

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

December 21st, 2016 | Volume: 2 - 9/12

[Afghanistan receives \\$83.5m incentive funds of World Bank for reforms](#)

Khaama Press|20th December
Afghanistan has received a total of \$83.5 million in incentive funds from the World Bank for successfully implementing reforms in key sectors. The Ministry of Finance (MoF) said “The World Bank donated \$ 83.5 million to ministry of finance based on commitments it made to bring reforms in 5 key sections.” A statement by MoF said “The mentioned funds, includes US \$ 900 million that ministry of finance would receive in return to bring reforms in income resources, organizational reforms, tax management, aid effectiveness and provincial budget within three years.”

[India, others stay out of regional tech moot](#)

Dawn|20th December
India, Bangladesh and Iran are not participating in a regional conference that began here on Monday under the aegis of the United Nations. The objective of the conference is to promote innovation for sustainable development and discuss strategy of the Asian and Pacific Centre for Transfer of Technology (APCTT). The Ministry of Science and Technology is hosting the three-day meeting of the 12th Governing Council of APCTT. According to sources, all of the 14 member countries of APCTT were invited, but India, Bangladesh and Iran decided not to attend the meeting.

[ADB grants USD 115 million financial assistance to fully electrify Sri Lanka](#)

Colombo Page| 19th December
The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has granted Sri Lanka USD 115 million of financial assistance for the implementation of Supporting Electricity Supply Reliability Improvement Project to fully electrify the island including its small isolated islands. Country Director of the ADB's Sri Lanka Resident Mission Sri Widowati Monday signed the grant agreement on behalf of ADB while Dr. R.H.S. Samarasinghe, Secretary to the Treasury, Ministry of Finance, signed for the Government of Sri Lanka.

AFGHANISTAN

[Taliban must reconsider notion of achieving objectives on battlefield: UN envoy](#)

Khaama Press|20th December
The United Nation Secretary General's Special Representative for Afghanistan Tadamichi Yamamoto has said the Taliban group must reconsider the notion of achieving objectives on the battlefield. Briefing the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), Mr. Yamamoto said “Once again, I call upon the Taliban to commit to direct talks with the Afghan Government, without preconditions.”

[No One is Above Law: Ghani](#)

Outlook Afghanistan|20th December
President Ghani on Monday said in a meeting held to support human rights defenders in Kabul that no one is above

the law and that the law will be implemented against every one regardless of their position. "First implement the law against me and then on other Afghans. Implementation of the law is what people expect and no one is above the law," he said.

[MoF Signs \\$415mln Electricity Agreement with ADB](#)

Outlook Afghanistan | 21st December

Finance Minister Eklil Hakimi on Monday signed a \$415 million USD agreement with the Asian Development Bank (ADB) to expand electrification in the country. Part of the money will be provided by donor countries and some international organizations and the remaining will be paid out by ADB. Hakimi said through this money a sub-station will be built in Pul-e-Khumri city in Baghlan province from where it will route Turkmenistan-imported power to the central provinces as well as distributing locally generated power to provinces.

BANGLADESH

[EC Formation: JP hands 5 proposals to President Hamid](#)

The Daily Star | 21st December

President Abdul Hamid has said it is necessary to enact a law in line with the country's constitution for appointment of election commissioners, according to JP leaders. The president apparently said this when a Jatiya Party delegation met him and submitted a five-point proposal, including enactment of a law on forming the next Election Commission.

[British co to build Dhaka-Payra rail link](#)

The Daily Star | 21st December

Bangladesh Railway and British company DP Rail Ltd yesterday signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for setting up a 240-kilometre rail line between Dhaka and Payra seaport in Patuakhali's Kuakata. The rail lines would cost an estimated Tk 60,000 crore, which would be provided by the British company, said railway officials, adding that the final cost of the mega project would be determined after a feasibility study.

[BD, India stay out of regional tech conference in Pakistan](#)

The Financial Express | 20th December

Bangladesh, India and Iran are not participating in a regional conference that began in Pakistan's Islamabad on Monday under the aegis of the United Nations. The objective of the conference is to promote innovation for sustainable development and discuss strategy of the Asian and Pacific Centre for Transfer of Technology (APCTT). The Ministry of Science and Technology is hosting the three-day meeting of the 12th Governing Council of APCTT.

[Tales of horror from new arrivals at Rohingya camp](#)

Dhaka Tribune | 20th December

According to the UNHCR, more than 27,000 Rohingya refugees have entered Bangladesh since the military crackdown began in Myanmar's Rakhine state after attacks on border posts on October 9. Every day, new arrivals at the Rohingya refugee camps in Cox's Bazar bring familiar horror stories of murder and rape from across the Naf River. But Mohammed Shah Alam will not be able to tell his story.

BHUTAN

[The rising burden of cancer](#)

Kuensel Online | 20th December

Cancers of the head and neck topped the list of referral cases to India. The steady increase in cancer cases in the country is fast emerging as a major burden on the health ministry's coffer. Records show that the health ministry spent Nu 7.5 million (M) in 2007, which increased to 36.5M in 2013. Treatment costs have increased steadily until 2013, after which it dropped following a drop in referral cases with 148 cases in 2014. The ministry spent Nu 12.1M for 148 patients in 2014.

MALDIVES

[Maldives Monetary Authority \(MMA\) shuts down illegal money sender overseas](#)

Sun Online | 19th December

Maldives Monetary Authority (MMA) has said that they have taken steps against service sending money abroad illegally. A statement issued by the MMA said that they received information that B-Cash Money Transfer is being operated without a money transfer license and publically advertising about sending money to Bangladesh. The

information was reported to the relevant authorities and legal steps have been taken against them after reviewing the situation.

[State ordered to pay USD 15 mn in damages to Nexbis](#)

Sun Online | 20th December

State of Maldives has been ordered to pay USD 15 million in damages to Malaysian company Nexbis by Singapore International Arbitration Center (SIAC) over dissolution of contract between Nexbis and Maldives Immigration to build a border control system in Maldives. Deputy Attorney General, Ahmed Usham reported to “Sun” this Tuesday that the ruling was issued by SIAC a few days back. Usham said that a decision regarding the ruling would be made after the evaluation by Attorney General’s Office of Maldives.

MYANMAR

[Telecom sector attracts most foreign investment in Myanmar in 2016](#)

Mizzima | 21st December

Telecom sector topped the foreign investment line-up of Myanmar with 47.07 percent of the total investment flowing into the country in the fiscal year 2016-2017, according to the statistics of Myanmar Investment Commission (MIC) Tuesday. The telecom sector was followed by industrial sector with 25.5 percent and the rest went to power, hotel and construction sectors.

[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 Maungtaw 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, Maungtaw Border Merchants Association was quoted as saying.

NEPAL

[Liu’s message: Room for improvement in relations](#)

My Republica | 21st December

Visiting Political Bureau and Secretariat member of the Communist Party of China (CPC), Liu Qibao, wrapped up his three-day official visit to Nepal on Tuesday, marking the highest level visit of any Chinese leader to Kathmandu in the year 2016. As it took place amid the cancellation of what was described as a planned visit here by Chinese President Xi Jinping earlier this year, the visit by Liu, who is one of the close aides of President Xi and a potential top leader of China in future, assumes big significance for Nepal.

[Japan extends Rs15.1b to build Nagdhunga tunnel](#)

The Kathmandu Post | 21st December

Travelling in and out of Kathmandu Valley may be a lot easier in a few years, as Japan has formally agreed to extend financial support to build a tunnel on Nagdhunga-Naubise section-one of the busiest and gridlock-prone segments of the Prithivi Highway that links the country’s capital. The Japanese government has agreed to provide a soft loan of 16.6 billion yen (approximately Rs15.1 billion) to the Nepal government to build the Nagdhunga Tunnel Project.

[725 units suggested in LLRC’s final report](#)

The Kathmandu Post | 21st December

Nine months after its formation, the Local Level Reconstruction Commission (LLRC) has finally completed its report, recommending around 725 local units (village and municipal councils) in the new federal set-up. However, the commission is not sure when it can submit the report to Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal, owing to his busy schedule.

[Abducted Nepali UNHCR staff released in Sudan](#)

Himalayan News Service / The Himalayan Times | 21st December

Two Nepalis and one Sudanese national working for the UN High Commission for Refugees who were abducted by gunmen in Sudan last month were released safely yesterday. UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi today confirmed the news and welcomed the safe release of Nepali duo Sarun Pradhan and Ramesh Karki and their Sudanese colleague Musa Omer Musa Mohamed.

PAKISTAN

[Raheel Sharif 'helped me out' in leaving Pakistan: Musharraf](#)

Dawn|21st December

Former president General (ret'd) Pervez Musharraf has claimed that ex-army chief Gen Raheel Sharif helped him leave the country by keeping the government from pressuring the courts. Speaking during a talk show on Dunya News Tuesday night, he said: "Well he (Raheel Sharif) did help me and I am absolutely clear and grateful. I have been his boss and I have been the army chief before him. He helped out, because the cases are politicised, they put me on the ECL, they turned it into a political issue."

[Political parties urged to unite for success of CPEC](#)

Dawn|21st December

A Chinese minister on Tuesday urged Pakistani political parties to join hands for the success of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and attainment of the 'shared goal of development'. "Political parties in Pakistan have divergent interests. We hope that the political parties can work together to resolve their differences and make CPEC a success," Zheng Xiaosong, Vice Minister of International Department, Central Committee, The Communist Party of China (CPC), said in a lecture at the Pak-China Institute. Mr. Zheng, during his visit, met Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and leaders of the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf and Pakistan Peoples Party and extended invitation to these parties for a visit to China.

[Govt tables Pakistan Inquiry Commission Bill](#)

The Express Tribune|21st December

After the main opposition group, the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), sailed its Panama Papers Inquiries Bill, 2016 in the Senate, the government on Tuesday also tabled in the upper house the Pakistan Inquiry Commission Bill, which has been already been adopted by the National Assembly. Law Minister Zahid Hamid presented the bill, which was later sent to the relevant standing committee by Senate Chairman Raza Rabbani. The chairman referred the issue of the Pakistan Study Centre at the Quaid-e-Azam University to a cabinet committee with the task to present its recommendations in two months as to how this centre could be saved from being closed down.

[Pak Suzuki will launch Celerio in March 2017, Cultus to make exit](#)

The Express Tribune|21st December

Pak Suzuki Motor Company (PSMC), the country's largest car manufacturer with over 50% market share – has decided to launch the standard model of Suzuki Celerio in March 2017, confirmed a company official Tuesday. A formal announcement, according to reports circulating on social media and Suzuki Pakistan's official Facebook page, is likely to be made by the company today. Pak Suzuki will launch Celerio in March 2017, Cultus to make exit. "We are confident that the government will provide some incentives to us under the new auto policy. Therefore, the company has decided to launch its standard model of Celerio in March 2017," a company official said on condition of anonymity.

SRI LANKA

[Sri Lanka to sign MoU with India to receive financial support to construct rainwater harvesting tanks in Jaffna](#)

Colombo Page| 20th December

Sri Lanka will sign a Memorandum of Understanding with India to receive financial assistance to construct 3,000 rainwater harvesting units in the North, an official said on Tuesday. Sri Lanka's Office for National Unity and Reconciliation (ONUR) seeking financial assistance from India to expand its rain water harvesting project in the Northern Province, has presented a proposal to the Indian High Commission in Sri Lanka for providing a sustainable drinking water source for the Jaffna peninsula.

[Development activities will be expedited next year, PM says](#)

Colombo Page| 20th December

Sri Lanka's Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe says the development activities of the country will be expedited in next year after laying the foundation for the mega economic transformation this year. The Premier said basic sectors like tourism, industries, and ports will be further improved to provide one million employment opportunities.

[Sri Lanka Navy arrests 12 Indian fishermen poaching in Sri Lankan waters](#)

Colombo Page| 21st December

Sri Lanka Navy said it has assisted the Sri Lanka Coast Guard on Wednesday to arrest twelve Indian fishermen for allegedly crossing the International Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL) and fishing in Sri Lankan waters. The Navy personnel arrested the 12 fishermen poaching in Sri Lankan waters South of Thalaimannar this morning (21). Two Indian fishing trawlers were also taken into custody along with the fishermen.

[Sri Lanka Finance Minister expects rupee to be stable next year](#)

Colombo Page| 21st December

Sri Lanka's Finance Minister Ravi Karunanayake said on Tuesday the Sri Lankan rupee, which is under downward pressure, will recover and be steady next year with expected foreign inflows. The rupee, which has fallen 3 percent this year after a nearly 10 percent loss in 2015, is under pressure because of higher imports and foreign outflows from government securities even though the central bank has raised key policy rates by 100 basis points since February.

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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