

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

March 3rd, 2017 | Volume: 3 - 2/3

[Reopen crossing points: Afghan envoy asks Sharif](#)

Afghanistan Times | 1st March
Afghan ambassador to Pakistan Umer Zakhilwal emphasized on Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif to withdraw the political move of closure of crossing points and transit routes to enhance objectives of Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) between the two neighboring countries. Zakhilwal, representing his country at the ECO Summit in Islamabad, he urged the member countries to make regional connectivity and economic integration part of their domestic development

[UN voices concern over Bangladesh child marriage law](#)

AFP/ the Daily Star | 3rd March
The United Nations yesterday voiced its criticism over a new law in Bangladesh that allows underage children to be married off by their parents. The new rule keeps the minimum marriageable age for males at 21 and for females at 18 but relaxes the restriction for "special circumstances" -- including for girls who elope, are raped or bear children out of wedlock. Rights groups fear without an age limit in these cases, underage children could be married off, undermining Bangladesh's efforts to curb such unions and improve women's health.

[Sri Lanka Navy arrests 13 Tamil Nadu fishermen poaching in Sri Lankan waters](#)

Colombo Page | 2nd March
Sri Lanka Navy on Thursday has arrested 13 fishermen from India's Tamil Nadu state for allegedly crossing the International Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL) and fishing in Sri Lankan waters. A Naval Patrol Craft belonging to the Northern Naval Command, arrested the Indian fishermen along with two fishing trawlers poaching in the seas north of Delft today. The arrested fishermen and the trawlers have been brought and handed over to the Kankasanthurai Police for onward action.

AFGHANISTAN

[Pakistani PM Calls for Regional Connectivity at ECO Summit](#)

Xinhua/Daily Outlook Afghanistan | 2nd March
Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif on Wednesday opened a key regional conference that will focus on intra-region connectivity in energy, infrastructure, transport and trade sectors. The theme of the 13th Summit of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) is "Connectivity for Regional Prosperity," which, officials insist, has assumed special significance in the backdrop of monumental project of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor.

[Rula Ghani Distressed over Trump's Afghan Policy Chaos](#)

Tolonews /Daily Outlook Afghanistan | 2nd March
First Lady of Afghanistan Rula Ghani on Wednesday expressed her deep concerns over a possible aid cut to Afghanistan by the United States, urging President Donald Trump's administration to continue in partnership with Afghanistan. She made the remarks during the National Conference on Women's Sustainable Development for peace in Kabul.

BANGLADESH

[Bangladesh ranks one of lowest in owning motor vehicles](#)

The Financial Express | 3rd March

Bangladesh's position in terms of owning motorised vehicles by households is one of the lowest in the world, according to a survey. Only 2.0 per cent of the country's households own cars, motorcycles or bikes, revealed a survey, conducted in 44 countries in 2016 by the Washington-based Pew Research Centre. The survey found that more people had bikes than cars. The average for car ownership was one-third while for bike ownership, it was around 42 per cent.

[Role of poll-time govt crucial for neutral elections: Experts](#)

Prothom Alo | 2nd March 3, 2017

A group of former election commissioners, academics, election experts and ex-bureaucrats on Thursday said people doubt if they will be able to exercise their franchise in the next elections. Terming restoration of public trust in the country's electoral system the biggest challenge of the new election commission, they expressed conviction that the commission's will is not enough for holding fair polls. Rather, they insisted, the role of poll-time government is crucial for a credible ballot. They were speaking at a roundtable discussion styled 'Challenges ahead of the new election commission' organised by a civic platform 'Citizens for Good Governance', also known as Sujana, at the National Press Club.

BHUTAN

[World Bank provides USD 1.5M to improve Bhutan's climate resilience](#)

Kuensel Online | 2nd March

The government and the World Bank signed into effect today the preparation of the Strategic Program for Climate Resilience (SPCR) Grant of USD 1.5 million, which will support Bhutan to formulate a long-term plan to improve climate resilience, according to a press release issued by the World Bank. The SPCR builds on ongoing initiatives and activities throughout Bhutan while providing a structure to incorporate resilience into development planning, putting in place a coordination mechanism and process of engagement on climate issues building on existing institutions, and developing a roadmap to build capacity and increase investment opportunities in the future.

MALDIVES

[Price of cigarettes, energy drinks increased](#)

Sun Online | 2nd March

President Abdulla Yameen Abdul Gayoom has ratified the amendment to Import/Export Act to import duty taken from cigarettes, energy drinks and soft drinks. According to the amendment, import duty on cigarettes will be increased to MVR 2 per cigarette, and an extra 25 percent will be charged for bulk purchases. This will push the price of a pack of cigarettes from MVR 50 to MVR 80.

MYANMAR

[Indian Navy responds positively to Myanmar Navy request for training facilities](#)

Mizzima | 2nd March

The Indian Navy on Wednesday responded positively to a visiting Myanmar Navy delegation's request for training facilities, asking the country to send a proposal, Defence and Aerospace News website brahmand.com reported on 2 March. The request was made by visiting Myanmar Navy (MN) delegation, comprising three officers – Lt Cdr Thurein Tun, Lt Cdr Kyaw Zeya Oo and Lt Ye Wint Tun. They are on a four-day official visit to Kochi from February 26 to March 2.

[UN envoy calls for highest level Myanmar probe](#)

Mizzima | 3rd March

The United Nations rapporteur on human rights in Myanmar called Thursday for the creation of a Commission of Inquiry (COI), the UN's highest-level probe, to investigate abuses in the country. Rights envoy Yanghee Lee made the appeal in a report submitted to the UN rights council, currently holding its main annual session in Geneva.

She urged the 47-member body to establish a COI "to investigate the systematic, structural, and institutional discrimination in policy, law and practice, as well long-standing persecution, against the Rohingya and other minorities in Rakhine State.

NEPAL

[India ready for development partnership with Nepal: Jaitely](#)

The Kathmandu Post | 3rd March

Visiting Indian Finance Minister Arun Jaitely has pledged more Indian investment in Nepal, saying that New Delhi wanted partnership with Kathmandu in various sectors of development. Jaitely, who arrived in Kathmandu on Thursday to participate in the Nepal Investment Summit, held talks with President Bidya Devi Bhandari, Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal and his counterpart Krishna Bahadur Mahara.

[South Asian lawmakers' meet begins](#)

My Republica | 3rd March

A regional meeting of parliamentarians from the eight South Asian countries began in Kathmandu on Thursday. The meeting is aimed at prioritizing and safeguarding children's rights in the region.

PAKISTAN

[Panamagate boils down to authenticity of leaked documents](#)

Dawn | 3rd March

While members of the five-judge Supreme Court bench that conducted marathon hearings into the Panama Papers scandal are busy authoring what is being billed as one of the most important judgements in the country's history, speculation is rife about what the outcome of the case may be. Before closing the final hearing into Panamagate, the bench announced on Feb 23 that their decision would have to be one that remained relevant and valid for at least 20 years.

[Civil, military leadership unanimity must for desired goals: Interior Minister Nisar](#)

The News | 3rd March

Interior Minister Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan on Thursday said that good coordination and close cooperation between the civil and military leadership is essential to achieve desired objectives. The minister was addressing senior military officers from the National Defence University (NDU) in Islamabad. "Better civil-military relations in Pakistan are always an eyesore for our foes as well as those masquerading as our friends. The enemies of Pakistan always want to see cleavage in this relation for their ulterior ends. Better civil-military relations as of today are in the interest of Pakistan and delivering desired results," said the minister. He said enemies in the disguise of friends want to create misunderstandings between the civil and military leadership.

[Analysis: How ready is K-P for merger with FATA - By Iftikhar Firdous](#)

The Express Tribune | 3rd March
The legislative process required for the much-awaited Fata reforms may have been initiated, but senior civil and military officials believe that the most difficult phase will be implementation of these reforms. "The cabinet's decision is only the beginning of a ponderous task," a senior official involved in drafting the legal and administrative framework for the future of the tribal areas told The Express Tribune.

SRI LANKA

[Justice Priyasath Dep sworn in as new Chief Justice of Sri Lanka](#)

Colombo Page | 2nd March

The senior-most judge of the Supreme Court, Priyasath Dep took oath as the new Chief Justice before President Maithripala Sirisena at the President's official residence today, President's Media Division said. Justice Dep held the office of the Solicitor General from 2007 to 2011 and became a judge of the Supreme Court in 2011. He had fulfilled his duties as the Acting Chief Justice several times. Minister of Justice, Wijeyadasa Rajapakhse Secretary

to the President P. B. Abeykoon, and family members of Justice Priyasath Dep participated in the swearing in ceremony.

[Sri Lanka Foreign Minister discusses progress made in human rights with UN High Commissioner](#)

Colombo Page| 2nd March

Sri Lanka's Foreign Affairs Minister Mangala Samaraweera has discussed the progress Sri Lanka has made in human rights with the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Prince Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein. Minister Samaraweera, who is leading the Sri Lankan delegation to the 34th session of the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva met with the High Commissioner Al Hussein on Wednesday on the sidelines of the session. The Minister also met with the U.S. State Department's Special Coordinator of Office of Global Criminal Justice Todd F. Buchwald and discussed reconciliation and capacity building issues related to Sri Lanka.

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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