

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

March 14, 2018 | Volume - 4 - 05/03

[Mattis meets President Ghani during his visit to Kabul](#)

Khaama Press| 13th March

The US Secretary of Defense James Mattis met with President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani after arriving in Kabul during an unannounced visit. The Office of the President, ARG Palace, said the two sides discussed the fight against terrorism in the region, counter-narcotics efforts, and security of the upcoming elections. President Ghani said the new strategy of the United States for South Asia has impacts on regional situation, specifically paving the way for further concentration on peace effort and for this reason the Afghan government has invited the Taliban to negotiations for peace as well as an offer was made to Pakistan on government-to-government level talks for reconciliation.

[Minister Sagala Ratnayaka criticizes ban on social media](#)

Colombo Page| 13th March

Sri Lanka's Minister of Youth Affairs and Southern Development Minister Sagala Ratnayaka criticized the government for continuing the ban on social media saying that blocking Facebook and messaging apps long term is not an option in present times. In a hard-hitting statement on Twitter, Minister Sagala Ratnayake said the social media Social media ban makes a negative impact on a wide range of industries.

[Indian government starts removing temporary bridge over Mahakali River](#)

The Himalayan Times | 13th March

The Indian government has started to remove the temporary bridges that were constructed over the Mahakali River without receiving the consent of the Government of Nepal. According to Inspector Lal Bahadur Saud, Chief at the Dhangadhi District Police Office, two wooden bridges have already been removed in Rapla area of Byas Municipality in the district. The temporary bridges joining Ghatibagadh of Rapla in Nepal and Maalpa in India, and Dopakhe of Nepal and Chhankan of India were removed by the Indian side, informed police.

AFGHANISTAN

[Right to Information: The foundation for Anti-corruption Initiatives](#)

Daily Outlook| March 14, 2018

The right to information is a fundamental human right that enables people to have access to information. It is a multi-dimensional instrument that serves both governments and citizens equally. Thus, the right to information is a fundamental tool to ensure anti-corruption measures in the country through making accountable the government authorities; it facilitates the meaningful participation of the citizens with the government and ensures that the citizens have access to information they need. Further, the right to information helps the journalists in

preparing investigative reports from different projects, enhance public participation in political and other decision making processes and provide a clearer understanding of government policies and strategies.

[Afghan Youth Involvement in Political Decision Making: Main Barriers and Drivers](#)

Daily Outlook | March 13, 2018

According to the new estimations, nearly half of Afghanistan's population is under 18, making Afghanistan one of the largest youth bulges in the world. Considering the current situation of Afghanistan and the ongoing conflict in the country, youth can play a constructive role in solving the numerous problems Afghanistan faces because many of these problems have root in the traditional norms and values of the Afghan society. While the Afghan youth either embrace the democratic norms and values or at least can be integrated in this process because they can change their mindset and accept the democratic norms and values easily.

BANGLADESH

[SC stays Khaleda's bail in Zia Orphanage Trust graft case till Sunday](#)

The Daily Star | 14th March

The Supreme Court today stayed till next Sunday the High Court order that granted bail to BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia in Zia Orphanage Trust graft case. A four-member bench of the Appellate Division of the SC led by Chief Justice Syed Mahmud Hossain passed the stay order following two separate petitions filed by the Anti-Corruption Commission and government seeking the stay on the HC order on Khaleda's bail. The apex court also asked the ACC and government to file two separate leave-to-appeal petitions with the court by Sunday challenging the HC order on bail of Khaleda.

[Bangladesh, Singapore ink MoUs on air service, PPP](#)

The Financial Express | 12th March

Bangladesh has signed two Memorandum of Understanding (MoUs) on air service and public private partnership (PPP) with Singapore. The MoU was signed on Monday at the Istana, office of the President of Singapore, in the presence of the prime ministers of both countries. The Confidential MoU on Air Services between the Government of the Peoples' Republic of Bangladesh and the Government of the Republic of Singapore was signed by S M Ghulam Farooque, according to a bdnes24 report. Civil Aviation & Tourism Secretary of Bangladesh and Loh Ngai Seng, Permanent Secretary, Minister of Transport in Singapore to extend the cooperation in air service sector.

[Scores dead as US-Bangla flight crashes in Nepal with 71 onboard](#)

Dhaka Tribune | 13th March

At least 49 people were killed on Monday when a US-Bangla Airlines flight crashed in cloudy weather as it came in to land at Kathmandu's Tribhuvan International Airport (TIA). As many as 71 people, including four crew members, were on-board the Bombardier Dash 8 Q400 aircraft, of which 37 were Bangladeshis, 32 were Nepalis, one Chinese and one Maldivian nationals. Emergency services rescued 25 people from the aircraft and took them to Kathmandu Medical College and Teaching Hospital, but seven among the rescued were pronounced dead upon arrival, Reuters reported quoting TIA spokesperson Prem Nath Thakur.

BHUTAN

[OAG to review Nu 7.2M visa fees embezzlement case](#)

Kuensel | 13th March

Eight immigration officials of Paro International Airport could face criminal prosecution for allegedly embezzling visa fees. The Office of the Attorney General (OAG) is yet to review the investigation report the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) forwarded last month for probable prosecution. OAG officials said that the prosecutor, who is assigned to the case, would review the ACC's findings and recommendations and submit it to the screen corpus to determine whether it merits for prosecution. The Commission recommended the OAG to charge the eight immigration officials for committing the offence of embezzling government funds amounting to Nu 7.278 million (M) collected as visa fees. ACC's investigation covered alleged misuse of funds from January 2013 to June 2017 at the immigration office in Paro.

MALDIVES

[Government: No intention of extending state of emergency](#)

Sun Online | 13th March

Maldivian government has said that it has no intention of extending the state of emergency declared in the country. At a press conference for foreign media outlets held at the President's Office today, the Legal Affairs Minister at the President's Office, Aishath Azima Shukoor said that the government does not intend to extend the state of emergency. A state of emergency was initially declared in the Maldives on 5 February 2018 for 15 days before it was extended by another 30 days. Azima said that the state of emergency is in effect for the people who were arrested in relation to the events of 1 February 2018.

[Shainee: Government held secret talks with ex-President Nasheed](#)

Sun Online | 13th March

The Maldivian government has revealed it held secret negotiations with former Maldivian President Mohamed Nasheed regarding resumption of All-Party Talks. Speaking at a press conference at the President's Office this Monday morning, the Minister of Fisheries and Agriculture and government's Chief Negotiator for All-Party Talks, Dr. Mohamed Shainee said the government held secret negotiations with Nasheed and even exchanged documents. "We were holding negotiations with the opposition with a top independent body acting as mediator. President Nasheed was the chief negotiator. President Nasheed said he was speaking with the backing of all opposition parties," said Shainee.

MYANMAR

[Microfinance institution goes digital to educate migrant factory workers](#)

Miziima | 13th March

On the heels of a new financial product designed specifically for factory workers in Yangon's industrial zones, VisionFund Myanmar (VFM), the second largest microfinance institution in Myanmar, recently partnered with Opportunities NOW (ONOW), to launch 'Mr.Finance VFM' - a ground-breaking chatbot platform that provides user-friendly financial literacy to microfinance borrowers, VFM said in a statement. The statement continues, the innovation takes advantage of Myanmar's historic rise in smart phone adoption and clients' eagerness for cutting-edge education. The partnership between VFM and ONOW reflects core beliefs that financial health must combine financial inclusion with financial literacy. VisionFund Myanmar's Chief Operations Officer Mr. Guerol Michael Sari said, "Client education is a key strength of our organization and a core part of our mission to bring financial services to underserved clients and communities in Myanmar.

[Bomb explodes at boarding school hostel in Tigyaing](#)

Mizzima | 14th March

Sagaing Region Legislative Assembly legislator Thein Han confirmed to Mizzima that a bomb exploded on March 12 at 1 p.m. at Hpu Pwint Wai boarding school hostel run by Khin Khin in Ahletaw village, Tigyaing Township, Sagaing Region. "There was a bomb explosion at about 1 p.m. but there were no casualties," he said. Thein Han added that the local army unit and local

police force conducted search operation after the explosion and found 9 unexploded bombs in the area. Though Thein Han said someone who allegedly planted the bomb had been arrested in Shwebo but the Township police chief could not confirm this.

NEPAL

[Bangladeshi plane crashes in Nepal, killing at least 49](#)

The Himalayan Times | 12th March

At least 49 people were killed on Monday when a Bangladeshi airliner crashed in cloudy weather as it came in to land at the Nepali capital's hill-ringed airport, officials said. The chief executive officer of US-Bangla Airlines, Imran Asif, accused Kathmandu's air traffic control for giving wrong signals. But airport general manager Raj Kumar Chettri said the pilot disregarded their messages and came in from the wrong direction. Seventyone people were on board the plane arriving from Dhaka when it clipped the fence at Kathmandu and burst into flames, Chettri said. There were 33 Nepali passengers, 32 from Bangladesh, one from China and one from the Maldives.

[Eight SC justices boycott hearings](#)

The Himalayan Times | 13th March

Eight Supreme Court justices have decided to boycott court hearings, stating that Chief Justice Gopal Parajuli did not agree to stay away from adjudication as per their suggestion. The eight justices — Hari Krishna Karki, Sapana Pradhan Malla, Ananda Mohan Bhattarai, Ishwor Khatiwada, Vishwambhar Prasad Shrestha, Anil Kumar Sinha, Dipak Raj Joshi and Prakash Singh Raut — did not take part in any of the hearings today. Chief Justice Parajuli had fixed 11 hearings for today, but none of them involved Justice Cholendra Shamsheer JB Rana. Yesterday, Justice Rana had boycotted the seven-member extended full bench, stating that CJ Parajuli should have retired on August 5, 2017, throwing the Supreme Court into a turmoil and prompting several justices to 'advise' Chief Justice Gopal Parajuli to step down.

PAKISTAN

[Wider cooperation in West Asia key to regional peace, Bajwa tells Zarif](#)

Dawn | 14th March

Army Chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa in a meeting with visiting Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif on Tuesday underscored the need for cooperation in 'West Asia' to tackle security challenges threatening the region. "Regional peace is dependent upon wider cooperation within West Asia. We all need to cooperate to root out transnational security/crimes threat," Gen Bajwa, according to army's media wing, told the visiting foreign minister who called on him at the General Headquarters on the last day of his three-day visit. Gen Bajwa, who visited Tehran late last year, is often credited for the recent improvements in Pakistan-Iran ties.

[World Bank agrees to finance rehabilitation of Sukkur Barrage](#)

The Express Tribune | 14th March

The World Bank has, in principal, agreed to finance the rehabilitation of the Sukkur Barrage and has asked the provincial government to submit the project's PC-1. The decision was taken on Tuesday in a meeting held between Chief Minister (CM) Murad Ali Shah and a 14-member World Bank delegation headed by Country Director Patchamuthu Illangovan. The CM said a feasibility study for the rehabilitation of the Sukkur Barrage had been conducted which was later reviewed by World Bank officials, including its experts in dam design, sedimentation and structures. A public hearing was also held to assess the project's environmental impact, he added.

[Afghanistan levies 400 times higher duty on Pakistan goods](#)

The Express Tribune | 14th March

Smuggling is obstructing legal trade between Pakistan and Afghanistan, a challenge that should be tackled through rationalising and removing tariff barriers, suggested Pakistan-Afghanistan Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry Secretary General Faiza Zubair. Talking to members of the Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI), she said smuggling should be dealt with firmly as it was equally destructive for both countries. She said the regulatory duty imposed by Afghanistan on Pakistani goods was 400 times more than the duty imposed by Pakistan on Afghan products, adding mutual trade could not grow in the presence of such a duty structure.

SRI LANKA

[Sri Lanka seeks more Japanese investments at investor forum in Tokyo](#)

Colombo Page | 13th March

An Investment Forum was held at the Imperial Hotel in Tokyo, under the patronage of Sri Lankan President Maithripala Sirisena, who is on an official visit to Japan, to take Sri Lanka-Japan partnership to new heights as well as to bring more Japanese investments. Investors and entrepreneurs from both countries attended this Investment Forum and attention was drawn regarding further strengthening the economic ties between the two countries.

[Sri Lankan President calls on Japan's Emperor Akihito](#)

Colombo Page | 13th March

Sri Lankan President Maithripala Sirisena and his spouse, Mrs. Jayanthi Sirisena made a State Call on Japan's Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko. President Sirisena, accompanied by Mrs. Jayanthi Sirisena is on an Official Visit to Japan from March 12 to March 15, 2018. "It is an incredible and a great honor to meet Emperor Akihito & Empress Michiko of Japan at Imperial Palace. We discussed our decades of long relationship between the countries recalling historical events," President Sirisena tweeted after the meeting.

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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