

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

**August 18th, 2017 | Volume: 3 - 04/8**

[ISI agent arrested in Kabul while planning attack on Pul-e-Charkhi prison](#)

Khaama Press | 17th August  
An agent of the Pakistani military intelligence, inter services intelligence (ISI), has been arrested by the security forces in Kabul as he was planning an attack on the major Pul-e-Charkhi prison. The Afghan intelligence, national directorate of security (NDS), said the man was detained during an operation from Kabul city. A statement by NDS said the detained suspect has been identified as Allah Noor who is originally a resident of Quetta city of Pakistan.

[Judgement reserved on Zardari's acquittal plea](#)

Dawn | 18th August  
An accountability court on Thursday reserved judgement on an application seeking the acquittal of former president and PPP co-chairman Asif Ali Zardari in a reference related to his alleged illegal assets in Pakistan and abroad. The court has conducted day-to-day proceedings on the application filed by Mr Zardari seeking his acquittal under section 265-K of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC) in the nearly two decade-old corruption reference.

[Bangladesh has highest trade deficit since 2010](#)

bdnews24 | 17th August  
The trade deficit at the end of fiscal 2016-17 stood close to \$9.5 billion, the largest in seven years, according to data released by Bangladesh Bank on Wednesday. The deficit widened near the end of the year as import spending increased faster than export earnings, said Zaid Bakht, a leading economist. Bangladesh spent \$43.49 billion on imports and earned \$34.02 billion in exports in FY2017, which ended on Jun 30, according to central bank data.

## AFGHANISTAN

[Ready for Economic Cooperation with Belarus: CEO](#)

Outlook Afghanistan/ Pajhwok | 17th August  
The chief executive officer (CEO) has said Afghanistan is ready for economic and industrial cooperation with the Republic of Belarus. Dr. Abdullah, currently on an official trip to the East European country, visited the Minsk Tractor Works -- a big producer of agricultural machinery. He is scheduled to discuss greater bilateral cooperation

with President Alexander Lukashenko Prime Minister Andrei Kobyako and other senior officials. A statement from the CEO office said Abdullah and his delegation visited MTZ, whose director offered to provide Afghanistan with automobile services. Abdullah said Afghanistan was ready to cooperate with Belarus in economic and industrial areas. Belarus and Afghanistan are expected to sign agreements in areas of economy, commerce and legislation.

#### [Procurement Units Being Restructured: IARCSC](#)

Outlook Afghanistan/ Pajhwok | 17th August

In cooperation with the National Procurement Authority, the commission reviewed the existing structures and job descriptions of the relevant directorates and procurement units of these institutions.

In a statement, IARCSC claimed streamlining the functions, roles and responsibilities of the units and revised the job descriptions to make them compatible with new standards. Lack of capacity, proper structure and clearly defined roles of procurement units was cited as one of the main reasons for non-utilisation of development budgets in a timely and efficient manner, affecting public service delivery.

#### [Taliban defeated in Tagab of Badakhshan](#)

Afghanistan Times/Tolonews | 17th August

The Afghan security forces after a week of operation, eventually cleared Tagab district of northeastern Badakhshan province from Taliban presence, security officials said on Wednesday. Afghan security forces inflicted huge casualties to the Taliban insurgents during clearing operation. The operation took seven days, TOLONews reported. In addition to that, a number of Taliban militants were also arrested in the operation, army officials said, adding that the insurgents retreated to the neighboring district of Yamgan. "We conducted a very effective operation and at the first step we cleared Taqab district and we took back...vehicles which the enemy seized from the security forces," said Mir Abdul Wahid, an army official in Badakhshan.

## **BANGLADESH**

#### [Awami League \(AL\) adamant not to lose to judiciary](#)

Prothom Alo | 18th August

Ruling Awami League (AL) does not want to lose out in the current fracas over the judgement scrapping the 16th amendment annulment verdict. According to party insiders, the AL will not appeal for a review petition if there is any possibility whatsoever of the judgement remaining unchanged. Meanwhile, AL's strategy is for its ministers, members of parliament and leaders to create political pressure. An AL lawyer leader told Prothom Alo that the ruling party is rigid over the observations of the verdict.

#### [Delhi yet to confirm \\$4.5b third LoC](#)

The Financial Express | 15th August

India is yet to confirm its third line of credit (LoC) worth US\$4.5 billion credit (LoC) despite Bangladesh's request for holding a meeting on this issue, officials concerned said Monday. Officials said although India assured Bangladesh of providing the loan during the visit of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to New Delhi in April last, the lender is delaying signing of the final agreement on the promised loan. "We have reminded New Delhi about holding negotiations on the third LoC. But they are yet to fix any date for negotiations. This has delayed the confirmation of the loan," said a Ministry of Finance (MoF) official.

## BHUTAN

### [Policy will require all Govt. agencies to make services online](#)

Kuensel Online | 16th August

After the implementation of the e-Government Policy, all government agencies will have to adopt citizen-centric delivery of online services. All government services will be made available online.

However, Information of Communications Minister DN Dhungyel said that “all government services” might have to be defined. He said it might not be possible to provide every government service online. There are over 200 G2C services spread out over 10 ministries, autonomous agencies, and dzongkhags, according to the G2C office web page.

### [E4T launch expected to enhance trade](#)

Kuensel Online | 17th August

The department of trade (DoT) in collaboration with Geneva’s Enhanced Integrated Framework (EIF) Executive Secretariat launched E-infrastructure for Trade and Services Development Project (E4T) in Thimphu yesterday. E4T will ensure that the government agencies and businesses are equipped to take advantage of the opportunities created by the development of information and communications technology (ICT) which will enable better trade in goods and services.

## MALDIVES

### [Secretary General of JP, Sameer arrested](#)

Sun Online | 17th August

Secretary General of Jumhooree Party, Ahmed Sameer has been arrested at a opposition rally held at Maafannu Kunooz tonight. Sameer was arrested as he was giving an interview to Raajje TV, for disobeying orders from the police to leave the area and disperse.

## MYANMAR

### [Myanmar’s military launches counter insurgency operation against Muslim terrorists](#)

Mizzima | 17th August

The Myanmar military has air-dropped hundreds of troops into the country’s strife-torn western Rakhine state in preparation for a surgical operation intended to route out accused Muslim rebels and insurgents, according to military sources. The deployment of the 33rd Light Infantry Division commenced last Thursday. They were helicoptered into the regional capital Sittwe, despite inclement weather, and were deployed to Maungdaw the following day. Since then they have down regular sorties in the area, according to local eyewitnesses.

### [Outgoing EU Ambassador makes farewell call on President U Htin Kyaw](#)

Mizzima | 18th August

President U Htin Kyaw received the Ambassador of the European Union to Myanmar H.E. Mr Roland Kobia yesterday in Nay Pyi Taw. The Ambassador was making a farewell call on President U Htin Kyaw. During the meeting, they discussed foreign investments in Myanmar, the peace building process and matters of mutual interest between the European Union and Myanmar, state media reported. Mr Kobia also met separately with the commander in chief of defence services, senior general Min Aung Hlaing.

### [HRW appeals to India on Rohingyas](#)

Mizzima | 17th August

The Indian government should not forcibly return ethnic Rohingya refugees to Burma, where they face persecution, US-based Human Rights Watch has said. In a statement, HRW said India should abide by its international legal obligations and protect the Rohingya – a Muslim minority predominately from western Burma-from systematic abuse by Burmese officials and state security forces. On August 9, 2017, the Indian minister of state for home affairs, Kiren Rijiju, told the parliament that “the government has issued detailed instructions for deportation of illegal foreign nationals including Rohingyas,” noting that there were around “40,000 Rohingyas living illegally in the country.”

## NEPAL

### [Rights defenders object to Lama's promotion](#)

Kathmandu Post | 18th August

Human rights defenders have taken exception to a recent government decision of promoting Kumar Lama to the post of brigadier general, saying the move violates the ruling of a Kapilvastu District Court and a verdict on human rights violation case by the Supreme Court. The Cabinet last week decided to promote Lama. Lama was convicted by Kapilvastu District Court in 2008 for torturing Janak Bahadur Raut and Karam Hussain when he was the in-charge of the Goringhe barracks in 2005.

### [Business, trade union leaders hail passage of new labor laws](#)

MyRepublica | 18th August

Business and trade union leaders have termed the recent passage of Labor Act and Social Security Act as a milestone achievement in a journey toward forging better employer-labor relationship. Speaking at an interaction organized by FNCCI, leaders of the private sector and trade unions said the passage of both acts was a win-win for both employers and workers. They also said the new laws would help end bitter relations between the employers and laborers.

### [EC, parties agree to hold provincial, parliamentary elections by Nov 23](#)

MyRepublica | 18th August

The Election Commission (EC) and the major political parties have agreed to conduct the provincial and parliamentary elections on the same day, by November 23. A trilateral meeting of election commissioners, ruling and opposition parties on Thursday reached an understanding to conduct both the elections by November 23 in a bid to avoid constitutional crisis. “Both the elections will be conducted on the same day, by November 23,” said election commissioner Narendra Dahal after the meeting.

## PAKISTAN

### [Families of APS attack victims again seek judicial probe](#)

Dawn | 18th August

The parents and other relatives of the martyred students of Army Public School (APS), Peshawar, have again raised the demand for constitution of a judicial commission under the supervision of a Supreme Court judge to probe into the Dec 16, 2014 attack and award exemplary punishment to those involved in the brutal act.

### [NA passes bill to protect 'whistleblowers' in corruption cases](#)

Dawn|18th August

The National Assembly on Thursday passed a crucial bill aimed at providing protection to whistleblowers in corruption cases. The bill, titled the Public Interest Disclosures Bill, 2017, was passed by the assembly with a majority vote after presiding officer Mahmood Bashir Virk, who was chairing the session in the absence of both the speaker and the deputy speaker, rejected the opposition's request that the bill should be sent back to the committee as they had not been provided the copies of the final draft at the time of its passage in the committee.

### [Ranked sixth-worst liveable city in the world, Karachi stays resilient](#)

The Express Tribune|18th August

The Global Liveability Report, 2017 has ranked Karachi as the world's sixth worst city to live in for the second consecutive year. For a city plagued by incompetent governance, The Economist Intelligence Unit's [EUI] Liveability Index will not surprise Karachiites. But it may raise questions on claims of an 'improved' Karachi. The index has ranked 140 cities based on stability, infrastructure, education, healthcare, culture and environment. Pakistan's financial hub has fallen behind in each category.

## SRI LANKA

### [Sri Lanka Finance Minister introduces tax concessions to boost growth](#)

Colombo Page | 17th August

Sri Lanka Minister of Finance and Mass Media today announced a series of tax concessions for local entrepreneurs in a bid to boost economic growth and generate employment. The Minister addressing a press conference today announced the concessions including the withdrawal of Telecommunication Levy on Internet data and duty reductions on single cabs, mini trucks and motorcycles below the engine capacity of 150cc.

### [Ceylon Chamber to host B2B meetings between Sri Lanka and Chinese businesses in automotive sector](#)

Colombo Page | 17th August

A Chinese business delegation will hold B2B meetings with Sri Lankan counterparts on Friday, 18th August, 2017 in Colombo, in a bid to find opportunities in the Automotive Spare Parts and Machinery Items. The 21- member business delegation from China, which is led by the Beijing Lansing Overlook International Exhibition Co. Ltd., will also attend a Sri Lanka - China Business Forum prior to the B2B meetings, which will be held at the Hilton Colombo Residences, starting at 2 in the evening. The event is organized by the Ceylon Chamber of Commerce.

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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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