

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

October 19th, 2016 | Volume: 2 - 8/10

[Taliban, Afghan Govt. in Secret Peace Talks: Report](#)

Outlook Afghanistan|19th October
Representatives of the Taliban militant group and a delegation of the Afghan government have reportedly been engaged in secret peace talks since September. The warring sides have already held two rounds of negotiations in Qatar, where the Taliban has an office, the British daily The Guardian reported on Tuesday, citing a number of unnamed senior sources in the militant group and the Kabul government as saying. It added that a top American diplomat as well as Mullah Abdul Manan, the brother of Afghan Taliban founder, Mullah Mohammad Omar, were also present in both meetings.

[32 bodies found in Myanmar ferry disaster as death toll mounts](#)

Mizzima| 18th October
Searchers have recovered 32 bodies after an overloaded ferry sank in central Myanmar and expect to find dozens more dead, officials said Monday, as workers began raising the boat from the riverbed. A total of 154 people were rescued alive after the ferry sank early Saturday on the Chindwin River, about 72 kilometres (45 miles) north of the city of Monywa.

[70 militants killed in Farah airstrikes](#)

Afghanistan Times|18th October
At least 70 Taliban insurgents were killed and 30 others wounded in a series of airstrikes carried out in the western Farah province, security officials said Tuesday. Provincial police chief, Hassan Shah Forugh, said that the strikes were carried out in the province but did not elaborate whether the attacks were carried out by international warplanes. "The airstrikes targeted Taliban hideouts that resulted in the death of 70 and 30 others injured during the operation," he said.

AFGHANISTAN

[US turned blind eye to terrorist sanctuaries: Karzai](#)

Afghanistan Times|18th October

Former President of Afghanistan, Hamid Karzai, said the United States has turned a blind eye to terrorist sanctuaries beyond Afghan frontiers. In an interview with Sophie Shevardnadze, a correspondent for the television network RT, the former Afghan president said that Afghanistan is insecure, the Taliban have gained more territory, foreign interferences have increased in the country, but the US and its allies have failed to improve security in Afghanistan and help the Afghan peace process.

[Abdullah Holds Fruitful Talks with GCC, Saudi Officials](#)

Outlook Afghanistan|19th October

Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Abdullah Abdullah on Tuesday met Saudi officials and the secretary-general of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), the Saudi Press Agency reported. At a meeting with GCC Secretary General Dr. Abdul Latif Bin Rashid Al-Zayani, the CEO discussed relations between the council and Afghanistan, as well as issues of common interest. Separately, the CEO held a positive meeting with Saudi Education Minister Dr. Ahmed bin Mohammed Al-Issa. They discussed issues concerning the strengthening of educational cooperation between the two countries.

BANGLADESH

[EC reconstitution to be discussed in Brussels: EU envoy](#)

Prothom Alo|17th October

The European Union will discuss reconstitution of the election commission in Bangladesh at the next joint commission meeting in Brussels in December next as the tenure of the current EC expires in February next year, reports UNB news agency. “We’ve a history of cooperation between the EU and the election commission in Bangladesh. So, this is very much on top of our agenda,” said Pierre Mayaudon, the EU Ambassador and Head of Delegation to Bangladesh on Monday.

[Hasina invites Sonia, Mamata, Amit Shah](#)

Prothom Alo|18th October

Prime minister and Awami League president Sheikh Hasina has invited three top figures in Indian politics to the ruling party's national council session, according to a report of Indian newspaper Hindustan Times. The three are AICC chairperson Sonia Gandhi, Trinamool Congress chairperson and chief minister Mamata Banerjee and BJP president Amit Shah.

[WB president announces \\$3b for Bangladesh](#)

Prothom Alo|18th October

Visiting World Bank president Jim Yong Kim on Tuesday pledged an additional \$2 billion over the next three years to help Bangladesh become less vulnerable to climate change. Overall, as he concluded his two-day visit, announced \$3 billion additional funding including \$1 billion for addressing childhood stunting in the country. The WB chief made the pledge for climate funding after visiting schools in Barisal that are used as cyclone shelters during major storms.

[Bangladesh cultural activists protest West Bengal's renaming plan](#)

Bdnews24|19th October

Bangladesh's Sammilito Sangskritik Jote, the central platform of cultural activists, has called for a rethink by West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's cabinet to change the name of the Indian state. They called the decision 'shortsighted' and a 'political stunt' by Mamata. A part of Bangla-speaking people was put in West Bengal through the Partition of India in 1947.

BHUTAN

[Bhutan stands in solidarity with India: PM](#)

Kuensel Online| 18th October

Prime Minister Tshering Tobgay pointed out that terrorism remains a “grave threat” to global peace, security and stability, in his statement at the BRICS-BIMSTEC outreach summit on October 16 in Goa, India. “We are here at a time when our host, India, has over the past several months suffered frequent terrorist attacks,” Lyonchoen said. “Bhutan strongly condemns these terror attacks,” he added. “Bhutan stands in solidarity with India and all like-minded countries in the fight against terrorism.”

MALDIVES

[Chief of Defence meets with Nepali President and Defence Minister](#)

Sun Online|18th October

Maldivian Chief of Defence Force, Major General Ahmed Shiyam has met with the President of Nepal, Bidhya Devi Bhandari and the Defence Minister, Bhim Bahadur Rawal on his official visit to Nepal. On his visit to the President of Nepal with the Commanding Officer of the College of Defence and Security Studies, Colonel Vais Waheed, the progress of the Maldivian military and building the relationship of the armies of the two countries were discussed.

[President requests Majlis advice over parting from Commonwealth](#)

Sun Online|18th October

President Abdulla Yameen Abdul Gayoom's request over advice on the extent of involvement Maldives should have with Commonwealth has been sent to National Security Committee of People's Majlis for evaluation after debate this Tuesday.

[Chief Justice: Judiciary working on boosting investor confidence](#)

Sun Online|18th October

Chief Justice of Maldives, Abdulla Saeed has announced Maldivian judiciary was working on some projects guaranteed to boost investor confidence in the country. Chief Justice Abdulla Saeed made the announcement in his speech at the ceremony held at Dharubaaruge on Monday night to grant over 100 people with their permit to practice law. He said that the judiciary was running projects to develop the field at the moment, one of which is the “Wide Area Network” project, designed to connect the more than 100 courts in the country and Department of Judicial Administration in an integrated communications network. He said that each of the projects was designed to bring economic, social and judicial development to the country, as well as fairness and justice received via the judiciary of the country.

MYANMAR

[Myanmar's giant bank jointly issues credit card with China-based Union Pay International](#)

Mizzima|19th October

The local giant bank of Myanmar, Kanbawza Bank (KBZ), introduced its credit card with China-based Union Pay International (UPI) on Tuesday which can be used locally and internationally. The KBZ Union Pay card holders can transact at over 35 million merchants covering 160 countries and regions in Union Pay's global payment network, said an official of UPI.

[Government agrees to four out of eight points demanded by UNFC](#)

Mizzima| 19th October

The government has agreed to four out of eight points demanded by the United Nationalities Federal Council (UNFC) and accepted the remaining four points in principle and as a result, the Delegation for Political Negotiation (DPN) formed by the UNFC attended the framework review for political dialogue, state media reported on 19 October quoting U Zaw Htay, Deputy Director-General of the President's Office.

NEPAL

[China wants to advance trilateral cooperation](#)

The Himalayan Times| 19th October

China today said it wanted to advance trilateral cooperation with Nepal and India, and a tripartite cooperation would contribute to stability and development in the region. On being asked if Chinese, Nepali and Indian leaders discussed trilateral cooperation during their meeting in Goa, Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Hua Chunying said: “Nepal and India are China's friendly neighbours.

[Impeachment recommendation panel likely today](#)

My Republica|19th October

Major political parties and Speaker Onsari Gharti have agreed to form an impeachment recommendation committee in parliament after lawmakers started demanding impeachment of CIAA chief Lokman Singh Karki.

[PM Dahal, Deuba discuss amendment proposal](#)

The Kathmandu Post|19th October

Amid criticism from Madhesi Morcha leaders, top leaders of the ruling CPN (Maoist Centre) and Nepali Congress discussed constitution amendment in an informal meeting at Baluwatar on Tuesday evening. Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal held talks with his key coalition partner NC's President Sher Bahadur Deuba and Deputy Prime Minister and Home Minister Bimalendra Nidhi along with another Deputy PM and Finance Minister Krishna Bahadur Mahara.

[Spending on development less than 4% in first 90 days](#)

My Republica|19th October Progress in capital spending by the government has gone down this year with only 3.37 percent of the budget allocated for the purpose spent in the first ninety days, or first quarter, of this fiscal year. A total of Rs 10.70 billion out of the allocated Rs 311 billion has been spent in the first quarter, according to the website of the Financial Comptroller General Office.

[Nepal Airlines takes second place in massive turnaround](#)

The Kathmandu Post|19th October

Nepal Airlines moved up to the second spot in international passenger carriage, marking a massive turnaround

after years in the wilderness. The venerable national flag carrier flew 178,799 passengers in the first six months of 2016, nearly double the figure of the first half of last year. According to Tribhuvan International Airport (TIA), Nepal Airlines saw its passenger traffic swell by a robust 90 percent during the period January-June to take second place after Qatar Airways.

PAKISTAN

[Senator moves bill to regulate movement of foreign currency](#)

The Express Tribune|18th October

As transfer of dollars abroad through banking channels peaked to \$2 billion last year due to a lax 1992 law, Senator Saleem Mandviwalla has moved a Bill to withdraw unprecedented immunities enjoyed by foreign currency account holders. However, State Bank of Pakistan has opposed the former finance minister's "the Protection of Economic Reforms (Amendment) Bill 2016", saying, "The proposed law appears inspired by India". Contrary to the central bank's take on a serious parliamentary business, India's foreign currency regime is said to be one of the best in the world, according to independent legal and tax experts.

[Exploration firms resist changes to petroleum policy](#)

The Express Tribune|18th October

The Ministry of Petroleum and oil and gas exploration companies are locked in a tug of war over the amendments proposed to be made in the Petroleum Policy 2012 as the industry terms the move an open threat to investments and a deliberate attempt to stall hydrocarbon search in the country.

[Centre still encroaching on provincial subjects despite 18th amendment, says Baloch](#)

DAWN|19th October

Dr Abdul Malik Baloch, the former chief minister of Balochistan and leader of the National Party (NP), said on Tuesday that even after the passage of the 18th constitutional amendment the Centre continued to encroach upon provincial subjects, adding that the country cannot have true democracy unless commoners from grass-roots level reached parliament.

[Protests not against CPEC, PTI chief assures Chinese envoy](#)

DAWN|19th October

Chinese Ambassador Sun Weidong called on Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) chairman Imran Khan at the latter's Bani Gala residence on Tuesday. The gist of the meeting, according to PTI sources, was to dispel the impression that the party's ongoing accountability movement against the prime minister was somehow meant to sabotage the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). The two men had a frank discussion over how Chinese investment was crucial for Pakistan's future and prosperity, sources said.

SRI LANKA

[Sri Lanka Central Bank resolves four insolvent financial institutions to protect depositors and promote the financial system stability](#)

The Colombo Page| 18th October

Sri Lanka's Central Bank today said depositors of Entrust Securities, a primary dealer in government securities and three finance companies will be repaid to protect depositors and promote the financial system stability. The Monetary Board has approved a resolution mechanism for repayment of depositors of three finance companies and legitimate investors in government securities-linked investments in Entrust Securities PLC, the Central Bank said in a statement Tuesday.

[GSP+ sooner than expected](#)

Daily News| 19th October

Sri Lanka will regain the GSP + concession sooner than expected, European Council President and former Poland Prime Minister Donal Tusk said, when Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe called on him at the European Council headquarters in Brussels yesterday. He said that that European Union was pleased at the manner in which Sri Lanka's political and social reforms and the economy is moving. He commended the outstanding efforts, commitment and sacrifices made by Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe in restoring democracy in a country.

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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