



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

November 15th , 2017| Volume: 3 - 4/11

[Lazuli Transit Route Accord Signing Today](#)

Daily Outlook Afghanistan| 15th November

The Lapis Lazuli Transit Route agreement is expected to be signed among the five member countries during the 7th Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan (RECCA-VII) conference on Wednesday. The RECCA conference scheduled for Wednesday in Ashgabat, the capital of Turkmenistan will be attended by 30 foreign ministers from the region and other parts of the world and representatives of 25 regional and international organizations. Hassan Sarosh, head of economic cooperation at the Afghanistan Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA), on Tuesday told Pajhwok Afghan News on the eve of the conference, that the Lapis Lazuli Transit Route agreement would be signed between Afghanistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan and Georgia.

[Pakistan stops bid to include Diemer-Bhasha Dam in CPEC](#)

The Express Tribune| 15th November

Pakistan has withdrawn its request to include the \$14-billion Diemer-Bhasha Dam in the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) framework after Beijing placed strict conditions including ownership of the project, said Water and Power Development Authority (Wapda) Chairman Muzammil Hussain on Tuesday. "Chinese conditions for financing the Diemer-Bhasha Dam were not doable and against our interests," said Hussain while briefing the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) on the status of the mega water and power project.

[BBS data show GDP growth 7.28pc, per capita income \\$1,610](#)

The Financial Express| 14th November

The Bangladesh economy has recorded 7.28 per cent growth in the 2016-17 financial year (FY), a 0.04 percentage points up from the provisional data which was released six months ago. Official data released by Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) have showed on Tuesday that the per capita income (gross national income-GNI) of the country has also risen by \$8.0 to \$1610 in the final calculation from that of the provisional estimation of \$1602.

## AFGHANISTAN

### [US Congress military aid to Pakistan to actions against Haqqani network](#)

Khaama Press| 14th November

The US Congress has restricted the military aid to Pakistan to actions against Haqqani terrorist network by wavering the previous provision which also included actions against the Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), it has been reported. According to a local news outlet, Dawn News, has removed a provision from the National Defence Authorisation Act 2018 that would have required the US Secretary of Defence to certify that Pakistan has taken steps against the two groups.

### [Pakistan paying price for security vacuum on Afghan side: Pak military](#)

Khaama Press| 14th November

The Pakistani military says the country is paying price for the security vacuum on the Afghan side as he urged Afghanistan and NATO to do more to ensure the security along the line. In reaction to the killing of two Pakistani troops in Bajaur Agency, a spokesman for the military of Pakistan Gen. Asif Ghafoor said “This is the price Pakistan is paying for security vacuum on Afghan side of the border.” “More efforts are required on Afghanistan side by all stakeholders. Lives of forces and citizens (are) equally precious on both sides of border,” Gen. Ghafoor was quoted as saying by the local media outlets.

### [Regional Conference on Afghanistan Kicks off in Ashgabat](#)

Daily Outlook Afghanistan| 15th November

The two-day 7th Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan (RECCA VII) kicked off in Ashgabat on Tuesday, a source familiar with the organization of the event said. Business and political leaders from Afghanistan in Ashgabat Tuesday reiterated their call to regional countries for help in attracting investment from private sector in order to rebuild the country after decades of violent conflict. It is expected that the prospects of projects implemented within the RECCA in its main areas – energy, transportation networks, trade and transit facilitation, communications, will be studied during the event. The RECCA, initiated in 2005 in Kabul, aims to consolidate the efforts of the countries of the region in stabilizing the situation in Afghanistan and promoting regional economic integration of South and Central Asia.

## BANGLADESH

### [BGMEA requests govt to form wage board for RMG workers](#)

The Financial Express|15th November

A move has been initiated to raise the minimum monthly wages of the workers of the country's ready-made garment sector in line with a provision of the labour law. This, industry insiders say, would help brighten the image of the apparel sector both at home and abroad. Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) has recently made a request to this effect. The apparel apex body in a letter on November 08 requested the labour ministry to form a minimum wage board to review the existing wages of the garment workers, they added. Industry insiders, however, opined that the BGMEA's move came following pressure especially from the international arena. The latest initiative has also been taken to avert a likely labour unrest centring the demand for wage hike, they said.

### [Hindus' homes in Rangpur could not be saved as mob outgrew police, home minister says](#)

bdnews24| 14th November

Several homes in the Thakurparha village near the district town were set ablaze on Friday during a large demonstration over a Facebook post allegedly hurting religious sensitivity. A man was shot dead in an ensuing clash with police while 11 others were injured. Speaking to the media in Dhaka on Tuesday, Kamal said law enforcers failed to save the homes of the members of the religious minority as the mob outgrew them in numbers. Speaking to the media in Dhaka on Tuesday, Kamal said law enforcers failed to save the homes of the members of the religious minority as the mob outgrew them in numbers. "Soon after the incident (Facebook post), the police were deployed in the Hindu neighbourhoods. But hundreds, who came to join a funeral prayer, had been incited," he said after visiting the Rangpur villager earlier on Tuesday. "The number of policemen was not that much when hundreds of people attacked the homes of the Hindus."

## **BHUTAN**

### [Female labour more productive in export-oriented industries: Study](#)

Kuensel| 14th November

Women empowerment is key to national happiness, according to a professor of Royal Thimphu College, Sanjeev Mehta. Presenting his paper 'link between export orientation, female employment and higher productivity: a case study of Bhutanese Industries' at the International Conference on Gross National Happiness (GNH) on November 9, he said that greater and more productive employment opportunity positively stimulates happiness experience of the female which permeates as greater welfare at a household level.

### [Council to discuss review report on G2C services](#)

Kuensel| 14th November

The National Council will present its review report on Government to Citizen services (G2C) in the upcoming session of the house that begins from November 16. Council's ad hoc committee met on November 2 to discuss their assessment on access and use of G2C services. It was found that firewood permit, CID renewal, security clearance, trade license renewal, household information and birth registration were the most availed services. However, one of the findings stated that about 28 percent of the respondents were not aware of G2C services and 49 percent have availed G2C services. Most respondents have heard of G2C services through advertisement and community centres (CC).

## **MALDIVES**

### [Import, sale of eggs stained with feces banned in Maldives](#)

Sun Online| 13th November

Ministry of Health has banned import and sale of eggs stained with feces and other contaminants in Maldives. Ministry of Health issued a statement this Monday that eggs and egg products imported and distributed in Maldives must uphold the national labelling standard for processed goods. The ministry announced fresh, unprocessed or untreated chicken eggs should be stored at 5 Degree Celsius for no more than three to five weeks. The authority said eggs cannot be stored without compromising its quality for any longer without additional treatment. The ministry said eggs stored for longer than the standard period without any treatment was being distributed in the Maldives.

### [67 percent of the bridge is completed](#)

Sun Online| 14th November

Contractor CCCC Second Harbor Engineering Company has said that 67 percent of the China-Maldives Friendship Bridge has been completed. The press visit to the bridge today was cut short due to unfortune weather. But at a press conference at the contractor's meeting room, Project Manager, Lin said that the work on the bridge is progressing efficiently and 67 percent has been completed without any major challenges. And assured that the project will be completed on the projected scheduled. He said that all aspects of the construction project is under control.

## MYANMAR

### [‘U.S. supports efforts to end the violence in Myanmar’: Trump](#)

Mizzima | 15th November

United States President Donald J. Trump gives remarks on his 12-day Asian tour, in which he visited five countries in Asia: Japan, South Korea, China, Vietnam with the final stop in the Philippines for 31st Association of Southeast Asian Nations Summit in Manila, Philippine President Donald Trump says the U.S. supports efforts to end the violence in Myanmar, where more than 600,000 people have fled their homes following attacks by vigilantes and security forces, according to an ABC report. Trump said in remarks Tuesday at the East Asia Summit in the Philippines that the U.S. also supports efforts "to ensure accountability for atrocities committed and to facilitate the safe and voluntary return of refugees." Hundreds of thousands of Rohingya Muslims have fled to neighbouring Bangladesh since August.

### [US to back democratic transition in Myanmar](#)

Mizzima | 14th November

US State Department spokesperson Ms Heather Nauert has said that her country will continue to work for Myanmar's democratic transition. Ms Nauert speaking at a meeting of selected media on Tuesday in Yangon said that US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson will arrive in Myanmar on Wednesday (November 15) and meet both State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi and army chief Senior General Min Aung Hlaing. The US ambassador to Myanmar Scot Marciel also said at the meeting that "The US expects Myanmar to provide unhindered media access to Rakhine, especially during the repatriation of Rohingya refugees from Bangladesh." Earlier on Tuesday, Suu Kyi discussed the Rakhine situation with Rex Tillerson on the sidelines of the East Asia Summit in Manila. Suu Kyi's supporters say she must navigate a path between outrage abroad and popular feeling in a majority Buddhist country where most people believe the Rohingya are interlopers.

## NEPAL

### [Contractors hijack parties: Rs 10 billion projects in limbo](#)

My Republica | 15th November

Among thousands of candidates vying for public offices in the upcoming elections are dozens of contractors who have won bids to build roads, bridges and other infrastructure projects. Major political parties have fielded them as both first-past-the-post (FPTP) and proportional representation (PR) candidates. "Most contractors have been fielded as candidates, not for their contribution to the political party they now represent, but because they can finance their campaigns," said an official at the Federation of Contractors' Association, Nepal (FCAN). Around 35 contractors are in the fray, according to FCAN.

### [Govt nixes Budhigandaki Hydro award to China firm](#)

My Republica | 14th November

At a time when the government is trying to woo more investments from China, a cabinet meeting on Monday decided to revoke the government's previous decision to award the Budhigandaki Hydroelectricity project to China's state-owned company Gezhouba Group Co Ltd (CGGC). The move by the Sher Bahadur Deuba-led cabinet to roll back the decision taken by the Pushpa Kamal Dahal government barely five months ago has raised serious questions about Nepal's policy stability and sent out a negative message among prospective investors in mega infrastructure projects in Nepal.

#### [NRB to call stakeholders' meet to set up infra bank](#)

The Himalayan Times | 15th November

As few banks and financial institutions have submitted the expression of interest to be promoter of Infrastructure Development Bank, Nepal Rastra Bank (NRB) — the central regulatory and monetary authority — is going to organise a stakeholders' meet to finalise the stake of the promoters of various sectors. Following the central bank's licensing policy to set up infrastructure bank, some financial institutions namely, Global IME Bank, NIC Asia Bank and Siddhartha Bank, among others, have jointly expressed interest to be the promoter of the bank that the government is going to establish to bridge the gap in infrastructure financing. The licensing policy has barred the promoters to chip in money as promoters' stake with the funds borrowed from the banks.

## PAKISTAN

#### [India spending \\$500 million to sabotage CPEC: Gen Zubair](#)

The Express Tribune | 14th November

Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee (CJCSC) General Zubair Mehmood Hayat said on Tuesday that India was aiming to sabotage the multi-billion dollar China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project through its premier intelligence agency RAW. RAW has established a special cell at a cost of \$500 million to sabotage the CPEC," the CJCSC said while addressing a two-day conference in Islamabad. "India is stoking chaos and anarchy in the region." Claiming that Islamabad will maintain a minimum nuclear deterrence in the context of current regional situation, General Zubair said New Delhi is also fanning terrorism in Balochistan.

#### [Pakistan's trade policy should be based on public-private dialogue](#)

The Express Tribune | 15th November

The Ministry of Commerce's forthcoming Strategic Trade Policy Framework (STPF) 2018-2023 must be based on constructive and broad-based engagement between the public and private sectors, said Ministry of Commerce Director General of Trade Policy Noman Aslam on Tuesday. Addressing a roundtable meeting, organised by the Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), titled 'Achieving Export Competitiveness in Pakistan', he said that the new framework will focus on addressing Pakistan's gradual decline in export competitiveness over the past 20 years.

#### ['Peace committee' slaps Taliban-style curbs on Wana](#)

DAWN | 15th November

A faction of the Taliban has apparently made a comeback to Wana, South Waziristan Agency, under the guise of a peace committee and placed a ban on cultural and social activities and put restrictions on movement of women outside their homes without male members of their family. The so-called peace committee has issued tough guidelines through pamphlets in Wana town and warned local people to abide by these rules otherwise violators would face repercussions, according to sources.

## SRI LANKA

### [EU Launches Rs. 5.4 billion program to reduce poverty in Uva and Central Provinces of Sri Lanka](#)

Colombo Page| 14th November

The European Union has launched one of the largest programs of development support in Sri Lanka contributing Rs. 5.4 billion to reduce poverty in the provinces by improving the income of poor people living in rural areas and helping to ensure that they have enough food to eat, even in times of hardship. Speaking at the launch alongside the Governors, Chief Ministers and Chief Secretaries of Uva and Central Provinces, Tung-Lai Margue, the Ambassador of the Delegation of the European Union to Sri Lanka and the Maldives, said the program has been designed with the needs of the poorest in mind.

### [Sri Lankan food and beverage products promoted at Foodex Saudi 2017](#)

Colombo Page| 15th November

Sri Lanka Tea Board, the Department of Commerce and Industries and private sector companies in Sri Lanka joined Embassy of Sri Lanka in Riyadh to promote the island's food and beverage products at the Foodex Saudi 2017 that kicked off on Nov. 12. In Jeddah. Foodex Saudi is Saudi Arabia's Leading International Trade exhibition 100% dedicated to the food and drink industry. It is being held at Jeddah Centre for Forums and Events. Six Sri Lankan companies in the food and beverage sector are participating in the exhibition. Sri Lanka's Ambassador to Saudi Arabia Mr. Azmi Thassim and Consul General in Jeddah Mr. U. L. Niyas were the main guests at the inaugural of Sri Lankan pavilion.

### [Election Commissioner to decide date for local government elections on 17th](#)

Colombo Page| 14th November

The Chairman of the Election Commission Mahinda Deshapriya says that the date for the local election will be decided at the Election Commission meeting to be held on the 17th of this month. Addressing the media following a ceremony held at Dodanagoda Maha Vidyalaya in Mathugama, the Chairman of the Election Commission said that there is no legal obstruction to hold local elections now as the gazette notification has already been issued. The date of submitting nominations will also be announced following the meeting on 17th, he said. Counting will take place at polling centers. Sometimes a decision will be made to count the votes of two or three polling stations at one location, he said.

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### ***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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