

|| WEEKLY NEWS HIGHLIGHTS ||

BANGLADESH ENTERPRISE INSTITUTE (BEI)

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

|| 20– 27 December , 2023 ||

BUSINESS AND INVESTMENT

IMF FLAGS POTENTIAL EXODUS OF FUNDS FROM BANGLADESH; BANGLADESH THIRD LARGEST FOOD IMPORTER IN WORLD: FAO; 2,000MW ROOFTOP SOLAR COULD SAVE BANGLADESH \$1BN A YEAR: REPORT

Bangladesh may have experienced capital flight in the last financial year due to an unusual outflow of funds and unrealized export proceeds, according to the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The financial account experienced an outflow of 0.5% of GDP (\$2.1 billion) in 2022-23, compared to a historically averaging 2.5 percent of GDP. Foreign currency shortages and letter of credit margin requirements led to a 16% contraction in imports in FY23. Unrealized export proceeds increased to \$9.6 billion, amounting to 2.1% of GDP in FY23. The IMF attributed the financial outflows to faster-than-anticipated global monetary policy tightening, inadequate domestic policy response, and currency depreciation expectations.

Bangladesh ranks third in food importing countries in 2021, importing around 12.5 million tonnes of food products. The country produced 93.3 million tonnes of agricultural produce, with China and the Philippines ranking first and second in food imports, respectively. The highest food import expenditure is on wheat, edible oil, and milk powder. Bangladesh's per capita consumption of nutritious food is low, but its food production is good. Agriculture Minister Abdur Razzak is working to increase import-dependent food production to reduce dependence. Per capita calorie consumption is 2,614 calories.

Bangladesh is gaining economic benefits from rooftop solar due to energy price spikes, supply disruptions, and deteriorating fiscal conditions since Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022. A report by the Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis suggests that adding 2,000 MW of rooftop solar capacity could save up to \$1 billion annually. The levelized cost of energy from rooftop solar is at Bangladeshi Taka 5/kWh, making it attractive for industrial and commercial buildings to install solar systems. To incentivize the sector, the government should waive import duties on solar panels and accessories, fix installation capacity to 100% of sanctioned load, declare rooftop solar a top priority, and ease its Letter of Credit opening process.

<https://www.thedailystar.net/business/economy/news/imf-flags-potential-exodus-funds-bangladesh-3502966>

<https://www.tbsnews.net/economy/bangladesh-third-largest-food-importer-world-fao-763118>

<https://thefinancialexpress.com.bd/economy/bangladesh/2000mw-rooftop-solar-could-save-bangladesh-1bn-a-year-report>

Inside this issue

- **AFGHANISTAN:** Acting interior minister meets with delegation of Japan in Kabul Japan ready to cooperate in normalizing IEA's relations with world: Yamamoto
- **Bangladesh:** Saudi Arabia sends \$3m as compensation, arrears for expatriate workers; Two-day Bangladesh, India shipping secretary-level meeting begins; Envoy: Russia not competing with US for influence in Bangladesh; Australia to provide \$235m to Bangladesh for Rohingya repatriation: envoy; Bangladesh is extra careful about Myanmar violence: MoFA; India, Russia, China among 9 countries confirm sending election observers
- **Business and Investment:** IMF flags potential exodus of funds from Bangladesh; Bangladesh third largest food importer in world: FAO; 2,000MW rooftop solar could save Bangladesh \$1bn a year: Report
- **India:** India's navy deploys warships to Arabian Sea after tanker attack; Plane held in France over trafficking concerns lands in India; Strategic Convergence Will Keep India-Russia Ties Positive": S Jaishankar; Uttarakhand Government to Get Uniform Civil Code Draft In New Year: Pushkar Dhami
- **Maldives:** Discussions held with India on enhancing defense cooperation; Maldives re-imposes compulsory medical checkup for expats.
- **Myanmar:** Myanmar: Tentative truce shows China's influence – and its limits – in Myanmar; Ethnic minority fighters seize northern town from Myanmar military regime
- **NEPAL:** CJ Shrestha emphasizes a clean and convincing Criminal Justice System; Banking criminal brought to Nepal with INTERPOL aid
- **PAKISTAN:** Pakistan's enemies hell-bent on creating fissures using religious, ethnic and political vulnerabilities: COAS; Balochistan gripped by protests.
- **Sri Lanka:** "Forgive those who oppose us": President says in Christmas message.

BANGLADESH

SAUDI ARABIA SENDS \$3M AS COMPENSATION, ARREARS FOR EXPATRIATE WORKERS; TWO-DAY BANGLADESH, INDIA SHIPPING SECRETARY-LEVEL MEETING BEGINS; ENVOY: RUSSIA NOT COMPETING WITH US FOR INFLUENCE IN BANGLADESH; AUSTRALIA TO PROVIDE \$235M TO BANGLADESH FOR ROHINGYA REPATRIATION: ENVOY; BANGLADESH IS EXTRA CAREFUL ABOUT MYANMAR VIOLENCE: MOFA; INDIA, RUSSIA, CHINA AMONG 9 COUNTRIES CONFIRM SENDING ELECTION OBSERVERS

Saudi Arabia has sent \$3 million in death compensation and dues to 65 Bangladeshi workers who died in Saudi Arabia. The amount was sent to the Bangladesh Wage Earners Welfare Board's "Death Compensation Fund" in Dhaka. Bangladesh's ambassador to Saudi Arabia, Dr. Mohammad Javed Patwari, instructed the Labour Welfare Wing to collect outstanding salaries, service benefits, and accident compensations for Bangladeshis who died in Saudi Arabia.

A two-day meeting between Bangladesh and India has begun at a Dhaka hotel. Senior Secretary of the Shipping Ministry M Mustafa Kamal and Secretary of the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways of India TK Ramachandran are leading their respective countries. The meeting is part of the Standing Committee under Protocol on Inland Water Transit and Trade and the Inter-Governmental Committee (IGC). Additional Secretary Sheikh Md Sharif Uddin and Chairman of Inland Waterways Authority of India are also leading their respective sides.

Russian Ambassador Alexander Mantytskiy stated that Moscow is not competing with the US or Western countries for influence in Bangladesh. The US-Russia relations have reached their lowest levels since the Cold War due to the Ukraine issue. Dhaka is currently dealing with Washington over the upcoming general election, with the US announcing a visa policy for Bangladesh. Russia has called the US's measures in Bangladesh's internal matter "interference," comparing the situation in Dhaka to the events in Ukraine 10 years ago.

Australia will provide \$235 million to Bangladesh for the return of over one million Rohingyas to Myanmar, following a farewell call between Australian high commissioner Jeremy Buer and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. The commitment was made during a meeting where Sheikh Hasina praised Bangladesh's democratic process, Covid pandemic handling, disaster management, and social safety net program. Australia also emphasized further cooperation in energy and climate change sectors, mentioning the Bangladeshi diaspora in Australia and suggesting defense sector cooperation.

Bangladesh is monitoring Myanmar's situation and is preparing for the repatriation of Rohingyas to Myanmar. Foreign secretary Masud Bin Momen praised Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's generosity in sheltering over one million Rohingyas in Bangladesh and called on the world community to be more generous in helping over 100 million refugees worldwide. The voluntary, safe, and sustainable repatriation is underway under a tripartite initiative of Bangladesh-Myanmar-China. Myanmar authorities have informed Rohingyas about the facilities they will receive and are verifying their place of origin in Rakhine for the first phase of repatriation.

Nine countries, including India, Russia, China, and Japan, have confirmed their presence in Bangladesh's 12th general election on January 7. The European Union, Arab Parliament, and Commonwealth also confirmed their presence. Foreign journalists face challenges in obtaining clearances from the Election Commission to cover the election. A four-member European Union election expert mission is already in Dhaka at the Election Commission's invitation. The election schedule was announced amid protests from opposition parties demanding the resignation of the Awami League government and a non-party caretaker government.

<https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/foreign-affairs/334548/saudi-arabia-sends-3m-as-compensation-arrears>

<https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/foreign-affairs/334351/two-day-bangladesh-india-shipping-secretary-level>

<https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/foreign-affairs/334339/envoy-russia-not-competing-with-us-for-influence>

<https://www.newagebd.net/article/221035/australia-to-provide-235m-to-bangladesh-for-rohingya-repatriation-envoy>

<https://www.newagebd.net/article/220787/bangladesh-is-extra-careful-about-myanmar-violence-mofa>

<https://www.newagebd.net/article/220784/india-russia-china-among-9-countries-confirm-sending-election-observers>

Inside this issue

- **AFGHANISTAN:** Acting interior minister meets with delegation of Japan in Kabul Japan ready to cooperate in normalizing IEA's relations with world: Yamamoto
- **Bangladesh:** Saudi Arabia sends \$3m as compensation, arrears for expatriate workers; Two-day Bangladesh, India shipping secretary-level meeting begins; Envoy: Russia not competing with US for influence in Bangladesh; Australia to provide \$235m to Bangladesh for Rohingya repatriation: envoy; Bangladesh is extra careful about Myanmar violence: MoFA; India, Russia, China among 9 countries confirm sending election observers
- **Business and Investment:** IMF flags potential exodus of funds from Bangladesh; Bangladesh third largest food importer in world: FAO; 2,000MW rooftop solar could save Bangladesh \$1bn a year: Report
- **India:** India's navy deploys warships to Arabian Sea after tanker attack; Plane held in France over trafficking concerns lands in India; Strategic Convergence Will Keep India-Russia Ties Positive": S Jaishankar; Uttarakhand Government to Get Uniform Civil Code Draft In New Year: Pushkar Dhami
- **Maldives:** Discussions held with India on enhancing defense cooperation; Maldives re-imposes compulsory medical checkup for expats.
- **Myanmar:** Myanmar: Tentative truce shows China's influence - and its limits - in Myanmar; Ethnic minority fighters seize northern town from Myanmar military regime
- **NEPAL:** CJ Shrestha emphasizes a clean and convincing Criminal Justice System; Banking criminal brought to Nepal with INTERPOL aid
- **PAKISTAN:** Pakistan's enemies hell-bent on creating fissures using religious, ethnic and political vulnerabilities: COAS; Balochistan gripped by protests.
- **Sri Lanka:** "Forgive those who oppose us": President says in Christmas message.

AFGHANISTAN: ACTING INTERIOR MINISTER MEETS WITH DELEGATION OF JAPAN IN KABUL JAPAN READY TO COOPERATE IN NORMALIZING IEA'S RELATIONS WITH WORLD: YAMAMOTO

Acting Minister of Interior Sirajuddin Haqqani met on Sunday with the delegation of Sasakawa Peace Foundation of Japan in Kabul, the ministry said in a statement. Sirajuddin Haqqani meanwhile said that Japan has helped Afghans in difficult situations and added that the historical relations between the two countries are positively affected by the deeds of kind and compassionate people like the late Tetsu Nakamura. Abdul Salam Hanafi, the administrative deputy prime minister of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA), met on Sunday in Kabul with the Japanese ambassador and a delegation from the Japanese Sasakawa Peace Foundation.

Atsushi Tsunami, the head of the Sasakawa Peace Foundation of Japan, while expressing his satisfaction with the overall security situation in Afghanistan, said that they are the voice of the Japanese people and are ready

to help the people of Afghanistan. During the visit, the Japanese ambassador Tadamichi Yamamoto also revealed that Japan has provided over \$58 million in aid to Afghanistan and intends to continue supporting the country with food assistance and aid for returning refugees and expressed that normalizing relations between the Islamic Emirate and the international community is beneficial for Afghanistan and the world and Japan stands ready to cooperate in this regard.

<https://www.ariananews.af/acting-interior-minister-meets-with-delegation-of-japan-in-kabul/>

<https://www.ariananews.af/japan-ready-to-cooperate-in-normalizing-ieas-relations-with-world-yamamoto/>

PAKISTAN: PAKISTAN'S ENEMIES HELL-BENT ON CREATING FISSURES USING RELIGIOUS, ETHNIC AND POLITICAL VULNERABILITIES: COAS; BALOCHISTAN GRIPPED BY PROTESTS

Chief of Army Staff (COAS) Gen Asim Munir on Monday said Pakistan's enemies were "hell-bent towards creating fissures using religious, ethnic and political vulnerabilities". "We have to stand together and united to rise as a resolute and strong nation," he said as he joined the Christian community at Christ Church, Rawalpindi for Christmas celebrations, according to the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR). The ISPR said the army chief was welcomed by the congregation who thanked him for attending the celebrations, adding that Gen Munir also wished a Merry Christmas to the entire Christian community.

Balochistan remained cut off with Sindh and Punjab for a second consecutive day on Saturday due to shuttered businesses, protest rallies, and sit-ins across the province. Highways were blocked, causing a complete halt to traffic. Demonstrations occurred in

Turbat, Panjgur, Naal, Uthal, Hub, Gadani, Dera Bugti, D.G. Khan, and others, following a call from the Baloch Yakjehti Council (BYC) in solidarity with the long marchers. Protesters blocked the Quetta-Karachi National Highway in Mangochar, Kalat, and Khuzdar, leading to significant travel difficulties for commuters. In Hub's Bhawani area, women activists blocked the highway, causing a 36-hour traffic standstill between Khuzdar and Hub. Panjgur observed a shutter-down strike, supported by the All Traders' Committee.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1800646/pakistans-enemies-hell-bent-on-creating-fissures-using-religious-ethnic-and-political-vulnerabilities-coas>

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1800336/balochistan-gripped-by-protests>

Inside this issue

- **AFGHANISTAN:** Acting interior minister meets with delegation of Japan in Kabul Japan ready to cooperate in normalizing IEA's relations with world: Yamamoto
- **Bangladesh:** Saudi Arabia sends \$3m as compensation, arrears for expatriate workers; Two-day Bangladesh, India shipping secretary-level meeting begins; Envoy: Russia not competing with US for influence in Bangladesh; Australia to provide \$235m to Bangladesh for Rohingya repatriation: envoy; Bangladesh is extra careful about Myanmar violence: MoFA; India, Russia, China among 9 countries confirm sending election observers
- **Business and Investment:** IMF flags potential exodus of funds from Bangladesh; Bangladesh third largest food importer in world: FAO; 2,000MW rooftop solar could save Bangladesh \$1bn a year: Report
- **India:** India's navy deploys warships to Arabian Sea after tanker attack; Plane held in France over trafficking concerns lands in India; Strategic Convergence Will Keep India-Russia Ties Positive"; S. Jaishankar; Uttarakhand Government to Get Uniform Civil Code Draft In New Year: Pushkar Dhami
- **Maldives:** Discussions held with India on enhancing defense cooperation; Maldives re-imposes compulsory medical checkup for expats.
- **Myanmar:** Myanmar: Tentative truce shows China's influence - and its limits - in Myanmar; Ethnic minority fighters seize northern town from Myanmar military regime
- **NEPAL:** CJ Shrestha emphasizes a clean and convincing Criminal Justice System; Banking criminal brought to Nepal with INTERPOL aid
- **PAKISTAN:** Pakistan's enemies hell-bent on creating fissures using religious, ethnic and political vulnerabilities: COAS; Balochistan gripped by protests.
- **Sri Lanka:** "Forgive those who oppose us": President says in Christmas message.

INDIA: INDIA'S NAVY DEPLOYS WARSHIPS TO ARABIAN SEA AFTER TANKER ATTACK; PLANE HELD IN FRANCE OVER TRAFFICKING CONCERNS LANDS IN INDIA; STRATEGIC CONVERGENCE WILL KEEP INDIA-RUSSIA TIES POSITIVE": S JAISHANKAR; UTTARAKHAND GOVERNMENT TO GET UNIFORM CIVIL CODE DRAFT IN NEW YEAR: PUSHKAR DHAMI

The Indian Navy has dispatched guided missile destroyers to the Arabian Sea after an attack on an Israel-linked chemical tanker off its coast, the Ministry of Defence said. The attack came as a US-led task force sought to counter similar threats to maritime shipping in the Red Sea posed by Yemen's Iran-aligned Houthi rebels. MV Chem Pluto, a Japanese-owned tanker carrying 21 Indians and one Vietnamese citizen, was hit on Saturday while travelling 200 nautical miles (370km) off the coast of India, according to the Pentagon. The Houthis have pledged to target any Israel-linked vessel in the Red Sea, through which some 12 percent of all global trade passes, in solidarity with Gaza which has been bombarded by land, sea and air by the Israeli military.

A plane carrying hundreds of Indian passengers that was grounded in France for four days amid a probe into possible human trafficking has arrived in India. The Airbus A340 carrying 276 Indian passengers landed in Mumbai early on Tuesday morning, flight tracking data showed. Passengers on the flight were confined at Vatry airport, about 150km east of Paris, while authorities turned the terminal into a makeshift courtroom to carry out emergency hearings. Among the 303 original passengers who stayed behind in France, 25, including five minors, requested asylum in the country and two others were initially detained as part of the trafficking probe before being released, local authorities said. The plane's departure on Monday came after a French court ruled that authorities did not have legal authority to detain several of the passengers further.

Geopolitics and strategic convergence will keep India-Russia ties on a positive trajectory, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar has said ahead of his talks with his Russian counterpart and other top leaders here.

"Geopolitics and strategic convergence will always keep India-Russia ties on a positive trajectory," he said on Monday as he interacted with strategic experts. "Geopolitics and strategic convergence will always keep India-Russia ties on a positive trajectory," Mr Jaishankar emphasised. "The time-tested India-Russia partnership has remained stable and resilient and continues to be characterised by the spirit of the Special and Privileged Strategic Partnership," the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said in New Delhi ahead of Mr Jaishankar's visit.

Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami Monday said the draft of a Uniform Civil Code for the state is ready and the expert committee will hand it over to the state government soon. He said the decision to introduce the UCC was as significant as the construction of a grand Ram temple in Ayodhya or the abrogation of Article 370 of the Constitution that gave Jammu and Kashmir special status. "The demands of a Ram temple in Ayodhya or abrogation of article 370 were being raised in the country for many years. Mr Dhami said a cultural re-awakening is taking place in the country under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/12/26/indias-navy-deploys-warships-to-arabian-sea-after-tanker-attack>

<https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2023/12/26/plane-held-in-france-over-trafficking-concerns-lands-in-india>

<https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/strategic-convergence-will-keep-india-russia-ties-positive-s-jaishankar-4744569>

<https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/uttarakhand-government-to-get-uniform-civil-code-draft-in-new-year-expert-committee-pushkar-dhami-4740939>

Inside this issue

- **AFGHANISTAN:** Acting interior minister meets with delegation of Japan in Kabul Japan ready to cooperate in normalizing IEA's relations with world: Yamamoto
- **Bangladesh:** Saudi Arabia sends \$3m as compensation, arrears for expatriate workers; Two-day Bangladesh, India shipping secretary-level meeting begins; Envoy: Russia not competing with US for influence in Bangladesh; Australia to provide \$235m to Bangladesh for Rohingya repatriation: envoy; Bangladesh is extra careful about Myanmar violence: MoFA; India, Russia, China among 9 countries confirm sending election observers
- **Business and Investment:** IMF flags potential exodus of funds from Bangladesh; Bangladesh third largest food importer in world: FAO; 2,000MW rooftop solar could save Bangladesh \$1bn a year: Report
- **India:** India's navy deploys warships to Arabian Sea after tanker attack; Plane held in France over trafficking concerns lands in India; Strategic Convergence Will Keep India-Russia Ties Positive": S Jaishankar; Uttarakhand Government to Get Uniform Civil Code Draft In New Year: Pushkar Dhami
- **Maldives:** Discussions held with India on enhancing defense cooperation; Maldives re-imposes compulsory medical checkup for expats.
- **Myanmar:** Myanmar: Tentative truce shows China's influence – and its limits – in Myanmar; Ethnic minority fighters seize northern town from Myanmar military regime
- **NEPAL:** CJ Shrestha emphasizes a clean and convincing Criminal Justice System; Banking criminal brought to Nepal with INTERPOL aid
- **PAKISTAN:** Pakistan's enemies hell-bent on creating fissures using religious, ethnic and political vulnerabilities: COAS; Balochistan gripped by protests.
- **Sri Lanka:** "Forgive those who oppose us": President says in Christmas message.

MALDIVES: DISCUSSIONS HELD WITH INDIA ON ENHANCING DEFENSE COOPERATION; MALDIVES RE-IMPOSES COMPULSORY MEDICAL CHECKUP FOR EXPATS

Inside this issue

- **AFGHANISTAN:** Acting interior minister meets with delegation of Japan in Kabul Japan ready to cooperate in normalizing IEA's relations with world: Yamamoto
- **Bangladesh:** Saudi Arabia sends \$3m as compensation, arrears for expatriate workers; Two-day Bangladesh, India shipping secretary-level meeting begins; Envoy: Russia not competing with US for influence in Bangladesh; Australia to provide \$235m to Bangladesh for Rohingya repatriation: envoy; Bangladesh is extra careful about Myanmar violence: MoFA; India, Russia, China among 9 countries confirm sending election observers
- **Business and Investment:** IMF flags potential exodus of funds from Bangladesh; Bangladesh third largest food importer in world: FAO; 2,000MW rooftop solar could save Bangladesh \$1bn a year: Report
- **India:** India's navy deploys warships to Arabian Sea after tanker attack; Plane held in France over trafficking concerns lands in India; Strategic Convergence Will Keep India-Russia Ties Positive": S Jaishankar; Uttarakhand Government to Get Uniform Civil Code Draft In New Year: Pushkar Dhami
- **Maldives:** Discussions held with India on enhancing defense cooperation; Maldives re-imposes compulsory medical checkup for expats.
- **Myanmar:** Myanmar: Tentative truce shows China's influence - and its limits - in Myanmar; Ethnic minority fighters seize northern town from Myanmar military regime
- **NEPAL:** CJ Shrestha emphasizes a clean and convincing Criminal Justice System; Banking criminal brought to Nepal with INTERPOL aid
- **PAKISTAN:** Pakistan's enemies hell-bent on creating fissures using religious, ethnic and political vulnerabilities: COAS; Balochistan gripped by protests.
- **Sri Lanka:** "Forgive those who oppose us": President says in Christmas message.

Maldives and India have held discussions with India on enhancing existing defense cooperation between the two nations. The discussions took place during a meeting between Maldives' Chief of Defense Force Lieutenant General Abdul Raheem Abdul Latheef and the Ambassador of India to the Maldives Munu Mahawar. The meeting was also attended by Indian High Commission's Defense Advisor Capital Deepak Bali. Disclosing details regarding the meeting, Chief of Defense Force Abdul Raheem said ongoing defense cooperation activities between the nations were reviewed while deliberations also took place on avenues to move forward with military-to-military engagements. The former Maldivian administration had been put in the hot seat for military relations with India by the then-opposition.

Senior officials in the incumbent administration, back then the opposition, had accused the former administration of executing various undisclosed defense agreements with India. The government at cabinet a meeting on Sunday chaired by President Dr. Mohamed Muizzuhas has decided to re-impose compulsory medical checkups for foreign citizens

who enter the Maldives on long-term visas. Mr. Abdulla Nazim Ibrahim, the principal secretary to the president on public policy, in a press briefing on Monday said that hereafter, foreign citizens who enter Maldives on long-term visas will be required to have medical checkups done in medical institutions approved by the Health Ministry. He said that foreign citizens who enter Maldives on work visa, dependent visa, resident visa, student visa, corporate visa and marriage visa will be required to get a medical checkup done upon arrival, and on a yearly basis. He also informed that at the same time, foreign citizens who entered the Maldives on the aforementioned visas and have not undergone a medical checkup in the Maldives over the last one year would be required to get one done within the next six months of entry.

<https://en.sun.mv/86686>

<https://en.sun.mv/86679>

SRI LANKA: "FORGIVE THOSE WHO OPPOSE US": PRESIDENT SAYS IN CHRISTMAS MESSAGE

President Ranil Wickremesinghe called for everyone to unite in shouldering responsibilities, recognizing the genuine adversities confronting the nation as Sri Lanka commemorates Christmas amidst a backdrop of numerous challenges burdening society.

Amid our celebratory mood, it is crucial to maintain focus on the authentic significance of Jesus Christ's birth in a manger, encapsulated by the theme "Sharing a meal with the less fortunate."

While the external festivities of Christmas may be apparent, I posit that its true significance remains elusive unless accompanied by a profound spiritual transformation within us. This year, as

we commemorate Christmas amidst a backdrop of numerous challenges burdening our society, I extend an invitation to everyone to unite in shouldering their responsibilities, recognizing the genuine adversities confronting our nation," the message added.

<https://www.dailymirror.lk/breaking-news/Forgive-those-who-oppose-us-President-says-in-Christmas-message/108-273852>

MYANMAR: TENTATIVE TRUCE SHOWS CHINA'S INFLUENCE – AND ITS LIMITS – IN MYANMAR; ETHNIC MINORITY FIGHTERS SEIZE NORTHERN TOWN FROM MYANMAR MILITARY REGIME

China has become the dominant foreign power in Myanmar's political crisis, exerting influence over several armed groups that have staged the biggest challenge to the generals since the February 2021 coup. Beijing recently pushed the three powerful ethnic armies – the Arakan Army (AA), the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA), and the Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA) – to agree to a truce after fighters working with anti-coup coalitions across Myanmar pushed Senior General Min Aung Hlaing's military out of swathes of the north, overran hundreds of military outposts, and seized control of border crossings with China under Operation 1027. Beijing's prominent involvement in the truce and its armed support for both ethnic armies and the SAC make it the most influential foreign actor in the turmoil in Myanmar.

The TNLA and its allies' offensive in Myanmar has sparked an anti-coup movement, presenting the generals with their most significant military challenge in decades. Namhsan, a city with bullet holes and blood stains, has seen residents living in fear with no escape route. Some have dug holes into hills to create rudimentary shelters, while others, like Ohmar, have dug rough shelters. However, the tight, hot interior is dangerous, and residents are afraid of artillery shells if not covered with sandbags. This situation is causing concern for residents and their families.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/12/20/tentative-truce-shows-extent-and-limit-of-chinas-influence-in-myanmar>

<https://www.aljazeera.com/gallery/2023/12/22/ethnic-minority-fighters-seize-northern-town-from-myanmar-military-regime>

NEPAL : CJ SHRESTHA EMPHASIZES A CLEAN AND CONVINCING CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM; BANKING CRIMINAL BROUGHT TO NEPAL WITH INTERPOL AID

Chief Justice Bishwombar Prasad Shrestha has emphasized the need for an effective and robust criminal justice system to earn public trust. Addressing a program organized on the 73rd anniversary of the Office of the Attorney General on Sunday, CJ Shrestha expressed the view that the criminal justice system should be clean and convincing and underlined the essential qualities of attorneys, including competence, professional integrity, and accountability. He stressed the importance of modernizing the criminal justice system and ensuring quality in both investigation and prosecution. According to him, international developments in investigation and prosecution, as well as the adoption of standards and workforce, are equally important aspects.

The Nepal Police has brought a banking criminal Rajindra Pasman, 44, from Qatar with the help of INTERPOL. Pasman, hailing from Aurahi rural municipality-5 of Dhanusha district, was issued a red notice by the INTERPOL for his involvement in the fraud and organized crime. Spokesperson of Nepal Police, Kuber Kadayat, informed the Rastriya Samachar Samiti (RSS) that Nepal Police was able to bring Pasman with the help of INTERPOL Qatar on Monday.

<https://thehimalayantimes.com/kathmandu/cj-shrestha-emphasizes-a-clean-and-convincing-criminal-justice-system>

<https://thehimalayantimes.com/nepal/banking-criminal-brought-to-nepal-with-interpol-aid>

Inside this issue

- **AFGHANISTAN:** Acting interior minister meets with delegation of Japan in Kabul Japan ready to cooperate in normalizing IEA's relations with world: Yamamoto
- **Bangladesh:** Saudi Arabia sends \$3m as compensation, arrears for expatriate workers; Two-day Bangladesh, India shipping secretary-level meeting begins; Envoy: Russia not competing with US for influence in Bangladesh; Australia to provide \$235m to Bangladesh for Rohingya repatriation: envoy; Bangladesh is extra careful about Myanmar violence: MoFA; India, Russia, China among 9 countries confirm sending election observers
- **Business and Investment:** IMF flags potential exodus of funds from Bangladesh; Bangladesh third largest food importer in world: FAO; 2,000MW rooftop solar could save Bangladesh \$1bn a year: Report
- **India:** India's navy deploys warships to Arabian Sea after tanker attack; Plane held in France over trafficking concerns lands in India; Strategic Convergence Will Keep India-Russia Ties Positive": S Jaishankar; Uttarakhand Government to Get Uniform Civil Code Draft In New Year: Pushkar Dhami
- **Maldives:** Discussions held with India on enhancing defense cooperation; Maldives re-imposes compulsory medical checkup for expats.
- **Myanmar:** Myanmar: Tentative truce shows China's influence – and its limits – in Myanmar; Ethnic minority fighters seize northern town from Myanmar military regime
- **NEPAL:** CJ Shrestha emphasizes a clean and convincing Criminal Justice System; Banking criminal brought to Nepal with INTERPOL aid
- **PAKISTAN:** Pakistan's enemies hell-bent on creating fissures using religious, ethnic and political vulnerabilities: COAS; Balochistan gripped by protests.
- **Sri Lanka:** "Forgive those who oppose us": President says in Christmas message.

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