

|| WEEKLY NEWS HIGHLIGHTS ||

BANGLADESH ENTERPRISE INSTITUTE (BEI)

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

|| September 03, 2021 – September 09, 2021 ||

SOUTH ASIA: COVID-19 CRISIS: AT A GLANCE

Afghanistan has reported 153,626 Covid-19 cases and 7,144 Deaths as of September 9, 2021, since the beginning of the pandemic. The country is now facing a huge medical supply shortage.

Bangladesh on September 9, 2021, has recorded 56 death tolls and 2,639 new cases of coronavirus indicating lower cases as well as lower fatalities in the last two months. In Bangladesh, the total number of cases becomes 1,519,805, and the total death toll reached 26,684 till September 8, 2021. Bangladesh has administered a total of 28,576,527 doses which covered the country's total 5.36% population. Health Minister Zahid Maleque has said that vaccination of children aged above 12 will begin after the approval from the World Health Organization (WHO) as an application has already been submitted to the WHO seeking its approval in this regard.

Bhutan on September 9, 2021, has reported no new cases and no death toll as the country reported a total of 3 death tolls due to Covid- 19. In Bhutan, 2,596 cases of coronavirus have been identified till September 8, 2021. 62.63% of Bhutanese got vaccinated as of September 8, 2021.

India has reported 369 death and 37,875 fresh cases due to coronavirus as of September 9, 2021. The country's total cases becomes 33,096,718 and the total death toll reached 441,411. 11.75% of Indians have been vaccinated till September 8, 2021.

The **Maldives** has reported 82,475 active cases and 227 deaths as of September 10, 2021. 58.03% of the population is fully vaccinated. Health Protection Agency urges all to continue wearing masks and follow health protocols.

Myanmar has reported 425,414 confirmed cases and 16265 deaths till September 10, 2021. The ongoing political upheaval disturbed the vaccination program.

Nepal has reported 961 new coronavirus cases on September 9, 2021, taking the nationwide infection tally to 775,548. The countrywide death toll has now reached 10,924 till date. The number of active cases stands at 27,958 and the rate of infection positivity is 11.24 percent as of September 10, 2021.

Pakistan has reported 3,689 new covid-19 cases on September 9, 2021. A total of 83 deaths has been reported on September 8, 2021, due to coronavirus.

Sri Lanka has reported 477,636 active cases and 10864 deaths as of September 10, 2021. 44.56% of the population is fully vaccinated. Prisoners are provided with the first jab of the vaccines and health authorities decided to inculcate children from thirteen to seventeen years of age.

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

Source: [John Hopkins University](#)

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BUSINESS AND INVESTMENT: BANGLADESH TO START FEASIBILITY STUDY ON PTA OR FTA WITH SINGAPORE

The government of Bangladesh has started to conduct a feasibility study on signing either a PTA or FTA with Singapore in a bid to further strengthen economic and trade ties with Singapore. The commerce ministry has recently asked the Bangladesh Trade and Tariff Commission (BTTC) to conduct the feasibility study based on the policy guidelines on Free Trade Agreement-2010 (FTA-2010) and to submit the report to the ministry within this September. In the 2020-21 fiscal year, Bangladesh exported worth US\$116.57 million to Singapore, and the country's main export products to Singapore are knitwear, woven garments, agricultural products, engineering products, and home textile, etc. Foreign direct investment from Singapore stood at US\$ 8.0 billion in Bangladesh last year. The feasibility study will find out the best option for Bangladesh between PTA and FTA for further negotiation with Singapore. Bangladesh will no longer enjoy a duty-free facility in the post-LDC graduation in 2026. BTTC will complete the study on Singapore to explore the economic and export potentiality there.

Sources: <https://thefinancialexpress.com.bd/economy/bangladesh/dhaka-to-start-feasibility-study-on-pta-or-fta-with-singapore-1630730544>

POLICY RESEARCHERS SUGGEST FOR GREATER ENGAGEMENT WITH WTO TO DEAL WITH POST-PANDEMIC AND POST-LDC WORLD

Policy researchers have suggested the government engage more with World Trade Organization (WTO) to cope up with the external shock to be arisen in the post-LDC graduation as well as by ongoing pandemic. The suggestions have come out in a webinar titled 'Goeconomics in the Aftermath of the Covid-19 Pandemic: Trade and Development Perspectives from Bangladesh' jointly organized by Economic Reporters' Forum (ERF), the Research Policy Integration for Development (RAPID), and Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES). Speakers also said that world trade and other major forces of globalization are now passing through a turbulent time for certain latest developments. While speaking as the chief guest at the webinar, State Minister for Planning Dr. Shamsul Alam said that the current policy documents of Bangladesh are tuned to addressing the adverse implications of the geo-economics and so far, the country has taken a cautious approach without falling into the power play of any regional or global powers. He added that the government is emphasizing investment diversification alongside enlarging the export basket.

Source: <https://thefinancialexpress.com.bd/economy/bangladesh/cautious-ropewalking-wise-for-bangladesh-skipping-any-orbit-say-policy-researchers-1630988278>

AFGHANISTAN: TALIBAN ANNOUNCED NEW ACTING GOVERNMENT INCLUDING 33 CARETAKER CABINET MEMBERS IN AFGHANISTAN, MOHAMMAD HASAN AKHUND, THE HEAD OF TALIBAN GOVERNMENT AND MULLAH ABDUL GHANI BARADAR DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER; AFGHAN WOMEN PROTEST AGAINST ALL-MALE TALIBAN GOVERNMENT; CIA

The Taliban has appointed Mohammad Hasan Akhund, a close aide to the group's late founder Mullah Omar, as head of Afghanistan's new caretaker government. The list of cabinet members announced by chief spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid on September 07, 2021, was dominated by members of the group's old guard. Abdul Ghani Baradar, the head of the Taliban's political office, will be the deputy leader while Sirajuddin Haqqani, son of the founder of the Haqqani Network, has been named as interior minister. Mullah Mohammad Yaqoob, son of Mullah Omar, has been named as defense minister. Hedayatullah Badri will be the acting minister of finance, while Amir Khan Muttaqi, a Taliban negotiator in Doha, was named foreign minister. Speaking at a news conference in the Afghan capital, Kabul, Mujahid stressed the cabinet was an "acting" government.

However, dozens of women in Kabul and the north-eastern Afghan province of Badakhshan have protested against the formation of an all-male interim Taliban government to rule Afghanistan. Demonstrators said they would not accept a government with no women ministers. The EU said the Taliban had reneged on promises to make their government "inclusive and representative", while the US also expressed concern that the interim government included figures linked to attacks on US forces. In a statement, the US state department said it was concerned by the "affiliations and track records of some of the individuals". Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said he would closely follow the new government's future course. China welcomed the end of "three weeks of anarchy" in Afghanistan with the establishment of a new interim government in Kabul. The US State Department has said it is concerned after the Taliban unveiled Afghanistan's new all-male government. Iran criticized the formation of the Taliban government in Afghanistan, saying it ignored the need for an inclusive government. Shahriar Alam, State Minister for Foreign Affairs in Bangladesh said that

the country will not recognize the interim government of Afghanistan.

Indian NSA chief Ajit Doval and his Russian counterpart General Nikolay Patrushev on September 08, 2021, held wide-ranging talks on the possible security implications of the Taliban's capture of power in Kabul for India, Russia, and the Central Asian region, people familiar with the development said. The meeting took place a day after Mr. Doval held extensive talks with Chief of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) William Burns on the Afghan crisis. In the Doval-Patrushev talks, both sides deliberated on a coordinated approach in dealing with any possible spilling out of terrorist activities from the Taliban-ruled Afghanistan into India, Russia, and the Central Asian region.

The Taliban said they have captured the Panjshir valley, the last holdout province, though the resistance has not conceded defeat. NRFA leader Ahmad Massoud said in a statement on September 06, 2021, the Taliban's "claim of occupying Panjshir is false" and that "NRF forces are present in all strategic positions across the valley to continue the fight."

Sources:

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<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/9/8/world-reacts-as-taliban-announce-new-afghan-government>

<https://indianexpress.com/article/india/cia-chief-in-delhi-to-discuss-afghan-problem-7496016/?fbclid=IwAR39PC62SRdrRCBD6dNrCGHqVtCPE1FF8hjA7qavNNk4oJObiIRJUxWNHA>

[fbclid=IwAR39PC62SRdrRCBD6dNrCGHqVtCPE1FF8hjA7qavNNk4oJObiIRJUxWNHA](https://indianexpress.com/article/india/cia-chief-in-delhi-to-discuss-afghan-problem-7496016/?fbclid=IwAR39PC62SRdrRCBD6dNrCGHqVtCPE1FF8hjA7qavNNk4oJObiIRJUxWNHA)

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AFGHANISTAN: CHINA TO PROVIDE USD 31 MILLION WORTH OF AID AND THREE MILLION COVID-19 VACCINE DOSES TO THE AFGHAN PEOPLE; WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION WARNED THAT 2,000 AFGHAN MEDICAL FACILITIES FACE IMMINENT CLOSURE; SCO TO MEET IN TAJIKISTAN ON SEPTEMBER TO DISCUSS THE CRISIS

China has announced that it is offering at least USD 31 million worth of emergency aid, including coronavirus vaccines to Afghanistan as the Taliban revealed the members of its new government. Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi announced on September 08, 2021, during a meeting with foreign ministers of Afghanistan's neighboring countries, including Pakistan, Iran, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan. The emergency aid will include grain, winter supplies, medicines as well as three million COVID-19 vaccine doses, Wang said. In his remarks on September 08, 2021, Mr. Wang was quoted as saying that Afghanistan is "standing at the crossroads", as it faces humanitarian crises including the COVID-19 pandemic.

The US is convening an expanded group of western nations to set a framework for cooperation with the new Taliban government. The meeting on September 08, 2021, chaired by the US secretary of state, Antony Blinken, and the German foreign minister, Heiko Maas, faces an all-male, Pashtun-dominated caretaker government that has ignored calls to form an inclusive administration. The virtual meeting, convening as many as 20 nations held in a familiar set of conditions for cooperation with

the Taliban, including free movement for Afghan and foreign nationals who wish to leave, protection of rights for women, and a commitment to protect aid workers. The meeting discussed the terms for giving humanitarian aid after the UN warned this week that the Afghan economy was on the brink of collapse. World Health Organization warned that 2,000 Afghan medical facilities face imminent closure due to a lack of money.

Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) summit is taking place in Dushanbe, Tajikistan from Sept 16-17, 2021. India Prime Minister Narendra Modi will attend virtually. Growing violence in Afghanistan, trade and economic cooperation as well as fighting against the global pandemic of COVID-19 is on the agenda of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization or SCO Heads of State summit.

Sources:

<https://www.reuters.com/world/china-says-us-allies-have-duty-aid-afghanistan-2021-09-08/?fbclid=IwAR1kVjkkA99W698tEnYsf1wEBBIATckG39SIG6TRaxmxC6hREI7w9067UCO>

BANGLADESH: BANGLADESH WILL TAKE ITS POLICY TOWARDS AFGHANISTAN INDEPENDENTLY: FOREIGN MINISTER; CHIEF OF ARMY STAFF VISITED INDIA

Foreign Minister Dr. AK Abdul Momen has recently said to BBC Bangla that Bangladesh will decide its foreign policy towards Afghanistan independently without taking into consideration of other's positions including India and Pakistan. He also said that Bangladesh believes in people's government that comes through a political and democratic process and the government will extend its support to the new interim Afghan government on the condition that people's desire is reflected in government policy. He added that Bangladesh is now closely monitoring the situation in Afghanistan before making any final move.

Meanwhile, State Minister for Foreign Affairs M Shahrar Alam has said that Bangladesh is now waiting to see a permanent government in Afghanistan before deciding to welcome the interim government or not. In the meantime, Chief of Army Staff General SM Shafiuddin Ahmed has visited India from August 4-8, 2021. During the tour, he visited the Indian Army's 50 Independent Parachute Brigade,

Wargaming Development Centre, Defense Image Processing and Analysis Centre and Indian National Defense College (NDC). The army chief also met Indian National Security Advisor Mr. Ajit Kumar Doval, Military adviser to the Secretariat of the State Security Council in the Indian Prime Minister's Office, Defense Secretary, Chief of Defense Staff, Chief of the Army Staff of the Indian Army, and Chief of Air Staff and discussed various security issues between the two countries.

Sources:

<https://www.daily-sun.com/post/574742/Army-chief-off-to-India-on-3day-official-visit>

<https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/2021/09/08/bangladesh-waiting-to-see-permanent-government-in-afghanistan>

<https://www.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/diplomacy/news/bangladesh-decide-its-policy-towards-afghanistan-independently-momen-2169666>

BANGLADESH: UNICEF WELCOMES BANGLADESH'S DECISION

Education Minister Dr. Dipu Moni has said that the government is set to reopen schools from September 12, 2021. The decision came during an inter-ministerial meeting at the Secretariat in Dhaka. In response, UNICEF has 'wholeheartedly' welcomed the move by the government to reopen schools after one and half years. The Education Minister also said that schools will be prepared for classes by September 9 and the students from class 2 to class 9 and HSC examinee will have to go to the schools once a week. Social

distancing, mask-wearing and sanitization facilities at school premises are mandatory. UNICEF country representative Mr. Tomoo Huzumi said that UNICEF together with other development partners will work with the government to keep schools open safely. UN Resident Coordinator in Dhaka Mia Seppo also welcomed the decision of reopening schools.

Source: <https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/2021/09/06/unicef-welcomes-bangladesh-s-decision-on-reopening>

INDIA: 'TALIBAN INDICATES THEY'LL BE REASONABLE IN ADDRESSING INDIAN CONCERNS', FOREIGN SECRETARY HARSH VARDHAN SHRINGLA AFTER WASHINGTON VISIT; NATIONAL SECURITY ADVISER AJIT DOVAL MEETS CIA CHIEF

Foreign secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla has visited the USA and met top Biden administration officials including Secretary of State Mr. Antony Blinken and Deputy Secretary Mr. Wendy Sherman and discussed bilateral, regional, and global issues like the current situation in Afghanistan. The foreign secretary at the end of his Washington visit told the journalists that the new Afghan government indicated that they would be responsible for addressing New Delhi's concern.

Meanwhile, National Security Advisor Mr. Ajit Kumar Doval met with CIA chief Mr. William Burns and Secretary of the Security Council of Russia Mr. Nikolai Patrushev in New Delhi to discuss on Afghan situation like government formation in Afghanistan and security issues. The meeting between Mr. Doval and the CIA chief would likely have included India's concerns over the

developments in Afghanistan. India has said it expects the Taliban not to allow terror groups to operate from its soil to target India, especially foment trouble in Jammu and Kashmir. Secretary of the Security Council of Russia Mr. Nikolai Patrushev also met Prime Minister Narendra Modi and External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and during the meetings, both countries share similar concerns on terrorism.

Sources:

<https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/cia-chief-met-national-security-adviser-ajit-doval-in-delhi-amid-taliban-government-formation-in-afghanistan-sources-2533667>

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/foreign-secretary-harsh-varadhan-shringla>

INDIA: TEXTILE, APPAREL ORDERS ESPECIALLY FROM U.S., POWER INDIA EXPORT SURGE; BANGLADESH'S RMG ORDERS REACH TO PRE PANDEMIC LEVEL, BUYERS OFFER LOW PRICES

India's textile and apparel exports to the United States has been increased by 55 per cent in the first seven months of 2021 which is the fastest growth among the top five countries exporting textile and garments to the US. India has been constantly competing with Vietnam, Indonesia and Bangladesh during the last 10 years in access to textile and apparel exports especially to EU and US market. India's exports to the US has surged 55 per cent throughout January-July 2021 which is more than Vietnam's 18 per cent, Bangladesh's 29 per cent, China's 28 per cent and Mexico's 31 per cent.

On the other hand, Bangladeshi RMG sector is optimistic about export recovery as it has booked work orders to almost its full capacities for the next five months. However, buyers are still offering prices that below the pre-pandemic levels although a very small number of manufacturers are getting orders at the previous rates or even higher.

Sources: <https://indianexpress.com/article/india/textile-apparel-orders-especially-from-us-power-india-export-surge-7487842/>

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MALDIVES: MALDIVES WILL HIRE QUALIFIED NATIONALS INSTEAD OF FOREIGN WORKERS - STATES PRESIDENT SOLIH

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President Ibrahim Solih inaugurated the Job Centre at R. Alifushi on September 8, 2021. Alifushi is the first out of the job centers in islands that are being opened following the national job center program of the government ministry of economic development. President in his speech stated that the Maldives will prioritize employing its nationals over foreigners, foreign workers won't be hired if there are nationals who fulfill the requirements. He affirmed that his government aims to decrease the number of foreign workers and added that job vacancies will be reduced enough so that foreigners won't be needed to fill in the vacancies. He cited that fifty-six thousand work permits were issued in 2018 whereas only eight thousand six hundred work permits were released in the current year.

He stressed the importance on the skill development of the youth. For this, the job

centers will assist youth to acquire necessary skills, employment desks will be established in every atoll for job seekers to register for available jobs, a mobile application is launched to bridge the gap between the employer and the employed. The main purpose of the centers is to avail job providers and job seekers a common platform, to ensure that all the necessary steps from the application to the selection process can be done in one place.

Sources:

<https://en.sun.mv/68993>

<https://raajje.mv/106238>

MALDIVES: UNGA PRESIDENT ELECT ATTENDED THE FIFTH WORLD CONFERENCE OF SPEAKERS OF PARLIAMENT

Fifth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament held in Vienna, Austria from September 7 to 8, 2021. The United Nations General Assembly president-elect, Maldivian Foreign Minister, Abdulla Shahid delivered a speech addressing the Parliaments across the globe and stated that the 76th session, under his "Presidency of Hope", will prioritize five rays of hope, all of which require the vital partnership of parliaments. He mentioned that the world is interlinked; we face common challenges and thus need

to seek opportunities through a multilateral approach. He underlined the five priorities of his presidency. Finally, he stressed the importance of parliaments to comply with United Nations to ensure vaccination, sustainable development, and tackle the threats of climate change.

Sources:

<https://raajje.mv/106129>

<https://en.sun.mv/69014>

<http://139.180.128.22/105970>

MALDIVES: MALDIVES SIGNED AIR SERVICE AGREEMENT WITH TURKEY

The governments of Maldives and Turkey signed an air service agreement to develop the tourism sector of both countries. Maldivian Transport Minister, Aishath Nahula and Turkish Transport Minister, Adil Karaismailoglu signed the agreement on behalf of their governments.

The agreement aims to develop the civil aviation sector of the countries, regulating traffic rights, flight capacity, flight safety, and fare schedules and reducing the hurdles faced by the passengers. It will strengthen tourism

and the economic relation of the nations. Further discussions were held to increase cooperation in civil aviation and maritime transportations.

Sources:

<https://raajje.mv/105984>

<https://www.raillynews.com/2021/09/Air-transport-agreement-signed-between-turkey-and-maldives/>

MYANMAR: NATIONAL UNITY GOVERNMENT DECLARES 'PEOPLE'S DEFENSIVE WAR' AGAINST THE MILITARY REGIME

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- Sri Lankan Ambassador to Thailand Meets Prime Minister and Minister of Defense of the Kingdom Thailand

Duwa Lashi La, the acting president of the National Unity Government (NUG) called for a war against the military rule of the country. He announced on September 7, 2021, through a video at the social networking site declaring Myanmar to be under a state of emergency until the restoration of democracy and added that this revolution aims to establish a peaceful federal union. The statement termed it as sedition against the military terrorism to safeguard the lives and property of the people, he encouraged ethnic groups to 'immediately attack' the military and take 'full control of their lands', ordered People's Defense Force militias to subjugate Tatmadaw and its assets, called civil servants, police, soldiers and other agencies of the government to support and affiliate with the public revolution.

The declaration triggered conflicts across the country such as scuffles, gunfights, explosions, killings targeting junta troops by the People's Defense Force militias and ethnic armed groups. The Ethnic Armed Organizations (EAO) asserted their solidarity with the announcement of the National Unity Government. The mass panicked and rushed to hoard food, medicines, fuel, and other essentials. The military regime's spokesman, Zaw Min Tun dubbed the declaration as an attempt to solicit international attention, accusing National Unity Government to destabilize the country by misleading its people and disrupt the ongoing vaccination program, however claims NUG to be a failure and asked the general people not to panic.

The international community has urged all parties of Myanmar to abstain from violence. Britain's Ambassador to Myanmar, Pete Vowles, condemned the brutality of the military and encouraged all stakeholders to engage in dialogues. US State Department spokesperson stated that United States will not accede to violence and requested all parties to wage peace. Indonesian foreign

ministry spokesman, Teuku Faizasyah advised the actors to prioritize the safety and wellbeing of the people. Malaysian

foreign minister, Saifuddin Abdullah, stressed the importance of implementing ASEAN's 'five-point consensus' at the earliest. China expressed concerns about the stability of the region and said that they will not interfere in the internal affairs of their neighbor.

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) special envoy to Myanmar, Erywan Yusof said that he needs to visit Myanmar immediately but before that, he needs to talk with all concerned parties and plans to establish a team of advisors with the representative of the neighbor countries, India and Bangladesh.

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PAKISTAN: PAKISTAN HOPES NEW TALIBAN GOVERNMENT WILL WORK FOR PEACE AND SECURITY IN AFGHANISTAN; TALIBAN DENIED PAKISTAN'S INTERFERENCE IN FORMING NEW GOVERNMENT; PREVENTION OF HUMANITARIAN CRISIS, ECONOMIC MELTDOWN IN AFGHANISTAN KEY PRIORITIES, FOREIGN MINISTER TOLD VIRTUAL MOOT

In its first official comment on the government announced by the Taliban, Pakistan on September 8, 2021, expressed the hope that the new political dispensation will work for peace and security in Afghanistan and address its people's humanitarian needs. "We have noted the latest announcement about the formation of interim political set-up in Kabul, which would address the requirement of a governance structure to meet the urgent needs of the people of Afghanistan," a statement issued by the Foreign Office said. It said Pakistan continued to closely follow the evolving situation in the neighboring country. "We hope that the new political dispensation will ensure coordinated efforts for peace, security, and stability in Afghanistan as well as work towards taking care of humanitarian and development needs of the Afghan people," the press release added.

The Taliban on September 07, 2021, rejected allegations that Pakistan was interfering in the internal affairs of Afghanistan. "The interference of Pakistan is a rumor that has been spread about for 20 years. We don't allow interference," Taliban spokesperson Zabihullah Mujahid said while addressing a news conference in Kabul. Mujahid added that the Taliban acted with "complete freedom" and defeated those countries which "had been occupying"

Afghanistan. The spokesperson said certain elements were trying to create rifts between Afghanistan and Pakistan. "We have sacrificed for the defense and the people of this country and will not allow any interference."

Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi on September 08, 2021, stressed that the prevention of a humanitarian crisis and economic meltdown in Afghanistan were key priorities in the wake of recent developments in the country that saw the Taliban take over Kabul and the formation of an interim government. Mr. Qureshi was addressing a virtual meeting of foreign ministers of Afghanistan's neighbors - China, Iran, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan to discuss the developments in Afghanistan. The meeting came a day after the Taliban announced an interim government. "In the wake of recent developments in the country, the key priorities are to prevent a humanitarian crisis that can exacerbate the sufferings of Afghans. Equally important is to take steps to prevent an economic meltdown in the country. If a humanitarian crisis is prevented and economic stability is assured, then peace can be consolidated and a mass exodus precluded," Mr. Qureshi said.

Sources: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2319041/taliban-deny-pakistans->

SRI LANKA: SRI LANKA DELEGATION OF INDIAN ARMY VISITS SRI LANKA; DELEGATION OF SRI LANKAN ARMED FORCES VISIT TO NEW DELHI

A delegation of the Indian army arrived in Sri Lanka on September 7, 2021, to discuss the roadmap of bilateral cooperation, and Mitra Shakti, the largest military exercise of the region, aimed to enhance interoperability and operational efficiency amongst the armies of both India and Sri Lanka.

Earlier on September 5, 2021, thirty-nine Sri Lankan armed force officers visited New Delhi. During the visit, the delegation was acquainted with the functioning of all three Service Headquarters along with the routine of tri-service field formations, interacted with top Indian Armed Forces officials, and took a tour of various industries and

cultural sites.

An Indian High Commission statement affirms that these visits are aimed to endorse comradeship and cordiality among the military forces of both countries. It is also a manifestation of India's 'Neighborhood First' policy with a specific focus on enhancing industrial expertise as well as defense cooperation between India and Sri Lanka.

Sources: https://www.dailymirror.lk/latest_news/Indian-Army-delegation-in-Sri-Lanka/342-219891
<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/delegation-of-sri-lankan-armed-forces-to->

SRI LANKA: SRI LANKAN AMBASSADOR TO THAILAND MEETS PRIME MINISTER AND MINISTER OF DEFENSE OF THE

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Ambassador of Sri Lanka to the Kingdom of Thailand and Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka to United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) C.A. Chaminda I. Colonne visited Prime Minister and Defense Minister of the Kingdom Thailand General Prayut Chan-ocha at the Government House in Bangkok on September 6, 2021.

Prime Minister General, Prayut Chan-ocha conveyed well wishes to the government and the people of Sri Lanka. He emphasized strengthening bilateral cooperation, increasing trade volume and investments. Moreover, the premier called for accelerating negotiations on bilateral Free Trade Agreement (FTA), assured continuous support to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic and to provide technical cooperation in Agriculture, Fisheries, and

Artificial Rainmaking.

Ambassador Chaminda Colonne underlined the importance of economic cooperation and invited Thai investors to invest in the Colombo port city. She expressed strong commitment during her tenure of office for consolidating Sri Lanka-Thai bilateral relations for mutual benefit.

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<https://mfa.gov.lk/ambassador-of-sri-lanka-to-thailand-meets-prime-minister-and-minister-of-defense-of-the-kingdom-thailand/>
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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.

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The institute is registered with the Registrar of Joint Stock

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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/>

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