

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

**April 4th, 2017 | Volume: 3 - 1/4**

[Long Way ahead to Achieve Goal: CEO](#)

Outlook Afghanistan/ Tolonews|3<sup>rd</sup> April  
China's Belt and Road Initiative can play an important role in boosting economy of Afghanistan and Addressing the first Women Economic Forum on Sunday, CEO Abdullah Abdullah said that Afghanistan still has a long way to achieve its goal regarding economic empowerment of women in the country. "Today's experience shows that in countries where women have suffered, including those in business, both the country and the nation suffered," said Abdullah. Abdullah had been speaking at the opening of a three-day conference, organized by the International Center For Afghan Women's Economic Development, at the American University of Afghanistan (AUA). Since its establishment in 2013, hundreds of women have graduated with business degrees from the university.

[Defence pact among 30 deals likely during Hasina's India visit](#)

UNB / Prothom Alo | 2nd April  
Bangladesh and India have taken necessary preparations to sign "more or less 30 deals and MoUs" during prime minister Sheikh Hasina's visit. Sheikh Hasina will embark on her four-day crucial visit on 7 April as it is being seen as extremely important one by both sides. A five-year memorandum of understanding (MoU) on defence cooperation and four other related documents are there on the list which are ready for signing between the two countries, diplomatic sources said.

[Pakistan, Russia, China inch closer to formal alliance](#)

Express Tribune | 3<sup>rd</sup> April  
For well over two decades, Islamabad and Moscow competed against each other to pursue their interests. But that is history now. The two are all set to become part of a possible alliance in a dramatic turnaround in their otherwise frosty relationship for decades. What has compelled Pakistan and Russia to join hands is apprehensions that the United States may not be interested in bringing stability to Afghanistan for its own strategic interests. These fears have now opened up the possibility of an alliance between Pakistan, Russia and China in an unprecedented development that will shape the future of this volatile region.

**AFGHANISTAN**

[Afghanistan reacts at Russia's stance on Taliban demands for foreign troops exit](#)

Khaama Press | 2<sup>nd</sup> April

The Afghan government reacted at Moscow's stance regarding the Taliban demands for the full withdrawal of the foreign forces from the country. Presidential spokesman Shah Hussain Murtazawi told reporters that no one has the right to dictate terms or issue instructions regarding the presence of the foreign forces in the country. He said the issue relates to the Afghan nation and the Afghan government to decide regarding the presence of the foreign forces or the forces belonging to the international allies of Afghanistan. This comes as the Russian special envoy for Afghanistan Zamir Kabulov earlier endorsed Taliban militants group's call for the withdrawal of all foreign forces from Afghanistan.

### [45 insurgents killed in military raids](#)

Afghanistan Times | 2<sup>nd</sup> April

At least 45 Taliban militants were killed and 14 others were wounded in different operations launched by military within past 24 hours. In a press release issued here, Ministry of Defense, (MoD) said that Afghan National Army (ANA) with the cooperation of the Afghan National Police (ANP) and National Directorate of Security (NDS) conducted joint operations against insurgents in different areas of in Kapisa, Nangarhar, Paktika, Ghazni, Kandahar, Uruzgan, Farah, Zabul, Faryab, Kunduz and Helmand provinces. Statement said that in these operations, 45 insurgents including three Taliban commanders and four Daesh commanders were killed and 14 others were injured.

### [HIA prisoner's release to start next week as govt waits for Hekmatyar's return](#)

Khaama Press | 2<sup>nd</sup> April

Some of the prisoners of Hezb-e-Islami will be released next week as the Afghan government is waiting for the return of the party's leader Gulbuddin Hekmatyar. Shah Hussain Murtazawi, a spokesman to President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani, told reporters that the peace deal with Hezb-e-Islami is being implemented. President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani chaired the National Security Council meeting late in February and instructed the relevant authorities to take immediate steps in implementation of the peace deal with Hezb-e-Islami. It was also concluded that all provisions of the agreement, specifically the release of the prisoners must be implemented.

### [Muslimyar to NATO: Prevent Russia's Interference](#)

Outlook Afghanistan/ Pajhwok | 3<sup>rd</sup> April

Meshrano Jirga chairman Fazl Hadi Muslimyar on Sunday asked the United States and NATO to prevent Russia from interfering in Afghanistan. The Senate chairman told today's session: "Russia is overtly interfering in Afghanistan's affairs, our strategic friends such as the US and NATO should not remain silent on this," asked the western military alliance clear their position on Russian meddling. Muslimyar also asked the Afghan government to resolve the issue through diplomatic channels, saying Russia and a number of other neighboring countries supported Taliban militants to achieve their own interests.

## **BANGLADESH**

### [Two dozen deals likely to bolster Bangladesh -Russia ties](#)

The Indian Express | 3<sup>rd</sup> April

Dhaka moves fast to strike two dozen deals with Moscow to bolster the bilateral ties, officials said, in a latest development on the diplomatic front. The ministry of foreign affairs (MoFA) in a recent meeting asked the ministries and departments concerned to finalise drafts of the agreements forthwith, they added. And some of those pacts are likely to be inked during Bangladesh foreign minister's trip to Russia this month (April) and top-level visit to Dhaka from the other direction.

### [PM Hasina cautions about arms trade at cost of Muslim blood](#)

BSS/ Prothom Alo | 3<sup>rd</sup> April

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has urged Muslims to remain careful about the end results of militancy saying it benefits some quarters weapon business at the cost of Muslim blood. Talking to UAE's visiting parliamentary speaker Dr Amal Al Qubaisi, she said some derailed people got themselves engaged in acts of terrorism and thus defaming Islam. "The vested quarters are doing business of arms and taking benefits with the blood of Muslims," premier's press secretary Ihsanul Karim quoted her as saying during the call on at her Ganobhaban residence here yesterday evening.

### [Nobel laureate Kailash Satyarthi's campaign launched in Bangladesh](#)

bdnew24 | 2<sup>nd</sup> April

A campaign by Nobel laureate Kailash Satyarthi has been launched to support six million disadvantaged children in Bangladesh. The journey began at a youth rally organised at Dhaka's St Joseph School in coordination with Ganasakkharata Ovijan, also known as Campaign for Popular Education or CAMPE, on Sunday. Satyarthi, the Indian child rights and education activist who won the 2014 Nobel peace prize with Pakistan's Malala Yousafzai, was visiting Dhaka as a keynote speaker to the IPU assembly.

## **BHUTAN**

### [Leaking irrigation channels worry Sergithang farmers](#)

Kuenselonline | 1<sup>st</sup> April

As the season for paddy plantation approaches, the people of Sergithang begin to worry. That is because while they have a huge area of fertile paddy fields, getting enough irrigation water is a major problem. Among the five chiwogs, Sergithang mae and Tashithang face the worst problems. This issue was raised during agriculture minister Yeshey Dorji's recent visit to Tsirang. Tashithang, the largest chiwog in terms of households with 84, draws irrigation water from two sources of Tshedachu and Larichu. Water from the Tshedachu is brought through a 2km irrigation channel to irrigate over 100 acres of fields belonging to 30 households.

## **MALDIVES**

### [11th conference of SAARC University Grants Commission begins](#)

Sun Online | 2<sup>nd</sup> April

The 11th high-level conference of the University Grants Commission of SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Corporation) and other relevant institutions has begun in Bandos Maldives. The conference was inaugurated at Bandos Maldives this Sunday morning by Minister of Education of Maldives, Dr. Aishath Shiham. At the inauguration, Dr. Aishath Shiham spoke of the ongoing work by Maldives and other SAARC countries to improve the quality of education.

### [MP Saud joins the opposition](#)

Sun Online | 2<sup>nd</sup> April

MP for the Vilingili constituency. Saud Hussain decided to join the former President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom saying that he supports the reform project started by the opposition. Talking on Raajje TV's 60 Minute program, MP Saud said that he has decided to join the efforts of President Maumoon and stand firm in the cause. He said that he would continue to do everything to promote President Maumoon and the Progressive Party of Maldives (PPM).

## **MYANMAR**

### [NLD Wins Nearly Half of By-Election Seats Amid Low Voter Turnout](#)

The Irrawaddy | 2<sup>nd</sup> April

The ruling National League for Democracy (NLD) won nine out of 19 available seats in union and regional parliaments in Saturday's by-elections although less than 40 percent of the two million eligible voters cast their ballots, according to initial data from the Union Election Commission (UEC). A total of 24 political parties contested seats in five states and three divisions—Rangoon, Bago and Sagaing divisions, and Arakan, Shan, Chin, Karenni, and Mon states. The country's main opposition party the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) fielded candidates for all seats—winning two—and the ruling NLD contested 18.

## **NEPAL**

### [Security Council secretariat must advise govt: PM Dahal](#)

The Kathmandu Post | 2<sup>nd</sup> April

Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal has directed the national Security Council secretariat to monitor whether the national security policy, 2073 has been independently and impartially implemented. Speaking at a programme organised to mark the 16th anniversary of the Secretariat here on Sunday, Dahal said the secretariat should be able to provide suggestions and advice to the national security council and the Government of Nepal following study, research and analysis of the overall current situation.

### [New budget ensures Argo's independency: Minister Chaudhary](#)

RSS / My Republica | 1<sup>st</sup> April

Minister for Agriculture Gauri Shankar Chaudhary said that the government was preparing to bring a new budget ensuring the agro sector's independency. While inaugurating a two-day Agro expo organized by the District Agro

Cooperatives Association here today, Minister Chaudhary shared that the government was working to uplift and strengthen the agro sector.

#### [Executive director of state-run hydel indicted for graft](#)

Himalayan News Service / The Himalayan Times | 3<sup>rd</sup> April

The Commission for the Investigation of Abuse of Authority today filed a charge sheet at the Special Court indicting Executive Director of the Nalsing Gad Hydropower Development Committee and five other officials. The anti-graft constitutional body said the accused were involved in embezzlement of Rs 272.45 million in selecting a company as a consultant for feasibility study of the project.

### **PAKISTAN**

#### [South Asia the next export centre – what can Pakistan learn?](#)

Express Tribune | 3<sup>rd</sup> April

Consider the following fact: 1 million young people enter the workforce each month in the region. This is the extent of the demographic dividend which South Asia can reap. As the workforce ages in China and other East Asian countries, many eyes turn towards South Asia. Can the region use the potential of this labour force to become the next manufacturing hotbed and export powerhouse? This has been discussed in a recent publication by the World Bank, “South Asia’s Turn: Policies to Boost Competitiveness and Create the Next Export Powerhouse”. The report states that to realise the potential of this region, countries should increase regional integration, take advantage of agglomeration economies and improve business environment.

#### [Afghan parliamentarian backs Durand Line as border](#)

Express Tribune | 2<sup>nd</sup> April

An Afghan parliamentarian has urged his government to set aside its differences with Pakistan and accept Durand Line as its border as it is already an ‘internationally accepted border’. Abdul Latif Pedram, a lawmaker and head of the Hezb-e-Kongara Milli Afghanistan (National Congress Party of Afghanistan), was speaking to newsmen in Kabul on Sunday following recent statements by some Afghan leaders, including Hamid Karzai, that Kabul will not accept Durand Line as its official border.

#### [Railways adds first batch of modern freight locomotives to its fleet](#)

Dawn | 3<sup>rd</sup> April

The freight service of Pakistan Railways (PR) has received a boost with the addition of the first batch of ‘heavyweight’ locomotives to its fleet. Equipped with the latest technology, these fully computerised locomotives of 4,000 horsepower (HP) each can haul up to 3,400 tonnes of load, use less fuel and are environment-friendly. An agreement to procure 55 diesel-electric locomotives had been signed between PR and GE Transportation Diesel Locomotives in Lahore on June 20, 2015. The first batch of seven locomotives had reached Karachi port in the last week of January this year, put to trial run and inducted into the PR fleet on Sunday.

#### [IDB has no fresh strategy for projects in Pakistan](#)

Dawn | 3<sup>rd</sup> April

Funding from the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) for development projects in Pakistan under the country partnership strategy has almost come to a halt because the bank currently has no such programme for the country in place. The previous partnership strategy covering a four-year period ended in 2015, and the Jeddah-based Islamic bank has not yet finalised a fresh strategy, according to official sources. After completion of the 2012-15 partnership strategy, the government had requested the IDB to undertake the repeater strategy in line with the country’s five-year development plan and ‘Vision 2025’.

### **SRI LANKA**

#### [Ties with China not at India's expense: Sri Lanka PM Ranil Wickremesinghe](#)

Colombo Page | 2<sup>nd</sup> April

Sri Lanka's Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe has said that the island nation's friendship with China is not at the expense of India and its neighbor should not get too worried. The Sri Lankan Premier has said that Sri Lanka

has good defense and economic ties with New Delhi and this has been one of the good periods in relations with India.

#### [Sri Lanka Navy arrests six Indian nationals with over 13 kg of heroin in Sri Lankan waters](#)

Colombo Page| 2<sup>nd</sup> April

The Sri Lanka Navy early today has arrested six Indian nationals in a fishing dhow with over 13 kilograms of drugs, suspected to be heroin, in Sri Lankan waters off Kankasanthurai in the north.

#### [Sri Lankans among migrants rescued in Mediterranean](#)

Colombo Gazette| 2<sup>nd</sup> April

Sri Lankans were among migrants rescued in the Mediterranean sea. A four-day-old baby was one of over 480 migrants rescued by humanitarian ships on Saturday during search and rescue operations in the central Mediterranean Sea, Reuters reported.

#### [USS Comstock concludes humanitarian training in Sri Lanka](#)

Colombo Gazette| 1<sup>st</sup> April

USS Comstock (LSD 45) departed Sri Lanka today following a week of exchanges with the Sri Lankan Navy and Marine Corps. These exercises focused on improving humanitarian assistance and disaster relief efforts and coordination, the third such military-to-military exchange between U.S. Sailors and Marines and their Sri Lankan counterparts in the past 12 months.

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