

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

**December 19th, 2016 | Volume: 2 - 8/12**

[Politicians Urge Improved Relations with Neighbors](#)

Daily Outlook Afghanistan | 19<sup>th</sup> December

President Ashraf Ghani on Sunday joined a number of political and national figures in stressing strengthening of Afghanistan's relations with its neighbors. According to a statement from the presidential palace, President Ghani met political, national and jihadi figures this morning following his advisory meetings. Many issues such as improving relations with neighboring countries, regional stability and ensuring security in Afghanistan were discussed at the meeting, the statement said. The participants also shared their views about issues of national importance and stressed on strengthening Afghanistan's relations with neighbors. They also urged stressed more such meetings in future.

[Damodar Valley Corporation keen to sell power to Bangladesh](#)

bdnews24 | 13<sup>th</sup> December

The Damodar Valley Corporation (DVC), a three-way joint venture of the West Bengal, Jharkhand and Indian governments, is exploring export of power to Bangladesh. DVC officials told bdnews24.com that the Bangladesh power market at the moment offers better returns than selling power in India. "We are looking to sell at least 500MW to Bangladesh. Our team gave this proposal to Bangladesh during a recent visit to Dhaka," said a top DVC official.

[India to attend Islamabad conference](#)

The Express Tribune | 18<sup>th</sup> December  
Despite escalating tensions between the two nuclear states, India is likely to attend the 12th session of the Governing Council of the Asian and Pacific Centre for Transfer of Technology (APCTT), which opens here in Islamabad on Monday. A senior official of the Ministry of Science and Technology confirmed to The Express Tribune that a delegation from India was participating in the three-day conference. "We have received a confirmation email from the authorities concerned in India regarding the participation of their delegate," said the official.

**AFGHANISTAN**

[Russia's support in Taliban talks necessary and effective: Karzai](#)

Khaama Press | 19<sup>th</sup> December

The former Afghan President Hamid Karzai has Russia's support in peace talks with the Taliban is necessary and effective as he insisted on the important role of the neighboring and regional countries for the Afghan peace talks. Karzai made the remarks during a meet with the Russian Ambassador to Afghanistan Alexander Mantytskiy. The former President warned that the menace of terrorism is dangerous not only for Afghanistan but for the region as the

two sides held talks regarding the ongoing situation. In his turn, the Russian Ambassador reaffirmed Moscow's support in different sectors with Afghanistan and reiterated efforts to bring peace and stability in the country.

#### [US airstrike kills 16 Daesh in Nangarhar](#)

Afghanistan Times | 17<sup>th</sup> December

At least 16 Daesh fighters were killed in a US airstrike in eastern Nangarhar province, provincial police chief said in a statement Saturday. "The airstrike targeted the hideout of the insurgents in Achin district of the province late Friday," the statement said. It added that the ammunition cache of the insurgents was also destroyed during the raids. No civilian's casualties reported during the operation. This comes as top US commander in Afghanistan Gen. John Nicholson said earlier October that Daesh is trying to expand their foothold and establish the Khorasan caliphate inside Afghanistan.

#### [NPC Approves 10 Contracts worth 2b Afghanis, Rejects 1](#)

Outlook Afghanistan | 19<sup>th</sup> December

The National Procurement Authority (NPA) has approved 10 contracts worth two billion afghanis, rejected one and asked review of another, President Ashraf Ghani's office said on Sunday. A National Procurement Commission meeting, chaired by President Ashraf Ghani, was held Saturday evening at the Presidential Palace here to review important contracts involving big sums of money. Yama Yari, director-general of NPA, briefed the session on the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on cooperation between the Authority and the Ministry of Interior's anti-crime department. He said both sides would work for preventing corruption on projects.

### **BANGLADESH**

#### [AL asks BNP to have faith in president](#)

The Daily Star | 19<sup>th</sup> December

Senior leaders of the ruling Awami League asked the BNP to keep faith in President Abdul Hamid, saying the next Election Commission to be formed by him would be acceptable to all. They said they would accept any decision made by the president and would expect the BNP to do the same.

#### [Half the population lack access to financial system: Study](#)

The Financial Express | 19<sup>th</sup> December

Mobile banking system has brought positive outcomes on money transactions, savings, health, and education status of the household of internal migrant workers of Bangladesh, according to a study. The study also showed that around 50 per cent of the country's total population don't have access to any sort of financial system while nearly 74 per cent of the rural population are unbanked, which can be potentially reached through mobile banking.

### **BHUTAN**

#### [His Majesty's Address to the Nation, 109th National Day, 17 December 2016](#)

Kuensel Online | 18<sup>th</sup> December

Each year, we come together to celebrate the 17th of December as our National Day— an occasion of great significance and importance. The commemoration of this day serves to remind us of the profound sacrifices of our forefathers, who worked tirelessly for the wellbeing of our country and people; it allows us to express our gratitude to those who came before us for handing over a strong, sovereign nation to the future generations; and it is a day on which our generation reaffirms our pledge to shoulder our important responsibility to serve the nation to the best of our abilities.

### **MALDIVES**

#### [HRCM: Majority of migrant complaints over unpaid salaries](#)

Sun Online | 18<sup>th</sup> December

Human Rights Commission of Maldives (HRCM) reports it has received 26 complaints regarding human rights violations against migrant workers so far this year. HRCM expressed concern over human rights violations against migrant workers taking place in Maldives, calling out for all relevant authorities to increase the efficiency of its work to prevent such violations. The commission reported the majority of complaints from migrant workers this year were over unpaid salaries.

### [Abu Dhabi Fund pledges USD 40 mn loan for airport development](#)

Sun Online | 18<sup>th</sup> December

Minister of Finance and Treasury, Ahmed Munawwar has announced Abu Dhabi Fund has pledged a USD 40 million loan for the development of Ibrahim Nasir International Airport (INIA). OPEC Fund for International Development (OFID) granted a USD 50 million loan with a grace period of four years, payable over 14 years this Sunday. Minister Munawwar announced that Abu Dhabi Fund has also pledged a loan, after signing the loan agreement between OFID and Maldivian government in a function held at Hotel Jen, this Sunday.

## MYANMAR

### [Myanmar army takes outpost from powerful rebel group](#)

Mizzima | 19th December

Myanmar's army has seized an important outpost from a powerful rebel faction during a bout of intense fighting, state media and insurgents confirmed Sunday, in the latest blow to peace efforts. Fighting has blighted Myanmar's border regions for decades, pitting various ethnic minority groups seeking autonomy or independence against the notoriously abusive military.

### [Border trade likely to reopen in Myanmar's Rakhine state with situation returning to normal](#)

Mizzima | 19th December

Border trade between Myanmar and Bangladesh at Maungtau border trade point is likely to reopen as situation in northern Rakhine state of Myanmar starts to return to normal, official media reported Sunday. However, the security needs to be tightened in the first phase of its reopening, Maungtau Border Merchants Association was quoted as saying.

### [New China Silk Road – Has Myanmar still got a role?](#)

Mizzima | 17th December

In September of this year I wrote an article arguing that Myanmar will play a pivotal and key strategic role in China's "One Belt One Road" strategy. Since the publication there have been a number of commentators claiming that recent activities suggest that Myanmar no longer holds this position. Let us first look at some of these activities and then assess whether the Country does still hold this role. Also note that the previous article focused on the maritime routes, particularly the impact on energy security for China as demonstrated in the map below. This article will look at the land routes and back up infrastructure to support the changes in maritime thinking.

## NEPAL

### [Amendment bill not to be allowed passage in parliament: CPN-UML chairman KP Sharma Oli](#)

The Kathmandu Post | 17<sup>th</sup> December

CPN-UML chairman KP Sharma Oli has said the constitution amendment bill would not be allowed passage in the parliament. Speaking in a colloquium titled 'Constitution Amendment Proposal and the Question of Nationality' organised by the All Nepal Intellectuals Association in Kathmandu on Saturday, the leader of the main opposition party and former Prime Minister Oli reiterated that the amendment bill would be prevented passage in parliament for it might endanger the national interest in future.

### [Chinese leaders call on Prez Bhandari](#)

My Republica | 18<sup>th</sup> December

A team of Chinese leaders led by Member of Political Bureau and Secretariat of Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee and Chief of CPC Publicity Department, Liu Qibao called on President Bidya Devi Bhandari on Sunday. During the courtesy call at Sheetal Niwas, the President's Office, discussions were held on further enhancing the mutual relation between the two countries.

### [Int'l Airport in Pokhara: Finance Ministry confirms \\$216m soft loan for project](#)

The Kathmandu Post | 19<sup>th</sup> December

The \$215.96 million soft loan signed with China in March for the construction of a new international airport in Pokhara has come into effect after the Finance Ministry officially sent a "letter of approval" to the lender on Friday. The approval letter is the official confirmation from the borrower to obtain the soft loan.

## PAKISTAN

### [CPEC to generate returns for paying back foreign debt](#)

The Express Tribune | 18<sup>th</sup> December

Pakistan has completed its loan programme with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in September this year with inflows of \$6.4 billion over a period of 36 months. This borrowing helped ease the strain on the balance of payments and enabled the country to bear cost of its foreign debt. In the meantime, foreign currency reserves of the country, which had dropped to dangerously low levels three years ago, swelled to an all-time high in 2016. The loan programme successfully ended at a time when Pakistan kicked off work on a raft of infrastructure projects including the building of energy plants and ports and construction of roads and highways under the \$46 billion China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). There is important relationship between the IMF loan and CPEC as Pakistan will start repaying the IMF debt in 2018 and this will be the time when CPEC will start giving returns to Beijing and Islamabad.

### [Europe to be largest market for Pakistan's textiles](#)

The Express Tribune | 18<sup>th</sup> December

In encouraging remarks for the perturbed exporters, Honorary Consul General of Pakistan for Finland WilleEerola has emphasised that the European bloc will remain the biggest export market for the country's textile sector in coming years despite a huge influx of Chinese investment in the South Asian nation. Referring to ongoing developments under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), he said the project would definitely change the country's landscape and bring both countries (China and Pakistan) more closer.

### [PTI asks PM to withdraw Qatari prince's letter from SC](#)

Dawn | 19<sup>th</sup> December

The Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf has asked Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif to withdraw the letter of the Qatari prince from the Supreme Court if he stands by his speech on the floor of the National Assembly. Talking to reporters after a meeting of the party's parliamentary group here on Sunday, PTI vice chairman Shah Mehmood Qureshi said the prime minister should come to parliament and explain his position over his alleged contradictory statements made in the National Assembly and the Supreme Court about the contents of the Panama Papers about foreign assets purportedly owned by him.

## **SRI LANKA**

### [World Bank approves soft loan of USD 1340 Million for Sri Lanka](#)

Colombo Gazette | 16<sup>th</sup> December

The World Bank has approved a soft loan of USD 1340 Million for Sri Lanka, the Government announced today. The Government says the soft loan has been granted at a low interest rate.

### [Sri Lanka looks to strengthen its presence in Africa](#)

Colombo Gazette | 17<sup>th</sup> December

Sri Lanka's new Ambassador to Ethiopia and Permanent Representative to the African Union (AU) and United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) Dassanayake Mudiyanse Lage Sumith Priyantha said that Sri Lanka will officially open a new Embassy in Addis Ababa in January 2017.

### [Government revenue increases by 23 percent this year - Finance Ministry](#)

Colombo Page | 18<sup>th</sup> December

The Ministry of Finance says state revenue has increased by 23 percent during the first 9 months of this year compared with the same period in 2015.

### [Passenger ship to travel from Sri Lanka's North to South India after three decades](#)

Colombo Page | 18<sup>th</sup> December

The Sri Lankan government has permitted a passenger ship to travel from North to South India for the first time in 32 years. The passenger ship service is made available for ten days from the 2nd to the 12th of January for pilgrims participating in a "Thiruvathirai" Hindu religious festival held in South India.

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

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