

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

December 28th, 2016 | Volume: 2 - 12/12

[IMF Sets Afs 150bn Revenue Collection Target for MoF in 2017](#)

Outlook Afghanistan | 28th December
The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has set a 150 billion Afs revenue collection target for the Ministry of Finance (MoF) for 2017 - the new fiscal year. The spokesman for MoF, Ajmal Hameed Abdul Rahimzai, meanwhile said following the MoF's achievement in exceeding its 2016 target of 130 billion Afs, this new target is achievable. He also said that because the MoF had exceeded its target, the IMF has pledged to reward government with \$100 million USD. "We will bring reforms in collecting national revenue so we collect more money than what is specified as the target by the IMF," he said.

[Elected representatives across the country vote in District Council polls](#)

bdnews24 | 28th December
Bangladesh is holding its first polls for the District Councils, 16 years after the relevant law was enacted in 2000. Elected public representatives in 61 districts are exercising their franchises to elect a chairman and 20 members for the local government body. Polls started at 836 centres across the country at 9am and will continue until 2pm. The present Election Commission (EC), as one of its final tasks, is conducting the elections in all districts except for the three Chittagong Hill Tracts districts.

[PM Sharif inaugurates 340MW Chashma-III Nuclear Power Plant](#)

Geo.tv | 28th December
Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif inaugurated the Chashma Nuclear Project – III, having a capacity of generating 340 megawatts of electricity. The 340MW power plant is a joint collaboration of Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission (PAEC) and China National Nuclear Corporation (CNNC), read a press statement issued on Tuesday. This is the third project after successful operation of Chashma-I and Chashma-II projects.

AFGHANISTAN

[Afghan MP wounded in Kabul explosion, more casualties feared](#)

Khaama Press | 28th December

A relatively heavy explosion was heard in Kabul city on Wednesday morning, leaving several people dead or wounded. The incident took place in the vicinity of 6th police district of the city close to a mosque in Dasht-e-Barchi area in West of Kabul. Eyewitnesses in the area are saying that a suicide bomber targeted a vehicle of an Afghan lawmaker in the vicinity of Dasht-e-Barchi area. However, a security official said a magnetic bomb was planted in the vehicle of MP Fakuri Biheshti's vehicle who was wounded in the attack and his bodyguard was killed.

[HIA neither Supports Taliban, Nor Afghan Govt: Baheer](#)

Outlook Afghanistan/ Express Tribune | 28th December

The Gulbadin Hekmatyar-led Hezb-i-Islami Afghanistan (HIA) has pledged staying neutral in the war between the Afghan government and the Taliban. Dr. Ghairat Baheer, head of HIA's political affairs committee, was quoted as saying on Tuesday his party would not side with anyone in the ongoing conflict. He told The Express Tribune that the HIA, which struck a peace deal with the Ashraf Ghani administration in September, would take part in the next

parliamentary elections. Islamabad did not oppose peace parleys between Kabul and HIA, he said, adding: "Pakistan had supported the negotiations which led to the signing of the peace deal in September."

[Problems in Afghanistan, M.E, Syria are All Subjects of Concern: Putin](#)

Outlook Afghanistan | 28th December

"The problems in Afghanistan, the Middle East, Syria and other hot spots are all subjects of concern," said Russian President Vladimir Putin opening a meeting of the CSTO Collective Security Council in St Petersburg on Monday, Kremlin reports. "We know how complicated relations are in many parts of the world. The number of problem places and hot spots has not decreased, and we have not managed to resolve old conflicts as often as we would have liked. The problems in Afghanistan, the Middle East, Syria and other hot spots are all subjects of concern. I am very pleased therefore to have this chance to meet today and discuss all of these problems," Putin said.

[Taliban Extracting Badakhshan's Gold, Lazuli Mines](#)

Outlook Afghanistan | 28th December

Officials in northeastern Badakhshan province on Tuesday said the provincial revenue department's income increased by seven percent this year despite no revenue collection from gold and lapis lazuli mines' extraction. Finance manager at the provincial Revenue Department, Abdul Sattar Natiq, in an exclusive interview with Pajhwok Afghan News said the Ministry of Finance (MoF) had estimated this year's revenue of the department at 298 million afghanis, while more than 329 million afghanis had already been collected.

[WikiLeaks release cable on assassination plot of Karzai](#)

Afghanistan Times | 28th December

A multi-sided agent, Chaman Gul, planned to assassinate the US ambassador and Hamid Karzai when he was President of Afghanistan, revealed a new WikiLeaks cable release. The cable was sent by the Joint Task Force Guantanamo Bay to the US Department of Defense on August 17, 2005. According to the cable released by the whistleblower, Chaman Gul, a resident of Logar province, planned to kill the ex-Afghan President Hamid Karzai and the former US ambassador. The task force said in the cable, "Detainee [Chaman Gul] was implicated in a plot to kill Afghan President Hamid Karzai and the American Ambassador to Afghanistan by placing bombs at the Presidential Palace and US Embassy."

BANGLADESH

[Bangladesh loses Tk 2.27 billion each month for traffic congestion](#)

BSS \ Prothom Alo | 28th December

Traffic congestion in the capital incurs a loss of Tk 2.27 billion in a month of city dwellers, said a study report here yesterday. The loss includes Tk two billion for waste of time and Tk 2.3 billion for fuel burn of vehicles from Airport to Postogola route, said the report on "State of Cities 2016-Traffic Congestion in Dhaka City-Governance Perspectives" conducted by the BRAC University. About 90 per cent of the cost was due to time loss and other 10 per cent for additional vehicle cost which mostly in additional fuel consumption.

[China trying to play Bangladesh against India over Brahmaputra issue](#)

The Financial Express | 27th December

China may try to play Bangladesh against India during river water negotiations on Brahmaputra, which flows from the Tibetan region to northeast India on its way to Bangladesh. What is more, Beijing may try to use the Brahmaputra issue to push forward its One Belt, One Road or the Silk Road programme, which India has not embraced enthusiastically, according to a report by Times of India.

[Three-tier security follows \\$81 million heist at Bangladesh central bank](#)

The Financial Express | 26th December

Bangladesh Bank is implementing a 'remediation plan' to build a foolproof security system to prevent any further breaches in its overseas transactions, following the \$81 million heist in February 2016. "We've started the implementation of the remediation plan after the February heist. The governing board of the Bangladesh Bank approved the plan in May this year," said a top official at the central bank.

BHUTAN

[Ngultrum value falls in P'ing](#)

Kuensel Online | 26th December

Indian Rupees (INR) are once again being illegally sold across the border. Both Bhutanese and Indian nationals in need of INR are paying between Nu 108-112 for INR 100. The commission depends on the amount being exchanged. With the demonetisation process coming into effect on November 8 in India, many attempted to bring the old denomination notes of INR 500 and 1,000 into Bhutan as banks here were still accepting the notes then.

[Japan to construct 4 bridges on Trongsa-Gelephu highway](#)

Kuensel Online | 27th December

Japanese companies will construct four double-lane bridges on the Trongsa-Sarpang national highway worth USD 18.4 million. JICA chief representative Koji Yamada and Gross National Happiness Commission representative Rinchen Wangdi signed the grant aid agreement for the reconstruction of the bridges project between the two governments yesterday. The project will construct bridges at Telegangchu in Trongsa, and Beteni, Samkhara and Passang in Sarpang.

MALDIVES

[MPL ordered to pay MVR 160 mn to Center Enterprises](#)

Sun Online | 27th December

Civil Court has ordered Maldives Ports Limited to pay total MVR 160 million in idle time charge to Center Enterprises Private Limited over two separate lawsuits filed over termination of contract to build a tugboat for MPL. Center Enterprises was contracted to build the tugboat in 2008, but the project was terminated as per order of Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC).

[Indian government identifies 5 cruise circuits, including Maldives](#)

Sun Online | 27th December

Indian government has made the decision to expand its cruise liner tourism industry by identifying five cruise circuits - which includes Maldives. The Indian government has decided on five main cruise circuits; India, Maldives, Sri Lanka, Dubai and Singapore. Minister of Shipping of India, Nitin Gadkari reported that 100 cruise liners are set to visit Mumbai alone in 2017; 60 cruise liners to Goa, Cochin and Mangaluru; and 11 cruise liners to Chennai.

MYANMAR

[Assessing the Impact of Climate Change and its Potential Social and Political Implications for Bangladesh, India, and Myanmar.](#)

Mizzima | 27th December

The increase in frequency of natural disasters such as cyclones, flooding, and extreme temperatures like El Nino in Myanmar, is a sounding alarm that climate change's impacts on the country cannot be ignored. In fact, the consequences of climate change are predicted to hit the South and Southeast Asia Regions of the world the hardest, considering their locations in low-lying coastal areas and in the tropical storm areas. For the states in these regions, such as Myanmar, Bangladesh, and India, they are already facing, and will be facing social consequences of climate change such as scarcity in resources, and political impacts due to ecomigration resulting from climate change. Climate change can lead to ecomigration from the region with scarcity in resources, to region with more resources.

[6 Bangladeshis shot by Myanmar Navy in Bay of Bengal incident](#)

Mizzima | 28th December

Six Bangladeshi fishermen were injured when the Myanmar Navy opened fire on them in the Bay of Bengal near St Martin's Island yesterday, the Daily Star reported. According to the report, a Myanmar Navy ship chased a trawler and opened fire when the fishermen were east of Chhera Dwip near St Martin, leaving the six injured. Locals and Coast Guard personnel took them to a local hospital with bullet injuries in their legs, hands and under the eyes.

[Three civilians killed in Myanmar Army, TNLA clashes](#)

Mizzima | 28th December

Three civilians were killed and eight others injured amid fighting between the Myanmar Army and the Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA) in Kyaukme township of northern Shan state, RFA reported on 27 December quoting a local official.

NEPAL

[Government to take together constitution amendment and elections bills](#)

My Republica | 27th December

The government has informed the federal alliance which also includes the United Democratic Madhesi Front that it would take together the constitution amendment bill and the bills relating to the elections. The federal alliance was urged for the support on such bid of the government during the meeting of the ruling Nepali Congress and the CPN (Maoist-Center) and the alliance held at Prime Minister's residence on Tuesday.

[Melamchi pipeline may not sustain earthquakes of higher intensity: Report](#)

My Republica | 28th December

Pipelines being laid down in the Kathmandu Valley to distribute water from Melamchi to consumers may be vulnerable to earthquakes of intensity greater than that of 2015 quakes, a report shows. The pipelines lack seismic design and might also suffer from soil liquefaction in the event of a major earthquake resulting to major flooding, according to Review of National Building Code & Implementation Capacity Report submitted to National Planning Commission in November last year.

PAKISTAN

[Pakistan, China, Russia agree to expand talks on Afghanistan](#)

Dawn | 28th December

Russia, China and Pakistan on Tuesday agreed to expand their tripartite consultations on Afghan conflict and include other countries, including Afghanistan, after Kabul objected to its absence from the regional discussions.

[Govt anticipates \\$4b investment in three industrial zones along CPEC](#)

The Express Tribune | 27th December

The government is expecting \$4 billion as fresh investment in three industrial zones that will be set up in Punjab and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (K-P) along the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) routes, said a senior official of Faisalabad Industrial Estate Development and Management Company.

[Govt mulls tax amnesty to lure foreign wealth back](#)

The Express Tribune | 28th December

The government may offer a general tax amnesty scheme to attract money stashed in Pakistan and abroad by its citizens after increasing requirements of disclosures in offshore havens have made it difficult to retain untaxed and hidden assets abroad.

SRI LANKA

[Sri Lanka wants more time to sign mine ban treaty](#)

Colombo Page | 27th December

Sri Lanka has said it will need more time to sign the Mine Ban Treaty (MBT) also known as the Ottawa Convention. It will take 15 more years to de-mine Sri Lanka's war-battered North and East regions, a group campaigning to ban anti-personal mines in the country said on Tuesday while criticising the Government for not acceding to the Ottawa Convention.

[India says Lankan refugees must decide if they want to return](#)

Colombo Gazette | 27th December

It is up to Sri Lankan Tamil refugees to return to their home country or not, according to Pon. Radhakrishnan, India's Union Minister of State for Road Transport, Highways and Shipping. After visiting a camp for the refugees in Gummidipoondi, on the northern outskirts of Chennai, Radhakrishnan told The Hindu on Monday evening that he favoured voluntary repatriation. "If the refugees want to remain here, suitable arrangements should be in place."

[Sri Lanka to establish 'Happy Villages' throughout the island to eliminate poverty](#)

Colombo Gazette | 27th December

The Sri Lankan government prepares to launch a project to establish 'Happy Villages' throughout the island aiming to

empower communities in eliminating poverty. The Ministry of Health, Nutrition, and Indigenous Medicine office will implement the 'Happy Village' project in parallel to the President Maithripala Sirisena's second anniversary celebration next month.

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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