

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

**March 21, 2018 | Volume - 4 - 08/03**

[Bangladesh to build roads along India-Myanmar border, project gets ECNEC nod](#)

The Financial Express | 21st March

Bangladesh is set to build roads along the India-Myanmar border aiming to ensure better security through improved road connectivity. The Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (ECNEC) approved the project on Tuesday at the committee's scheduled weekly meeting with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in the chair. The project involving Tk 16.99 billion is titled 'Construction of Border Roads', according to a report on UNB. After the meeting, Planning Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal told reporters that Bangladesh Army has been given the task to implement the project.

[Yadav, Swaraj exchange views on bilateral ties](#)

The Himalayan Times | 20th March

Minister for Industry, Commerce and Supplies Matrika Prasad Yadav today called on Minister of External Affairs of India Sushma Swaraj in New Delhi. During the meeting, the two ministers exchanged views on a wide range of matters related to Nepal-India relations. According to a press release issued by the Nepali Embassy in New Delhi, Minister Yadav conveyed the desire of the government to further consolidate bilateral relations with India and to this end, he stressed the need to step up meaningful economic cooperation on the basis of mutuality of benefits. External Affairs Minister Swaraj assured India's continuous support to Nepal's development and prosperity. Swaraj also termed the completion of the processes of various elections in Nepal as important achievement.

[First female Mayor of Colombo Rosy Senanayake takes reins of the Sri Lankan capital city](#)

Colombo Page | 20th March

The first female Mayor of the Colombo Municipal Council (CMC) Rosy Senanayake and 60 other councilors elected from the United National Party (UNP) took oaths before the party leader and Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe at Temple Trees. Mohammed Iqbal took oaths as the Deputy Mayor. Minister D.M Swaminathan and several other UNP Ministers and Parliamentarians were also present at the ceremony.

### [Saudi to Host Global Scholar Moot on Afghanistan](#)

Daily Outlook Afghanistan | 20th March

An international scholar conference on Afghanistan is scheduled four months later in Saudi Arabia (SA), a statement from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) said. Hussain Oni Bestal, ambassador of the Organisation of Islamic Countries (OIC), briefed Foreign Minister Salahuddin Rabbani about preparation for holding the ulema moot during a meeting, the MoFA statement said. The multi-national ulema conference would be attended by scholars from Islamic countries in mid July. The OIC envoy extended multi-dimensional support to an Afghan-owned and led peace process. Rabbani termed OIC support for the Afghan peace as vital and hailed Bestal's efforts for an effective OIC role in Afghan affairs.

### [Communications Ministry to Enhance Postal Services](#)

Daily Outlook Afghanistan | 19th March

Deputy Minister of Communications Sayed Ahmad Shah Sadat says postal services will meet standard norms in the near future. The Ministry of Communications and Information Technology (MCIT) says it will standardize postal services in the country. Based on this plan, Communications Deputy Minister Sayed Ahmad Shah Sadat, said the post office will also be able to offer insurance, money transactions, water and electricity bill paying services online. "By standardizing postal services, online services will be provided for transferring licenses, passports and other documents and materials," Sadat said. "We can transfer money using postal services."

## **BANGLADESH**

### [Amu seeks WIPO support to accelerate industrialization](#)

The Financial Express | 20th March

Industries Minister Amir Hossain Amu on Monday sought technical support from the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) to accelerate the country's industrialisation. "Under the prudent policy and dynamic leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, Bangladesh is moving forward towards development," he said while exchanging views with WIPO Deputy Director General Jhon B Sandage at the Industries Ministry in Dhaka, according to an official release. During the meeting, they discussed on various issues, including Patent Cooperation Treaty (PCT).

## **BHUTAN**

### [Country's first satellite builders attend the BHUTAN-1 workshop](#)

Kuensel | 21st March

As Bhutan's first satellite BHUTAN-1, a 10x10x10 CubeSat, is scheduled to be launched in June, the engineers building it shared their stories at the BHUTAN-1 workshop held at the College of Science and Technology (CST) yesterday. The four engineers claimed it started with their masters' programme in space engineering. Yeshey Choden, 25, the youngest of the four, who is from Babesa, Thimphu, said she did not give a second thought when the programme was announced.

Although from a civil engineering background, she said she was interested in space studies. "Similarly, I wanted to serve the nation," Yeshey Choden said. "And I took it up." Yeshey Choden said young minds today should determine their field of interest and advance. "There will be a way."

## **MALDIVES**

### [Installation of solar diesel hybrid system in H. A. Atoll begins](#)

Sun Online | 20th March

Installation of solar diesel hybrid systems in the islands of H. A. Atoll in Maldives has begun. Ministry of Environment and Energy reports that once the project is complete, the H. A. Atoll will have a 2.3 megawatt solar PV system, 17 3.3 megawatt diesel power generators, 2.5 megawatt batteries and cable and automatic synchronizing panel boards in every island. The Ministry also said that necessary energy management systems will be established using modern technology for management and maintenance, as resources for power generation are developed. Training will be provided for staff, both in Maldives and abroad, to prepare them to use the new systems, said the Ministry. The Ministry of Environment said the project will be complete in May, ensuring efficient power services to all.

## MYANMAR

### [Village Link launches cutting-edge digital communication platform for farmers](#)

Mizzima | 21st March

Village Link, a leading digital service company in Myanmar, officially introduces Htwet Toe, an innovative agri-mobile application for the farmers of Myanmar that aims to build a community between the farmers and agricultural professionals on a single platform, the company said in a statement. The company also announces the support of the Geodata for Agriculture and Water (G4AW) program, which will assist to further develop the application. Myanmar's agriculture sector is the backbone of the nation's economy. It contributes to 38 percent of GDP and employs over 60 percent of the labor force. Compare to other ASEAN nations, Myanmar has more arable land and a wider variety of growing conditions. But due to agricultural challenges as well as lack of technology and information, Myanmar's farmers have among the lowest agricultural productivity and income in the region.

## NEPAL

### [Plan to trade power with China, B'desh](#)

The Himalayan Times | 20th March

Nepal and China have proposed to ink a memorandum of understanding to have a power trade agreement during the next high-level political meeting between the two countries. Nepal has already signed a power trade pact with India which has facilitated the purchase of power between the two countries. Nepal has also proposed a similar PTA with Bangladesh. "The purpose of PTA with China and Bangladesh is to facilitate exchange of power among the three countries as is happening between Nepal and India" Spokesperson for the Ministry of Energy, Water Resources and Irrigation Dinesh Ghimire told THT. According to the ministry, the aim of the proposal is to sell Nepal's surplus power to its neighbours. Nepal expects to have surplus power in a few years. Nepal has been buying more energy from India during winter but selling less amount of energy to India in the summer when it has surplus power.

## 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

### [U.S. concerned by reports of right violations by security forces and attacks on minorities in Sri Lanka](#)

Colombo Page | 20th March

The United States while welcoming the Sri Lankan government's decision to accept its recommendations on full implementation of HRC resolution 30/1 expressed concern over the ongoing reports of human rights violations and abuses by members of the security services, and recent attacks targeting members of religious minority communities. In the statement prepared for delivery at the adoption of the Universal periodic Review (UPR) outcome of Sri Lanka at the 37th session of the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) in Geneva, the U.S. urged the government to hold accountable all those responsible for human rights abuses and violations and to protect religious minorities and their places of worship.

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

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