

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

February 13th, 2017 | Volume: 3 - 6/2

[Frustration in UAE as Kabul thwarts bombing probe](#)

Express Tribune | 13th February
Afghanistan's government has not yet accepted senior UAE security officials' repeated requests to question the Kandahar police chief and his associates about last month's deadly bombing which killed five Emirati diplomats and seven other people. UAE Ambassador Juma Mohammed Abdullah al Kaabi and Kandahar Governor Dr Humayun Azizi were among the scores injured in the attack. Officials had later confirmed that the explosives were taken inside the governor's compound, a comprehensive security zone, and were hidden in a sofa. No one could have entered the governor's office without a thorough search and high-level clearance. No group has claimed responsibility for the attack so far. Two UAE teams, comprising senior security officials, had been in Kandahar and Kabul to investigate the bombing that shocked the Gulf state.

[Afghan forces with US air support launch another offensive against ISIS](#)

Khaama Press | 12th February
The Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF) launched another major offensive against the loyalists of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) terrorist group in eastern Nangarhar province of Afghanistan. The local government and Security officials informed regarding the launch of the offensive during a press conference today. Provincial governor's spokesman Ataullah Khogyani said the offensive "Shaheen-28" was launched after the approval of President Ghani was attained following the decisions of the provincial military council. Khogyani further added that the Afghan forces will also receive air support from the US forces based in Afghanistan

[Dhaka, Delhi may sign dozens of deals, MoUs during PM's visit](#)

UNB/ The Financial Express | 12th February
Bangladesh and India have finalised dozens of draft documents -- deals and MoUs -- to take into consideration for signing during Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's expected visit to New Delhi, reports UNB. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is likely to pay a visit to its next door neighbour within a couple of months, and the two countries are working on dates convenient to both sides, officials at the Foreign Ministry said.

AFGHANISTAN

[Ghani's Assurance over Polls Next Year Sparks Backlash](#)

Outlook Afghanistan/ Tolonews | 13th February

The Independent Election Commission (IEC) on Sunday reported that President Ashraf Ghani has assured donors that parliamentary elections will be held next year, something election observers and monitoring groups believe is not possible. The election commission has drafted a proposal about elections and will soon share it with government in order to confirm the timeframe for parliamentary elections, said IEC spokesman Gula Jan Abdul Badi Sayyad. Observers and election monitoring institutions have responded to Ghani's assurances with dismay,

saying that it would be impossible for the IEC to conduct the poll next year due to technical issues and a slow “working pace”.

[Steps Taken to Combat Corruption in Military Institutions: MoD](#)

Outlook Afghanistan/ Tolonews|13th February

The Ministry of Defense (MoD) on Sunday said that it has authorized special military courts to investigate alleged involvement of military personnel in corruption schemes and embezzlement. The investigations by military attorneys will also take in violation of professional rules, misconduct, misuse of official authorities and embezzlement. The number of corruption cases relating to military personnel is estimated to be more than 1,000 cases, said a defense ministry spokesman Mohammad Radmanish. “According to my information, these cases are related to soldiers including generals and the number of these cases are more than one thousand cases, we have achieved significant results from fighting corruption,” said Radmanish.

[Anti-Daesh Offensive Kicks off in Nangarhar](#)

Outlook Afghanistan/ Pajhwok|13th February

Afghan security forces backed by US air support on Sunday launched a military operation codenamed ‘Shaheen-25’ against Daesh or Islamic State militant group in eastern Nangarhar province, officials said. On the day one of the operation, provincial government and military spokesmen briefed media persons about the objectives of the operation in Jalalabad, the provincial capital. Afghan National Army’s 201st Selab Military Corps spokesman Maj. Shirin Aqa Faqiri said the operation was started from Kot and Haska Mena districts and would be gradually extended to other districts.

[Female employees to decrease further, if harassment continues: MoWA warns](#)

Afghanistan Times|12th February

The Ministry of Women’s Affairs (MoWA) on Sunday expressed deepest concern over rampant of harassment on women at workplace in governmental and non-governmental offices. It said that if the harassment did not control, women employees would be decreased in governmental offices. “Harassment on women at workplace has been increased enough, and it would lead into reduction of female employees from the current 22 percent to 21 or 20,” Deputy of MoWA, Spoghmai Wardak said. Speaking at a press conference titled “policy reforms for women in government,” she said that the ministry in cooperation with the related organs planned to enlarge women presence in government organizations to 30 percent.

BANGLADESH

[World Bank asked to apologise to Bangladesh PM for Padma Bridge graft allegation](#)

bdnews24 | 12th February

Law Minister Anisul Huq has asked the World Bank to apologise to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina for bringing charges of corruption in the Padma Bridge project. He raised the demand during a discussion in Parliament on Sunday after a Canadian court acquitted three business executives of charges of planning to bribe Bangladeshi officials to get the Padma Bridge job.

BHUTAN

[Spouting structural imbalance in the economy](#)

Kuensel Online| 10th February

Having realised economic growth of 7.6 percent in the past three decades, Bhutan is the one of the most successful countries, said senior economist and resident representative of the World Bank, Yoichiro Ishihara, at a panel discussion following the Launch of economic early warning system yesterday. Notwithstanding the fact that Bhutan runs the highest current account deficit in the world, which is around 30 percent of the GDP, the country is confronted with a structural imbalance. This is because the economic growth is being driven by hydropower and the public sector.

[Quandary over resignation of elected leaders](#)

Kuensel Online| 11th February

The resignation of a gup last December has once again generated much discourse on whether elected leaders or

representatives can be allowed to leave so easily in absence of clear legislation. The gup of Dangchu gewog resigned to leave for Australia about two months after he was elected.

MALDIVES

[Economic Ministry to launch online payment system](#)

Sun Online | 12th February

Ministry of Economic Development has announced it will be launching an online payment system for its services in coming March. Registrar of Companies, Mariyam Wisam said Ministry of Economic Development received a large volume of applications for its services through its online business portal, but that customers were still required to physically go to the ministry headquarters to make the payment.

[11,000 new members join Progressive Party of Maldives](#)

Sun Online | 12th February

11,000 signed up to join Progressive Party of Maldives (PPM) from Male' City and the atolls during the campaign by the ruling party to boost its numbers. The event was run from Thaaajuddin School on Saturday by key PPM activists, as well as Cabinet ministers, members of People's Majlis, and heads of State corporations.

MYANMAR

[Curfew in Maungdaw shortened](#)

Mizzima | 11th February

Maungdaw District General Administration Department made an announcement on February 9 that the dusk-to-dawn curfew imposed in Maungdaw under Section 144 of the Criminal Procedural Code has been shortened to 9 pm from previous 7 pm. The announcement shortened the curfew order imposed in Maungdaw from the previous 7 pm to 6 am to the current 9 pm to 5 am.

[Shan National Day held at Loi Tai Leng](#)

Mizzima | 11th February

The Restoration Council of Shan State/Shan State Army (RCSS/SSA) celebrated Shan National Day, on 7 February, as they always do, with a huge military parade at their mountain base of Loi Tai Leng. This year was a special year, because it marked 70 years since the original signing of the Panglong Agreement on 12 February 1947 by General Aung San for the government and representatives of the Shan, Kachin and Chin ethnic groups in the southern Shan State town of Panglong.

NEPAL

[Nepal-India bilateral meeting on PTA begins today](#)

My Republica | 13th February

Nepal-India Joint Working Group (JWG) and Joint Steering Committee (JSC) meetings are beginning in Kathmandu from Monday. The two-day bilateral meeting on implementation of Power Trade Agreement (PTA) is expected to discuss on ways to bring three recently completed transmission line projects -- Dhalkebar-Muzaffarpur, Raxaul-Parwanipur and Kataiya-Kushaha -- into operation.

PAKISTAN

[Haidri visa refusal tied to Obama, not Trump policy](#)

Express Tribune | 13th February

A day after the Senate deputy chairman's visit to the United States was called off after he was denied a visa, another senator revealed on Sunday that his visa application too was turned down without a valid reason. Hafiz Hamdullah, who like Abdul Ghafoor Haidri also belongs to the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam Fazl, said he had to wait in a queue for over four hours inside the US Embassy's consular section before being told he could not be granted a visa. The incident, according to the aggrieved politician, dated back to the last week of October, just days before the US presidential elections.

[TTP publishes second issue of Vogue-style magazine](#)

Express Tribune | 13th February

In an effort to promote its ideology and update supporters about its latest actions in the country, the Tehreek-e-

Taliban Pakistan (TTP) has brought out a high gloss, Vogue-style magazine, The Express Tribune has learnt. The first issue of Mujjallah magazine was published in November 2016 and reportedly distributed in Pakistan sometime in December last year. The inaugural issue had 56 pages. The second issue printed a couple of weeks ago is slicker and thicker and has more pages than the first one.

[Military favours 'mainstreaming' of Fata, says Bajwa](#)

Dawn|13th February

Chief of the Army Staff Gen Qamar Javed Bajwa has said that the military will support the government's efforts to "mainstream" the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (Fata). He said this while talking to field commanders and soldiers during a visit to South Waziristan on Sunday, according to a press release issued by the Inter Services Public Relations. He visited predominantly Mehsud tribe areas, where repatriation of displaced families is under way.

[Sindh needs new law to set up neutral police force, says IGP](#)

Dawn|13th February

Inspector General of Police (IGP) A.D. Khowaja has said Sindh needs a new law to establish a 'neutral police force' in order to ensure efficient policing with the help of the public. The IGP said at the launch of a divisional women protection cell set up in the DIG's office on Sunday that a draft law in this connection had already been submitted to the government for consideration. He reiterated the comments he had made earlier at the Karachi Chamber of Commerce and Industry that when policemen were being killed in the 1990s, the members of civil society did not raise voice over it. As a result, assistance had to be sought from the Rangers to rein in the situation, he said.

[Discos, NTDCL projects may be included in CPEC](#)

Dawn|13th February

Several projects of power distribution companies (Discos) and the National Transmission and Dispatch Company Limited (NTDCL) are likely to be made part of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) in future as a joint working group comprising senior officials from the two countries is working on the plan. Details about the functions and scope of work of Discos and the NTDCL and their mega projects planned to be completed over next five years have been shared with the Chinese in various sessions of a high-level meeting held in Islamabad a couple of days ago, it is learnt.

SRI LANKA

[Sri Lanka envoy seeks compatriots' support for Saudi authorities to implement Vision 2030](#)

Colombo Page| 13th February

Sri Lanka's Ambassador to Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Azmi Thassim has urged the Sri Lankan community in the Kingdom to cooperate with Saudi authorities to implement Vision 2030 and the National Transformation Program (NTP) 2020.

[Bangladesh to sign free trade agreement with Sri Lanka soon](#)

Colombo Page| 12th February

A free trade agreement (FTA) between Bangladesh and Sri Lanka is currently being discussed to boost the bilateral trade and the governments will sign the agreement soon, Bangladesh Commerce Minister Tofail Ahmed has said.

[Sri Lanka accused of violating commitment to UN resolution](#)

Colombo Gazette| 13th February

Sri Lanka has been accused of violating its commitment to the UN resolution on Sri Lanka adopted by the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva. The International Truth and Justice Project (ITPJ) said that at least one alleged perpetrator of torture named in a UN report has been appointed to the body in Sri Lanka supposed to protect victims and witnesses, known as the National Authority for Victim and Witness Protection.

[Sri Lanka Navy takes part in Pakistan's AMAN-17 multinational naval exercise](#)

Colombo Gazette| 12th February

Sri Lanka Navy is taking part in Pakistan's AMAN-17 multinational naval exercise kicked off on February 10 in the North Arabian Sea in Karachi. The multinational naval exercise is held from February 10 to 14 with the

participation of 37 countries. Nine nations including Australia, China, Indonesia, Turkey, Sri Lanka, the United Kingdom, the United States, Japan and Russia are participating with warships or aircraft.

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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