

|| WEEKLY NEWS HIGHLIGHTS ||

BANGLADESH ENTERPRISE INSTITUTE (BEI)

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

|| 17 August –24 August , 2023 ||

BUSINESS AND INVESTMENT

EXPORT GAINS LIMITED FROM EXISTING TRADE DEALS; BGMEA, IRAQI FEDERATION OF CHAMBERS KEEN TO COLLABORATE IN PROMOTING BILATERAL TRADE, INVESTMENT; TOTAL OUTPUT IN BD ECONOMIC CORRIDOR REGION LIKELY TO INCREASE TO \$286B BY 2050: ADB

Bangladesh has so far signed five bilateral and regional trading agreements to bolster exports, trade and investments with a view to expediting economic growth. However, except for the South Asian Free Trade Area Safta, the export growth to the countries covered by various trading deals has not been buoyant. India is the major country where Bangladesh has managed to boost its shipment over the years thanks to the duty-free benefit provided by New Delhi to least-developed countries LDCs except for 25 products under the Safta, data from the Export Promotion Bureau EPB showed.

trade, investment In efforts to explore trade and investment opportunities in new markets, a delegation of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association BGMEA led by President Faruque Hassan is visiting Iraq. During their four-day trip, they are scheduled to meet Iraqi ministers, trade bodies, businessmen and other stakeholders to promote and boost trade relations between Bangladesh and Iraq.

The total combined output in the entire Bangladesh economic corridor region is expected to increase from 32 billion in 2020 to 286 billion by 2050 in the business induced scenario BIS due to the intervention. Along the timeline, the total corridor region BIS output is expected to split off from the business as usual scenarios output and gradually increase to become 1.4 times of the total corridor region business as usual output by 2030, and 2.6 times by 2050, said the Bangladesh Economic Corridor Development Highlights launched by the Asian Development Bank ADB at the Bangabandhu International Conference Center BICC in the capital on Wednesday.

<https://www.thedailystar.net/business/economy/news/export-gains-limited-existing-trade-deals-3401621>

<https://www.tbsnews.net/economy/rmg/bgmea-iraqi-federation-chambers-keen-collaborate-promoting-bilateral-trade-investment>

<https://thefinancialexpress.com.bd/economy/total-output-in-bd-economic-corridor-region-likely-to-increase-to-286b-by-2050-adb>

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- Bangladesh: PM Hasina holds bilateral meeting with Xi during BRICS Summit; Bangladesh's expanding economy needs Algerian support to meet energy needs: Momen; India wants to see fair polls in Bangladesh: GM Quader; 1st day of Bangladesh-US defence dialogue held in Dhaka
- India: INDIA: News stories on India's Chandrayaan-3 Mission to the moon; Micro, small and medium enterprises to be the focus of 7th edition of the Bengal Global Business Summit.
- NEPAL: President Ram Chandra Paudel meets UN Resident Coordinator Hanaa Singer-Hamdy Gradual economic recovery in last FY.
- Pakistan: UNDP, EU, courts collaborate to improve legal aid in provinces; Nation united against terrorism, extremism, says minister.
- Sri Lanka: Sri Lanka: "Recent interactions will elevate bilateral engagement between India and Sri Lanka"; "Lankan economy shows positive signs of recovery".

AFGHANISTAN: KARZAI URGES EDUCATION FOR GIRLS ON INDEPENDENCE DAY

In commemoration of Afghanistans Independence Day on 19th of August, former President Hamid Karzai has appealed to the ruling Taliban government to allow the education of girls at all levels, including schools and universities. Afghans should educate all their children, both boys and girls, he said in a message on the occasion. Karzais message echoes a call to action for Afghans to ensure comprehensive

education for all their children. In a simultaneous narrative, the Taliban leadership acknowledged the 104th anniversary of Afghanistans liberation from British rule through an official statement.

<https://www.afghanistantimes.af/karzai-urges-education-for-girls-on-independence-day/>

BANGLADESH: PM HASINA HOLDS BILATERAL MEETING WITH XI DURING BRICS SUMMIT; BANGLADESH'S EXPANDING ECONOMY NEEDS ALGERIAN SUPPORT TO MEET ENERGY NEEDS; MOMEN; INDIA WANTS TO SEE FAIR POLLS IN BANGLADESH: GM QUADER; 1ST DAY OF BANGLADESH-US DEFENCE DIALOGUE HELD IN DHAKA

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has held a bilateral meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping on the sidelines of the BRICS Summit in South Africa. The Hasina-Xi meeting, the first bilateral one in four years, is being seen as a crucial one amid the current geopolitical competition between the West and its rivals. Hasina arrived in Johannesburg on Tuesday to join the summit of the five countries –Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa – who control one-fourth of the world economy.

Bangladesh's expanding economy needs support from Algeria to meet the country's energy needs, Foreign Minister Dr AK Abdul Momen told Algerian Finance Minister Laaziz Faïd during the Brics Summit in Johannesburg, South Africa yesterday. The foreign minister made the remarks as Algerian Finance Minister Laaziz Faïd, who is also the head of the Algerian delegation to Brics Outreach Forum, paid a courtesy call to Foreign Minister Dr AK Abdul Momen in his place of residence in Johannesburg on Wednesday (23 August), said a press release issued Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Jatiya Party Chairman GM Quader yesterday said India wants to see a fair election in Bangladesh and they will be happy if there is no violence before and after the polls.

India has a lot of investments in this country. So, India wants the next gov-

ernment to be formed in Bangladesh through fair elections. India wants us all to create a good election environment. There should be no violence and no instability in Bangladesh, said the JP chief. Quader, also deputy leader of the opposition, said this while talking to reporters at the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in Dhaka.

A two-day bilateral defence dialogue between Bangladesh and the United States began in Dhaka on Wednesday with an aim to discuss cooperation on a myriad of defence topics. In pursuit of these mutual objectives, the Bangladesh Armed Forces Division and Indo-Pacific Command will conduct the bilateral defence dialogue in Dhaka," U.S. Embassy Spokesperson Bryan Schiller said on Tuesday.

<https://thefinancialexpress.com.bd/national/pm-hasina-holds-bilateral-meeting-with-xi>

<https://www.tbsnews.net/bangladesh/bangladeshs-expanding-economy-needs-algerian-support-meet-energy-needs-momen-687690>

<https://www.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/politics/news/india-wants-see-fair-polls-bangladesh-gm-quader-3401556>

<https://thefinancialexpress.com.bd/national/1st-day-of-bangladesh-us-defence-dialogue-held>

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SRI LANKA: "RECENT INTERACTIONS WILL ELEVATE BILATERAL ENGAGEMENT BETWEEN INDIA AND SRI LANKA"

The recent interactions between the leadership from both India and Sri Lanka have set the stage for elevating bilateral engagement across various sectors, said the outgoing President of the Council Romesh David CEO, South Asia Gateway Terminals Pvt Ltd. The impending Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement was underscored as a priority, offering the potential to amplify trade and stimulate economic growth for both countries, he added.

GDP contraction of -12.4% in 4Q-2022 reduced to -11.5%YoY in 1Q 2023. Though the Agricultural sector expanded slightly by 0.8 YoY, elevated interest and tax rates dampened the Industrial and Services sectors by -23.4 YoY and -5

YoY, respectively. However, 6.7 QoQ growth in real GDP, has shown signs of recovery from the worst GDP contraction of -12.4 YoY recorded in 4Q2022. With robust economic reforms underway, the overall contraction is projected to improve to -3.0 to -4.0 in 2023.

<https://www.dailynews.lk/2023/08/24/business/89907/recent-interactions-will-elevate-bilateral-engagement-between-india-and-sri-lanka/>

<https://www.dailynews.lk/2023/08/24/business/89826/lankan-economy-shows-positive-signs-of-recovery/>

INDIA: NEWS STORIES ON INDIA'S CHANDRAYAAN-3 MISSION TO THE MOON; MICRO, SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES TO BE THE FOCUS OF 7TH EDITION OF THE BENGAL GLOBAL BUSINESS SUMMIT.

The Chandrayaan-3 lander module touched down on the lunar surface on Wednesday, making India the first country to reach the lunar south pole region and the fourth country to land a spacecraft on the moon after Russia, the US and China. The lander, entirely under the control of an onboard computer, nudged itself out of lunar orbit at an altitude of 30km. Rocket engines slowed its speed and smaller thrusters kept it steady during its 19-minute descent until the soft landing around 6.04pm IST.

CM said larger industries like cement-producing units brought investments but they generated fewer jobs compared to MSME sector. Mamata Banerjee on Wednesday said the micro, small and medium enterprises MSME would be the focus of the 7th edition of the Bengal Global Business Summit BGBS to be held on November 21 and 22 as they generate more employment opportunities. The focus of this year's BGBS will be the MSME. This sector generates more employment. I will ask everybody to draw investment to the MSME sector, said the

chief minister while inaugurating an exhibition of handicraft items at Milan Mela here on Wednesday. The chief minister said larger industries like cement-producing units brought investments but they generated fewer jobs compared to the MSME sector.

<https://www.telegraphindia.com/india/chandrayaan-3-india-becomes-first-country-to-reach-lunar-south-pole-fourth-on-moon/cid/1961152>

<https://www.telegraphindia.com/india/relief-and-joy-on-isro-campus-after-successful-landing-of-chandrayaan-3/cid/1961120>

<https://www.telegraphindia.com/india/three-lunar-missions-in-15-years-moon-truly-beckons-isro/cid/1960930>

<https://www.telegraphindia.com/west-bengal/micro-small-and-medium-enterprises-to-be-the-focus-of-7th-edition-of-the-bengal-global-business-summit/cid/1961143>

NEPAL: PRESIDENT RAM CHANDRA PAUDEL MEETS UN RESIDENT COORDINATOR HANAA SINGER-HAMDY GRADUAL ECONOMIC RECOVERY IN LAST FY.

The President and the UN Resident Coordinator discussed long-standing history of collaboration, the Peace Keeping Operations, and the road ahead to meet the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. The UN Resident Coordinator Hanaa Singer-Hamdy reiterated UN's commitment to collaborate with the government to strengthen the Nepal's social sector, the importance of building resilient communities to better prepare for crisis and improve coordination among all the stakeholders.

Remittance surges, trade deficit narrows, foreign exchange reserves soar The Nepal Rastra Bank (NRB) has released its latest macroeconomic update, highlighting a gradual economic recovery in the country. The report showcases positive developments across various sectors, includ-

ing remittance inflows, balance of payments, gross foreign exchange reserves, and a reduction in the trade deficit. Remittance inflows exhibited remarkable growth, surging by 21.2 per cent to Rs 1,220.56 billion during the fiscal year 2022-23, a substantial improvement compared to the 4.8 per cent decline observed in the corresponding period of fiscal 2021-22.

<https://thehimalayantimes.com/kathmandu/president-ram-chandra-paudel-meets-un-resident-coordinator-hanaa-singer-hamdy>

[.https://thehimalayantimes.com/business/gradual-economic-recovery-in-last-fy](https://thehimalayantimes.com/business/gradual-economic-recovery-in-last-fy)

PAKISTAN: UNDP, EU, COURTS COLLABORATE TO IMPROVE LEGAL AID IN PROVINCES; NATION UNITED AGAINST TERRORISM, EXTREMISM, SAYS MINISTER.

At a workshop concluded in Swat on Wednesday, stakeholders from the justice system in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan discussed challenges and opportunities faced by the District Legal Empowerment Committees DLECs functioning in the two provinces. The participants also formulated recommendations to improve the functioning of these committees to increase synergies between legal aid mechanisms and strengthen the capacity of the legal aid system.

Caretaker Interior Minister Sar-faraz Bugti on Wednesday emphasised the nation's collective resolve against terrorism and extremism, saying that Pakistan is dedicated to eradicating these threats and creating a peaceful environment for all citizens. He was speaking during his visit to National Counter Terrorism Authority Nacta headquarters, where Inspector General Tahir Ray briefed the minister. The minister reviewed the National Action Plan and reiterated the na-

tions commitment to eliminating terrorism, transforming Pakistan into a harmonious nation.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1771837/undp-eu-courts-collaborate-to-improve-legal-aid-in-provinces>

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1771839/nation-united-against-terrorism-extremism-says-minister>

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1771864>

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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.

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



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Bangladesh Enterprise
Institute