



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

October 27th, 2017 | Volume: 3 - 10/10

[Govt revives plan to relocate GHQ from Rawalpindi to Islamabad](#)

The Express Tribune | 27th October
The government has revived its plan to relocate the military headquarters, known as General Headquarters (GHQ), from Rawalpindi to Islamabad, according to Defence Secretary Lt Gen (retd) Zamirul Hassan. Briefing the Senate Standing Committee on Defence on Thursday, he said that 2,450 acres of land has been allocated for building a defence complex in Islamabad. And for this purpose 5,000 families would be relocated to a different place.

[India sees highest visitors from Bangladesh](#)

The Financial Express | 26th October
India's issuance of visas to the people of Bangladesh has marked a sharp rise in recent months as the two neighbouring countries are considering people-to-people contacts as the biggest strength to bolster ties. Bangladeshi people constitute the largest number of visitors to India and Indian High Commission in Dhaka issued 976,000 visas in 2016 and India expect this to grow to about 1.4 million visas in 2017, a diplomat told UNB on Wednesday.

[Qatar assures Sri Lanka assistance in development of power, ports, infrastructure](#)

Colombo Page | 26th October
The State of Qatar has agreed to assist Sri Lanka in its development of power sector, ports and infrastructure facilities when President Maithripala Sirisena had bi-lateral discussions with Qatar's Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani in Doha. President Sirisena who is on a two-day state visit to State of Qatar met with the Emir at the Emir's Palace in Doha today. The President was warmly welcomed by the Emir of Qatar with a Guard of Honor at the Palace. A bilateral meeting between the Emir and the President followed after one-on-one discussions between the two leaders.

AFGHANISTAN

[New deadly US airstrike target ISIS hideout in Nangarhar, 22 killed, wounded](#)

Khaama Press | 26th October

The United States forces based in Afghanistan conducted a new airstrike on the hideout of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) terrorist group in eastern Nangarhar province of Afghanistan. According to the local security officials, the latest airstrike was carried out by the US forces using unmanned aerial vehicles. The officials further added that the airstrike carried out on Wednesday in the vicinity of Khogyani district left at least 22 ISIS militants dead or wounded. The provincial police commandment in a statement confirmed the airstrike and said the militants were targeted in Wazir Tangi area of Khogyani. The statement further added that 14 ISIS militants were killed and 8 others were wounded in the airstrike.

[Islamabad believes Afghan situation to improve if US accepts its defeat](#)

Khaama Press | 26th October

The Pakistani officials have said there will only be room for improvement if Washington accepts their defeats, failures in Afghanistan, apparently lobbying for a change in the new US strategy for Afghanistan and South Asia. The country's foreign affairs minister Khawaja Asif told the Senate on Wednesday that "There will only be room for improvement if Washington accepts their defeat, their failures in Afghanistan," according to local media reports.

[Ghani Refuses to Join CPEC While Access to India is Blocked](#)

Daily Outlook Afghanistan | 24th October

While in India on Tuesday, President Ashraf Ghani called on Pakistan to end its support to insurgent groups and took a firm stand against joining the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). According to India's Live Mint news portal, Ghani said he would not join CPEC if Islamabad refused to permit connectivity between India and Afghanistan. The report stated that Ghani also rejected what he termed a "Pakistan-managed" effort to broker peace in Afghanistan. This comes just a week after talks between Pakistan, the US, China and Afghanistan in Oman which were aimed at getting the Taliban to the peace talks tables.

BANGLADESH

[Home Minister Khan says he sought bilateral solution to Rohingya crisis during Myanmar visit](#)

bdnews24 | 26th October 2017

Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan has said he pitched a bilateral solution to the Rohingya crisis during his Myanmar visit. "We've told them that this should be resolved bilaterally and that's what we want. Our honourable prime minister wants it too," Khan said at a media briefing at the Secretariat on Thursday, a day after his return from Naypyidaw. He hinted that Bangladesh would think of something else if Myanmar did not respond to Bangladesh's call for a bilateral solution to the crisis. "We've told them that we would raise the issue at different platforms gradually, because Bangladesh is shouldering the burden."

[EC has nothing to do with polls-time govt, CEC says in response to BNP demand](#)

bdnews24 | 27th November

Chief Election Commissioner KM Nurul Huda has said the Election Commission has nothing to do with the polls-time government. It is not up to the commission to decide whether the current parliament will continue to function during the next general elections, he added. "There is no scope to go beyond the Constitution and the law. The election will have to be held in the existing constitutional system," Huda said at a media conference wrapping up the talks on the next parliamentary election on Thursday. "It's not possible for us to bring constitutional changes." In the long dialogue on the next polls, the BNP and its allies pitched a non-partisan government that can facilitate a free and fair election, alleging such an election will not be possible for the Awami League in power.

[Bangladesh seeks support of nations in new UN initiatives](#)

Prothom Alo | 26th October

Bangladesh has once again requested the international community to extend their support to the new initiatives expected to be taken in various forums of the United Nations (UN) against Myanmar in the next one month. The initiatives include convening a special session of the UN Human Rights Council and passing a special resolution at the UN Third Committee. Foreign secretary Md Shahidul Haque on Wednesday made this request to diplomats of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and BRICS countries stationed in Dhaka.

BHUTAN

[PM says works to light up two chiwogs in Gongdue underway](#)

Bhutanese Expression | 26th October

Prime Minister Dasho Tshering Tobgay told people of Pikari-Yangbari and Daagsa-Kumadzung chiwogs under Gongdue Gewog in Monggar that works to electrify their villages are in process. Lyonchhen announced this during the meeting with people of Gongdue yesterday. Currently, villagers in these two chiwogs depend on solar energy to brighten their homes at nights. However, solar power is not reliable. “Twelve households in Pikari and another 12 in Kumadzung use solar power but they have said it is not reliable. So you must be aware that survey of stretching grid electrical lines is complete,” said Prime Minister. “Once the electric lines are installed, electricity will be supplied to your homes.” Listening to Prime Minister’s words, villagers of two chiwogs beamed with happiness which was obvious since they can lead comfortable life once their villages are electrified.

[UN Reaffirms Support for Bhutan](#)

Bhutan Times | 26th October

The UN Resident Coordinator, Gerald Daly reaffirmed the unwavering support of the United Nations to Bhutan in achieving its development goals and objectives in the years ahead as the UN day was observed yesterday in Thimphu. “As the UN team in Bhutan, in collaboration with GNHC, prepares the next UN framework of support, we will ensure that our strategic priorities are aligned with the 12th Five Year Plan priorities,” he said. The UN Resident Coordinator was speaking at the butter lamp lighting ceremony held yesterday to mark the day. This year marks the 72nd anniversary of the founding of the United Nations. A thousand butter lamps were lit at the Kuenray of the Tashichhodzong to observe the day. The butter lamp lighting ceremony was led by home and cultural affairs minister Dawa Gyeltshen. The event was attended by parliamentarians, senior government officials, former ambassadors of Bhutan to the UN, representatives and officials of the UN and its specialized agencies and members of diplomatic community based in Thimphu.

MALDIVES

[Minister: Expected revenue went down due to political turmoil](#)

Sun Online | 25th October

Minister of Finance and Treasury, Ahmed Munawar has said that the expected state annual revenue could not be acquired due to political turmoil in the country. Responding to the questions of the committee regarding the Supplementary Budget, Minister Munawar said that the larger portion of the estimate revenue has not been received. And so the MVR 500 million expected from the Special Economic Zone was not received as

well. Minister Munawar said that that an investment of MVR 500 was going to come about ten years ago but that too was obstructed by political turmoil.

MYANMAR

[Myanmar seizes \\$4.6 mn of crystal meth](#)

Mizzima | 27th October

Myanmar said Thursday it had seized \$4.6 million worth of crystal methamphetamine in the heart of the drug-producing 'Golden Triangle' zone that showers narcotics across the region. The remote area -- which covers Shan State, Laos and northern Thailand -- churns out huge quantities of opium and meth that are smuggled across porous borders to countries around Asia. Myanmar soldiers and border officers arrested a man with 250 kilograms (550 pounds) of crystal meth in the back of his car early Wednesday at a toll gate in eastern Shan state. Highly pure crystal methamphetamine -- known as "ice" -- is extremely addictive and fetches hefty sums. The quarter-tonne cache is worth \$4.6 million, according to a statement posted on the commander-in-chief's Facebook page. The arrested man and drugs were systematically transferred to anti-drugs squad. Authorities in Myanmar, Laos and Thailand have struggled to dismantle the sprawling drug networks that funnel Myanmar-made narcotics through the region.

[New EU Ambassador lays out course for EU-Myanmar relations](#)

Mizzima | 26th October

The new Ambassador of the European Union to Myanmar, Mr Kristian Schmidt, will represent the European Union in Myanmar and serve as Head of the EU Delegation in Yangon during the next four years. Ambassador Schmidt has previously served as the Head of the European Union Delegation to Uganda and held several senior positions in the European Union's headquarters in Brussels. Ambassador Schmidt is a Danish national with extensive experience in development cooperation, security and peace-keeping matters. In the following interview for Mizzima, the EU Ambassador discusses the priorities during his period in office. He is spending his first weeks in Myanmar listening and broadening my understanding of the challenges. You can read and study history and politics in advance, but nothing can substitute for meeting and listening to Myanmar's own voices. Our priorities are aligned with yours: As friendly "neighbours" from another continent, we Europeans have no hidden agendas in Myanmar – we are here because the aspirations of the people of Myanmar were freely and democratically expressed in the last elections.

NEPAL

['Nepal can't rely on remittances to become a middle-income country'](#)

MyRepublica | 27th October

Nepal could miss its target to become a 'middle-income' country by relying too heavily on remittance incomes, according to a new report prepared jointly by the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) and South Asia Watch on Trade, Economics and Environment (SAWTEE). Economists at the two think-tanks have calculated how, based on past growth rates, Nepal is on course to graduate from a low-income country (LIC) to a lower-middle-income country (LMIC) by 2030. However, this would require creation of 6.1 million jobs, of which 3.1 million are needed simply to match population growth.

[House to be revived if govt defers polls: Left alliance](#)

MyRepublica | 27th October

A day after the Supreme Court (SC) sought details from the Election Commission (EC) on ensuring that separate ballot papers are being printed for provincial assembly and parliamentary elections, leaders of the left alliance have threatened to reinstate parliament if the November 26 and December 7 polls are postponed under any pretext. Convening a press meet on Thursday, top leaders from the left alliance, CPN-UML Chairman K P Oli and CPN (Maoist Center) Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal, said that any move that could result in postponement of the polls was unacceptable to them.

PAKISTAN

[Abbasi defends LNG contract with Qatar](#)

DAWN | 27th October

Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi has justified the LNG contract with Qatar, claiming that Pakistan had settled for the cheapest price among all 15-year term contracts in the world. Responding to a calling attention notice in the Senate on Thursday, he described the agreement negotiated for about 14 months as a big achievement. Pointing out that Pakistan was purchasing LNG at 13.3 per cent of Brent while Japan — the largest importer of LNG — was buying it at 14.5-15pc of Brent.

[Tillerson-Ghani meeting speaks volumes of American failures in Afghanistan: Asif](#)

DAWN | 26th October

The meeting between United States Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and Afghan President Ashraf Ghani at the Bagram airbase tells a story of American failures, Foreign Minister Khawaja Asif informed the National Assembly Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs on Thursday.

SRI LANKA

[Fifth Indo Sri Lanka joint military exercise Mitra Shakti - 2017 concludes](#)

Colombo Page | 27th October

The fifth India-Sri Lanka Joint Training Exercise Mitra Shakti 2017 commenced on 13 October in Pune, India came to a successful conclusion with special emphasis on increasing the use of modern communication, reconnaissance and weapon technologies. The 14-day joint exercise between India and Sri Lanka to build Military to Military co-operation and interoperability was conducted at the Aundh Military Camp in Pune from October 13 to 25. The exercise had focused on counter-insurgency and counter-terrorism operations. On the last day of the exercise, a joint operations team of both armies conducted a mock drill on how to counter a terror attack in a semi-urban environment. The mock drill involved insertion of troops, by climbing down with ropes from helicopters, and destroying a terrorist hideout, the Indian Express reported.

[Sri Lankan foreign minister to visit China](#)

Colombo Page | 26th October

Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Tilak Marapana will pay an official visit to China from October 29 to November 4 at the invitation of Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, a spokesperson said Thursday. "It is Marapana's first official visit to China, and China attaches great importance to the upcoming visit," said Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Geng Shuang. According to the spokesperson, Chinese leaders will meet Marapana, and he

will also attend celebrations marking the 60th anniversary of bilateral ties, Xinhua reported. "This year, China and Sri Lanka have reached broad consensus within the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative," Geng said.

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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