



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

November 13th , 2017 | Volume: 3 - 3/11

[Bahrami Reports on NATO Meeting, Says Insurgent Attacks up by 13%](#)

Daily Outlook Afghanistan | 13th November

Acting defense minister Gen. Tariq Shah Bahrami said on Sunday that in the past seven months insurgent attacks have increased by 13 percent. He also stated that the casualty toll among insurgents in this time has risen by 11 percent. Addressing a press conference in Kabul on Sunday, after returning from last week's NATO defense ministers meeting in Brussels, Bahrami said that although the number of attacks have increased, the casualty toll among insurgents was much higher than that sustained by the Afghan security forces. He reiterated NATO secretary general Jens Stoltenberg's announcement that the organization would also be sending in more troops, in addition to the United States' troop surge of about 4,000.

[US nudging India, Pakistan to table](#)

The Express Tribune | 13th November

The United States is quietly pushing Pakistan and India to re-engage as the Trump administration seeks to defuse tensions between the nuclear-tipped neighbours in order to have a more focused approach on the Afghan endgame. Government officials and diplomatic sources said US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson took up the issue with the leadership of both Pakistan and India during his recent visit to the two countries. Behind the scenes, efforts appear to have started paying dividends since Tillerson's visit, as there has been a noticeable reduction in violence along the Line of Control (LoC) in the disputed Kashmir region. Also last week, cross-LoC trade resumed after remaining suspended for four months.

[Gas crisis hurting output in industrial belt](#)

The Financial Express | 10th November

Factories in the country's Tongi-Gazipur industrial belt have been facing acute gas crisis over the past few months following diversion of gas to 'upstream' power plants. The crisis has deteriorated further this week albeit some improvements for a few days last week, said local industrialists and businessmen. According to them, if the ongoing gas crisis persists they may be forced to shut down their factories. Officials of the Titas Gas Transmission and Distribution Company Limited (TGTDC), however, blamed the Petrobangla for the gas crunch.

AFGHANISTAN

[Taliban Key Impediment to Afghan Settlement: US](#)

Daily Outlook Afghanistan | 13th November

A top American diplomat has told lawmakers that the Taliban are key impediment to a negotiated political settlement in Afghanistan, adding the US wants the Taliban on the table as early as possible. "The key impediment to achieving a peaceful negotiated settlement is the unwillingness of the Taliban to engage directly with the government of Afghanistan," acting assistant secretary for South and Central Asian Affairs and Acting Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan Alice Wells told lawmakers during a Congressional hearing this week. "We have to change that calculus of the Taliban using both military and political means."

[NATO Plus-Up Will Give Afghan Forces an Offensive Boost: Gen. Nicholson](#)

Khaama Press | 13th November

The commander of the NATO Resolute Support Mission and the US forces in Afghanistan says with an increase in troops, the U.S. and NATO strategy in Afghanistan has a good chance of enabling Afghan security forces to do more to secure their country. "We fought most of the year ... at the lowest level of capability that we've ever had in the 16 years [of the Afghan conflict]," Nicholson was quoted as saying in a statement by Pentagon. He also added that "It was the lowest level of capability and the highest level of risk we've faced in this time."

[Trump allows US troops to jointly conduct operations with Afghan force](#)

Khaama Press | 13th November

The administration of President Donald Trump has allowed the US troops to accompany and jointly conduct operations with the Afghan security forces, it has been reported. According to the Pentagon officials, hundreds of US troops will accompany the Afghan forces during the counter-terrorism operations, mainly to coordinate air and artillery strikes. "Hundreds of American troops will accompany Afghan forces on combat missions, where they will be able to directly request bombing raids and artillery fire for their Afghan partners," the Pentagon officials have told Foreign Policy.

BANGLADESH

[Govt seeks US\\$1.83b under 39th Japanese ODA package](#)

The Financial Express | 12th November

The government has sought around US\$1.83 billion worth of assistance from Japan for bankrolling six development projects, officials said Saturday. Officials at the Ministry of Finance (MoF) said they have already discussed the issue with the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). "We are hopeful of receiving funds under its upcoming 39th Official Development Assistance (ODA) package to finance six development projects," a senior MoF official told the FE. He said a JICA mission in September-October last completed its visit to Bangladesh to explore the possibilities of financing the proposed projects.

[BNP will turn Awami League workers into human beings: Khaleda](#)

bdnews24 | 13th November

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia has said neither she nor her party will exact revenge on the Awami League if her

party comes to power but she will 'make Awami League workers real human beings'. She made the remarks while criticising the ruling party in her speech at a party rally at Suhrawardy Udyan in Dhaka on Sunday. The BNP chief said all her party wanted to do is get some 'corrective measures' for the Awami League.

[Arrests cannot be made under Section 57 without investigation, says IGP](#)

bdnews24 | 12th November

Inspector General of Police AKM Shahidul Hoque has assured journalists that they cannot be arrested under the Information and Communication Technology Act without an investigation. The Bangladesh Police chief made the statement during a conference with journalists at the Chandpur Press Club Auditorium on Saturday.

“A journalist will not be harassed or arrested under a Section 57 case without an investigation,” IGP Hoque said. Many Section 57 cases have been pouring in from across the country, the IGP said. “So, an instruction from the police headquarters has been issued on this matter.”

BHUTAN

[India commits support to Bhutan's 11th and 12 Plans](#)

Kuensel|11th November

The 6th annual Bhutan-India Development Cooperation Talks was held yesterday in New Delhi, India. Foreign Secretary Sonam Tshong led the Bhutanese delegation, while Vijay Gokhale, Secretary (Economic Relations), led the Indian delegation. As Bhutan enters the tail end of 11th Five Year Plan (2013 – 2018), the two sides reviewed the progress of GOI-sponsored projects under the components of the Project Tied Assistance (PTA) and Small Development Projects (SDP). India had committed Rs 45 billion (B) for the 11th Plan, of which Rs 28B was provided as PTA, Rs 8.5B for SDPs and Rs 8.5B as programme grants. GoI had also provided Rs 5 billion for the Economic Stimulus Plan. A total of 83 PTA projects and 595 SDPs are being implemented during the current Plan. Both sides expressed satisfaction with the progress in the implementation of all these projects. Bhutan expressed appreciation to GoI for its support for the 11th Plan.

[Dekiling quartzite mining applicant appeals to PM](#)

Kuensel|11th November

Almost a month after the Sarpang Dzongkhag Tshogdu (DT) resolved to deny approval to a private individual proposing to set up a stone (quartzite) quarry in Pharkey, Dekiling gewog, the applicant has appealed to the Prime Minister. In his appeal letter, the proponent Kinley Wangdi said that it has been 11 years since he first proposed the Department of Geology and Mines (DGM) to set up a stone quarry. The proposal was found feasible by DGM following a public clearing he had sought promising to build a bridge and road, the appeal states. Two years later the department had written to the dzongkhag administration and the dzongkhag discussed the issue at the 87th DT, which resolved to allow the stone quarry.

MALDIVES

[President: Area near Kulhudhuffushi can be developed to create 1,500 tourist beds](#)

Sun Online| 13th November

1,500 tourist beds can be created from developing the lagoons and islands near H. Dh. Kulhudhuffushi as resorts, says president Abdulla Yameen Abdul Gayoom. Speaking at Progressive Party of Maldives's "Udhuey" function at Kulhudhuffushi last Sunday night, Yameen said there were prime lagoons and islands a mere 20-minute speedboat ride away from Kulhudhuffushi that can be developed as resorts.

“The size of each lagoon is incredible. If the numbers I have received are accurate, one of the lagoons is 785-hectares. The other lagoon is some 1,000-hectares,” said Yameen.

[IBM lays foundation for bottling plant at Kulhudhuffushi](#)

Sun Online|12th November

Island Beverages Maldives (IBM) has laid the foundation and launched construction of a bottling plant at H. Dh. Kulhudhuffushi. The foundation for the bottling plant was laid in a function held this Sunday morning by Minister of Housing and Infrastructure, Dr. Mohamed Muizzu; Managing Director of MWSC and IBM, Ibrahim Fazul Rasheed; and General Manager of IBM, Mohamed Shafeeq. IBM is spending MVR 25 million from its budget for the plant. Speaking at the function, Managing Director Fazul said the plant will create 15 to 20 new job opportunities.

MYANMAR

[Aung San Suu Kyi attends APEC ahead of ASEAN meet](#)

Mizzima|11th November

Myanmar State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi is attending the APEC-ASEAN dialogue, on the sidelines of the 25th Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit (APEC), in Danang, Vietnam. In her role as foreign minister, Suu Kyi is taking part in the regional Asia-Pacific meeting ahead of flying to the Philippines for the 31st ASEAN Summit. The APEC summit brings together world leaders from its 21 member nations. It is the second time Vietnam is hosting the summit, the first was in 2006.

[Remembrance Day held in Yangon](#)

Mizzima|13th November

A memorial service for soldiers of Britain and Commonwealth countries who died in the line of duty during the world wars was held at a Commonwealth Cemetery near Hanthawady roundabout in Yangon on Sunday, state media reported. The memorial service was attended by ambassadors and embassy staff and military attachés of the embassies in Yangon, officials from Ministry of Foreign Affairs, families of Commonwealth soldiers who fell during the WWII, families of Myanmar citizens and invited guests. The British Ambassador delivered an address at the service and a two-minute silence was observed in honour of the soldiers who died.

NEPAL

[Cabinet scraps decision to award Budhigandaki hydro project to Chinese company](#)

My Republica|13th November

The government on Monday rolled back from its earlier decision to award Budhigandaki Hydropower Project to a Chinese company nearly after six months. Deputy Prime Minister and Energy Minister Kamal Thapa has said that the agreement with the China Gezhouba Group Co Ltd (CGGC) has now been scrapped by the Monday's cabinet meeting. "The decision was of irregularity and whimsical and has now been scrapped as per the recommendation by the parliamentary committees," Thapa tweeted after the Monday's meeting.

[EC concerned about pre-poll violence](#)

The Himalayan Times|13th November

The Election Commission today directed the Ministry of Home Affairs and the security agencies to control incidents of violence in the run-up to the first phase of provincial and parliamentary polls slated for November 26. The EC held a high-level security meeting at its central office today after two explosives went off on Friday and Saturday targeting left alliance candidates Janardan Sharma and Barshaman Pun in Rukum and Rolpa, respectively.

[‘To boost trade, foreign direct investment is must’](#)

The Himalayan Times | 13th November

The country has been facing issues of low productivity since long due to lack of investment and proper infrastructure. Low productivity has become a structural constraint of the economy to move forward towards a higher growth trajectory to achieve the target to be a middle income country by 2030. Swarnim Wagle, vice chairman, National Planning Commission, spoke to Pushpa Raj Acharya of The Himalayan Times on how the country can overcome such structural constraints.

PAKISTAN

[US Congress authorises \\$700 million for reimbursing Pakistan](#)

DAWN | 11th November

The American Congress has authorised up to \$700 million in Coalition Support Fund (CSF) to reimburse Pakistan for activities carried out in support of US operations in Afghanistan. The authorisation is included in the reconciled text of the House and Senate versions of the 2018 National Defence Authorisation Act (NDAA-2018), which was released on Thursday. The reconciled version makes \$350m of \$700m available to Pakistan under the CSF contingent upon certification from the secretary of defence that Pakistan is taking demonstrable steps against the Haqqani network.

[Will Musharraf make an impact in Pakistan’s politics?](#)

The Express Tribune | 13th November

He was once the most powerful man in Pakistan who ruled the country with unchallenged authority for eight long years. From creating the ‘King’s party’ to introducing the infamous National Reconciliation Ordinance (NRO), he would have the final word on anything and everything. For years, the orders were issued and executed in the name of the ‘PM’. Everybody knew that the ‘PM’ did not mean prime minister: It meant Pervez Musharraf. But good old days are long gone. Today, the ex-general is dubbed by many a thing of the past. His misfortune was triggered by the lawyers’ movement which began with the ouster of then judicial czar Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry and culminated in the assassination of Benazir Bhutto.

[Getting rid of Sharifs won’t solve problems: Hashmi](#)

DAWN | 13th November

Senior politician Javed Hashmi says getting rid of Nawaz Sharif and his family would not solve country’s problems. “Major opposition parties want to see the Sharifs out of politics. Democratically elected governments are never allowed to settle down. This is a matter of great concern,” he told newsmen at local press club on Sunday. According to APP, Hashmi observed that politicians always delivered and quoted examples of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, Benazir Bhutto and Muhammad Nawaz Sharif for their contribution towards nuclear Pakistan, missiles programme and CPEC, respectively.

SRI LANKA

[Sri Lankan government focuses on reconciliation in 2018 budget allocating Rs. 12.75 billion](#)

Colombo Page | 12th November

Sri Lanka's budget for next year presented by the Minister of Finance Mangala Samaraweera has focused on the post-war reconciliation proposing a number of measures to develop the war-ravaged North and East and uplift the

lives of the people in those area. Presenting the budget in parliament, Minister Samaraweera said if Sri Lanka is to achieve its goal of becoming an advanced economy, it is essential that we build our future plans on a strong foundation of democracy and reconciliation. "We must ensure that the tragedies of the past we had to face as a nation, does not ever recur again," he stressed.

[Sri Lankan President says will not remove Army camps from North but will release lands to people](#)

Colombo Page| 12th November

Sri Lankan President Maithripala Sirisena says that the army camps in the North have not been removed or will not be removed in a way which will weaken the national security or have an impact on the security forces but lands acquitted by the armed forces during the war will be released to people. The President said the government has taken steps to release the lands, which were acquired during the war period for army camps. The lands not needed for the three Armed forces at present have already been returned to the people in the North and East, and in the future also more lands under those conditions will be released to the people.

[2018 Budget propose incentives to discourage use of polythene](#)

Colombo Page| 13th November

Sri Lanka's 2018 budget, which aims to create a Blue-Green Economy in the country proposes programs to discourage the use of plastics and polythene. Non-biodegradable waste is a major problem Sri Lanka is currently facing and dispose of plastics and polythene has caused severe environmental problems. Accordingly, to discourage the use of Polythene and Plastic products, the budget 2018 has proposed to impose an excise duty of Rs. 10 per kilogram for Plastic resins. The private sector will be incentivized to convert to environmentally friendly alternatives and to engage in manufacturing bags, packing materials etc. out of biodegradable materials such as banana fiber, palm leaves, coir, bamboo etc. The government will allocate Rs. 75 million for the project.

About Ananta Aspen Centre

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