

## || WEEKLY NEWS HIGHLIGHTS ||

### BANGLADESH ENTERPRISE INSTITUTE (BEI)

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

|| 07—14 November , 2023 ||

#### BUSINESS AND INVESTMENT

#### BB UNVEILS 4,400C REFINANCING SCHEMES FOR SMALL BORROWERS; LOCAL GOVT SPENDS 8PC OF TOTAL EXPENDITURE ON WASTE MANAGEMENT: BBS SURVEY.

Bangladesh Bank has introduced two new refinancing schemes totaling Tk4,400 crore for agricultural-product processing and small enterprises run by women. The schemes aim to increase loans and funds for women entrepreneurs and small-scale industrial units. The bank also introduced four credit-guarantee funding options: Tk25,000 crore for pre-financing, Tk30,000 crore for women entrepreneurs' refinancing, Tk5,000 crore for agricultural-product processing refinancing, and Tk500 crore for the financial-inclusion scheme. CMSMEs can avail of collateral-free loans ranging from Tk5 lakh to Tk5 crore.

The Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) reports that city corporations and municipalities spend Tk 7,045 per capita annually on services, with 8% of this being spent on waste management. In the fiscal year 2020-21, all city corporations and municipalities combined spent Tk 285.39 billion, with Tk 22.60 billion spent on waste management. Urban planners have raised concerns about excessive waste management spending, but the BBS survey highlights local governments' efforts to prevent environmental pollution through resource management, employment, and technological development.

<https://www.dhakatribune.com/business/banks/330538/bb-unveils-4-400c-refinancing-schemes-for-small>

<https://today.thefinancialexpress.com.bd/trade-market/local-govt-spends-8pc-of-total-expenditure-on-waste-management-bbs-survey-1699808155>

#### Inside this issue

- Business and Investment: BB unveils 4,400C refinancing schemes for small borrowers; Local govt spends 8pc of total expenditure on waste management: BBS Survey.
- AFGHANISTAN: UN-brokered int'l meeting on Afghanistan may take place in near future: Moscow.
- Bangladesh: Russian Navy squadron visits Bangladesh for first time in 50 years; EU delegation in Dhaka to assess labour conditions; India, US exchange views on Bangladesh; UN review meeting on human rights in Bangladesh starts in Geneva.
- India: India holds '2+2' Ministerial dialogue with the US: What it means; Indo-Pacific economic framework in focus: Goyal's talks with global counterparts in the US.
- PAKISTAN: Amnesty International urges Pakistan to immediately halt Afghan deportations; 'Tragedy of epic proportions': Pakistan urges UNSC to call for unconditional ceasefire in Gaza

## BANGLADESH

### **RUSSIAN NAVY SQUADRON VISITS BANGLADESH FOR FIRST TIME IN 50 YEARS; EU DELEGATION IN DHAKA TO ASSESS LABOUR CONDITIONS; INDIA, US EXCHANGE VIEWS ON BANGLADESH; UN REVIEW MEETING ON HUMAN RIGHTS IN BANGLADESH STARTS IN GENEVA.**

A Russian Navy squadron visited Chittagong for the first time in 50 years, marking a significant milestone in Russia-Bangladesh relations. The visit aimed to revive Bangladesh's economy through a mine-sweeping operation at Chittagong port, amid political tensions between Bangladesh and the US over the January general election. The ruling Awami League accuses the Biden administration of interfering in Bangladesh's internal political process.

A European Union delegation visited Dhaka to discuss labor rights and human rights with Bangladeshi stakeholders. They visited a disabled child school and met with government officials. Bangladesh adopted a National Action Plan to improve labor rights, and the European Parliament and Commission will consider Bangladesh's market access application, GSP+.

India and the US held a high-level meeting in New Delhi to discuss political developments in Bangladesh, aiming to boost defence cooperation and align policy objectives. The US called for a free, fair, and peaceful election in Bangladesh, a strategically important country under the US's Indo-Pacific Strategy. They stressed the need to strengthen their friendship for global challenges.

The UN Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review on Bangladesh is currently underway in Geneva. The meeting, led by law minister Anisul Huq, focuses on the country's zero-tolerance policy against human rights violations and political space for opposition parties. The law minister also addresses the Rohingya crisis, stating that Bangladesh alone cannot resolve it.

<https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/foreign-affairs/330906/russian-navy-squadron-visits-bangladesh-for-first>

<https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/foreign-affairs/330863/eu-delegation-in-town-to-assess-labour-conditions>

<https://www.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/diplomacy/news/us-reiterates-need-free-fair-polls-3466461>

<https://www.newagebd.net/article/217549/un-review-meeting-on-human-rights-in-bangladesh-starts-in-geneva>

### **Inside this issue**

- **Business and Investment:** BB unveils 4,400C refinancing schemes for small borrowers; Local govt spends 8pc of total expenditure on waste management: BBS Survey.
- **AFGHANISTAN:** UN-brokered int'l meeting on Afghanistan may take place in near future: Moscow.
- **Bangladesh:** Russian Navy squadron visits Bangladesh for first time in 50 years; EU delegation in Dhaka to assess labour conditions; India, US exchange views on Bangladesh; UN review meeting on human rights in Bangladesh starts in Geneva.
- **India:** India holds '2+2' Ministerial dialogue with the US: What it means; Indo-Pacific economic framework in focus: Goyal's talks with global counterparts in the US.
- **PAKISTAN:** Amnesty International urges Pakistan to immediately halt Afghan deportations; 'Tragedy of epic proportions': Pakistan urges UNSC to call for unconditional ceasefire in Gaza

## AFGHANISTAN: UN-BROKERED INT'L MEETING ON AFGHANISTAN MAY TAKE PLACE IN NEAR FUTURE: MOSCOW

Another UN-mediated international meeting of special envoys on Afghanistan could take place in the foreseeable future, Zamir Kabulov, Russia's special envoy to Afghanistan, has said.

"We are planning a range of broad international events on Afghanistan.

We and our regional partners remember that UN Secretary General [Antonio] Guterres planned to gather special envoys, just as he did, you will remember, in Doha in the spring, after the presentation of a report from his special coordinator," Kabulov told TASS news agency.

According to Kabulov, such a meeting would give an opportunity "to speak

with partners and like-minded people" on its margins.

The conference on Afghanistan was held at Guterres' initiative in Doha on May 1 to 2, 2023.

<https://www.ariananews.af/un-brokered-intl-meeting-on-afghanistan-may-take-place-in-near-future-moscow/>

## PAKISTAN: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL URGES PAKISTAN TO IMMEDIATELY HALT AFGHAN DEPORTATIONS; 'TRAGEDY OF EPIC PROPORTIONS': PAKISTAN URGES UNSC TO CALL FOR UNCONDITIONAL CEASEFIRE IN GAZA

Amnesty International on Monday called on Pakistan to immediately stop deporting Afghans.

"Over 170,000 Afghans, many of whom have lived in Pakistan for years, have had to leave since the government gave an ultimatum for all 'unregistered foreign nationals' to depart Pakistan in October," Amnesty International said.

At the same time, Hollywood actress Angelina Jolie on Monday criticized Pakistan's decision to "abruptly push back" Afghan refugees it says are residing illegally in the country, describing it as a "new tragedy" for the people of Afghanistan.

Pakistan on Friday expressed deep concern over "heinous crimes" committed by Israel against the Palestinian people and urged the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) to call for an "urgent and unconditional ceasefire" in Gaza.

In a weekly press briefing today, Foreign Office Spokesperson Mumtaz Zahrah Baloch said the people of Gaza had been subjected to the worst forms of collective punishment.

"The UNSC must act to fulfil its responsibility to uphold peace and call for urgent and unconditional ceasefire, lifting of siege and commencement of rapid unhindered humanitarian assistance," the spokesperson said.

"As an occupying power, Israel must fulfil its obligations under the 4th Geneva Convention and end its carnage in Gaza," Baloch added.

<https://www.ariananews.af/amnesty-international-urges-pakistan-to-immediately-halt-afghan-deportations/>

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1788125/tragedy-of-epic-proportions-pakistan-urges-uns-c-to-call-for-unconditional-ceasefire-in-gaza>

### Inside this issue

- Business and Investment: BB unveils 4,400C refinancing schemes for small borrowers; Local govt spends 8pc of total expenditure on waste management: BBS Survey.
- AFGHANISTAN: UN-brokered int'l meeting on Afghanistan may take place in near future: Moscow.
- Bangladesh: Russian Navy squadron visits Bangladesh for first time in 50 years; EU delegation in Dhaka to assess labour conditions; India, US exchange views on Bangladesh; UN review meeting on human rights in Bangladesh starts in Geneva.
- India: India holds '2+2' Ministerial dialogue with the US: What it means; Indo-Pacific economic framework in focus: Goyal's talks with global counterparts in the US.
- PAKISTAN: Amnesty International urges Pakistan to immediately halt Afghan deportations; 'Tragedy of epic proportions': Pakistan urges UNSC to call for unconditional ceasefire in Gaza

## INDIA: INDIA HOLDS '2+2' MINISTERIAL DIALOGUE WITH THE US: WHAT IT MEANS; INDO-PACIFIC ECONOMIC FRAMEWORK IN FOCUS: GOYAL'S TALKS WITH GLOBAL COUNTERPARTS IN THE US.

### Inside this issue

- Business and Investment: BB unveils 4,400C refinancing schemes for small borrowers; Local govt spends 8pc of total expenditure on waste management: BBS Survey.
- AFGHANISTAN: UN-brokered int'l meeting on Afghanistan may take place in near future: Moscow.
- Bangladesh: Russian Navy squadron visits Bangladesh for first time in 50 years; EU delegation in Dhaka to assess labour conditions; India, US exchange views on Bangladesh; UN review meeting on human rights in Bangladesh starts in Geneva.
- India: India holds '2+2' Ministerial dialogue with the US: What it means; Indo-Pacific economic framework in focus: Goyal's talks with global counterparts in the US.
- PAKISTAN: Amnesty International urges Pakistan to immediately halt Afghan deportations; 'Tragedy of epic proportions': Pakistan urges UNSC to call for unconditional ceasefire in Gaza

Indian Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar met their counterparts from the US government, Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin and Secretary of State Antony Blinken respectively, for the fifth 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue held in New Delhi on Friday (November 11).

The first 2+2 dialogue between the two countries was held during the Trump Administration, when then Secretary of State Michael Pompeo and then Secretary of Defence James Mattis met the late Sushma Swaraj and then Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in New Delhi in September 2018.

Additionally, India has held 2+2 meetings with ministers from Australia, Japan, the United Kingdom and Russia. Notably, in this year's meeting, Antony Blinken reiterated the significance of India's relations with some of these countries that are also important US allies.

The talks with Japan via this platform began in 2019, with the aim that it would "further enhance the strategic depth of bilateral security and defence cooperation," according to a joint press release from back then. We advocate similar or identical positions on the most important political and military issues." He also said that the 2+2 would turn into an "efficient dialogue platform to talk about a wide range of regional and international topics a little further deepening our traditional, mutual understanding."

The same year, 2+2 dialogue with Australia also began.

Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal met the US Trade Representative (USTR) Katherine Tai and discussed ways to further boost trade and investments between the two countries.

These ministers are in the US for the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF) meeting.

"Wonderful meeting my friend Ambassador Katherine Tai, the US Trade Representative. We discussed ways to further deepen our trade & investment ties along with convergence on key WTO issues for a favourable outcome at MC13," Goyal said on the social platform X.

The 164-member World Trade Organization (WTO) is holding its 13th ministerial conference (MC) at Abu Dhabi in February next year.

During the ministerial meetings in San Francisco, Goyal discussed potential collaboration under the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF), ways and means of further enhancing bilateral trade and commerce linkages and matters related to the WTO.

During the visit, Goyal will participate in the third in-person IPEF Ministerial meeting, and the engagements of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC).

<https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/everyday-explainers/ministers-india-us-two-plus-two-dialogue-explained-9021601/>

<https://www.telegraphindia.com/business/indo-pacific-economic-framework-in-focus-goyals-talks-with-global-counterparts-in-the-us/cid/1979925>

## 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](mailto: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](mailto: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