

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

December 5th, 2016 | Volume: 2 - 2/12

Plans underway to connect Afghanistan-India via air transport corridor: Modi

KHAAMA PRESS | 4th December
The Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi said Sunday that plans are underway to connect Afghanistan with India through air transport corridor. In his speech during the opening of the 6th Heart of Asia conference in Amritsar, Prime Minister Modi identified four key issues in supporting Afghanistan, beginning with an Afghan-led, Afghan-owned and Afghan-controlled process. Second, he said, we must demonstrate strong collective will to defeat terror networks that cause bloodshed and spread fear.

BBIN road connectivity plan in limbo

Kuensel Online | 3rd December
Parliament is expected to once again vote on the Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal (BBIN) Motor Vehicle Agreement (MVA). The National Assembly is likely to submit it to His Majesty The King for Royal Command to deliberate the agreement in a joint sitting. Support of the National Council (NC) and the opposition party is necessary for the government to push the agreement through Parliament. Both stand against ratifying the agreement.

Armed groups renew attacks on military post in N. Myanmar: authorities

Mizzima | 5th December
A combined force of three non-ceasefire signatory ethnic groups have renewed attacks on Mongkoe military post in northern Myanmar's Shan state, forcing the government troops to fight back, according to the Defense Services Office Sunday. The combined forces of Kachin Independence Army (KIA), Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA) and Kokang's Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA) tried to approach the post by launching attacks.

AFGHANISTAN

First ever conference held to empower women in agriculture

Afghanistan Times | 3rd December

Ministry of Agriculture Irrigation and Livestock (MAIL) on Saturday run the first ever press conference with the aim of boosting up women's role in agriculture sector across the country. "Running this conference aims at supporting female farmers and paving the ground for development of women's activities in agriculture fields," said Assadullah Zamir, Minister of Agriculture Irrigation and Livestock. He said that empowerment of women in agriculture fields will lead toward decline of poverty in rural areas.

Prominent Daesh commander killed in Jawzjan

Afghanistan Times | 4th December

A prominent commander of the Daesh terrorist group also known as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), was killed during a clash with the security forces in Darzab district of northern Jawzjan province, an official said Sunday. Rahmatullah Hashar, the district administrative confirmed the death of "a senior Daesh leader", saying "the terrorist was killed after launching an attack on a security checkpoint in the district." "The leader was identified as Mohammad Nasir and two other terrorists were wounded during the clash," he said.

[MoI orders police to arrest perpetrators of student hanging](#)

Afghanistan Times | 4th December

The ministry of interior (MoI) Sunday condemned publicly hanging of a university student in strong terms and ordered the Wardak police to arrest perpetrators. The victim was identified as Faizul Rahman, who was reportedly on his way to meet his family when he was captured by Taliban. He was hanged to death in accusation of involvement in the assassination of a senior Taliban official. Provincial governor spokesman Abdul Rahman Mangal confirmed the incident, saying "Faizul Rahaman was a student in Kabul Polytechnic University. The Taliban captured him from Sayed Abad district Thursday and hanged him in Sewaka village of Chak district on Friday."

[Russia reacts on US plans to purchase Blackhawks for Afghan Air Force](#)

KHAAMA PRESS | 5th December

The Russian special envoy for Afghanistan Zamir Kabulov has the replacement of the Afghan Air Force inventory with the US-made Blackhawk helicopters will be hard and will require more time and investment. Insisting that Moscow is doubtful regarding the plan, Kabulov said only the training of the pilots for Blackhawks will require at least 4 years.

BANGLADESH

[30 Rohingyas missing after boat capsized in Naf river](#)

UNB/ Prothom Alo | 5th December

At least 30 Rohingyas went missing as a boat capsized in the Naf river in Teknaf early Monday. Md Ali, a member of Nella union, said the boat was carrying between 30 and 35 Rohingyas. It capsized in the river around 3:30am when the Rohingyas were entering the Bangladesh territory from Myanmar, he added.

[Bangladesh seeks duty-free access to Malaysia market](#)

The Financial Express | 5th December

Bangladesh has sought duty-free access for its products to Malaysian market to boost trade ties between the two countries further which is on an uptrend. "We expected that Malaysia, like other countries, would also award us duty-free market access. But it's yet to happen. I would like to request the Malaysian government to award duty-free market access for our products," said Commerce Minister Tofail Ahmed.

BHUTAN

[Making Bhutan the cleanest country in the world](#)

Kuensel Online | 3rd December

The programme begins with a nationwide cleaning campaign on December 9. Perhaps for the first time in the country, every citizen will be involved in a nationwide cleaning campaign on December 9 to commemorate the 10th Anniversary of His Majesty The King's accession to the Golden Throne. The day will be declared as a national holiday. All dzongdags will take the lead role in this national endeavour. They will also submit different programmes and strategies to sustain this national initiative.

MALDIVES

[Election Commission appeals postponement of Council Election](#)

Sun Online | 4th December

Elections Commission (EC) has filed for appeal of the Civil Court order to postpone Local Council Election by two-months. Member of EC, Ahmed Akram has confirmed that EC filed for appeal on Saturday. EC has not yet received notification whether the file for appeal has been accepted by High Court. Civil Court accepted the lawsuit by Progressive Party of Maldives (PPM) to postpone the Local Council Election – scheduled to be held on January 14 - over "unavoidable circumstances" which rendered the party unable to prepare for the election in time.

MYANMAR

[Shan State Peace Talks Fall Apart](#)

The Irrawaddy | 2nd December

Scheduled peace talks fell apart on Thursday, and conflict continued between four ethnic armed groups and the

Burma Army in northern Shan State, according to ethnic armed group leaders. Representatives of the Northern Alliance had planned to discuss a possible end to the two-week-old conflict in Kunming, China, where they had traveled to meet officials from Burma's National Reconciliation and Peace Center (NRPC). But the talks never happened because the opposing sides could not agree on the basic format of the meeting, according to ethnic armed group leaders.

NEPAL

[Dr KC ends 22-day fast after deal](#)

The Kathmandu Post | 5th December

Dr Govinda KC ended his tenth hunger strike on the 22nd day on Sunday morning after reaching a 12-point agreement with the government on Saturday night. Dr KC drank juice offered by two-and-a-half-year old Marsaang Tamang, who lost his mother in the earthquake last year, to break his fast at the TU Teaching Hospital. The orthopaedic surgeon was taken to the ICU ward of the hospital immediately after breaking the fast. He also signed the agreement paper which he had agreed to on Saturday night.

[Bill registration an important step: India](#)

The Kathmandu Post | 5th December

India has said the Nepal government's registration of a constitution amendment bill in Parliament is an "important step". "As part of the ongoing efforts, the registering of a Constitution Amendment Bill in the Nepali Parliament on November 29, 2016 is an important step," said Spokesperson for Indian Ministry of External Affairs Vikas Swarup. Responding to the Post's question on the bill, Swarup said, "Our consistent position has been that peace, stability and progress of Nepal is in the interest of both India and Nepal. We have therefore been supportive of initiatives of the government of Nepal to meet the aspirations of all sections of its society through dialogue and constitutional process.

[President prods all parties to prepare for polls](#)

The Kathmandu Post | 5th December

President Bidya Devi Bhandari has urged all the political parties to work towards ending the current stalemate over the constitution amendment bill for the sake of implementing the charter by holding the elections. During an all-party meeting held at Sheetal Niwas on Sunday, President Bhandari advised the ruling coalition of the CPN (Maoist Centre) and the Nepali Congress, the main opposition CPN-UML and the Madhes-based parties to work jointly on holding the three layers of elections. The constitution requires the local, provincial and federal polls to be held by January, 2018.

[US envoy Alaina B Teplitz calls on PM Dahal](#)

The Himalayan Times | 5th December

US Ambassador to Nepal Alaina B Teplitz today paid a courtesy call on Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal at the latter's residence, in Baluwatar, on Monday. Teplitz discussed contemporary political issues, law and order and other bilateral issues with PM Dahal, informed PM's Secretariat. PM Dahal informed the US Ambassador about the commitment of his government to reach consensus for the Constitution amendment and its implementation.

[Country has strategic opportunities, says Sachs](#)

The Himalayan Times | 5th December

The country has enormous strategic opportunities to achieve very rapid sustainable development in the coming 15 years, said world-renowned professor Jeffrey David Sachs, who is also special advisor to the United Nations Secretary General. Delivering his public lecture titled 'Sustainable Development in an Uncertain World' among state actors, development partners, diplomats, private sector representatives and academicians in Kathmandu that was organised by National Planning Commission (NPC) today, Sachs laid emphasis on harnessing hydroelectricity citing that hydroelectric power is a strategic asset which has the most potential to be sold across the region as a clean source of energy.

PAKISTAN

[Taliban wouldn't last a month without Pakistan support: Ghani](#)

Express Tribune| 5th December

Afghan President Ashraf Ghani said on Sunday that the Taliban insurgency would not survive a month if it lost its sanctuary in neighbouring Pakistan, urging its neighbour to take on militant groups on its soil instead of giving Kabul financial aid.

[Govt intervention destabilises energy market](#)

Express Tribune| 4th December

Energy sector experts believe the market should be left alone to perform and determine prices, as continued government intervention to set petrol and gas prices has destabilised the market.

[Efforts under way to reach out to Trump team](#)

DAWN| 5th December

Some media reports claim that as part of these efforts, Pakistan is also considering the possibility of sending Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif to attend US President-elect Donald Trump's inaugural ceremony on Jan 20.

[Aziz says it's simplistic to blame one country for violence](#)

DAWN| 5th December

The statement named Lashkar-e-Taiba, Jaish-e-Mohammed and the Haqqani group as posing threats to region together with other groups fomenting terrorism in the neighbourhood and beyond. Foreign Affairs Adviser Sartaj Aziz countered the claim, calling the criticism 'simplistic'.

SRI LANKA

[American and Sri Lankan experts gather to unleash Sri Lanka's trade potential](#)

Colombo Page| 2nd December

The United States Department of State, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Commerce and the Sri Lanka Department of Commerce held three seminars on trade policy from November 29-December 1 in Colombo. More than 70 key decision makers and technical experts from various Sri Lankan ministries, agencies, research institutes, trade policy think tanks, and Chambers of Commerce participated in the seminars, the U.S. Embassy said in a release.

[Maldives, Sri Lanka discuss strengthening bilateral relations](#)

Colombo Gazette| 2nd December

Foreign Minister Mangala Samaraweera held discussions with Dr. Mohamed Asim, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Maldives today at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The two Ministers discussed ways and means of strengthening bilateral relations, including economic and trade links.

[Sri Lanka to buy more military transport planes from China](#)

Colombo Gazette| 3rd December

Sri Lanka will buy more military transport planes from China and seek its help in transforming its failed Hambantota port into a hub comparable with Shenzhen, Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe told This Week in Asia in an exclusive interview.

[World Bank to provide US\\$ 70 million to uplift Sri Lanka's plantations sector](#)

Colombo Page| 4th December

The World Bank will provide Sri Lanka US\$ 70 million to modernize the estates and factories of Regional Plantations Companies (RPCs), the Ministry of Plantation Industries said in a statement.

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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