

## || WEEKLY NEWS HIGHLIGHTS ||

### BANGLADESH ENTERPRISE INSTITUTE (BEI)

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

|| 19 November – 25 November 2021 ||

#### SOUTH ASIA: COVID-19 UPDATE: AT A GLANCE

**Afghanistan** recorded a total of 156,000 cases of coronavirus since the beginning of the pandemic. Total death cases reported 7,234 as of 27 November.

**Bangladesh** reported 9 new deaths and 237 coronavirus cases on 26 November and has thus far recorded a total of 27,970 fatalities and 1,575,185 confirmed cases. Bangladesh has administered a total 92,730,087 Covid-19 vaccine doses, totaling 21.89% of the population.

**Bhutan** reported no new cases or deaths as of 26 November. A total of 2,633 cases have been registered until 26 November, while 73.93% of Bhutan's population has been vaccinated.

**India** reported 488 deaths and 10,549 new coronavirus cases bringing the total number of cases to 34,555,431 while the total number of deaths now stands at 467,468. Until 26 November, 30.88% of Indian population has been vaccinated.

**Maldives** reported 91,274 active cases and 248 deaths as of 27th November. 68.32% of the population is vaccinated.

**Myanmar** reported a total of 520,706 cases and 19067 deaths as of 27th November, 2021.

**Nepal** on 27 November reported 363 new coronavirus cases taking the nationwide infection tally to 818,035. The countrywide death toll has reached to 11,438 since the beginning of the pandemic.

**Pakistan** recorded a total of 515 new cases of coronavirus on 27 November. Total 11 fatalities were also recorded according to the reports on 27 November.

**Sri Lanka** reported 561,059 active cases and 14258 deaths as of 27th November. 62.94% of the population vaccinated.

<https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/map.html>

#### Inside this issue

- South Asia: Covid-19 Crisis: At a glance
- Bangladesh's GDP stands at \$411BN after base year revision; BIDA selects 11 sectors to attract FDI mainly from 15 countries
- U.S. said it would resume talks with Taliban next week to fight against terrorism and the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan; JAPAN to reopen embassy after security is assured; EU delegation discussed cooperation, situation in Afghanistan with Central Asian nations
- UN adopts resolution on Bangladesh's LDC graduation; Foreign Minister says UN resolution on Rohingyas has political value; BANGAVAX finally gets approval for human trial
- Three farm laws will be repealed, says PM Modi; US, India act in concert to cool price at the pump; Meeting between Indian and Chinese diplomats comes a month after the 13th round of border commander talks ended in acrimony
- Vice President of Maldives concluded a three-day official visit to Dhaka
- 15TH edition of biennial trilateral exercise held in Maldives
- ASEAN-China summit held without Myanmar
- Rising debt, low revenue 'national security' issue: Prime Minister Imran Khan; Pakistan urged international community to provide assistance to Afghanistan
- United Nation Assistant Secretary General meets Foreign Minister of Sri Lanka
- Sri Lanka and India established parliamentary friendship association

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- Sri Lanka and India established parliamentary friendship association
- GENERAL OF THE ARMY

### **BANGLADESH'S GDP STANDS AT \$411BN AFTER BASE YEAR REVISION; BIDA SELECTS 11 SECTORS TO ATTRACT FDI MAINLY FROM 15 COUNTRIES**

The size of Bangladesh's economy now stands around \$411 billion after the government's statistics agency revised the base year to 2015-16 from 2005-06. Planning Minister MA Mannan revealed the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics data after the base year revision which was approved in a meeting of the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council chaired by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on 23 November, 2021. The Planning Minister said that new values of products and services have been included after the data was calculated with the new base year. He added that Bangladesh's per capita income has increased to \$2,554 after the base year revision. In the agriculture sector, the authorities added around 20 products, including dragon fruit, strawberry, capsicum, taro spinach, and malta or navel orange. Livestock and poultry have also been added to the updated data. Services sector now includes ride-hailing apps and helicopter rental. Mobile banking, agent banking, government non-profits, education and health sector data have also been added.

Moving on to other news, the government has set a primary target to woo investment from 15 countries and regions during the upcoming International Investment Summit 2021. The countries and regions include the United States of America (USA), United Kingdom, Singapore, China, Netherlands, India, Japan and Korea. Md. Sirazul Islam, executive chairman of Bangladesh Investment Development Authority (BIDA), said that the target was set through analyzing the track record of FDI (foreign direct investment) inflow in the past.

<https://bdnews24.com/economy/2021/11/24/bangladeshs-gdp-stands-at-411bn-after-baseline-revision>

<https://thefinancialexpress.com.bd/economy/bida-selects-11-sectors-to-woo-fdi-mainly-from-15-countries-1637726634>

## AFGHANISTAN:

### U.S. SAID IT WOULD RESUME TALKS WITH TALIBAN NEXT WEEK TO FIGHT AGAINST TERRORISM AND THE HUMANITARIAN CRISIS IN AFGHANISTAN; JAPAN TO REOPEN EMBASSY AFTER SECURITY IS ASSURED; EU DELEGATION DISCUSSED COOPERATION, SITUATION IN AFGHANISTAN WITH CENTRAL ASIAN NATIONS

The United States will resume talks with the Taliban next week in Qatar, addressing among other issues the fight against terrorism and the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan. The American delegation will be led by the US special representative for Afghanistan, Tom West, for the planned two weeks of discussions. The two sides will discuss on vital national interests, which include counterterrorism operations against the Islamic State group and Al-Qaeda, humanitarian assistance, Afghanistan's devastated economy, and safe passage out of Afghanistan for U.S. citizens and Afghans who worked for the United States during the 20-year war. Mr. West in his statement reiterated U.S. conditions for the Taliban to receive US financial and diplomatic support: fight terrorism install an inclusive government, respect the rights of minorities, women and girls, and provide equal access to educations and employment. He said the US would continue to have dialogue with the Taliban and for now provide only humanitarian aid.

Japan's ambassador to Afghanistan, Takashi Okada, in a meeting with the Afghanistan's Prime Minister's Deputy for Political Affairs, Mawlawi Abdul Kabir, said his country would reopen its embassy in Kabul if security is assured. The Japanese Ambassador also said that his country would continue its humanitarian aid to Afghanistan, adding that aid should arrive in Afghanistan before winter sets in, as quoted by Samangani.

A high-level EU delegation has held talks in the Tajik capital with foreign ministers from Central Asia to discuss issues such as regional cooperation,

human rights, and the situation in neighboring Afghanistan. After the 17th EU-Central Asia ministerial meeting was held behind closed doors in Dushanbe on November 22, 2021, EU Foreign Policy Chief Josep Borrell said recent developments in Afghanistan, where the Taliban took control over the country in August, require new approaches to the issue of security in Central Asia. They also expressed shared concern about the regional repercussions of developments in Afghanistan, stressed the importance of preventing the Afghan territory from being used as a base for hosting, financing or exporting terrorism to other countries and called for the establishment of an inclusive and representative government in Kabul. According to the United Nations, millions in Afghanistan may face famine, with almost all the population living in poverty as the economy collapses.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/11/24/us-to-resume-talks-with-taliban-in-qatar-state-department>

<https://www.afghanistantimes.af/afghanistan-on-agenda-of-eu-central-asia-talks-in-dushanbe-2/>

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- United Nation Assistant Secretary General meets Foreign Minister of Sri Lanka
- Sri Lanka and India established parliamentary friendship association
- SRI LANKAN CHIEF OF DEFENSE STAFF VISITED RUSSIAN GENERAL OF THE ARMY

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## BANGLADESH:

### UN ADOPTS RESOLUTION ON BANGLADESH'S LDC-GRADUATION; FOREIGN MINISTER SAYS UN RESOLUTION ON ROHINGYAS HAS POLITICAL VALUE; BANGAVAX FINALLY GETS APPROVAL FOR HUMAN TRIAL POLITICAL VALUE; BANGAVAX FINALLY GETS APPROVAL FOR HUMAN TRIAL

The United Nations General Assembly has adopted the resolution on Graduation of Bangladesh from the LDC category. With the adoption of this resolution at the 40th plenary meeting of 76th UN General Assembly, Bangladesh completes all the procedures to graduate from the LDC category. Besides Bangladesh, Lao People's Democratic Republic and Nepal are also graduating from the least developed country category. This is a landmark achievement in Bangladesh's development journey, which coincides with the celebration of the 50th anniversary of Bangladesh's independence. Ambassador Rabab Fatima, permanent representative of Bangladesh to the United Nations, thanked all the Member States, especially the development partners, for their support to reach consensus for the adoption of this resolution.

In the meantime, on 18 November, 2021, after attending a discussion at Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BISS), Foreign minister AK Abdul Momen said that the adaptation of UN resolution on Rohingyas by consensus for the first time has political value as it showed interest of all countries, including Russia and China, in resolving the protracted crisis. He added that the resolution has put pressure on Myanmar. The United Nations has adopted the resolution on "The situation of human rights of Rohingya Muslims and other minorities in Myanmar" by consensus in New York on 17 November. Foreign Minister further mentioned that it showed all countries want a peaceful solution to the Rohingya crisis. He added that he had discussions with Russia over the issue while China has already made some interventions.

In another news, Mohammad Mohiuddin, senior manager of Bangladesh Medical Research Council's (BMRC) quality and regulatory department said that BMRC has given the approval in principle for administering Covid-19 vaccine of Bangavax and they will submit an application to the Bangladesh Directorate General of Drug Administration (DGDA), seeking its permission for the clinical trial. The process will start once the final approval is given. BMRC director Ruhul Amin signed the letter of approval issued on 23 November, 2021.

<https://thefinancialexpress.com.bd/national/un-adopts-resolution-on-bangladeshs-graduation-from-ldc-1637814869>

<https://en.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/un-resolution-on-rohingyas-has-political-value-momen>

<https://en.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/bangavax-finally-gets-approval-for-human-trial>

## INDIA:

### THREE FARM LAWS WILL BE REPEALED, SAYS PM MODI; US, INDIA ACT IN CONCERT TO COOL PRICE AT THE PUMP; MEETING BETWEEN INDIAN AND CHINESE DIPLOMATS COMES A MONTH AFTER THE 13TH ROUND OF BORDER COMMANDER TALKS ENDED IN ACRIMONY

Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed the nation on 19 November to announce that the new farm laws enacted in 2019 will be repealed in the upcoming winter session of Parliament. He added that a committee will be formed to look examine all aspects of agriculture. Farmers, most of them from Punjab, have been opposing the laws since it was enacted. They have taken stations in the borders of Delhi as part of their protest. PM Modi also mentioned that the agriculture budget now is five times more than it used to be. The Prime Minister further mentioned that the three farm laws were brought in, the aim was to provide relief to small farmers to give them alternatives for selling their crops and to get them better prices. Farmers' groups across the country have supported these moves and he expressed his gratitude to them.

Meanwhile, the White House announced that the Department of Energy will release 50 million barrels of oil from the country's Strategic Petroleum Reserve. Concurrently, India committed to releasing 5 million barrels from its reserve for a start. The quantum of release from Japan and South Korea was not immediately known. China has also been invited to join the group but it has not responded so far. Britain is also expected to join in.

On another note, Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) issued a statement on November 18, expressing that it was agreed that both China and India will hold the next (14th) round of the Senior Commanders meeting at an early date to achieve the objective of complete disengagement from all the friction points along the LAC in the Western Sector in accordance with the existing

bilateral agreements and protocols. The statement was issued after a virtual talk led by additional secretary (East Asia) Naveen Srivastava and Director-General of the Boundary & Oceanic Department of the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs Hong Liang. The outcome of the virtual talk was candid and in-depth discussions. This is the 9th round of WMCC talks just in the last year since the Galwan incident took place in June 2020, compared to the past when bi-annual meetings had been held since the mechanism was launched in 2012, an indication of the seriousness of the situation between the two militaries at present.

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/pm-modi-address-to-nation-live-updates-november-19-2021/article37572939.ece>

[http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/87874568.cms?utm\\_source=contentofinterest&utm\\_medium=text&utm\\_campaign=cppst](http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/87874568.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst)

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/india-china-agree-to-hold-14th-round-of-lac-talks/article37564334.ece>

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## MALDIVES: VICE PRESIDENT OF MALDIVES CONCLUDED A THREE-DAY OFFICIAL VISIT TO DHAKA

The Vice President of Maldives, Faisal Naseem was on a three-day official tour to Bangladesh from 22nd to 24th November 2021. During his meetings with the dignitaries of Bangladesh, Mr. Naseem discussed partnerships in developing technical capacity in the Maldives, especially in the areas of healthcare and education. Foreign Minister of Bangladesh, Dr. Momen assured to impart necessary assistance to provide medical education, training and skill development in various areas of Maldives, as well as agreed to work on establishing direct shipping line between the two countries for further increasing bilateral trade volume.. Bangladesh offered scholarship to two Maldivian underprivileged students in Chittagong University, University of Asia Pacific also sanctioned grants and waivers to Maldivian students. The Vice President detailed the Maldives goal to regularize all unregistered expatriate workers in the Maldives at the earliest.

The Vice President, Naseem paid

courtesy call to the Bangladeshi President Abdul Hamid and the Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. He held meetings with the cabinet ministers including the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr. Abdul Momen, the Minister of Expatriate's Welfare and Overseas Employment, Imran Ahmad, Minister of Youth and Sports, Md. Zahid Ahsan Russel, the Minister of Education, Dr Dipu Moni and Advisor to Prime Minister, Salman F Rahman. He visited key institutions like Bangabandhu Museum, the Bangladesh-Korea Technical Training Centre (BKTTTC) and the National Institute of Advanced Nursing Education & Research (NIANER).

<https://presidency.gov.mv/Press/Article/25868>

<https://www.tbsnews.net/bangladesh/maldivian-vice-president-arrives-dhaka-332854>

<https://raajje.mv/109973>

## 15TH EDITION OF BIENNIAL TRILATERAL EXERCISE HELD IN MALDIVES

The 15th biennial Trilateral Exercise 'Dosti' of India, Sri Lanka and Maldives held in Maldives from 20th to 24th November, 2021 as a part of regional security formation for peaceful and stable Indian Ocean Region. Coast Guard vessels of India and Sri Lanka arrived at the Maldives for the exercise.

This year marks the 30th year of this military exercise. The aim of the Tri-Lateral Exercise 'DOSTI' is to further accentuate the friendship, enhance mutual operational capability and exercise interoperability and to build cooperation between the Coast Guards of Maldives, India and Sri Lanka.

[https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/biennial-trilateral-exercise-](https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/biennial-trilateral-exercise-dosti-underway-for-stability-of-indian-ocean-region/articleshow/87855068.cms)

[dosti-underway-for-stability-of-indian-ocean-region/articleshow/87855068.cms](https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/biennial-trilateral-exercise-dosti-underway-for-stability-of-indian-ocean-region/articleshow/87855068.cms)

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## MYANMAR: ASEAN-CHINA SUMMIT HELD WITHOUT MYANMAR

A virtual summit commemorating the 30th anniversary of ASEAN-China dialogue relations held on 22nd November, 2021. The dialogue aims to the economic, political, socio-cultural, regional and international cooperation of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and China. Despite the proposition of China to invite Chairman of the State Administration Council of Myanmar, the summit took place without any representative from Myanmar. ASEAN especially Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia and Brunei sidelined Myanmar as the country was not complying with the diplomatic efforts of the regional bloc to end the existing crisis of the country.

At the summit the Chinese President, Xi Jinping

stated that China does not want hegemony, rather the country was and always will be a good partner to ASEAN.

<https://asean.org/joint-statement-of-the-asean-china-special-summit-to-commemorate-the-30th-anniversary-of-asean-china-dialogue-relations-comprehensive-strategic-partnership-for-peace-security-prosperity-and-sustain/>  
<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/11/22/china-asean-summit-begins-without-a-myanmar-representative>  
<https://www.reuters.com/world/china/xi-says-china-will-never-look-for-hegemony-summit-with-asean-2021-11-22/>

## PAKISTAN: RISING DEBT, LOW REVENUE 'NATIONAL SECURITY' ISSUE: PRIME MINISTER IMRAN KHAN; PAKISTAN URGED INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY TO PROVIDE ASSISTANCE TO AFGHANISTAN

Prime Minister Imran Khan noted that the rising foreign debt and low tax revenue had become an issue of "national security" because government did not have enough resources to spend on people's welfare. He also maintained that the country's very sustainability was at stake because of the absence of a "tax culture" and hoped that the use of technology would take revenue collection to Rs 8 trillion per year. Pakistan's total debt and liabilities have crossed Rs 50.5 trillion, an addition of Rs 20.7 trillion under the current government alone, The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) released the debt figures till September 2021.

Pakistan urged the international community to generously provide assistance to Afghanistan, which is facing a humanitarian crisis. Foreign Office Spokesperson Asim Iftikhar Ahmed said at the weekly briefing that Pakistan as part of international efforts would continue to facilitate Afghan citizens. The spokesperson said Pakistan has pledged humanitarian assistance worth Rs 5

billion and it also accepted Afghan people's request to let the humanitarian assistance offered by India to pass through Wagah border. Answering another question, he said Pakistan and many other countries have been saying that unfreezing Afghan assets will be an appropriate way of assisting the Afghan people at this point of time.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/11/23/pakistan-pledges-28-million-in-afghanistan-humanitarian-support>

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## SRI LANKA:

### UNITED NATION ASSISTANT SECRETARY GENERAL MEETS FOREIGN MINISTER OF SRI LANKA

The UN Assistant-Secretary-General (ASG) for Political, Peace building and Peace Operations, Khaled Khiari held meeting with the Foreign Minister of Sri Lanka Prof G.L. Peiris during his visit to Sri Lanka on 24th November, 2021. the minister outlined the progress of the country Sri Lanka's post-COVID recovery including the economic challenges in the aftermath of the pandemic and the progress in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and assured that Sri Lanka will continue to cooperate with the United Nations in order to achieve sustainable peace and development, in line with the international obligations that his country had voluntarily undertaken.

<https://www.un.int/srilanka/news/united-nations-asg-khaled-khiari-calls-foreign-minister>  
[https://www.dailymirror.lk/latest\\_news/UN-Assistant-Secretary-General-meets-GL/342-225492](https://www.dailymirror.lk/latest_news/UN-Assistant-Secretary-General-meets-GL/342-225492)

### SRI LANKA AND INDIA ESTABLISHED PARLIAMENTARY FRIENDSHIP ASSOCIATION

Sri Lanka, on 12th November 2021, established the India-Sri Lanka Parliamentary Friendship group comprising senior members of Lankan parliament to strengthen the bilateral relations amongst the friendly nations. The meeting was held at the presence of Sri Lankan Speaker of Parliament, Mahinda Yapa Abeywardana, High Commissioner of India to Sri Lanka Gopal Baglay and Ministers and MPs of Sri Lanka on the 9th session of the parliament.

The accord aims to bolster the multi-faceted bilateral relationship between the two nations, especially in six areas i.e. sharing of democratic values, cooperation in combating common challenges, enhancing people-to-people connectivity, encouraging greater economic engagement, strengthening the cultural connections and reap the benefits of development partnership.

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/india-sri-lanka-revive-parliament-friendship-association/article37450423.ece>  
<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/india/sri-lankan-parliament-forms-friendship-group-with-india-aiming-to-rejuvenate-ties/articleshow/87657309.cms>



## About Us

Bangladesh Enterprise Institute is a non-profit, non-political research centre. Established in October 2000, the Institute has established for itself a reputation for excellence in its research and advocacy work focusing on the growth of private enterprise in Bangladesh. The Institute promotes issues of importance to the private sector and seeks to initiate essential measures and influence policy for the development of a market-oriented economy. Through the promotion of sustainable growth in domestic trade, commerce and industry, BEI hopes to address the enormous challenge for Bangladesh in securing a fair share of the global market.

BEI has a particular interest in the support and growth of Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs), which have the potential to be the engine of economic growth in Bangladesh. BEI also undertakes research and policy advocacy work focusing on the issues of foreign policy and security, particularly those of terrorism impacting Bangladesh and South Asia.

Being conscious of the enormous challenge to securing a fair share for Bangladesh in the global market as well as to address issues of trade and investment promotion, the Bangladesh Enterprise Institute (BEI) was established under the initiative of some leading business personalities of the country. Salman F. Rahman, Deputy Chairman of the BEXIMCO Group, has been working as the Chairman of the Board of Governors, Ambassador Farooq Sobhan, former Foreign Secretary and Ambassador, and past Executive Chairman of the Board of Investment, has been working as a Distinguished Fellow and Member of the Board of Governors of the institute and M Humayun Kabir, former Ambassador, has been working as the President and Chief Executive of the institute.

The institute is registered with the Registrar of Joint Stock.

## DISCLAIMER

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) held a three-day regional summit from 26 to 28 October 2021, without Myanmar, after the country's ruling junta refused to send veteran diplomat, Chan Aye as the nonpolitical representative to the meeting instead of its military leader, Senior General Min Aung Hlaing. The leaders of the Southeast Asian countries deplored Myanmar's nonattendance in the regional summit.

The President of United States, Joe Biden attended the summit virtually and expressed grave concerns about the crisis and violence in Myanmar. He then announced plans to provide funding of 102.7 million US dollar for the development of health, climate, economic and educational programs in the region and another fund of 40 million US dollars to help address the current COVID-19 pandemic and strengthen ASEAN's ability to prevent, detect and respond to future outbreaks of infectious diseases. Biden highlighted the importance of US-ASEAN cooperation and strategic partnership for a free and open Indo-Pacific, which had been the foundation for shared security and prosperity.

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Ground Floor, House No. 3/A, Road No. 84, Gulshan 2, Dhaka-1212, Bangladesh



**BEI**

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Institute**