

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

**March 19, 2018 | Volume - 4 - 07/03**

[Indian, Chinese foreign ministers greet Gyawali](#)

The Himalayan Times | 19th March

Indian Minister of External Affairs Sushma Swaraj today made a phone call to congratulate Nepal's newly elected Minister for Foreign Affairs Pradeep Kumar Gyawali. In a congratulatory letter, the Indian minister expressed her confidence that the bilateral relations between Nepal and India would further strengthen during his tenure, the Embassy of India in Nepal tweeted in its official micro-blogging site. Swaraj assured that India would continue to partner Nepal in its pursuit towards accelerated development.

[Cooperation between India and Myanmar in railways sector reaches landmark](#)

Mizzima | 19th March

Cooperation between India and Myanmar in the railways sector will reach an important landmark today, 19 March, when the visiting Indian Minister of State of Railways, His Excellency Mr. Rajen Gohain, will hand over the last of the 18 locomotives being procured under an Indian Line of Credit to His Excellency U Thant Sin Maung, Minister of Transport and Communication of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, at a ceremony in Naypyitaw, according to a statement. India and Myanmar have long enjoyed close cooperation in the railways sector. Over the last two decades, a large quantity of railways rolling stock consisting of 78 locomotives, 56 coaches and 250 wagons, besides assorted equipment and machinery, has been supplied by Indian entities to Myanmar Railways.

[Ambassador: Need to rebuild trust with India](#)

Sun Online | 18th March

The Maldivian

Ambassador to India, Ahmed Mohamed, has said that the trust between Maldives and India has diminished and that trust needs to be rebuilt anew. In an interview with Press Trust India (PTI), Ambassador Ahmed Mohamed said that there was a lot of issues between India and the Maldives and the confidence between the two were strained due to a lack of credible discussions. He said that despite the strain on the relationship between the two countries, the trust between the two must be rebuilt anew and let the past be the past.

**AFGHANISTAN**

[Abdullah, Janjua Want Taliban to Seize Offer for Talks](#)

Daily Outlook Afghanistan | 19th March

Pakistan and Afghanistan have called for the Taliban to respond positively to President Ashraf Ghani's offer of open-ended peace talks. The call came during a meeting Pakistan's National Security Adviser (NSA) Nasser Janjua and Chief Executive Officer Dr. Abdullah on Saturday.

### [Dozens of Insurgents Killed in ANSF Operations](#)

Daily Outlook Afghanistan | 19th March

The ministry of defense said dozens of insurgents have been killed in the past 24 hours in operations around the country. At least 38 armed insurgents including a local commander were killed, and 14 others wounded during operations by the Afghan Security Forces across the country in the past 24 hours, the Ministry of Defense said on Sunday.

## **BANGLADESH**

### [Zia Orphanage Trust graft case: Khaleda's bail stayed until May 8](#)

Dhaka Tribune | 19th March

The Supreme Court has stayed until May 8 the High Court order which granted bail to BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia in the Zia Orphanage Trust graft case. A full bench of the Appellate Division led by Chief Justice Syed Mahmud Hossain passed the order Monday morning. Earlier on Sunday, a four-member bench of the Appellate Division fixed Monday to deliver its judgment on the leave-to-appeal petitions challenging Khaleda Zia's bail. Earlier on March 15, the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) and the state filed two leave-to-appeal petitions before the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court challenging the BNP chief's bail, which the High Court had granted her in the Zia Orphanage Trust graft case.

### [ADB seeks NOC to invest \\$120m in power sector](#)

The Financial Express | 18th March

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has sought clearance from the government to invest US\$120 million under a private initiative in Bangladesh's power sector that struggles to serve an insatiable demand. Sources said the foreign development financier made the move as private-sector conglomerate Summit Power tries to tap global equity through listing on Singapore stock-market. The independent power producer has formed Summit Power International (SPI) as a Singapore-based holding company for netting in funds from abroad by divesting its shares on Singapore Exchange Ltd (SGX) because of Bangladesh's stock-market being a small one.

## **BHUTAN**

### [ECB denies registration for Druk Gaki Tshogpa](#)

Kuensel | 17th March

The Election Commission of Bhutan (ECB) has rejected the application for registration of Druk Gaki Tshogpa, an aspiring political party formed by former civil servant Chheku Dukpa, also known as Jackson Dukpa. The decision to refuse registration for the party was taken at the commission's meeting held on March 15. The application received on February 9 this year, the ECB through a notification stated was subjected to due scrutiny and review against the provisions of the Constitution and electoral laws. According to the ECB, the applicant party submitted a final list of 308 registered members. However, irregularities in 29 cases were found with names not in the electoral roll, names of religious personalities, mismatch of names and constituency mistake. The Druk Gaki Tshogpa did not have members in two constituencies, the ECB stated.

## **MALDIVES**

### [Five days for Chief Justice to respond to charges](#)

Sun Online | 18th March

A duration of five days has been granted to the Chief Justice, Abdulla Saeed, to respond to the charges pressed against him. With the penal code suspended during the course of the State of Emergency, the Chief Justice is being treated under the pre-penal code regulations. At the hearing today, the Judge said that this was an arbitrary trial. The Chief Justice has two charges pending against him. Today's hearing was on the charge of obstructing the government. Sources say that the second charge is for destroying evidence. Aside from the Chief Justice, the former President, Maumoon Abdul Gayoom and the Supreme Court Judge, Ali Hameed Mohamed, are also being charged with destroying evidence.

## **MYANMAR**

### [ASEAN leaders tackle Rakhine crisis and urge South China Sea calm](#)

Mizzima | 19th March

Australia and its ASEAN neighbours vowed to boost defence ties while stressing the importance of non-militarisation in the disputed South China Sea Sunday at a summit where the "complex" Rohingya crisis took centre stage. Leaders from the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, at the three-day meeting in Sydney, also agreed to work more closely to tackle the growing menace of violent extremism and radicalisation. But while a final communique noted a resolve to "protect the human rights of our peoples", it failed to condemn member state Myanmar's treatment of the Muslim-minority Rohingya. Nearly 700,000 Rohingya have fled the troubled Rakhine state for Bangladesh since authorities launched a brutal crackdown six months ago that the UN has called "ethnic cleansing". Myanmar, whose de-facto leader Aung San Suu Kyi was in Sydney, has vehemently denied the allegations.

### [India Education Fair 2018 offers a good education at an affordable price](#)

Mizzima | 19th March

Sanjay Thapa is the founder and managing director of Sape Events & Media Pvt. Ltd in Kolkata in India. Here he discusses the upcoming India Education Fair 2018 to be held in Yangon at the Summit Parkview Hotel on March 23-24 with Mizzima's Myo Thant. Please could you introduce yourself? We are involved in organizing an education fair across the south Asian countries. And when we organized the education fair we came up with the views of students in the south Asian countries and the institutions from India. So we facilitate the students of south Asia to understand about the education system and how they can pursue careers in our Indian university. Why should Myanmar students attend this fair? Number one, that is what I said, India we are a multicultural country. It means an acceptance of any kind of a race, culture, anyone who comes to India, because we lead ourselves into different cultural systems.

## **NEPAL**

### [PM: Won't tolerate corruption by ministers, officials](#)

My Republica | 19th March

Vowing to do away with the rampant corruption in the country, Prime Minister KP Oli has announced to keep all his cabinet colleagues under surveillance and threatened to sack right away any cabinet member found involved in any unscrupulous activity. Stating that the main objective of the government is to make Nepal prosperous and Nepalis happy, Prime Minister Oli directed the ministers and secretaries to mobilize all government resources to achieve the objective.

## **PAKISTAN**

### [PM, Pence review Afghan peace push amid signs of thaw](#)

Dawn | 17th March

Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi had an unscheduled meeting with US Vice President Michael Pence here on Friday and their talks focused on finding a negotiated settlement to the conflict in Afghanistan, official sources told Dawn. In the Pence-Abbasi meeting, both sides “explained their perspectives” on Afghanistan. The prime minister assured Mr Pence of Pakistan’s “sincere commitment” to efforts for peace in Afghanistan and also underlined “Pakistan’s successes” in the war against terrorism, the sources said. Like Mr Pence, the US lawmakers also focused on the current situation in Afghanistan but they expressed “their concern about China’s growing influence in Pakistan” as well, sources told Dawn.

### [Supreme Court summons airline officials over Rao Anwar's bid to flee abroad](#)

GeoNews | 19th March

The Supreme Court resumed hearing today the suo motu case of Naqeebullah Mehsud's extra-judicial murder and the hunt for wanted police officer Rao Anwar. Anwar, suspended from his post of Malir SSP, has been absconding in the murder case of Mehsud, a 27-year-old native of Waziristan, who, among three others, was killed in a fake police encounter in Karachi on January 13 on Anwar's orders. As the hearing went under way, a three-member bench, headed by Chief Justice of Pakistan Justice Saqib Nisar, inquired from the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) governor, who was present in court, whether Anwar's bank accounts have been frozen. Replying in the affirmative, the SBP governor said two of the suspended police officer's bank accounts have been seized.

## **SRI LANKA**

### [Sri Lankan President lifts nationwide state of emergency](#)

Colombo Page | 18th March

Sri Lankan President Maithripala Sirisena has removed the nationwide state of Emergency that was imposed on March 6 after communal clashes broke out in Kandy district. "Upon assessing the public safety situation, I instructed to revoke the State of Emergency," the President said in a Twitter post. The relevant gazette notification was issued, the Government Press reported. The Gazette notification has been issued after President Sirisena returned to country Saturday night after a six-day official visit to Japan.

### [Sri Lankan delegation to leave for Geneva tomorrow to attend 37th UNHRC session](#)

Colombo Page | 18th March

A high-level Sri Lankan delegation led by Foreign Minister Tilak Marapana will leave for Geneva to take part in the ongoing 37th Session of the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC). Special Assignments Minister Dr. Sarath Amunugama will accompany the delegation to the UNHRC as the President's Representative. In addition to the Foreign Minister Sri Lankan team will comprise Foreign Minister Tilak Marapana, Senior Advisor to Finance and Media Minister Mano Tittawella, Deputy Solicitor General Nerin Pulle, Advisor to Prime Minister Prashanthi Mahindaratne, Additional Secretary of the Foreign Ministry A.L.A. Aziz and Director General UN Division, Mahishini Colonne.

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