

WEEKLY NEWS HIGHLIGHTS

BANGLADESH ENTERPRISE INSTITUTE (BEI)

| Brief Highlights on Current Issues of South Asia |
| 18 September – 24 September 2026 |



BANGLADESH



PM TARIQUE, UN REFUGEE CHIEF DISCUSS SUSTAINABLE SOLUTION TO ROHINGYA CRISIS

Prime Minister Tarique Rahman held a high-level meeting with UN High Commissioner for Refugees Barham Salih in New York to discuss a sustainable and lasting solution to the prolonged Rohingya crisis. Tarique emphasized that the **safe, voluntary and dignified repatriation of Rohingyas to Myanmar** is essential for resolving the crisis and called for stronger, more coordinated international efforts to create conditions conducive to their return. Both sides also stressed the importance of continued humanitarian assistance for the Rohingya population and greater international cooperation to accelerate the repatriation process. Barham appreciated Bangladesh's humanitarian role in hosting the displaced Rohingyas and underscored the need for continued global

engagement. The meeting took place during Tarique's visit to New York for the **81st UN General Assembly**, where the Rohingya crisis remains one of Bangladesh's key priorities. Bangladesh is also expected to call for renewed international efforts toward a durable solution to the prolonged displacement at a high-level side event on the crisis.

Source: <https://www.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/diplomacy/news/tarique-un-refugee-chief-discuss-sustainable-solution-rohingya-crisis-4280791>

PM'S UNGA TRIP TO OPEN SCOPE FOR EXPANDING TIES - SAYS FOREIGN SECY

Prime Minister Tarique Rahman is set to deliver his first address to the **81st United Nations General Assembly (UNGA)** on September 24 in New York, where he will outline Bangladesh's vision and priorities to the international community. Foreign Secretary Asad Alam Siam said the visit provides a significant opportunity to present the new government's political commitments and showcase Bangladesh as a **democratic, self-confident, responsible, peace-loving and promising country**. During his September 21–25 visit, Tarique is scheduled to hold a series of high-level meetings with foreign leaders and senior officials of international organisations. According to the foreign secretary, these engagements could create new opportunities to **strengthen bilateral and multilateral relations and expand cooperation** with different countries and international organisations. The visit is also considered significant as it marks the current government's first participation in the UN's highest global forum, while Bangladesh's foreign minister is serving as president of the 81st session. **Source:** <https://www.thedailystar.net/news/politics/news/pms-unga-trip-open-scope-expanding-ties-says-foreign-secy-4278456>



ADB TRIMS GROWTH FORECAST TO 4% FOR FY27

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has lowered Bangladesh's **FY27 growth forecast to 4%**, down from 4.5% in July and 4.7% in April. The economy is expected to recover moderately, supported by stronger private consumption and investment as political uncertainty eases. However, **energy shortages, high borrowing costs, limited access to credit and weak external demand** are likely to constrain industrial activity and investment. Inflation is projected to rise from 8.7% in FY26 to **9% in FY27**, driven by energy, production and transportation costs. ADB also expects the current account deficit to widen to 0.6% of GDP, while strong remittances and higher foreign exchange reserves could support external stability. Global risks, including higher oil prices and shipping disruptions, could further affect the recovery. **Source:** <https://www.tbsnews.net/economy/adb-cuts-bangladeshs-gdp-growth-forecast-4-warns-inflation-will-hit-9-fy27-1551156>



BANGLADESH SEEKS NEW GANGES WATER-SHARING TREATY WITH INDIA: ANEE

ALL ARE ONE FAMILY

Bangladesh has said it wants to **negotiate a new Ganges Water-Sharing Treaty with India** instead of simply renewing the existing 1996 agreement. Water Resources Minister Md Shahiduddin Chowdhury Anee said the new treaty should include a **guarantee clause** while protecting Bangladesh's national interests. He also highlighted the importance of rivers to Bangladesh's economy and raised concerns over river pollution caused by industrialisation and climate change. The event noted that Dhaka generates around **3,900 million litres of wastewater daily**, with about 1,500 million litres entering rivers, causing significant economic and environmental losses.

Source: <https://www.daily-sun.com/bangladesh/899561>

PM TARIQUE RAHMAN, CROATIAN COUNTERPART DISCUSS BILATERAL TIES IN NEW YORK

Prime Minister Tarique Rahman held a bilateral meeting with Croatian Prime Minister Andrej Plenkovic on the sidelines of the **81st UN General Assembly in New York**. The two leaders discussed strengthening bilateral relations and expanding **trade, investment and economic cooperation**. They also explored greater collaboration in areas including **skilled manpower, education and technology**, while emphasizing stronger coordination at multilateral forums such as the United Nations on issues of common interest.

Source: <https://www.daily-sun.com/bangladesh/899491>



BANGLADESH CAN CUT ENERGY IMPORT RISKS THROUGH ELECTRIFICATION: IEA

The International Energy Agency (IEA) says Bangladesh could reduce its dependence on imported fuels by expanding the use of **electricity in transport, industry and agriculture**, helping lower fuel import costs and exposure to global energy price shocks. The IEA identifies **electric vehicles, textiles, food processing, agriculture and solar irrigation** as major opportunities. Electric two- and three-wheelers could reduce petroleum use, while electric boilers and heat pumps could replace fossil fuels in low- and medium-temperature industrial processes. Solar-powered irrigation and electric cold storage could also reduce diesel use in agriculture. However, greater electrification would increase electricity demand, making **reliable and affordable power supply, stronger grids,**

transmission and distribution networks, battery storage and demand management essential. The IEA also stresses that electrification will provide greater energy-security benefits if additional electricity comes from **domestic and low-emission sources**, particularly renewables, rather than imported fossil fuels.

Source: <https://www.tbsnews.net/economy/energy/bangladesh-can-cut-energy-import-risks-through-electrification-iea-1551986>

BANGLADESH CLOSER TO JOINING WORLD'S LARGEST FREE-TRADE BLOC AS RCEP WORKING GROUP APPROVED

Bangladesh has moved closer to joining the **Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP)** after trade ministers approved an ad hoc working group to facilitate the accession process for Bangladesh, Chile, Sri Lanka and Hong Kong (China). The decision was endorsed at the **fifth RCEP Ministerial Meeting in Manila on 21 September 2026**, following a recommendation from the RCEP Joint Committee. The working group will conduct formal discussions, technical processes and assess the applicants' progress toward meeting RCEP rules and procedures. According to Bangladesh's Commerce Ministry, joining the bloc could help the country address trade challenges after **LDC graduation**, maintain preferential market access, strengthen global supply-chain links and attract foreign investment. RCEP comprises the **10 ASEAN countries plus China, Japan, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand**. Bangladesh's accession would require the consent of all existing RCEP members, making diplomatic engagement an important part of the process.

Source: <https://www.tbsnews.net/economy/bangladesh-moves-closer-joining-worlds-largest-free-trade-bloc-rcep-working-group-approved>

INDIA

US AND INDIAN TOP DIPLOMATS DISCUSS RUSSIA SANCTIONS BILL SIGNED BY TRUMP

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Indian External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar discussed potential **US sanctions and tariffs on countries that engage economically with Russia and Iran** during a meeting in New York. The talks came after President Donald Trump signed the **Lindsey O. Graham Sanctioning Russia and Iran Act of 2026**, which allows increased economic pressure on Russia and could lead to tariffs of up to 100% on goods from major buyers of Russian oil and gas. Jaishankar reiterated India's concerns and interests regarding the legislation. India is among the largest buyers of Russian crude oil and has increased purchases since Russia's invasion of Ukraine, citing the need for **affordable energy supplies** for its large population and growing economy. The issue has previously created tensions in US-India trade relations, as Washington has imposed tariffs on Indian goods linked partly to New Delhi's continued purchases of Russian oil.

Source: <https://www.reuters.com/world/us/us-indian-top-diplomats-discuss-russia-sanctions-bill-signed-by-trump-2026-09-24/>



INDIA IS PRODUCING MORE GREEN ENERGY - BUT WASTING A LOT OF IT

India has rapidly expanded its renewable energy capacity, with renewables now accounting for around **300GW, or 54% of the country's total 552GW installed power capacity**. Renewable sources briefly met more than half of peak electricity demand in July, highlighting the growth of solar, wind, hydro and other non-fossil energy. However, much of this clean power is being wasted because **transmission infrastructure has not expanded as quickly as generation capacity**. In the first quarter of 2026, transmission constraints accounted for nearly two-thirds of renewable energy curtailment, according to Ember. Limited battery storage, rising costs, delays in transmission projects and difficulties accessing affordable financing are also slowing progress. India is expected to need **\$400-500**

billion in investment to reach its 500GW non-fossil capacity target by 2030, while rapidly rising electricity demand is adding further pressure to the system.

Source: <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c8xkvz0x4o>

CANADIAN PM "LOOKING FORWARD" TO HOST PM MODI, SAYS "AIM TO WRAP TRADE TALKS"

Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney said **Canada-India trade negotiations are making good progress**, with both countries aiming to conclude a comprehensive trade agreement by the **G20 summit in December 2026**. Carney also said he is looking forward to hosting Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Canada around the summit, although the exact date of Modi's visit has not yet been finalized. Canada and India formally launched negotiations in March, with both governments committing to complete the agreement by the end of 2026. Carney is seeking to **double Canada's non-US trade over the next decade** and has identified India as an important partner in reducing Canada's economic dependence on the United States.

The renewed economic engagement comes after a major diplomatic dispute over the 2023 killing of Canadian Sikh activist Hardeep Singh Nijjar, following allegations by Canada of links to Indian government agents, which India has denied.



REUTERS

Source: <https://www.ndtv.com/world-news/canadian-pm-looking-forward-to-host-pm-modi-says-aim-to-wrap-trade-talks-12084265>

PAKISTAN



PAKISTAN HAS CONDUCTED PRECISION AERIAL AND DRONE STRIKES IN 10 LOCATIONS ACROSS AFGHANISTAN

Pakistan carried out **aerial and drone strikes at 10 locations in Afghanistan** in response to drone attacks that Islamabad said originated from Afghan territory. Information Minister Attaullah Tarar said the strikes targeted sites allegedly used to launch and store drones and described the action as a response taken in self-defence. Pakistan said its air defence systems had intercepted and neutralised **eight drones** that entered its airspace near the Torkham border and Kohat. Islamabad has repeatedly accused the Afghan Taliban of allowing terrorist groups, particularly the **Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP)**, to operate from Afghan territory, while urging Kabul to take concrete and verifiable action against them. The strikes follow earlier Pakistani airstrikes in Afghanistan in September and June amid continuing border clashes and heightened tensions between Islamabad and Kabul. Pakistan has also said it remains committed to dialogue and regional peace while warning that further attacks will receive a response.

Source: <https://www.dawn.com/news/2032261/pakistan-conducted-strikes-at-10-locations-in-afghanistan-in-response-to-recent-drone-attacks-info-minister>

PAKISTAN'S LATEST TRUMP BET IS ON DRONE FIRM ALREADY SELLING TO INDIA

Pakistan has signed a limited procurement order and a memorandum of understanding with **Powerus**, a US-based drone company founded in 2025 and backed by Donald Trump's sons, Donald Trump Jr. and Eric Trump. The deal has raised questions because Powerus had recently granted an Indian defence company an exclusive licence to manufacture and sell its drone-interceptor technology in India, while cofounder Ziv Marom is a former Israeli military veteran. Pakistan does not recognise Israel. Analysts also questioned the need for the deal, as Pakistan already produces and imports drones from China and Türkiye. However, some experts said Pakistan may be seeking advanced **counter-drone technology, electronics, systems integration and local production capabilities**. The value and specific systems covered by the procurement order have not been disclosed. The agreement comes amid closer ties between Pakistan's military leadership and the Trump administration



Source: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2026/9/23/pakistans-new-drone-deal-is-with-trump-backed-firm-also-selling-to-india>

PACT WITH SAUDI ARABIA THREATENS TO DRAW PAKISTAN INTO MIDDLE EAST CONFLICT

Bangladesh has moved closer to joining the **Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP)** after trade ministers approved an ad hoc working group to facilitate the accession process for Bangladesh, Chile, Sri Lanka and Hong Kong (China). The decision was endorsed at the **fifth RCEP Ministerial Meeting in Manila on 21 September 2026**, following a recommendation from the RCEP Joint Committee. The working group will conduct formal discussions, technical processes and assess the applicants' progress toward meeting RCEP rules and procedures. According to Bangladesh's Commerce Ministry, joining the bloc could help the country address trade challenges after **LDC graduation**, maintain preferential market access, strengthen global supply-chain links and attract foreign investment. RCEP comprises the **10 ASEAN countries plus China, Japan, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand**. Bangladesh's accession would require the consent of all existing RCEP members, making diplomatic

Source: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2026/sep/19/pakistan-saudi-arabia-mecca-pact-joint-defence-agreement-houthis-yemen-conflict>

NMA VISIT OPENS NEW AVENUES FOR NEPAL-CHINA MOUNTAIN TOURISM

A delegation from the **Nepal Mountaineering Association (NMA)**, led by President Fur Gelje Sherpa, completed a six-day visit to China from September 18–23 to strengthen cooperation in **mountaineering and mountain tourism**. The delegation visited Kangding, Hailuoguo and the Gongga Peak region in Sichuan Province, where it observed tourism facilities, trekking routes, cable cars, accommodation and disaster-management infrastructure. Discussions with Chinese mountaineering associations and local authorities focused on **mountain tourism, outdoor sports, guide training, high-altitude search and rescue, safety and environmental protection**. Both sides also explored cooperation in peak surveying, route assessment and developing new climbing routes. Nepal offered to share its expertise in Himalayan mountaineering, professional guiding and high-altitude rescue. The visit is expected to create further opportunities for exchanges among mountaineers, guides, tourism entrepreneurs, rescue professionals and youth from both countries.

Source : <https://thehimalayantimes.com/nepal/nma-visit-opens-new-avenues-for-nepal-china-mountain-tourism>

NEPAL TO USE NEW FLOOD STUDY TO CLAIM MILLIONS FROM UN CLIMATE DISASTER FUND

Nepal plans to seek around **\$20 million from the UN Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage** to support recovery from the devastating floods and landslides along the Nepal-Tibet border last month. The government plans to use a new **World Weather Attribution study** as the main evidence for its claim that human-induced climate change contributed to the disaster. The study found that rising temperatures, thinning glaciers, thawing permafrost and existing geological weaknesses contributed to the collapse of rock and ice near Langtang Lirung, triggering the massive floods. Around **1,400 people have died and 6,150 remain missing** in Nepal, according to official figures. Thousands of homes and major energy infrastructure were also destroyed, while Nepal estimates that around **\$5 billion will be needed for reconstruction**. The UN fund requires evidence linking losses to climate change, making the new study important to Nepal's application. However, the fund faces limited resources, with nearly 120 countries seeking almost **\$3 billion**, while less than \$400 million is currently available. Nepal's request is expected to be considered at a UN meeting in December.

Source: <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cmlyrzve5pwzo>



BHUTAN



HOW THE RESTORATION OF AN 18TH-CENTURY TEMPLE IS HELPING PRESERVE NOBGANG'S HERITAGE

Bhutan's Royal Family attended the consecration of the restored **Pelri Dorjiden Tsulakhang** in Nobgang, Punakha, on September 16, 2026, marking an important step in preserving the village's religious and cultural heritage. Established in the **18th century by Sakya Rinchen**, the temple played a central role in the development of Nobgang, around which monks, practitioners and later permanent residents settled. The recent renovation covered the Tsulakhang and Zimchung Gom, while efforts were also made to conserve religious thangkas and textiles. The restoration forms part of the **Nobgang Cultural Site Stewardship Plan**, which seeks to protect the village's traditional architecture, religious sites, natural surroundings and cultural practices while supporting local communities. The programme also aims to create economic opportunities through community-owned enterprises, including a traditional restaurant established in a restored Kabu-Dharcham house.

The initiative represents a broader approach to preserving Nobgang as a **living cultural landscape**, rather than focusing only on individual historic structures..

Source: <https://www.dailybhutan.com/article/how-the-restoration-of-an-18th-century-temple-is-helping-preserve-nobgangs-heritage>

SRI LANKA

'NO MATTER WHAT HAPPENS': CHINA SAYS SRI LANKA WILL NEVER STAND ALONE



China's new Ambassador to Sri Lanka, Wei Huaxiang, reaffirmed Beijing's commitment to strengthening its **strategic partnership with Sri Lanka**, describing the country as a trusted friend and important partner in regional cooperation and development. Speaking at an event marking the 77th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China, Wei highlighted cooperation in **trade, infrastructure, investment, technology, renewable energy and culture**. He cited projects including Colombo Port City and Hambantota Port as examples of bilateral cooperation under the Belt and Road Initiative. China also highlighted support for Sri Lanka through its school uniform programme, which has benefited more than **4.4 million students**, and the China-Sri Lanka Joint Research and Demonstration Centre for Water Technology. The ambassador announced that China's **"Mazu" intelligent weather early-warning platform** will be deployed in Sri Lanka to support disaster preparedness and climate adaptation. Looking ahead, both countries are expected to deepen cooperation as they prepare to mark **70 years of diplomatic relations in 2027**, alongside the 75th anniversary of the Rubber-Rice Pact.

Source: <https://www.lankanewspapers.com/2026/09/24/china-pledges-unwavering-support-for-sri-lanka-vows-island-nation-will-never-face-challenges-alone>

MALDIVES



INCREASED RENEWABLE ENERGY FROM 53 MW TO 126 MW: MINISTRY

The Maldives has increased its installed renewable energy capacity from **53 MW to 126 MW**, according to Minister of Climate Change, Environment and Energy Ali Shareef. The increase supports President Mohamed Muizzu's target of shifting **33% of the country's electricity use to renewable energy**. Since July 2026, **23 islands across Raa and Baa Atolls** have started using 6.5 MW of solar photovoltaic systems alongside 10 MW of battery storage. On some islands, generators can be switched off for up to six hours while electricity is supplied entirely from renewable sources. The minister said the expansion will reduce diesel consumption by approximately **3.1 million litres annually** and cut carbon dioxide emissions by around **8,400 tonnes per year**. Residents on participating islands have also reported reduced smoke, noise and other impacts associated with diesel generators.

Source: <https://edition.mv/news/54359?ref=home-sub>

AFGHANISTAN



PAKISTAN STRIKES 10 SITES IN KANDAHAR, TALIBAN CONFIRMS OIC CONTACT GROUP DISCUSSES AFGHANISTAN ON SIDELINES OF UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Pakistan's military carried out **air and drone strikes on 10 sites inside Afghanistan**, including an area in Kandahar, early Thursday under the operation codenamed "Ghazab Lil Haq." Pakistan's Information Minister Attaullah Tarar said the strikes were conducted in response to **drones launched from Afghan territory that entered Pakistani airspace on September 23**, describing the incursions as a violation of Pakistan's sovereignty. He said Pakistan's air defences had intercepted all the drones and that the targeted locations were used to launch or store them. Taliban officials confirmed that Pakistan carried out an airstrike in Kandahar, with spokesperson Zabihullah Mujahid saying there were **no casualties**. A Kandahar resident reported hearing a fighter jet followed by a powerful explosion and seeing a fire. Pakistan said it did not seek an escalation but would respond to attacks originating from Afghan territory.

Source: <https://www.afintl.com/en/202609245046>

CONFIRMS OIC CONTACT GROUP DISCUSSES AFGHANISTAN ON SIDELINES OF UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The Organization of Islamic Cooperation's (OIC) Contact Group on Afghanistan held a meeting on the sidelines of the **81st UN General Assembly**, focusing on continued international engagement and cooperation with Afghanistan. Qatar called for stronger coordination and dialogue to keep Afghanistan on the international agenda and offered to

host the **fourth meeting of special envoys on Afghanistan** under the Doha process. The OIC Secretary-General reaffirmed the organization's commitment to supporting the Afghan people through engagement and practical cooperation with the country's de facto authorities, particularly to sustain humanitarian activities. Pakistan's Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar stressed the importance of continued attention to Afghanistan while saying deeper cooperation depends on changes in the Taliban's approach. Azerbaijan highlighted Afghanistan's potential to become a **regional connectivity hub** through expanded cooperation in trade, transportation and energy. Source: <https://www.tolonews.com/afghanistan-200950>

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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