

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

February 15th, 2017 | Volume: 3 - 7/2

[Ghani Calls on Jihadi Leaders to Stand by Security Forces](#)

Outlook Afghanistan/ Tolonews | 15th February

President Ashraf Ghani on Tuesday addressed guests attending the 28th anniversary ceremony to mark the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan and said “yesterday was about freedom, today is about development.” Ghani also called on all Jihadi leaders to maintain their support for the security forces, “who are today’s Mujahideen.” Ghani said that by signing the recent peace agreement with Hizb-e-Islami, government is paving the way for “unhappy Mujahideen brothers to return to their country.” He said Jihad had been carried out at the time of the Soviet occupation to ensure the country’s freedom and development but later efforts were made by others to destroy the progress.

[Windfall for Chinese on coal fired projects](#)

Express Tribune | 15th February

In what appear to be heavily China-favoured deals, Pakistan has offered up to 34.5 per cent annual profit on equity invested in coal-fired energy projects of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor and loans have been obtained at six per cent interest rates, excluding insurance cost. The official documents revealed that by including the cost of insurance, also paid to a Chinese insurance company, the cost of borrowings would surge to 13 per cent. Adding insult to injury, the government has already exempted income of Chinese financial institutions from dividend income tax.

[Indo-Bangla trade fair begins in Dhaka Thursday](#)

bdnews24 | 14th February

The fourth Indo-Bangla trade fair will begin in Dhaka on Thursday in an effort “to strengthen the business ties” between the countries. Commerce Minister Tofail Ahmed will inaugurate the three-day showcase at the Pan Pacific Sonargoan Hotel, organiser the India-Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce and Industry (IBCCI), says.

AFGHANISTAN

[Roots of ongoing violence in Afghanistan lie outside, Afghan envoy tells UNSC](#)

Khaama Press | 14th February

The roots of ongoing violence in Afghanistan lie outside the country, the Afghan envoy to the United Nations said during a meeting of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). Nazifullah Salarzai Minister, Deputy Permanent Representative of Afghanistan, was speaking during the meeting “Threats Caused by Terrorist Acts – Protection of Critical Infrastructure”. “The ongoing cycle of violence in Afghanistan is not, by any means, a homegrown phenomenon. Its roots lie elsewhere, outside Afghanistan,” Salarzai said.

[16 ISIS militants killed in Nangarhar air and ground operations](#)

Khaama Press | 14th February

At least sixteen loyalists of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) terrorist group were killed in eastern Nangarahr province of Afghanistan. The provincial police commandment in a statement said the militants were killed in the past 24 hours in Haska Mina and Kot districts. The operations were conducted jointly by the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF) with the close-air support.

[Procurement Body Oks 3 Contracts worth 1.5b Afghanis](#)

Outlook Afghanistan/ Pajhwok | 15th February

The National Procurement Commission has approved three contracts worth one half billion afghanis, the Presidential Palace said on Tuesday. The contracted were given the go-ahead at a meeting of the commission chaired by President Ashraf Ghani on Monday night, a statement from the palace said. It said contracts were okayed for the construction of a 10.8 kilometre road in Zaranj, the capital of Nimroz province, a 50-bed hospital in the Siah Gird district of Parwan province and food supplies for security personnel. The meeting also endorsed a proposal from the Ministry of Defence for cancellation of medical supplies. The commission rejected contracts for gravelling of roads in Kandahar, asking the Defense Ministry's engineering corps to implement the projects.

[NATO Mission in Afghanistan is to Fight Global Terror: Stoltenber](#)

Outlook Afghanistan/ ToloNews | 15th February

Speaking ahead of a defense ministers meeting in Brussels, NATO secretary general Jens Stoltenberg has said that the alliance is committed to combatting terrorist groups operating in Afghanistan and will not allow Afghanistan to become a safe haven for them. NATO's mission and presence in Afghanistan is aimed at combating terrorist groups operating there, said Stoltenberg. Meanwhile, the UN has said that the terrorists waging war against the Afghan people are getting political, moral and financial support from outside the country.

BANGLADESH

[False graft claim caused Padma bridge delay: PM](#)

UNB/ The Daily Star | 15th February

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said the Padma bridge project suffered a setback due a false graft allegation raised by the World Bank. "The country already achieved 7.11 percent GDP growth in the last fiscal year. Had the construction of the Padma bridge been started in due time, it would have been completed by now, adding around another 1 percent to the GDP. In the mean time, our GDP would have gone up to 8 percent, but that prospect was shattered," she said.

[Poverty plunges 1.74pc per yr: Planning minister](#)

The Financial Express | 15th February

Bangladesh's poverty rate is declining at about 1.74 per cent every year, says the planning minister. Mustafa Kamal attributed the falling poverty rate to various poor-friendly initiatives of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina-led government. "The poverty rate in the country is decreasing at about 1.74 per cent every year due to different poor-friendly programmes and plans taken by the government," AHM Mustafa Kamal told the Jatiya Sangsad (parliament) on Tuesday when replying to a scripted query from Treasury Bench member Md Abul Kalam (Natore-1).

[ADB to provide \\$800m loan for LNG-based power plant](#)

The Daily Star | 14th February

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has assured the official agency concerned of providing nearly US\$800 million loan to it for setting up an 800-megawatt (MW) LNG-based power plant in Khulna, officials said Monday. Power Division officials said they held a meeting with the ADB Mission last week where the lender had assured them of the loan for the power plant project.

BHUTAN

[CDCL unveils first set of hydropower equipment](#)

Kuensel Online | 14th February

The Construction Development Corporation Ltd. (CDCL) yesterday unveiled hydropower equipment worth Nu 214 million (M) at Hosethangkhang in Wangdue. This purchase was the first phase of the procurement plan for hydropower construction under department of hydropower, CDCL. The equipment includes two drilling jumbos, shot crete machine, concrete pump, steel bending machine, transit mixtures, explosive bans and wheel loader. CDCL's general manager for department of hydropower Ugyen Gyeltshen said the equipment were for Khorlongchu-hydroelectric project, where CDCL is expected to get few kilometers of Head Race Tunnel (HRT) construction.

MALDIVES

[President: I welcome opposition to return back](#)

Sun Online | 14th February

President Abdulla Yameen Abdul Gayoom has declared that he welcomed self-exiled members of the opposition to return back to the country, but that for those who had prison sentences hanging over their heads, it was up to them to decide if they were to return home, or somewhere else. President Yameen made the comment during his speech at the function held in K. Hinmafushi on Monday to celebrate end of the island's land reclamation project.

[Majlis accepts bill to increase duty on cigarette, energy drinks](#)

Sun Online | 14th February

People's Majlis has accepted the bill to amend Import/Export Act to increase import duty taken from energy drinks and cigarettes. The bill, put forward on behalf of government by Kudahuvadhoo MP Ahmed Amir proposes increasing import duty on cigarettes to MVR 2 per cigarette, and increasing import duty on energy drinks and soft drinks to MVR 4.60 per liter.

MYANMAR

[Myanmar to execute Rohingya man for raid on police post](#)

Mizzima | 14th February

Myanmar authorities have sentenced a Rohingya man to death for leading raids on police border posts that sparked a deadly military crackdown in the north of Rakhine state, police said on Monday. Hundreds from the Muslim minority are thought to have died and tens of thousands have fled to Bangladesh since the army launched "clearance operations" four months ago to find the attackers. Sittwe police chief Yan Naing Lett said the court in the town, the capital of Rakhine, had sentenced the leader of the raid on the Kotankauk border post to death on Friday. "He was sentenced to death on Feb 10 at Sittwe court for intentional murder," Yan Naing Lett told AFP, without giving a date for the execution.

[Refugees from Myanmar allowed to continue resettlement in US](#)

Mizzima | 14th February

A group of five refugees from Myanmar are back on track to arrive in Tulsa, Oklahoma, tonight after their plans to resettle in the United States were called off earlier this month, Tulsa World reported on 14 February. Representatives with Catholic Charities will be at Tulsa International Airport to welcome them. Nine additional Myanmar refugees are scheduled to arrive later this week. After President Donald Trump signed an executive order on Jan. 27 temporarily banning immigrants from seven countries and halting all refugees from entering the country, Catholic Charities had to cancel plans for the refugees, who originally were scheduled to resettle in the Tulsa area during February.

NEPAL

[Butwal-Gorakhpur cross-border transmission line: Nepal, India to finalise DPR of 400 kVA power line](#)

The Kathmandu Post | 15th February

Nepal and India have agreed to finalise the detailed project report (DPR) of the proposed Butwal-Gorakhpur cross-border transmission line prepared by the joint technical team representing both the countries. The Joint Steering Committee (JSC) meetings at the secretary and joint secretary levels held on Monday and Tuesday agreed to finalise the DPR of 400kVA power line after consulting with experts and stakeholders of the respective countries.

PAKISTAN

[Envoy invites UAE to invest in CPEC](#)

Express Tribune | 15th February

Pakistan would be pleased if the UAE could benefit from the CPEC project, as it was a win-win situation for all countries in the region, said Pakistan's Ambassador to UAE Moazzam Ahmed Khan. According to the Pakistani embassy in UAE the ambassador stated this in an interview. He spoke about how both countries could benefit from the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a part of China's ambitious One Belt, One Road multi-billion dollar initiative, and also part of Pakistan's Vision 2025.

[Lahore attack: Defence analysts hold authorities responsible](#)

Express Tribune | 15th February

The deadly suicide attack in Lahore which claimed 13 lives – including those of two senior police officers – on Monday is described as a failure of security agencies as they failed to counter it despite a prior intelligence report. The government and police are shifting responsibility by terming the intelligence report 'vague' and not 'specific'. However, independent defence analysts are holding the security institutions responsible.

[Sound Bytes: 'Gas-fired plant at Nandipur was a bad idea'](#)

Dawn | 15th February

The power sector lies at the heart of the government's efforts to revive the economy. It is where the majority of all investments related to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is coming in. And the promise to eliminate load shedding before 2018 is central to the Pakistan Muslim League-N's election strategy. At the centre of the power sector sits the secretary of water and power, with a large say in all decisions.

[Over 40 economic zones to boost CPEC projects](#)

Dawn | 15th February

The Board of Investment has identified 41 sites for establishing special economic zones (SEZs) to boost the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) projects, the National Assembly's Standing Committee on Planning, Development and Reform was informed on Tuesday. The committee's meeting was presided over by Abdul Majeed Khan Khanan Khail. "We need to pave the way for export-oriented businesses to reap full benefits of the CPEC," Mr Khanan Khail said, adding that the committee would like to know what incentives were available for local investors as there were rumours there were little benefits for them.

SRI LANKA

[Sri Lanka, Australia sign MoUs on development cooperation, strengthening cooperation in sport](#)

Colombo Page | 15th February

Feb 15, Canberra: Sri Lanka's Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe, who is visiting Australia at the invitation of Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull, held discussions with the Australian Premier at the Parliament House in Canberra today. Following bilateral discussions between the two sides, the two leaders witnessed the signing of two Memorandums of Understanding on development cooperation and on strengthening cooperation in sport.

[Sri Lanka PM asks asylum seekers to return, says 'all is forgiven'](#)

Colombo Page | 15th February

Sri Lankan asylum seekers detained in Australia's offshore detention centers in South Pacific islands can return to Sri Lanka as it is safe to return to the island now, Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe said Wednesday. Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe, who is in Canberra meeting with his Australian counterpart Malcolm Turnbull told reporters that the asylum seekers who illegally migrated to Australia will be forgiven for breaking the law.

[First steps taken on open Government commitments](#)

Colombo Gazette | 14th February

The Sri Lankan Government has taken its initial steps to implement ambitious governance reforms made through its Open Government Partnership (OGP) commitments, Transparency International Sri Lanka said. The 12 key commitments, which received Cabinet approval in October 2016, range from issues concerning teacher recruitment and chronic kidney disease treatment to enhanced Anti-corruption agency coordination and RTI implementation.

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.

To know more, Please log on to www.anantaaspencentre.in