in Myanmar
- Nepal: Petitions registered at Supreme Court against ordinance to amend political parties act
- Pakistan: Pakistan urged 'inclusive' political settlement in Afghanistan; Pakistani envoy met Karzai, Abdullah amid efforts to form afghan government; Pak-Afghan trade picked up as taliban seizes control
- Sri Lanka: Sri Lanka receives funds from international monetary fund; HSBC launches climate dedicated project 'core'

INDIA: COP26 PRESIDENT ALOK SHARMA VISITS INDIA; UK-INDIA SET TO PARTNER IN GREEN HYDROGEN

Mr. Alok Sharma, the President of the 26th UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26) has met Union Power and Renewable Energy Minister Mr. Raj Kumar Singh on August 17, 2021 and expressed the willingness of the United Kingdom to collaborate with India on its ambitious green hydrogen project. The proposal came after a few days of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Independent Day announcement of India's willingness to hydrogen mission. India aims to become a net-zero carbon emitter and targets to achieve 450 giga watts of renewable energy by 2030. Union Minister Mr. Raj Kumar Singh expressed India's interest in collaborating with the UK on offshore wind and stressed on low cost storage capacity for power generation.

Mr. Alok Sharma came to India ahead of the COP-26 summit to be held in Glasgow in November 2021. The COP-26 President also requested Indian government to consider raising ambitions in emission reduction targets. He reiterated that a delivery plan on finance for developing countries is being put in place ahead of the conference in Glasgow this year.

Source: <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/cop26-alok-sharma-hydrogen-energy-climate-change-green-climate-fund-101629213956153-amp.html>

MALDIVES: MALDIVIAN FOREIGN MINISTER MET PRESIDENT-DESIGNATE OF COP-26

The President-elect of 76th session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), Foreign Minister of Maldives, Abdulla Shahid met with the President designate for the 26th United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP 26), Alok Sharma on August 17, 2021 in London.

The two leaders discussed about the importance of taking action to combat climate change and its impacts. Minister Abdulla Shahid reiterated the priorities of his 'Presidency of hope' which includes responding to the needs of the planet that is climate change, recovering from Covid-19 impairments, rebuilding sustainability, respecting the everyone's rights and stimulate

the United Nations. Minister Shahid was accompanied by the High Commissioner of Maldives to the United Kingdom, Dr Farah Faizal. The United Kingdom will host the twenty sixth United Nation Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26) in Glasgow which will take place from October 31, 2021 to November 12, 2021. Ahead of the summit the appointed President is set to approach stakeholders around the globe to garner support for the climate action.

Source: <https://raajje.mv/105040>
<https://avas.mv/en/105327>

MYANMAR : CHINA PLEDGES TO FUND DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS IN MYANMAR

China has been one of the top investors of Myanmar and currently has some vital infrastructural projects in progress. A sign of cooperation was resumed between Beijing and Naypyitaw after Beijing announced support of USD six million to fund 21 development projects in Myanmar. The agreement was signed on August 9, 2021 by Chinese Ambassador to Myanmar, Mr Chen Hai and Foreign Ministry of Myanmar. The funds shall be transferred from China under the Lancang-Mekong Cooperation (LMC) framework and affirms to prioritize agriculture, science, tourism and disaster prevention, culture and animal vaccines.

Pro-democratic forces of Myanmar accused

China to support the military regime. However, renouncing the allegations, Beijing stated that they are supporting the regional diplomacy amid the crisis.

Sources: http://www.lmcchina.org/eng/2021-08/11/content_41645969.html
<https://www.reuters.com/world/china-fund-myanmar-projects-agreement-with-junta-2021-08-11/>

NEPAL: PETITIONS REGISTERED AT SUPREME COURT AGAINST ORDINANCE TO AMEND POLITICAL PARTIES ACT

President Bidya Devi Bhandari on August 18, 2021 promulgated an ordinance on the recommendation of the Sher Bahadur Deuba government which seeks to change the provision of a political party split, reducing the requirement for numbers of members in the Central Committee and the Parliamentary Party. According to Supreme Court spokesperson Baburam Dahal, six petitions have been registered at the Apex Court against the government-issued ordinance. The ordinance issued by the Deuba government amended the provisions related to party split of the Political Parties Act-2017. As per the new provision, any group that

can prove the support of 20 percent of members in the Central Committee or Parliamentary Party can quit the mother party and register a new party. Before the amendment, such a group had to prove the support of 40 percent of members in the Central Committee and Parliamentary Party. The country's largest political party, the CPN-UML, has split after Madhav Kumar Nepal, a senior communist leader, applied for a new party.

Source: <https://kathmandupost.com/politics/2021/08/19/aided-by-deuba-ordinance-dissidents-split-two-parties>

PAKISTAN: PAKISTAN URGED 'INCLUSIVE' POLITICAL SETTLEMENT IN AFGHANISTAN; PAKISTANI ENVOY MET KARZAI, ABDULLAH AMID EFFORTS TO FORM AFGHAN GOVERNMENT; PAK-AFGHAN TRADE PICKED UP AS TALIBAN SEIZES CONTROL

Pakistan has emphasized the importance of an "inclusive" political settlement in Afghanistan as US Secretary of State Antony Blinken spoke to Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi and discussed rapidly changing situation in Afghanistan. Blinken's talks with Qureshi was part of the several outreaches made by him to many of his counterparts across the world, State Department spokesperson Ned Price told reporters at his daily news briefing on August 16, 2021. Qureshi underlined that Pakistan would remain closely engaged with the US and other international partners in promoting efforts in support of a peaceful and stable Afghanistan.

Mansoor Ahmad Khan, Pakistan Ambassador to Afghanistan met former Afghan president Hamid Karzai and senior official Abdullah Abdullah to discuss the prevailing situation in the neighboring country on August 19, 2021 Karzai also said in a tweet that

they discussed the latest situation in Afghanistan and inclusive political process with "national and international legitimacy" amid efforts to form a new government in the country. Meanwhile, Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi said on August 18, 2021 that he would undertake a visit of regional countries including Iran, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan to hold consultations on the evolving situation in Afghanistan. Meanwhile, he urged all Afghans to work together for "an inclusive political settlement" stressing that a peaceful and stable Afghanistan was of critical importance for Pakistan and the region. Commercial traffic across Afghanistan's border with Pakistan at the Spin Boldak/Chaman crossing picked up on August 20, 2021, traders said.

Sources: <https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/pak-calls-for-inclusive-political-settlement-in-afghanistan-as-blinken-talks-to-qureshi/article35951083.ece>

SRI LANKA: SRI LANKA RECEIVES FUNDS FROM INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND; HSBC LAUNCHES CLIMATE DEDICATED PROJECT 'CORE'

The State Minister, Ajith Nivard Cabraal asserted that Sri Lanka will receive IMPF allocation of USD seven hundred and eighty million under Special Drawing Rights (SDR) from International Monetary Fund (IMF). The fund will be used predominantly for Covid related expenditures. The facility is expected to restructure the debt and assist the country to overcome the current financial crisis to some extent.

Sri Lanka is one of the most vulnerable countries exposed to the impacts of climate change. Considering the fact the Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation (HSBC) launched a project named 'Climate-smart

Opportunities through Restoration and Education' or Project CORE of forty-eight million two hundred thousand Sri Lankan rupee. The project aims to revive one hundred and twenty five hectares of degraded land in the Thanthirimale area of the country within a period of four years. The project will also focus on various societal issues like enhancing disaster resilience, addressing income challenges, improving ecosystem services and biodiversity.

Source: <https://island.lk/govt-to-receive-usd-780-mn-via-imf-sdr-facility-to-get-over-covid-difficulties/>

Inside this issue

- South Asia: Covid-19 Crisis: At a glance
- Business & Investment: Government plans for economic structural transformation for post-LDC graduation
- Business & Investment: Bangladesh's revenue collection increased by 21 percent, says NBR
- Afghanistan: Taliban returned to the power of Afghanistan; Taliban offered amnesty, promised women's rights and media freedom; EU, U.S. will work with Taliban only if rights are respected; Bangladesh to welcome Taliban government 'backed by people'
- Afghanistan: U.S. froze USD 9.5 billion Afghan reserves, Germany halted aid; Afghanistan's currency falls to record low amid ongoing turmoil; G7 foreign ministers called for 'united response' to prevent crisis from escalating in Afghanistan; Taliban's exiled leaders return to form new Afghan government
- Bangladesh: Commerce minister urges foreign investors, non-resident Bangladeshis to invest in Bangladesh
- Bhutan: Bhutan must grab e-commerce opportunities, study finding
- India: India's security challenges becoming complex, Defense Minister
- India: COP26 President Alok Sharma visits India; UK-India set to partner in green hydrogen
- Maldives: Maldivian Foreign Minister met President-Designate of COP-26
- Myanmar: China pledges to fund development projects in Myanmar
- Nepal: Petitions registered at Supreme Court against ordinance to amend political parties act
- Pakistan: Pakistan urged 'inclusive' political settlement in Afghanistan; Pakistani envoy met Karzai, Abdullah amid efforts to form Afghan government; Pak-Afghan trade picked up as Taliban seizes control
- Sri Lanka: Sri Lanka receives funds from international monetary fund; HSBC launches climate dedicated project 'core'

NEPAL: NEPAL'S TOP COURT REMOVES MOST OF CABINET MINISTERS OF CARETAKER GOVERNMENT

Nepal's Supreme Court delivered a fresh blow to embattled Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli by removing 20 recently appointed ministers, pending a ruling on whether a caretaker premier can make such sweeping cabinet changes. With the Himalayan country struggling to contain a deadly second wave of coronavirus infections and beset by political turmoil, Oli lost a vote of confidence in May, 2021 as a result of factional infighting within his Communist Party of Nepal (UML).

Oli dissolved parliament and ordered fresh elections for November, 2021 while staying on as caretaker prime minister until the elections are held. The Supreme Court is set to begin hearing dozens of petitions challenging Prime Minister Oli's dissolution of parliament. In a bid to hold onto power and ditch opponents within his own party, Prime Minister Oli earlier this

month dropped most ministers from his cabinet, and named 20 replacements, who were mainly members of a junior coalition partner. The ministerial appointments had been "against the spirit of the constitution", the Supreme Court judges said, as Oli was only a caretaker prime minister. The court's removal of the 20 ministers means the cabinet is left with just five members, including the prime minister.

Sources:

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/nepals-top-court-removes-most-cabinet-blow-caretaker-pm-2021-06-23/>

PAKISTAN: PAKISTAN PM IMRAN KHAN WARNS OF A CIVIL-WAR IF NO PEACE DEAL IN AFGHANISTAN

Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan has called on the United States to find a political settlement to its war in Afghanistan before withdrawing from the country, as he ruled out hosting any US military bases to be used against other countries. Prime Minister Imran Khan was speaking in an interview to US news platform Axios and said that, "The Americans, before they leave, there must be a settlement," referring to a September 11, 2021 deadline set by the US government for its troops to withdraw from Pakistan's northwestern neighbor. He stated that "A political settlement in Afghanistan would mean a sort of coalition government. A government from the Taliban side and the other

side. There is no other solution."

Source:

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/6/21/pakistan-imran-khan-axios-afghanistan-ughurs>

Inside this issue

- South Asia: Covid-19 Crisis: At a glance
- Business & Investment: Government plans for economic structural transformation for post-LDC graduation
- Business & Investment: Bangladesh's revenue collection increased by 21 percent, says NBR
- Afghanistan: Taliban returned to the power of Afghanistan; Taliban offered amnesty, promised women's rights and media freedom; EU, U.S. will work with Taliban only if rights are respected; Bangladesh to welcome Taliban government 'backed by people'
- Afghanistan: U.S. froze USD 9.5 billion Afghan reserves, Germany halted aid; Afghanistan's currency falls to record low amid ongoing turmoil; G7 foreign ministers called for 'united response' to prevent crisis from escalating in Afghanistan; Taliban's exiled leaders return to form new Afghan government
- Bangladesh: Commerce minister urges foreign investors, non-resident Bangladeshis to invest in Bangladesh
- Bhutan: Bhutan must grab e-commerce opportunities, study finding
- India: India's security challenges becoming complex, Defense Minister
- India: COP26 President Alok Sharma visits India; UK-India set to partner in green hydrogen
- Maldives: Maldivian Foreign Minister met President-Designate of COP-26
- Myanmar: China pledges to fund development projects in Myanmar
- Nepal: Petitions registered at Supreme Court against ordinance to amend political parties act
- Pakistan: Pakistan urged 'inclusive' political settlement in Afghanistan; Pakistani envoy met Karzai, Abdullah amid efforts to form afghan government; Pak-Afghan trade picked up as taliban seizes control
- Sri Lanka: Sri Lanka receives funds from international monetary fund; HSBC launches climate dedicated project 'core'

About Us

Bangladesh Enterprise Institute is a non-profit, non-political research centre. Established in October 2000, the Institute has established for itself a reputation for excellence in its research and advocacy work focusing on the growth of private enterprise in Bangladesh. The Institute promotes issues of importance to the private sector and seeks to initiate essential measures and influence policy for the development of a market-oriented economy. Through the promotion of sustainable growth in domestic trade, commerce and industry, BEI hopes to address the enormous challenge for Bangladesh in securing a fair share of the global market.

BEI has a particular interest in the support and growth of Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs), which have the potential to be the engine of economic growth in Bangladesh. BEI also undertakes research and policy advocacy work focusing on the issues of foreign policy and security, particularly those of terrorism impacting Bangladesh and South Asia.

Being conscious of the enormous challenge to securing a fair share for Bangladesh in the global market as well as to address issues of trade and investment promotion, the Bangladesh Enterprise Institute (BEI) was established under the initiative of some leading business personalities of the country. Salman F. Rahman, Deputy Chairman of the BEXIMCO Group, has been working as the Chairman of the Board of Governors, Ambassador Farooq Sobhan, former Foreign Secretary and Ambassador, and past Executive Chairman of the Board of Investment, has been working as a Distinguished Fellow and Member of the Board of Governors of the institute and M Humayun Kabir, former Ambassador, has been working as the President and Chief Executive of the institute.

The institute is registered with the Registrar of Joint Stock Companies, Bangladesh, under the Societies Registration Act.

DISCLAIMER

In compiling this weekly news update, BEI has attempted to include the most relevant news accounts from the past week concerning South Asian Region. From time to time, news beyond South Asia has also been included if it finds relevance on any issues to the region. We recognize that some developments may have been overlooked, and that some sources may not be viewed by all as credible or balanced. Inclusion of a news story and its summary does not constitute any kind of endorsement or position taken by BEI, and the text and positions included in the above are solely extracted from various news articles published in the print media in various countries in South Asia and beyond. If you have any comments or feedback for us regarding this digest, please email at bei@bol-online.com. For more information about BEI and our work, please visit <https://www.bei-bd.org/>

Contact Us

Phone :

+ (88 02) 2222 62645
+ (88 02) 2222 92662
+ (88 02) 2222 96805
+ (88 02) 2222 92663

Fax : + (88 02) 2222 88583

Email : bei@bol-online.com

Address 1 :

Apt.: 2B, House: 2D, Road: 73-G, Gulshan 2, Dhaka-1212, Bangladesh

Address 2 :

Ground Floor, House No. 3/A, Road No. 84, Gulshan 2, Dhaka-1212, Bangladesh



BEI

Bangladesh Enterprise
Institute