

WEEKLY NEWS HIGHLIGHTS

BANGLADESH ENTERPRISE INSTITUTE (BEI)

| Brief Highlights on Current Issues of South Asia |
| 12 September -17 September 2026 |



BANGLADESH



'PM TARIQUE DECIDED NOT TO ATTEND BRICS, NEXT DAY ADANI UNIT SHUT DOWN': RIZVI

BNP Acting Secretary General Ruhul Kabir Rizvi alleged that India was creating a broader “web of conspiracy” against Bangladesh, centred around ousted Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. Speaking at an event in front of the Jatiya Press Club, he questioned the timing of Adani Power’s Godda Unit-2 shutdown, which occurred a day after Prime Minister Tarique Rahman decided not to attend a recent BRICS event. Rizvi claimed Tarique was not invited in his capacity as Bangladesh’s prime minister and said his decision not to attend protected the country’s dignity, independence and sovereignty. He questioned whether the plant shutdown was connected to the BRICS decision, while presenting it as part of broader concerns about India-Bangladesh relations. Rizvi also criticised the opposition’s conduct

in parliament and alleged that India was sheltering Sheikh Hasina despite allegations against her over the deaths of protesters. He questioned why individuals facing legal proceedings in Bangladesh had not been handed over by India.

Source: <https://www.thedailystar.net/news/politics/news/pm-tarique-decided-not-attend-brics-next-day-adani-unit-shut-down-rizvi-4274536>

HOME MINISTER: CYBER UNITS TO BE SET UP AT DIVISIONAL CITIES

Home Minister Salahuddin Ahmed said the government is establishing modern **cybersecurity units and specialized laboratories** across all divisional headquarters, alongside facilities at Police Headquarters, DMP and the Detective Branch, to address the growing threat of digital crime. He said digitalization has shifted a significant portion of criminal activity into cyberspace, making digital forensics, location tracking and electronic-device analysis increasingly important for investigations and court evidence. District-level cyber units with dedicated officers will support police stations at the upazila and thana levels. The minister also highlighted the rise of **cyber scams, digital extortion, impersonation and cross-border financial crimes**, saying the new decentralized system would strengthen responses to such threats. He added that updated legislation has been introduced to address online betting and cyber-enabled financial crimes not adequately covered by the old 1867 Gambling Act.

Source: <https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/nation/419980/home-minister-cyber-units-to-be-set-up-at>



LAW MINISTER: GOVERNMENT COMMITTED TO PROTECTING CITIZENS' RIGHTS

Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Md Asaduzzaman said the government is committed to protecting citizens’ rights and strengthening the criminal justice system’s response to **human trafficking and migrant smuggling**. Speaking at a national consultation organised by the ministry and UNODC in Dhaka, he said Bangladesh has amended several laws to broaden the definition of human trafficking and cover more forms of exploitation and related illegal activities. He noted that Bangladesh **ratified the UN protocol on human trafficking in September 2019** and has been working to meet its international commitments. The minister acknowledged challenges faced by law enforcement, including limited manpower, insufficient cooperation from complainants and difficulties in collecting evidence. their rights.

Source: <https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/laws-rights/420012/law-minister-government-committed-to-protecting>



WE ALL ARE ONE FAMILY

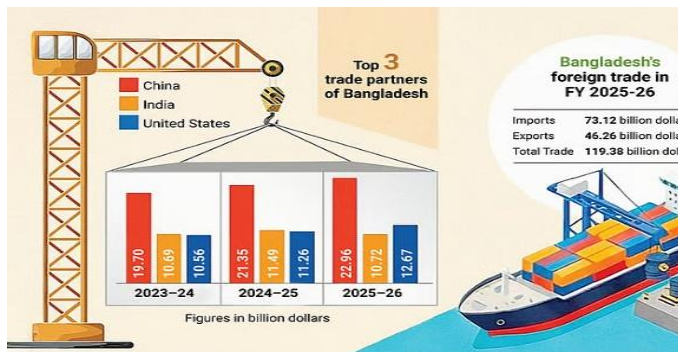
President Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir urged the United Kingdom to expand cooperation with Bangladesh in **education, human resource development, technology, business and investment** during a meeting with British High Commissioner Sarah Cooke at Bangabhaban. He requested greater opportunities for Bangladeshi students to pursue higher education in the UK, more Commonwealth scholarships and support for strengthening education and technology institutions. The President also highlighted the contribution of the Bangladeshi diaspora to bilateral relations and called for stronger parliamentary exchanges and cooperation. The British High Commissioner said **nearly 99.99% of Bangladeshi products are expected to retain duty-free and unrestricted access to the UK market for another three years** after Bangladesh graduates from LDC status. She also briefed him on a UK-Bangladesh initiative to exchange digital climate data, which could improve weather forecasting and support agricultural production.

Source: <https://en.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/ickyxa0qj7>

'WE WANT TO RESET TIES, PM'S BILATERAL VISIT TO INDIA SHOULD TAKE PLACE'

State Minister for Foreign Affairs Humayun Kabir said Bangladesh wants to **reset its relations with India** and move beyond the pattern of ties maintained over the past 15 years. He said Prime Minister Tarique Rahman should make a dedicated **bilateral visit to India** rather than visiting only through a multilateral engagement. Regarding 101 agreements with India, Kabir said they are being scrutinised through the parliamentary process. He also confirmed that Tarique will travel to New York on 21 September for the UN General Assembly, where Bangladesh will hold a meeting on the Rohingya issue. Kabir said Bangladesh seeks good relations with India but should not focus exclusively on the country and would engage with other nations as needed. On the upcoming WHO South-East Asia regional director election, he criticised the previous appointment of Saima Wazed and said Bangladesh would support a future candidate based on appropriate qualifications, experience and a strong track record.

Source: <https://en.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/v092gitu43>



US OVERTAKES INDIA IN TRADE TO RANK SECOND

The United States has overtaken India to become **Bangladesh's second-largest trading partner**, while China remains the largest by a wide margin. In FY2025-26, Bangladesh's trade with the US reached **\$12.67 billion**, compared with **\$10.72 billion with India**. US imports increased by **43% to \$3.56 billion**, driven by purchases of wheat, soybean seeds, cotton and LNG, while exports to the US rose by around 4% to \$9.11 billion. In contrast, imports from India fell by about 7.5% and exports declined by around 3%, amid trade restrictions and strained bilateral relations. China remained far ahead, with total trade of **\$22.96 billion**. Overall, China, the US and India accounted for nearly **39% of Bangladesh's total trade** last fiscal year.

Source: <https://en.prothomalo.com/business/local/hwb8ip4ep1>

LOCAL POLLS LIKELY TO START WITH UP ELECTIONS IN NOVEMBER: EC

The Election Commission (EC) plans to begin **local government elections from mid-November 2026**, starting with Union Parishad (UP) elections in phases, according to Election Commissioner Abdur Rahmanuel Masud. Speaking at the EC headquarters in Dhaka, he said the polls would be conducted under the existing law if no legal changes are made before the elections. The commissioner did not specify whether the election schedule would be announced in September or October, but said the **schedule would be announced soon**.

Source: <https://www.thedailystar.net/news/politics/election/news/local-polls-likely-start-elections-november-ec-4272531>

A FASTER, CHEAPER PATH TO RURAL JUSTICE

A recent Supreme Court study found that **more than 46.3 lakh cases were pending** across Bangladesh as of March 2026, highlighting the need for faster and more accessible dispute resolution. Village courts have emerged as an affordable alternative for rural communities, handling civil and minor criminal disputes without requiring lawyers. Between February 2024 and July 2026, more than **2.6 lakh cases** were recorded by village courts, with an overall **83.77% resolution rate** and cases typically settled within **18 days**. The system also includes women's representation in panels for disputes involving women. With EU and UNDP support, the government is expanding village courts to **4,456 Union Parishads across 61 districts**. The editorial supports making the system a permanent government-funded service and expanding it nationwide to reduce court backlogs, costs and the risk of minor disputes escalating into violence. Student Against Discrimination called for an independent foreign policy, and Akhter Hossain of the Jatiya Nagorik Committee demanded transparency on agreements made with India, urging scrutiny of whether they safeguarded Bangladesh's interests.

Source: <https://www.thedailystar.net/opinion/editorial/news/faster-cheaper-path-rural-justice-4272036>



NBR CUTS SOLAR EQUIPMENT IMPORT TAX TO 1% FROM 17%

The National Board of Revenue (NBR) has reduced the tax on **solar power equipment imports from 17% to 1%** for a 180-day period, extending the benefit to commercial importers for the first time. The measure aims to lower the cost of solar projects and accelerate renewable energy development amid energy shortages and the global energy crisis. The concession covers solar panels, mounting structures, lithium batteries, inverters, battery management systems and monitoring equipment. Importers must meet specific certification and verification requirements to qualify for the reduced tax. The NBR expects the move to increase renewable power generation, reduce dependence on fossil fuels and improve energy security, although it did not specify the expected revenue loss or additional generation capacity.

Source: <https://www.thedailystar.net/business/news/nbr-cuts-solar-equipment-import-tax-1-17-4275276>

GOVT PLANS SPECIALISED POLICE CYBER SECURITY UNIT: HOME MINISTER

Home Minister Salahuddin Ahmed said the government is planning to establish a **full-fledged specialised cyber security unit within the police**, headed by an additional inspector general of police (IGP), to strengthen the country's response to growing cybercrime. He noted that many police officers already have academic backgrounds in engineering, IT and computer science, but cybercrime investigations and forensic analysis are currently handled on a temporary basis through Police Headquarters, the DMP cyber unit and the Criminal Investigation Department. The proposed permanent and integrated unit would make better use of existing expertise and improve coordination. The minister also stressed expanding **domestic and international-standard training**, including developing master trainers, bringing in foreign trainers and establishing modern facilities where necessary. The meeting further discussed creating an independent **research and innovation centre** under the Police Staff College and making mandatory training an important criterion for police promotion and posting.

Source: <https://www.thedailystar.net/news/governance/news/govt-plans-specialised-police-cyber-security-unit-home-minister-4273546>



110,364 FARMERS WILL RECEIVE INCENTIVES UNDER FARMER CARD PROGRAMME: MINISTER

Agriculture, Fisheries and Livestock Minister Mohammed Aminur Rashid said **110,364 farmers will receive incentives under the Farmer Card programme** when its pilot phase begins on September 17. Each selected farmer will receive **Tk 2,500**, while **7,643 farmers in Feni** will receive printed Farmer Cards on the inaugural day. The programme will gradually expand to every upazila, union and block, with the government aiming to bring **more than two crore farmers** under the scheme. The minister said there would be no discrimination, with marginal, small, landless, medium and large farmers all eligible. The programme is intended to ensure farmers can obtain fertiliser and seeds at fair prices, receive better prices for their produce, and access government support through a more transparent and organised system. On fertiliser supplies, the minister said there is **no shortage**, warning of strict legal action against hoarding, overpricing

and other irregularities. Several monitoring teams are operating from **8am to 10pm** to investigate complaints and identify unauthorised storage or other disruptions in the fertiliser supply chain.

Source: [World Bank Loans For Bangladesh Development Projects | World Bank approves \\$1.16bn for three Bangladesh projects](https://www.thedailystar.net/news/governance/news/govt-plans-specialised-police-cyber-security-unit-home-minister-4273546)

CYBER SECURITY ACT CAN HELP CURB CULTURE OF ABUSIVE LANGUAGE: JS BODY

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting said the **“culture of abusive language” that has emerged in politics over the past two years is unacceptable**, and suggested that the Cyber Security Act could help curb such activities. At its first meeting, the committee also urged people and institutions to play a responsible role in preventing **misinformation on social media**, while stressing greater accountability and transparency in the ministry's activities. The committee reaffirmed the importance of **freedom of expression and press freedom**, describing the National Press Club as an important platform for journalists to exercise their professional and expressive rights. It also called for necessary repairs and reforms at the Press Club, including modernisation of its auditorium. The meeting was chaired by **Amanullah Aman**, with Information and Broadcasting Minister Andaleev Rahman Partho, State Minister Yasser Khan Choudhury, committee members and senior ministry officials in attendance.

Source: <https://www.thedailystar.net/news/governance/parliament/news/cyber-security-act-can-help-curb-culture-abusive-language-js-body-4273722>

INDIA



BRICS SUMMIT CONCLUDES WITH PUSH FOR AI, RESILIENT SUPPLY CHAINS, GLOBAL SOUTH COOPERATION

The 18th BRICS Summit has concluded in New Delhi with the unanimous adoption of the New Delhi Declaration, reflecting a strategic pivot towards artificial intelligence, resilient supply chains and Global South cooperation. Following the summit, member nations will implement a new supply-chain resilience framework designed to strengthen information sharing and coordinate collective responses during future global disruptions. The grouping urged collaborative development of an open-source AI community to support large-language-model training and ensure equitable technology access across borders. Indian officials noted these initiatives form part of a broader vision to transform the expanded economic bloc into a highly practical engine for inclusive multilateralism and sustainable development. The declaration has

drawn significant praise from international observers because of its pragmatic approach to balancing rapid technological innovation with equitable growth and environmental sustainability. The council has strongly encouraged global businesses to actively explore pilot value chains to enhance cross-border operational integration efforts worldwide.

Source: <https://www.onmanorama.com/news/india/2026/09/13/brics-summit-concludes-with-push-for-ai-resilient-supply-chains-global-south-cooperation.html>



NAVAL COLLISION IN ARABIAN SEA HEIGHTENS INDIA-PAKISTAN TENSIONS

A naval collision in the North Arabian Sea involving Indian and Pakistani warships has added to existing tensions between the two countries, according to the report. India's External Affairs Ministry described the alleged high-speed manoeuvres by Pakistani naval units as **"unacceptable and unprofessional conduct"** and said they violated provisions of a **1991 India-Pakistan agreement** concerning military exercises and naval movements. Indian naval officials and retired military experts cited in the report expressed concern that unsafe manoeuvring could increase the risk of confrontation at sea, while pointing to similar incidents in the past, including a 2011 encounter involving **INS Godavari** and **PNS Babur**. India has formally raised the issue with Pakistan's Charge d'Affaires, calling for greater caution and adherence to existing agreements. India's own Charge d'Affaires in Islamabad is also expected to lodge a protest with Pakistan's foreign ministry. The incident comes amid broader India-Pakistan tensions and has increased attention on **maritime safety, military conduct and regional security in the Arabian Sea**.

Source: <https://www.indianewsnetwork.com/en/naval-collision-arabian-sea-heightens-india-pakistan-tensions-20260917>

INDIA HOSTS LEADERS AMID GLOBAL ECONOMIC SHIFTS

The 18th BRICS Summit hosted by India in New Delhi brought together leaders of the expanded economic bloc to address major geopolitical and financial shifts. Operating under the theme of resilience, innovation, cooperation, and sustainability, the summit emphasized reforming global governance institutions and strengthening support for the Global South. Member nations focused on expanding cross-border intra-bloc trade, enhancing national currency payment mechanisms, and promoting safe, accessible artificial intelligence systems for developing economies. While addressing geopolitical tensions in the Middle East and Ukraine through calls for diplomatic dialogue, the platform also facilitated crucial bilateral engagements between Indian and Chinese leaders. Industry analysts note that as China prepares to assume the 2027 presidency, the expanded grouping's primary long-term challenge will ultimately involve converting broad summit declarations into concrete economic, regulatory, trade, and infrastructure policies across diverse member nations.

Source: <https://www.asiabusinessoutlook.com/perspective/brics-summit-2026-india-hosts-leaders-amid-global-economic-shifts-nwid-12465.html>

IRAN WAR RESHAPES BRICS TIES BUT ALSO EXPOSES DIVISIONS

The **18th BRICS Summit hosted in Delhi brought together key global leaders**, including Narendra Modi, Xi Jinping, Vladimir Putin, and Masoud Pezeshkian, amid heightened global tensions and the Middle East conflict. Prime Minister Modi urged member nations to act as **"rule-shapers"** rather than **"rule-takers,"** emphasizing strategic autonomy rather than establishing an explicitly anti-Western bloc. Although geopolitical divisions and conflicting interests exist among member states due to ongoing rivalries and historical border disputes, the summit provided a critical platform for high-level diplomatic engagements, including talks between Iranian and UAE officials as well as a bilateral meeting between Modi and Xi. The resulting **"New Delhi Declaration"** achieved consensus by carefully side-stepping divisive issues; it urged restraint in the Middle East and condemned unilateral trade tariffs without explicitly naming specific nations or mentioning the **Russia-Ukraine war to avoid provoking Western anger**. Analysts emphasize that while **BRICS successfully creates space for geopolitical rivals to negotiate outside Western-dominated institutions**, translating shared ambitions into concrete policy actions remains a persistent challenge. As member states balance economic cooperation with independent foreign policies, the forum continues to serve as an essential venue for navigating rapidly shifting international alliances.

Source: <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/ce8767q4jdpo>



MODI AND XI SEEK TO RESET INDIA-CHINA TIES ON BRICS SIDELINES

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping held a crucial bilateral meeting on the sidelines of the BRICS Summit in New Delhi, aiming to reset severely strained diplomatic relations. The high-level interaction marks a significant attempt to resolve lingering tensions that defined the geopolitical landscape since the deadly **Himalayan border clashes in 2020**. Officials confirm that both leaders engaged in substantive discussions regarding the disengagement of military troops, economic imbalances and the broader strategic dynamics in the Indo-Pacific region. Both sides acknowledged that stabilizing cross-border interactions and restoring mutual trust remain essential for regional prosperity and the effective functioning of the expanded BRICS bloc. The landmark meeting included specific agreements to instruct their

respective military commanders and diplomatic representatives to accelerate ongoing negotiations. While previous engagements were largely informal or brief, this structured dialogue signifies a mutual willingness to prevent minor skirmishes from escalating into larger military confrontations. Industry experts expect the diplomatic thaw could gradually pave the way for relaxed trade restrictions and increased cross-border investments, directly benefiting the technology and manufacturing sectors. The international community is closely monitoring these developments, recognizing that improved Sino-Indian relations are vital for ensuring long-term geopolitical stability across the evolving Asian continent.

Source: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2026/9/12/chinas-xi-heads-to-india-for-brics-summit-overshadowed-by-wars>



INDIA DISMISSES PAKISTAN'S BOUNTY ON AZHAR AS EMPTY GESTURE

India has dismissed Pakistan's decision to increase the bounty on **Masood Azhar**, leader of the banned Jaish-e-Mohammed, calling it a publicity gesture rather than meaningful counter-terrorism action. Indian officials argue that Azhar has been linked to multiple attacks targeting India and that simply increasing the bounty does not demonstrate genuine efforts to address terrorism or hold those responsible accountable. India has repeatedly accused Pakistan of providing space to terrorist groups and has called for stronger action against individuals it considers security threats. The development comes amid heightened India-Pakistan tensions and broader concerns about terrorism in South Asia. Analysts cited in the report also suggest the announcement could be intended to divert attention from Pakistan's domestic economic difficulties and diplomatic pressures, while India continues to question Islamabad's commitment to combating terrorism.

Source: <https://www.indianewsnetwork.com/en/india-dismisses-pakistan-bounty-azhar-empty-gesture-20260916>

PAKISTAN



PM SHEHBAZ LAUDS ECONOMIC PROGRESS, STRESSES NEED FOR EXPORT-LED GROWTH

Pakistan Defence Minister **Khawaja Asif** has said Pakistan is ready to fulfil its obligations under the **Makkah Defence Agreement** with Saudi Arabia and Turkey as fighting between Saudi Arabia and Yemen's Houthis escalates. Signed on August 7, the pact contains a mutual-defence provision similar to **NATO's Article 5**, under which an attack on one member is treated as an attack on all three, particularly when their territorial integrity or borders are violated. However, the agreement has **not yet been formally activated** despite the rising tensions. Asif said the pact "applies to us" and Pakistan would fulfil its duty, while Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif reiterated Pakistan's support for Saudi Arabia and called for dialogue and diplomacy. Pakistan also condemned an alleged Houthi drone attack near Mecca, although the Houthis denied targeting the holy city

and rejected Saudi Arabia's claim. Asif said protection of Mecca would be Pakistan's duty regardless of whether the pact was activated. Meanwhile, Pakistan Army chief **Field Marshal Asim Munir** has raised the Houthi attacks with Iran, which denies involvement in the Yemen conflict and describes the Houthis as independent actors.

Source: <https://www.hindustantimes.com/world-news/pakistan-ready-to-fulfil-obligations-under-mecca-pact-says-khawaja-asif-as-saudi-houthi-conflict-escalates-yemen-news-101789636506391.html>

PAKISTAN EYES BIGGER CHINA SWAP LINE, EXPECTS US FINANCING DECISION SOON

Pakistan plans to seek an **increase in its 30 billion yuan currency swap line with China** when the facility expires in 2027, Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb said, as the country continues to rely on external financing to support foreign-exchange reserves and debt repayments. Aurangzeb said the entire existing swap facility has already been drawn and Pakistan intends to make a formal request for additional financing during renewal, although the amount has not yet been decided. At the same time, Pakistan expects a response within **two months** from the US on its request for a **\$10 billion exchange stabilisation facility** and is also negotiating with US EXIM Bank and the Development Finance Corporation (DFC). EXIM financing could support Pakistan International Airlines' planned Boeing aircraft purchases, while DFC funding could contribute to a **\$5 billion refinery-upgrade programme**. Aurangzeb described Pakistan's approach to seeking support from both China and the US as an "and-and" strategy. He also warned that prolonged Middle East conflict and elevated oil prices could threaten Pakistan's **4% growth target**, although he said oil supplies were secured through September and largely covered for October. Despite these pressures, the government currently does not plan to seek additional IMF financing and says it remains broadly compliant with the conditions of its existing **\$7 billion IMF programme** ahead of the next review.



Source: <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/pakistan-eyes-bigger-china-swap-line-expects-us-financing-decision-soon-2026-09-17/>

US DRONE MAKER POWERUS SIGNS PAKISTAN ARMY MOU, GETS INITIAL ORDER

US-based drone maker **Powerus** has signed a memorandum of understanding with the **Pakistan Army** that includes an initial order for unmanned aerial systems, according to Powerus co-founder Brett Velicovich. The company has not disclosed the order's value or technical details, citing security and confidentiality concerns. Powerus provides aerial and maritime drones for military and industrial applications and is expected to merge in early October with **Aureus Greenway Holdings**, a publicly traded company backed by US President Donald Trump's sons, Donald Trump Jr. and Eric Trump. The deal comes as **US-Pakistan relations have been improving**, with Islamabad pursuing closer economic, financial and defence ties with Washington. Powerus says it is exploring a longer-term technology partnership that could involve manufacturing or developing systems in Pakistan. Company officials also rejected suggestions that the Trump family's investment influenced the contract, saying the Trump sons have no operational or procurement role in Powerus; a White House spokesperson similarly said there were no conflicts of interest. The agreement could therefore mark an expansion of US defence-technology involvement in Pakistan, particularly in the growing unmanned-systems sector.

Source: <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/us-drone-maker-powerus-signs-pakistan-army-mou-gets-initial-order-2026-09-16/>



PRICE WAR AND FLOOD CLOUD NEPAL EV MARKET

Nepal's EV market is experiencing an intense **price war**, with Chinese manufacturers and major brands cutting prices and offering more features and range at increasingly competitive prices. Models such as the **Nammi Box, Nammi Vigo, Deepal Nevo Q05, BYD Atto 2, Jaecoo J5 and Leapmotor B03X** have seen significant price reductions, allowing buyers to move into larger or better-equipped segments for only a few additional lakhs. However, the market is facing major supply and after-sales uncertainties. The **August 26 debris flow at the Rasuwagadi checkpoint** disrupted the main China-Nepal EV import route, forcing vehicles to be rerouted through the less-developed Korala checkpoint in Mustang; nearly **700 Chinese EVs** had entered Nepal through Korala by the time of the report. Landslides and disruptions on the Prithvi Highway have further affected deliveries from both Chinese and Indian routes. The article also raises concerns about **after-sales service, spare-parts availability, skilled technicians and EV safety**, particularly following the death of a driver in Bharatpur after an EV caught fire. For importers, disrupted transport routes could increase delivery times and logistics costs, potentially putting pressure on prices despite the ongoing price cuts.

Source 1: <https://nepalitimes.com/price-war-and-flood-cloud-nepal-ev-market>

NEPAL TALLIES THE COST OF ITS DISASTER

Nepal's government estimates that rebuilding after the floods and landslides that began on **August 26 will cost around \$4.7 billion**, according to a Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment by the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Authority (NDRRMA). **Infrastructure accounts for about \$2.6 billion, or 65% of the total**, with the energy sector suffering particularly severe damage. Thirteen hydropower projects and five solar plants, with a combined capacity of around **783 MW**—about 20% of Nepal's pre-disaster generation capacity—**were affected**, causing nearly \$1 billion in energy and grid losses. The assessment recommends restoring transmission lines, substations and micro-hydropower facilities, while noting that the full extent of damage to several hydropower plants has yet to be assessed and could push costs higher. Climate and disaster-risk reduction measures account for another **13%**, with NDRRMA prioritising a multi-hazard early-warning system within six months, river management, landslide protection and restoration of irrigation systems. The disaster has also disrupted roads, housing, schools and health facilities and affected an estimated **32,963 people**, with 3,685 people currently in 37 holding centres across Nuwakot, Rasuwa and Dhading. The government expects resettlement to take around two years. As of the report, **1,386 bodies had been recovered and 5,130 people remained missing**, highlighting the scale of the human and economic impact.

Source: [Hospitality industry contributes Rs326 billion to Nepal's economy](#)



BHUTAN



JAPAN-SUPPORTED MEDICAL EQUIPMENT STRENGTHENS HEALTHCARE IN EASTERN BHUTAN

Bhutan has deployed nearly Nu 300 million (about \$3.15 million) worth of medical equipment across six eastern districts with support from Japan, strengthening healthcare services in the region as the two countries mark **40 years of diplomatic relations**. More than **30 types of equipment**, including digital X-ray and ultrasound machines, infant incubators and other medical devices, have been distributed to district hospitals in Lhuentse, Trashigang, Trashigang, Trashigang, Pema Gatshel and Samdrup Jongkhar, as well as Mongar Eastern Regional Referral Hospital. The equipment is expected to improve diagnostic and treatment capacity and allow patients to receive more specialised care closer to home. The Ministry of Health said trained staff are already available in most districts, while additional workers will be recruited and trained where needed to operate and maintain the equipment. The **four-year project, implemented by JICA in partnership with Bhutan's Ministry of Health**, also focuses on building the technical capacity of

healthcare professionals. Since the project was signed in 2022, JICA has provided a total of around Nu 327 million (\$3.44 million) in equipment and capacity-building support for eastern Bhutan's hospitals. The initiative reflects the broader healthcare cooperation between Bhutan and Japan and comes amid celebrations marking four decades of diplomatic ties.

Source: <https://www.dailybhutan.com/article/japan-supported-medical-equipment-strengthens-healthcare-in-eastern-bhutan>

INDIA-BHUTAN TIES GET FRESH ENERGY, CONNECTIVITY PUSH; RS 4,000-CRORE CREDIT LINE FOR PROJECTS

India and Bhutan have given significant new momentum to their **bilateral economic partnership through a major ₹4,000-crore concessional line of credit dedicated to vital energy projects**. These critical agreements were finalised during a three-day diplomatic visit by External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, who held talks with top Bhutanese leadership to review ongoing development priorities. The high-level discussions focused heavily on improving cross-border connectivity to support Bhutan's ambitious Gelephu Mindfulness City, with India firmly committing to establish specialized immigration check posts in Assam and advancing proposed cross-border railway links. Further strengthening comprehensive economic integration, both nations successfully operationalised a Unified Payments Interface facility enabling seamless digital transactions for Bhutanese nationals visiting India. The **wide-ranging dialogue also successfully expanded strategic cooperation across regional trade, space technology, and higher education through significantly increased scholarship allotments for Bhutanese students**. Demonstrating robust diplomatic solidarity amidst an increasingly complex geopolitical environment, **Bhutan officially reaffirmed its backing for New Delhi's non-permanent seat candidature on the United Nations Security Council for the 2028-29 term**. These sweeping agreements vividly underscore India's sustained strategy of fostering robust, mutually beneficial infrastructure and energy development with its closest trusted regional neighbor.



Source: <https://www.dailybhutan.com/article/bhutanese-artist-pem-lham-receives-2026-rubin-museum-himalayan-art-prize>



IMF REVIEWS SRI LANKA'S PROGRESS AS PRESIDENT SETS OUT NEXT ECONOMIC GOAL

Sri Lanka's President Anura Kumara Dissanayake has reaffirmed his administration's firm commitment to translating macroeconomic stability into tangible improvements in public living standards as an International Monetary Fund (IMF) mission conducts the seventh review of the country's Extended Fund Facility (EFF) programme. Speaking during a high-level meeting at the Presidential Secretariat with an IMF delegation led by Mission Chief Evan Papageorgiou, President Dissanayake emphasized that recent economic performance indicators demonstrate that the island nation is steadily moving toward sustainable recovery. He specifically pointed to Sri Lanka's encouraging 4.2% economic growth recorded in the second quarter of 2026 as clear proof that ongoing structural reforms are yielding positive results. In response, IMF Mission Chief Evan

Papageorgiou commended Sri Lanka's impressive economic strides, pointing out clear improvements in government revenue generation, overall fiscal discipline, and rising foreign investment. He emphasized that maintaining strict economic discipline remains vital as the country moves toward 2027 and long-term prosperity.

Source: <https://www.newswire.lk/2026/09/17/imf-reviews-sri-lankas-progress-as-president-sets-out-next-economic-goal/>

PM MEETS NEW CHINESE AMBASSADOR, DISCUSS EDUCATION SECTOR COOPERATION

Sri Lankan Prime Minister Dr. Harini Amarasuriya met newly appointed Chinese Ambassador Wei Huaxiang at Temple Trees to discuss strengthening Sri Lanka-China relations ahead of the 70th anniversary of diplomatic ties in 2027. The talks focused particularly on cooperation in the education sector, including developing a three-to-five-year plan to ensure China provides school uniforms to Sri Lankan students on time before each school term. The two sides also discussed China's support for a task force working on digitalising education, as well as expanding scholarship opportunities for Sri Lankan students through the Chinese government and embassy. The meeting highlighted efforts to develop longer-term bilateral cooperation, with education identified as an important area for deeper partnership.

Source: <https://bizenglish.adaderana.lk/news/cmu5a9ekz0001356p4o6k6nxu>

MINISTERIAL CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE APPROVES ORDER ON CALLING FOR INVESTMENT PROPOSALS FOR THE EXPLORATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF PETROLEUM RESOURCES IN SRI LANKA

Sri Lanka's Ministerial Consultative Committee on Energy Affairs has approved an order to invite investment proposals for the exploration and development of petroleum resources in identified offshore blocks. The decision was taken at a Parliament meeting chaired by Energy Minister Anura Karunathilaka and follows an order issued under the Petroleum Resources Act No. 21 of 2021, which was approved by Cabinet and published in the Extraordinary Gazette on July 16, 2026. Under the new process, companies or other interested parties seeking to explore or develop petroleum resources in one or more designated blocks must submit an investment proposal and pay the required administrative fee specified in the relevant bidding invitation. The move formally establishes the process for attracting investors into Sri Lanka's petroleum sector and is aimed at advancing exploration and potential development of the country's petroleum resources.

Source: <https://bizenglish.adaderana.lk/ministerial-consultative-committee-approves-order-on-calling-for-investment-proposals-for-the-exploration-and-development-of-petroleum-resources-in-sri-lanka/>



SRI LANKA EXPLORES THAILAND'S TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AND PROMOTION MODELS

Sri Lanka's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Employment and Tourism Vijitha Herath visited Bangkok to study Thailand's tourism development and promotion models. During the visit, he explored the historic Songwat neighbourhood, Asiatique The Riverfront, and Wat Pho, focusing on how Thailand combines heritage, culture and lifestyle to create diverse tourism experiences. The visit also examined Thailand's use of technology, destination development and cultural heritage promotion to attract international visitors. Sri Lanka aims to identify relevant practices that can be adapted to diversify its own tourism products, strengthen heritage-based tourism and improve the country's international tourism promotion.

Source: <https://www.news.lk/current-affairs/sri-lanka-explores-thailands-tourism-development-and-promotion-models>

MALDIVES

NO LAW, NO MEANS: MALDIVES MAY BE UNABLE TO POLICE FLOW OF RESTRICTED GOODS TO RUSSIA



The Maldives is investigating allegations that **restricted Western goods** are being routed to Russia through Velana International Airport, but there are questions about whether such activity actually violates Maldivian law and whether authorities have the capacity to detect the goods. The *Wall Street Journal* reported that US, European and Chinese products—including **microchips, aircraft parts, aerospace components and optical instruments** with potential military applications—were being transferred through the Maldives to Russia. Maldivian officials acknowledged the investigation but said Customs may have limited ability to inspect transit cargo because the goods do not formally enter the country. The Russian embassy rejected Western sanctions, arguing that only **UN Security Council sanctions** are legitimate, while Maldivian law appears to rely primarily on UN-designated sanctions for measures such as asset freezes and trade restrictions, although the country has obligations to control dual-use goods that could contribute to weapons proliferation.

The route has reportedly been used before. In 2023, the US suspended the export privileges of Maldivian freight forwarder **Intermodal Maldives**, saying it had routed **212 consignments**, mostly aircraft parts, to Russia in 2022. *Nikkei Asia* also reported that around **400,000 US-made semiconductors worth \$53.6 million** were shipped to Russia through the Maldives in the year after Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The latest investigation identified Maldivian companies **Freight Care** and **Go Investment** in shipping paperwork, although both have denied knowingly facilitating restricted or weapons-related shipments; Go Investment said its name may have been used without authorisation. The issue presents a difficult balancing act for the Maldives: Western governments could impose measures on companies involved in sanctions evasion, while **Russia is a major tourism market**, accounting for about **15% of tourist arrivals in 2026**, with 212,927 Russian visitors recorded by September 6.

Source: <https://maldivesindependent.com/politics/no-law-no-means-maldives-may-be-unable-to-police-flow-of-restricted-goods-to-russia-1840>

AFGHANISTAN

THE DUAL CRISIS: DISPLACEMENT AND FOOD INSECURITY

Afghanistan is facing a worsening **food insecurity and displacement crisis** after devastating flash floods in May 2024. Floods across 21 districts in Baghlan, Badakhshan and Takhar killed at least **180 people**, injured over 240, destroyed thousands of homes and damaged roads, schools, health facilities and livestock. Thousands were displaced and left without adequate food or basic necessities. The **WFP reported that one in three Afghans already struggled to secure their next meal**, with the floods further worsening food insecurity and humanitarian conditions.

Source: <https://theafghantimes.com/afghanistan/2024/10/16/the-dual-crisis-displacement-and-food-insecurity/>

ABOUT BEI

Bangladesh Enterprise Institute is a non-profit, non-political research center. 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.

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/>]

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