



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

**December 18th , 2017| Volume: 3 - 3/12**

[MoF, ADB signs agreement of \\$60m to support power transmission expansion in eastern Afghanistan](#)  
Afghanistan Times | 17th December  
Eklil Hakimi, Minister of Finance and Ms. Shanny Campbell, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) Deputy Country Director for Afghanistan today (Sunday) signed grant agreement of \$60 million to provide more electricity for Afghan households, businesses and industry by extending the national grid connectivity into eastern provinces and strengthen the north-east power system in the presence of H.E. the President, Cabinet Members and PMs at the beginning of the High Economic Council in ARG, a statement from Ministry of Finance said. The project is part of the total \$1.2 billion Energy Supply Improvement Investment Program (2015-2024) and will be financed from the Afghanistan Infrastructure Trust Fund (AITF). AITF, administered by ADB, is a donor-financed fund established in 2010 which aims to improve

[Myanmar delegation arrives Monday for talks on working group](#)  
The Financial Express | 17<sup>th</sup> December  
Myanmar is expected to send a six-member delegation to Dhaka on Monday evening to take forward the process of forming a joint working group. The team is scheduled to arrive in a bid to start the repatriation of Rohingya people now living in Bangladesh, said the sources concerned. The two neighbouring countries will hold a meeting at the State guesthouse Meghna on Tuesday morning to discuss and finalise things to form the much-awaited working group. Foreign Secretary M Shahidul Haque will lead the Bangladesh side while his Myanmar counterpart Permanent Secretary Myint Thu the Myanmar delegation at the meeting, an official told UNB on Sunday.

[Malaysian Prime Minister's visit to Sri Lanka expected to provide opportunity for both countries to strengthen ties](#)  
Colombo Page| 17th December  
Malaysia's Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak accompanied by his wife Datin Seri Rosmah Mansor arrived in Colombo on a two-day official visit on an invitation of President Maithripala Sirisena. Sri Lanka's Foreign Affairs Minister Tilak Marapana welcomed the Malaysian Premier at the Bandaranaike International Airport in Katunayake. The Prime Minister was accorded a grand welcoming ceremony where he was also introduced to Sri Lankan ministers and the diplomatic corps by Marapana.

livelihoods of the Afghan people through infrastructure development, the statement added.

## AFGHANISTAN

### [China, India two global giants: Afghanistan benefits](#)

Afghanistan Times | 17th December

Indeed, Afghanistan has been enjoying warmest relations with two global giants—China and India, and the relations have been all the time affectionate and friendly. In the 21st century, relations have improved significantly with giving hope to the war-hit country, Afghanistan toward having a brighter future with support of New Delhi and Beijing. There is no doubt that China and India are two global giants. If they work together, the world will benefit in general, but Afghanistan in particular due to its geopolitical location. Kabul's relations with these two big Asian Countries go back to the history of Silk Road-hundreds of years' ago. A decade of democracy has opened up Afghan society, and India's and China's cooperation have helped develop sustainable links around a shared vision. India is already the sixth largest donor to Afghanistan. It has been involved in diverse development projects in infrastructure, education, water management, power production, agriculture and other productive areas. China is also in the same path, helping Afghanistan in every area.

### [Karzai, Modi discuss bilateral relations](#)

Afghanistan Times | 17th December

The former President Hamid Karzai, and the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi the other day held a meeting in New Delhi, where the two sides discussed bilateral ties and shared views on security situations in Afghanistan and in the region. "Delighted to meet my friend Hamid Karzai in New Delhi, PM Narendra Modi, who also hosted dinner for the ex-Afghan President, tweeted. During the meeting, the two prominent leaders discussed strategic bilateral relations, comprising New Delhi's development assistance to Afghanistan and India's cooperation in other key areas. According to officials, the two sides also shared opinions on security situations in Afghanistan and in the region. They agreed to further bolster bilateral relations and productive cooperation in a number of areas.

### [Law on Use of Afghan Air Space Approved](#)

Pajhwok / Daily Outlook Afghanistan | 17th December

Wolesi Jirga or lower house of the parliament on Tuesday approved the draft law on management of foreign military flights in Afghanistan airspace. Earlier, some reports said that unidentified helicopters were landed in Sar-I-Pul, Nangarhar and some other areas of the country. Shayesta Baz Nasari, head of the defense commission of the Wolesi Jirga said the draft law for the management of foreign military aircraft flights was prepared in four chapters and 27 articles under a legislative decree.

## BANGLADESH

### [BNP not in a position to ask for votes, says Hasina](#)

bdnews24 | 17<sup>th</sup> December

“The people, who want to see progress, will never ever vote for them. They (BNP) have patronised the war criminals, the anti-liberation forces, they have burnt people alive,” she said at a discussion held at the Bangabandhu International Conference Centre on Sunday. The programme was arranged in observance of the Intellectual Martyrs Day and Victory Day. She referenced the money laundering charges against Tarique Rahman and late Arafat Rahman Coco, the sons of BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia. Hasina said: “They are not in a position to face the people and ask for votes. There is hardly any chance that the party will rise to power ever again” Condemning the BNP, the arch rival of the ruling Awami League, Hasina said: “People who aim for power only are unable to create anything or make sacrifices. They long for riches only.” In her speech, the prime minister mentioned how the war criminals were empowered after the assassination of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

### [Thrust on stopping fake currency flow between India, Bangladesh](#)

UNB/ The Financial Express | 17<sup>th</sup> December

A joint task force has emphasised on increasing cooperation between India and Bangladesh to check flow of fake currency between the two countries. The call was made on first day of the three-day conference of the task force on fake currency notes between the two neighbouring countries. The conference, which began on Sunday, is taking place at Police Headquarters (PHQs) in Dhaka. Additional Inspector General of Police (Admin and Ops) of the PHQs Mukhlesur Rahman formally inaugurated the conference, reports UNB.

## **BHUTAN**

### [Haa ready to host National Day celebrations](#)

KUENSEL | 16th December

The stage is set for the 110th National Day celebrations in Haa. The pride of Haa is draped intricately in colourful scarves. Flagpoles and eight lucky signs adorn the road. Streets are swept clean and the people are attired in their best. Thousands of people from Haa and neighbouring areas gathered at the courtyard of the newly-constructed Lhakhang Karpo yesterday for the final rehearsals. The celebration will include indigenous cultural programmes and strongmen contests. Prayer ceremonies to ward off diseases and obstructions will be conducted for the new year. On hearing the loud music and congregation of people, Lhab Gyem, 95, from Kibiri village abandoned her cattle in the nearby forests and came to Lhakhang Karpo where rehearsals for the National Day celebrations were in full swing. “I didn’t even care to dress up because I didn’t want to miss anything,” she said. The mood at the ground is terrific. Laughter reverberates across the courtyard and the valley as young and old witness the cultural programmes that have been screened numerous times. Villagers, students, and civil servants prepared more than 40 cultural programmes.

### [Labour ministry to publish labour force survey report 2016](#)

KUENSEL | 16th December

After withholding it, the labour ministry has decided to publish the 14th Labour Force Survey Report (LFSR) 2016. Labour ministry officials had then claimed that they needed to review the findings of the LFSR after the technical team found technical issues with the sampling, survey instruments, methodologies, and definition of employment. Department of employment and human resources’ director general (DG), Sherab Tenzin, said the review has been completed after several consultations with the World Bank, National Statistics Bureau (NSB) and Centre for Bhutanese Studies.

## **MALDIVES**

### [Maldives on the list of countries adopting Islamic Finance](#)

Sun Online | 17<sup>th</sup> December

The Maldives has been included on the list of countries adopting the Islamic Finance System. According to the Thomson Reuters Islamic Finance Development Report 2017, the Maldives, along with Oman and Palestine are the top three countries adopting the system at a fast rate. Maldives was also included on the list of the fast developing Islamic Financial Institutes.

### [Discontent within opposition coalition after Umar joins JP](#)

Sun Online | 17<sup>th</sup> December

The past week may have seen new life poured into Jumhoory Party with the former Minister of Home Affairs and presidential candidate accepting JP's request to join the party. The function held to celebrate Umar joining JP was attended by a large number of general party members. This new development poses two major questions. Will the opposition coalition remain intact or disintegrate with Umar now a member of JP? How much support did the decision to invite Umar to join JP have among its general members? "If Umar joins JP, then I shall leave the party". This was a popular sentiment expressed by the party's members on social media before the function.

## **MYANMAR**

### [China donates USD 500,000 towards Peace Process](#)

Mizzima | 18th December

The People's Republic of China donated USD 500,000 to National Reconciliation and Peace Center yesterday afternoon in Nay Pyi Taw, state media reported on 18 December. Speaking at the ceremony at the center, Mr. Sun Guoxiang, Special envoy of Asian Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China said, "China supports Myanmar's peace process and will provide up to USD 3 million for it. The country will donate USD 1 million next year. Although the amount is not large, the donation reflects China's goodwill towards Myanmar as the two are friendly countries. China will provide more assistance for Myanmar." Mr. Sun presented the cash donation to Vice-Chair of the Center and Chair of the Peace Commission Dr Tin Myo Win who in return handed over a certificate of honour. Dr Tin Myo Win said, "Peace is what the entire Myanmar wants," the report said.

### [Myanmar introduces 1st cable car service in pilgrimage site](#)

Global times / Mizzima | 18th December

Myanmar has introduced the country's first cable car services at a well-known pilgrimage and tourist site the Kyaiktiyo Pagoda, also known as Golden Rock, in southeastern Mon state, the official Global New Light of Myanmar reported Sunday. The cable car service, run by a South Korean company, the Sky Asia Co., was inaugurated by Minister of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation U Ohn Win on Saturday. With six towers it will run with 44 cable cars, each with the capacity of a maximum eight persons and the journey will take about 10 minutes running from Yathedaung Mountain to the Kyaiktiyo pagoda. The 21 million US dollars project was implemented on a 5.46 hectares' land within Kyaiktiyo Wildlife Sanctuary. Kyaiktiyo Pagoda, a small one built on the top of a 1,100-meter high granite boulder covered with gold leaves pasted on by devotees, is one of the well-known pilgrimage sites in the country.

### [Myanmar govt ready to receive returnees from Bangladesh](#)

Mizzima | 16th December

The Myanmar government says it is ready to receive refugees who fled the unrest in Rakhine state to take shelter in Bangladesh. Union Enterprise of Humanitarian Assistance, Resettlement and Development (UEHRD) for

Rakhine State Vice-Chairman Dr. Win Myat Aye said the Myanmar government is ready to receive those who return after fleeing to Bangladesh due to unrest in northern Rakhine State, to allow them to resettle in Myanmar safely again. He said that all necessary measures have been made for providing them shelter, food and employment. Dr. Win Myat Aye told Mizzima: "We need to only create job opportunities and arrange for their livelihood. This place is fertile land and good for their livelihood so that they will be okay when they come back to the places close to their old habitats where they will be resettled."

## NEPAL

### [RPP for Hindu State, Constitutional Monarchy reinstatement: Thapa](#)

The Himalayan Times | 17th December

Chairman of Rastriya Prajatantra Party and Deputy Prime Minister Kamal Thapa has asserted for the reinstatement of Hindu state and constitutional monarchy in the country. He also said that the RPP would hit the parliament and the street to establish their agendas.

### [Construction of Ram Janaki Temple worth Rs 100 mln underway in Palpa](#)

Rastriya Samachar Samiti / The Himalayan Times | 17th December

The construction of Ram Janaki Temple is underway in Rampur Municipality-5 of Palpa district according to the Ram Janaki Temple Council Conservation Committee. Phaneshwor Gautam, Chairperson of the Conservation Committee at Rampur, informed that the construction project, with an estimated cost of Rs 100 million, aims to conserve and protect the historically and religiously significant "Ram Chulo" by building a temple and other religious structures around it.

## PAKISTAN

### [US to take unilateral steps in 'areas of divergence' with Pakistan: Pentagon](#)

DAWN | 18th December

The Trump administration has informed Congress that it will take unilateral steps in areas of divergence with Pakistan while expanding cooperation between the two countries where their interests converge. In a report to Congress, which was released to the media this weekend, the Pentagon also underlined the need for a joint US-Afghan platform for combating more than 20 militant groups active in the region.

### [CPEC could turn into a nightmare if Pakistan keeps tariffs high](#)

The Express Tribune | 18th December

Pakistan's situation regarding its international trade and tariff policies is similar to that of Alice in Wonderland. Should it continue to negotiate new free trade agreements (FTAs) and thus liberalise or should it keep imposing new regulatory duties, consequently tightening its import regime further? At present, it seems to be going in both directions, not knowing which is the right course. Pakistan has played on both sides of the fence in the past and its success in a few cases probably encourages it to stick to that strategy.

### [Water wars: In AJK, Pakistan races to tap the Himalayas](#)

AFP / The Express Tribune | 18th December

Located several hundred metres underground, thousands of labourers grind away day and night on a mammoth hydroelectric project in Azad Jammu and Kashmir, where India and Pakistan are racing to tap the last of subcontinent's diminishing freshwater supplies.

### [PML-N govt steered country out of darkness: Shehbaz](#)

The Express Tribune | 18th December

Punjab Chief Minister Shehbaz Sharif has said that the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) government has created history by successfully steering the country out of darkness. “The nation will always remember this historical accomplishment of the PML-N to end power crisis and our efforts to complete the energy projects will be written in golden letters in the country’s history,” said the Punjab CM while talking to a PML-N delegation in London on Sunday.

## SRI LANKA

### [Employees of Sri Lanka power sector to strike indefinitely if demands not met](#)

Colombo Page | 18th December

Joint Trade Union Coalition of Ceylon Electricity Board (CEB), Sri Lanka's power authority, announced that the CEB employees would launch an indefinite strike if the government fails to respond to their demands. Ceylon Electricity Employees Union Secretary Ranjan Jayalal said the hunger strike launched by CEB employees will continue for the 8th day.

### [Sri Lankan President to request Russian President to consider removing temporary ban on tea exports](#)

Colombo Page | 17th December

Sri Lankan President Maithripala Sirisena says he will make a special request to the Russian President Vladimir Putin to consider temporarily suspending the ban on Sri Lanka's tea imports. President Sirisena said Sri Lanka will take prompt measures to get the temporary ban imposed on tea exports to Russia, which is a major buyer of Sri Lankan tea, revoked. The Russian agricultural safety watchdog, Russian Federal Service for Veterinary and Phytosanitary Surveillance (Rosselkhoz nadzor) announced that it has decided impose restrictions on Sri Lankan tea imports after an insect, a Khapra beetle, was found in the packaging of one consignment of tea from Sri Lanka.

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### ***About Ananta Aspen Centre***

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