

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

April 12th, 2017 | Volume: 3 - 5/4

[Visited India to seek nothing but friendship: PM Hasina](#)

Prothom Alo | 11th April
Bangladesh Awami League president and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has said she did not go to India to seek anything. "I went there to seek friendship. And I got that friendship," Hasina replied when a newsman asked her what Bangladesh has got from her recent India visit. Sheikh Hasina was briefing newsmen on the outcome of her India visit at her official Ganabhaban residence on Tuesday. The PM said nothing has happened during her India visit that can make people pessimists.

[China, Myanmar ink oil pipeline deal](#)

AFP/ Mizzima | 11th April 12
China and Myanmar agreed a deal on a crude oil pipeline between the neighbouring countries as part of a raft of agreements signed when their leaders met Monday in Beijing. Chinese President Xi Jinping met with Myanmar President U Htin Kyaw at the end of the Burmese statesman's first visit to China since taking office last spring. The countries signed an agreement on a partially-completed crude oil pipeline between western Myanmar's Kyaukpyu port and southern China's Kunming city, which Beijing expects to be 'up and running soon', Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Liu Zhenmin said.

[Contours of Saudi alliance will shape up next month: Asif](#)

Express Tribune | 12th April
Defence Minister Khawaja Asif said on Tuesday that the contours of the proposed Saudi Arabia-led Islamic military alliance to fight terrorism would shape up in a meeting of defence ministers of the member states which is expected next month. Delivering a policy statement in the upper house of parliament, he tried to clear the 'mist of confusion' surrounding the Saudi-led alliance and Pakistan's role in it. According to him, the terms of reference (ToRs) of the proposed alliance are yet to be finalised. Asif said Pakistan would not become a part of any alliance created to foment sectarian strife in the region and added that it was also Pakistan's duty to protect Saudi Arabia. "Pakistan will never become a part of any alliance which will be against any country, particularly if it is against any Muslim country," he added.

AFGHANISTAN

[Haqqani network's coordinated suicide attacks plot foiled by Afghan forces](#)

Khaama Press | 11th April

The Afghan security forces foiled a series of the coordinated suicide attacks plot by the notorious Haqqani terrorist network in northern Parwan and eastern Nangarhar provinces. The Afghan Intelligence, National Directorate of Security (NDS), said the terrorist network was looking to carry out the attacks using a Vehicle-borne Improvised Explosive Device (VBIED) and several suicide bombers on the two provinces.

[Kabul to Send 'Clear Message' to Taliban at Moscow Talks: MoFA](#)

Outlook Afghanistan/ Tolonews | 12th April

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) on Tuesday said Kabul is committed to sending a 'clear message' to the Taliban during the upcoming conference on Afghanistan in Moscow. The Taliban must realize that they cannot reach their objectives by waging war and violence, MoFA spokesman Ahmad ShekibMustaghni said. He added that at the meeting, Afghanistan would also push participating countries to deliberate the issue of terrorist safe havens and that terrorists must not be differentiated between.

[11 Contracts worth 955m Afs Accorded Approval](#)

Outlook Afghanistan/ Pajhwok | 12th April

Eleven contracts worth 955 million afghanis have been accorded approval the National Procurement Commission (NPC), the Presidential Palace said on Tuesday. An NPC meeting -- chaired by President Ashraf Ghani -- reviewed 27 contracts and approved 11 of them, including the procurement of equipment for the BreshnaSherkat in Sarobi district. Extension of the contract and price for the transmission line from Turkmenistan border to Noor Jihad area was given the go-ahead, according to the statement from Ghani's office.

[Senate Demands Probe into Cash Aid to Taliban Families](#)

Outlook Afghanistan/ Pajhwok | 12th April

Senate members on Tuesday expressed concern over cash donation to families of slain Taliban fighters in northern Kunduz province and demanded an investigation into the issue. Kunduz governor Asadullah Omarkehl in a video message had said up to 60 family members of dead Taliban had demanded cash assistance from him and the aid was given. Abdullah Qarleq, a lawmaker from Kunduz, said a delegation with 50 million afghanis in cash aid had been dispatched to Kunduz to distribute it among the conflict-affected people.

[18 insurgents killed in raids](#)

Afghanistan Times | 11th April

At least 18 militants were killed and 17 others were wounded in different operations within past 24 hours, officials said Tuesday. In a press release issued here, Ministry of Defense (MoD), said that Afghan National Army (ANA) with the cooperation of Afghan National Police (ANP) and National Directorate of Security (NDS) have conducted joint operations against insurgents in different areas Nangarhar, Laghman, Kapisa, Paktia, Paktika, Wardak, Khost, Kandahar, Uruzgan, Badghis, Faryab, Kunduz, Balkh, Sar-e-Pul and Helmand provinces. Statement said that in these operations 18 insurgents including three local commanders and eight Daesh fighters were killed and 17 others were injured.

BANGLADESH

[Delhi pursues two-pronged approach to resolving Teesta issue](#)

Dhaka Tribune | 12th April

The West Bengal government claimed to have submitted a report detailing the present scenario to the Centre, two days before Hasina's visit. Contrary to public perceptions, Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's Delhi visit has ended on an encouraging note: India has started taking a two-pronged approach to dealing with concerns of its ally Bangladesh over the Teesta River water sharing.

[BIMSTEC urged to promote 'war nostalgia tourism'](#)

bdnews24 | 12th April

A new idea dubbed 'war nostalgia tourism' has come up at a BIMSTEC conference in Dhaka to promote tourism in the region that connects South Asia with Southeast Asia. bdnews24.com senior editor Subir Bhaumik proposed to promote 'war nostalgia' tourism among the member states particularly among Bangladesh, India and Myanmar where there are spots related to the world war II. Bhutan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Thailand are the other members of the Bay of Bengal grouping.

[Q3 budget spending stays only at 45pc](#)

The Financial Express | 12th April

The government spent 45 per cent of its annual development programme (ADP) funds until the third quarter (Q3) of the current fiscal, leaving 55 per cent for three months. Such limited rate of implementation of development projects prompted experts to raise questions about executing agencies' capacity.

BHUTAN

[Trans-boundary infections threaten measles elimination target](#)

Kuensel Online | 12th April

The country plans to eliminate measles by next year. Trans-boundary infections present serious challenges for the country to maintain its target to eliminate measles by the end of next year, say health officials. Bhutan did not have any measles cases in 2013 and 2014. However, there was a measles outbreak in a school in Merak in Trashigang, last year.

[East-West Highway open](#)

Kuensel Online | 11th April 12

The block on the East-West Highway near Tsheringmo Drubchu in Trongsa was cleared around 6pm and opened to traffic yesterday. The Department of Roads and the contractor worked round the clock to clear the block and to rebuild the stretch that collapsed on April 7. Authorities are urging travellers to be extra cautious while crossing the area as it has not been completely stabilised

MALDIVES

[Bill which grants President authority over LGA's Board sent to committee](#)

Sun Online | 12th April

People's Majlis has accepted the bill to amend Decentralization Act so that councilors are excluded from the Board of Local Government Authority (LGA), sending it to National Security Committee for evaluation. The bill was presented during this Tuesday's Majlis sitting on behalf of the government by Ungoofaaruu MP Jaufar Dawood. Jaufar's bill calls for Article 62 of the Decentralization Act to be amended.

[LGA Board to be established without Councilors](#)

Sun Online | 10th April

An amendment to the Local Government Authority (LGA) regulation has been brought in to the Parliament floor that would allow the LGA Board to be formed without the local councilors. The amendment submitted by the MP for Ungoofaaruu constituency, Jaufaru Dauood, leads to change the current formation of the LGA Board by making an amendment to Article 62 of the LGA Law.

MYANMAR

[China, Myanmar stress win-win cooperation to advance relations](#)

Global Times/Xinhua/ Mizzima | 12th April

China and Myanmar on Monday agreed to uphold the principle of mutual respect and win-win cooperation to promote the sustained, healthy and steady development of bilateral relations.

China appreciates Myanmar's support for and participation in the Belt and Road Initiative, President Xi Jinping said during talks with Myanmar President U Htin Kyaw. China will work with Myanmar to synergize the two nations' development strategies, and push forward cooperation in trade, investment, infrastructure, energy, agriculture, water conservation, electricity, finance and border economic cooperation zone, Xi said.

[China, Myanmar ink oil pipeline deal](#)

AFP/ Mizzima | 11th April 12

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NEPAL

[Constitution amendment: New bill registered at Parliament Secretariat](#)

The Kathmandu Post | 12th April

The government on Tuesday withdrew an earlier constitution amendment bill that it had tabled in Parliament on January 8 and registered a new proposal at the Parliament Secretariat. Unlike the earlier amendment proposal, the new proposal seeks to address the boundary row through a federal commission.

[World Bank extends \\$100m for financial sector stability](#)

The Kathmandu Post | 12th April

The International Development Association (IDA), the anti-poverty support programme of the World Bank Group, is providing \$100 million (approximately Rs10.70 billion) in loan assistance to the government to launch programmes to ensure stability in the financial sector. Finance Secretary Shanta Raj Subedi and the World Bank Country Director to Nepal Qumiao Fan signed an agreement in this regard on Tuesday.

[Nepal should not send labour to Qatar under Kafala law: Bundestag Vice President](#)

Himalayan News Service / The Himalayan Times | 12th April

Vice President of German Bundestag (Parliament) Claudia Roth today said Nepal should not send its workforce to Qatar, especially in the construction field under the current Kafala system in the Gulf state.

PAKISTAN

[Uzair Baloch taken into military custody: ISPR](#)

Express Tribune | 12th April

The army took custody of Lyari gang war leader Uzair Baloch, who was arrested by the Rangers from the outskirts of Karachi last year. In a tweet late Tuesday night, Director General of the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) Major General Asif Ghafoor said that Uzair Baloch was taken into military custody under the Pakistan Army Act 1952 and Official Secret Act, 1923. He further said that the high-profile criminal was taken into custody on charges of espionage (leakage of sensitive security information to foreign intelligence agencies).

[Pakistan's trade deficit widens to historic level](#)

Express Tribune | 11th April

In what is seen as a dangerous development for Pakistan's external sector, the monthly import bill crossed \$5 billion for the first time in March, which took the nine-month trade deficit to \$23.4 billion – also a new record. The gap between imports and exports stood at \$23.38 billion in the July-March period of current fiscal year, which was 38.8% or \$6.53 billion more than the comparative period of previous year, stated Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) on Tuesday.

[President Mamnoon invites Belarus to join CPEC](#)

Express Tribune | 12th April

Pakistan regards Belarus as an important country and is keen to further bilateral relations in various sectors to the mutual benefit of both countries, said Pakistan President Mamnoon Hussain on Tuesday. Talking to Belarus National Assembly House of Representatives Chairman Vladimir Andreichenko, Hussain welcomed Belarus to join the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) hoping it would quicken the pace of development in the region.

[US envoy appreciates Operation Radd-ul-Fasaad for eliminating terrorism](#)

Express Tribune | 11th April

US Ambassador to Pakistan David Hale appreciated the ongoing Operation Radd-ul-Fasaad to purge the country of terrorism, a statement issued by the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said. The envoy called on Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Qamar Javed Bajwa on Tuesday and discussed matters of regional security and mutual interest.

[India will go out of its way to save Jadhav from death row: Swaraj](#)

Dawn | 12th April

Indian Foreign Minister Sushma Swaraj on Tuesday assured lawmakers that New Delhi would go "out of its way" to save sentenced spy Kulbhushan Jadhav from death row in Pakistan, according to Indian media reports. Calling Jadhav "a son of India", Swaraj issued a warning to Pakistan saying, "I would caution the Pakistani government to consider the consequences for our bilateral relationship if they proceed on this matter."

[‘Pakistan to be the first country in South Asia to test 5G services’](#)

Dawn | 12th April

Minister of State for Information Technology Anusha Rehman on Tuesday said Pakistan would be the first country in South Asia to test 5th generation cellular services for fast connectivity. Speaking at the Information Communication Technology (ICT) awards ceremony, organised by the Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI), Ms Rehman said: "Pakistan recently won the GSMA award and ranked third in the list of mobile telecom operator groups." The government was working on a project to provide at least one mobile tower per 100 users in every village by 2030, she added.

[Building walls, fences won't end cross-border terrorism, says Afghan envoy](#)

Dawn | 12th April

People of the same nation (Pakhtuns) resided on both sides of the border and the Afghan government was not in favour of increasing distances among them, he explained, adding that Pakistan would not close the border with Afghanistan in future. While he admitted that there was tension between the two countries, he stressed that talks were under way to solve those problems. When asked about his recent meeting with National Security Adviser retired Lt Gen Nasir Khan Janjua, the ambassador said he had met the heads of various institutions, including Gen Janjua, to improve bilateral relations.

SRI LANKA

[Tight fiscal and monetary policies expected to constrain Sri Lanka's growth next year](#)

Colombo Gazette | 11th April

Sri Lanka's economic growth in 2017 and 2018 will be constrained by tight fiscal and monetary policies under the International Monetary Fund (IMF) program and private investment will have to play a primary role in maintaining economic growth, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) says.

[Japan and Sri Lanka will look to further boost the bilateral relationship](#)

Colombo Page | 11th April

Sri Lanka Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe, who is in Japan on an official visit, has met with the President of Sri Lanka - Japan Parliament Friendship Association Wataru Takeshita on Tuesday. During the meeting, Mr. Takeshita has said that Japan and Sri Lanka will look to further boost the decades-long bilateral relationship between the two countries. He further said that Japan would lend their fullest support for Sri Lanka's development activities.

[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. "We are currently negotiating the specifics of the joint venture," Sri Lanka's Petroleum Minister Chandima Weerakkody told The Hindu.

[China, Sri Lanka vow to develop strategic cooperative partnership](#)

Colombo Gazette | 9th April

China and Sri Lanka have pledged here to deepen pragmatic cooperation in all fields to further develop the

strategic cooperative partnership between the two countries, the Xinhua news agency reported. The pledge was made when visiting Chinese top political advisor Yu Zhengsheng held talks with Sri Lankan leaders.

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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