

## || WEEKLY NEWS HIGHLIGHTS ||

# BANGLADESH ENTERPRISE INSTITUTE (BEI)

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

|| 01 August –12 August , 2024 ||

### AFGHANISTAN

#### RELIGIOUS FREEDOM IN TALIBAN-RULED AFGHANISTAN ON STEADY DECLINE, US WATCHDOG SAYS

The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, or USCIRF has reported a decline in religious freedom in Afghanistan under Taliban rule, which has imposed strict Islamic laws restricting personal freedoms, particularly for women. The Taliban has silenced religious clerics, limited religious minorities' rights, and imposed harsh punishments, including public executions and beatings. The U.S. and other nations refuse to recognize the Taliban government due to its human rights violations. The USCIRF recommends designating Afghanistan as a "country of particular concern" for religious freedom violations.

<https://www.voanews.com/a/religious-freedom-in-taliban-ruled-afghanistan-on-steady-decline-us-watchdog-says/7733924.html>

#### UN SEES RISING THREAT OF IS-KHORASAN ATTACKS OUTSIDE AFGHANISTAN

The head of the United Nations counterterrorism office raised concerns about the Afghanistan-based Islamic State affiliate IS-Khorasan possibly carrying out attacks abroad. The group has strengthened its financial and logistical capabilities in the past six months and intensified recruitment efforts. The UN Security Council discussed the terrorist threat in Afghanistan, emphasizing the need to prevent the country from becoming a terrorism hotspot again. Additionally, the report highlighted Islamic State's resilience and adaptability despite counter-terrorism efforts. The threat of IS extends to Africa, specifically West Africa and the Sahel, where regional affiliates have expanded their operations. In Europe, ISIL-K is considered the greatest external terrorist threat.

<https://www.voanews.com/a/un-sees-rising-threat-of-is-khorasan-attacks-outside-afghanistan/7734968.html>

#### AFGHAN MISSIONS VOW TO PROVIDE CONSULAR SERVICES DESPITE TALIBAN DISAVOWAL

Afghan diplomatic missions in Europe, Australia, and Canada are defying the Taliban's recent disavowal and continuing to provide consular services. The Taliban's Foreign Ministry stated that services in 11 European countries, Canada, and Australia would not be recognized, but Afghan diplomats argue they are allowed by host countries and international laws. The Taliban's decision, seen as unreasonable, has caused tensions as some countries have handed over their Afghan missions to the Taliban, potentially impacting Afghans in need of consular assistance.

<https://www.voanews.com/a/afghan-missions-vow-to-provide-consular-services-despite-taliban-disavowal/7728058.html>

#### IRAN PROPOSES JOINT MINERAL ECONOMIC ZONE WITH AFGHANISTAN

Currently, Iran has already invested in Afghanistan's mining sector, particularly in the Ghorian mine in Herat. Iran has proposed an investment in establishing a joint mineral economic zone between Afghanistan and Iran, according to the Ministry of Industry and Commerce. The delegation also discussed the establishment of iron processing factories, railway development, and road construction. The Ministry of Energy and Water is ready to cooperate with the Iranian delegation. Economic experts believe the

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## BANGLADESH

### UNIVERSITY TEACHERS' NETWORK GIVES 11 RECOMMENDATIONS TO INTERIM GOVERNMENT

They demanded justice for the July killings through the International Court of Justice. The University Teachers' Network has made recommendations to the interim government, including youth participation in politics and the prevention of attacks on cultural sites. These demands were discussed at a meeting at Dhaka University, where initial suggestions for the government were provided. The Network emphasized the importance of clarifying the government's intentions and prosecuting the July killings. They also proposed the creation of community centers to honor martyrs and stressed the need for youth involvement in politics.

<https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/354321/university-teachers%E2%80%99-network-gives-11>

### DISINFORMATION BEING SPREAD IN INDIA ABOUT ATTACKS ON HINDUS IN BANGLADESH

Disinformation and fake videos are spreading about attacks on the Hindu community in Bangladesh, with some fake content reaching Indian news media. While incidents of attacks on Hindu communities have been reported following Sheikh Hasina's resignation, fact-checking platforms have debunked false videos. Social media is being used to spread misinformation about communal violence, including fake reports of attacks on Hindu temples. It is crucial to verify information before sharing to prevent the spread of fake propaganda and protect the Hindu community in Bangladesh.

<https://en.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/ljlb17kfw>

### ATTACKS ON MINORITIES: BBC, DISMISLAB DEBUNK FAKE NEWS

Following the ouster of the Awami League government, violence against Hindus escalated in Bangladesh. However, fake news is also being spread on social media, particularly from India, according to BBC Verify. Misinformation includes a photo of a cricketer's house being shared as another player's, and videos of alleged attacks on Hindu establishments actually targeting Awami League offices. Fact-checking organizations in Bangladesh are debunking these false claims, including misleading photos of a supposed rape incident in Bangladesh, which actually originated in India. Bangladesh-based groups have reported over 200 incidents of violence against minorities in various districts.

<https://www.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/news/attacks-minorities-bbc-dismislab-debunk-fake-news-3675136>

### TIB CALLS FOR EFFECTIVE ACTION TO PROTECT MINORITIES AND STATE PROPERTY

Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) strongly condemns communal violence, attacks on religious minorities, and the destruction of state infrastructure and vehicles during the regime change period. TIB emphasizes the importance of rebuilding the nation with equality, justice, and good governance, urging authorities to ensure the security of religious minorities and state assets. TIB Executive Director Dr. Iftekharuzzaman calls on all factions to uphold law and order and prevent chaos and unruly situations.

<https://unb.com.bd/category/Bangladesh/tib-calls-for-effective-action-to-protect-minorities-and-state-property/140418>

### PEOPLE UNITE TO DEFEND MINORITIES IN BANGLADESH

Locals in Bangladesh, including students from madrassahs and activists from various political and Islamist groups, joined forces to defend Hindu property and religious sites from attacks on minority communities. The attacks coincided with celebrations of the downfall of Sheikh Hasina's regime, leading to vulnerability and fear among many. Police collaboration with the previous regime was criticized as attacks resulted in injuries, deaths, and destruction. Efforts were made to protect minority communities and prevent further violence.

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## INDIA

### INDIA'S BIG DIPLOMATIC DILEMMA AFTER DHAKA POWER SHIFT, SHEIKH HASINA'S OUSTER

After her escape from Dhaka in turmoil, Sheikh Hasina landed at the Hindon airbase in Delhi and is likely to fly to the UK today to seek political asylum. Sheikh Hasina's ouster as Bangladesh Prime Minister has put India in a tricky situation, as she is currently in Delhi and is likely to seek political asylum in the UK. India faces a diplomatic dilemma and must avoid overtly backing the ousted leader, which may complicate its relationship with the new Dhaka government. The history of Sheikh Hasina's relationship with India is also important. The role of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party and Jamaat-e-Islami in the new government is unclear, as they have backed protests in Bangladesh. The geopolitical ramifications of the Dhaka turmoil are also a concern, as unrest has occurred in India's neighbourhoods, including Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Afghanistan, and Bangladesh.

<https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/sheikh-hasina-bangladesh-protest-bangladesh-updates-india-faces-tightrope-walk-after-bangladesh-turmoil-sheikh-hasinas-ouster-6273466>

### HASINA SOUGHT TO COME AT 'SHORT NOTICE': INDIA MINISTER

Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has requested to return to India after her government was toppled in a political crisis. India has been in contact with Dhaka authorities due to concerns that tensions in Bangladesh could affect India. The two countries share a long border and have strong economic and cultural ties. India is monitoring the situation of minorities in Bangladesh and has suspended train services between the two countries since July. Border Security Forces are reviewing operational readiness at the Bangladesh border.

<https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c93ppx7lg0go>

### PM MODI CHAIRS KEY MEET OVER BANGLADESH UNREST

Bangladesh's army chief General Waker-Uz-Zaman said in a broadcast to the nation on state television that Ms Hasina, 76, had resigned and the military would form a caretaker government. The Cabinet Committee on Security met at Prime Minister Narendra Modi's residence amid Bangladesh's turmoil, where Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina fled the country amid protests over job quotas. The meeting included Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, Home Minister Amit Shah, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, and Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman. Bangladesh's army chief General Waker-Uz-Zaman announced that Hasina had resigned and the military would form a caretaker government. Sheikh Hasina is expected to leave for London, where she may seek political asylum.

<https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/pm-modi-chairs-key-meet-over-bangladesh-unrest-6270182>

### INDIA REACHES OUT TO DHAKA, WANTS MILITARY TO RESTORE PEACE AND NORMALCY

The Modi government has left to ousted leader Sheikh Hasina to decide her next steps. Bangladesh's ousted PM Sheikh Hasina is currently in the country as a guest and is deciding her future plans. The Indian government, led by Narendra Modi, is working to restore peace in Dhaka through dialogue with protesting youth after the coup. Hasina expressed concerns about fighting in upcoming elections due to threats from Islamists and Western regime change agents. India is supporting Bangladesh during their economic crisis and facing security challenges from a radical regime in the neighborhood.

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## MALDIVES

### MALDIVES KEY PARTNER FOR INDIA IN INDIAN OCEAN REGION: JAISHANKAR

The Maldives is a key partner for India in the Indian Ocean region and the two nations aspire to turn their cooperation into a modern partnership, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said on Sunday.

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar highlighted India's significant partnership with the Maldives, investing around USD 220 million in projects like the Addu Reclamation and Shore Protection Project. These initiatives aim to enhance connectivity, promote economic growth, and create employment opportunities. India is also focusing on community development projects, demonstrating a strong bond between the two nations.

<https://www.news18.com/world/maldives-key-partner-for-india-in-indian-ocean-region-jaishankar-9012279.html>

### MALDIVES OPPOSITION PARTY WELCOMES RECALIBRATION OF INDIA POLICY BY MUIZZU GOVT

Abdulla Shahid, the president of the Maldivian Democratic Party, made the remarks after he met External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar here on Saturday.

The Maldivian Democratic Party has welcomed a shift in India's policy, expressing confidence in India's support during emergencies. The party president, Abdulla Shahid, met with India's External Affairs Minister, S Jaishankar, to discuss the recalibration of bilateral relations. The opposition party hopes for a consistent and meaningful relationship for the Maldives, and calls for the government to apologize for damaging the country's foreign and economic outlook. The party also appreciates India's support in community development and infrastructure projects.

## MYANMAR

### ETHNIC ARMED GROUP SUSPECTED OF DEADLY ATTACK IN MYANMAR ON ROHINGYA TRYING TO FLEE FIGHTING

At least 150 Rohingya civilians may have been killed in an attack in Rakhine state, Myanmar, possibly carried out by the Arakan Army, a resistance force against military rule. The attack occurred while Rohingya refugees were crossing the Naf River into Bangladesh. Doctors without Borders reported hundreds of dead bodies and bombings. The Arakan Army, seeking autonomy from Myanmar's central government, has been involved in human rights violations and has been accused of abuses.

<https://apnews.com/article/rohingya-rakhine-maungdaw-bangladesh-refugees-edb7b9df01ae4c20795c9c149c9bbcc0>

### MYANMAR JUNTA ON BRINK IN RAKHINE AS AA ADVANCES INTO SOUTHERNMOST TOWNSHIP

The Arakan Army (AA) launched attacks in Gwa Township in Rakhine state, reaching the southernmost point of the state. The ethnic armed group targeted junta troops at a checkpoint near a bridge in Chinkwin village. The troops fled the checkpoint and retreated to another bridge nearby. The regime responded with airstrikes and artillery barrages. The AA also attacked junta troops at a hilltop monastery, reportedly causing casualties. The regime has fortified Taungup town, north of Thandwe. The AA has gained control of most of northern Rakhine and neighboring Paletwa Township in Chin State.

<https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/war-against-the-junta/myanmar-junta-on-brink-in-rakhine-as-aa-advances-into-southernmost-township.html>

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## NEPAL

### FOREIGN SECRETARY VIKRAM MISRI ARRIVES IN KATHMANDU ON 2-DAY OFFICIAL VISIT TO NEPAL

Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri visited Kathmandu for a two-day official trip at the invitation of Nepal's Foreign Secretary Sewa Lamsal. Both countries will discuss matters related to Nepal-India relations and cooperation. This visit is part of regular high-level exchanges between the two nations and reflects India's 'Neighbourhood First' policy. India has been supporting Nepal with various infrastructural projects. Misri will meet with Nepal government officials before returning to India. The visit strengthens the long-standing cultural and people-to-people ties between Nepal and India.

<https://www.newsonair.gov.in/foreign-secretary-vikram-misri-to-embark-on-two-day-visit-to-nepal-beginning-today/>

## PAKISTAN

### PAKISTAN ENSURES POLITICAL, ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT OF MINORITIES: PRESIDENT

Pakistani President Asif Ali Zardari has emphasized the country's commitment to empowering minorities in politics, social, and economics. He stated that Pakistan is committed to protecting their rights and religious freedoms, and has allocated a 5% quota for minorities in government jobs and separate seats in parliament. The government is also providing financial assistance and scholarships to minority students. Zardari urged society to educate people about their rights and promote interfaith harmony to make Pakistan a strong country.

<https://english.news.cn/20240812/4f8ed0bbfbf5414b81b52ae8322f420f/c.html>

### PAKISTAN'S ENERGY MINISTER HIGHLIGHTS REFORMS TO END FUTURE GOVERNMENT RELIANCE ON BUYING ELECTRICITY

Among the reforms are measures that will allow private consumers to buy electricity directly from producers. Sardar Awais Leghari says the state will reform the power sector by privatizing distribution companies

Pakistan's Energy Minister, Sardar Awais Leghari, announced major reforms to make the country's energy sector more efficient. The government is modernizing grids and privatizing distribution companies to address electricity challenges such as power outages, high transmission losses, and dependence on imported fuels, limited renewable energy sources, and circular debt. The reforms include allowing private consumers to buy electricity directly from producers, and implementing advanced net metering for reliable data on distribution. The government also increased the average national tariff by Rs5.72 per unit to secure a fresh financial bailout from the IMF.

<https://arab.news/496t9>

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## 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.

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](mailto:bei@bol-online.com). For more information about BEI and our work, please visit <https://www.bei-bd.org/>

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