

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

January 27th, 2017 | Volume: 3 - 12/1

[Afghan and Pakistani border guards clash in Spin Boldak](#)

Khaama Press | 27th January

The Afghan and Pakistani security forces exchanged fire in Spin Boldak district located close to Durand Line, the local officials said. The incident took place late on Thursday after the Afghan border guards opened fire on a number of militants who were trying to enter the district from the other side of the line. Provincial police spokesman Zia Durani confirmed that a border policeman lost his life and two others were wounded during the clash.

[Probe into 'illegal tax benefits' availed by Yunus-founded organisations, says Muhith](#)

Financial Express | 26th January

An inquiry has been started on several organisations founded by Muhammad Yunus, which are enjoying 'illegal' tax benefits, says Finance Minister AMA Muhith. "It's a very difficult issue...Professor Yunus has taken tax benefits on organisations with the name Grameen; it is illegal. It is being investigated, that's all," he told the media on Thursday, reports bdnews24.com.

[Hambantota mega port project to receive Rs.165 bn in FDI](#)

SS / Daily News | 27th January

Sri Lanka Ports Authority (SLPA) will receive an inflow of US\$ 1.1 billion (Rs.165 billion) Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) with the conclusion of the negotiations and the signing of the final agreements, for the Hambantota Harbour this year. The receipt of US\$ 1.1 billion will help improve the country's Balance of Payments (BOP) position as this will be an inflow to the financial account of the BOP.

AFGHANISTAN

[Afghan nation will never forget Indian nation's cooperation: Atmar](#)

Khaama Press | 26th January

The Afghan nation will never forget the aid and cooperation delivered by the Indian people and government, Afghan National Security Adviser (NSA) Mohammad Hanif Atmar said Thursday. In his statement released on the occasion of the Republic Day in India, Atmar said "On this auspicious occasion and important day, let me convey my best wishes and happiest moments for the government and people of India." Atmar further added "This day reminds us our strong commitment for an evergreen friendship, cooperation, countering terrorism and getting rid of extremism."

[Trump Told Ghani He'd Consider Sending More Troops](#)

NYP / Outlook Afghanistan | 26th January

President Trump would consider beefing up the US military presence in Afghanistan, according to a report. Trump "said he would certainly continue to support Afghanistan security forces and will consider a proposal for more troops after an assessment," an official told The Wall Street Journal about a phone conversation between the president and Afghan leader Ashraf Ghani last month.

[Uzbekistan, Afghanistan Keen to Boost Trade Turnover](#)

Trend / Outlook Afghanistan | 26th January

Uzbekistan and Afghanistan signed a bilateral trade and economic road map on the results of an official visit of the Uzbek delegation to Afghanistan, the Uzbek Foreign Ministry's press service said in a message. The road map's implementation will allow increasing the two countries' trade turnover up to \$1.5 billion in a short period of time. Moreover, several intergovernmental documents aimed at boosting the bilateral cooperation have been signed during the visit, according to the message. During the visit, the delegation was led by Uzbekistan's Foreign Minister Abdulaziz Kamilov, said the press service.

[Political Tension Takes Heavy Toll on Af-Pak Trade](#)

Pajhwok / Outlook Afghanistan | 26th January

The Pakistan-Afghanistan trade has sharply fallen over the last six months as a result of political tensions and strict border controls, an official says. Afghanistan's exports to the neighbour slumped by 21.9 percent while imports declined by 14.9 percent during the period, Model Collectorate of Customs chief said. The News International quoted Qurban Ali Khan as saying the export of 30 main items to Afghanistan accounted for \$103 million, but the overall trade volume dropped. Pakistan's exports to Afghanistan stood at Rs53 billion in the two quarters (July-December) of the current fiscal, compared to Rs62.49 billion in the corresponding period of last year.

BANGLADESH

[Dhaka seeks from Trump admin duty-free market access](#)

Prothom Alo | 25th January

Dhaka on Tuesday renewed its request to the new administration of US president Donald J Trump to consider 'duty free quota free' (DFQF) access of Bangladeshi commodities to the US market. Bangladesh ambassador to the United States Mohammad Ziauddin made the request during a meeting with US Republican senator Roger Wicker in Washington DC, according to an official release received in Dhaka on Wednesday.

[BD earned \\$94.9b remittance in last 7 years: PM](#)

Financial Express | 25th January

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina a total of 37,15,111 workers went abroad with employment and Bangladesh earned \$94.98 billion in remittance from 2010 to 2016. "Bangladesh sent 7,57,731 overseas workers including 1,18,158 females to 162 countries and received \$ 13.61 billion as remittance in 2016," she said this while responding to a question from treasury bench member Selina Begum in the Jatiya Sangsad on Wednesday, reports BSS.

[Bangladesh not a democracy, a hybrid regime](#)

Prothom Alo | 26th January

The state of democracy in Bangladesh has remained static compared to the last year when the world saw a democratic recession, shows the Economist Intelligence Unit's (EIU's) democracy index 2016. The EIU has not called Bangladesh a democracy; rather branded it as a hybrid regime, a branding that remains valid for the country since 2008. Bangladesh has ranked 84th among 167 nations with a score of 5.73 in the category of 'hybrid regime'.

BHUTAN

[Man files complaint related to caste system](#)

Kuensel | 26th January

A 36-year-old man from Jigmecholing in Sarpang has lodged a complaint with the Gelephu police, alleging that his in-laws conducted funeral rites for his wife, not because she is dead, but because she married him.

[His Majesty The King arrived in Dewathang](#)

Kuensel | 26th January

His Majesty The King arrived in Dewathang after having trekked from Chokhorling yesterday evening. His Majesty met with all the shopkeepers and residents of Nganglam town yesterday morning before travelling to Chokorling. His Majesty visited the villages along the way and met with the people.

MALDIVES

[India donates spare parts to Maldives National Defense Force \(MNDF\)](#)

Sun Online | 25th January

Indian government has donated some spare parts needed by the Maldives National Defense Force (MNDF). At special ceremony held today on board the Indian naval ship taking part in the surveillance operation inside the Maldivian economic borders, the parts were officially donated by the Indian Defence Advisor to the Maldives, Captain Prashanth Haandhoo. The parts were received by the Commander of the Marine Corp, Brigadier General Ali Zuhair.

[Transparency: Corruption subsided in Maldives](#)

Sun Online | 25th January

The Corruption Perception Index 2016 (CPI 2016) by Transparency International publicized today has shown that corruption in the Maldives have gone down in the past five years. The last time the Maldives was on the CPI was in 2011 at 134th with a score of 25. It was even lower than Ethiopia that year.

[Law on alcohol to be compiled, huge penalties](#)

Sun Online | 26th January

Minister of Home Affairs, Azleen Ahmed has announced authorities are in the process of compiling a law on alcohol abuse and distribution, with huge penalties to offenders. Minister Azleen made the announcement during his speech at function in Customs Office this Thursday to celebrate International Customs Day. In his speech, Minister Azleen said that alcohol being missing from Anti-Narcotics Act was a cause for great concern.

MYANMAR

[Former President Thein Sein urges USDP to make enormous effort to win in elections](#)

Mizzima | 27th January

The Union Solidarity and Development Party's Central Steering Committee patron Thein Sein has urged the party to make a great effort to win in the elections.

[Authorities to confiscate unused Myanmar farmland](#)

AFP / Mizzima | 26th January

Authorities in Myanmar's central Mandalay region plan to confiscate some 40,000 acres of unused farmland to use for the nation's interests, an official said Wednesday. Land ownership is one of the most contentious issues in Myanmar, where the former junta was accused of rampant confiscation during its 50-year rule.

NEPAL

[No polls without Madhesis, Tharus on board: PM](#)

My Republica | 27th January

As Madhes-based parties press the government not to announce the date for any of the three elections without first completing the process of constitutional amendment, the prime minister, who had been claiming that local elections would be held by mid-May, said on Thursday that no election would be announced without first taking the Madhesi and Tharu communities on board.

[NRA to quiz ministry over lack of design approval](#)

My Republica | 27th January

The National Reconstruction Authority (NRA) has decided to seek clarification from the Ministry of Health about negligence on the part of various international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) and local NGOs in the reconstruction of health posts and other health institutions in the earthquake-affected districts.

PAKISTAN

[Pakistani, Afghan visa applicants to face extreme vetting: Trump](#)

Dawn | 27th January

US President Donald Trump has indicated that both Pakistan and Afghanistan will be among the countries whose citizens will have to go through an “extreme vetting” process before entering the United States. In an interview to ABC News, Mr Trump also said he was going to sign an order placing a ban on people from seven Muslim-majority countries entering the US on Wednesday but it was delayed, apparently because of a huge public backlash. The interview, broadcast on Wednesday night, was his first to a television channel since he took oath as president on Jan 20 and covered a wide range of subjects, from Obamacare to immigration and war against terrorists.

[PTI moves privilege motion in NA against PML-N lawmakers following pandemonium](#)

Express Tribune | 27th January

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf on Friday submitted a privilege motion in the National Assembly against the ruling Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) after a scuffle broke out between lawmakers of both the parties. “We the undersigned (signatures attached) wish to move a privilege motion against PML-N MNAs, including Shahid Khaqan Abbasi, Mian Mannan, Capt Safdar and others, who on January 26, 2017 during the NA session physically moved towards the Opposition side and took physical aim at PTI MNAs as well as hurling abuses against them,” the motion read.

SRI LANKA

[Prime Minister asserts Sri Lanka needs foreign investments](#)

Colombo Gazette | 25th January

Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe today asserted that Sri Lanka needs foreign investments to develop the country. Speaking at the Youth Parliament in Maharagama today, the Prime Minister said there is no move to “sell the country” to anyone.

[India hopes Sri Lanka take advantage of its 'Neighborhood First' policy](#)

Colombo Page | 26th January

The new High commissioner of India to Colombo, Taranjit Singh Sandhu said Sri Lanka continues to be a key part of India's "neighborhood first" policy. Speaking at the 68th Republic Day of India celebrations in Colombo on Thursday, Sandhu expressed hope that Sri Lankan businesses will take advantage of their proximity to the fastest growing major economy in the world.

[Sri Lanka's highest foreign debt repayment due in 2019](#)

Colombo Page | 26th January

The total debt stock of Sri Lanka has gone up by 233% to Rs.7, 391 billion during the period from 2005 to 2014. The total debt burden of Sri Lanka in 2005 was Rs.2, 222 billion and, within 5 years, it increased up to Rs.4, 590 billion in 2010. In addition there is another Rs 2,000 billion debt obtained by the Public owned Enterprises directly off the balance sheet.

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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