

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

March 16, 2018 | Volume - 4 - 06/03

[Sri Lanka Prime Minister assures to enhance economic and trade cooperation with China](#)

Colombo Page | 15th March
Sri Lankan Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe on Thursday has assured China of greater economic and trade cooperation and affirmed to tackle the practical difficulties of China-Sri Lanka mega-projects cooperation. The Chinese Embassy in Sri Lanka said in a statement that on March 14th, Chinese Ambassador Cheng Xueyuan held a working consultation with Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe in the Temple Trees.

[Judicial reforms part of PML-N election manifesto: Nawaz](#)

Dawn | 16th March
Supreme leader of the Pakistan Muslim League-N (PML-N) Nawaz Sharif has announced that judicial reforms aimed to provide speedy and inexpensive justice to the masses is one of the main items of his party's manifesto for the general elections. While responding to a journalist's question during an interval in proceedings of the trial about the Avenfield apartments in London, Mr Sharif said: "We will introduce comprehensive judicial system that is desperately needed in the country."

[Trade through Thai-Myanmar border gates increases](#)

Mizzima | 15th March
Trade through the Thai-Myanmar border gates from 1 April to 2 March of the current fiscal year (FY) was worth some US\$1.33 billion, which is some \$90 million more than the trade value achieved during the same period last FY, according to state media. Of the seven Thai-Myanmar border gates, Myawady gate is the major trading point, but the value of trade at this gate decreased by \$29 million compared with last FY. Similarly, Tachilek also showed a slight decline in trade. The other five border gates recorded an increase in trading activity.

AFGHANISTAN

[U.S. Detecting Some Taliban Interest in Afghan Peace Talks: Mattis](#)

Daily Outlook Afghanistan | 14th March

The United States is picking up signs of interest from Taliban elements in exploring the possibility of talks with Kabul to end the more than 16-year-old war, U.S. Defense Secretary Jim Mattis said on Tuesday as he made an unannounced visit to Afghanistan. "There is interest that

we've picked up from the Taliban side," Mattis told reporters before landing in Kabul, saying the signs dated back several months. Afghan President Ashraf Ghani offered talks without preconditions with the Taliban insurgents last month, in what was seen by U.S. officials as a major overture from Kabul.

[US military partnering with the Afghan forces to bolster Kabul security](#)

Khaama Press | 15th March

The US military is partnering with the Afghan national defense and security forces to bolster the security of capital Kabul. The commander of the US Forces in Afghanistan and the NATO-led Resolute Support Mission Gen. John Nicholson has said efforts are underway to harden the security of Kabul in a bid to protect the people and international community in the capital city.

BANGLADESH

[Thai PM for synchronising policies to create new trade, economic connectivity](#)

The Financial Express | 15th March

Thai Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha has proposed that Bangladesh's 'Look East Policy' and Thailand's 'Look West Policy' may be synchronised to create new trade and economic connectivity corridors. Terming Bangladesh a 'gateway and connectivity hub' between South Asia and South East Asia, the premier offered to establish coastal shipping connectivity between Thailand's Ranong Port and Bangladesh's Chittagong Port, reports UNB. He pledged his full support for Bangladesh's bid for membership in Mekong-Ganga Cooperation Forum and the Asean Sectoral Partnership. Chan-o-cha also proposed to create institutional framework with Bangladesh on security cooperation to prevent transnational crimes in the region.

[Doctors to conduct toxicology tests on crew members of crashed US-Bangla flight](#)

Dhaka Tribune | 15th March

Doctors are performing toxicology tests on crew members of the US-Bangla Airlines that crashed while landing at the Tribhuvan International Airport (TIA) in Kathmandu on Monday. The Forensic Department of the Tribhuvan University Teaching Hospital, tasked with the responsibility of conducting autopsy of those killed in the crash, said that the toxicology exam results will reveal if any of the crew members were under the influence of any poisons or toxins, reports the Kathmandu Post. Experts said only eight out of the 49 bodies could be identified easily.

BHUTAN

[Jaiprakash denies labour constraints for MHPA's delay](#)

Kuensel | 15th March

The Jaiprakash Associates Limited (JAL) has refuted Mangdechhu Hydroelectric project Authority's (MHPA) claim that the three-month delay in construction of the 720MW Mangdechhu is due to labour constraints and liquidity issues on part of the contractor. In an interview with Kuensel last week, the project's managing director A.K Mishra had said that the number of labourers dropped from 3,500 to 1,000 today. He also said that the project has been pumping money to make up for the liquidity issues the contractors face. The Vice President of JAL, Parvinder Singh (Rtd Brigadier) said it is unfair to blame the contractors for the delay and that JAL submits a monthly labour report to the project authority.

MALDIVES

[Police: March 16 demonstration a coup attempt; will not allow it](#)

Sun Online | 15th March

Speaking at a press conference this Wednesday, Mar. 14, afternoon, Police Spokesperson, Chief Superintendent of Police Ahmed Shifan said the MPS has received credible information of a plan to create unrest in Male' City and stage a coup on March 16. "We have received information this demonstration is being planned for the purpose of encouraging unconstitutional and illegal acts, confronting security forces and creating unrest. I announce the security forces will not allow any such act to take place," said Shifan. Shifan also said the authorities have received credible information influential figures within the community were forcing owners of fishing boats and boats used for other occupational purposes to transport people from the atolls to Male' City to join the March 16 demonstration.

[Saeed: Maldives has every right to tap into Chinese tourist market](#)

Sun Online | 14th March

The Chinese outbound travel market is growing and Maldives has every right to tap into the opportunities available from the China market, says Minister of Economic Development, Mohamed Saeed. During the press conference held for visiting Indian journalists at the President's Office last Tuesday, Minister Saeed spoke of economic development spearheaded by President Abdulla Yameen Abdul Gayoom over the past four years. Saeed said the economic development in Maldives was progress not only to Maldives, but the entire South East Asian region. He said regional countries such as India should therefore be proud of the development. "China and India are economic superpowers. It's a blessing that Maldives is located in the same region as the two countries," said Saeed.

MYANMAR

[Japan to contribute to insurance, loan and electricity sectors](#)

Mizzima | 16th March

Japan will contribute to the insurance, loan and electricity sectors in Myanmar for its economic development, according to state media quoting a report released by the Republic of the Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry (UMFCCI). Japan's Ambassador to Myanmar Tateshi Higuchi read out a message sent by Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe confirming his country's commitment to Myanmar at the Myanmar-Japan Joint Economic Conference. A delegation, led by Ken Kobayashi, chair of Japan-Myanmar Economic Committee (Keidanren), and 50 Japanese businessmen and the UMFCCI jointly held the 3rd Myanmar-Japan Joint Economic Conference on 13 March at the UMFCCI office.

[Myanmar activists receive EU's 2018 Schuman Award for Human Rights](#)

Mizzima | 16th March

The European Union in Myanmar honoured Cheery Zahau, Ko Swe Win and Daw Khin Than Htwe with this year's Schuman Award for Human Rights, according to a statement. The three activists and human rights defenders received the award recognising their outstanding merits in promoting human rights and fundamental freedoms in Myanmar during an award ceremony at the residence of EU Ambassador Kristian Schmidt on 15 March 2018. "Burma was among the "founding" nations of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. Seventy years later human rights can still not be taken for granted – not in Myanmar, and not in many other parts of the world. Activists and journalists fighting for human rights and freedom of expression are the backbone of democracy," said EU Ambassador Schmidt at the Schuman Award ceremony in Yangon.

NEPAL

[PM Oli and Bangladeshi Minister Kamal meet](#)

The Himalayan Times | 14th March

Visiting Bangladeshi Minister for Civil Aviation and Tourism AKM Sahajan Kamal has paid a courtesy call on Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli today. In a meeting held at the PM's official residence, Baluwatar, Prime Minister Oli said the accident of US Bangla aircraft that occurred on March 12 (Monday) was saddening and a probe commission was constituted for the investigation of the incident. According to PM's personal secretary Chetan Adhikari, Prime Minister Oli expressed deep condolence and sympathy to the Prime Minister and the people of Bangladesh and the bereaved family over the demise of Bangladeshi nationals in the aircraft accident.

[Locals warn of agitation](#)

The Himalayan Times | 16th March

Upper Tamakoshi Stocks Concerns Joint Struggle Committee has threatened to resort to agitation unless their demands are met soon. The committee, holding a press conference here today, Mar. 15, said that it would launch agitation unless its demands were fulfilled in five days. Earlier, the committee had submitted a seven-point demand related to the distribution of stocks of the hydropower plant to the chief district officer with a 10-day deadline for fulfilment of their demands.

PAKISTAN

[Pakistan ranked happiest among neighbouring countries: UN report](#)

Dawn | 15th March

Pakistanis are the happiest among all their bordering nations, a 2018 United Nations report on happiness revealed. According to the sixth World Happiness Report, Islamabad is 58 points ahead of its arch-rival India, 11 points ahead of all-weather friend China, 31 of Iran, and 70 points ahead of Afghanistan on the ranking table of happiness. The UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network's annual survey report ranked Pakistan on the 75 spot among 156 countries. The ranking was based on six indicators: income per capita, life expectancy, social support, freedom, generosity and corruption.

[Pakistan's 'net reserves stands at minus \\$724m'](#)

The Express Tribune | 16th March

In a disclosure that could jolt the country's financial markets, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has said Pakistan's net international reserves after excluding its foreign exchange liabilities are negative \$724 million. In its first Post Programme Monitoring report, the global lender has exposed the shallowness of the current gross official \$12.1 billion reserves, which are largely maintained by double booking of reserves and taking Chinese deposits under the currency swap arrangements. As of February 14, Pakistan's Net International Reserves stood at minus \$724 million – down from \$7.5 billion in September 2016 when the three-year IMF programme had ended, according to the IMF report released on Thursday.

SRI LANKA

[International Atomic Energy Agency extends support to achieve Sri Lanka's development goals](#)

Colombo Page | 15th March

The International atomic energy agency (IAEA) Director General Yukiya Amano says that the IAEA will extend its support to Sri Lanka to achieve future development goals. The visiting IAEA Director made these remarks when he made an observation visit to the new office premises of Sri Lanka Atomic Energy Board on Wednesday (March 14) during his one-day visit to Sri Lanka on an invitation extended by the Government.

[Sri Lanka Law & Order Minister and Muslim organizations discuss preventing racial, religious violence](#)

Colombo Page| 16th March

Sri Lanka's Minister of Public Administration and Law & Order Ranjith Madduma Bandara on Thursday (15) met with representatives of Muslim religious organizations at the Ministry for discussions on the tense situation arisen in the country following the attacks on Muslim community in Kandy and on measures to prevent such attacks in the future.

About Ananta Aspen Centre

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