

**Highlights from the local media of Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka**

**April 10th, 2017 | Volume: 3 - 4/4**

[Indian President Pranab Mukherjee praises Hasina for giving 'solid foundation' to India-Bangladesh ties](#)

bdnews24 | 10<sup>th</sup> April

Indian President Pranab Mukherjee has praised Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina for her role in taking Bangladesh-India relations forward. The prime minister met Pranab at the Rashtrapati Bhavan on Sunday, the third day of her stay at the president's residence during her state visit. The deep relations between Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's daughter Hasina and Pranab developed long before he became president. She calls him 'Dada', a term used in Bangla to address an elder brother.

[PTI to approach NA against Saudi alliance](#)

Express Tribune | 10th April

The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) has decided to submit a resolution in the National Assembly Secretariat within two days against Pakistan's decision to join Saudi-led 41-nation Islamic military alliance and appointment of General (ret'd) Raheel Sharif as its head, senior PTI leaders confirmed on Sunday. The move, some political analysts believe, apparently suggests that PTI is not convinced to give weightage to the apprehensions conveyed recently to PTI chief Imran Khan during his one-on-one meeting with the army chief Lt Gen QamarJavedBajwa.

[India hopes to secure release of fishing trawlers impounded by Sri Lankan navy before PM Modi's visit to Colombo](#)

Colombo page | 9<sup>th</sup> April

India is making efforts to get over 140 fishing trawlers held by Sri Lanka after those were impounded by the Sri Lankan Navy ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to the island nation, a union minister said. Rajya Sabha member and senior party leader L. Ganesan asserting that the BJP-led government at the Centre was taking serious steps to bring a lasting solution to the fishermen issue, said efforts were made to secure the release of the trawlers impounded by Sri Lanka before the Indian Premier's visit to Colombo.

**AFGHANISTAN**

[Putin believes Syrian army has no chemical weapons](#)

Afghanistan Times | 9th April

The President of Russia regards the US airstrikes on Syria as an act of aggression against a sovereign state delivered in violation of international law under a far-fetched pretext. The Syrian Army has no chemical weapons. The fact of the destruction of all Syrian chemical weapons' stockpiles has been recorded and verified by the OPCW, a specialised UN body. Vladimir Putin believes that complete disregard for factual information about the use by terrorists of chemical weapons drastically aggravates the situation.

[More than one million Afghans suffer from depressive disorders](#)

Afghanistan Times | 9th April

Minister of Public Health (MoPH) on Sunday said that, the World Health Organization's (WHO) recent estimation showed that more than a million Afghans suffer from depressive disorders and over 1.2 million suffer from anxiety disorders in the country, actual figures are likely to be much higher than above-mentioned

estimation. Ferozuddin Feroz said that accurate data on depression and mental health disorders is not available in Afghanistan.

#### [Afghanistan reacts at Pakistani allegations over India's destructive role](#)

Khaama Press/Ghanizada | 9th April

The Afghan defense officials reacted at the allegations of a Pakistani official regarding the alleged destructive role of India, calling it as baseless. General Dawlat Waziri, spokesman for the Ministry of Defense in response to the allegations of the Pakistani official, said that New Delhi has no military presence in Afghanistan, rejecting the misunderstanding of Islamabad claiming that the country is fuelling anti-Pakistan feelings with its presence in Afghanistan. He said India is only providing training and study opportunities to the Afghan army cadets and that New Delhi has military presence in Afghanistan. Pakistan's Defence Minister Khawaja Mohammad Asif, on Thursday, said that the state was serious about improving relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan.

#### [Russia reacts at alleged support to the Afghan Taliban](#)

Khaama Press | 10th April

The Embassy of Russia in Kabul has reacted towards the remarks of the Afghan officials regarding the alleged support of Moscow to the Taliban group. According to a statement by the Russian Embassy, some senior Afghan officials are accusing Russia of supporting the Taliban group, emphasizing that such allegations are made without any proof or evidence. The growing frustrations among the Afghan officials follow amid reports that Moscow is providing support to the Taliban group. The American officials also expressed regarding the growing attempts by Moscow to strengthen links with the Taliban group. The American defense secretary James Mattis said Washington is concerned regarding the ties between Moscow and Taliban group.

#### [Smugglers Earn \\$800bln of Afghanistan Drug: Ghani](#)

Khaama Press | 10th April

President Ashraf Ghani on Sunday that Australia, is one of the most successful countries in mine extraction section, and is ready to help Afghans in this sector. "Australian enterprises won't come here to invest directly in mining sector, but they will send experts in the sector. Now, there are two Australian experts in Afghanistan who work on our system building process." President Ghani told reporters. The president says, during the past 17 years international drug dealers and countries that provide transit facilities have earned \$ 800 billion from narcotic cultivation in Afghanistan. "We ask international community to prosecute these drug dealers. We – as the people of Afghanistan – would welcome these acts. We are not smugglers. We are not involved in that trade."

#### [EU Stresses Women Must Participate in Education](#)

Outlook Afghanistan | 10th April

The European Union (EU) launched a one year nationwide campaign, promoting women in political and economic areas. The EU officials in Afghanistan say the campaign would further push Afghan officials to provide more facilities for women in those arenas. "The project not only aims to promote women role in political sphere, but pushes for increased women role in economic areas as well, but we are not legislators. What only we can do via the project is to put some extra pressures on government to pay more attention for women," John Loka Soulra, democracy and civil society chief in Afghanistan said.

### **BANGLADESH**

#### [Indian parties have common stance on Bangladesh](#)

The Daily Star | 10th April

Congress President Sonia Gandhi yesterday conveyed to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina that there is a bipartisan approach in India towards consolidating relations with Bangladesh. Sonia made the remarks when she paid a courtesy call on Hasina. She was accompanied by former prime minister Manmohan Singh and Congress Vice-President Rahul Gandhi.

#### [Bangladeshis to get medical visa for diagnostic tests in India](#)

bdnews24 | 9th April

India has agreed to a Bangladesh request to give medical visa even for the "diagnosis" purposes. New Delhi responded to the request considering a "humanitarian need", according to the joint statement released on Saturday after the bilateral meeting of the two Prime Ministers – Sheikh Hasina and Narendra Modi. "Indian side

responded to a humanitarian need expressed by Bangladesh by allowing medical visa facilities for diagnosis in India subject to supporting documentation being produced". Thousands of Bangladeshis travel to India for medical treatment.

#### [Indian businesses to invest \\$9.0 billion in Bangladesh](#)

The Financial Express | 9<sup>th</sup> April

Indian businesses will make investments of \$9 billion in Bangladesh. The country's private sector have signed several deals with Bangladeshi companies during Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's visit, says the India-Bangladesh joint statement. "Both sides have expressed satisfaction over the growth of trade and investment in the recent years," it reads.

#### [Mamata calls Teesta WB's lifeline, says it can't be taken away](#)

Prothom Alo | 9<sup>th</sup> April

Chief minister of Indian state of West Bengal Mamata Banerjee on Sunday expressed displeasure at the talks of sharing Teesta waters, asserting that the river is the lifeline of 'North Bengal' which can't be taken away, reports India's multimedia news agency ANI news. According to its report appeared on the site, Mamata expressed her dissatisfaction following Indian prime minister Narendra Modi and Bangladesh prime minister Sheikh Hasina's talks on river Teesta. "There is very little water in Teesta River, it is our lifeline, the lifeline of North Bengal," Banerjee was quoted as saying.

### **BHUTAN**

#### [Draft road safety and transport Bill up for public feedback](#)

Kuensel | 7<sup>th</sup> April

Thimphu's traffic has worsened to the point that traffic jams are a regular occurrence during rush hours. Given the rising number of vehicles plying on the roads today, accidents along with traffic offences have become frequent. With the increasing violation of the traffic regulations, the need to review the Road Safety and Transport (RST) Act has been a long time coming. A new RST Bill 2017, which has been drafted, will soon replace the Act of 1999. The draft Bill which is now available on the information and communications ministry's website is open to public feedback.

#### [Spare parts and maintenance issues affecting power tillers](#)

Kuensel | 8<sup>th</sup> April

Agriculture minister admits problems but says measures are underway With the farming season approaching, farmers in some dzongkhags are worried that their power tillers might not be ready for action. At least 16 power tillers in 10 dzongkhags are defunct today, Kuensel has found. Among them, the rate of disrepair is the highest in Trongsa and Lhuentse. Of the 10, five power tillers are in disrepair in Trongsa and about one in three power tillers in Lhuentse, which has 22, are defunct for lack of spare parts and maintenance.

### **MALDIVES**

#### [Committee passes amendment which could force out confidence vote against Maseeh and Moosa](#)

Sun Online | 9<sup>th</sup> April

General Committee has passed an amendment that has the potential to force out the no confidence motions pending against the Speaker, Abdulla Maseeh Mohamed and the Deputy Speaker, Riko Moosa Manik. The committee passed to make amendment to Article 175 of the Parliament Regulations. The regulation now says that 15 signatures are required to file a no confidence motion against the Speaker or Deputy Speaker of the Parliament. But the amendment filed by the committee, if passed, would require 42 signatures to file a no confidence motion.

#### [Maldivian company to provide solar energy to 5,000 Sri Lankan homes](#)

Sun Online | 9<sup>th</sup> April

Maldivian company, Renewable Energy Maldives has signed an agreement with Sri Lankan government on a project to provide solar energy to 5,000 Sri Lankan homes. Renewable Energy Maldives – part owned by former Maldivian President Mohamed Nasheed's brother – will be supplying electricity to houses in Batticaloa - a major

city in the Eastern Province of Sri Lanka. The agreement between Renewable Energy Maldives and Sri Lankan government was signed by Chairman of Renewable Energy Maldives – Ibrahim Nashid and State Minister of Rehabilitation, Resettlement M.L.A.M. Hizbullah.

## MYANMAR

### [China's trans-Myanmar pipeline to start pumping oil in May](#)

Mizzima | 7<sup>th</sup> April

A pipeline pumping crude oil from Myanmar's Rakhine coastline into Yunnan Province in China will finally be operational in May after several delays, according to the Thura Swiss market research company based in Yangon. An official from investors Southeast Asia Crude Oil Pipeline (SEAOP) was cited in local and Chinese media reports this week saying that the pipeline is ready for operation, and that commencement is awaiting "instructions from higher ups."

## NEPAL

### [Nepal Airlines captain held with undeclared USD 93,600 from TIA](#)

The Himalayan Times | 10<sup>th</sup> April

A senior pilot with the Nepal Airlines Corporation has been arrested with a huge amount of undeclared American dollar from the Tribhuvan International Airport on Sunday night. According to a highly-placed source at the TIA, police arrested senior captain Subarna Awale with USD 93,600 during the final security check to board a flight to Dubai.

### [PM Dahal signals recovery of due amount from Ncell](#)

The Kathmandu Post | 10<sup>th</sup> April

Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal on Sunday indicated that the government would not hesitate to recover due capital gains tax on sale of Ncell, the largest private sector telecom company, from Ncell itself, if the seller refuses to fulfil its tax obligation. His comments come at a time when the government has not been able to frame a clear-cut plan to collect the due tax amount of billions of rupees from the Ncell buyout deal, as the seller has already left the country.

## PAKISTAN

### [Pakistan to stay neutral in Syria war](#)

Express Tribune | 10<sup>th</sup> April

Last week, US President Donald Trump finally ordered direct attacks against Syrian President Bashar al Assad's regime in the wake of suspected chemical attack in the rebel held town that killed over 80 people and shook the entire world. Since Syria has become the major battleground for proxy war between the regional and international players, Pakistan has maintained a position, many believe, is in line with Russia and Iran, something that is unusual considering Islamabad's strong ties with Saudi Arabia and Turkey. Unlike Saudi Arabia and other Arab countries, Pakistan has long been against the regime change through a foreign intervention. "Pakistan is not taking sides. In fact our position is based on international law and principles of the UN," Naqvi added explaining as to why Islamabad was against the regime change.

### [Hard Brexit to have significant implications for Pakistan's exports](#)

Express Tribune | 10<sup>th</sup> April

The British prime minister invoked Article 50 on March 29, 2017 and formally started a two-year Brexit process. Although the United Kingdom has two years to negotiate a deal with the European Union (EU), the outcome of trade negotiations between the UK and the EU can have implications for exports of Pakistan. EU countries are members of a single market which means goods, capital, labour and services can move freely from one member to another. The scope of post-Brexit arrangements will involve either extreme 'hard' measures such as complete withdrawal from the EU or soft measures which retain certain aspects of the existing customs union.

### [OIC secretary general arrives in Pakistan](#)

Express Tribune | 10<sup>th</sup> April

The Secretary General of Organisation of Islamic Cooperation [OIC] DrYousef Ahmad al Othaimen arrived in Islamabad on Sunday on a three-day official visit to Pakistan, Foreign Office announced. During his first official visit to Pakistan, the Secretary General's engagements include calls on the leadership and meetings at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The secretary general will also visit Headquarters of the OIC Standing Committee on Scientific and Technological Cooperation in Islamabad. The OIC chief and Prime Minister's Adviser on Foreign Affairs Sartaj Aziz will address a joint news conference after their formal talks today on Monday.

#### [Indian, Chinese navies jointly rescue ship attacked by pirates](#)

Dawn | 10th April

Unperturbed by spiralling tensions between India and China over a disputed border state, the navies of the two countries came together in the Arabian Sea on Sunday to jointly end a piracy incident involving a foreign ship, reports said. Tensions have been soaring between New Delhi and Beijing over Tibetan spiritual leader Dalai Lama's ongoing visit to the border state of Arunachal Pradesh, with China saying New Delhi's move had severely damaged Sino-India ties.

#### [Probe against petroleum ministry officials in Rs86bn scam](#)

Dawn | 10th April

The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) has launched a probe into the role of some senior officials of the petroleum and natural resources ministry in the alleged embezzlement of billions of rupees by some national and international oil and gas companies. The investigation relates to the embezzlement of Rs86 billion allegedly committed by 40 companies. Referring to the petroleum ministry's audit reports 2013-15, a complaint (filed in the FIA Lahore) said these companies had collected billions of rupees from the masses during 2012 and 2015 in lieu of petroleum levy and gas surcharge.

#### [India stands in the way of China's free trade ambitions](#)

Dawn | 10th April

A China-backed trade deal meant to cement Beijing's dominance in Asia has veered off course because India is hesitant to open its borders to cheap Chinese goods. Without the participation of India, the third-largest Asian economy, the free-trade zone China hoped to create might still happen, but it won't carry the same economic heft, depriving Beijing of the chance to set the trade rules for the region.

### **SRI LANKA**

#### [Sri Lanka's youth empowered with modern technology to connect with export trade - President](#)

Colombo Page | 9th April

Sri Lanka's youth have been empowered to get connected with the export trade using mobile phones and internet at present, instead of mere traditional agriculture, President Maithripala Sirisena says.

#### [Sri Lanka, India to develop Trinco oil tank farm](#)

Colombo Gazette | 9th April

India and Sri Lanka have, in principle, agreed to jointly operate the World War-era oil storage facility in Trincomalee, the strategically advantaged port town located on the island's east coast, The Hindu newspaper reported.

#### [Sri Lankan Prime Minister leaves for Japan on official visit](#)

Colombo page | 10th April

Sri Lanka's Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe accompanied by his wife Prof. Maithree Wickremesinghe left for Japan early this morning on an official visit on a special invitation extended to him by the government of Japan. During his Official Working Visit to Japan from Monday, 10 April to Saturday, 16 April, Prime Minister Wickremesinghe will hold a meeting with his Japanese counterpart Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. Prime Minister Abe will host a dinner for the Sri Lankan Prime Minister.

#### [India sends water, rice as Sri Lanka faces severe drought](#)

Colombo Page | 10th April

As Sri Lanka is facing the worst drought in 40 years, India has provided an emergency assistance of water and rice to the Island country. The commitment to donate eight water bowsers and 100 metric tons of rice as immediate

assistance for drought relief was made by Foreign Secretary of India Dr. Jaishankar on behalf of Minister of External Affairs, Mrs. Sushma Swaraj to Sri Lanka Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mangala Samaraweera, during his recent visit to Sri Lanka in February 2017.

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