

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

February 17th, 2017 | Volume: 3 - 8/2

[High commissioner says Bangladesh now India's biggest trade partner in South Asia](#)

bdnews24 | 17th February

The Dhaka-Delhi trade and commercial relations are growing at a “substantial pace”, the Indian high commissioner in Bangladesh has said. “Bangladesh is now India’s biggest trade partner in South Asia,” Harsh Vardhan Shringla said on Thursday at the opening of the fourth Indo-Bangla trade fair. The India-Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce and Industry (IBCCI) organised the three-day show at the Pan Pacific Sonargoan Hotel in Dhaka where more than 60 companies from both the countries are showcasing their products. The high commissioner said in the last 15 years “Bangladesh’s exports to India have grown tenfold and India’s exports to Bangladesh have grown six times”.

[Pakistan asks Afghanistan to hand over 76 terrorists immediately](#)

Express Tribune | 17th February

Pakistan Army on Friday asked Kabul to hand over 76 terrorists hiding in Afghanistan, Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) said. The head of the military’s media wing DG ISPR Major-General Asif Ghafoor said Afghan Embassy officials were called to General Headquarters. “Given list of 76 terrorists hiding in Afghanistan. Asked to take immediate action/be handed over to Pakistan,” he said.

[Pakistan closes routes with Afghanistan after deadly attacks](#)

Khaama Press | 17th February

Pakistan has closed all routes along the Durand Line with Afghanistan following a series of deadly attacks across the country. The Pakistani military officials announced the closure of the routes late on Thursday night after a deadly suicide attack ripped through a shrine in Sindh province.

AFGHANISTAN

[Experts Pin Hopes on 6-Nation Moscow Talks](#)

Outlook Afghanistan/ Pajhwok | 16th February

Optimistic about the outcome of a six-nation conference in Russia on Afghanistan’s future that began on Wednesday in Moscow, political affairs experts in Kabul said the Afghan government should push for a consensus roadmap at the summit towards peace and stability in Afghanistan. Ahmad Shikab Mustaghni, spokesman for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA), told Pajhwok Afghan News the Moscow summit on Afghanistan would discuss joint efforts at bringing peace and stability to Afghanistan. He said the MoFA’s policy and strategy director would represent Afghanistan at the summit being attended by representatives from China, Russia, Pakistan, India and Iran.

[NATO lends support to Afghan security forces defeat terrorism](#)

Afghanistan Times | 15th February

The NATO Secretary General, Jens Stoltenberg has said the alliance is firmly committed to its Resolute Support

mission in Afghanistan. The NATO decided to stay in Afghanistan with 13,000 troops to train, assist and advise Afghan security force to defeat terrorism and stabilize the war-torn country. Jens Stoltenberg, the alliance secretary-general, reiterated the commitment during a question-answer session at a pre-ministerial meeting press conference in Brussels. “NATO has played a key role in the fight against terrorism for many years. We have to remember that our biggest military operation ever, the operation in Afghanistan, the purpose of that operation is to fight terrorism,” he said. He added that the foreign troops in Afghanistan were aimed at preventing the country from becoming a safe haven for international terrorist groups again.

BANGLADESH

[PM Hasina off to Munich](#)

Dhaka Tribune | 17th February

During the visit, the Bangladesh premier will hold bilateral talks with German Chancellor Angela Merkel. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has left here for Germany on a three-day official visit to attend the 53rd Munich Security Conference (MSC). An Etihad Airways flight carrying the premier and her entourage took off from Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport around 10:05pm on Thursday, reports BSS. The three-day Munich Security Conference (MSC), an annual conference on international security policy, kicks off today in the southern German city of Munich, also the capital and largest city of the German state of Bavaria.

[Dhaka world's second most polluted city](#)

The Daily Star | 17th February

Dhaka has ranked second on a global list of cities with worst air pollution, which claims 122,400 lives in Bangladesh a year. Delhi tops the list, while Karachi and Beijing stand third and fourth, according to the State of Global Air Report 2017. Air pollution is the leading environmental cause of death worldwide, and 92 percent of the world's population lives in areas with unhealthy air, mentions the report launched by Boston-based Health Effects Institute (HEI) on Tuesday. India and Bangladesh experienced the steepest increase in air pollution levels between 1990 and 2015, it says.

[EC alone can't hold credible polls: CEC Huda](#)

Prothom Alo | 16th February

The newly appointed chief election commissioner, KM Nurul Huda, said on Thursday that the election commission alone would not be able to hold a credible election. Addressing a meeting with the election commission officials at the Election Bhavan, he also said controversies will arise over an election should it not be participatory. Despite the reservations expressed by major opposition BNP about Huda, the former bureaucrat, however, expressed hope that the next 11th parliamentary elections will be a participatory one. It was the first views exchange meeting with the EC officials as the CEC Huda and four of his colleagues took oath of office on Wednesday.

[Bangladesh seeks US support to accelerate economic growth](#)

The Financial Express | 15th February

Bangladesh Ambassador to the US Mohammad Ziauddin has sought Washington's support for “accelerating” its economic growth. He met Congressman Ted S Yoho in Washington DC on Monday, the embassy said in a statement. The Republican Congressman from Florida, Ted Yoho is a member of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs

BHUTAN

[His Majesty The King grants dhar](#)

Kuensel Online | 16th February

His Majesty The King granted dhar to appoint the Secretaries of International Boundaries and Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and to promote two Lieutenant Colonels from the RBG and RBA to the rank of Colonel. Letho T Tangbi is the new secretary of International Boundaries, and Sonam Tshong is the new secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Lt. Col Pema Tshewang from the RBA and Lt. Col Khitu Dukpa from the RBG have been promoted to the rank of Colonel.

MALDIVES

[President ratifies amendments to council election eligibility](#)

Sun Online | 16th February

President Abdulla Yameen Abdul Gayoom has ratified the amendments to Local Council Election Act passed by the People's Majlis this week. The amendments were made to eligibility criteria of contenders who participate in local council elections, loosening restrictions placed on former criminals. It limits the prohibition to people convicted for rape and child abuse, and provides the right to anyone convicted of drug dealing to participate in local council election if it has been seven years since the person has completed serving his/her sentence or seven years since the person has been granted clemency.

[Supreme Court: Judge Mariyam Waheed has no authority in courts](#)

Sun Online | 16th February

Supreme Court has ruled that the Civil Court Judge, Mariyam Waheed has no authority to preside in any court in the Maldives. The Supreme Court made the ruling following the case filed by the Attorney General claiming that Judge Mariyam Waheed made a ruling against a Supreme Court decision. This is the first instance such a ruling regarding a judge's decision.

MYANMAR

[Myanmar reopens border gate with Bangladesh as peace restores](#)

Mizzima | 17th February

Myanmar has reopened No. 1 border gate with Bangladesh which was temporarily closed following terrorist attacks on some three border posts on Oct. 9 last year, according to the State Counselor's Office Thursday. The border gate was reopened for entry and departure in Maungtau, Rakhine state in the weekend due to restoration of peace and stability in the region after Myanmar negotiated with Bangladesh.

[National Security Advisor meets with Diplomatic Corps and UN Agencies in Yangon](#)

Mizzima | 16th February

Myanmar's newly appointed National Security Advisor, U Thaug Tun, met yesterday with over 60 members of the Diplomatic Corps and UN Agencies at the National Reconciliation and Peace Centre in Yangon to brief them on his role, state media reported on 16 February. Union Minister for the Office of the State Counsellor, U Kyaw Tint Swe, opened the meeting by explaining how the new role of National Security Advisor will support the government's efforts to build a peaceful, prosperous and democratic federal union.

NEPAL

[EU to act on facts in airlines ban](#)

My Republica | 17th February

Minister for Foreign Affairs Dr Prakash Sharan Mahat has asked the European Union (EU) to lift the ban imposed by the EU on Nepali airlines in European skies. During his meeting with the president of the European Commission Jean Claude Juncker at the latter's office in Brussels on Wednesday, Minister Dr Mahat asked the EU to lift the ban imposed on December 5, 2013 considering the fact that Nepal has made significant progress in the area of aviation safety since the EU first placed its ban. "The president assured the foreign minister of looking into the matter positively based upon the facts to be provided by the government of Nepal," said a statement issued by Embassy of Nepal in Brussels.

[Nepal Investment Summit: IBN to show 8 projects as potential ventures](#)

The Kathmandu Post | 17th February

Investment Board Nepal (IBN) will be showcasing eight large infrastructure projects as potential ventures at the Nepal Investment Summit slated to be held from March 2-3. The board has selected four railway projects, a hydropower project, a tunnel highway, an international airport and a chemical fertilizer plant out of more than

100 schemes under its purview to exhibit as possible investment opportunities at the summit it is jointly organizing with the Industry Ministry.

[Will comply with int'l laws: PM](#)

The Kathmandu Post | 17th February

Reiterating his position on the transitional justice process, Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal has said that it will follow the international laws and practices. At a meeting with UN Resident Coordinator Valerie Julliard on Thursday, PM Dahal told her that the government of Nepal would comply with international laws and practices of transitional justice, according to the PM's Secretariat.

[Mahat requests Luxembourg to extend support to Nepal](#)

The Himalayan Times | 17th February

Minister for Foreign Affairs Prakash Sharan Mahat has urged Luxembourg's Prime Minister Xavier Bettel to include Nepal in his government's priority list of international cooperation. Minister Mahat, who is on a Europe visit currently, had made the request in a meeting with the Prime Minister at the latter's office in Luxembourg on Thursday, informed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

PAKISTAN

[21 terrorists killed in nationwide security crackdown after Sehwan blast](#)

Express Tribune | 17th February

Security forces launched a nationwide crackdown on Friday after a bomb ripped through Lal Shahbaz Qalandar's shrine, killing at least 70 people, including 20 children, and wounding hundreds. "Both the federal and provincial law enforcement authorities and police started a crackdown across the country before dawn, and scores of suspects have been arrested from different cities," a government official speaking on condition of anonymity told AFP. He said the sweeping operation will continue for the coming days.

[Taliban entered Pakistan as migrants on condition they would disavow militancy: Aizaz Chaudhry](#)

Dawn | 17th February

The newly-appointed ambassador to the United States, Aizaz Chaudhry, on Thursday said that the Taliban had entered Pakistan as migrants, who had been told to steer clear of militant activities if they wanted to stay in the country. Chaudhry, whose career as a foreign service officer spans over 36 years of multilateral and bilateral experience, was speaking at a seminar at the Air University Islamabad on matters of national security. "We will not tolerate that the Taliban operate from here to carry out terror attacks across the border. The unrest in Afghanistan will not be allowed to infiltrate into Pakistan," Chaudhry said, when asked for a comment on the supposed distinction between "the good and the bad" Taliban.

SRI LANKA

[Sri Lanka Navy earns over US\\$ 20 million from OBST Operations](#)

Colombo Page | 16th February

Sri Lanka Navy said it has earned the over US\$ 20 million to-date, since taking over the duty of facilitating On-board Security Teams (OBST) 15 months ago. The duty undertaken was an extension of maritime security operations in which the Navy got actively involved in keeping island waters safe and secure for maritime commons and freedom of navigation.

[Government looking for win-win deal with China](#)

Colombo Gazette | 16th February

The Government says it is looking for a win-win deal with China on investments to the country. Finance Minister Ravi Karunanayake told reporters that the Chinese government feels Sri Lanka is giving a positive response to its requirements.

[Sri Lanka lauds Pakistan's efforts against terrorism](#)

Colombo Gazette| 16th February

Commander Sri Lankan Navy Vice Admiral RC Wijegunaratne called on Chief of Army Staff General Qamar Javed Bajwa in Rawalpindi on Thursday, Radio Pakistan reported. Matters relating to regional security and professional interest were discussed.

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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