

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

January 17th, 2018 | Volume: 4 - 6/01

[Bangladesh, Myanmar finalise physical arrangement for repatriation of Rohingya within two years](#)

The Financial Express | 17th January
The Joint Working Group (JWG) on the return of the displaced Rohingyas from Rakhine State finalised the physical arrangement at their first two-day meeting, which began on Monday in Myanmar's capital Nay Pyi Taw. The Physical Arrangement stipulates that the repatriation would be completed preferably within two years from the commencement of repatriation. Verification and return will be based on considering the family as a unit. The two countries also finalized the "form" for verification. Myanmar has reiterated its commitment to stop outflow of Myanmar residents to Bangladesh.

[Joint Nepal-India team starts inspecting pillars](#)

The Himalayan Times | 17th January
Technicians' teams from Nepal and India have launched a joint inspection of border pillars along the Nepal-India border from today. The team has started checking the state of pillars to prepare a report. After some pillars went missing and most of them out of 162 large, medium and small pillars of Dasgaja area were dilapidated, voices were raised to repair those pillars. So, to understand the real situation, technicians' teams from both countries started monitoring from the eastern side of Rautahat.

[FDI in Pakistan drops massive 71.5% in Dec](#)

The Express Tribune | 17th January
Foreign investment in Pakistan's economy dropped a massive 71.5% in December, amounting to just \$197.4 million from \$692.1 million in the same month of 2016, according to data released on Tuesday by the State Bank of Pakistan. Majority of the foreign investors seem to have taken a wait-and-see approach in making new injections in Pakistan considering mounting political tension ahead of the planned next generation elections this year. Additionally, worrying macroeconomic indicators are keeping investors at bay, say analysts.

AFGHANISTAN

[USAID, FAO Launch 3-Year Agriculture Development Project](#)

Daily Outlook Afghanistan | 17th January

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID), in partnership with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) have launched the Promoting Value Chains–West project, a statement from the USAID said on Tuesday.

The project would promote inclusive growth and job creation in the agricultural sector by strengthening the capabilities of producers and private enterprises to effectively link Afghan farmers to domestic and international markets, the statement said.

[President Ghani, UNSC delegation discuss increasing pressures on Pakistan](#)

The Kabul Times | 16th January

President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani on Sunday met with members of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) led by Kairat Umarov in Kabul and both sides discussed key issues pertaining the country's situation, Presidential

Palace said in a statement on Monday. The two sides also discussed efforts against terrorism, corruption, drugs-trafficking, acceleration of the peace process and preparations for parliamentary elections. Administrative reforms, strengthening women's participation in governance and the UN role in the fields of security and development in Afghanistan were also reviewed at the meeting late on Sunday.

[15 Tajikistani militants killed in Afghan Air Force raids in Badakhshan](#)

Khaama Press | 16th January

At least fifteen militants hailing from Tajikistan were killed in a series of airstrikes conducted in northeastern Badakhshan province of Afghanistan. According to the 209th Shaheen Corps of the Afghan Military, the Afghan Air Force carried out a series of airstrikes against the militants hideouts in Jurm district using the A-29 planes. A statement by the Shaheen Corps said at least fifteen militants were killed and eleven others were wounded in the airstrikes. The anti-government armed militant groups including the Taliban insurgents have not commented regarding the report so far.

BANGLADESH

[Bill allowing 4 family members on bank board passed](#)

Dhaka Tribune | 17th January

The much-talked-about "Bank-Company (Amendment) Bill 2018" has been passed in the parliament with a provision to allow up to four members of a family to become directors of any bank and the directors to hold their posts for nine years consecutively. According to the existing Bank-Company Act 1991, two members of a family can be directors of a bank, while the tenure of a bank director is three years and the director can be disqualified for re-election on completion of two consecutive terms (six years) unless s/he elapsed three years. Talking on the bill, Rustam Ali Farazi said the amendment to the bill astonished him as this was brought just to protect the interest of some individuals.

[Mayhem in Narayanganj](#)

The Daily Star | 17th January

Narayanganj city Mayor Selina Hayat Ivy and around 50 others were injured as supporters of local Awami League lawmaker Shamim Osman attacked Ivy and her followers, leading to a clash on Bangabandhu Road in Narayanganj's Chashara. There had been tension in the city over the last few days as Osman took a stance against the mayor's decision to evict illegal hawkers from footpaths, locals said. Gunshots were heard and some were seen brandishing firearms at that time. Panicked pedestrians ran for cover and shopkeepers shuttered their outlets, locals said. Later, police swung into action, fired blank shots and charged baton. The law enforcers eventually brought the situation under control

[No job for China Harbour in future](#)

The Daily Star | 17th January

Finance Minister AMA Muhith yesterday said China Harbour Engineering Company Limited has been blacklisted for offering bribes to government officials and would not get any contracts in the future. Bangladesh and China signed a memorandum of understanding during the Chinese president's visit to Bangladesh in 2016. Under the deal, China had promised to give soft loans of \$21.5 billion for 26 projects, including the Dhaka-Sylhet four-lane highway project to be done by China Harbour Engineering Company Limited. Allegation of bribing Bangladeshi influential people is not new about the Chinese company.

BHUTAN

[Portable toilets brought in to improve sanitation during public events](#)

BBS | 16th January

Sanitation, especially with regard to public toilets during national events and in times of disaster, is expected to improve hereon. The Bhutan Toilet Organisation (BTO) recently introduced its National Portable Toilet Fleet with 22 units of portable toilets. These portable toilets will replace the temporary toilets built during public events. The facility will not only help in saving resources put into constructing makeshift toilets but also in efficient use of water. Along with pots, each of the portable toilets has a water sink and tank inside. "During the national events the major problem is number of toilets against number of people. Then it follows small problem with water supply. Then suddenly toilets have problem. So we came up with portable toilets," said Chalop Passang Tshering,

the Founder of Bhutan Toilet Organisation. "With this in place we do not have water problem now, it has independent tank. We have enough numbers we can spread across so there is no rush during the events,"

[Ugyen Thegchogling Zangdopelri consecrated in Tingtibi](#)

BBS | 16th January

Gangtey Trulku, Kunzang Pema Namgyel, consecrated the Ugyen Thegchogling Zangdopelri at Tingtibi in Zhemgang today. The three-storey Zangdopelri was constructed at a cost of more than Nu 20 M. Following the consecration ceremony, the Gangtey Trulku administered a blessing ceremony to the people gathered at the event. The Zangdopelri will be an important religious object for the residents of Tingtibi to accumulate merits.

MALDIVES

[Shameem's suspension lifted after two years](#)

Sun Online | 16th January

Two years after being suspended from practicing in court as a lawyer, the suspension has been lifted for the former Deputy Prosecutor General, Hussain Shameem. Department of Judicial Administration (DJA) suspended Shameem on 4 November 2015. He was suspended following his comments on the Judicial System at a press conference while representing the former Vice President Ahmed Adheeb Abdul Gafoor. The DJA announced that Shameem's suspension has been lifted in a statement tonight stating that it was done so after an investigation.

[EU delegation meets PPM leadership](#)

Sun Online | 16th January

The high-level delegation from European Union currently in Maldives has held talks with leaders of ruling Progressive Party of Maldives (PPM). The meeting took place at PPM headquarters and was attended on behalf of PPM leadership by Secretary-General of PPM Abdulla Khaleel, Deputy Leader of PPM and Minister of Tourism Moosa Zameer, Naifaru MP Ahmed Shiyam and leader of PPM parliamentary group MP Ahmed Nihan Hussain Manik.

MYANMAR

[IFC, Regulators Assess Corporate Governance of Myanmar Firms](#)

mizzima | 17th January

IFC, a member of the World Bank Group, is working with Myanmar regulators to benchmark the corporate governance practices of Myanmar companies against international standards to help them improve performance, according to a statement. Numerous studies show that stronger governance helps companies operate more efficiently and manage risks better. In cooperation with the Securities and Exchange Commission of Myanmar (SECM), the Yangon Stock Exchange (YSX), and the Directorate of Investment and Company Administration (DICA), IFC is hosting a two-day workshop that began on the 16 January in Yangon for dozens of Myanmar companies to learn about the importance of corporate governance and best practices. At the workshop, IFC experts lead participants in evaluating the corporate governance practices of listed Myanmar companies as examples. The assessment is based on the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Corporate Governance Scorecard – the regional benchmark of best practices; company performance is rated on various areas such as equitable treatment of shareholders, responsibilities of the board, and disclosure and transparency.

[Myanmar must reverse laws and practices that perpetuate military impunity – ICJ](#)

mizzima | 17th January

Myanmar's government must take concrete action to counteract decades of military impunity for human rights violations, the International Commission of Jurists concluded in a report published today. The report, Achieving Justice for Gross Human Rights Violations in Myanmar, finds that gross human rights violations in Myanmar rarely go punished, particularly in conflict areas. Justice remains elusive for victims and their families as a result of laws, institutions and investigative practices that protect members of security forces from prosecution, the ICJ says. "Decades of denial of justice for victims of gross human rights violations in Myanmar, and impunity for the perpetrators, particularly when involving the military, have severely eroded the rule of law," said Sam Zarifi, the ICJ's Secretary General.

[List of more than 1,300 ARSA terrorist suspects sent to Bangladesh](#)

mizzima | 17th January

According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, a list containing the names of more than 1,300 suspected Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) terrorists had been sent to Bangladesh, state media reported on 17 January. It was done at the 4th Myanmar-Bangladesh Central-Level Meeting on Border Security and Law Enforcement Cooperation held in Nay Pyi Taw on 14 November 2017. In addition, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said that Bangladesh was also asked to extradite the ARSA suspects according to the 1980 Myanmar-Bangladesh Border Agreement so that action can be taken against them according to the law.

NEPAL

[Army to have own DPR for expressway](#)

The Kathmandu Post | 17th January

Nepal Army, the government appointed developer of the Kathmandu-Tarai Fast Track, has decided against purchasing the highway's detailed project report prepared by an Indian consultant. Instead, the Army has reached a decision to prepare a new DPR to develop the 76km expressway that will link Kathmandu with Nijgadh in the Tarai. The Army, at a press conference on Tuesday, said the DPR prepared by the Indian consultant was incomplete, expressing the need for a new DPR to undertake the project.

[Nepal approves preliminary design of Timure dry port](#)

The Himalayan Times | 17th January

The government has approved the preliminary design for Timure (Rasuwa) dry port prepared by Architectural Reconnaissance and Design Institute of Tibet, an entrusted party of the Chinese government, during the recently held meeting in China. The dry port is being constructed with technical and financial support from the government of China. In accordance with the letter of exchange in 2012, a memorandum of understanding (MoU) was signed between the Ministry of Commerce (MoC) and government of Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) of China for the feasibility study of the project in October, 2014.

PAKISTAN

[US renews call for steps against 'externally focused terrorists'](#)

Dawn | 17th January

The first diplomatic engagement between Pakistan and the United States after the mini-crisis created by President Donald Trump's tweet ended with Washington renewing its demand for Islamabad to clear its territory of "externally focused terrorists". "Ambassador [Alice] Wells urged the government of Pakistan to address the continuing presence of the Haqqani network and other terrorist groups within its territory," said a US embassy statement at the conclusion of a two-day visit by Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Alice Wells. During her meetings in Islamabad, she conveyed to her Pakistani interlocutors that the US wanted to shift to a "new relationship with Pakistan" based on "mutual interest". While praising Islamabad's "extraordinary" fight against the Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan and Jamaatul Arhar, she said the US wanted similar efforts against groups trying to destabilise Afghanistan.

[Country, democracy need timely general elections: PM](#)

Daily Times | 17th January

Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi said on Tuesday that the country and the democracy needed timely conduct of general elections. Speaking to a private TV channel on Tuesday, he said that his office requires taking difficult decisions and there were huge responsibilities. Responding to Indian propaganda against China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), he said that New Delhi had been waging a propaganda war against the multi-billion dollar project from the very beginning. "Gwadar is a commercial port and it is being used for commercial purposes."

SRI LANKA

[ADB provides additional \\$75 million to support SME development in Sri Lanka](#)

Colombo Page | 17th January

The Asian Development Bank's (ADB) said its Board of Directors has approved \$75 million in additional financing to continue support toward the development of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), considered vital for economic growth and job creation in Sri Lanka. "SMEs have the potential to reduce regional inequalities in Sri

Lanka given that SMEs are more widespread throughout the country than larger enterprises, which are mainly based in the capital Colombo," said Don Lambert, an ADB Principal Finance Specialist. "The additional support will ensure that more SMEs have wider access to credit."

[Sri Lanka's services sector expands at a higher rate than manufacturing sector in December 2017](#)

Colombo Page| 17th January

Sri Lanka's services sector expanded at a higher rate than the manufacturing sector in December 2017 although both sectors showed progress compared to the previous month, the Central Bank's Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) Survey released for the month showed. According to the survey, the Manufacturing PMI increased marginally by 0.3 index points to 59.1 in December 2017 from the previous month while the Services Sector PMI increased significantly by 3.8 points to 61.2 in the month from 57.4 in November.

[Sri Lanka PM expects the Central Expressway to bring economic development to northern provinces](#)

Colombo Page| 16th January

Sri Lanka Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe says that the construction of the Central Expressway will ensure good infrastructure stretching from Hambantota to Kandy, growing the economy and creating jobs. The Prime Minister expressed these views while making an observation tour at the construction site of the Central Expressway.

About Ananta Aspen Centre

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