

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

**January 30th, 2017 | Volume: 3 - 13/1**

[Prominent lawyer and NLD's legal advisor gunned down in Myanmar](#)

Mizzima | 29<sup>th</sup> January

A prominent lawyer and legal advisor of Myanmar's ruling party was shot dead along with a taxi driver outside Yangon's international airport on Sunday, officials said. Ko Ni, a member of Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy party, was gunned down as he was waiting for a taxi outside arrivals around 5pm (1030GMT) by an assassin who also killed the driver.

[India signs MoU to make Rajshahi a sustainable city in northern Bangladesh](#)

bdnews24 | 30<sup>th</sup> January

The Indian High Commission in Dhaka has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Rajshahi City Corporation to help the northern Bangladesh city to become a 'sustainable one'. Under the MoU signed on Sunday in the presence of High Commissioner Harsh Vardhan Shringla, India would provide financing to the tune of nearly Tk 211 million for different construction and conservation projects. Those include reconstruction of the infrastructure of Rajshahi Cultural Sangho, construction of a Library building – Padma Library, conservation of city water bodies, construction of footpaths along different roads in the city and conservation of temples in the city.

[Govt. Keeping Mum on Kandahar Explosion Findings](#)

Daily Outlook Afghanistan/  
ToloNews | 30<sup>th</sup> January

Kandahar provincial council members claimed on Sunday that the government is not revealing its findings following a probe into the recent bomb blast at the Kandahar governor's guesthouse which claimed the lives of 12 people, including five United Arab Emirates diplomats. "No information has been given to people and no satisfactory evidence has been shown to them," Sayed Ahmad Silab, a member of the council, said. The incident is being investigated by a commission appointed by the Afghan government; in addition to the task team, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and NATO are also investigating the incident.

**AFGHANISTAN**

[IEC Fails to Agree on Candidate for Secretariat Post](#)

Daily Outlook Afghanistan/ ToloNews | 30<sup>th</sup> January

The Independent Election Commission (IEC) has failed to reach a consensus on who to appoint to lead the IEC secretariat, former IEC chief Fazel Ahmad Manavi said on Sunday. This comes two weeks after the IEC reportedly submitted the names of three candidates for the position to the National Unity Government (NUG). However, all three were reportedly rejected by President Ashraf Ghani and CEO Abdullah Abdullah. Meanwhile, election observers and monitoring groups have accused IEC officials of dealing with the appointment from a political perspective. Afghan Civil Society Election Network (ACSEN) has meanwhile accused the IEC of exploiting the election process for their own political purposes, warning that the weak performance and weak management by the IEC would plunge the next elections in a crisis.

[NUG Criticized for Not Appointing Ministers in Key Portfolios](#)

Daily Outlook Afghanistan/ ToloNews | 29<sup>th</sup> January

A number of MPs and analysts on Saturday raised the issue of key government positions being run by caretakers, including the Ministry of Mines and Petroleum, which according to them is critical in leading the country towards self-reliance. Critics urged the National Unity Government (NUG) to address the issue and end the caretaking trend. "At least nine ministries are run by caretakers, according to the Wolesi Jirga's [Lower House of Parliament] information. And these are among key and important ministries. These are the ministries which can affect the [overall] budget spend process," MP Fawzia Kofi said.

### [Afghanistan-China trade via railway face challenges](#)

Afghanistan Times/ Ariana | 29<sup>th</sup> January

The Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce and industry (ACCI) on Sunday said that minimum production and shortage of market are the main obstacles for the export of Afghan goods to the China, local media reported. Ariana news reported that the Afghan government and its leaders have always insisted on the key role of China in resolving Afghanistan's economic challenges. To overcome the deserts and mountains, trade through railway was inaugurated between the two countries, but only two cargos were pulled in the northern Hairatan of the country. ACCI claims that the government has failed to utilize the opportunity properly. "The poor quality, lack of low productivity and lack of markets for Afghan goods in China are sole reason behind these problems," ACCI spokesman, Sayam Pesarlay said.

## **BANGLADESH**

### [Bangladesh Minister says India may change 'form and design' of Tipaimukh project](#)

bdnews24 | 29<sup>th</sup> January

India may bring changes to the 'basic form and design' of Tipaimukh hydroelectric project following Bangladesh's opposition and concerns over possible damage to the lower riparian. Water Resources Minister Anisul Islam Mahmud told Parliament on Sunday that New Delhi has recently conveyed the message to Dhaka of its willingness to reconsider the 'basic form' of the project. Answering to a question from Nizam Uddin Hazari, MP, the minister said a joint survey was being conducted to assess the effects of the project on Bangladesh.

### [Finance Minister Muhith satisfied with macro economic indicators](#)

The Financial Express | 29<sup>th</sup> January

The finance minister has expressed satisfaction over the current state of Bangladesh's basic macro economic indicators. Abul Maal Abdul Muhith says that he is happy with the macro economic indicators in regard to GDP growth, export-import progress, inflation rate, foreign currency reserve and foreign exchange rate.

### [No meddling in local govt affairs](#)

The Daily Star | 30<sup>th</sup> January

Union parishad chairmen and members yesterday demanded the government take effective measures to keep lawmakers and other politicians from meddling in the affairs of local government institutions. In many cases, lawmakers and chairmen of district councils and upazila parishads irrationally try to influence union parishads' activities. They even try to exercise their power to get development projects awarded to their selected contractors, said UP chairmen and members at a press conference at Dhaka Reporters Unity in the capital.

## **BHUTAN**

### [Lifting of ban on loans drives credit growth](#)

Kuensel Online | 28<sup>th</sup> January

While deposits with the financial institutions experienced a growth of 17 percent, credit expanded by 21 percent, last year. The total credit outstanding with the financial institutions, (banks and non-banking financial institutions, excluding the NPPF) saw a growth of 21.1 percent, to Nu 86.6 billion in 2016 from Nu 71.5 billion in June 2015.

## **MALDIVES**

### [Minister of Fisheries and Agriculture Shainee: Maldivian Supreme Court is regionally exceptional](#)

Sun Online | 29<sup>th</sup> January

Minister of Fisheries and Agriculture, Dr. Mohamed Shainee has voiced out in defense of the Bench of Maldivian

Supreme Court, commenting that it was concurred by many that the Bench was compiled of regionally exceptionally capable and experienced judges. In an interview on Television Maldives' "Rajje Miadhu" show on Saturday night, Minister Shainee said that the country faced a number of critical issues in 2013, but that it was Supreme Court's work in performing its duties and providing solutions which prevented the country from being plunged into a legal vacuum.

#### [Former President Nasheed arrives in Sri Lanka for internal talks of MDP](#)

Sun Online | 30<sup>th</sup> January

Former President Mohamed Nasheed, who acquired political asylum in the UK while on a medical visit while serving a prison sentence, has arrived in Sri Lanka. The arrival of the ex-President, also a former President of MDP, who was sentenced to 13 years in prison, was confirmed to Sun Media by a high ranking official of MDP. But he did not give any details on the visit.

### MYANMAR

#### [China-Myanmar engagement may deepen in Trump era](#)

Mizzima | 30<sup>th</sup> January

How US President Donald Trump will adjust US policies toward major countries has been gripping the headlines lately. For US-Myanmar relations, some observers deem that his strategy for the Southeast Asian country remains uncertain while a few Western scholars urge him to inherit Obama's Myanmar policy. It is noteworthy what policy the Trump administration will formulate toward Myanmar and how Washington-Nay Pyi Taw ties will develop in the future.

### NEPAL

#### [PM Dahal invites Madhesi parties for fresh talks](#)

The Himalayan Times | 29<sup>th</sup> January

Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal has invited the Madhesi parties for fresh talks a day after the latter announced fresh agitation. The meeting has been scheduled for 9 am Monday at Baluwatar, according to Sadbhawana Party's General Secretary Manish Kumar Suman.

#### ['EC gradually losing autonomy'](#)

My Republica | 30<sup>th</sup> January

The Election Commission (EC) is gradually losing its autonomy, with the government curtailing the powers the election body had been enjoying previously in its capacity as a constitutional body. The long-exercised powers of the election body have been curtailed at a time when the election commissioners and experts have been pressing the government to give the EC more autonomy to conduct elections in an independent manner.

#### [PM under pressure with no progress on amendment, polls](#)

My Republica | 30<sup>th</sup> January

While the government's attempts to address the demands of the agitating Madhes-based parties through a statute amendment make no headway, Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal is under pressure both from the ruling coalition partners and from within his own party.

### PAKISTAN

#### [Palestinian president arrives in Islamabad today](#)

Express Tribune | 30<sup>th</sup> January

President of the State of Palestine Mahmoud Abbas is arriving here today (Monday) on a two-day official visit to hold wide-ranging talks with Pakistan's top leadership, the Foreign Office announced on Sunday. The statement said this would be President Abbas's third visit to Pakistan as he previously traveled to Islamabad in 2005 and 2013. On his current tour, he would be accompanied by a 17-member delegation including 5 ministers, the statement added.

#### [Employees oppose proposal to lease out PSM for 30 years](#)

Dawn | 30<sup>th</sup> January

The employees of Pakistan Steel Mills (PSM) have opposed a government proposal to lease out the country's largest

industrial unit for 30 years and urged that those who brought this national asset to its knees be held accountable. In a letter sent to the ministries of finance, privatisation and industries, the PSM Workers Union (CBA) also questioned a suggestion for the imposition of regulatory and anti-dumping duties or a ban on steel imports for the future private operator, wondering why such protections were never granted to the PSM while it was in public hands, despite repeated requests.

#### [Trump administration might extend visa suspension to Pakistan](#)

Dawn|30<sup>th</sup> January

An official with the Trump administration has hinted that the recent suspension imposed on travel from seven Muslim countries might be extended to other countries, including Pakistan. White House chief of staff Reince Priebus, while talking on CBS News, clarified that this is "not a Muslim ban". "You can point to other countries that have similar problems like Pakistan and others - perhaps we need to take it further," said Priebus. "But for now, immediate steps, pulling the Band-Aid off, is to do further vetting for people traveling in and out of those countries," added the White House chief of staff.

#### [Unesco agrees to add eight more Pakistani sites to world heritage list](#)

Dawn|30<sup>th</sup> January

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (Unesco) has accepted a proposal to include eight more Pakistani sites of cultural and natural significance to its list of World Heritage Sites. The Derawar Fort in Cholistan, Hingol Cultural Landscape in Balochistan, Nagarparkar Cultural Landscape in Sindh, Central Karakoram National Park and Deosai National Park in Gilgit-Baltistan, Ziarat Juniper Forest and Karez System Cultural Landscape in Balochistan and the Khewra Salt Range in Punjab have been named in a tentative list prepared by the Department of Archaeology and Museums (DOAM) and accepted by Unesco as properties of universal value.

### SRI LANKA

#### [Mauritania wants to elevate relations with Sri Lanka](#)

Colombo Gazette| 27<sup>th</sup> January

The High Commissioner of Sri Lanka in Nigeria Thambirajah Raveenthiran, concurrently accredited as Ambassador of Sri Lanka to Mauritania as well, presented his Credentials to Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz, the President of Mauritania at a ceremony held at the Presidential Palace at Nouakchott in Mauritania.

#### [China says never asked Sri Lanka to allow only Chinese companies in Hambantota Industrial Zone](#)

Colombo Page| 27<sup>th</sup> January

China has never asked Sri Lanka to allow only Chinese enterprises to operate inside the Hambantota Industrial Zone, China's Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Hua Chunying said.

#### [Oil leaks from Kolonnawa distribution line at port](#)

Colombo Gazette| 28<sup>th</sup> January

Oil leaked from the Kolonnawa distribution line at the Colombo port today. The oil is transferred from the port via the distribution line to the Kolonnawa oil storage facility.

#### [Any act to sabotage the economy will be defeated - Sri Lanka PM](#)

Colombo Page| 29<sup>th</sup> January

Sri Lanka's Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe says the unity government will not allow any acts to sabotage the economy and strikes, protests and any other such threats conducted by the opponents to derail the economy will be defeated.

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#### ***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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