

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

**February 6th, 2017 | Volume: 3 - 3/2**

[Indian automakers eye market expansion in Bangladesh](#)

Prothom Alo | 6<sup>th</sup> February  
Indian auto manufacturers have turned to Bangladesh looking for market expansion, reports the New Indian Express. Bangladesh has a growing market with sales forecast of as much as \$2.5 billion per year, said the report published on 3 February. Tata Motors, Ashok Leyland, Hero Motocorp, Bajaj, Eicher, Mahindra, TVS, Maruti made reached the capital city of Dhaka as their “capacity, competence and geographical proximity” to Bangladesh, puts them in an ideal position to meet this demand, an official in Indian High Commission was quoted to have said.

[FM Rabbani to visit Russia to discuss Kabul-Moscow cooperation](#)

Khaama Press | 5<sup>th</sup> February  
Afghanistan’s Foreign Minister Salahuddin Rabbani will visit Russia to discuss bilateral cooperation between Kabul and Moscow. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) said Minister Rabbani will visit Moscow on an official invitation from his Russian counterpart Sergei Lavrov. According to a statement by MoFA, Minister Rabbani will meet with his counterpart on Tuesday and will have in-depth discussion on various issues. The statement further added that the two sides will hold talks on political, technical, military, economic, trade, cultural issues.

[JR has said he was forced to sign deal with India](#)

Colombo Gazette | 5<sup>th</sup> February  
Sri Lanka was forced into making a deal with India as its own armed forces had twice refused to “take Jaffna”, then President J.R. Jayewardene has been quoted as saying in a declassified document, nearly 30 years after the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) was deployed in the island nation, The Hindu newspaper reported.

**AFGHANISTAN**

[Around 50 dead as avalanche hit Nuristan in East of Afghanistan](#)

Khaama Press | 5<sup>th</sup> February

At least 50 people were killed after avalanche hit a remote village in eastern province of Afghanistan, local officials said. The incident took place earlier today after Hafsi village in Bargmatal district was hit by avalanche. Provincial governor’s spokesman Hafiz Qayum said the rescue team has managed to recover dead bodies of at least 50 people so far. He said efforts are underway to recover the bodies of the remaining residents who are still trapped under the snow

[Pakistan Pushes for Improved Afghan Border Management](#)

Outlook Afghanistan/ Xinhua | 5<sup>th</sup> February

Pakistan is seeking cooperation from Afghanistan to secure their nearly 2,600 kilometer-long common border to consolidate achievements made in major military operations in tribal regions. Pakistan had long been insisting that loose border control benefits militants by allowing them to move freely across the border and carry out terrorist activities in both countries, which is a source of tension and mistrust between the two neighboring countries. The military and other forces, after conducting major operations against the Pakistani and foreign

militants in tribal regions bordering Afghanistan in recent years, have now shifted their focus to border security to stop the cross-border movement of the militants.

#### [ARG Advisor Welcomes UN's Move to Lift Sanctions on Hekmatyar](#)

Outlook Afghanistan/Tolonews | 5<sup>th</sup> February

A senior advisor to President Ashraf Ghani on Monday welcomed the United Nations' move to remove Hizb-e-Islami leader Gulbuddin Hekmatyar's name from the sanctions list and said it was a historical day for Afghanistan. Speaking at a joint press conference on Saturday afternoon in Kabul following the UN's announcement earlier in the day, Akram Khpalwak said government is currently focusing on securing the release of Hizb-e-Islami prisoners and paving the ground to take in return Hizb-e-Islami refugees. In addition, he called on all other insurgent groups to join the peace process – as did Hizb-e-Islami last year.

### **BANGLADESH**

#### [ADB outlines Bangladesh's future challenges in development effectiveness brief](#)

bdnews24 | 5<sup>th</sup> February

Bangladesh still faces challenges in creating enough productive jobs to reduce poverty and unlock the country's development potential, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) says in its 'development effectiveness brief 2017'. "Easing infrastructure constraints is an important priority. Enhancing the quality of the workforce is another. Other priorities and challenges include improving the business climate and reducing the costs of doing business," it pointed out as the future challenges of Bangladesh. The report released on its website also acknowledged Bangladesh's socio-economic gains with a steady rise in its gross domestic product, boost in social development, and meeting the Millennium Development Goal of halving the incidence of poverty in 1990–2015.

#### [Rohingya Relocation: Dhaka seeks help; diplomats sceptic](#)

The Daily Star | 6<sup>th</sup> February

The government yesterday sought financial support from the United Nations and other international partners for relocating tens of thousands of Rohingya Muslims, who had fled ethnic cleansing in Myanmar, to Thengar Char in Hatiya in the Bay of Bengal. In response, the diplomatic community in Dhaka suggested that the Rohingyas in Cox's Bazar should not be moved against their will and that the place chosen for relocation was uninhabitable and prone to floods.

#### [Government tosses ways to recover heist money fully](#)

The Financial Express | 6<sup>th</sup> February

The government is considering taking recourse to fit ways to recover the rest of Bangladesh's money stuck up in the Philippines after a trans-national cyber-heist, the finance minister indicated. "The central bank has been asked to give opinion on how the remaining money can be brought back. We want to discuss what can be done," Mr AMA Muhith told newsmen at the secretariat Sunday, a year after US\$101 million was stolen from Bangladesh Bank's account with the US Federal Reserve Bank in New York.

### **BHUTAN**

#### [All-time low inflation rate in 2016](#)

Kuesnel Online | 3<sup>rd</sup> February

The economy saw one of the lowest inflation rates last year at 3.22 percent. This figure is the lowest annual inflation the National Statistical Bureau (NSB) recorded since 2004. However, the lower inflation rate will not translate into an absolute decrease in price of goods and services. It entails a slower rhythm to the price increase. From 8.8 percent in 2011, inflation hit an all-time high of 11 percent in 2012. After a persistent figure of about 8 percent for the two successive years, it came down to 4.58 percent in 2015 on the back of a fall in global fuel prices.

#### [No immediate pay raise: PM](#)

Kuensel Online | 4<sup>th</sup> February

The government does not have any plans to raise the salaries for civil servants for now, said Prime Minister Tshering Tobgay at the Meetthe-Press session in Thimphu yesterday. He said inflation has been falling and is at its lowest in many years. "We are happy with the dedication and handwork of the civil servants," he said. The

Prime Minister said that the government hasn't received complaints from civil servants. "There is no immediate plan to increase civil servants' salaries," he said.

## MALDIVES

### [MDP to boycott presidential address to parliament](#)

Sun Online | 5<sup>th</sup> February

Opposition party, Maldivian Democratic Party (MDP) has announced it will be boycotting the People's Majlis sitting scheduled for February 6, during which President Abdulla Yameen Abdul Gayoom will be reading his presidential address. MDP's spokesperson, North Maafannu MP Imthiyaz Fahmy spoke to "Sun" and said the party's parliamentary group had voted not attend the sitting. He said the decision was made because MDP did not want to lie to cover up President Yameen's "unconstitutional actions".

### [Ministry presses for place in top 50 of Ease of Doing Business Index](#)

Sun Online | 5<sup>th</sup> February

Ministry of Economic Development has announced it has started efforts to place Maldives in the top 50 of World Bank's annual Ease of Doing Business Index. Maldives dropped six ranks to place in 135th in the latest Ease of Doing Business Index, released in October, 2016. National Trade Facilitation Committee met for discussions with Maldivian law firms this Sunday morning regarding what the government can do to collaborate with the law firms to push up the ranking.

## MYANMAR

### [Myanmar, Thailand sign cooperation deals to boost private sectors](#)

Mizzima | 4<sup>th</sup> February

Myanmar and Thailand have signed 16 bilateral cooperation documents between private sectors in four fields for mutually beneficial economic development, the Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry (UMFCCI) announced Friday. The cooperation documents were signed by UMFCCI and Federation of Thai Industries on Thursday, aimed at enhancing the development of Myanmar's small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and trade, industrial businesses, human resources as well as implementation of digital economic platform.

### [Myanmar and Cambodia to strengthen ties](#)

Mizzima | 6<sup>th</sup> February

Myanmar and Cambodia have agreed to strengthen ties by focusing on both nations' tourism and education sectors, the Khmer Times reported on 6 February. In a meeting between Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen and Myanmar's President U Htin Kyaw, the pair discussed establishing tour packages between Siem Reap, home of World Heritage listed Angkor Wat, as well Myanmar's Bagan, a city with the densest concentration of Buddhist temples on the banks of the Irrawaddy river, the report said.

## NEPAL

### [Labor ministry received threat phone calls: Minister Gurung](#)

My Republica | 5<sup>th</sup> February

Minister for Labor and Employment Suryaman Gurung has accepted that free visa and air ticket system could not be implemented and managed. Speaking with media in Chitwan, he said that a gang is actively involved to prevent the implementation of the free visa and air ticket system.

### [Pact signed to open Nepali goods stalls in sister cities](#)

The Kathmandu Post | 6<sup>th</sup> February

The Industry Ministry and Kathmandu Metropolitan City (KMC) on Sunday signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to establish stalls showcasing Nepali products in Kathmandu's sister cities abroad in a bid to promote exports. The outlets where goods will be displayed and sold are planned to be opened in 16 countries including the US, Japan, China, India, Myanmar and South Korea.

### [Bimstec prep meeting begins](#)

The Kathmandu Post | 6<sup>th</sup> February

The seventh meeting of Bimstec Joint Working Group on the establishment of Bimstec Permanent Secretariat

began in Kathmandu on Sunday. Chief of the Regional Organisations Division of the Ministry and leader of Nepali delegation Mani Prasad Bhattarai is leading the meeting. Other members of the Nepali delegation include officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Prime Minister's Office and the Ministry of Finance.

## PAKISTAN

### [PM's top aide won Trump team pledges last year](#)

Express Tribune | 6<sup>th</sup> February

Almost a month before US President Donald Trump formally took charge, the prime minister's special assistant on foreign affairs travelled to Washington as part of Pakistan's efforts to establish early contacts with the incoming administration. After spending over a week in the US capital, Tariq Fatemi returned home without being able to meet any senior officials of Trump's transition team – at least that is what was reported at the time. PM's aide, US envoy chalk out road map for meetings. It has now emerged that Fatemi quietly met at least two senior members of Trump's transition team. Those meetings were not publicly acknowledged at the Trump administration's request, officials familiar with the development told The Express Tribune.

### [Real estate sector set to go north on back of CPEC, Trump](#)

Express Tribune | 6<sup>th</sup> February

Pakistan's property market has attracted billions of rupees over the last three years because of extraordinary returns. These returns come on the back of differences in demand-supply, speculative trading in the real estate sector and its ability to be a safe-haven for tax evaders. The growth story was broadly intact until the middle of 2016 when the government brought in new regulations. However, despite a major turmoil, the sector succeeded in getting concessions from the government and the market rebounded at the end of the year. Improving security situation and macroeconomic indicators have played a key role in fuelling the property boom.

### [Egypt's inclusion to boost CPEC, says NA speaker](#)

Express Tribune | 6<sup>th</sup> February

Egypt's participation in the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) will assign substantive meaning to the 'transcontinental game-changer' project by connecting this region with Africa, Europe and the Middle East, National Assembly Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq told Egyptian Ambassador to Pakistan Sherif Shaheen. Talking to media persons after his meeting with the Egyptian envoy, who called on him the other day at the Parliament House, the speaker remarked that Egypt's proposal to join CPEC vindicated Allama Iqbal's allusion to integration: 'from the shores of Nile to the soil of Kashghar', albeit in a different context.

### [Pakistan's net public debt crosses Rs18 trillion mark](#)

Dawn | 6<sup>th</sup> February

Pakistan's net public debt has crossed the Rs18.28 trillion mark, rising about 35pc during the tenure of the ruling Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N). This was reported by the ministry of finance, in response to a question from Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) MNA Shahida Rehmani in the National Assembly last week. "The volume of net public debt as on Sept 30, 2016 was Rs18,277.6 billion," the ministry's response said. Total public debt stood at Rs13.48tr at the end of fiscal year 2012-13 – almost three years ago. The major contribution to the increase in net public debt came from an almost 40pc rise in domestic debt, which rose from Rs8.686tr at the end of 2013 to Rs12.14tr at the end of the first quarter of the current fiscal year (FY 2016-17).

### [Pakistan turning into a water-scarce country, say experts](#)

Dawn | 6<sup>th</sup> February

Leading experts on water resources are of the view that there is not sufficient awareness among the policy-makers of the impending water crisis in Pakistan, which is posing a threat to the country's security, stability and environmental sustainability. Former chairman of the Water and Power Development Authority (Wapda) Shamsul Mulk highlighted water security issues discussed in a United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) report, 'Development Advocate Pakistan'.

## SRI LANKA

### [Sri Lanka's Footwear and Leather exports increase by 28 percent in 2016](#)

Colombo Page | 4<sup>th</sup> February

Sri Lanka's footwear and leather exports have increased by a strong 28 percent in 2016, Minister of Industry and Commerce Rishad Bathiudeen said. "Our footwear and leather exports in 2016 increased by 28% in comparison to 2015 revenues to \$140 Million showing strong growth trends," the Minister said addressing the opening of Sri Lanka's Annual Footwear Leather Exhibition on Friday the BMICH in Colombo.

#### [China informed no room for military facility in Hambantota](#)

Colombo Gazette| 4<sup>th</sup> February

Sri Lanka will not allow China to set up a military facility at any port in the country, the Sri Lankan ambassador to Beijing said on Saturday, adding that Chinese investors have been informed that no civilian facility will be allowed to be used militarily, the Hindustan Times reported.

#### [Sri Lanka securities regulator introduces new fee structure for share transactions at Colombo Bourse](#)

Colombo Page| 6<sup>th</sup> February

Sri Lanka's securities regulator, Security Exchange commission (SEC) has issued a directive introducing a new fee structure for all share transactions of Colombo Stock Exchange (CSE) and Central Depository Systems (CDS) effective from next month.

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### ***About Ananta Aspen Centre***

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