



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

December 20th , 2017| Volume: 3 - 4/12

[Afghan Govt. Welcomes Trump's New Security Strategy](#)

Tolonews / Daily Outlook
Afghanistan | 20th December
Afghan government welcomed the US President Trump's new national security strategy, calling it in line with Afghanistan's shared objective against terrorism. The US President Donald Trump's new national security strategy affirms the enduring US-Afghanistan strategic partnership, President Ashraf Ghani's Office said in a statement on Tuesday.

[Allegations arise India imposing visa restriction on Maldivians](#)

Sun Online | 19th December
Some Maldivians living in neighboring India have raised allegations the country is imposing restrictions on visa services. Maldivian ambassador for India, Ahmed Mohamed confirmed to "Sun" this Tuesday that the embassy has been receiving complaints from Maldivian citizens living in India over difficulties in obtaining extensions on visas. However, said Ahmed, the Indian authorities say there has been no change to the current policy on visas for Maldivians travelling to India. Both the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Maldives and the Indian embassy in Maldives say there has been no change to the visa policy.

[Sri Lanka, Malaysia PMs agree to start negotiations for a comprehensive FTA](#)

Colombo Page| 19th December
Sri Lanka and Malaysia agreed to start negotiations for a comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between the two states in order to strengthen the bilateral trade and economic relations during discussions held between the prime ministers of the two countries. Sri Lankan Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe hosted a luncheon meeting today in honor of his Malaysian counterpart Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak, who is on a three-day official working visit to the island nation.

[Ghani Approves Resignation of Balkh Governor](#)

Pajhwok / Daily Outlook Afghanistan | 19th December

Ghani Approves Resignation of Balkh Governor

The president has approved Balkh governor Atta Mohammad Noor's resignation and has appointed Engineer Mohammad Dawood as his successor. President Ashraf Ghani, accepting Atta Mohammad Noor's resignation, has appointed Mohammad Dawood as new governor of northern Balkh province.

[President Ghani approves new contracts worth 4.7 billion Afghanis](#)

Khaama | 19th December

The Afghan President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani has approved contracts for the new projects worth around 4.7 billion Afghanis. The Office of the President, ARG Palace, in a statement said the new contracts were approved during the latest meeting of the national procurement commission chaired by President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani on Monday.

BANGLADESH

[Bangladesh and Myanmar form joint panel to repatriate Rohingyas](#)

bdnews24 | 19th December

Bangladesh and Myanmar have formed a Joint Working Group to handle the repatriation of Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh. Foreign Secretary Md Shahidul Haque and his counterpart Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Myanmar U Myint Thu signed an agreement on behalf of the respective governments in the presence of the Foreign Minister AH Mahmood Ali at Dhaka's State Guest House Padma on Tuesday. A nine member Myanmar delegation led by the permanent secretary held talks with the Bangladesh delegation before finalising the agreement. Representatives from relevant ministries and agencies from both countries participated in the meeting.

[Turkey to help Rohingyas in Bangladesh](#)

UNB/ the Daily Star | 20th December

Visiting Turkish Prime Minister Binali Yildirim yesterday expressed his country's intention to further improve the existing strong trade and economic relations with Bangladesh, and assured Bangladesh of its continuing support to Rohingyas living in Bangladesh. "We've discussed what we can do to improve our economic and trade relations," he said, terming Bangladesh a dynamic nation with nearly 7 percent GDP growth over the past few years. After a bilateral meeting with his Bangladesh counterpart Sheikh Hasina, the Turkish PM highly appreciated Hasina's diplomacy over the Rohingya issue and Bangladesh's support to the displaced people.

[Foreign aid inflow jumps by 91pc in five months](#)

The Financial Express | 20th December

Bangladesh received US\$1.72 billion worth of foreign aid in July-November period this fiscal year (FY2017-18). The disbursements of the concessional medium- and long-term (MLT) assistance were 91 per cent higher than \$903.18 million registered in the corresponding period of last FY (2016-17), according to provisional data released Monday. Of the total assistance, the development partners provided \$1.60 billion in concessional loans and \$126.73 million in grants, the Economic Relations Division (ERD) data showed. Meanwhile, the aid commitments of US\$6.71 billion were registered during the first five months of the current FY.

BHUTAN

[2,892 civil servants receive Royal Civil Service Award](#)

Kuensel | 19th December

A total of 2,892 civil servants and public servants received the Royal Civil Service Award this year. Of the total, 2,360 were civil servants and 532 were public servants. On the command of His Majesty The King, the Royal Civil Service Commission launched the 'royal civil service award' on December 17, 2013 coinciding with the 106th National Day. The award, comprising a medal and certificate signed by His Majesty The King, has become an annual event.

[Businessman from Paro to contest for National Council](#)

Kuensel | 19th December

A proprietor of 'Drugyel Selchu Paro8,' a local mineral water company from Paro, has decided to contest for the National Council (NC) election from Tsento gewog. Kuenzang Dorji, 34, also worked as an investigating officer with the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) for seven years before starting his business in January 2016.

MALDIVES

[Prime Minister and First Lady of Malaysia arrive in the Maldives on Official Visit](#)

Sun Online | 19th December

At the invitation of President Abdulla Yameen Abdul Gayoom and First Lady Fathimath Ibrahim, the Prime Minister of Malaysia Dato' Sri Mohd Najib bin Tun Abdul Razak and First Lady Datin Paduka Rosmah Mansor have arrived in the Maldives this evening. The Malaysian Prime Minister and the First Lady were welcomed at Velana International Airport upon their arrival by the Foreign Minister, Dr. Mohamed Asim and the Malaysian Prime Minister proceeded to inspect the Honor Guard by the Maldives National Defence Force.

[Jihad: The goal is to make Maldives an investment hub in South Asia](#)

Sun Online | 19th December

Vice President Abdulla Jihad has said that the government aims to make the country an investment hub in South Asia. Speaking at the Maldives Investment Forum 2017 that began in Dubai today, Vice President Jihad said that there is no better time to invest in the Maldives than right now. The Vice President said that with the natural beauty of the country along with the geographic location surrounded by vast oceans creates an opportunity for investment for the 21st century investors

MYANMAR

[Myanmar army investigating mass grave in Rakhine](#)

AFP / Mizzima | 20th December

Myanmar's army says it is investigating a mass grave found in a village in northern Rakhine state, a region where the UN has accused troops of committing atrocities against Rohingya Muslims. Northern Rakhine has been nearly emptied of its Muslim population since late August, when an army crackdown on Rohingya terrorists sent more than 655,000 refugees fleeing across the border to Bangladesh.

[One more five-year term needed for consolidation of democracy, says Win Htein](#)

Mizzima | 20th December

National League for Democracy (NLD) party Central Executive Committee (CEC) member and Secretariat

member Win Htein said that their ruling party needed one more 5-year term for consolidating democracy in Myanmar. Win Htein was speaking at a meeting with executive committee members of the party from 8 townships from Naypyitaw district and Naypyitaw territory, held at Mingalar Byuhar Sasana Beikman in Naypyitaw Council territory on December 18.

NEPAL

[Envoy stresses strengthening US-Nepal economic ties](#)

MyRepublica | 20th December

US Ambassador to Nepal Alaina B Teplitz has said that one of key areas of cooperation between Nepal and the US in coming years should be to increase growth in Nepal by strengthening economic ties between the two countries. Addressing a monthly lecture and policy discussion series on US-Nepal bilateral relationship: The Next 70 Years and Beyond in Kathmandu on Tuesday, the ambassador made the remarks while outlining major areas of cooperation between the two countries in the next 70 years. She mentioned that collaborative partnership in ensuring accountability and transparency and genuine inclusion of women and marginalized groups of people in various state structures could improve other major areas of cooperation between the two countries.

[‘China committed to helping neighbours in every sector’](#)

The Kathmandu Post | 20th December

China, which is embarking on a journey to build a great modern socialist nation by 2050, is committed to peaceful development of the whole of mankind along with its own goals, according to a visiting Chinese leader. Addressing a programme in the Capital on Monday, Communist Party of China (CPC) leader and President of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) Wang Weiguang said, “World’s peace and development for everyone is equally significant to the party as we strive to achieve our own goal of emerging as a great modern socialist country with modernised economy.”

[Some 3,000 officials required for provincial secretariats](#)

The Kathmandu Post | 20th December

As work begins for installing provincial governments, an estimated 3,000 officials will be required immediately to run the secretariats in the seven provinces. A detailed plan tabled by the Ministry of General Administration in the Cabinet two months ago recommends a secretary to lead the bureaucracy in a state. Each province will have seven ministries attended by joint-secretaries while there will be an official of the same rank in the governor’s secretariat.

PAKISTAN

[Bajwa says army not destabilising civilian govt](#)

DAWN | 20th Decemeber

Chief of the Army Staff Gen Qamar Javed Bajwa on Tuesday reaffirmed his commitment to democracy and the rule of law and categorically denied the military’s role in destabilising the civilian government. Speaking at an ‘in-camera session’ of the Senate Committee of the Whole, the army chief, who originally came to brief the legislators on national security issues, deliberated on a wide range of topics from politics and frayed civil-military ties to counterterrorism operations and foreign policy.

[PM, army chief discuss Fata issue with Fazl](#)

DAWN | 20th Decemeber

Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi and Chief of the Army Staff Gen Qamar Javed Bajwa met Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman at Parliament House on Tuesday to discuss the proposed merger of the tribal areas with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

[Pakistan rejects 'unfounded' allegations made in Trump's first foreign policy](#)

DAWN | 19th Decemeber

Pakistan on Tuesday categorically rejected the allegations levelled in the Trump administration's first foreign policy announced a day earlier, saying they "trivialise" its counterterrorism efforts and sacrifices to promote peace in the region. In an official response to Trump's new national security strategy, which presses on Pakistan to intensify its action against militant groups it alleges are operating from Pakistani soil, the Foreign Office (FO) said the "unsubstantiated" and "unfounded" allegations are contrary to ground realities and reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to its counterterrorism efforts.

[Senate finally passes amendment bill on delimitation of constituencies](#)

The Express Tribune | 19th December

The Senate on Tuesday passed an amendment to the Constitution to reallocate National Assembly seats among the federating units and allowing the election authorities revamp the boundaries of constituencies in accordance with the provisional results of this year's population count.

SRI LANKA

[Special unit established to provide national IDs to people without birth certificates](#)

Colombo Page | 20th December

A special unit has been set up at the Department of Registration of Persons to provide the National Identity Cards (NICs) for over 300,000 voters who cannot obtain NICs due to the lack of a birth certificate and a proof of residence. The unit has received over 5,000 requests from people without the NICs and it has issued NICs to over 1,000 persons, the Commissioner General of the Department of Registration of Persons, Wyani Goonetilleke says.

[Health Minister explains 5% price hike in medicines](#)

Colombo Page | 19th December

Sri Lanka's Minister of Health, Nutrition and Indigenous Medicine Dr. Rajitha Senaratne explained the reason to increase the prices of medicines in the market by five percent. According to Dr. Senaratne, the importers of pharmaceuticals had requested to increase their prices by 5 percent as they are incurring losses due to the increase in the prices of medicines in the world market relative to the dollar.

About Ananta Aspen Centre

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