

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

January 11th, 2017 | Volume: 3 - 5/1

[Ghani Urges Islamic Countries to Help Bring Peace](#)

Afghanistan Times | 8th January
Afghan President Ashraf Ghani has said that Afghans across the board want peace and that Islamic countries should put pressure on extremist groups to join the peace process. Speaking to Asharq al-Awsat – an Arab newspaper – Ghani said it was important for Taliban to separate itself from terrorist groups that pose a threat to Islamic nations. “We hope that Islamic countries, including Saudi Arabia, exert pressure on extremist leaders to push them toward reconciliation,” he said.

[Walkout in Senate over Nisar’s remarks about banned outfits](#)

The Dawn | 11th January
Interior Minister Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan’s remarks about classification of banned organisations in the Senate on Tuesday sparked controversy, prompting the opposition to walk out of the house in protest. Responding to the objection to his meeting with a delegation comprising members of a banned outfit, the interior minister said outlawed sectarian organisations should not be equated with those of terrorist outfits. He also stated that unfortunately sectarian violence had been continuing for 1,300 years.

[Sri Lanka seeks tripartite arrangement with Singapore](#)

Colombo Gazette | 10th January
Sri Lanka is keen to establish a tripartite arrangement for trade and investment with India and Singapore, its Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs Harsha de Silva has said. Sri Lanka aims to conclude Economic Technology Cooperation Agreement (ECTA) with India for services this year, and is negotiating a free trade agreement (FTA) with Singapore, Silva said, according to the Press Trust of India.

AFGHANISTAN

[Suicide attack rocks Lashkargah city in South of Afghanistan](#)

Khaama Press | 10th January

A suicide blast rocked Lashkargah city the provincial capital of southern Helmand province of Afghanistan. Eyewitnesses in the area are saying that the blast has likely taken place close a compound of the security forces. Preliminary reports indicate at least 6 people were killed in the attack and several others were wounded. The local government officials have not commented regarding the casualties so far. Helmand is among the volatile provinces in southern Afghanistan where the Taliban insurgents openly operate in its various districts and frequently conduct insurgency activities.

[Over 100 Killed and Wounded in Kabul Twin Blasts](#)

Daily Outlook Afghanistan | 11th January

Officials revised the casualty toll after Tuesday’s deadly twin-bombings in Kabul and said 30 people had been killed and at least 78 wounded. The attack, which appeared coordinated, took place at around 4pm on Tuesday as a convoy of parliament staff was leaving the offices in Darulaman Road in PD6. According to reports a suicide bomber blew himself

up first at the entrance to parliament's offices and then a suicide car bomber detonated his explosives. Police immediately cordoned off the area and two hours after the attack ambulances could still be heard transporting the wounded to various hospitals in the city.

[US Wants Indo-Pak Talks to Include Afghanistan](#)

Daily Outlook Afghanistan/ Pajhwok Afghan News | 11th January

The outgoing Obama administration wants Indo-Pak dialogue to include Afghanistan, even as a top US expert on South Asia favoured a strong anti-Islamabad policy by the incoming Trump government. "We do think that any regional dialogue between India, Pakistan for including Afghanistan and others to counter terrorism would be desirable," Peter Lavoy, senior director for South Asian affairs, told Pajhwok Afghan News in an interview. "Terrorism is a threat to all of us and no country will be safe, unless terrorism is irradiated in every other country, especially in the neighbourhood," said Lavoy, who heads the White House National Security Council on South Asia. Lavoy, who has spent several decades dealing with Afghanistan and Pakistan-related issues in various capacities in the US government, said it was clear to all that many terrorist groups operated in Pakistan.

BANGLADESH

[Fight terror, build nation](#)

The Daily Star | 11th January

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday vowed to build a Bangladesh where there would be no room for militancy and terrorism, and people irrespective of caste and creed would practise their religions peacefully. She called upon all, including imams, teachers and parents, to put up strong resistance against militancy and terrorism.

[Dhaka University to launch ICCR Chair for Hindi language](#)

bdnews24 | 11th January

A Memorandum of Understanding has been signed between the Indian Council for Cultural Relations, ICCR, and the University of Dhaka for the establishment of the 'ICCR Chair for Hindi language'. Indian High Commissioner Harsh Vardhan Shringla and Vice Chancellor Prof Dr AAMS Arefin Siddique signed the memo on Tuesday. The signing took place commemorating the World Hindi Day on Jan 10 at the auditorium of the Institute of Modern Languages, the high commission said in a statement.

[Indo-Bangladesh coastal shipping now operational](#)

Prothom Alo | 10th January

The first Bangladesh-flagged vessel, under a bilateral coastal shipping agreement with India, completed its voyage when it reached Chittagong Port on 1 January. According to The Hindu BusinessLine, MV Shamayel called at Paradip Port in Orissa, India on 29 December 2016, carrying 149 empty containers and sailed back with 91 containers loaded with sponge iron.

[Taka depreciates against US dollar again](#)

The Financial Express | 10th January

The Bangladesh currency depreciated maximum six paisa against the US dollar in a single-day knock Tuesday, after nearly two weeks' interval. According to treasury officials of commercial banks, the dollar was quoted at Tk 78.70-Tk 78.76 on the inter-bank foreign exchange market Tuesday against Tk 78.70 of the previous working day.

BHUTAN

[Irrigation schemes desperate for funds](#)

Kuensel Online | 10th January

Of the 197.6km of major irrigation schemes, the agriculture ministry built or repaired only 66km until June this year. Agriculture secretary Rinzin Dorji said that there is no budget for the remaining works. "29km are in progress as spill over activity from the previous fiscal," he reported during the mid-year review of the annual performance agreements yesterday. The agriculture department faced by budget constraints proposed to drop the schemes for want of budget during the ministry's mid-term review in 2015.

MALDIVES

[Case sent to prosecute Nasheed over Yameen's detention](#)

Sun Online | 10th January

Police has sent the case of former Maldivian President Mohamed Nasheed detention of the current President Abdulla Yameen Abdul Gayoom – who had been parliamentary representative for Mulak at the time – for prosecution. Prosecutor General Aishath Bisham reported to “Sun” this Tuesday that Prosecutor General’s Office was working with the police to complete procedural formalities of the case.

[ACC probes issues in Housing Ministry audit report](#)

Sun Online | 10th January

Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) has announced its looking into issues highlighted in the audit of Ministry of Housing and Infrastructure of the year 2014. President of ACC, Hassan Luthufy reported to “Sun” this Tuesday that some of the major issues noted in the audit included the case of an individual being hired in violation of regulation and being given salary before the individual had even started work.

MYANMAR

[22,000 Rohingya fled Myanmar to Bangladesh in one week: UN](#)

Mizzima | 10th January

At least 65,000 Rohingya have fled to Bangladesh from Myanmar -- a third of them over the past week -- since the army launched a crackdown in the north of Rakhine state, the UN said Monday. The figure marks a sharp escalation in the numbers fleeing a military campaign which rights groups say has been marred by abuses so severe they could amount to crimes against humanity.

[UN special rapporteur visits Internally Displaced camps in Kachin State](#)

Mizzima | 11th January

United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar Ms Yanghee Lee and delegation met with internally displaced persons in IDP camps in Myitkyina and Waingmaw Townships yesterday morning, state media reported on 11 January. The special rapporteur and delegation first visited camps in Mongna Baptist Church and Mongna Roman Catholic Church and met with some of the IDPs there. In the afternoon, the special rapporteur visited the IDP camp of RC Church and met with some IDPs separately.

[One million new jobs needed for young people in the next four years](#)

Mizzima | 11th January

A new census report reveals that despite its young population, Myanmar must position itself well if it is to harness a demographic dividend – the phenomenon which has been a major driver of rapid economic growth in the Asian Tigers. A unique window of opportunity opens when there are more people of working age than there are people above or below working age. To become an Asian Tiger, a country also needs steeply declining fertility and mortality rates. In Myanmar’s case, the demographic changes have been more gradual.

NEPAL

[Japanese Ambassador calls on Commerce Minister Thakali](#)

My Republica | 9th January

Japanese Ambassador to Nepal Masashi Ogawa called on Commerce Minister Romi Gauchan Thakali at the latter's

office in Singha Durbar on Monday. During the meeting, they discussed various issues including bilateral interest, financial support, trade, investment and tourism promotion, according to the Ministry.

[Govt prepares to announce local polls date](#)

My Republica | 10th January

Buoyed by its success in tabling the constitution amendment bill in Parliament on Sunday, the government has geared up necessary preparations to announce by next week the date for local level elections. Top leaders of the ruling Nepali Congress and CPN (Maoist Center) have decided to announce the date of local elections after the election-related bills tabled in Parliament along with the statute amendment bill are duly endorsed.

[Nepal will play proactive role to repel negative impact of climate change: President](#)

RSS / The Kathmandu Post | 10th January

President Bidya Devi Bhandari has said that Nepal wishes to play a proactive role to protect biodiversity and repel the negative impact of climate change. Inaugurating the International Conference on Biodiversity, Climate Change Assessment and Impacts on Livelihood here on Tuesday, the Head of State said, "The whole world is concerned about the biodiversity loss and looming threats of climate change. Despite resource constraints and globalized nature of climate change impact, Nepal has given priority to address these concerns."

[Nepal Red Cross spends millions from quake funds on 'luxuries'](#)

My Republica | 11th January

Nepal Red Cross Society (NRCS) has been found splurging millions meant for earthquake victims on administrative activities and the purchase of various luxury items instead of channelizing the hefty amounts into the real tasks of earthquake reconstruction and rehabilitation.

[House passes BAFIA, with two four-year term limits for CEOs, chairmen](#)

My Republica | 11th January

The parliament has endorsed the bill to amend and unify bank and financial institution act (BAFIA), imposing two term limit for the chief executive officer, chairman and managing director of a bank or financial institution. The bill endorsed by a full house of parliament on Tuesday will come into effect once it receives the presidential seal. Among other things, the newly-endorsed act has set a term of upto four years for the board directors and CEOs.

[Fishery zone program to be implemented in Rupandehi](#)

My Republica | 11th January

Rupandehi District Agricultural Development Office (DADO) is implementing the program in eight VDCs, putting Dayanagar VDC at the center, under the Prime Minister Agriculture Modernization Project. Under the project, Morang and Rupandehi have been selected for 'fishery zone' program, while Bara has been selected for 'super zone' program.

PAKISTAN

[Disqualification of PM to set a dangerous precedent: SC](#)

The Express Tribune | 9th January

A member of the apex court's larger bench on Tuesday dampened excitement of the PTI's leadership when he cautioned that a dangerous precedent will be set, if the Supreme Court disqualifies Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif merely on the basis of his speeches related to the Panama leaks. "We being human make statements. A question arises whether the statements may become a base to disqualify someone – if yes, then it will be a dangerous precedent," said Justice Ejaz Afzal Khan, one of the five judges hearing Panamagate case about offshore businesses of the premier's family members.

[Obama rejects discrimination against Muslim Americans in final address](#)

The Express Tribune | 9th January

President Barack Obama on Tuesday rejected any form of discrimination against Muslims in the United States. "I reject discrimination against Muslim Americans," he said in a clear reference to Trump, drawing applause. With a final shout of his campaign mantra "Yes We Can," Obama urged Americans to stand up for US values and reject discrimination as the country transitions to the presidency of Republican Donald Trump.

[PPP braces to launch anti-govt drive in Punjab](#)

The Express Tribune|9th January

Pakistan Peoples Party is set to start the first phase of its protest campaign from Punjab in what will be seen as a test for the party's young chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari. In the first phase, PPP plans to hold public gatherings in different cities of Punjab this month, dates for which will most likely be announced by Bilawal today (Wednesday). Venues recommended by the PPP Punjab chapter are Gujranwala, Sahiwal and Faisalabad, party sources said.

[World Bank agrees to fund three hydro projects in K-P](#)

The Express Tribune|9th January

In the latest development, the World Bank has given the Khyber-Pakhtunkwa government a positive response for funding three hydropower projects. "They [World Bank] have agreed to our request and are ready to grant loans for our three projects," said a senior official of the K-P energy and power department who held a meeting with the international financial institution's delegation in Islamabad on Monday.

SRI LANKA

[Three Sri Lankan and 51 Indian fishermen repatriated](#)

Colombo Gazette| 10th January

Fifty-one Indian and three Sri Lankan fishermen were today repatriated to their respective countries in line with the decision taken at a recent ministerial-level talks held in Colombo, an Indian Fisheries official said, according to the Press Trust of India.

[Sri Lanka begins national program to empower state institutions with solar power](#)

Colombo Page| 9th January

Sri Lanka has commenced the first stage of the national program of empowering state establishments with solar power today from the Ministry of Finance. The national program aims to electrify all state establishments with solar power within two years.

[US launches US\\$ 1 million clean water project in Sri Lanka to provide drinking water to local communities](#)

Colombo Page| 9th January

The United States government joined State Minister Sudarshini Fernandopulle and MEP leader Dinesh Gunawardena on January 5 to launch an approximately Rs. 150 million (\$1 million) program to provide safe disaster-resilient drinking water to local communities in Sri Lanka.

About Ananta Aspen Centre

Ananta Aspen Centre is an independent and not-for-profit organisation that seeks to foster positive change in society through dissemination of knowledge. The Centre facilitates discussions on issues of international significance, values-based leadership and cross-sector outreach by engaging the civil society, government, private sector, and other key stakeholders.

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