

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

March 29th, 2017 | Volume: 3 - 8/3

[China holds military drills near restive Myanmar border](#)

Mizzima | 29th March

China's army held drills near its border with Myanmar on Tuesday, state media reported, in a show of strength from Beijing following weeks of clashes between ethnic rebels and Myanmar's military. Tens of thousands of people have fled to China in recent months to escape the battles in Myanmar's restive borderlands. The bloodshed has threatened to derail a push by de facto leader Aung San Suu Kyi to end decades of fighting with ethnic insurgents.

[Afghanistan Optimistic to China OBOR Project: Hakimi](#)

Outlook Afghanistan/ Pajhwok | 29th March

Finance Minister Eklil Ahmad Hakimi has said China One Belt One Road (OBOR) initiative provided hope for Afghanistan after years of conflict and bloodshed in the war-torn country. During an exclusive interview to CGTN Hakimi said: "There is a lot of potential inside Afghanistan. Chinese companies have invested in copper mine projects, and also oil fields in the north".

[Romania wants a slice of CPEC](#)

Express Tribune | 29th March 2017

As Pakistan works on the multibillion-dollar China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), Romania has expressed interest in becoming a part of the game-changing project. "We are trying to understand how Romania can be part of it," said Romania's Ambassador to Pakistan Nicolae Goia while delivering a lecture at the Strategic Vision Institute (SVI) – an Islamabad-based think tank – on Tuesday.

AFGHANISTAN

[MoD Calls on Pakistan to Stop Supporting Terrorists](#)

Outlook Afghanistan/ Tolonews | 29th March

Afghan Defense Ministry spokesman Dawlat Waziri, on Tuesday called on Pakistan to prevent terrorists from coming in to Afghanistan and urged Pakistan to stop supporting terrorists. At a media briefing on defense ministry issues Waziri said terrorist group leaders are based in Pakistan and some had even been killed in Pakistan. Four big terrorist groups are active in Afghanistan – all of which are all located in Pakistan, Waziri said.

[WB to Give \\$200m for Urban Development](#)

Outlook Afghanistan/ Pajhwok | 29th March

The World Bank will offer \$200 million for the sustainable urban development of Afghanistan, the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Urban Development (MRRUD) says. The aid would be used for the preparation of strategic plans for urban development, MRRUD officials say. \$20 million of the assistance will be presented to government to meet initial needs for studies.

[Kabul terms fencing along Durand Line impossible, unpractical](#)

Afghanistan Times | 29th March

The Afghan government and people have reacted to the unauthorized and alleged fencing work by Pakistan along

the Durand Line and called it un-acceptable and unproductive move of Islamabad. The ministry of foreign affairs spokesperson, Ahmad Shakib Mostaghni said in a conference on Tuesday here in Kabul that the fencing work along the Durand Line would be ineffective without Kabul's consent.

[Afghan, US security officials discuss bilateral cooperation](#)

Afghanistan Times | 29th March

The Afghan national security adviser, Hanif Atmar address his US counterpart, H.R. McMaster through video conference, discussing expansion of bilateral cooperation, the national security council said on Tuesday. "The two sides exchanged views on the overall security situation of the region, particularly the security of Afghanistan, counter-terrorism strategy, peace and expansion of political and security cooperation between Kabul and Washington," it said in a statement. The statement added that Atmar and McMaster agreed to frame a working group and stressed on face-to-face meetings over the implementation of the agreed issues.

BANGLADESH

[British PM acknowledges growing ties with Bangladesh](#)

The Financial Express | 28th March

British Prime Minister Theresa May has written to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina acknowledging the 'strong and growing' relationship between Bangladesh and the United Kingdom. Visiting Permanent Under Secretary and Head of the Diplomatic Service at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office Sir Simon McDonald handed over the letter to Foreign Minister AH Mahmood Ali on Tuesday morning, reports UNB.

[Dhaka becomes most expensive city in South Asia](#)

The Financial Express | 28th March

Dhaka is the most expensive city for in South Asia, a recent survey conducted by the Economist Intelligence Unit says. Results showed Dhaka was the most expensive city in South Asia, followed by Colombo and Kathmandu, reports The Indian Express.

[BTRC: Facebook will be shut down on govt order](#)

Dhaka Tribune | 28th March

The Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) will shut down Facebook if the government orders them to do so, BTRC Chairman Dr Shahjahan Mahmood said on Tuesday. Sources at the Ministry of Home Affairs have said the government is prepared to block the social networking site for a few hours every night to help curb terrorism and militant activities.

[Cyber Threat Detection, Response: Govt to install tools for constant watch](#)

The Daily Star | 29th March

Tk 150cr scheme okayed to purchase equipment to ensure enhanced monitoring of internet use. The government is going to install internet monitoring equipment by May next year to help combat militancy amid growing concerns about extremists using the internet to spread their propaganda and communicate amongst themselves. The equipment, to be installed under a project, would also help clamp down on cyber threats and crimes, and enforce the ban on pornography. It would enable law enforcers monitor internet activities of people round-the-clock.

BHUTAN

[Japan to provide much-needed diagnostic machines](#)

Kuensel Online | 28th March

The health ministry will receive seven medical equipment for the national and regional referral hospitals from Japan next year to improve their diagnostic capacity and services. The JICA Chief Representative Koji Yamada and Gross National Happiness Commission (GNHC) secretary Thinley Namgyel signed an agreement to improve

medical equipment at the national and regional referral hospitals yesterday.

MALDIVES

[President Maumoon dismissed from PPM](#)

Sun Online | 27th March

Disciplinary Committee of PPM has decided to dismiss the President of party, Maumoon Abdul Gayoom from PPM. A report released by the committee said that the decision was made after giving Maumoon the opportunity to respond but he did not do so. Maumoon lost the membership of the party in reference to a resolution passed at an emergency council meeting with President Abdulla Yameen Abdul Gayoom was the chair. In reference, the Disciplinary Committee made seven accusations against Maumoon.

[Ministry of Defence: Allegations against Chief of Defense Force are false](#)

Sun Online | 28th March

Ministry of Defense has refuted allegations being made against Chief of Defense Force, Major General Ahmed Shiyam. Shiyam reportedly went into People's Majlis in late night hours in plain clothes before the no-confidence vote was taken on Speaker Abdulla Maseeh Mohamed the next day. Allegations are being made on social media websites linking Shiyam's visit to complaints of issues with the parliament's electronic voting system by lawmakers on the day of the vote, last Monday. Ministry of Defense issued a statement this Tuesday, in which the authority refuted the allegations.

[Former President Nasheed charged with terrorism over Yameen's arrest](#)

Sun Online | 28th March

Former Maldivian President Mohamed Nasheed has been charged with terrorism over alleged arbitrary detention of President Abdulla Yameen Abdul Gayoom in 2010, when he had been the Mulaku representative at People's Majlis. Criminal Court is scheduled to hear the case at 1:30 pm, Wednesday, March 29.

MYANMAR

[Sino-Myanmar oil pipeline launch a good signal: experts](#)

Mizzima | 28th March

The launch of the Sino-Myanmar oil pipeline following a two-year delay could be the Myanmar government's way of sending a positive signal ahead of its president's visit to China in April, Chinese experts said. The project to pump oil 770 kilometers across Myanmar to Southwest China is set to begin, Reuters reported, citing Aung Myat Soe, deputy director of planning under the state-owned Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise, as saying that the project was awaiting a final go-ahead from the Minister of Electricity and Energy.

[India to supply lightweight torpedoes to Myanmar](#)

Mizzima | 29th March

India has agreed to supply lightweight torpedoes to Myanmar in a US\$ 37.9 million-contract which is said to be evidence of a growing arms race between Myanmar and Bangladesh, sputniknews.com reported on 27 March. The torpedoes will be manufactured by government-owned Bharat Dynamics and private company L&T. Earlier this month, the Indian Navy had accepted a proposal of the Myanmar Navy to train their personnel and set up meteorological facilities.

NEPAL

[PM's Office rejects Education Regulations draft](#)

My Republica | 29th March

Officials at the Ministry of Education (MoE) are discussing the management and administrative structure of the education sector after the Office of Prime Minister and Council of Ministers refused to register the 'final' draft of the Education Regulations for approval by the cabinet.

[Chinese suppliers slapped with fine of Rs 462 million](#)

The Himalayan Times | 29th March

The Special Court today issued a verdict instructing the government to slap a fine of Rs 461.88 million on various Chinese companies that had supplied substandard transformers to Nepal Electricity Authority, bringing a closure to the multi-million rupee transformer procurement scam.

PAKISTAN

[ECC allows 0.2m tons sugar export without subsidy](#)

Express Tribune | 29th March 2017

Accepting the request of powerful sugar millers, the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the cabinet has allowed further export of 200,000 tons of the commodity, apparently to reduce the surplus following handsome sugarcane harvests. Earlier, the ECC had permitted in December 2016 export of 225,000 tons by the end of March 2017.

[Raheel Sharif's appointment as coalition chief an administrative decision, says Khawaja Asif](#)

Dawn | 29th March 2017

Defence Minister Khawaja Asif said the decision to appoint former army chief General Raheel Sharif as head of the 39-nation coalition of Muslim countries is an administrative decision and is not linked to the conflict in Yemen. The defence minister was speaking on Geo's Aaj Shahzaib Khanzada Kay Sath. Asif reiterated that the force is "purely against terrorism" and said, "The decision was taken after much deliberation and I will stand by it in the parliament". "They (Saudi Arabia) first wrote a letter to our government regarding the matter some six weeks ago, after which the government discussed the matter internally and sent a written agreement to the proposal after a week," said Asif while explaining the timeline of the development.

[US spies still being 'secretly' issued visas, claims Rehman Malik](#)

Dawn | 29th March 2017

Former interior minister Rehman Malik has claimed that Pakistani visas are still being 'secretly' issued to US intelligence officials. Talking to reporters outside the Parliament House here on Tuesday, he said the government was accusing the previous government of the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) of issuing visas to US spies, though it was still issuing visas to US officials. He claimed that Pakistani authorities would continue to issue visas to US officials till they continued to receive the Coalition Support Fund (CSF) from the US government.

SRI LANKA

[Sri Lanka Finance Minister promises to reduce current taxes and pass benefits to people](#)

Colombo Page | 28th March

Sri Lanka's Finance Minister Ravi Karunanayake says Sri Lanka has been able to build a positive international image subsequent to its ability to reform the economy during the last two years.

[Indian envoy briefs Chief Prelates on Modi's Sri Lanka visit](#)

Colombo Gazette | 28th March

The Indian High Commissioner to Sri Lanka Taranjit Singh Sandhu today called on the Chief Prelates in Kandy and briefed them on the visit to Sri Lanka by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi for the UN Vesak Day celebrations in May.

[Sri Lanka wants to reduce China's stake in strategic port deal](#)

Colombo Gazette | 27th March

The Government wants a Chinese company to agree to cut its stake in a strategic port project by up to a quarter, as part of a renegotiation aimed at blunting public and political opposition to the deal, the Reuters news agency reported.

[European Investment Bank delegation to visit Sri Lanka](#)

Colombo Gazette | 27th March

A high-level delegation from the European Investment Bank, the world's largest international public bank, will make a three day official visit to Sri Lanka at the start of a South Asia regional tour, the EU office in Colombo 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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