



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

February 16, 2018 | Volume - 7/02

President: Indian army will not come to Maldives

Sun Online | 15th February
President Abdulla Yameen Abdul Gayoom has said that the Indian military is not going to come to the Maldives. President said that efforts should be put to bringing changes but some of the political leaders are calling to make the country a war zone. He said that the Maldives is the land of the Maldivian people and they would make decisions on their own.

President Ghani stresses expansion of cooperation between Afghanistan, Kazakhstan & Uzbekistan

The Kabul Times | 14th February
President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani met Monday with army chiefs of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan at Presidential Palace. President Ghani said that the arrival of top security officials from Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan would open a new chapter of security and economic cooperation Afghan President Ashraf Ghani said that the arrival of top security officials from these central Asian nations opens a new chapter of relations and cooperation in security field in particular between Afghanistan, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan and he hoped further expansion of relations between the respective countries.

Army says troops being sent to Saudi Arabia

Dawn | 16th February
Taking a major decision, the army on Thursday, Feb 15th, announced that it is deploying troops in Saudi Arabia under an existing bilateral security pact. "In continuation of ongoing Pak-KSA bilateral security cooperation, a Pakistan Army contingent is being sent to KSA on training and advice mission," the Inter-Services Public Relations announced after a meeting between Army Chief Gen Qamar Bajwa and Saudi Ambassador Nawaf Saeed Al-Maliki at the General Headquarters, which was said to be about "regional security situation". Saudi Arabia has been demanding deployment of Pakistani troops since the start of the Yemen conflict in 2015.

AFGHANISTAN

[Afghanistan – Pakistan talks on counter terrorism & peace](#)

The Kabul Times | 13th February

Afghanistan and Pakistan officials have not reached to an agreement on issues that are in top priorities for Kabul. Second round of Afghanistan – Pakistan talks on counter terrorism, peace and decreasing of violence ended without any results; thus, no decision has been made so far for continuation of such talks. Afghanistan high-ranking civil and military delegation led by deputy minister of foreign affairs Hekmat Khalil Karzai paid a visit to Islamabad to participate the meeting of what is named the Afghanistan – Pakistan Action Plan for Peace and Solidarity (APAPPS). The Pakistani delegation was led by the country's foreign secretary Tahmina Janjua.

BANGLADESH

[IFAD, Bangladesh to invest \\$92.30m to improve livelihoods in flood prone areas](#)

The Financial Express | 14th February

Bangladesh signed a financing agreement with the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) to sustainably improve incomes and promote resilience to extreme weather conditions for 0.33 million rural households in six flood-prone districts in northern Bangladesh. According to the agreement titled 'Promoting Resilience of Vulnerable through access to Infrastructure, Improved Skills and Information', IFAD will give USD 63.25 million at very concessional rate where there will be a grant of USD 1.25 million. The rest of the money will come from the internal source of the Bangladesh government. The project aims to improve rural peoples' resilience in 25 flood-prone upazilas, or townships, through building weatherproofed infrastructure, creating off-farm employment opportunities, and strengthening communities' ability to adapt to climate change related risks.

[ILO panel once again calls for a robust labour law](#)

The Daily Star | 16th February

The expert committee of the International Labour Organisation in its observation urged the government to ensure that the Bangladesh Labour Act and the Bangladesh Labour Rules meet ILO Conventions. The ILO also urged the government for ensuring the draft EPZ Labour Act allows freedom of association for workers' and employers' organisations and is brought into conformity with the provisions of the convention, said the report released last week. The committee also asked for: continuation of the investigation of all alleged acts of anti-union discrimination, including in Ashulia; ensure reinstatement of those illegally dismissed; and impose fines or criminal sanctions (particularly in cases of violence against trade unionists) according to the law.

BHUTAN

[GST issues for Bhutan to be resolved with urgency](#)

Kuensel | 15th February

The Indian government is undertaking a project to enhance and install infrastructures related to trade and customs along the northeast frontier including trading points with Bhutan. The commissioner of GST, who is behind the GST legislation and policy, Upender Gupta is in the country leading a high-level delegation to clarify the issues with regard to the goods and services tax (GST). The delegation met representatives of the private sector yesterday in Thimphu. Members from the private sector said the introduction of GST has a serious impact on trade between the two countries. Chairman of Zimdra Pvt. Ltd, Ugen Tshechup Dorji said Bhutan is worst hit

among the countries in the region. “The impact is not much in other countries in the region as they have multiple trading partners. Bhutan has only one trading partner,” he said.

MALDIVES

[UN WGAD calls for compensation and release of Sheikh Imran Abdulla](#)

Sun Online | 14th February

The United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention (UN WGAD) has called on the Maldivian government to release and compensate the Leader of Adhaalath Party (AP), Sheikh Imran Abdulla. Sheikh Imran was sentenced to 12 years on the charge of terrorism following the protest rally on 1 May 2015. According to the decision passed on 21 January from the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, the trial of Sheikh Imran was not just in reference to international laws and human rights. The decision said that the trial was unjust and adequate time was not given to appoint an attorney. And was not allowed to present any defensive evidence.

[President launches National Strategic Plan to end TB in Maldives](#)

Sun Online | 15th February

President Abdulla Yameen Abdul Gayoom has launched the National Strategic Plan to end TB in Maldives. The MVR 170 million (USD 11 million) Plan was launched in a function held at Hotel Jen this Thursday morning. The Plan was launched to eradicate tuberculosis from Maldives within the next five years, and to make Maldives the first South East Asian country to eradicate TB. TB was classified as a serious disease in Maldives in 1960. Maldives has been running campaigns to eradicate the disease from the country since then. The Ministry of Health aims to lower the TB indicator rate by 50 percent, and lower the mortality rate from TB by 75 percent in 2022, compared to 2017. Speaking at the launch of the Plan, World Health organization (WHO)'s resident representative to Maldives, Dr. Arvind Mathur said Maldives was the first South East Asian country to launch a national strategic plan to eradicate TB.

MYANMAR

[US project helps Myanmar dry zone development](#)

Mizzima | 15th February

The U.S. Agency for International Development's (USAID) US\$70-million Shae Thot – or The Way Forward – project is ending in March having reduced maternal and child mortality, improved food security, increased access to safe water and advanced hygiene, and strengthened community institutions in Myanmar's central Dry Zone and Kayah State. US AID announced on February 15 that the project had made progress. “Shae Thot has helped thousands of communities and hundreds of thousands of people,” said USAID Mission Director Teresa McGhie. “The project's scope has been significant – working with people to live healthier, more productive lives, and empowering villages to achieve communal goals. This is why USAID is so proud of Shae Thot's success.”

[UMFCCI and JCCM sign MoU on economic cooperation](#)

Mizzima | 16th February

The Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry (UMFCCI) and Japan Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Myanmar (JCCM) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on all-round economic cooperation and development at the Park Royal Hotel last Wednesday, state media reported. The MoU is designed to promote bilateral trade and investment, information and technology exchange, as well as human

resource and infrastructural development. From 1995 to 2017, Japan and Myanmar agreed to enter into 15 MoUs. Bilateral trade between Japan and Myanmar grew 2.2 times between 2012 and 2017, the report said.

NEPAL

[Indian PM Modi, Chinese PM Li congratulate PM Oli](#)

The Kathmandu Post | 16th February

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi congratulated Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli on his appointment as the 38th Prime Minister of Nepal on Thursday. Indian PM Modi called up PM Oli at around 10:30 pm yesterday and congratulated him and wished for a successful term. During the phone conversation, PM Modi said that he was eager to welcome PM Oli to India adding that the southern neighbour would provide every possible assistance for the development of Nepal. In response, PM Oli thanked the Indian Prime Minister saying that his sole focus is on the development of Nepal and will continue his efforts to strengthen the relationship between the two countries.

[Deuba calls its quits, takes credit for polls](#)

The Kathmandu Post | 16th February

Two months after successfully holding the House of Representatives and Provincial Assembly elections, PM Sher Bahadur Deuba announced his resignation on Thursday. Deuba, also the president of the Nepali Congress, stepped down a day after the Election Commission (EC) submitted the final results of the federal and provincial assembly elections to President Bidya Devi Bhandari. Deuba was elected prime minister on June 6 with support from the CPN (Maoist Centre), which is now a key partner of the left alliance and is considering merger with its ally CPN-UML. The left alliance of the UML and the Maoist Centre emerged victorious in the elections to the federal parliament and Provincial Assemblies. In his valedictory speech, Deuba presented a summary of the tasks that his government carried out, putting a spotlight on the three tiers of election.

PAKISTAN

[Army says troops being sent to Saudi Arabia](#)

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[Terror financing: US, UK move 'aims at hampering economic progress'](#)

The Express Tribune | 15th February

Pakistan raised serious concerns and objections to the proposal by the US and its western allies to place it on the global terrorist financing watchlist, terming the move 'politically motivated', with an aim to hamper the country's economic progress. The strongly-worded reaction from the Foreign Office came after the US and the UK jointly moved a motion before the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) to place Pakistan on its terrorist financing watchlist. The FATF, an intergovernmental organisation that sets global standards against illicit finance, is set to

meet next week to take up the motion jointly moved by the US and the UK and also backed by Germany and France.

SRI LANKA

[Sri Lanka President to launch a broad program against corruption, fraud and waste](#)

Colombo Page | 16th February

Sri Lanka President Maithripala Sirisena said he will launch a broad national program against corruption, fraud and waste within the next two weeks. The President said he will gather together all Sri Lanka Freedom party (SLFP) candidates who gained victory as well as those who did not and commence the program of serving the people.

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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