



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

**September 4th, 2017 | Volume: 3 - 02/9**

[Nepal, US to sign \\$500m grant pact on Sept 14](#)

The Kathmandu Post | 4th September  
Nepal will sign an agreement with the US government on September 14 to secure a grant of \$500 million (approximately Rs51.5 billion) for construction of transmission lines and maintenance of various road sections. A Nepali delegation is planning to leave for the US on September 12 to seal the deal. The members of the Nepali delegation have not been finalised till date.

[Pakistan urges Myanmar to ensure safety of persecuted Rohingya Muslims](#)

The Express Tribune | 3rd September  
Pakistan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs has expressed its concerns over reports of the increasing number of deaths and forced displacement of Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar and urged its government to take action to ensure their safety. "Such reports, if confirmed, are a source of serious concern and anguish on the eve of Eidul Azha," the Foreign Office said in a statement released on September 3.

[Islamabad reacts at President Ghani's remarks of 'Peace with Pakistan First'](#)

Khaama Press | 3rd September  
Pakistan's foreign minister Khawajah Asif on Saturday reacted at President Ghani's remarks regarding Kabul's readiness to hold peace talks with Pakistan. Asif told reporters "Pakistan's position on Afghanistan is very clear: we want to see peace and stability in the country." Insisting that Pakistan will contribute and play its due role in all the initiatives taken to peace in Afghanistan, Asif said "We already have bilateral, trilateral, quadrilateral and multilateral mechanisms for dialogue and interaction with Afghanistan in place."

**AFGHANISTAN**

[Afghans Impregnable on Sectarian Lines: Ghani](#)

Outlook Afghanistan/Pajhwok | 4th September

President Ashraf Ghani during a meeting with Sunni and Shiite scholars has urged them to expose real intention of terrorists in their sermons and promote religious harmony. The president, who met the religious scholars at the Presidential Palace on Friday afternoon, once again expressed his grief over the terrorist attack on the Imam Zaman mosque in Kabul. “We don’t want the war which is imposed on us, but the Afghanistan enemies should know they are isolated,” said the president, who confirmed conspiracies at fueling sectarian violence in the country.

#### [US Defense Secretary Orders New Troop Deployment to Afghanistan](#)

Outlook Afghanistan/Press TV | 4th September

US Defense Secretary James Mattis has said that he has signed deployment orders to send more troops to Afghanistan, days after President Donald Trump announced a new strategy to prolong war in the strategically important country located within South Asia and Central Asia, APA reports quoting Press TV. “Yes, I’ve signed orders, but it’s not complete. In other words, I’ve signed some of the [orders for] troops that will go and we are identifying the specific ones,” Mattis told reporters at the Pentagon on Thursday. The Pentagon chief did not say how many troops would be dispatched as part of the deployment orders. “By and large this is to enable the Afghan forces to fight more effectively. It’s more advisers, it’s more enablers. Fire support, for example, and there’s some other things,” Mattis said.

#### [Govt. to Spend \\$6bn on Afghan Air Force: Ghani](#)

Outlook Afghanistan/ Tolonews | 4th September

President Ghani said during a visit to Nangarhar that the Afghan Air Force will be boosted by government in order to increase capability. President Ashraf Ghani said on Sunday during a visit to eastern Nangarhar province that government will spend \$6 billion USD on the air force in the next four years. In Nangarhar to review the province’s security situation, Ghani said: “The air force’s capability will be increased.” Ghani also visited the military hospital at the 201 Military Corps in the province and met with a number of officials in Nangarhar. “We are ready for both war and peace. In four years we will spend \$6 billion on the country’s air force,” Ghani said.

## **BANGLADESH**

#### [Turkey’s Erdogan phones Bangladesh President Hamid, talks Rohingya issue](#)

bdnews24 | 1st Septemeber

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has called up his Bangladesh counterpart Md Abdul Hamid over the current state of the Rohingya crisis. The foreign ministry said on Friday that the Turkish president supported measures taken by Bangladesh over the Rohingya refugee issue in the conversation on Thursday night. Erdogan expressed concern over the ongoing violence in Myanmar's Rakhine state while Hamid informed him about the steps taken by Bangladesh. The Turkish president assured Hamid of full support and cooperation in Bangladesh's bid to send back the Rohingya refugees to Myanmar. He also assured the Bangladesh president of raising the issue at different international fora, according to a media release from the foreign ministry.

#### [Myanmar building economic zone in Rakhine to boost trade with Bangladesh](#)

bdnews24 | 3rd September

The Myanmar authorities have said the construction of an economic zone on the outskirts of Maungdaw Township in northern Rakhine state is expected to start when the 'current situation in the area calms down'. A regional minister told the Myanmar Times that the zone is dedicated to promoting trade, manufacturing and services and it would also benefit 'local residents' in the area with the jobs created by the project. “When the economic zone is

completed, it will be much more convenient. It will create jobs and result in more development. It can reduce conflict," State Minister for Finance, Revenue, Economics and Planning U Kyaw Aye Thein added. "The first phase of the zone will emphasise trade with Bangladesh, while subsequent development will expand into the manufacturing, financial and services sectors, including banks, factories and other industries in the area," he said.

## BHUTAN

### [Traders should not consider GST benefit as profit](#)

Kuensel Online | 2nd September

Importers, suppliers, distributors, dealers, wholesalers, and retailers gaining from the Indian goods and services tax (GST) should not consider the benefit as profit. The benefits, officiating secretary of economic affairs ministry, Sonam P Wangdi, said should be passed down to the consumers and that the office of consumer protection would ensure that prices are not distorted. A notification was also issued on August 28 to this effect. About 81 percent of goods and services in India fall below or in the 18 percent tax band and the rest falls under 28 percent tax band. However, for Bhutan GST will not be imposed as the Indian GST law specifies that exports from India to any country will be zero-rated, meaning that goods of Indian origin will be cheaper in Bhutan.

### [Climate change and TB in WHO's regional meeting agenda](#)

Kuensel Online | 1st September

Health minister of 11 member countries will attend the 70th Regional Committee meeting of World Health Organisation South-East Asia Region (WHO SEAR) region in the Maldives from September 6 to 10. WHO Goodwill Ambassador for Hepatitis in South-East Asia Region, Amitabh Bachchan, will join the meeting to advocate for urgent action against viral hepatitis, a preventable disease that kills approximately 410,000 people in the region every year, a press release from WHO SEAR office states.

## MALDIVES

### [Maldives cease all trade ties with Myanmar](#)

Sun Online | 3rd September

The Maldivian government has condemned the atrocities being committed against the Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar and ceased all trade ties with the country. A statement issued by the Foreign Ministry today said that the Maldives is "deeply concerned by the recent cycle of violence that resulted the death of dozens of Rohingya Muslims and displacing several thousands."

### [BML launches internet banking awareness campaign](#)

Sun Online | 2nd September

Bank of Maldives has launched a large-scale internet banking awareness campaign for its customers. The one-month campaign began last Friday. BML reports that the campaign will be run from all of its branches in the Maldives, and that roadshows were planned for populous islands.

## MYANMAR

### [Increased connectivity and trade sought in India-Myanmar relations](#)

Mizzima | 2nd September

At a forum held in Yangon to celebrate and discuss 70 years of India-Myanmar relations, a key message to come out being the need to substantially increase connectivity, trade and diplomatic relations between the two neighbours. Parami Roundtable and Mizzima Media Group organised the first India-Myanmar Dialogue 'Act East Policy and India-Myanmar Relations' at Park Royal Hotel on 2 September 2017 to commemorate the 70 years of India-Myanmar relations. The roundtable was attended by high level speakers from India and Myanmar.

#### [Scholars point out the need for pro-active engagement of Myanmar in BIMSTEC](#)

Mizzima | 2nd September

Myanmar needs to engage more proactively with Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) grouping as it is strategically located as a gateway for Act East Policy of India as well as Look West perspective of Thailand. This was the central message of the meeting of scholars and policy makers who assembled at the invitation of the Parami Round table on the occasion of 20th anniversary of BIMSTEC. Scholars from India, Myanmar, and Japan attended and presented perspectives on how to 'reinvigorate' and 'reactivate' BIMSTEC so that the trade, investment and B2B exchange would benefit the over 2.5 billion population of the sub-region.

### NEPAL

#### [NASO to present paper on Space Science Outreach and Capacity Building in Nepal'](#)

MyRepublica | 3rd September

Nepal Astronomical Society (NASO) is going to present a paper on 'Space Science Outreach and Capacity Building in Nepal' on September on coming Thursday. NASO Chairperson Suresh Bhattarai will present the paper which will highlight the importance of space science and its application and how we are using it in our day-to-day life. The paper will present an overview of NASO's activities during 2007-2016 on space science outreach in Nepal.

#### [Chinese experts skeptical of Nepal's commitment to BRI](#)

MyRepublica | 4th September

Chinese officials in Beijing and Kunming last week expressed skepticism over Nepal's intention to wholeheartedly endorse the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). While many Chinese officials said they understood Nepal's tricky balancing act between India and China, they insisted that Nepal fully embraced BRI for its long-term prosperity. Moreover, frequent change of guard in Singha Durbar and the slow pace of implementation of agreed upon projects have left Chinese officials confused about Nepal's commitment to BRI (also called One Belt One Road or OBOR), China's \$1 trillion project to connect peoples and economies in Asia, Europe and Africa.

### PAKISTAN

#### [Will face courts in Benazir murder case: Musharraf](#)

Dawn | 3rd September

Former president Gen Pervez Musharraf said on Sunday that he will face the courts in the Benazir Bhutto assassination case in Pakistan after his health improves. In a statement issued by the All Pakistan Muslim League (APML) secretariat, Musharraf said that the recent court verdict was not against him as his case is still pending.

#### ['Pakistan will play its due role in bringing peace and stability to Afghanistan'](#)

Dawn | 2nd September

"Pakistan's position on Afghanistan is very clear: we want to see peace and stability in the country," said Foreign

Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif on Saturday in response to Afghan president's message on normalisation of bilateral relations through talks. Speaking at the Presidential Palace in Kabul after Eid prayers on Friday, Afghan President Ashraf Ghani had sent a message to Pakistan, saying Afghanistan was "ready for comprehensive political talks. Peace with Pakistan is in our national agenda".

#### [Gen Bajwa pledges army's full support for development of Balochistan: ISPR](#)

Dawn | 3rd September

Army Chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa, during a visit to Gwadar and Turbat on Sunday, pledged the military's "full support" for the development of Balochistan, the military's media wing said. According to a statement issued by the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), the army chief visited Gwadar and Turbat on the second day of Eidul Azha and met with soldiers and officers.

### SRI LANKA

#### [India raises concerns with Sri Lanka over delay to implement projects](#)

Colombo Gazette | 2nd September

India has raised concerns with Sri Lanka over the delay to implement India backed projects in the island, The Hindu newspaper reported today. Indian External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj who met President Maithripala Sirisena and discussed bilateral matters, had also noted the perceived delay in implementing India backed projects in the island, a top source in Colombo told The Hindu.

#### [Indian FM assures India's fullest support to Sri Lanka's government](#)

Colombo Page | 1st September

India's External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj said the government of Sri Lanka under President Maithripala Sirisena could always count on continued support from India. Minister Swaraj called on President Sirisena at the President's Official Residence in Colombo today (September 1) and held discussions on issues related to the Indian Ocean Conference currently being held in Colombo.

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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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