

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

**December 23rd, 2016 | Volume: 2 - 10/12**

[Pakistan resumes shelling in Kandahar, Kunar provinces of Afghanistan](#)

Khaama Press | 22nd December

The Pakistani military has resumed artillery shelling in southern Kandahar and eastern Kunar provinces of Afghanistan as Afghanistan summons the country's ambassador to lodge a protest over indiscriminate shelling. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan (MoFA) said the Pakistani Ambassador to Afghanistan Syed Abrar Hussain was summoned over the recent artillery shelling from the side of Durand Line by Pakistani military and militia forces over Maruf district of Kandahar and Sarkanu district of Kunar.

[Rohingyas face army atrocities: HRW](#)

Prothom Alo | 22nd December

Myanmar security forces have inflicted horrific abuses on the Rohingya population since October, Human Rights Watch said on Wednesday. The New York-based rights body observed that the Myanmar military has conducted a campaign of arson, killings, and rape against ethnic Rohingya people that has threatened the lives of thousands more.

[Taliban not operating from Pakistan, says FO](#)

Dawn | 23rd December

The Foreign Office dismissed on Thursday Pentagon's latest assessment that the Taliban and Haqqani network were freely operating from Pakistan and instead accused Afghanistan of being an epicentre of terrorism in the region. "This is more of a rhetoric than anything else. Afghanistan is infested with most terrorist organisations due to the instability there, which has created space for these terrorist elements," Foreign Office Spokesman Nafees Zakaria said.

## AFGHANISTAN

[Kabul's Dasht-e-Barchi upgrading plan discussed in meeting chaired by Ghani](#)

Khaama Press | 22nd December

The upgrading plan of key western zone in capital Kabul, Dasht-e-Barchi, was discussed during a meeting chaired by President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani on Thursday. The Office of the President, ARG Palace, said the meeting to discuss the upgrading plan of Dasht-e-Barchi, chaired by President Mohamad Ashraf Ghani, was organized in ARG Presidential Palace. According to a statement released by ARG Palace, the meeting was attended by acting Kabul mayor Abdullah Habibzai, and key challenges along with the opportunities, and future plans were discussed in details during the meeting.

[China, UK vow to support Afghanistan](#)

Afghanistan Times | 21st December

The United Kingdom Foreign Secretary and Chinese State Councilor Yang Jiechi agree long term commitment to future security and stability in Afghanistan. In a statement posted on its website, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office at UK said that Beijing and London remain committed to their long term support for the government of Afghanistan and its people.

## BANGLADESH

### [Govt will continuously support private sector to boost economy: PM Hasina](#)

bdnews24 | 21<sup>st</sup> December

The Awami League government will continue to support the private sector in order to ensure the optimum economic growth and development of the country, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has said. "I believe the private sector is one of the main drivers which will keep the cycle of economy moving," the premier said while inaugurating an international seminar on Wednesday. The seminar titled "New Economic Thinking: Bangladesh 2030 and Beyond" was arranged by Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DCCI). Assuring traders and investors, Hasina said her government would keep on supporting the private sector through policy formation and establishing a trade-friendly atmosphere.

### [Train service between Kolkata, Khulna likely in Jan](#)

The Financial Express | 22<sup>nd</sup> December

Adding a new feather in the Indo-Bangla cooperation in the rail sector, a new train would be launched between the two countries early next year, reports PTI via India Today. Recently the frequency of Maitree Express was increased to four days a week between Kolkata and Dhaka, catering to the growing demand of passengers from both sides. The new train service between Kolkata and Khulna is likely to be launched during Bangladesh Prime Minister Shaikh Hasinas India visit in January 2017, said a senior Railway Ministry official.

### [Bangladesh provides 'expansive degree' of religious freedom: US](#)

bdnews24 | 22<sup>nd</sup> December

The visiting US Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom, David N Saperstein, has hailed Bangladesh's religious tradition and said the country provides an "expansive degree" of religious freedom. The ambassador was responding to different questions at a live Facebook chat on Thursday, after his meeting with foreign minister AH Mahmood Ali. He said the primary challenges to religious freedom were manifested "in the occasional violent acts against religious individuals, communities, and institutions that we have seen in recent years".

### [Elections Free, Fair: No interference made it possible](#)

The Dailys Star | 23<sup>rd</sup> December

The administration and law enforcers played a proactive role in ensuring a peaceful atmosphere during the Narayanganj City Corporation elections yesterday. And non-interference by the ruling party men, violence-free electioneering and cooperation from the candidates created the ground for such a clean and undisturbed election.

## **BHUTAN**

### [Addressing demonetisation](#)

Kuensel | 21<sup>st</sup> December

The impact of the demonetisation process in India on Bhutanese exporters raises a number of questions for which answers have to be found. If the Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal (BBIN) Motor Vehicle Agreement (MVA) were in place today, Bhutanese trucks would be transporting oranges all the way to Bangladesh and orange exporters would not be paying Indian truckers inflated prices to do so today.

### [Himalayan glaciers, changing surface water regimes and groundwater resources: Connecting the dots](#)

Kuensel | 22<sup>nd</sup> December

The Hindu Kush Himalaya (HKH) is one of the most dynamic, diverse, and complex mountain systems in the world, providing fresh water resources to more than 210 million people in the mountains and 1.3 billion people downstream. Several river and glacial systems originate in the HKH, making the region a "Third Pole" of the Earth.

## **MALDIVES**

### [EC decides to withdraw appeal over election postponement](#)

Sun Online | 22<sup>nd</sup> December

Elections Commission (EC) has made the decision to withdraw its file for appeal with the High Court over the Civil Court order to postpone the upcoming Local Council Election by two months. EC appealed the court order claiming such a postponement with result in irrevocable loss to EC and gross wastage of State resources. The decision to withdraw the appeal comes mere hours after High Court reported to the press that the file for appeal had been accepted by the court.

## **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 Maungtau 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, Maungtau Border Merchants Association was quoted as saying.

## NEPAL

### [Ready a master plan on railways to connect Nepal with Europe, Africa: House panel to govt](#)

My Republica | 22nd December

The Development Committee of the Legislature-Parliament has directed the government to prepare a master plan on railways so as to connect Nepal with Europe and Africa through the Trans-Asian and Trans-Siberian rail networks. A meeting of the House panel directed the government to that end during a discussion with the representatives from the concerned authorities on Thursday.

### [Nepal, India to introduce open skies policy](#)

The Himalayan Times | 22<sup>nd</sup> December

Officials of Nepal and India have agreed to adopt the open skies policy in their aviation sectors. A meeting of the joint secretary-level delegations held in New Delhi on Tuesday and Wednesday concluded with such an agreement, according to the Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation.

### [Karki appointed after removing constitutional hurdle: Joint AG](#)

My Republica | 23<sup>rd</sup> December

The Supreme Court on Thursday began final hearings in the writ petitions challenging the appointment of Lokman Singh Karki as chief of the Commission for Investigation of Abuse of Authority (CIAA) and six other cases concerning him. During the hearings, lawyers for the plaintiff argued that Karki's appointment as CIAA chief was unconstitutional as he lacked the qualifications mentioned in the Interim Constitution, which was then in force.

### [China positive to open Tatopani check point](#)

RSS / My Republica | 23rd December

The Chinese side has hinted to take initiative at central level to open the Tatopani check point soon as it was in the priority of the Chinese government. The Tatopani check point along the Nepal-China border has remained closed after the 25 April 2015 earthquake.

## PAKISTAN

### [PSX sells 40pc stake to Chinese consortium](#)

Dawn | 23<sup>rd</sup> December

The Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) sold 40 per cent strategic shares on Thursday to a Chinese consortium that made the highest bid of Rs28 per share for 320 million shares on offer. The value of the transaction is calculated to be Rs8.96 billion (\$85 million). The Chinese consortium comprises three Chinese exchanges — China Financial Futures Exchange Company Limited (lead bidder), Shanghai Stock Exchange and Shenzhen Stock Exchange. Together they will take up 30pc of the strategic stock while two local financial institutions Pak-China Investment Company Limited and Habib Bank Limited — will pick up 5pc each, the maximum permitted to a single institution under the regulations.

### [Musharraf's remarks on army's 'pressure' echo in SC](#)

Dawn | 23<sup>rd</sup> December

A controversial statement of former military ruler Gen Pervez Musharraf echoed in the Supreme Court during the hearing of a case moved by model Ayyan Ali on Thursday. However, Chief Justice-designate Mian Saqib Nisar made it clear that the judiciary did not decide cases due to pressures from various quarters but in accordance with its conscience and the law. "Let it be known to everybody that the judiciary never decides cases under pressure, but in accordance with its conscience," observed Justice Nisar while heading a three-judge bench that has taken up the case of Ms Ali, who is seeking permission to go abroad to fulfil her contractual obligations.

#### [UN chief calls for Pakistan-India dialogue](#)

The Express Tribune | 23<sup>rd</sup> December

Outgoing United Nations chief Ban Ki-moon has once again called on India and Pakistan to resolve their differences through dialogue and expressed concern over the tensions along the Line of Control. Ban, whose 10-year term as the world's top diplomat ends at the end of this month, encouraged the South Asian neighbours to continue their efforts to deal with their disputes through dialogue.

#### [Four new schemes to be part of CPEC](#)

The Express Tribune | 23<sup>rd</sup> December

Pakistan and China are set to make four new infrastructure schemes worth \$8 billion part of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor next week but prospects for early inclusion of Punjab government's Orange Line Metro project and the Karachi Circular Railway remain bleak. The inclusion of the four schemes would increase the size of CPEC to nearly \$54 billion. The upcoming sixth meeting of the Joint Cooperation Committee, the highest decision-making body of CPEC, would be different from past five meetings. This time, all chief ministers for the first time are expected to attend the JCC. Each of them would be seeking inclusion of mass transit projects in their provincial capitals in the CPEC framework, according to officials of the Planning Ministry.

### **SRI LANKA**

#### [Sri Lankan government to ink agreement with China on Hambantota Port early next year - Minister](#)

Colombo Page | 22<sup>nd</sup> December

The Sri Lankan government will proceed with inking the agreement with China Merchant Holdings on Hambantota Port as President Maithripala Sirisena and the Cabinet of Ministers have approved the agreement to develop the port as a public - private partnership, Minister of Development Strategies and International Trade Malik Samarawickrema said.

#### [Sri Lanka probes plot by Rajiv Gandhi's attacker to kill President - report](#)

Colombo Page | 20<sup>th</sup> December

Sri Lanka said Tuesday it was investigating a former navy sailor convicted of attempting to assassinate late Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi 25 years ago on suspicion of involvement in an alleged plot to kill Sri Lankan President Maithripala Sirisena, according to an AFP report.

#### [Indian Minister urged to secure release of boats in Sri Lanka](#)

Colombo Gazette | 22<sup>nd</sup> December

The National Fishworkers Forum (NFF) in India has urged the Indian External Affairs Ministry to take up the release of 121 boats of fishermen in Sri Lankan custody at the Indo-Sri Lanka joint working group on fisheries meeting at Colombo to be held on January 2, 2017, The Hindu newspaper reported.

#### [ISIS recruit was in Sri Lanka on missionary work](#)

Colombo Gazette | 22<sup>nd</sup> December

An ISIS recruit arrested in India had visited Sri Lanka allegedly on missionary work, the Times of India reported. Abid Khan, a 23-year-old Abid Khan resident of Bengaluru, lived in a church in Banjar town in Kullu district of Himachal Pradesh for the last six months before he was arrested in a joint operation of the NIA and Kullu Police.

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

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