

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

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[Myanmar, China exchange views on bilateral economic cooperation](#)

Mizzima | 28th March
Business communities of Myanmar and China exchanged views on bilateral cooperation in economic, trade and investment here on Monday. The exchange was jointly-organized for the first time by the Chinese Embassy and the Chinese Enterprises Chamber of Commerce in Myanmar (CECCM). Xie Guoxiang, the economic and commercial counselor of the Chinese Embassy in Myanmar, said China's investment in Myanmar has increased and become a great incentive for Myanmar's socio-economic development. Bilateral trade between the two countries hit 13.54 billion US dollars so far, according to figures from the China's Ministry of Commerce, he said.

[Sri Lanka PM seeks India and Japan investment to balance China](#)

Colombo Page | 27th March
Sri Lanka Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe has said that the government is seeking foreign investment from India, Japan and others amid criticism over his country's reliance on Chinese loans for infrastructure projects, Bloomberg reports. In an interview in Colombo on the sidelines of a business conference on Monday, the Premier defending the deal last year that gave a joint venture led by state-owned China Merchants Port Holdings Co Ltd a 99-year lease to the southern port of Hambantota, has said that the deal took the burden off of the government.

[India purchase four more Mi-24 gunships for the Afghan Air Force](#)

Khama Press | 28th March
A contract has been signed for the purchase of four more Mi-24 gunships with the financial support of the government of India for the Afghan Air Force, it has been reported. Belarus will deliver the gunships to Afghanistan based on a trial agreement signed between the three countries earlier this month. "We recently were able to sign a trilateral MoU... India will be paying for the four Mi-24s (which will be delivered) in the next few months. All the four helicopters (will be) paid (for) by India," Afghan Ambassador to India Dr. Shaida Mohammad Abdali has told The Hindustan Times. "India has been kind enough to agree to that request... Afghanistan will have ready helicopters that will be used in the coming season," Abdali added, referring to the request of the Afghan government for arms supply.

AFGHANISTAN

[Central Asian FMs, EU High Representative Mull Afghanistan](#)

Daily Outlook Afghanistan | 28th March

Regular meeting under the Central Asia – EU format was held within the framework of the high-level international conference on Afghanistan “Peace Process, Cooperation in the Sphere of Security and Regional Interaction” in Tashkent on March 26–27, 2018, Uzbek media reported on March 27. According to the information, Foreign ministers of Kazakhstan (Kayrat Abdrakhmanov), Kyrgyzstan (Erlan Abdyldayev), Tajikistan (Sirojiddin Aslov), Uzbekistan (Abdulaziz Kamilov), Deputy Foreign Minister of Turkmenistan – Vepa Hajiyevev and Vice-President of the European Commission, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Federica Mogherini discussed relevant topics of the regional cooperation during the meeting.

[China to Increase Assistance with Bamyan: Ambassador](#)

Daily Outlook Afghanistan | 28th March

Chinese ambassador to Afghanistan Liu Jingson on Monday said his country would increase assistance with the war-hit country in education, infrastructure projects and preservation of historic monuments of central Bamyan province. The Chinese ambassador, who arrived in Bamyan City, told reporters that the People's Republic of China and Afghanistan had a long-standing relationship. He emphasized his country was determined to expanding its relations with Afghanistan in various fields. Liu expressed his satisfaction with security situation of Bamyan and added his country would focus more on various investments in the province in future.

BANGLADESH

['BNP made Bangladesh champion in corruption for five times'](#)

The Financial Express | 27th March

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has said BNP made Bangladesh the world champion in corruption for five times. The Prime Minister also alleged that BNP had hired a special agency to level corruption charges against her family members during its regime. Awami League arranged the discussion marking the 48th Independence and National Day. The Prime Minister said it is internationally recognised that her family members are not involved in any corruption though Awami League is now in power. The Prime Minister further said, "The country shouldn't be of militancy, anti-liberation forces and war criminals...it should be built based on the ideology of freedom fighters.

[Country to be zero-hunger country by 2030: Speakers](#)

The Financial Express | 27th March

Bangladesh would be a zero-hunger country by 2030 overcoming all odds and obstacles, speakers made the remark in a seminar held on Tuesday. Challenges are huge to achieve the Sustainable Development Goal (SDGs) as country's arable lands are decreasing and population are increasing day by day, they said. The speakers shared their insights while addressing a seminar on Role and Measures of Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) to achieve the SDGs.

BHUTAN

[CDB and ACC sign agreement to tackle corruption in construction industry](#)

Kuensel | 27th March

In a step towards preventing, educating and investigating allegations of corrupt practices, a memorandum of understanding (MoU) was signed between Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) and Construction Development Board (CDB) in Thimphu yesterday. CDB would be entrusted with the primary responsibility to regulate and promote a fair, competitive, quality-based and

corruption-free construction industry. The MoU is expected to encourage strong partnership to prevent and combat corruption and work in cooperation and collaboration between CDB and ACC to foster good governance. CDB's director, Phub Rinzin, said the signing of MoU was an important tool to prevent corruption in the construction industry and to cut short the administrative procedure in accessing information with CDB.

MALDIVES

[JP discusses Maldives situation with UN delegation](#)

Sun Online | 27th March

Jumhooree Party (JP) has discussed the political situation in the Maldives with a UN delegation visiting the country. JP Spokesperson, Ali Solih, told Sun Media that four members of the party attended the meeting today held at the UN Office in Maldives. The meeting today was attended by the Deputy Leader of JP, Abdulla Kamaaludheen, Deputy Leader, Hussain Rasheed Hassan, Chairman of the JP Foreign Relations Committee and former Education Minister, Dr. Azim Ahmed and the MP for Kendhoo constituency, Ali Hussain.

[Warning issued over counterfeit Hep B vaccine batches](#)

Sun Online | 28th March

Ministry of Health has issued a warning over counterfeit batches of Hepatitis B vaccines circulating in the world market. Ministry of Health released a circular this Wednesday, warning that the World Health Organization (WHO) has issued an alert that counterfeit Hep B vaccines are circulating in Uganda. The ministry said the counterfeits are of multi-dose (10 ml) Hep B vaccines produced by Serum Institute of India. It said counterfeits of the vaccine have not been imported into Maldives. "We make this public announcement informing HBV products imported into Maldives will be given special attention and checked at the border as a proactive measure," said the ministry in its circular.

MYANMAR

[Myanmar Military head calls for development, not finger-pointing](#)

Mizzima | 28th March

Myanmar Military Commander in Chief Senior General Min Aung Hlaing has called on the country to work for the nation's development by drawing lessons from the past rather than pointing fingers and allotting blame, noting the problem of underdevelopment due to armed conflicts in the country. Senior General Min Aung Hlaing offered these words at the parade held on the 73rd Tadmaw Day (Armed Forces Day) at the parade ground in Nay Pyi Taw on the morning of 27 March. "We must work hard to catch up with other countries. We must work hard in unity for the development of the country disregarding our race and creed rather than doing the blame game and pointing fingers at the past.

[UK High Court judge discusses complaints against media in Myanmar](#)

Mizzima | 28th March

A visiting UK High Court judge has spoken to Myanmar state officials about a judge's role in dealing with complaints against the media. Sir Michael Tugendhat (Ret.d) was a Judge of the High Court of England and Wales from 2003 to June 2014. He was the High Court's most senior media judge from 2010 onwards. His books include: The Law of Privacy and Media; Liberty Intact: Human Rights in English Law; Fighting for Freedom? Sir Michael Tugendhat was in Myanmar last week at the invitation of Free Expression Myanmar (FEM), Deutsche Welle and the Myanmar Press Council, to speak to state officials about a judge's role in complaints against the media. He took time out to answer questions from Mizzima about freedom of expression in Myanmar.

NEPAL

[PM briefs international community](#)

Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli apprised the diplomatic and donor communities in Kathmandu at length on Tuesday on the priorities of his government and its foreign policy, nearly two months after taking office. Top Kathmandu-based diplomats including from India, China, the United States, the United Kingdom, the European Union and the UN System, totalling 29 in number, attended the meeting, alongside representatives from the World Bank, International Monetary Fund and the Asian Development Bank. At the outset, PM Oli presented a brief summary of how the new constitution was promulgated in 2015 and the subsequent two years until formation of the federal and provincial governments following three tiers of election.

[Left unification only after PM's India visit](#)

The Himalayan Times | 28th March

Senior leaders of the left alliance have concluded that merger of the CPN-UML and the CPN-Maoist Centre will not be possible before Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli's India visit, which is likely to begin on April 6. PM Oli, who is also the UML chairman, senior UML leader Madhav Kumar Nepal, CPN-Maoist Centre Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal and senior CPN-MC leader and Minister for Home Affairs Ram Bahadur Thapa have reached an understanding that the unification would not happen in the first week of April as planned earlier since less than 10 days remain for Oli's India visit. "Both the task forces on unification have not completed their tasks," a highly-placed source told THT.

PAKISTAN

[Trump White House divided over Pakistan: report](#)

Dawn | 28th March

The Trump White House is divided over how to deal with Pakistan, with some officials favouring a hardline approach and others warning against alienating a nuclear-armed country of 200 million people, the US media reported on Tuesday. The divide — reported by the prestigious Foreign Policy magazine — is reflected in recent statements by US officials who continue to urge Pakistan to do more for eliminating terrorism but also acknowledge that Pakistan has taken "some positive steps in the right direction".

[US not engaging Pakistan as a democracy, says defence minister](#)

The Express Tribune | 27th March

Defence Minister Khurram Dastgir Khan has said that the strained bilateral relationship between Pakistan and the United States (US) stems from Washington's focus on a military partnership with Islamabad rather than engaging the country as a democracy, according to Voice of America News. In an interview with the news agency, the minister argued that the approach pushed Pakistan to turn towards China and initiate rapprochement with Russia, as the US moves away from providing military assistance to a major non-NATO ally.

[Seven years on, Nawaz regrets moving SC over Memogate](#)

Dawn | 28th March

Perhaps for the first time, former prime minister Nawaz Sharif expressed regrets on Tuesday over taking the Memogate controversy — which had triggered a confrontation between the then government and the military leadership — to the Supreme Court in 2011. Also during the day, the apex court resumed proceedings in the Memogate case and summoned the interior and foreign affairs secretaries on Wednesday (today) to brief the court about their efforts to bring former ambassador to the United States Hussain Haqqani, the main character in the controversy, back to Pakistan.

SRI LANKA

[Sri Lanka to launch a special program to control underworld crimes, drug trade](#)

Colombo Page| 27th March

The Sri Lankan government says it has taken all necessary steps to promote Sri Lanka as a country which protects internationally accepted human rights and civil rights and to ensure the rule of law is functioning properly. Although the recent illegal activities and organized crime by some persons involved in the underworld have had some impact on the peaceful situation during recent disturbances, there was no breakdown in law and order as the reported by the media, the Government Information Department said in a statement requesting the public to act calmly and wisely.

[Sri Lankan businesses should take the opportunity to develop in the Asia Pacific region - Prime Minister](#)

Colombo Page| 28th March

Businesses in Sri Lanka have a great opportunity in the he Asia Pacific region in the field of development as the region develops its own competitive trading system, the Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe said addressing the executive Committee meeting of SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry. President of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCI) of Sri Lanka Ruwan Edirisinghe has been elected as the new president of the South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation (SAARC) Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

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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