

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

**January 4th, 2017 | Volume: 3 - 2/1**

[Pakistan to pursue diplomacy on CPEC](#)

The Express Tribune | 4th January

The country's top civil and military leaders have decided to pursue effective diplomacy to counter the challenges faced by the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) which has been dubbed a 'game-changer' and 'destiny changer' for the region.

[Afghanistan approves 4-year development plan of defense, security forces](#)

Khaama Press | 3rd January

The Afghan government has approved a 4-year plan for the development of the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF). The plan was approved in principle during a meeting of the National Security Council chaired by President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani.

[Indonesia offers 'bridge building' to resolve Rohingya crisis](#)

Prothom Alo | 3rd January

Indonesia is carrying out intensive diplomacy with bridge building between Myanmar and Bangladesh to help address the Rohingya humanitarian crisis. The Straits Times wrote this on Tuesday, quoting Indonesia's foreign minister Retno Marsudi. Jakarta is also keeping in mind that the issue is very sensitive in Myanmar, the newspaper reported.

## AFGHANISTAN

[Afghanistan, Uzbekistan to enhance bilateral trade](#)

Afghanistan Times | 3rd January

Scores of Afghan ministries have drafted different agreements to be signed with the Uzbekistan government in order to boost up mutual trade and transit deals. Afghanistan and Uzbekistan Inter-government commercial and economic commission on Tuesday launched the 2nd conference in Kabul attended by ministers of agriculture, commerce, public works, transportation, energy and water, as well as public health.

[Former Jihadi Leader Warns Against Russia, Taliban Thaw](#)

Daily Outlook Afghanistan | 3<sup>rd</sup> January

He said relations between the Taliban and the Russians are however nothing less than a new crisis and devastating for Afghanistan. Former politician and Jihadi figure Mohammad Ismail Khan on Monday warned that Afghanistan is likely to enter a new era of conflict unless government reviews its regional policies, referring to the recent trilateral meeting between China, Pakistan and Russia on Afghanistan.

[Thousands Displaced as Taliban Advance in Faryab](#)

Daily Outlook Afghanistan | 4th January

Afghan forces have broken the siege of Almar district in northeastern Faryab province, but tactically retreated to avoid

casualties, local officials said on Tuesday. Provincial police Chief Col. Mir Amanullah Zafer said three security check points had to be relocated in Almar district after hundreds of Taliban rebels launched attacks in many areas.

## **BANGLADESH**

### [Bangladesh on Social Progress Index: A top performer in nutrition, basic medicare](#)

The Daily Star | 4<sup>th</sup> January

Bangladesh is one of the top performers in ensuring nutrition and basic medical care, and health and wellness, according to the Social Progress Index 2016 prepared on a study on 133 countries. Still, Bangladesh was grouped “low social country” as it was ranked 101st because of its weak performance in nine out of 12 components in the ranking, said the Social Progress Imperative, a US-based non-profit behind the rankings.

### [Inflation down to 5pc](#)

The Financial Express | 3<sup>rd</sup> January

Inflation has come down to five per cent, the lowest in the past four years, says the planning minister. The Bangladesh government through ‘various measures’ has been able to contain inflation and it would go below target at the end of the financial year, AHM Mostafa Kamal said at a press conference in Dhaka on Tuesday. He was announcing the latest data by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics at the NEC conference centre in Sher-e-Bangla Nagar.

## **BHUTAN**

### [We welcome more stakeholder intervention](#)

Kuensel | 1<sup>st</sup> January

In a significant development concerning Department of Local Governance’s (DLG) September 12 notification and local government leaders’ entitlement issues that it gave birth to, Election Commission of Bhutan (ECB) and the National Council (NC) have walked in to clarify that members of local governments are declared elected from the day the election results are declared, not from the day they are administered oath or affirmation of office.

## **MALDIVES**

### [Fire extinguishers installed at every school](#)

Sun Online | 3<sup>rd</sup> January

Fire extinguishers have been installed in every school in the country before the new academic year begins. Education Ministry and the welfare company of the MNDF ran the project installing fire extinguishers in 215 schools. While the MNDF Fire and Rescue installed the extinguishers, the MNDF Welfare company would be maintaining them for five years.

## **MYANMAR**

### [Myanmar detains police over Rohingya abuse video](#)

Mizzima | 3<sup>rd</sup> January

Myanmar says it has detained several police officers over a video shot by a fellow policeman that shows them beating Rohingya civilians, a rare admission of abuse against the Muslim minority.

## **NEPAL**

### [PM directs ministers, secretaries to boost development spending](#)

Republica | 3<sup>rd</sup> January

Prime Minister Puspa Kamal Dahal on Monday directed the government officials and ministers to expedite development spending. Addressing the ministers and secretaries of various ministries during the meeting of National

Development Action Committee (NDAC) on Monday, Dahal asked them to spend at least 80 percent of the development budget.

#### [UML to halt obstructions if boundary changes dropped from bill](#)

Republica | 4<sup>th</sup> January

The main opposition CPN-UML has proposed withdrawing the proposal concerning provincial boundary revisions from the constitution amendment bill in order to find a consensus among the major political parties.

#### [Govt to set up SEZ in all seven provinces](#)

Republica | 4<sup>th</sup> January

The government has planned to set up special economic zones (SEZs) in all seven provinces of the country. While the government has already started work to establish the SEZ in three provinces, it is planning to add such industrial zones in four more provinces.

#### [Parties begin fresh talks after SC order](#)

The Himalayan Times | 4<sup>th</sup> January

Speaker Onsari Gharti Magar today adjourned the Legislature Parliament till 1:00pm on Sunday after the main opposition party, CPN-UML, sought time to resolve political deadlock through talks after the Supreme Court defined constitutional provisions relating to changes of federal boundaries through constitution amendment.

#### [2017 to see record hydropower generation](#)

Republica | 4<sup>th</sup> January

The year 2017 will set a record in power generation, people involved in the hydropower sector say. Two plants of Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA), having combined capacity of 44 MW, are starting generation in 2017, while projects developed by independent power producers will add a minimum of 200 MW to national grid this year, according to a projection made in the National Energy Crisis Prevention and Electricity Development Decade (2016-2026) document.

## PAKISTAN

#### [‘Violence-related fatalities in Balochistan, Punjab increased in 2016’](#)

DAWN | 4<sup>th</sup> January

Fatalities in Balochistan rose from 719 in 2015 to 798 in 2016, while Punjab lost 424 people to violence last year. Both provinces were the targets of suicide attacks that increased the casualty count.

#### [Shortfall in tax collection crosses Rs127bn](#)

DAWN | 4<sup>th</sup> January

The government faces the challenge of achieving a fiscal deficit target of 3.8 per cent of the GDP for 2016-17 owing to its lower-than-expected revenue collection so far.

#### [Government releases Rs280b for development spending](#)

The Express Tribune | 4<sup>th</sup> January

The government sanctioned Rs279.5 billion for development spending in the first half of this fiscal year and two-thirds of the amount was given for four priority sectors by compromising on other critical areas like water security.

## SRI LANKA

#### [Sri Lanka says will not be dictated to by any foreign country](#)

Colombo Gazette | 3<sup>rd</sup> January

The Government today asserted that while it maintains good diplomatic relations, it will not agree to be dictated to by

any country. Minister of Petroleum and Petroleum Gas Chandima Weerakkody told reporters that the Government will ensure Sri Lanka's sovereignty is protected.

#### [Work begins on Volkswagen assembly plant in Kuliyaipitiya](#)

Colombo Gazette| 3<sup>rd</sup> January

President Maithripala Sirisena and Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe placed the foundation stone today for the construction of a vehicle assembly plant of the German auto maker Volkswagen in Kuliyaipitiya.

#### [Sri Lanka Navy earns Rs. 2.26 billion in 2016 after taking over from Avant Garde](#)

Colombo Page| 3<sup>rd</sup> January

The Sri Lanka Navy has earned Rs. 2.26 billion in 2016 since taking over the Onboard Security Team Operations from Avant Garde Maritime Services.

#### [Sri Lanka tourist arrivals increase by 14 percent in 2016 with over 2 million tourists visiting the island](#)

Colombo Page| 3<sup>rd</sup> January

Statistics released by Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority (SLTDA) for the last year shows that over 2 million tourists visited the island in 2016.

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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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