

South Asia daily Briefing

By Kaswar Klasra

Bangladesh's volatile election season intensified as Jamaat-e-Islami's chief sought to reassure voters that the country would not follow the political or ideological paths of Pakistan, Afghanistan, or Iran, even as human-rights groups warned of collapsing law and order ahead of February polls. The twin narratives underscore Dhaka's struggle to balance identity politics, Islamist influence, and democratic credibility.

Regionally, Pakistan and Iran signaled diplomatic alignment, with Tehran publicly thanking Islamabad for backing its position at the UN Human Rights Council amid escalating U.S.–Iran tensions. India, meanwhile, is deepening its strategic economic outreach, pushing toward a landmark free-trade agreement with the European Union to hedge against pressures from Washington and Beijing.

In Afghanistan, deadly snow and floods exposed chronic governance and humanitarian fragility. Sri Lanka's post-crisis recovery debate also sharpened, with economists cautioning that populist credit relief could undermine banking stability.

Here are Top Five news article shaping the South Asia Today:

1. 'Bangladesh will not become Pakistan, Afghanistan or Iran', says Jamaat-e-Islami chief

A leading Islamist party leader declares at a major election rally that, if elected, Bangladesh will preserve its unique political identity and not mirror Pakistan, Afghanistan, or Iran, shaping domestic and regional foreign-policy narratives.

<https://www.indiandefensenews.in/2026/01/bangladesh-will-not-become-pakistan.html>

2. "It is a dire situation, there is no law and order": Bangladesh Human Rights ahead of elections

Ahead of Bangladesh's Feb. 12 general election, a human-rights leader warns of deteriorating law and order, justice failures, and unrest, highlighting political instability and concerns about credible democratic participation.

<https://www.malaysiasun.com/news/278827277/it-is-a-dire-situation-there-is-no-law-and-order-secretary-general-of-bangladesh-human-rights-ahead-of-elections>

3-- Iran FM thanks Pakistan for 'strong support' at UN Human Rights Council

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi on Saturday thanked his Pakistani counterpart Ishaq Dar for his “strong support” and Pakistan’s position at the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) amid the prevailing tense situation between Washington and Tehran.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1968790/iran-fm-thanks-pakistan-for-strong-support-at-un-human-rights-council>

4-- Europe and India seek closer ties with 'mother of all deals'

India and Europe hope to strike the "mother of all deals" when EU chiefs meet Prime Minister Narendra Modi in New Delhi next week, as the two economic behemoths seek to forge closer ties.

Facing challenges from China and the United States, India and the European Union have been negotiating a massive free trade pact -- and talks, first launched about two decades ago, are nearing the finishing line.

https://www.indianagazette.com/the_wire/europe-and-india-seek-closer-ties-with-mother-of-all-deals/article_137d7031-f079-5bbc-a25c-a1b72c1a10e0.html

5-- Snow, heavy rain kill over 60 in three days in Afghanistan

Snow and heavy rain have killed 61 people in Afghanistan in the last three days, the disaster management authority (ANDMA) said on Saturday.

<https://www.trtworld.com/article/8761669332be>

6-- Sri Lanka needs to balance SME support and banking stability: Think tank

ECONOMYNEXT – Calls for government intervention in credit enforcement could potentially destabilize the Sri Lanka financial system, a think tank has said.

“Urging for artificial interventions in credit markets risks promoting policies that undermine the very mechanisms that enable growth, particularly at a time when economic recovery is urgently needed,” the Advocata Institute said in a statement.

<https://economynext.com/sri-lanka-needs-to-balance-sme-support-and-banking-stability-think-tank-258808/>

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