

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

January 12th, 2018 | Volume: 4 - 4/01

[Local uprising forces clash with US Special Forces in Nangarhar](#)

Khaama Press | 12th January
A clash broke out between the local uprising forces and the US Special Forces in eastern Nangarhar province of Afghanistan on Thursday, the local officials said. The incident took place in the vicinity of Achin district where an operation is underway to eliminate the loyalists of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) terrorist group. Achin district administrative chief Ismail Shinwari confirmed the incident but did not elaborate further saying still there is no information available regarding the cause of the incident and possible casualties.

[World Bank projects 6.4pc growth for current fiscal](#)

The Financial Express | 10th January
World Bank has estimated that Bangladesh economy will grow by 6.40 per cent in the current fiscal year (FY18). The multilateral lending agency came up with the growth projection in its Global Economic Prospects released on Wednesday. It also projected that annual growth rate of Bangladesh economy would increase to 6.70 per cent in the next fiscal year.

[Indian PM to visit Maldives](#)

Sun Online | 11th January
Accepting the invitation by the President Abdulla Yameen Abdul Gayoom to visit the country at a convenient time, the Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi. The visit was announced in a statement by the Indian government following the PM's meeting with the Maldivian Foreign Minister, Dr. Mohamed Asim, in New Delhi on his current visit to India. The Indian government said that PM Modi will visit the Maldives at his convenience but did not give any further details on a specific date of visit.

AFGHANISTAN

[US Program to Revive Afghan Economy Fails: SIGAR](#)

Daily Outlook Afghanistan | 11th January
A SIGAR report showed the Task Force for Business and Stability Operations program to be inept and beyond the Defense Department's capabilities. A report by the US Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction says a program by the Defense Department of the United States has spent \$675 million USD to revive the Afghan economy, but it could not provide reliable data on where the money went. "DOD was unable to provide reliable data showing the extent to which TFBSO projects created jobs, facilitated foreign direct investments, increased exports, or increased Afghan government revenues," the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) said in the report titled DOD Task Force for Business and Stability Operations (TFBSO).

[Abdullah Wants Accord on Refugees Enforced In Letter and Spirit](#)

Daily Outlook Afghanistan | 11th January
Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Dr. Abdullah Abdullah says the issue of refugees should not be politicised and a three-way agreement on the subject implemented in letter and spirit. In a statement from his office on Wednesday, the CEO underlined the need for the complete execution of the accord among Afghanistan, Pakistan and the UN refugee agency. Earlier, Pakistan extended the stay of Afghan refugees for a month. The decision came at a federal cabinet meeting days after the US blamed Pakistan for sheltering some of the fiercest Taliban factions.

At a meeting of the Council of Ministers in Kabul on Tuesday, Minister of Refugees and Repatriation Syed Hussain Alami Balkhi briefed participants on the Afghans living in Pakistan.

[Afghan Air Force carry out more raids on ISIS targets in Kunar](#)

Khaama Press | 11th January

The Afghan Air Force continues to pound the ISIS targets in eastern Kunar province of Afghanistan in response to a large scale attack which was repulsed earlier this week. The 201st Silab Corps of the Afghan army said the latest airstrikes were carried out in the vicinity of Suki district. A statement by the Silab Corps said at least three ISIS militants were killed and a 82mm rocket launcher, 2 Ak-47s rifles were destroyed in the airstrikes. The anti-government armed militant groups have not commented regarding the reports so far. Kunar is among the relatively volatile provinces in East of Afghanistan where the anti-government armed militants including the Taliban and ISIS insurgents are actively operating in some of its and often carry out insurgency activities.

BANGLADESH

[Indians paying for free visa](#)

The Daily Star | 12th January

If an Indian citizen with a valid passport is willing to pay 1,800-2,000 rupees, he or she can get a Bangladeshi visa for a month sitting at home. The person doesn't even have to fill out a visa application form online or make any effort to go to a Bangladesh mission to submit a printed copy of the filled-in form. The cost, however, will go up if the person wants a visa for a longer period. And the ones offering "the hassle-free visa service" are some middlemen who loiter around the Bangladeshi missions in Delhi and Kolkata. All this was revealed by a recent report of the Bangladesh home ministry.

[Pre-paid food card for refugees, locals](#)

The Daily Star | 12th January The World Food Programme has planned an e-voucher programme for 12 lakh people -- 10 lakh Rohingyas and 2 lakh locals -- in Cox's Bazar by September of this year. It is hoped that this will help improve their nutritional intake and check any possible socio-economic instability. "When we just distribute rice, lentils and oil, they are not getting all the nutrition they need. As we introduce the new programme, they feel dignified. It also gives them choice," said Rehan Asad, chief of staff of WFP, in an interview on January 9 at the UN office in the capital.

BHUTAN

[RCSC reforms doctors' career path](#)

KUENSEL | 11th January

In a move to make up for the seniority lost, to attract, retain and motivate doctors who are in critical shortage in the civil service, the Royal Civil Service Commission (RCSC) has reformed their career path with four special provisions. The provisions, which were approved for doctors by the commission and introduced in 2015, are now incorporated in the revised Bhutan Civil Service Rules (BCSR) 2018. The four provisions are meritorious promotion for senior doctors, entry level at P3 for doctors with masters, more than two years study to be considered active service for promotion of doctors, and first promotion after three years plus one year of probation. With the amendment, the BCSR 2018 states that according to section 13.6.7.1 civil servants irrespective of the entry position level shall be eligible for their first promotion after serving five years, including probation period while for a civil servant in Schedule 13/A, four years including probation period shall apply.

[Japan gifts 353 more power tillers](#)

KUENSEL | 11th January

Come summer, farmers across Bhutan will have access to more power tillers to help them complete paddy transplantation works on time. The Ambassador of Japan to Bhutan, Kenji Hiramatsu handed over 353 sets of power tillers and accessories worth Nu 137 million to agriculture minister Yeshey Dorji in a simple ceremony at the Agriculture Machinery Centre in Paro yesterday. The power tillers were received through the project that was initiated in 2015 based on the request for 1,450 power tillers. Since then Japan provided 592 power tillers.

[Bhutan participates in international renewable energy assembly](#)

KUENSEL | 11th January

A Bhutanese delegation led by the economic affairs minister, will attend the 8th Session of General Assembly of the international Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) from January 13 in Abu Dhabi, UAE. The General Assembly is IRENA's supreme decision-making body. IRENA is an inter-governmental organisation that supports countries

in their transition to a sustainable energy future. The Assembly will hold discussions on current trends in renewable energy policy and technology.

MALDIVES

[Indian parliament debates FTA between Maldives and China](#)

Sun Online | 10th January

Indian Parliament has debated the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between China and the Maldives for a second time. Indian media outlets have reported that the Indian Parliament discussed the effects of the FTA to India. The debate was led by the National Congress. The Indian Parliament has previously discussed the FTA in the past as well. Indian media outlets have reported that the agreement could potentially affect the relations between India and the Maldives.

MYANMAR

[Shallow 6.0-magnitude earthquake hits Myanmar: USGS](#)

AFP / mizzima | 12th January

A strong 6.0-magnitude earthquake hit a remote region of central Myanmar early Friday, the US Geological Survey said. The shallow quake struck some 40 kilometres (24 miles) west of the town of Pyu, the USGS said. It was followed by three weaker tremors in the region, all of magnitudes 5.3, the survey reported. "There is a low likelihood of casualties and damage," USGS said, but noted that residential structures in the region are typically vulnerable to earthquake shaking. The epicentre was located in a sparsely populated region between the capital Naypyidaw to the north and commercial hub Yangon to the south, at least 150 kilometres from each.

[Myanmar army admits 10 Rohingya killed by security forces, villagers](#)

AFP / mizzima | 11th January

Myanmar security forces have admitted in a press release that 10 arrested Rohingya Muslims were killed by security personnel and villagers in what appears to have been a revenge attack. The press release from the army chief's office, issued January 10, says "the security personnel from Inn Din village were attacked by about 200 Bengali terrorists with sticks and swords while they were conducting area clearing operations at the areas near the seashore on September 1 and then they fired warning shots in the air in retaliation." After that local Rohingya fled the scene and they were chased in hot pursuit leading to the arrest of the 10. The press release admitted for the first time that abuses took place during a crackdown that sparked a mass exodus of the Muslim minority.

[Chairman of UEHRD 'prays' for smooth and successful reception of refugees](#)

mizzima | 12th January

Chairman of the Union Enterprise of Humanitarian Assistance, Resettlement and Development (UEHRD) for Rakhine State, Dr Win Myat Aye, told Mizzima that he prayed for a smooth and successful reception of those who fled to Bangladesh when they are repatriated. "We are doing our best for security. In fact, repatriation is the good matter. Those who lived here fled to the other side under various circumstances and the government has a responsibility to receive them back. I pray for having a lot of people who will help us," Dr Win Myat Aye said. Dr Win Myat Aye was speaking when asked if there would be any impact on the repatriation programme after the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) threatened the government with renewed attacks. Dr Win Myat Aye who is also the Union Minister of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement, said, "These troubles and obstacles will not benefit [anyone]. So, I wish hope there will be no trouble or obstacles to our works." ARSA stated on January 7 they will launch attacks in Rakhine State.

NEPAL

[With new govt delayed, poll losers still minister](#)

MyRepublica | 12th January

At least 14 ministers out of the total of 33 in the Sher Bahadur Deuba government are still heading key ministries despite losing the elections as the formation of a new government is being delayed. With the new government expected only after the end of February, they will get a chance to lead the government for three months even after their election defeat.

['Nepal Power Investment Summit 2018' from Jan 27](#)

MyRepublica | 12th January

Energy Development Council (EDC) is organizing Nepal Power Investment Summit 2018 in Kathmandu on January 27-29. The event is being organized with the slogans '40,000 MW in 10 years' and 'Assemble Electric in

Nepal'. Two conferences are being organized on the sidelines of the event. The summit will see the participation of multinational investment companies, world's famous speakers, government officials, officials of the EDC, and other stakeholders, the organizers said in a press meet in Kathmandu on Thursday.

[EPG talks make 'significant progress'](#)

The Himalayan Times | 12th January

The sixth meeting of the Eminent Persons Group on Nepal-India relations which kicked-off in New Delhi, India, today continued discussions on regular bilateral issues such as those related to the 1950 treaty, trade and transit, water resources, floods, and border issues, among others. The EPG has been mandated to submit a joint report to the respective governments including recommendations to resolve all contentious issues in Nepal-India relations.

PAKISTAN

[NA session may witness uproar over Kasur incident, Fata reforms bill](#)

Dawn | 12th January

A session of the National Assembly, which will begin on Friday (today), may witness heated debates over the rape and murder of a minor girl in Kasur this week and the government's failure to table the Fata (Federally Administered Tribal Areas) reforms bill which seeks merger of the tribal areas with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

[Pakistan, US in 'secret talks'](#)

The Express Tribune | 12th January

Far from the public posturing and rhetoric, Pakistan and the United States are thought to be holding 'secret talks' in a desperate attempt to avoid a complete rupture in their fragile relations. Officials familiar with the development said some Trump administration's officials visited Islamabad this week and held talks with their Pakistani interlocutors, in what appears to be a last ditch effort to find a common ground in the fight against terrorism.

[New energy policy 'in final stages'](#)

The Express Tribune | 12th January

Minister for Power Awaiz Khan Leghari has said that the National Electricity Plan and the government's new energy policy are in the final stages, being developed with full participation of the provinces. "The plan will be of utmost importance" in determining the demand and supply situation in the country, said the minister while presiding over the 113th meeting of the Private Power and Infrastructure Board (PPIB) held in Islamabad.

[With CPEC in mind, PIA to start Islamabad-Gwadar flights](#)

The Express Tribune | 12th January

Amid demand emanating from the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) is set to start direct flights from Islamabad to Gwadar as the national carrier looks to gain air traffic and reduce its losses. The cash-strapped national carrier faces more than Rs319.1 billion in accumulated losses by the end of March 2017, but is now looking to remove loss-making routes from its agenda, while adding new and profitable destinations to its schedule.

Sri Lanka

[Sri Lanka Central Bank to carry out forensic audits into the Treasury bond issues during 2008 - 2014](#)

Colombo Page | 11th January

Sri Lanka's Central Bank said that it will initiate measures to carry out forensic audits in relation to the issuance of Treasury bonds during the 2008 to 2014 and the Treasury bond auctions held in March 2016. Issuing a statement, the Monetary Board of the Central Bank said on 10, January 2018 the Secretary to the President, handed over a copy of the report of the Commission of Inquiry to Investigate, Inquire and Report on the Issuance of Treasury Bonds (COI) during the period from 1st February 2015 to 31st March 2016 to Governor, Central Bank of Sri Lanka entrusting the task of considering giving effect to the recommendations contained in the Report.

[Sri Lanka PM says 50,000 housing units will be constructed in Colombo city for middle income earners](#)

Colombo Page | 12th January

Sri Lanka Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe said that 50,000 housing units will be constructed soon for the Colombo city dwellers and a sum of Rs, 75 million has been set aside for the purpose. The houses will be made available on easy loan terms to middle income earners, the Premier said. The Prime Minister disclosed this at a public rally held in Wellawatta today in support of the Colombo United National Party (UNP) mayoral candidate

Rosy Senanayake. The Premier further said that all details regarding the beautification of the Colombo city came to be known by the Prime Minister. After three years the country is continuing to pay for those expenses busting the Treasury.

[Russia keen to expand trade with Sri Lanka](#)

Colombo Page| 11th January

The Russian Federation has revealed that its historic longing for Ceylon Tea has not wavered and even vowed for bigger trade with Sri Lanka, calling to dispatch a strong delegation to the trade meet scheduled in Moscow this year, according to Sri Lankan Minister of Industry and Commerce Rishad Bathiudeen. Russia expressed its keenness to expand its trade relations with Sri Lanka beyond the imports when Russian Ambassador to Sri Lanka Yury Materiy met with Minister Bathiudeen in Colombo.

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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