

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

**January 31, 2018 | Volume: 4 - 11/01**

[Pakistan ready to extend rail link agreement with India](#)

Dawn | 31st January

Despite tense ties with New Delhi due to frequent ceasefire violations on the Line of Control and Working Boundary, Pakistan gave its consent for a three-year extension to an agreement with India on Munabao-Khokhrapar rail link. "The government of Pakistan has agreed to extend the agreement of the rail link between Munabao (India) and Khokhrapar (Pakistan) for another three years," a Foreign Office statement said. The extension will take effect from Feb 1, 2018. The rail link facilitates people-to-people contact that Pakistan believes is essential for improving relations between the two countries, the FO said.

[NATO reaffirms support to Afghanistan in wake of recent violence](#)

Khaama Press | 30th January

The NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg has reaffirmed support to Afghanistan and the Afghan national defense and security forces in the wake of the recent violence. "The Afghan security forces are demonstrating bravery and resilience, keeping up the pressure against insurgents across the country. NATO is firmly committed to supporting them as they develop their skills and capabilities, and we are increasing the size of our Resolute Support training mission," Stoltenberg said in a statement. He said "At the same time, it is essential to redouble efforts to achieve peace and reconciliation, through a process led and owned by Afghans. A stable Afghanistan benefits us all, so we encourage all regional actors to play a constructive role."

[Sushma Swaraj coming to reset ties, feel pulse: Experts](#)

MyRepublica | 31st January

As Indian External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj prepares to arrive in Kathmandu on Thursday as the emissary of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, there is a cautious optimism in Nepal that the bilateral relations between the two countries would move smoothly even as the leftist parties are poised to form a new government. Foreign affairs experts and political leaders see the visit of Swaraj at India's own initiative as a part of New Delhi's policy to engage the new government, most likely to be led by CPN-UML Chairman K P Sharma Oli - someone New Delhi has not had good terms in the recent past - as an attempt to give a message that New Delhi is ready to work with the government of any party configuration in Nepal.

**AFGHANISTAN**

[Indonesian President vows peace support in landmark visit to Kabul](#)

Kabul Times | 30th January

Indonesian President Joko Widodo arrived in Kabul on a formal visit on Monday, 29th January. The snow-covered Kabul gave a warm welcome to the president who was welcomed by Second Vice President Mohammad Sarwar Danesh, Foreign Minister Salahudin Rabbani and Finance Minister Eklil Hakimi among others at Hamid Karzai International Airport. Later, President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani welcomed his Indonesian counterpart at the presidential palace. Flags of the two countries had already been erected on major roads of Kabul City. President Widodo visited Kabul after he met with Pakistani officials in Islamabad, where he told Pakistan's

President Mamnoon Hussain that his country could play a role in the Afghan peace process. Meanwhile he also suggested the formation of a committee of religious scholars from Indonesia, Pakistan and Afghanistan to promote peace and reconciliation in Afghanistan.

#### [Large cache of weapons, explosives belonging to ISIS seized in Kabul](#)

Khaama Press | 30th January

A large cache of weapons and explosives belonging to the ISIS terrorist group was discovered and seized by the Afghan forces in Kabul. The Afghan Intelligence, National Directorate of Security (NDS), said the cache was seized from during an operation from the vicinity of the 5th police district of the city. According to NDS, several weapons and large quantities of explosives from seized from the cache as the militants were using them for their attacks in the city. This comes as a group of at least five insurgents apparently belonging to the ISIS terrorist group launched a coordinated attack on a base of the 111th division of the Afghan army in the early hours of 29th morning.

### **BANGLADESH**

#### [PM Hasina launches election campaign on Sylhet visit](#)

Dhaka Tribune | 31st January

The ruling Awami League formally began its campaign for the general election slated for December this year through party chief Sheikh Hasina's visit to Sylhet. Addressing a public rally on the Government Alia Madrasha ground later in the day, Awami League president Hasina called upon the people to vote for her party's "Boat" electoral symbol to keep up the pace of development across the country. She also inaugurated and laid the foundation stones of 35 development projects, which Awami League leaders see as "gifts" from the prime minister for the district's people ahead of the polls.

#### [Bangladesh 7th nation to send technical interns to Japan](#)

The Financial Express | 30th January

Bangladesh is set to become the seventh country to send technical interns to Japan. To this effect, Dhaka and Tokyo inked a Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC), said a media release by Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment. The MoC will enhance the opportunity for technical interns to acquire Japanese skills and knowledge said Nomita Halder, Visiting Secretary in Charge to the ministry. After completing internship they will get jobs in Japan for three to five years in different sectors. They also can contribute to the development of the country to use their technical knowledge at home, she said.

### **BHUTAN**

#### [HM grants land kidu to 9,628 beneficiaries in Samtse](#)

Kuensel | 30th January

His Majesty The King yesterday granted land kidu to 9,628 beneficiaries of Samtse dzongkhag. A total of 1,261.027 acres of land was granted as kidu to the people of the 15 gewogs. Samtse is the 17th dzongkhag where land kidu has been granted as part of the nationwide land reform following the National Cadastral Resurvey Programme carried out by the National Land Commission. To date, His Majesty has granted 133,287.765 acres of land as kidu to 123,265 beneficiaries nationwide. His Majesty personally resolved these land issues, by granting land kidu.

### **MALDIVES**

#### [Opposition asked to complete admin procedures for President's impeachment](#)

Sun Online | 30th January

Supreme Court has informed the case form filed with the court for impeachment of President Abdulla Yameen Abdul Gayoom is incomplete, and has asked for the necessary administrative procedures to be completed, says the opposition coalition. The impeachment motion was filed by former Maldivian President Mohamed Nasheed, former Maldivian President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom, leader of Jumhoory Party Qasim Ibrahim and leader of Adhaalath Party Imran Abdulla. A leading member of the team of attorney's representing the opposition leaders denied rumors the request for the impeachment has been rejected by the Supreme Court. "The Supreme Court instructed this morning to complete some administrative procedures and re-submit it," said the attorney.

## MYANMAR

### [Mandalay Myotha Industrial Park attracts USD 500 million investment](#)

Mizzima | 31st January

The Mandalay Myotha Industrial Park project in Myanmar's central Mandalay region has attracted 500 million U.S. dollars of local and foreign investment as of mid this month, Xinhua reported quoting state media. The project is jointly implemented by the Mandalay government and Mandalay Myotha Industrial Development (MMID) Public Company, aiming to construct more than 100 plants on a 1000-plus-acre compound within three years. At present, five factories including animal feed plants, a saw-mill, a concrete plant and a snow cookie plant with investments from Indonesia, Denmark, Thailand, China and China's Hong Kong are operational.

### [US imposes sanctions on Laos casino with alleged links to UWSA](#)

Mizzima | 31st January

The US Treasury Tuesday placed the notorious Kings Romans Casino in the Golden Triangle region of Laos on its organized crime sanctions blacklist, calling it a hub of trafficking in humans, drugs and protected animals. The Treasury said the Chinese casino owner Zhao Wei heads a formidable "transnational criminal organization" operating from the gaming resort in the Golden Triangle Special Economic Zone on the Mekong River near Ton Pheung, Laos, close to where Myanmar, Thailand and Laos meet. "The Zhao Wei crime network engages in an array of horrendous illicit activities, including human trafficking and child prostitution, drug trafficking, and wildlife trafficking," said Sigal Mandelker, Treasury Under Secretary for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence, in a statement.

## NEPAL

### [Nepali, Indian security officials agree to curb cross-border crime](#)

The Himalayan Times | 31st January

The security authorities of Nepal and India have agreed to prevent cross-border crimes that take place along the Nepal-India border in Darchula district. The officials of both countries reached the agreement at a joint security meeting held at Jauljibi, India on Tuesday. The Indian Seema Suraksha Bal (SSB)'s 55th Battalion organised the joint meeting.

## PAKISTAN

### [UAE takes Pakistan to WTO over anti-dumping duty](#)

The Herald Pakistan | 31st January

The United Arab Emirates has launched a trade complaint at the World Trade Organisation to challenge Pakistan's duties on biaxially oriented polypropylene (BOPP) film, used in food packaging, a WTO filing showed. The UAE said the anti-dumping duties, imposed on UAE, China, Oman and Saudi Arabia, from April 2015 and extended in December 2016, broke WTO rules. Pakistan has 60 days to settle the dispute, after which the UAE could ask the WTO to adjudicate.

### [Pakistan hands over 27 Taliban, Haqqani network suspects to Kabul](#)

The Express Tribune | 30th January

Pakistan has handed over more than two dozen suspects belonging to the Taliban and their affiliated Haqqani network to Afghanistan, the Foreign Office. The unprecedented move appears to be aimed at dispelling the oft-repeated allegations that Islamabad is supporting violent insurgency in Afghanistan. Following the string of terrorist attacks over the last few days in Kabul, Islamabad has been again accused by senior Afghan officials for providing shelter to the Afghan Taliban and Haqqani network.

## SRI LANKA

### [Australia grants Sri Lanka Rs.3.8 billion in assistance to strengthen good governance for growth](#)

Colombo Page | 30th January

The Governments of Sri Lanka and Australia Tuesday signed a regulatory agreement for AUD 31 million (Rs. 3.85 billion) grant assistance for a four-year program to strengthen good governance for growth in Sri Lanka. Secretary to the Ministry of Finance and Mass Media Dr. R H. S. Samararatunga and Australian High Commissioner for Sri

Lanka Mr. Bryce Hutchesson signed the agreement on the 30th of January 2018 at the Ministry of Finance and Mass Media.

[President reviews progress on development projects carried out with the assistance of Tri Forces](#)

Colombo Page| 30th January

A Progress Review Meeting was held under the patronage of President Maithripala Sirisena at the Presidential Secretariat to evaluate the progress of the development projects carried out with the help of the members of the Tri Forces and the Civil Security Department. During the meeting, the President appreciated the efficient assistance given by the members of the Tri Forces and the Civil Security Department, when implementing development projects, paving the way to save a huge amount of public funds.

\*\*\*\*\*

***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.*

To know more, Please log on to [www.anantaaspencentre.in](http://www.anantaaspencentre.in)