

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

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[India not working to isolate Pakistan, claims Modi](#)

The Express Tribune | 22nd January
Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has said that to assume New Delhi's foreign policy revolves around Pakistan would be a "grave injustice" to India, Times of India reported. "India's foreign policy is based in the context of India. India's foreign policy is based in the context of its relations with the world. It is issue-based. Our foreign policy is not based around one nation and it shouldn't be," said Modi during an interview on Sunday. Without naming any country but in a clear reference to Pakistan, he said India was not working to isolate one nation, but that "whoever takes a step against terrorism, I will welcome them and praise them."

[India, US and Afghanistan Target Pakistan over Terrorism at UNSC](#)

Daily Outlook Afghanistan | 21st January
Pakistan needs to change its "mindset" of differentiating between good and bad terrorists, India said at the UN Security Council, urging it to focus on challenges posed by terrorism emanating from the safe havens from across the border. Indian Ambassador to the UN Syed Akbaruddin told the Security Council that it is India's vision to see Afghanistan regain its place. He added that New Delhi remain committed to work closely with its regional and international partners to bring peace, security, stability and prosperity in Afghanistan.

[With CPEC, Pakistan could play host to Chinese industries](#)

The Express Tribune | 21st January
Pakistan could see an industrialisation wave in the coming months through the addition of production and manufacturing units including mobile and laptop assembly plants from China, stated the central bank in its quarterly report on the state of the economy. "With CPEC (China-Pakistan Economic Corridor) in its implementation stages, technology transfers and spillovers from China into Pakistan may be expected," said State Bank of Pakistan. Other industries – which may see relocation of complete industrial units and transfer of technology – include low-end textile manufacturing and basic food processing. Fertiliser, steel, automobile, chemicals, plastic (toys, sanitation and pipes) manufacturing industries may also see a similar trend, stated the central bank.

AFGHANISTAN

[Afghanistan to be Linked to China via Train in 3 Days](#)

Daily Outlook Afghanistan | 22nd January

Uzbekistan deputy prime minister Jamshid Qochqarov, who called on President Ashraf Ghani after arriving in Kabul on Saturday, said Afghanistan would be connected with China through his country's Andijan railway route within next three days. President Ghani met Jamshid Qochqarov, also finance minister of Uzbekistan, who arrived on a visit to Kabul today, a statement from the Presidential Palace said. The statement quoted President Ghani as saying in the meeting: "Your trip to Kabul would help the implementation of agreements and further strengthen relations between the two countries." The Uzbek leader called his trip to Afghanistan as "historic" in extending cooperation between the two neighbors. He said the aim of his trip was to meet senior Afghan authorities and seek

further ground for improving cooperation between the two countries. Qochqarov thanked President Ghani for paying attention to infrastructural projects and said talks were underway on funding the Mazar-i-Sharif-Herat railway road and an assessment for the project had been completed.

[Korea Provides \\$5.4m for GBV Response Projects in Afghanistan](#)

Daily Outlook Afghanistan | 22nd January

South Korea contributes \$5.4 million to step up its long-running support for UN Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA's) response to gender-based violence (GBV) in Afghanistan, the UNFPA said on Sunday. These funds would help sustain UNFPA's projects, established through the national government as well as local governments, to prevent and respond to GBV through the end of 2020. These projects are currently active in 11 of Afghanistan's 34 provinces, and will expand over the next year to reach 24 provinces. The overall goal of the programme is to better enable the health sector to respond to violence against women and girls, by strengthening referral mechanisms between health, legal and police sectors to provide a package of essential services. The project would also include GBV prevention activities through engaging community elders and religious leaders, as well as men and boys. "The issue of violence against women requires serious attention and support," noted Amb. Rhee ZhaHyoun, the Republic of Korea's Ambassador to Afghanistan. "UNFPA, through this GBV project, takes a comprehensive approach to address the issue, providing survivors with necessary physical and psychological care as well as referrals to protection and legal services.

BANGLADESH

[Rohingya Refugees: Repatriation faces a hitch](#)

The Daily Star | 22nd January

The return of Rohingyas is scheduled to begin on 23 January, but some of the major tasks including finalisation of the list of families and setting up of repatriation camps remain incomplete. This makes the start of repatriation on the announced date uncertain. Moreover, the situation back in Myanmar's Rakhine State has yet to be secure and congenial, prompting several foreign diplomats in Dhaka to reiterate their demands for safe, voluntary and dignified return of the refugees. The diplomats, including the ones from the US, the UK and India, said it is necessary to have sustainable development in Rakhine State to create an environment for safe and sustainable return of Rohingyas.

[Bangladesh proposes to build hydropower plants in Nepal](#)

The Financial Express | 19th January

Bangladesh has proposed to build hydroelectric projects in Nepal to expand its power options after spending \$1 billion to build electricity plants in Bhutan. "In order to meet growing demand, we are importing 640 MW from India and thinking of installing nuclear plants," Bangladeshi Ambassador to Nepal Mashfee Binte Shams said on Thursday. "We consider Nepal a big market that can fulfill our energy demand", he added. Over a year ago, the Nepal government submitted a list of seven possible projects after Bangladesh sent a proposal to invest in Nepal's hydropower sector. However, no progress has been made since then, reports The Kathmandu Post. Earlier, it had been reported that India could obstruct cross-border transit facilities to Nepal via Bangladesh, including the import of electricity and grid expansion between the two countries. Now the situation has changed. The new sub-regional framework like the Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal (BBIN) which has already been implemented, is changing the regional landscape in the field of connectivity, trade, commerce, transit, motor vehicle, energy and grid.

BHUTAN

[Reading Culture In Bhutan Improving](#)

Bhutan Times | 22nd January

The public library has initiated a mobile bus book every Saturday for an hour and every Sunday for three to four hours making books accessible to different locations in Thimphu. The only public library in Thimphu, the capital, Jigme Dorji Wangchuck Public Library has garnered over 4,000 registered members within a span of 40 years. Since the reading year was initiated in 2013, the library and a handful of bookstores have tried to keep the reading culture alive. For instance, Junction bookstore gets about 3 to 20 customers daily. Although very few actually buy books, it is a popular hangout for youth. Junction's owner, Kunzang Choki said that when the reading year and

numerous awareness programs were initiated, students bought books as birthday gifts but the number of book buyers has declined for now.

MALDIVES

[Ambassador of Pakistan pays farewell call on the President](#)

Sun Online | 21st January

The Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan to the Republic of Maldives, Vice Admiral (Rtd) Syed Khawar Ali Shah, paid his farewell call on President Abdulla Yameen Abdul Gayoom at the President's Office. During the call, the President conveyed greetings and good wishes to Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi, President Mamnoon Hussain, and the people of Pakistan, and conveyed thanks and appreciation for the continuous support and services provided to the Maldives during the Ambassador's tenure. Noting that the Maldives and Pakistan have enjoyed historic and close bilateral ties based on mutual respect, understanding and shared values, President Yameen expressed hope and confidence that the Maldives and Pakistan will continue working together on regional and international issues of mutual concern, to further strengthen the existing ties between the two countries.

[Saudis donate Islamic literature to 3 libraries](#)

Sun Online | 21st January

Saudi Arabia has donated Islamic literature to the library at Ministry of Islamic Affairs, the library at the Islamic Centre being developed by the government in G. Dh. Thinadhoo, and the library at the Islamic Centre being developed in V. Rakeedhoo. The literature, filling 14 boxes, was presented to Ministry of Islamic Affairs in a function held at the Saudi Arabian Embassy on 21st January. Speaking at the function, Permanent Secretary at Ministry of Islamic Affairs, Musab Abdulla said the State received donation of Islamic literature from time to time, and stressed that the literature was invaluable. He said the donation was an example of the close ties between Maldives and Saudi Arabia.

MYANMAR

[Myanmar reaches naval agreement with Russia](#)

Mizzima | 22nd January

An intergovernmental agreement on simplified procedure for calls of warships to the ports of Russia and Myanmar was reached on Saturday after talks between Russian Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu and the commander-in-chief of the Myanmar Armed Forces Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, The Maritime Executive reported on 21 January. The agreement was part of moves to extend military cooperation between the two nations, and Shoigu says the nations are ready to implement a large-scale bilateral military cooperation plan. Shoigu also says Russia is ready to share its experience of fighting long-range unmanned aerial vehicles used for attacks by terrorists in Syria with Myanmar.

[Bangladesh says will coordinate with UN over Refugee return](#)

AFP / Mizzima | 22nd January

Bangladesh on Sunday sought to reassure the international community that a planned repatriation of hundreds of thousands of Rohingya Muslims to conflict-scarred western Myanmar would be "voluntary" and in coordination with the United Nations. In a briefing to foreign diplomats, Bangladesh Foreign Minister A.H Mahmood Ali insisted that the operation to return some 750,000 refugees who fled unrest and a military crackdown in Myanmar would involve the UN's refugee agency. "In order to ensure that the return is voluntary, Bangladesh has incorporated provisions for involvement of UNHCR and other relevant international organisations in the entire return process," he said at the meeting in Dhaka. Plans by Bangladesh and Myanmar to repatriate the refugees, who face desperate conditions in overcrowded camps near the countries' shared border, are due to begin within days and last for two years.

[Dr. Aye Maung and Wai Hin Aung to appear before court at the end of January](#)

Mizzima | 22nd January

Sittwe court's statement says Ann constituency House of Representatives MP Dr. Aye Maung and young writer Wai Hin Aung will appear before court on January 31 to hear their case. Rakhine Ahlin Dagar Organization Chairman Kyawt Sein said, "Dr. Aye Maung was remanded in to judicial custody. I think in the first hearing of the case the lawyers will argue whether this case should be accepted or not for further court proceedings. We don't have any plan for staging demonstrations for this case. The party will do what they should do." Rakhine writer Wai Hin Aung has a registered case against him under section 505(b) of Penal Code (conducting public mischief)

and was arrested on January 16 while MP Dr. Aye Maung's case was registered under section 17(1) of Unlawful Associations Act. He was arrested on January 17. The President's Office directed security agencies to arrest and register cases against them for talks delivered at a memorial ceremony on the anniversary of the loss of the Rakhine Kingdom on January 15 in Rathedaung which allegedly included words conducing public mischief.

NEPAL

[Net neutrality law, not an urgent need: NTA](#)

MyRepublica | 22nd January

Though Nepal Telecom Authority (NTA) is drafting a regulation for 'net neutrality', a senior official of the telecommunication sector regulator said that the regulation is not an urgent need. "There is no urgent need of net neutrality regulation in the country at this time," said Ananda Raj Khanal, a senior director of NTA and chairman of the committee. "Why would we need a regulation on the topic about which a very few people know?"

[Modi calls Oli, congratulates him in advance as next PM](#)

The Himalayan Times | 21st January

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Damodardas Modi has telephoned CPN-UML Chairman KP Sharma Oli, to congratulate him in advance as next prime minister of Nepal, this afternoon. In a statement today, Oli's press coordinator Chetan Adhikari said, Indian PM Modi made telephone call to UML Chair Oli to exchange new year wishes and congratulate him in advance as next Prime Minister of Nepal.

PAKISTAN

[Pakistan awaits Afghan 'fatwa' against TTP, affiliates](#)

The Express Tribune | 22st January

In October last year, Army chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa traveled to Kabul as part of efforts to improve strained ties between Pakistan and Afghanistan. One of the decisions, according to Kabul, reached during the visit was that Pakistan would seek a 'fatwa' or religious decree from its religious scholars against suicide bombings inside Afghanistan. Pakistan officially never acknowledged if the army chief made any such commitment. However, now a senior official, who was privy to the outcome of Gen Qamar's visit to Kabul, confirmed the development. What is significant, though, is the revelation by the official that the Afghan government was just telling 'half-truth.' The official, who requested not to be named because of the sensitivity of the subject, told The Express Tribune that it was a 'mutual commitment', meaning that both the sides would seek fatwa from their respective religious scholars against suicide bombings.

[PPP unlikely to retain its strength in Senate after election](#)

Dawn | 22nd January

The Pakistan Muslim League-Q (PML-Q) will be fighting a battle for survival in the coming Senate elections as the party is on the brink of extinction in the House of Federation as all its four senators are set to retire on March 11. Given the party position in all the four provincial legislatures and the National Assembly, it is unlikely that the PML-Q would win any seat in the Senate. However, political experts believe that with the recent political developments in Balochistan and after the election of PML-Q's man as the provincial chief minister despite having a mere four members, the chances of the party's getting one or two seats from the province cannot be ruled out. The term-wise data of the senators shows that the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) will be the biggest loser in terms of representation in the Senate as almost 70 per cent of its members — the largest number belonging to a single party — are set to retire this March after completion of their six-year term.

SRI LANKA

[Sri Lanka Human Rights Commission issues guidelines for police officers to follow during local election](#)

Colombo Page | 21st January

Sri Lanka's Human Rights Commission has issued guidelines for police officers to follow before, during and after

the upcoming local government election. Issuing the "Guidelines to Police Officers on Local Authority Election 2018" Chairperson of the Human Rights Commission Dr. Deepika Udagama said the Commission will be monitoring compliance with these guidelines and would be compelled to inquire into complaints of violations resulting from either action or inaction.

[Sri Lanka President to take over economic management](#)

Colombo Page| 20th January

Sri Lanka President Maithripala Sirisena announced that he will take responsibility of economic management in order to reduce cost of living burden of the people. He made this announcement at a public meeting in Kegalle. The President said he appointed the National Economic Council three months ago to fulfill this objective. Addressing the meeting, the President said measures will be taken to grant relief to the general public by carrying forward the country's economy.

[Thailand to assist Sri Lanka's agriculture sector](#)

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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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