

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

**January 13th, 2017 | Volume: 3 - 6/1**

[Shafiq-Era Water Pact with Iran to be Enforced: Ghani](#)

Daily Outlook Afghanistan | 12<sup>th</sup> January

President Ashraf Ghani has called the Helmand River agreement with Iran as one of the important achievements of former Prime Minister Musa Shafiq, saying it is the responsibility of the current government to implement it. The president said that Shafiq had been under pressure from critics to cancel the agreement, but the former Prime Minister believed Afghanistan and its neighbours would understand their interests and treat each other as friends. Speaking at a seminar on the 90th birth anniversary of Musa Shafiq, Ghani referred to the Helmand River agreement. "Article 5 says Iran has no claim to more water than what has been specified in the accord, even if there is a larger amount of water available in the river."

[Sri Lanka Ports and Shipping Minister raises suspicions of a foreign conspiracy against the development of Hambanthota port](#)

Colombo Page | 12<sup>th</sup> January  
Sri Lanka's Minister of Ports and Shipping Arjuna Ranatunga today raised suspicions that there is a conspiracy against bringing foreign investors to develop the Hambanthota Port. Addressing media at a religious event held in Baduragoda today, Minister Ranatunga said he there is speculation that a major country in the South Asia region would lose businesses to Sri Lanka when construction of a canal with the Chinese funds in Thailand is completed and that country may be behind the opposition to the development of the southern port.

[Bangladesh urges Myanmar to end unrest](#)

AFP / Mizzima | 13<sup>th</sup> January  
Bangladesh urged Myanmar Thursday to end months of violence that has forced tens of thousands of Rohingya to flee across the border, saying the influx was hitting economic development. At least 65,000 Rohingya have fled to Bangladesh since Myanmar launched a military operation in October following attacks on police posts in western Rakhine state, a third of them over the past week.

**AFGHANISTAN**

[Taliban suffer heavy casualties as 2 major IED factories destroyed in Nimroz](#)

Khaama Press | 13<sup>th</sup> January

The Taliban militants suffered heavy casualties during an operation of the Afghan security forces in western Nimroz province of Afghanistan, the Ministry of Interior (MoI) said Thursday. According to a statement by MoI, at least 80 Taliban insurgents were killed and two large Improvised Explosive Device (IED) factories were destroyed during the operation. The statement further added that the militants suffered casualties during the operations which were launched ten days ago in Khashrud district.

[Deadly Kandahar blast: Five UAE diplomats among 12 killed](#)

Afghanistan Times | 11<sup>th</sup> January

At least 12 people were killed and 18 others including provincial governor and the United Arab Emirates ambassador to Kabul wounded in an explosion in the southern Kandahar province on Tuesday evening, officials said. The bombing targeted governor Homayoun Azizi and the ambassador Juma Mohammad Abdullah al-Kaabi's meeting at Azizi's guest house in the Kandahar city, provincial capital. "The blast took place at around 6:30pm," said Kandahar Police Chief Abdul Raziq Achakzai, adding that 11 were killed.

## BANGLADESH

### [Khaleda loses review appeal in HC to halt Zia Charitable Trust graft case proceedings](#)

bdnews24 | 12<sup>th</sup> January

The High Court has thrown out former prime minister Khaleda Zia's petition to review its earlier decision that scrapped her plea to halt case proceedings in Zia Charitable Trust graft case. The bench of Justice M Enayetur Rahim and Justice JBM Hassan issued the order on Thursday. Badruddoza Badal, a lawyer for BNP Chairperson Khaleda, said they had filed the petition as the rule to administer oath of witnesses by 'God' was not followed while recording statements of 32 witnesses presented by his client.

### [India to open a new mission in Bangladesh's Khulna](#)

bdnews24 | 12<sup>th</sup> January

India has decided to open an Assistant High Commission in Khulna recognising the "importance" of the south-western district in India-Bangladesh relations, the high commissioner has said. "We hope to have this set up at the earliest possible once the formalities are completed," Harsh Vardhan Shringla said while addressing business leaders at a function of the Khulna Chamber of Commerce and Industry on Thursday. India has currently two assistant high commissions in Bangladesh – Chittagong and Rajshahi – apart from the High Commission in Dhaka.

### [Rohingya issue to be solved soon: Foreign Minister](#)

UNB/ Prothom Alo | 12<sup>th</sup> January

Foreign minister AH Mahmood Ali on Thursday said Bangladesh is 'quite evidently' heading towards next step to have a permanent solution to Rohingya issue. "Surely, they'll have to take back their nationals ... we're heading towards next step quite evidently," he told reporters at a press conference at the Foreign Ministry. He said they have seen sincerity from the Myanmar side in resolving the issue.

### [Data gap holds back Bangladesh's march for achieving SDGs](#)

The Financial Express | 13<sup>th</sup> January

Bangladesh is facing a serious shortage of data related to indicators of sustainable development goals (SDGs), incapacitating the government to move ahead with proper plans for achieving the goals and targets. Almost three-fourths of the indicators lack data mainly in areas of environment and maritime, sources said. The SDGs consist of 17 goals, 169 targets and 230 indicators.

## BHUTAN

### [Education ministry to recruit over 600 support staff](#)

Kuensel | 12<sup>th</sup> January

Over 200 matrons and wardens, and at least 402 support staff will be recruited to reduce the workload on teachers by sparing them from non-teaching activities, it was decided at the ongoing National Education Conference in Phuentsholing yesterday. Education ministry's chief human resource officer Kinley Gyeltshen said that the Royal Civil Service Commission has already approved recruitment of 200 matrons and wardens this year, and at least 402 support staff in the schools in the next four years. "Vacancies will soon be announced and the dzongkhag education offices can start the recruitment soon," Kinley Gyeltshen said.

### [Physical violence against children common in Bhutan](#)

Kuensel | 12<sup>th</sup> January

More than six out of 10 children aged between 13 to 17 years have experienced at least one incident of physical violence, a study on violence against children in Bhutan has found. The report produced by the National Commission for Women and Children (NCWC), the government and UNICEF Bhutan in May 2016 stated that physical violence that caused bodily harm was inflicted by the use of physical force which included the use of weapons and by forcing children to withstand extraneous and excessive physical endurance.

## MALDIVES

### [PPM to hold primary in January with 600 candidates](#)

Sun Online | 11<sup>th</sup> January

Ruling political party, Progressive Party of Maldives (PPM) has announced its primary for the upcoming Local Council Election will be held within January. Civil Court ordered a two-month postponement to Local Council Election – originally scheduled for January 14 – after PPM filed a lawsuit claiming inability to prepare for the election due to inner-conflicts within the party, changes to management of the party and loss of important documentation. Elections Commission has announced the Local Council Election will be held on April 8.

## MYANMAR

### [Budget, taxes and foreigner bill top agenda for coming Hluttaw session](#)

Myanmar Times | 13<sup>th</sup> January

Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Joint Bill Committee member U Kyaw Soe Lin told The Myanmar Times, “The main item on the agenda is the foreigners’ bill. Apart from that, we will be discussing the exchange of culprits bill. As international investment will continue to enter the country, these will be the main issues.” The bill governing the status of foreigners will be a revised version of an earlier law relating to citizenship and foreign status, he said. The text is subject to ongoing discussions with government experts.

### [Special envoy meets with Bangladesh PM, foreign minister](#)

Myanmar Times | 13<sup>th</sup> January

Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs U Kyaw Tin yesterday held talks with Bangladesh’s prime minister, foreign minister and foreign affairs secretary. According to a Myanmar spokesperson, the discussions centred around promoting the “bilateral relationship of the two countries” and also addressed the peace and security of the shared border.

### [Myanmar’s fourth telco gets licence at last](#)

Myanmar Times | 13<sup>th</sup> January

The Ministry of Transport and Communication formally awarded the firm – Myanmar National Tele & Communications (MNTC) – a licence yesterday in Nay Pyi Taw, U Than Htun Aung, director of the ministry’s Posts and Telecommunications Department, told The Myanmar Times. MNTC is a tie up between Vietnam defence ministry owned-firm Viettel, a consortium of 11 local firms called Myanmar National Telecom Holding Public, and a subsidiary of military-run Myanmar Economic Corporation called Star High Public Company.

### [NCA Signatories Plan to Meet State Counselor, Burma Army Chief](#)

The Irrawaddy | 12<sup>th</sup> January A coalition of eight armed groups who signed the nationwide ceasefire agreement (NCA) have requested a meeting with the State Counselor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and army chief Snr-Gen Min Aung Hlaing to find solutions to ongoing armed conflict in Shan and Kachin states and to the country’s stunted peace process.

## NEPAL

### [Govt sacks NRA CEO Gyewali, appoints Pokharel](#)

My Republica | 12<sup>th</sup> January

The government on Wednesday sacked the CEO of National Reconstruction Authority (NRA) Sushil Gyewali from the post and appointed former vice-chairman of the National Planning Commission Govinda Raj Pokharel as replacement.

### [Nepal raises labour issues with Qatar](#)

The Kathmandu Post | 12<sup>th</sup> January

Foreign Minister Prakash Sharan Mahat, who is currently in Qatar on an official visit, has raised the issue of safety and benefits of Nepali migrants working in the Gulf emirate. During the meetings, Mahat suggested the Qatari government build temporary shelters for workers facing problem at their work place, according to the statement, adding that he had urged the Qatar government to set up a mechanism at the Labour Ministry to settle the disputes of Nepali migrant workers who are not paid on time.

### [Government reviving sick industries: PM Dahal](#)

My Republica | 12<sup>th</sup> January

Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal on Wednesday said that the government was working to breathe new life into sick industries. He also said that the newly endorsed Industrial Enterprises Act will usher in industrial development in the

country. Addressing the 66th Annual General Meeting of Nepal Chamber of Commerce (NCC) and the Chamber Day celebration, Dahal said that the new law will contribute to economic development of the country.

#### [PM Pushpa Kamal Dahal to attend energy summit in UAE](#)

Himalayan News Service / The Himalayan Times | 13<sup>th</sup> January

Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal is set to embark on a four-day visit to United Arab Emirates on Saturday. He will attend the World Future Energy Summit 2017 in Abu Dhabi on January 16. He will also visit Dubai, the most populous city of the UAE, and meet his counterpart Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, according to the Prime Minister's Press Adviser Govinda Acharya. He will also interact with Nepali migrant workers and representatives of various Nepali associations based in Dubai.

### PAKISTAN

#### [Centre rejects Sindh's plea for action against 'suspected' seminaries](#)

The Dawn | 13<sup>th</sup> January

The federal government has rejected the Sindh government's request for taking action against certain "suspected" seminaries, describing the information provided in this regard by the provincial authorities as "insufficient, ambiguous and without any credible evidence". Through a letter, the interior ministry has instead asked the Sindh government to inform the federal government of the action the provincial authorities have so far taken against the "suspected" seminaries, if it has any concrete evidence against them because taking action against such elements falls in the domain of the provincial governments.

#### ['PM may have omitted details from NA speech'](#)

The Dawn | 13<sup>th</sup> January

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif did not intentionally suppress any facts in his speech before the National Assembly on the Panama Papers issue, rather he gave a broad overview about his family's businesses set up by his father, the counsel for the prime minister told the Supreme Court on Wednesday. "The prime minister may have inadvertently omitted something, but he was not making a sworn, itemised submission in a court of law," Makhdoom Ali Khan argued before a five-judge Supreme Court bench hearing petitions seeking the disqualification of the prime minister under Article 63(1 f) of the Constitution.

#### [PM launches National Health Programme in Narowal](#)

The Express Tribune | 13<sup>th</sup> January

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif launched on Thursday the National Health Programme for families in Narowal. "This is just the beginning of the health programme as it will reach other districts as well," the premier told the launching ceremony in the Punjab district.

#### [Senate's Committee on Human Rights to debate how to prevent misuse of blasphemy laws](#)

The Express Tribune | 13<sup>th</sup> January

A Senate committee is set to debate how to prevent the country's blasphemy laws being applied unfairly. Senator Farhatullah Babar said the Senate Committee on Human Rights, of which he is a member, will start discussions on blasphemy laws as early as next week, based on recommendations from a 24-year-old report. He said it would be the first time in decades that any parliamentary body had considered a formal proposal to stop the abuse of the blasphemy laws.

### SRI LANKA

#### [Sri Lanka committed to implement the UN resolution](#)

Colombo Gazette | 12<sup>th</sup> January

Foreign Minister Mangala Samaraweera says Sri Lanka is committed to the implementation of the UN resolution so that as a country it can deal with the past honestly and truthfully, accept that past, put it behind and then move forward to build the Sri Lankan nation anew. Speaking at the Royal Institute of International Affairs in London, the Foreign Minister said that a set of actions that the Government has identified to deal with the past in a comprehensive

manner, addressing the grievances of all victims, include truth seeking, justice, reparation and measures for guaranteeing non-recurrence

### [Muslim body takes up Muslim issues with US envoy](#)

Colombo Gazette|12<sup>th</sup> January

The Muslim Council of Sri Lanka (MCSL) met the US Ambassador Atul Keshap and apprised him of the issues facing the Muslim community in the light of a recent resurgence of Sinhala-Buddhist extremism with the tacit support of a section of the Government, the New Indian Express reported. Briefing Express on the meeting, MCSL member and media personality Hilmy Ahamed said that the Ambassador was concerned about the fate of the post-war ethnic reconciliation process and said that he, along with some other envoys, was talking to various sections of the government about the need to keep the process on track.

### [Report raises concerns over transitional justice in Sri Lanka](#)

Colombo Gazette|12<sup>th</sup> January

A proposed delay in setting up a special war crimes court by “sequencing” transitional justice mechanisms has deepened concerns about the process being independent, a world report released today said. The Government should ensure greater transparency and progress in meeting its undertakings to the United Nations Human Rights Council, Human Rights Watch said in its World Report 2017. The President and other senior officials have downplayed the Government’s commitment to international involvement in key transitional justice mechanisms, and need to make justice a top priority.

### [Sri Lanka will work out the architecture of a domestic mechanism - Foreign Minister](#)

Colombo Page|12<sup>th</sup> January

The government of Sri Lanka, as a democratic and sovereign government, will work out the architecture of an independent and credible domestic mechanism in consultation with all the stake holders to address the national reconciliation and accountability, the country's Foreign Minister said. Foreign Affairs Minister Mangala Samaraweera said while there are divergent views even within the government in respect of the participation of foreign judges in the proposed judicial mechanism, there is a clear consensus across the board on the need of an independent and credible domestic mechanism as promised by the manifesto of President Maithripala Sirisena.

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