



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

November 17th , 2017 | Volume: 3 - 5/11

[Afghanistan's Opium Production Hits Record High in 2017: UN](#)

Daily Outlook Afghanistan | 16th November

Opium production in Afghanistan reached a record high this year, rising 87 percent compared with last year, after a rapid expansion of the areas used to cultivate poppies, the United Nations said on Wednesday. In the key findings of its annual Afghanistan opium survey, the U.N. Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) said output of opium made from poppy seeds in Afghanistan, the world's main source of heroin, stands at around 9,000 metric tons this year. reased insurgency and funding to terrorist groups is likely within Afghanistan while more high quality, low cost heroin will reach consumer markets across the world, leading to increased consumption," the UNODC said.

[Ready to discuss CPEC with India: FO](#)

The Express Tribune | 17th November
Pakistan on Thursday indicated it could talk to India directly on the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) but the prospects for such parleys are bleak, given New Delhi's unwillingness to resume dialogue on all outstanding issues. "Pakistan continues to hold the position that only through uninterrupted, uninterrupted, and meaningful and result-oriented dialogue will all outstanding disputes with India, including the Jammu and Kashmir dispute, be resolved," said the Foreign Office spokesperson. "At the moment, India is not willing to hold any dialogue, therefore, I don't see any prospects of what you have mentioned," Mohammad Faisal said when asked to comment on the possibility of Pakistan holding direct talks with India on CPEC.

[China foreign minister to visit Myanmar, Bangladesh amid Rohingya crisis](#)

bdnews24 | 17th November
Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi will visit Myanmar and Bangladesh this weekend, his ministry said on Thursday, amid a crisis over Myanmar's treatment of Rohingya Muslims. More than 600,000 Rohingya have fled to Bangladesh since late August, driven out by a military counter-insurgency clearance operation in Buddhist-majority Myanmar's Rakhine State. A top UN official has described the military's actions as a textbook case of "ethnic cleansing". Myanmar rejects accusations of rights abuses. China has expressed support for what it calls the Myanmar government's efforts to protect stability. Foreign Ministry spokesman Geng Shuang told reporters that Wang would go to Bangladesh and Myanmar this weekend where he would meet his counterparts and exchange views

on bilateral ties and issues of mutual regional concern.

AFGHANISTAN

[Rabbani Says RECCA Taking Place at a Critical Time](#)

Daily Outlook Afghanistan | 16th November

Addressing the 7th Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan (RECCA VII) in Turkmenistan on Wednesday, the acting foreign minister Salahuddin Rabbani said that with the help of all partner-countries, RECCA has transformed into an effective platform for regional economic cooperation. “Indeed, it is only with common efforts through such mechanisms of win-win cooperation that can we gradually but surely overcome any existing tensions and jointly address our nations’ common needs, whether in the economic or security spheres.”

[Turkey to Continue Support to Afghanistan](#)

Daily Outlook Afghanistan | 16th November

Turkey has supported 800 projects worth \$1B in Afghanistan; Turkey will continue to support Afghanistan’s efforts towards integration into the regional and global economy, the Turkish deputy foreign minister said Wednesday. Speaking at the Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan (RECCA-VII) in Turkmenistan’s capital Ashgabat, Ahmet Yildiz said: “Our vision for Afghanistan is that of a peaceful and stable country, which enjoys good and cooperative relations with its neighbors while being at the heart of Asia.” Turkey has given Afghanistan \$1 billion in foreign aid and supported more than 800 projects, including those in the energy and connectivity sectors, he added.

[ISIS and Taliban operating with similar ideology in Afghanistan: Abdullah](#)

Khaama Press | 17th November

The Chief Executive of the Government of National Unity Abdullah Abdullah says the Taliban and Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) terrorist group offshoot militants are conducting insurgency with a similar ideology, insisting that there is no difference between the two groups. Speaking to reporters in a gathering hosted by VOA’s Afghanistan service, Abdullah said there is not much difference between the groups and both continue to incur losses to the Afghan people. However, CEO Abdullah said the ISIS loyalists do not operate on large swathes of Afghanistan but the Taliban continue to operate in more provinces.

BANGLADESH

[ICT export fetches \\$800m in 2017](#)

The Daily Star | 17th November

Bangladesh earned nearly \$800 million this year exporting locally made software, and providing ICT-related services like outsourced and freelance work, said State Minister for ICT Zunaid Ahmed Palak. The government aims to get the earnings up to the \$1 billion mark next year and \$5 billion by 2021, Palak said quoting data from Bangladesh Bank and the Bangladesh Association of Software and Information Services (BASIS). Bangladesh's top export earners are the ready-made garments sector, leather and leather goods industries, jute and jute products, and then ICT and IT services.

[Record growth in tough year](#)

The Daily Star | 17th November

Agriculture sector grows despite huge crop loss; service sector contributes most to 7.28pc GDP growth Bangladesh has achieved a record economic growth of 7.28 percent in the last fiscal year despite a fall in rice production and also in industrial growth. The gross domestic product rose by 0.17 percentage points in fiscal 2016-17 from 7.11 percent in the previous fiscal year, according to Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics data. The country attained the feat riding on the faster growth of the service sector. In the final count, the GDP growth increased by 4 basis points from the BBS' provisional estimate of 7.24 percent. Planning Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal unveiled the data of the state-run statistical agency at a press conference at the National Economic Council auditorium yesterday.

BHUTAN

[Opposition probes govt. on tourism royalty waiver](#)

Kuensel | 17th November

The government's proposal to waive off tourism royalty came under scrutiny at the National Assembly yesterday. The waiver of royalty USD 65 a day for tourist visiting the eastern dzongkhags was debated in the house following the first and the second reading of the Tourism Levy Exemption Bill of Bhutan 2017, which the finance minister introduced as a Money Bill. While acknowledging the intent of promoting tourism in the east, Panbang MP, Dorji Wangdi, questioned the benefits and measures being proposed to do so. The royalty, now known as sustainable development fee, is levied in addition to the minimum daily tariff of USD 200 during lean season and USD 250 during the peak season. "We have to understand that tourists don't visit eastern dzongkhags not because they cannot afford to pay USD 65, but because of poor road conditions and lack of infrastructures," he said.

[Rising chronic disease burden calls for palliative care](#)

Kuensel | 17th November

Health workers say palliative care is about healing and adding life to days instead of days to life. A few years ago, a 44-year-old monk was diagnosed with advanced lung cancer that had spread to the bone. Unaware about his illness, he was in severe pain that was inadequately managed. He had few family members including his old mother around him. A few days later, he died in a state of physical, psychological, emotional and spiritual distress.

MALDIVES

[Annual Military exercise "Rannamaari Hunt" to begin on Monday](#)

Sunonline | 16th November

The annual military exercise conducted by the Maldives National Defence Force (MNDF) with the use of weapons and explosives, "Rannamaari Hunt" is set to begin this Monday. MNDF said that the exercise will be held from Monday to Friday. In the greater Male' area, the exercise will be conducted in Male' City, Hulhule', Hulhumale' and Thilafushi. During the course of the exercise, the military would be using weapons and explosives on land and at sea along with armed vehicles in Male' and Hulhumale'.

MYANMAR

[Refugees can return only if Myanmar's 'real citizens' accept them: army chief](#)

Mizzima/AFP | 17th November

Rohingya refugees cannot return to Rakhine state until "real Myanmar citizens" are ready to accept them, the country's army chief said Thursday, casting doubt over government pledges to begin repatriating the persecuted Muslim minority. More than 600,000 Rohingya are languishing in Bangladeshi refugee camps after fleeing a brutal Myanmar army campaign launched in late August. The UN says the scorched-earth operation, which has left hundreds of villages burned to ash in northern Rakhine state, amounts to ethnic cleansing of the stateless minority.

[UN urges end to Myanmar military campaign in Rakhine](#)

Mizzima/AFP | 17th November

UN member-states on Thursday urged Myanmar authorities to end a military campaign against the Muslim Rohingya in a resolution adopted despite opposition from China, Russia and some regional neighbours. The General Assembly's human rights committee overwhelmingly endorsed the measure presented by Muslim countries by a vote of 135 to 10, with 26 countries abstaining. UN member-states said they were "highly alarmed" by the violence and "further alarmed by the disproportionate use of force by the Myanmar forces" against the Rohingya.

[Myanmar Investment Commission approves 31 foreign and local investments](#)

Mizzima/AFP | 17th November

The Myanmar Investment Commission (MIC) has approved a total of 31 foreign and local investments in Myanmar in October and November, according to U Aung Naing Oo, the Director-General of the Directorate of Investment & Company Administration (DICA), quoted in state media. The MIC gave the green light to 24 foreign direct investments (FDIs) worth over US\$157 million. The FDIs created 8,845 jobs for local people. The FDIs were in the transportation, communication, electricity and industrial zone sectors.

NEPAL

[Left alliance promises stable govt and prosperity](#)

My Republica | 17th November

Chiefs of the left alliance parties have assured voters of prosperity in the country once they form a stable government after the upcoming parliamentary polls. Addressing election campaigns jointly in Baglung, Parbat and Syangja districts on Thursday, CPN-UML Chairman K P Oli and CPN (Maoist Center) Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal urged voters to give the alliance a majority in the elections.

[Blasts target NC leader Mahat, Speaker Gharti: 5 hurt](#)

The Himalayan Times | 17th November

Former minister and Nepali Congress leader Ram Saran Mahat escaped unhurt when an improvised explosive device exploded targeting the vehicles carrying him and his party cadres in Nuwakot district on Friday morning. According to police, five NC cadres were injured in the incident. The IED was exploded at Kauletha while Mahat along with his supporters was on his way to Kakani area to address an election rally, police added. "One of the jeeps has been partly damaged in the blast."

[Three Gorges, NEA, seal deal to form joint venture](#)

The Himalayan Times | 17th November

Ten months after Nepal Electricity Authority and China Three Gorges International Corporation inked a joint venture agreement, the power authority and CTGIC today signed a deal to form a joint venture company to

develop the 750-megawatt West Seti Hydropower Project. Though the NEA board, led by energy secretary, had endorsed the JVA allowing the authority to form a joint venture company to expedite the National Priority Project, CTGIC had taken a longer time to endorse the JVA through its board.

PAKISTAN

[Government drafts strategy to foil conspiracies against Pakistan](#)

The Express Tribune|17th November

The federal government has decided to take steps under a well-coordinated strategy to foil conspiracies by foreign agencies that are involved in creating instability in Pakistan. All elements, groups, organisations, military wings, facilitators and providers of financial and other resources will be eliminated completely. To eradicate these elements strict and fast operations will be undertaken, without giving any concession to these elements. The federal government is also expected to raise the issue of conspiracies by other countries to destabilise Pakistan on all international forums.

[No K-P-proposed projects land among CPEC](#)

The Express Tribune|17th November

The federal government has ignored all the projects proposed by the Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa government for financing under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). The K-P government had proposed several projects for inclusion in CPEC, but the federal government did not say yes to any of them, according to the provincial government officials. "None of the projects we sent to the Ministry of Planning, Development and Reforms have been included in the CPEC," said an official who requested not to be named.

[Volcano alert](#)

DAWN|17th November

THE vaunted 'establishment', it would appear, is getting rather anxious. Over the past week whatever little pretence there remained about the autonomy of Pakistan's mainstream politicians was put to bed in three almost simultaneous announcements. First came Musharraf's (laughable) 20-odd party alliance, followed by the MQM-PSP farce in Karachi and finally the revival of the MMA. The open secret of behind-the-scenes machinations of the permanent state apparatus makes clear that for all that has changed in Pakistan, much remains the same. It took 23 years for the establishment to even permit direct elections in this country, and historians have shown that even in 1970 the Yahya Khan regime did its utmost to manufacture the outcome.

SRI LANKA

[President, PM open Shangri-La Hotel in Colombo](#)

Colombo Page| 16th November

Sri Lankan President Maithripala Sirisena opened the latest addition of the Asia Pacific's leading luxury hotel group, Hong Kong-based Shangri-La Hotels and Resorts in Colombo. The President along with the Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe and Chairman of Shangri-La Asia Company Mrs. Hui Kuok cut the ribbon and declared open the hotel. He made an entry in the special guests' book and observed the surrounding from the observation room on the 32nd floor. Shangri-La Hotel, built facing the Galle Face Green promenade, a prominent landmark in Colombo, and overlooking the Indian Ocean, is another stride in expansion of the facilities for the tourists coming to Colombo.

[Sri Lanka acquires automatic defendant surveillance broadcasting system](#)

Colombo Page| 17th November

Sri Lanka has acquired the latest air surveillance and monitoring technology with the operation of a new radar system from Ratmalana airport. The modernized system was declared open under the patronage of Minister of Transport and Civil Aviation. The new automatic defendant surveillance broadcasting (ADS-B) system will help Sri Lanka to enhance its air traffic control capacities. The new technology which operates utilizing GPS Satellites, will ensure the safety of the aircraft creating a satellite communication network between the aircraft and the air traffic control tower.

[Sri Lanka Parliament passes Second Reading of 2018 budget](#)

Colombo Page| 16th November

Sri Lanka parliament passed the Second Reading of the Appropriation Bill (2018) with a majority of 93 votes today, when it was taken for vote on the sixth allotted day. In the division that was taken, 151 votes were cast in favor while 58 votes were against it. The JVP and the Joint Opposition voted against the Bill while the Opposition Tamil National Alliance (TNA) voted in favor. Minister of Finance Mangala Samaraweera presented the budget to the parliament on November 9th. The Committee stage debate will begin from tomorrow and continue until the third and final vote of budget fixed for December 9th.

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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