



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

October 18th, 2017 | Volume: 3 - 07/10

[Ajit Doval meets President Ghani, CEO Abdullah, NSA Atmar](#)

Afghanistan Times | 18th October
Indian National Security Adviser, Ajit Doval on Monday paid an official visit to Kabul on the invitation of his Afghan counterpart, Haneef Atmar, where he met with President Ashraf Ghani, and Chief Executive Dr. Abdullah Abdullah. During his meeting with President Ghani, both sides discussed bilateral ties, further cooperation and regional efforts against terrorism. Ghani and Doval welcomed the opportunities created by the new US strategy for bringing durable peace and stability in the region. Moreover, the Indian delegation, headed by India's National Security Adviser, Ajit Doval held meeting with Chief Executive Dr. Abdullah Abdullah, where they exchanged views and emphasized on strengthening bilateral relations and regional cooperation against terrorism.

[15,000 Rohingyas stranded near Bangladesh border: UNHCR](#)

Reuters / Prothom Alo | 18th October
The UN refugee agency urged Bangladesh on Tuesday to speed up vetting of up to 15,000 Rohingya refugees "stranded" near the border after crossing into the country from Myanmar and move them further inland to safer and better conditions. Some 582,000 Rohingya are now known to have fled since violence erupted on Aug. 25 in northern Rakhine state, where they lack access to food and healthcare, U.N. officials said. "We are gravely concerned about humanitarian conditions in Bangladesh, where thousands of new arrivals are stranded near the border," UNHCR spokesman Andrej Mahecic told a Geneva news briefing.

[Pakistan, China to treat all investors equally](#)

The Express Tribune | 18th October
Pakistan and China on Tuesday agreed to treat equally all investors that will pour capital into the planned nine Special Economic Zones (SEZs) – an understanding that will address concerns of local businesses about preferential treatment of the Chinese. "It has been agreed that everyone will be treated equally," said Chinese Charge d'Affaires Lijian Zhao after first meeting of the Expert Group on Industry.

AFGHANISTAN

[Muscat Meeting to Discuss Afghan-Pak Relations: CEO](#)

Daily Outlook Afghanistan | 16th October

Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Abdullah Abdullah on Sunday said relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan would be discussed in upcoming Quadrilateral Cooperation Group (QCG) meeting in Muscat, the capital of Oman. Talking to reporters in Mehtarlam, the capital of eastern Laghman province, Abdullah said good relations with neighbours was Afghanistan's need and said the recent visit of the Pakistan Army Chief was aimed at decreasing tensions and improving relations between the neighbors.

[Iranian Economy Minister Meets Counterparts from India, Afghanistan](#)

Daily Outlook Afghanistan | 16th October

Iranian Minister of Economic Affairs and Finance Masoud Karbasian in separate meetings with his Afghan and Indian counterparts reviewed issues of mutual interest with them. The meetings were held on the sidelines of the 2017 Annual joint meeting of the World Bank Group and International Monetary Fund (IMF). In his meeting with Indian Minister of Finance Arun Jaitley, Karbasian expressed Iran's readiness to host joint commission meeting in early 2018. He pointed to using \$450m credits of India to develop Chabahar Port and also to establish cooperation in transportation field.

[Clash among ISIS and Afghan forces leaves 12 dead, wounded in Kunar](#)

Khaama Press | 15th October

At least twelve people were killed or wounded during a clash between the Afghan security forces and the ISIS militants in eastern Kunar province of Afghanistan. The 201st Silab Corps of the Afghan National Army (ANA) forces in the East said the incident took place late on Saturday night in the vicinity of Kunar Bain area. A statement by the Silab Corps said at least eight ISIS militants were killed and four others were wounded during the clashes.

BANGLADESH

[Khaleda Zia returning today, minister warns of legal action](#)

Prothom Alo | 18th October

BNP chairperson Khaleda Zia, facing arrest warrants in three cases, returns home on Wednesday completing her over a three-month visit to the United Kingdom, reports news agency UNB. Khaleda is scheduled to leave London's Heathrow Airport for Bangladesh around 2:00am (BST) on Tuesday night by an Emirates Airlines flight, her media wing member Sayrul Kabir Khan. The flight is expected to land at Shahjalal International Airport in Dhaka around 5:20pm on Wednesday, he said.

Sayrul said BNP leaders and activists will gather in the airport area to receive Khaleda.

[Income inequality widens further](#)

The Financial Express | 18th October

Income inequality in Bangladesh has widened further despite decline in the rate of poverty, dropping to 24.3 per cent last year from 31.5 per cent six years back. Official findings in the Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES) 2016 unveiled Tuesday such a state of poverty, hunger and income of people in the country. The survey, conducted by the state-run Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS), showed that the Gini coefficient, which

measures income inequality within a country's population, increased to 0.483 from 0.458 in 2010. According to the HIES 2016, the income inequality in the urban areas has risen faster than in the rural areas.

BHUTAN

[Bhutan receives ASOCIO Digital government award](#)

KuenselOnline | 17thOctober

Bhutan received the Asian-Oceanian Computing Industry Organisation (ASOCIO) Digital government award at the ICT summit last month in Taiwan for Information and Communications technology (ICT) initiatives that had been undertaken in the country. ASOCIO is an ICT federation organised by ICT associations comprising of 31 economies throughout Asia. The event is organised every last quarter of the year in different member economies annually. The summit is recognised as one of the region's high-powered Information Technology (IT) forum, providing platforms for government and industry to exchange information and develop closer relationship. It also identifies new business opportunities. ASOCIO recognises and awards individuals, firms and government for remarkable transformation in ICT. The award was presented during the summit, which was held from September 11 -13.

[Collaborative approach necessary to develop disaster management plan](#)

KuenselOnline | 17thOctober

At the Thimphu thromde's disaster management committee meeting yesterday, understanding secondary hazard, identifying vulnerable groups and places, and the need for the stakeholders to work together were seen as important to develop thromde's disaster management plan. The discussion was part of the risk assessment process of the thromde's disaster management plan. Department of Disaster Management's (DDM) programme officer, Tenzin Choden, said that following an earthquake in Kobe, Japan, fire broke out which caused further damage in the country. "Most of the houses are built close to each other in Bhutan." She said building code is necessary in the country to monitor infrastructure. "We might be confident of the structures built after 2000, but we might have to think about those built before 2000." During the meeting, children were identified as the most vulnerable group.

MALDIVES

[Agreement signed to acquire loan from Abu Dhabi Fund for airport development](#)

Sun Online | 17th October

An agreement has been signed to get a loan from the Abu Dhabi Fund for the development of Velana International Airport. The agreement was signed on President Yameen's on going official visit to the UAE at the Ruler's Court in Dubai today. At the ceremony, the President and the First Lady were greeted by the Vice President, Prime Minister of UAE and the Ruler of the Emirate of Dubai, Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum.

[Maldives wins 4 votes, despite bowing out of running for UNHRC](#)

Sun Online | 17th October

Maldives won votes from four countries to be in the United Nations Human Rights Council this Tuesday, despite bowing out of running. In a tweet by Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the government thanked the countries which showed support for Maldives. Despite reports by some media sources that Maldives lost the bid for UNHRC, the government of Maldives had announced in July that it will not be running for the UNHRC

[ACC completed probes into 265 cases in Q3](#)

Sun Online | 17th October

Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) reports it completed investigations into 265 cases during the third quarter of this year. In a statement released this Tuesday, ACC said it completed investigation and forwarded seven cases for trial during the third quarter, which it said was a 57.74 percent increase compared to the same period last year. Statistics show ACC completed investigations into a fewer 167 cases during the third quarter of 2016, and sent only two cases forward for trial during the period.

MYANMAR

[New EU Ambassador Kristian Schmidt hands over credentials to Myanmar President U Htin Kyaw](#)

Mizzima | 18th October

The new Ambassador of the European Union to Myanmar, Mr Kristian Schmidt, handed over his credentials to the President of the Union of Myanmar, U Htin Kyaw, at the presidential palace in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. Ambassador Schmidt will represent the European Union in Myanmar and serve as Head of the EU Delegation in Yangon during the next four years.

[State Counsellor meets with PPST to discuss NCA](#)

Mizzima | 17th October

State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and members of the Peace Process Steering Team (PPST) of the signatories to the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) yesterday discussed the implementation of the NCA, state media reported. According to the report, the State Counsellor expressed her delight for the open discussion with the delegation. She also stressed the need for unity of all the people of the country, warning that the country would be put under pressure and bullied by others if there was no unity. She also stressed the importance of solidarity in the union, the report said.

NEPAL

[Avoid any decision that could affect polls, EC to govt](#)

MyRepublica | 11th October

Chief Election Commissioner Ayodhee Prasad Yadav has urged the government not to take any decision that can affect the scheduled parliamentary and provincial elections. The request from the election body chief comes at a time when speculations are rife that the government is preparing to reshuffle the cabinet by sacking ministers from the UCPN (Maoist), a key coalition partner. The relations between the two ruling coalition partners--Nepali Congress and the Maoist Center--have soured after the Maoist Center forged an electoral alliance with the main opposition CPN-UML last week.

[NC MPs demand ouster of Home Minister Sharma](#)

MyRepublica | 11th October

In a reflection of increasing rivalry between the two ruling coalition partners, a Nepali Congress (NC) lawmaker has demanded the resignation of Home Minister Janardan Sharma, who belongs to the CPN (Maoist Center), for failing to catch the murderers of construction entrepreneur Sharad Kumar Gauchan. Speaking in parliament in a special session Tuesday, NC's Ram Hari Khatiwada came down heavily against Home Minister Sharma. "If the

individual responsible for maintaining peace and security fails to do so he should resign. I strongly demand the resignation of the home minister,” Khatiwada said.

[Govt claims it can achieve targeted growth rate of 7.2pc](#)

The Himalayan Times | 11th October

At a time when multilateral development partners — World Bank and Asian Development Bank — have made forecasts that the growth rate will decline moderately from around 4.5 per cent to 4.7 per cent, compared to 6.9 per cent in the previous fiscal, the government has said the high growth rate of last fiscal can be achieved this fiscal too. According to the Ministry of Finance, the country will achieve the targeted growth rate of 7.2 per cent this fiscal as paddy production will break last year’s record of 5.23 million tonnes. Paddy production is expected to hover at around 5.3 million metric tonnes this fiscal.

PAKISTAN

[PM, his top men brief Gen Bajwa on economy](#)

The Express Tribune | 18th October

The civilian top brass on Tuesday briefed Chief of the Army Staff General Qamar Javed Bajwa on the state of the economy to address the military’s concerns over “sky-high debts” and “growing external imbalances”. The army chief was also given a briefing on the “real picture” of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and its intended benefits for the country, according to officials privy to the meeting. Gen Bajwa was also informed in details about external sector problems, said the officials.

[Bajwa back home after ‘quiet’ visit to Saudi Arabia, UAE](#)

DAWN | 18th October

Chief of the Army Staff Gen Qamar Javed Bajwa returned from a three-day visit to the Middle East on Tuesday, military sources told Dawn. The army chief’s ‘quiet’ visit to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Saudi Arabia coincided with a meeting of representatives from Pakistan, Afghanistan, China and the US in Muscat to revive the stalled Quadrilateral Coordination Group (QCG).

SRI LANKA

[Sri Lanka President emphasizes need to further consolidate relationship with Pakistan](#)

Colombo Page | 17th October

Sri Lanka's President Maithripala Sirisena recalling the long-standing bilateral relations with Pakistan emphasized the need to further consolidate the relationship between the two countries when visiting Pakistani Foreign Secretary Ms. Tehmina Janjua called on him at the Presidential Secretariat. Emphasizing the need to expand economic relations between the two countries, President Sirisena said Pakistan could invest in sugar and cement industries as there is a huge requirement of sugar and cement in Sri Lanka. He pointed out that currently Sri Lanka produces only 20 percent of the sugar requirement.

[Prime Minister calls to let Deepavali be the opportunity to restore lives and rebuild relationships](#)

Colombo Page | 18th October

Sri Lanka's Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe in a message to mark Deepavali, the Hindu festival of lights, calls on the people to light thousand lamps and take the opportunity at the occasion to restore lives, rebuild

relationships, and pave the way for harmony and healing. He says the true meaning of Deepavali is found in overcoming lies with the truth, hatred with love, evil with goodness and defeat with victory.

[Sri Lanka needs to look beyond its borders and increase its global competitiveness, says World Bank](#)

Colombo Page|18th October

With a domestic market of only 20 million consumers with a modest per capita income, Sri Lanka needs to look beyond its borders and increase its global competitiveness to sustain high and long-term growth, the World Bank says. In a feature story "Vision 2025: Sri Lanka's Path to Prosperity" the World Bank looks at the key constraints to the island's economic growth and how the global lender assists the unity government's proposed reforms in its Vision 2025, to reduce poverty and create prosperity for the Sri Lankans. According to the global lender among the key constraints are, Sri Lanka's geographically unequal economic growth, land administration, and rapidly aging population.

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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