

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

April 5th, 2017 | Volume: 3 - 2/4

[**Aziz Stresses Cooperation to Eliminate Terrorism**](#)

Outlook Afghanistan/ Pajhwok | 5th April

Pakistan prime minister's advisor on foreign affairs Sartaj Aziz has said Islamabad and Kabul should work closely to deal with common challenges and pursue the welfare and progress of their people, a foreign office statement said on Tuesday. Aziz expressed the view during a meeting with 14-member delegation of the Afghan media presently visiting Pakistan. Taking to the delegation he said relations between the two brotherly countries were rooted in common history, religion, culture and people to people ties. He added that like their past, Afghanistan and Pakistan also shared their destiny. It was, therefore, important that the two countries closely work together for dealing with the common challenges and pursue the welfare and progress of the people.

[**India to offer \\$5b line of credit to Bangladesh**](#)

The Financial Express | 4th April

India hopes to fund 17 projects in Bangladesh through a proposed \$5-billion line of credit, which is likely to be finalised during Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's visit to the neighbouring country later this week. The bulk of the funds are expected to be used for connectivity projects - railway projects, road construction and maintenance - as India eyes transit to the northeast and Southeast Asia via Bangladesh.

[**Pakistan accepts, India rejects US peace talks offer**](#)

Dawn | 5th April

The US offer to help de-escalate tensions between India and Pakistan led to a chain of reactions on Tuesday, as Pakistan welcomed the suggestion, India rejected it and the US State Department rephrased the offer to facilitate talks to accommodate both. "Any positive role that the US plays to bring peace and stability in South Asia can serve the region well," said Pakistan's Washington envoy Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry, hours after Nikki Haley, the US ambassador to the United Nations, made the offer.

AFGHANISTAN

[**Afghan intelligence foil suicide attack plotted by Haqqani network in Paktika**](#)

Khaama Press | 4th April

The Afghan intelligence operatives foiled a suicide plotted by the notorious Haqqani terrorist network for execution in southeastern Paktika province of Afghanistan. The National Directorate of Security (NDS) said a suspected suicide bomber was arrested before he manage to carry out attack on the district police commandment of JaniKhel.

[**9 ISIS militants killed in Afghan Special Forces operation in Nangarhar**](#)

Khaama Press | 4th April

At least nine militants affiliated with the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) terrorist group were killed during the operations conducted by the Special Forces of the Afghan National Police (ANP). Local officials in Nangarhar said at least two militants of ISIS terrorist group were also arrested during the operation. Provincial police spokesman Hazrat Hussain Mashriqiwal said the operation was conducted in coordination with the Afghan Local Police (ALP) forces in the vicinity of Achin district.

[UK opens new geological centre in Kabul](#)

Afghanistan Times | 4th April

British envoy to Kabul, Domenic Jerney has said that the newly inaugurated geological centre would help the country to extract minerals and help in stabilization of the country. The UK envoy said that all the minerals inside the country are the valuable wealth of Afghan people and it is the responsibility of the government to develop the mineral sector on behalf of the people. Addressing to the opening ceremony here at Kabul he said that the government should pay attention to the extraction of minerals to use them for stability and economic growth of the country.

[Over 150 refugee families return home from Pakistan](#)

Afghanistan Times | 4th April

Over 150 families have returned home from Pakistan through Torkham cross point in the past two days, officials said Tuesday. Refugee returning stopped after tensions increased between Kabul and Islamabad and the Torkham cross point remained closed for more than a month, but on Monday, returning of refugees restarted. "Over 150 families returned home from Pakistan through Torkham cross point in the past two days," said Nangarhar governor Spokesman Attaullah Khogiani.

[Want to Learn from Australia's Agro Experience: Ghani](#)

Outlook Afghanistan/ Pajhwok | 5th April

President Ashraf Ghani has urged the Australian government to share its experience in the agriculture sector with Afghanistan and get maximum advantage of existing opportunities in his country. A statement from the Presidential Palace said on Tuesday Ghani held wide-ranging discussion with Australian agriculture experts in Canberra and informed them about the existing opportunities. The experts also shared their views with the president. Ghani called the Australia expertise in water management, quality agriculture, exploration of market and technical areas vital and urged them to share their skills with Afghanistan, according to the statement.

[Taliban Sets out Spring Offensive Battle Strategy in Afghanistan](#)

Outlook Afghanistan/ RFERL | 5th April

Taliban forces in Afghanistan plan to extend their control of provinces in which they already have a heavy presence in the upcoming spring offensive, a spokesman told the German dpa news agency in an interview. Zabihullah Mujahid on April 3 said the militants will press their advantage during the campaign in the provinces of Helmand and Oruzgan in the south, Farah and Faryab in the west, and Sar-e Pul and Kunduz in the north. U.S. military officials say the Western-backed government in Kabul controls less than 60 percent of the country.

BANGLADESH

[UK and Bangladesh can forge common future after Brexit, says UK MP Nigel Evans](#)

bdnews24 | 4th April

The UK is looking to strengthen relations with Commonwealth nations and share the opportunities emerging from Brexit with Bangladesh, said British MP Nigel Evans. The UK lawmaker and Chair of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (UK) was speaking at an event organised by the British High Commission at the Westin hotel in Dhaka on Tuesday. "We are leaving the European Union and we want to make absolutely certain that the opportunities that Brexit is going to provide is going to be shared by Bangladesh as well," said the representative from Ribble Valley.

[BNP urges government to disclose details on possible deals with India](#)

bdnews24 | 4th April

The BNP has urged the government to divulge the details of the deals Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is likely to sign with India during her upcoming visit. People have every right to know about the deals and give their opinion on them,” said the party’s Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir. He made the call at a press brief held at its Naya Paltan headquarters on Tuesday. Ruling Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina has recently assured that she would not sign any deal that may hinder the country’s interest.

[Bangladesh Govt to restore rail links to India, Nepal, Bhutan](#)

Dhaka Tribune | 5th April

The Bangladesh government is set to reopen the disused and defunct transborder rail routes to India, Nepal and Bhutan in a major boost to cross-border trade and tourism.

The restoration of two of the planned routes has already been completed in time for their inauguration during Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina’s four-day official visit to India, which begins on Friday. The routes connecting Bangladesh with Nepal and Bhutan are also part of the proposed Trans-Asian Railway network.

BHUTAN

[Her Majesty the Queen Mother Dorji Wangmo Wangchuck in Rajasthan](#)

Kuensel | 3rd April

Her Majesty the Queen Mother Dorji Wangmo Wangchuck graced the Rajasthan Diwas 2017 as the chief guest on the invitation of the government of Rajasthan. Her Majesty was accompanied by Bhutan’s ambassador to India, V Namgyel and officials of the Royal Government. Prior to gracing the Rajasthan Day at the Vidhan Sabha, Her Majesty visited the Amber Palace, City Palace, Jantar Mantar and also witnessed a heritage fashion show by Bibi Russel, a world renowned Bangladeshi designer.

MALDIVES

[MDP candidate arrested in drug case](#)

Sun Online | 4th April

The MDP candidate for the Alifu Alifu Rasdhoo Island Council in the upcoming Local Council Election has been arrested in a drug related case. President of the Rasdhoo Island Council, Abdul-Jaleel Moosa told Sun Media today that the police arrested the candidate, Abdulla Anil, around 5:30 a.m. this morning. He was arrested with a court order for using and selling drugs.

MYANMAR

[Rehabilitating refugees in eastern Myanmar](#)

Bangkok Post/Mizzima | 5th April

After decades on the run from armed conflict in their ancestral lands, Myanmar nationals with Karen heritage are finally getting a taste of peace as they settle into newly built houses in the country’s southeastern region. The peace is fragile, but the return of genuine smiles suggests there is hope that it will hold this time.

[India mulls deporting up to 10,000 Rohingyas](#)

Mizzima | 5th April

The Indian government is currently engaged in talks with the local government of Jammu and Kashmir as it looks at options for deporting to Myanmar up to 10,000 Rohingyas who it says are living illegally in the northwest of the country, according to a report in India’s Zee News on Tuesday.

[Myanmar needs 30 years to get rid of landmines](#)

Mizzima | 4th April

Myanmar needs to take about 30 years to eradicate landmines in the entire country, said the Humanitarian Mine

Action Initiative (Myanmar) chairman Thant Zin. He was speaking at an event marking the International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action on April 4 held in Kandawgyi Palace Hotel in Yangon.

[China remains Myanmar's largest foreign investor](#)

Mizzima | 3rd April

According to data released by the Directorate of Investment and Company Administration (DICA), China remains Myanmar's largest foreign investor with 163 projects valued at US\$18.5 billion as of February this year.

NEPAL

[Govt at a loss for lack of laws to manage public finance](#)

The Kathmandu Post | 5th April

Government officials seem to be at a loss over budget formulation for the next fiscal year, as three crucial laws required to manage public finance in a federal structure are yet to be finalised. This has left officials rushing to scout for stopgap measures, as less than two months are remaining for the annual budget to be presented in Parliament. The government encountered this unique problem after the country formally embraced the new local restructuring in March in line with the new federal setup, which led to dissolution of different bodies in local, district, zonal and regional levels. These are replaced by 744 new local units.

[Third meeting of EPG on Nepal-India Relations from Wednesday](#)

The Himalayan Times | 4th April

Members of the Eminent Persons Group (EPG) on Nepal-India Relations from the Indian side have arrived in Kathmandu to hold a formal meeting with their Nepali counterparts.

The EPG's third meeting, which was put off for two times, will start in the Nepali capital tomorrow.

[Nepal to import more electricity to get rid of power crisis](#)

The Himalayan Times | 4th April

The NEA has so far imported electricity worth Rs 9.68 billion from India in the first nine months of the fiscal year 2016-17. It is projected that additional power worth Rs 6 billion would be bought from India in three months. At a press conference organised here on Tuesday, NEA Chief Executive Officer Kul Man Ghising informed that power worth around Rs 14.9 billion was imported in the last fiscal year.

PAKISTAN

[Banking sector proposes reduction in tax rate to 30%](#)

Express Tribune | 5th April

The Pakistan Banks' Association (PBA) has urged the government to reduce the tax rate to 30% for the fiscal year 2018 in line with the corporate sector. The request is part of the budget proposals the PBA has submitted to the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) for the banking sector. While the government took a positive step by progressively reducing income tax rates for business income of corporate sector from 35% to 34% for tax year 2014, which is now down to 30% for tax year 2018, no such reduction has been provided for banks, according to a press release.

[Saudi-led alliance not aimed against any country: Tehmina](#)

Express Tribune | 5th April

Just days after Iran went public with its concerns over former army chief General (ret'd) Raheel Sharif's possible role in the Saudi-led counter terrorism alliance, Pakistan on Tuesday clarified that the purpose of 41-nation coalition was to fight terrorism and was not against any country. The clarification came from newly appointed foreign secretary Tehmina Janjua, who briefed the National Assembly Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs about the reason behind the government's move to allow former army chief to head the Saudi-led alliance.

[Efforts to stop oil theft in K-P go in vain](#)

Express Tribune | 5th April

Efforts of the federal and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (K-P) governments to resolve the crude oil theft issue have come to naught as the provincial police could not extend a helping hand to the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA). Over the past two years, the National Assembly Standing Committee on Petroleum and Natural Resources has

repeatedly taken up the matter of oil stealing from installations of MOL oil and gas exploration company in Karak district of K-P, but it could not reach any conclusion.

[French companies keen to invest in Pakistan](#)

Dawn|5thApril

More than a dozen French companies on Tuesday expressed their desire to invest in Pakistan. "Pakistan has a favourable financial position and the security situation has improved tremendously during the last three years," said M. Thierry Pflimlin, chairman of the France-Pakistan Business Council of MEDEF International and president of Total Global Services, while speaking to the media at the residence of the French ambassador.

[3 killed, several injured in mysterious Lahore blast](#)

Dawn| 5th April

At least three people have been killed in an explosion on Lahore's Bedian Road on Wednesday, police sources said. The Punjab government tweeted that the exact nature of the blast is being ascertained. Security sources claimed the explosion was a suicide blast. Meanwhile, police sources said the blast was caused when the gas cylinder of a van parked at Manawala Chowk exploded. At least eight people have sustained injuries in the blast.

SRI LANKA

[Sri Lanka, Australia to collaborate in the mineral sector, survey mineral resources](#)

Colombo Page| 4th April

Sri Lanka's Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Harsha de Silva, on a visit to Australia last week on an invitation extended by the Australian Government under their Special Visitor Program, sought to utilize the expertise of Australia which is one of the world's leading explorers of minerals and metals, to expand the investment opportunities in the mineral sector of Sri Lanka.

[China's top political advisor Yu Zhengsheng to visit Sri Lanka this week](#)

Colombo Page| 5th April

Chinese top political advisor Yu Zhengsheng will pay an official visit to Pakistan and Sri Lanka this Wednesday to Saturday, a media report said. Yu is the Chairman of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC). He will visit Sri Lanka at the invitation of Sri Lankan Parliament Speaker Karu Jayasuriya, Xinhua news agency reported.

[UK tells Lanka to become signatory to Ottawa Convention](#)

Colombo Gazette| 4th April

The British Government has urged Sri Lanka to become a signatory to the Ottawa Convention. The British High Commission in Colombo has been funding demining work in Sri Lanka since 2010.

[Germany and Sri Lanka discuss strengthening Parliament ties](#)

Colombo Gazette| 4th April

Germany and Sri Lanka had talks today on strengthening Parliament ties between both countries. The talks took place between Professor Norbert Lammert, President of the German Bundestag and Speaker Karu Jayasuriya.

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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