

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

March 31st, 2017 | Volume: 3 - 9/3

[Pakistan sends 10,000 MT of rice for drought affected people of Sri Lanka](#)

Colombo Page | 30th March
Pakistan has initiated the procedure for shipment of 10,000 metric tons rice to Sri Lanka in the wake of severe drought in the island nation. Pakistan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in a statement that in line with a directive of Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif to provide all necessary assistance to the Government and people of Sri Lanka, in the wake of severe drought in that country, the procedure for dispatch of 10,000 MT rice to Sri Lanka through containerized shipments, has been initiated.

[Nepali gas bullets stranded in India](#)

My Republica | 30th March
Despite being two and a half months since they entered India, LPG gas bullets belonging to Nepali gas entrepreneurs are still empty waiting for their turn to be filled with gas since Explosive Department(ED) of India is delaying the process of verifying the explosive safety of bullets. Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) Refinery loads gas into gas bullets only after the verification of their explosive safety.

[Over 70 rockets fired on Kunar from Pakistan in past 24 hours](#)

Khaama Press | 30th March
The restive eastern Kunar province of Afghanistan once again witnessed artillery shelling from the other side of the Durand Line as dozens of shells landed in its two districts in the past twenty four hours. According to the local officials, the artillery shelling took place on Sarkano and Khas Kunar districts. Provincial police spokesman Faridullah Dehqan confirmed that more than 70 artillery shells landed in the vicinity of the two districts. He said no human loss or collateral damage was reported as a result of the shelling.

AFGHANISTAN

[27 ISIS militants killed in Afghan commandos operations and airstrikes](#)

Khaama Press | 30th March

At least twenty seven militants affiliated with the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) terrorist group were killed during the operations of the Afghan Special Forces (Commandos) and airstrikes in eastern Nangarhar province of Afghanistan. The 201st Silab Corps of the Afghan National Army in Eastern Afghanistan said the operations and airstrikes were conducted in the vicinity of Kot district. The district was once one of the main strongholds of the loyalists of the terror group from where they launched their operations in Afghanistan.

[Russia Urges Direct Peace Talks with Taliban](#)

Outlook Afghanistan/ Tolonews | 30th March

Russian President Vladimir Putin has expressed deep concerns over the continuing deterioration in security in

Afghanistan, suggesting that the Afghan government and the Taliban must engage in direct peace talks to end the ongoing turmoil. In a meeting with his Iranian counterpart Hassan Rouhani on Tuesday, Putin said that Moscow warmly welcomes Iran's involvement in promoting direct peace and reconciliation talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban insurgents.

[China's Belt and Road Initiative Key to Boosting Afghan Economy: Official](#)

Outlook Afghanistan/ Xinhua | 30th March

China's Belt and Road Initiative can play an important role in boosting economy of Afghanistan and the countries at the region at large, Deputy Foreign Minister Hekmat Khalil Karzai said on Wednesday. "The Belt and Road Initiative is a very important project on the record in Afghanistan," Karzai told a seminar held in the Afghan Foreign Ministry. "Giving its location as a natural land, which is connecting Central Asia to South Asia and China to Middle East, Afghanistan has a good position to contribute significantly to this initiative, including realization of transport corridors between China, Central Asia, Middle East and Europe," he said.

[Kabul Calls for Regional Economic Cooperation](#)

Outlook Afghanistan/ Pajhwok | 30th March

Economic cooperation needs to be put ahead of geopolitical rivalries in the South Asian region, an Afghan foreign ministry official said on Wednesday. Addressing the 10th South Asia Conference "Strengthening Connectivity in South Asia" in New Delhi, the director-general of policy and strategy at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said, Ashraf Haidari said his country had seen an improvement in hard and soft connectivity and, despite having meagre resources, had taken much of the security responsibility from NATO forces.

BANGLADESH

[Western Marine hands over largest 'Made-in-Bangladesh' ship](#)

The Financial Express | 30th March

Western Marine Shipyard (WMS) Limited has successfully built and handed over the country's largest ship - MV JSW Pratapgad, the first of its ten 8,000 dead weight ton (DWT) capacity mini bulk carriers, to its Indian buyer. According to the company officials, this is the largest vessel built so far in Bangladesh - thereby recording a milestone in the country's emerging shipbuilding industry.

[Higher allocation for marginal people assured](#)

Prothom Alo | 31st March

Already deprived and downtrodden, the country's marginal people including dalits, cannot access the government-provided benefits due to influence of others, participants told a Prothom Alo roundtable on Thursday. They called for changing mindset through proper education and framing law against discrimination to address the social ills that affect the underprivileged people. Addressing the roundtable, state minister for finance and planning Abdul Mannan admitted that despite having projects and programmes for the marginalised community people, there is weakness in monitoring in implementation.

[RAB intelligence chief Azad dies](#)

Prothom Alo | 31st March

Lieutenant Colonel Abul Kalam Azad, the chief of the intelligence wing of Rapid Action Battalion (RAB), who was injured during an operation against militants in Sylhet, died at the Combined Military Hospital (CMH), Dhaka early Friday. Azad, who was taken to Singapore for better treatment after his injuries in bomb blasts during the operation, codenamed 'Twilight', on March 25, breathed his last at the CMH around 5 am, reports UNB quoting RAB officials.

BHUTAN

[Double harvest to boost rice production](#)

Kuensel Online | 30th March

After the success of rice double harvest in Rinchengang village in Wangdue, the dzongkhag is now expanding the

strategy in other gewogs to boost rice production. Last week, six households of Hebasa and Mephuna villages in Gase-Tshogwom gewog carried out paddy plantation on an acre of paddy fields as part of a rice double harvest trial in the gewog. The gewog agriculture extension officer, Chimmi, said the dzongkhag agriculture sector took the initiative for the rice double harvest by providing seeds and other support from the Agriculture Research Development Centre in Bajo and the dzongkhag.

MALDIVES

[Government invites opposition for all-party talks](#)

Sun Online | 30th March

Maldivian government has invited the opposition for open dialogue with the government.

The invitation was issued by representative of Maldivian government for all-party talks, Minister of Fisheries and Agriculture, Dr. Mohamed Shainee, during a press conference held at President's Office this Thursday afternoon.

[Japan donates MVR 34.1 mn to Maldives Police Service](#)

Sun Online | 30th March

The Japanese government has provided a grant of MVR 34.1 million to aid in increasing efficiency of Maldives Police Service. The agreement for the assistance was signed in a function held at Ministry of Foreign Affairs this Thursday by Minister of Foreign Affairs of Maldives, Dr. Mohamed Asim and Japanese Ambassador to Maldives, Kazumi Endo. Japanese embassy reports the assistance is to strengthen and increase efficiency of Maldives Police Service.

MYANMAR

[88 law-breaking Myanmar fishermen repatriated from India](#)

Mizzima | 31st March

A total of 88 Myanmar fishermen, who were detained in India for violating the country's law, have been brought back home through diplomatic channel, Myanmar News Agency reported Thursday. The fishermen, who were put into custody at the Open Distress Camp in India, arrived back at the Yangon International Airport Wednesday evening from Port Blair by chartered flight after verification as Myanmar citizens.

NEPAL

[Prez confers honorary general rank on chief of Indian Army](#)

Kathmandu Post | 30th March

President Bidya Devi Bhandari, who is the supreme commander of the Nepal Army, conferred the rank of honorary chief of the NA on Indian Chief of Army Staff General Bipin Rawat amid a special function held at the Office of the President at Sheetal Niwas on Wednesday. It has been a customary practice between armies of the two neighbours to confer the title to each other's army chiefs since 1950 as a symbol of good military ties.

PAKISTAN

[Pakistan asks India to hand over Jinnah House](#)

Express Tribune | 31st March 2017

Pakistan has asked India to hand over the historic residence of Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah in Mumbai after a lawmaker of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) called for demolition of the iconic building.

Addressing the Indian Legislative Assembly on budgetary demands, MLA Mangal Prabhat Lodha last Monday said, "The Jinnah residence in south Mumbai was the place from where the conspiracy of the Partition was hatched." "The Jinnah House is a symbol of the Partition. The structure should be demolished," he added.

According to Lodha, India's Public Works Department (PWD) pays hundreds and thousands of rupees for the property's upkeep and maintenance.

[Oil prices likely to rise up to Rs13 per litre](#)

Express Tribune | 31st March 2017

Oil prices are likely to rise up to Rs13 per litre from April 1 this year following fluctuations in global crude prices. The Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (Ogra) on Thursday recommended to the federal government to increase prices of petroleum products at the beginning of next month. Final approval will be given on Friday. Sources said Ogra had proposed an increase of Rs2.28 per litre for petrol (motor spirit), Rs2.04 for high-speed diesel (HSD), Rs13 for kerosene oil (superior) and Rs7.75 for light diesel oil (LDO). A summary in this regard has been sent to the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Resources.

[‘PTA be allowed to block all objectionable websites’](#)

Express Tribune | 31st March 2017

The ministry of religious affairs asked security agencies concerned on Thursday to allow Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) to block all websites containing blasphemous, anti-state and/or objectionable content as soon as possible. The request was forwarded during an inter-ministerial meeting here. An official, who attended the meeting, said that the meeting was attended by officials of ministries of interior, information technology as well as the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA).

[Joining military alliance won't hit Pakistan's neutrality: FO](#)

Dawn | 31st March 2017

The Foreign Office believes that Pakistan's participation in the Saudi-led 39-nation military alliance will not compromise its long-standing policy of neutrality in Middle Eastern affairs as the alliance is being built to fight terrorism. "You are talking about two different things. The basic purpose of this force is (to) counter terrorism," FO spokesman Nafees Zakaria said at his weekly briefing when asked if Islamabad had given up the policy of neutrality in the Middle East by joining the alliance. However, he noted that the "terms of reference" guiding activities of the alliance were yet to be finalised.

[Boycott of IPU assembly in Bangladesh announced](#)

Dawn | 31st March 2017

Pakistan has decided to boycott the forthcoming session of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) beginning in Bangladesh from Saturday due to uneasy and tense relationship between the two neighbouring South Asian countries. "It is with regret and disappointment that the Parliament of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan has decided not to participate in the 136th IPU Assembly, which is due to begin from April 1 in Dhaka (Bangladesh)," declared National Assembly Speaker Ayaz Sadiq through an official announcement here on Thursday.

[Chinese firm awarded Rs55bn power project at Gwadar](#)

Dawn | 31st March 2017

The Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the Cabinet on Thursday allowed award of Rs55 billion worth of 300-megawatt coal power project at Gwadar to a Chinese firm without bidding. Presided over by Finance Minister Ishaq Dar, the single-point meeting of the ECC was specifically convened to authorise the Private Power and Infrastructure Board to proceed with the award of the project to China Communication Construction Company (CCCC) at Gwadar.

[SCBA comes out against military courts](#)

Dawn | 31st March 2017

The Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) on Thursday joined the muted chorus of voices opposing the government's reactivation of military courts, when its president Rasheed A. Rizvi noted: "Military justice is justice denied and military courts have never been, nor will be, the answer to terrorism."

SRI LANKA

[Sri Lanka inks USD 17 million loan agreement with Kuwait for Kalu Ganga project](#)

Colombo Page | 30th March

Sri Lanka Thursday entered into a USD 17 million (KD 5.5 million) loan agreement with the Kuwait Fund for Arab

Economic Development (KFAED) for financing of Kalu Ganga Development Project, the KFAED said in a statement.

[Indian Navy chief hints at helping Sri Lanka fight LTTE](#)

Colombo Gazette| 30th March

Hinting that the Indian Navy aided Sri Lanka in its fight against LTTE, chief of naval staff Sunil Lanba on Wednesday said the TU 142 M long-range maritime patrol aircraft exhibited its supremacy in the airspace around Sri Lanka when the island nation was fighting the Tamil tigers, the Times of India reported.

[India could collaborate in the development of three other ports in Sri Lanka - Ports Minister](#)

Colombo Page| 30th March

While China is firmly engaged in the development of Hambantota Port in Southern Sri Lanka, India could collaborate in the development of three other major ports in the island nation, a Sri Lankan Minister has 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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