WEEKLY NEWS HIGHLIGHTS

BANGLADESH ENTERPRISE INSTITUTE (BEI)
| Brief Highlights on Current Issues of South Asia |
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BANGLADESH



BANGLADESH SCRAMBLES AS GANGES TREATY SET TO EXPIRE

Bangladesh is facing growing concerns over water security as its 30-year Ganges water-sharing treaty with India is set to expire on December 12, 2026. Signed in 1996, the treaty regulates dry-season water sharing at India's Farakka Barrage. Declining river flows have severely affected agriculture, fisheries, and irrigation, particularly in the Barind region. The Ganges-Kobadak Irrigation Project, originally designed to cover 955 square kilometres of farmland, now serves only around 550 square kilometres due to water scarcity. Reduced freshwater flows also threaten the Sundarbans by increasing saltwater intrusion, while climate change is intensifying both dry-season shortages and destructive monsoon floods. Bangladesh has reportedly received no response from India regarding its request to begin treaty renewal negotiations. Strained bilateral relations and stalled negotiations over the Teesta River further complicate the situation. Bangladesh is seeking a new agreement based on mutual benefit that considers climate change and the entire river basin. Failure to reach a renewed deal could worsen water shortages, threatening agricultural livelihoods, ecosystems, and millions of people dependent on the river.

***Source**:https://www.thedailystar.net/news/news/bangladesh-scrambles-ganges-treaty-set-expire-4310386*

TARIQUE RAHMAN'S JAPAN VISIT: JAPAN'S BET ON BANGLADESH IS REALLY ABOUT THE BAY OF BENGAL



Japanese Prime Minister? No—Bangladesh's Prime Minister Tarique Rahman's October 26–29, 2026 visit to Japan aims to strengthen bilateral ties, attract investment, and advance cooperation under Japan's updated Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) vision. Japan views Bangladesh as a strategically important partner due to its location along the Bay of Bengal, which connects key maritime routes and markets across South and Southeast Asia. Cooperation has expanded beyond development assistance to include maritime security, infrastructure, trade, and investment. In July 2026, Japan handed over five patrol boats to the Bangladesh Navy to strengthen maritime surveillance and disaster-response capabilities. The Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA), signed in February 2026, also provides a framework for closer trade and investment ties. However, the article highlights that Bangladesh must ensure these partnerships generate domestic economic benefits through local production, employment, technology transfer, and stronger supply chains. It also emphasises the importance of transparent infrastructure financing, environmental safeguards, and institutional capacity. By deepening cooperation with Japan while maintaining balanced relations with other partners, Bangladesh can diversify its economic opportunities, strengthen maritime capabilities, and preserve its strategic autonomy in the Indo-Pacific region.

***Source**:* https://www.thedailystar.net/slow-reads/geopolitical-insights/news/tarique-rahmans-japan-visit-japans-bet-bangladesh-really-about-the-bay-bengal-4307886

BANGLADESH-GERMANY RELATIONS IN A CHANGING WORLD ORDER

German Ambassador to Bangladesh Dr Rüdiger Lotz has highlighted Bangladesh's growing strategic and economic importance amid a changing global order. In an interview with The Daily Star, he emphasised opportunities to diversify bilateral trade beyond the ready-made garment (RMG) sector, particularly in leather, agro-industry, light manufacturing and pharmaceuticals. He stressed that Bangladesh needs stronger governance, transparent regulations, legal certainty, and investment in infrastructure and education to attract German investment and maintain access to European markets as

the country prepares to graduate from least-developed-country status. Germany also seeks to expand cooperation in renewable energy, particularly rooftop solar, vocational training, and skilled migration, while encouraging Bangladesh to strengthen labour and environmental standards to remain competitive in European markets. On democratic transition, the ambassador underscored the importance of independent institutions, political stability, reconciliation and dialogue across society. He also called for continued international support for Rohingya refugees, suggesting expanded livelihood and educational opportunities while safe repatriation to Myanmar remains unfeasible. Drawing on Germany's reunification experience, he highlighted patience, inclusive dialogue and strong institutions as essential to achieving sustainable democratic and social transformation.

***Source**:https://www.thedailystar.net/slow-reads/geopolitical-insights/news/bangladesh-germany-relations-changing-world-order-4307131*



Russia proposes wheat silo at Maheshkhali, Bangladesh prefers Payra port

Russia has proposed constructing a wheat silo in Maheshkhali, Cox's Bazar, with Russian financing, while Bangladesh has suggested Payra seaport in Patuakhali as an alternative due to its available land and existing transport infrastructure. The proposal was discussed during a meeting between Russian Ambassador Alexander Khozin and Food Minister Afroza Khanam on October 27, 2026, alongside a proposed government-to-government arrangement for wheat exports to Bangladesh. The minister suggested initially developing a storage capacity of 200,000 tonnes, with the potential to expand it to 500,000 tonnes. The facility would enable Bangladesh to store imported wheat, improve supply management, and facilitate distribution to major centres across the country, including Narayanganj and Baghabari in Sirajganj. Both sides expressed interest in assessing the feasibility of the project, with the Russian ambassador welcoming the proposal to visit Payra port. If implemented, the initiative could strengthen Bangladesh's food security and expand bilateral trade and economic cooperation with Russia.

***Source**: https://www.newagebd.net/post/foreign-affairs/319826/russia-proposes-wheat-silo-at-maheshkhali-bangladesh-prefers-payra-port*



Electricity import from Nepal resumes after two months

Bangladesh has resumed electricity imports from Nepal after nearly two months of disruption caused by deadly flash floods that damaged hydropower infrastructure in Nepal's Rasuwa district. According to Power Grid Bangladesh PLC data, supply initially resumed at 15 megawatts before increasing to 38MW. However, Bangladesh's Power Development Board could not confirm whether the electricity was being supplied from repaired facilities or alternative hydropower plants. Under a tripartite agreement signed by Bangladesh, India and Nepal on October 3, 2024, Nepal agreed to export 40MW of electricity to Bangladesh annually during the five-month period from June 15 to November 15, using India's transmission network. Nepal began exporting electricity under the arrangement in June 2025. The resumption restores an important source of regional energy cooperation, although the disruption highlights the vulnerability of cross-border electricity supplies to climate-related disasters and damage to hydropower infrastructure.

Source: https://www.newagebd.net/post/foreign-affairs/319608/electricity-import-from-nepal-resumes-after-two-months

Bangladesh and Japan Sign Six Instruments and Pledge Two Loan Projects During PM's Visit

Bangladesh and Japan have signed six bilateral instruments and announced two loan projects during Prime Minister Tarique Rahman's four-day visit to Japan to strengthen cooperation in coastal security, trade, investment, skills development, agriculture and climate change. State Minister for Foreign Affairs Humaiun Kobir announced the agreements on October 28, 2026, noting that 17 additional memorandums of understanding (MoUs) had been signed between private-sector entities. The government-level agreements include a grant of up to 2.12 billion yen ($13.44 million) for a patrol vessel to strengthen Bangladesh's coastal security, alongside cooperation on improving the business environment, agricultural development, employment and skills training, fisheries and livestock, and climate change. Japan also pledged a 15.88 billion yen ($100.8 million) loan to improve the investment environment and a 30.68 billion yen ($194.7 million) loan for the second phase of the Upazila Governance and Development Project. The agreements reflect efforts by both countries to expand economic cooperation and support Bangladesh's development priorities.

***Source**:https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/foreign-affairs/423162/humaiun-kobir-bangladesh-japan-sign-six*

INDIA



INDIA'S OPPOSITION HOLDS MEGA RALLY SEEKING ELECTION CHIEF'S RESIGNATION

Tens of thousands of people gathered at Ramlila Maidan in New Delhi on November 1 for a major opposition rally demanding the resignation of Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar over alleged irregularities in India's voter-list revision process. Organised by the opposition INDIA bloc and led by Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, the protest follows the removal of around 130 million names from draft electoral rolls under the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) exercise. The Election Commission says the revision aims to remove the names of deceased voters and those who have relocated, while opposition parties allege that eligible voters have been deliberately excluded to benefit Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Both the BJP and the Election Commission have rejected the allegations. The controversy has intensified following reports of disagreements among election commissioners over the process, prompting weeks of protests and demands for electoral reforms. Security was tightened across central Delhi, with thousands of police and paramilitary personnel deployed around the rally venue.

***Source**: https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c60qk92dvlwgo*

INDIA AND CHINA WERE EASING TENSIONS - THEN A BORDER OFFICIAL SPOKE OUT



India-China relations have come under renewed strain following remarks by India's border police chief, Shatrujeet Singh Kapur, who said Chinese troops had returned to disputed areas in Arunachal Pradesh in larger numbers and pitched tents around six to seven kilometres inside territory claimed by India. The reported stand-offs have raised concerns about the durability of the diplomatic thaw that began after the deadly 2020 Galwan Valley clashes, which killed 20 Indian and four Chinese soldiers. Although both countries have taken steps to restore relations, including resuming direct flights and easing visa restrictions, the latest developments have reignited political criticism in India. New Delhi has not explicitly denied the border police chief's account, while China maintains that its forces are conducting normal patrol activities and respecting bilateral agreements. Beyond the security implications, the tensions also highlight India's economic vulnerability, as bilateral trade reached $151 billion last year, with significant Indian dependence on Chinese imports of machinery, rare earth magnets, batteries and pharmaceutical products. The situation underscores the gap between improving diplomatic engagement and lasting stability along the disputed frontier.

***Source**:https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cj3vq7nkzr0qo*



INDIA AND CHINA AREN'T FRIENDS - BUT NEPAL WANTS TO UNITE THEM AGAINST CLIMATE THREATS

Nepal's Prime Minister Balendra Shah has proposed establishing a Himalayan Climate Resilience Mechanism to bring India, China and Nepal together to address growing climate-related threats in the Himalayan region. Speaking at the United Nations General Assembly, Shah called for greater cross-border cooperation in disaster response, scientific data sharing and technical expertise, following devastating floods in Nepal in August. The proposal comes as rising temperatures accelerate glacier retreat and permafrost thaw, increasing the risks of landslides, avalanches and glacial lake outburst floods that can affect communities across national borders. However, cooperation faces significant geopolitical obstacles, particularly the unresolved India-China border dispute and longstanding restrictions on sharing sensitive hydrological information. Previous joint research initiatives and agreements on river-flow data have made limited progress, with China halting data sharing on the Brahmaputra and Sutlej rivers in recent years. Experts suggest that the three countries could begin with practical measures, including identifying high-risk glacial lakes, establishing basic monitoring standards and exchanging disaster warnings. Although neither India nor China has formally responded to Nepal's proposal, it highlights the growing need for regional cooperation to manage shared climate risks.

***Source**: https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cvy0rd1j2kzlo*

PAKISTAN



PAKISTAN ARMY 'CAUTIOUSLY OPTIMISTIC' ABOUT US-IRAN MEDIATION EFFORTS

Pakistan's military has expressed cautious optimism about ongoing mediation efforts to revive a ceasefire between Iran and the United States, as regional countries intensify diplomatic engagement to de-escalate the eight-month-long conflict. Military spokesman Lieutenant General Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry said recent visits to Tehran by Pakistan's army chief, Field Marshal Asim Munir, alongside Saudi and Turkish officials, indicated positive signs in the negotiations. However, he warned that powerful actors seeking to benefit from the conflict could obstruct progress. The diplomatic efforts gained further momentum with the arrival of Qatari mediators in Tehran to explore the revival of a ceasefire that collapsed months after being agreed in June. The discussions also come amid growing regional security cooperation following the signing of the Mecca Joint Defence Agreement between Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Turkey in August. Chaudhry said the agreement remains open to countries sharing a commitment to collective deterrence and regional peace, while reaffirming Pakistan's commitment to Saudi Arabia's defence. The latest developments highlight Pakistan's emerging role as a mediator amid concerns that the conflict could expand across the Middle East.

***Source**:https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2026/10/30/pakistan-army-cautiously-optimistic-about-us-iran-mediation-efforts*



HAS PAKISTAN REOPENED ITS BORDER WITH IRAN FOR TRADE?

Pakistan has partially resumed trade with Iran following a weeklong suspension of cargo traffic through the Gabd-Rimdan and Taftan border crossings in Balochistan, which Islamabad closed on October 17, citing security concerns. Pakistani traders and transport officials confirmed that exports, including rice, potatoes, bananas and retail goods, had begun crossing, while Iranian trucks carrying liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) that were loaded before the closure were gradually entering Pakistan. However, Iran's ambassador to Pakistan, Reza Amiri Moghadam, said changes to Pakistan's import documentation requirements under the E-Form procedure had prevented Iranian traders from dispatching new cargo. The suspension also disrupted LPG supplies to Pakistan, contributing to shortages and price increases. The closure followed an attack on trucks near the Gabd crossing, amid worsening security conditions in Balochistan. While Pakistan has maintained that the restrictions were introduced for security and border-management reasons, questions have emerged over possible links to US sanctions against Iran. The situation reflects the combined impact of security concerns, banking and customs procedures, and wider geopolitical tensions on cross-border trade.

Source:https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2026/10/26/has-pakistan-reopened-its-border-with-iran-for-trade

US HEARS PAKISTAN'S CONCERNS OVER TERRORISM FROM AFGHANISTAN, WOULD PLAY 'PRODUCTIVE ROLE' IF THERE IS ONE: RUBIO

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said Washington had heard Pakistan's concerns about terrorist attacks allegedly originating from Afghan territory and would play a "productive role" if it could help resolve the tensions. Speaking in Atlanta, Rubio acknowledged Pakistan's position that the Afghan Taliban had failed to prevent attacks, while reiterating the US opposition to terrorism regardless of its source or targets. Islamabad has repeatedly called on Kabul to dismantle militant sanctuaries, particularly those linked to the banned Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), while the Taliban administration rejects allegations that Afghan territory is being used for attacks against Pakistan. The dispute has continued despite multiple rounds of talks facilitated by Qatar and Türkiye, as well as China's involvement, none of which produced a breakthrough. Russia has also offered to facilitate dialogue. Meanwhile, intermittent border clashes and Pakistani airstrikes have continued, reflecting persistent security tensions between the two neighbours.

***Source:** https://www.dawn.com/news/2041358/us-hears-pakistans-concerns-over-terrorism-from-afghanistan-would-play-productive-role-if-there-is-one-rubio*

NEPAL

NEPAL PM BALENDRA SHAH LIKELY TO VISIT INDIA IN LATE NOVEMBER; FOREIGN SECRETARY VIKRAM MISRI TO PREPARE GROUNDS



Nepalese Prime Minister Balendra Shah is expected to visit India around November 22, 2026, for his first bilateral foreign trip since taking office in March. Indian Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri is scheduled to visit Kathmandu on November 4 to prepare the agenda and review bilateral relations, while India's ambassador-designate to Nepal, Sudhakar Dalela, is also expected to arrive next week. The planned visit comes as Nepal's ruling Rastriya Swatantra Party seeks a reset in relations, with discussions expected to focus on trade and economic cooperation, air, land and digital connectivity, border security, employment, education and implementation of existing agreements. The two sides may also advance India-backed development projects and announce new assistance for Nepal's economy and reconstruction following this year's flash floods. The visit follows recent diplomatic engagement and efforts by Nepal's government to move bilateral relations away from geopolitical tensions and towards development cooperation, despite continuing differences over the disputed border areas of Limpiyadhura, Lipulekh and Kalapani.

Source: https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/nepal-pm-balendra-shah-likely-to-visit-india-in-late-november-vikram-misri-external-affairs-ministry-101793493101547.html

BHUTAN



KIREN RIJIJU, BHUTAN PM DRIVE TOGETHER TO ATTEND STUPA CONSTRUCTION CEREMONY

India's Union Minister for Parliamentary Affairs and Minority Affairs Kiren Rijiju represented India at a major Buddhist ceremony in Bhutan's Gelephu Mindfulness City on November 1, marking the construction and consecration of 108 Jangchub Chortens (stupas). Bhutanese Prime Minister Tshering Tobgay personally drove Rijiju to the ceremony, an initiative conceived by King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck. The event, regarded as one of Bhutan's largest spiritual gatherings, involved ritual ceremonies, the chanting of Buddhist mantras and the participation of more than 100 spiritual masters. Each stupa is to contain sacred manuscripts, images, mantras and Buddha relics, with contributions received from Bhutan, India, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore and Taiwan. Eighteen monks were assigned to each structure to conduct the installation and rituals, followed by consecration by Bhutan's Chief Abbot, Je Khenpo. The simultaneous raising of 108 stupas at one location is expected to be among the largest undertakings of its kind and may set a Guinness World Record.

Source: *https://www.ndtv.com/world-news/kiren-rijiju-bhutan-pm-drive-together-to-attend-stupa-construction-ceremony-12264990*

SRI LANKA



Sri Lanka Invites Indian Businesses to Partner in Its Next Phase of Economic Growth

Sri Lanka has invited Indian businesses to invest in its economy and participate in its transition from economic stabilisation to sustainable growth. During a visit to New Delhi on October 22–23, Deputy Minister of Industry and Entrepreneurship Development Chathuranga Abeysinghe met Indian business representatives, media organisations and officials at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Delhi to explore partnerships in industry, technology and innovation. Speaking at the NDTV World Summit 2026, he acknowledged India's support during Sri Lanka's 2022 economic crisis and highlighted progress in restoring financial stability, restructuring debt and implementing reforms. He identified manufacturing, agricultural value addition, logistics, renewable energy, marine industries and technology as priority sectors for cooperation. The Deputy Minister also outlined plans to establish new industrial zones, simplify investment procedures and digitise public services to attract investors. Discussions with Indian industry organisations focused on technology transfer, expertise-sharing and commercial partnerships, while engagement with IIT Delhi explored startup incubation and innovation cooperation. He also invited Indian businesses to participate in Sri Lanka Expo 2027.

Source: *https://www.mfa.gov.lk/en/news/sri-lanka-invites-indian-businesses-partner-its-next-phase-economic-growth*

AFGHANISTAN



PAKISTAN UNWILLING TO RESOLVE TENSIONS THROUGH TALKS, SAYS TALIBAN

Taliban spokesperson Zabihullah Mujahid accused Pakistan of lacking the willingness to resolve tensions with Afghanistan through peaceful negotiations, claiming that Kabul has repeatedly sought dialogue without success. Speaking to Taliban-affiliated Hurriyat Radio on October 31, Mujahid said messages continued to be exchanged between Kabul and Islamabad through the mediation of several countries, although he did not identify the mediators or provide details of the discussions. He accused Pakistan of maintaining its previous policies and said the Taliban had not initiated the recent tensions, describing its actions during clashes as self-defence. The main point of contention between the two sides remains the activities of Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). Islamabad alleges that the group operates from Afghan territory and accuses the Taliban of providing shelter to its members, while the Taliban denies the allegations and considers Pakistan's security challenges an internal matter. Despite mediation efforts involving Qatar, Türkiye and Saudi Arabia, the two sides have yet to reach a lasting agreement.

Source: *https://www.afintl.com/en/202610310092*

BEI WEEKLY UPDATES





BEI ENGAGES MYMENSINGH STAKEHOLDERS ON BANGLADESH'S EMERGING FOREIGN POLICY

As part of its research project "Shaping Creative Diplomacy in Bangladesh," the Bangladesh Enterprise Institute (BEI) convened a consultation in Mymensingh from 26 October to 29 October 2026. The consultations brought together teachers from the Jatiya Kabi Kazi Nazrul Islam University, civil society representatives, journalists, and other distinguished stakeholders to reflect on the study's emerging findings and recommendations. Ambassador M. Humayun Kabir (Retd.), President of BEI, delivered the welcome remarks, while Md. Alif Ifteker Seaum, Research Officer, led presentations on the study's key findings. The ensuing discussion offered valuable perspectives on advancing a more people-informed and responsive approach to Bangladesh's foreign policy.





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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