

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

**March 6th, 2017 | Volume: 3 - 3/3**

[Atmar leaves for India to participate in 19th ASC](#)

Afghanistan Times | 5<sup>th</sup> March

The National Security Advisor to the President Mohammad Haneef Atmar on Sunday flew to India with aim of participating in the 19th Asian Security Conference (ASC), his office said. A press statement issued by National Security Advisor Office, said that during this three-day official visit, Atmar would participate in the 19th Asian Security Conference on combating terrorism evolving an Asian response arranged by Institute of Defense Studies and Analyses (IDSA) of India.

[5 Pakistan Army soldiers killed as militants attack check posts in Mohmand Agency](#)

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

Five Pakistan Army soldiers were killed in cross fire as militants from Afghanistan attacked three border posts in Mohmand Agency on Sunday night. The military's media wing, Inter Services Public Relations, said, "Last night terrorists from across the border attempted physical attack on three Pakistan border posts in Mohmand Agency." "Effective presence, vigilance and response repulsed terrorists' attempt," the statement added. Over 10 militants were reportedly killed.

[Tamil Nadu CM calls for a 'workable diplomatic arrangement' between Indian and Sri Lanka for fishermen](#)

Colombo Page | 6 March 2017

Following the arrest of 45 Tamil Nadu fishermen by the Sri Lankan Navy within a span of only four days, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Edappadi Palaniswami has called on the central Indian government to put in place a 'workable diplomatic arrangement' so that the Tamil Nadu fishermen can continue fishing without harassment from Sri Lankan Navy.

**AFGHANISTAN**

[Anti-Daesh Summit in Washington on March 21](#)

Outlook Afghanistan/ Pajhwok | 4<sup>th</sup> March

The Trump administration plans to hold an anti-Daesh (Islamic State) summit in Washington on March 21, a Saudi newspaper reported on Saturday. The Arab News quoted Washington-based diplomatic sources as saying administration officials were discussing plans for the summit with core members of the anti-Daesh coalition. More than 60 countries are part of the coalition that holds counter-ISIS meetings every three to four months. "We are continuing with that schedule and planning the next one for March....," a State Department official told the daily.

[Barikab Economic and Development Township to attract \\$200m investment](#)

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

A major contract for the establishment of Barikab Economic and Development Township was signed in the presence of President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani on Saturday as the Afghan officials are optimistic that the project

will attract up to \$200 million in investment. The head of the capital development zone independent directorate Engineer Elham Omar Hotaki said the township has been designed for up to one thousand factories. Hotaki further added that the township once established will create jobs for around 35,000 people and will attract up to \$200 million in investment. He said the government will invest around \$15 million which will have a turn over \$28 million over a period of three years.

#### [USAID launches \\$70m program to help schoolchildren](#)

Afghanistan Times|5<sup>th</sup> March

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in close collaboration with the Afghanistan Ministry of Education (MoE) announced Sunday the official launch of Afghan Children Read (ACR), a five-year project in Early Grade Reading (EGR) for primary grades 1 to 3. “Despite the gains made in education in Afghanistan, access to quality education remains a challenge. To help reverse the situation, USAID is investing \$70 million in the ACR Project. This project will help to improve early grade reading skills for primary level students, boys and girls, in grades 1-3 in formal and community based education (CBE) schools. The ACR project will enable the MoE to utilize the best practices of EGR standards towards improving the primary level student’s literacy and learning skills at large,” the USAID said in a statement.

#### [Durand Line will remain line; Pakistan has no legal authority to dictate term on Durand Line: Karzai](#)

Afghanistan Times|5<sup>th</sup> March

Reacting to the merger of Federally Administered Tribal Area (FATA) with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the former President Hamid Karzai has said that the government of Pakistan has no legal authority to dictate terms on the Durand Line, a de facto border between the two states. “The government of Pakistan has no legal authority to dictate terms on the Durand Line. While we wish freedom for the people of FATA from Frontier Crimes Regulations (FCR),” Karzai said in his twitter account. He furthered, “and other repressive measures, we remind the government of Pakistan that Afghanistan hasn’t and will not recognize the Durand Line.”

## **BANGLADESH**

#### [Elections in 14 upazilas, 4 municipalities underway in Bangladesh](#)

Prothom Alo| 6<sup>th</sup> March

Voting to 14 upazila councils and four municipalities in different districts began on Monday morning amid tight security. The balloting began at 8:00am and will continue till 4:00pm without any break. The polling is being held in three upazilas—Osmaninagar in Sylhet, Guimara in Khagrachari and Jagannathpur in Sunamganj—for the posts of chairman, vice-chairman and vice-chairman (woman reserve seat), while by-polls to 11 upazilas for vacant posts.

#### [BNP won't join polls under Hasina: Gayeshwar](#)

Prothom Alo| 5<sup>th</sup> March

Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) standing committee member Gayeshwar Chandra Roy has said the BNP will not take part in the next general elections if it is held under Bangladesh Awami League (AL) president Sheikh Hasina. Addressing a discussion meeting in the capital on Sunday, Gayeshwar said the party would much rather wait until Doomsday for a party-neutral administration.

## **BHUTAN**

#### [New UN res rep presents credentials to foreign minister](#)

Kuensel Online| 2<sup>nd</sup> March

The new UN resident coordinator and UN Development Programme (UNDP) resident representative, Gerald Daly, presented his credentials to foreign minister Damcho Dorji today, according to a foreign affairs ministry press release. Before his appointment to Bhutan as the UN resident coordinator and UNDP resident

representative, Gerald Daly worked as a policy advisor and team leader with the UN Development Operations Coordination Office in New York from 2011. He has also served as the World Food Programme country director and representative in Thimphu from February 2003 to June 2007.

## MALDIVES

### [Heavy rainfall results in flooding, extensive damage to Kulhudhuffushi](#)

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

Heavy rainfall over H. Dh. Kulhudhuffushi for four straight hours last Saturday caused flooding and extensive damage to the island. President of Kulhudhuffushi Council, Ali Mohamed reported this Sunday that heavy rain started falling on the island at approximately 8:30 pm on Saturday and continued non-stop for about four hours. Ali Mohamed said that the rain cause flooding on the streets, with the floodwater entering some of the houses and damaging household items.

## MYANMAR

### [Total, PTTEP equal in Myanmar project](#)

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

Myanmar has given approval for Total E&P Myanmar Co to hold a 50% stake in the Myanmar MD-7 project in which PTT Exploration and Production Plc (PTTEP) has the other 50%. Total was experienced in worldwide petroleum exploration and development and it will help to reduce risk and add value to the project, said Somporn Vongvuthipornchai, PTTEP president and chief executive officer. PTTEP through PTTEP South Asia Ltd will remain the key operator in the project located offshore in Moattama Basin, covering 7,798 square kilometres, he said.

### [Group of NGOs call for Commission of Inquiry into situation in Rakhine](#)

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

A group of NGOs including Amnesty International, Fortify Rights, Christian Solidarity Worldwide and Burma Campaign UK is calling on the UN for a Commission of Inquiry into the situation in Myanmar's Rakhine State. Thirteen NGOs signed a letter to the United Nations this week to investigate what they claimed were serious human rights violations in Rakhine State.

## NEPAL

### [China hands over Araniko highway to Nepal after repair](#)

RSS / My Republica | 4<sup>th</sup> March

China has handed over the Araniko highway to Nepal after repairing it. The 114 kilometres long highway from Kathmandu to Tatopani of Sindhupalchok district was damaged at five different places by the April 25, 2015 devastating earthquake, disrupting vehicular movement.

### [Indian Fin Min pledges exchange facility](#)

My Republica | 4<sup>th</sup> March

Ending long-running uncertainty over the fate of demonetized Indian banknotes that Nepal holds, Indian Minister for Finance and Corporate Affairs, Arun Jaitley, has said that his government would settle the issue after finalizing exchange modality.

### ['Having India, China as its neighbours great opportunity for Nepal'](#)

The Kathmandu Post | 5<sup>th</sup> March

Nepal's Ambassador to India Deep Kumar Upadhyay has remarked that geographic location of China and India as Nepal's neighbour is a great opportunity for the country. Addressing the concluding session of a three-day

interaction programme on 'Nepal India relations: Economic Development and Cooperation' jointly organised by Policy Research Foundation (NITI Foundation) Nepal, International Cooperation Council India and Nepal India Cooperation Forum, Birgunj, Ambassador Upadhyay said Nepal had already stepped into seizing such opportunity for economic benefits.

## PAKISTAN

### [Pakistan warns Trump's generals: 'Sort out Afghanistan mess or Russia will intervene'](#)

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

Pakistan's military has warned Donald Trump's new generals that they face a 'total mess' in Afghanistan unless the US and UK can halt the advance of IS and the Taliban. In an interview with the Telegraph, a senior Pakistani army source said the collapse in security since the draw-down of Western troops from Afghanistan meant the West now faced 'losing control'. If IS and the Taliban continued to gain strength, he added, it could tempt Russia to stage a Syrian-style intervention, this time on the pretext of protecting its 'backyard' in Central Asia. The source within the Pakistani army said that in recent weeks, high-level discussions had taken place with both Resolute Support Mission commander Gen John Nicholson and James Mattis, the retired US general appointed by Mr Trump as Secretary of Defence.

### [Days of isolation over: PM](#)

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

Pakistan's days of isolation are over, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif declared as the final of the Pakistan Super League T20 tournament was held successfully with the participation of foreign players on Sunday. "Over the past four years, we have become stronger, safer and more stable, creating an environment conducive to national aspirations," he said in a statement issued by the Prime Minister's House. "Against all the odds, all the fears and divisions, we have risen stronger, more united and more prosperous on the night of the PSL final. Today, Pakistan has proved to the world that our days of isolation are over."

### [ECO energy network: A welcome idea to bridge deficit](#)

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

There is now no iota of doubt that Pakistan is increasingly focusing on Central Asian states which are a hub of energy and trade. It needs to explore this region to give a boost to dwindling exports and meet energy needs. Geographically, Pakistan is close to Central Asia than Europe. Central Asia may also become a gateway to Russia and Europe. The recent 13th Economic Cooperation Organisation (ECO) summit in Islamabad put greater emphasis on three aspects which included setting up a regional energy network, integrated water management and controlling and coping with impact of climate change. Pakistan is also facing these challenges and can take benefit of relevant initiatives.

### [Pakistan loses \\$10bn a year to money laundering](#)

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

The international community loses hundreds of billions of dollars every year due to trade-based money laundering, says a US report which identifies China, Russia, Mexico and India as the top four sources of illicit financial outflows. The practice also costs Pakistan more than \$10bn a year. The US State Department's International Narcotics Control Strategy Report, released a couple of days ago, refers to TBML (trade-based money laundering), the process by which criminals use a legitimate trade to disguise their criminal proceeds from their unscrupulous sources.

### [German bank questions claim of power sector turnaround](#)

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

A German state-owned development bank has questioned the power ministry's claim of turning around the power sector through efficient generation and effective control, terming it "politically influenced". In a policy paper released here, the KfW acknowledged that Pakistan's power generation had improved in recent years, but asserted that it came from three new power plants initiated before the current government came to power in 2013. Conversely, the bank said, three major public sector power plants — Muzaffargarh, Jamshoro and Guddu —

cumulatively underperformed over the past three years and produced fewer electricity units last year, compared with 2010 and 2013.

## SRI LANKA

### [U.S. Navy's 12th Pacific Partnership mission in Sri Lanka](#)

Colombo Page | 5 March 2017

The U.S. Navy's Pacific Partnership will engage in Sri Lanka for the first time in the 12-year history of the mission making the mission's initial outreach to South Asia. The U.S. Navy is partnering with personnel from Australia, Japan, South Korea, and the UK to help improve disaster response preparedness in Sri Lanka, Malaysia, and Vietnam during this year's 12th annual Pacific Partnership mission, beginning March 1.

### [Sri Lankan investors pledge US\\$ 500 mn investment in Nepal](#)

Colombo Page | 5 March 2017

Sri Lankan investors have pledged to invest a total of US\$ 500 million in Nepal at the Nepal Investment Summit that concluded on Friday. The Himalayan country received a total pledge of \$13.52 billion from seven countries at the two-day Nepal Investment Summit 2017 held from March 2-3 in Kathmandu. According to Investment Board Nepal (IBN) the investment climate in Nepal has improved following the endorsement of a number of new laws passed recently by the Nepal government.

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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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