

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

January 18th, 2017 | Volume: 3 - 8/1

[Taliban's explosives factory discovered in Balkh province](#)

Khaama Press | 17th January

The Afghan security forces discovered an explosives factory of the Taliban group in northern Balkh province of Afghanistan. The Afghan Intelligence, National Directorate of Security (NDS), said the factory was used to produce Improvised Explosive Device, suicide bombing vests, magnetic bombs, and remotely controlled bombs. NDS further added that the intelligence operatives' confiscated 395 remote controls used in mines, 15 time bombs, 800 electric capsules, and some other equipment and explosives used in Improvised Explosive Device.

[PM Nawaz Sharif doesn't have 'absolute' immunity: SC](#)

Dawn | 18th January

The Supreme Court bench hearing the Panamagate case observed on Tuesday that the immunity available to the Prime Minister or the members of parliament was not absolute and that obedience of the law and the Constitution was an inviolable duty of every citizen. "Committing a crime but still claiming parliamentary privilege is not covered in the immunity available to government functionaries in the performance of their duties," observed Justice Asif Saeed Khosa, who heads the five-judge bench that has taken up a number of petitions seeking the disqualification of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif over his family's undeclared investments in offshore companies.

[Coca Cola interested in setting up a production plant in Sri Lanka](#)

Colombo Page | 16th January

American beverages giant Coca-Cola is interested in using Sri Lanka as a production hub and set up a plant, to cater to the Indian market, the Finance Ministry said today. Coca Cola has expressed its interest when the President and the Executive Vice President of Coca Cola Company Asia Pacific Group met Sri Lanka's Finance Minister Ravi Karunanayake in Colombo at the weekend.

AFGHANISTAN

[Refugees poured \\$7 billion to Afghanistan by returning home in past 1 year](#)

Khaama Press | 17th January

The Afghan refugees have poured around \$7 billion in the country by repatriating from the host countries in the past one year, the officials said Tuesday. Syed Hussain Alimi Balkhi, the Minister of Refugees and Repatriation, informed regarding the latest developments regarding the repatriation of the Afghan refugees by appearing in a gathering in Kabul on Tuesday. He said the year 2016 witnessed a massive return of the refugees, mainly from the neighboring countries.

[Afghans Have Little Faith in NUG's Economic, Security Policies](#)

ToloNews / Daily Outlook Afghanistan | 18th January

A new survey carried out by the Center for Strategic and Regional Studies (CSRS) has found that the majority of people

in Afghanistan are skeptical about government's policies on economy, security and corruption. The (CSRS) poll shows that distrust among Afghans continues over the government's anti-graft strategy and foreign policy track. The poll notes that almost 90 percent of Afghans have said that they believe government is facing serious challenges.

[US, Pakistan Back Afghan- Led Reconciliation Drive](#)

Pajhwok / Daily Outlook Afghanistan | 18th January

Top American and Pakistani military commanders have reaffirmed their support for an Afghan-led peace and reconciliation process, Pakistan's Chief of Army Staff General Qamar Javed Bajwa and US Central Command chief General Joseph Votel pledged support for Afghan peace efforts at a meeting in Rawalpindi. "Blame games are detrimental to enduring peace," said Bajwa while referring to anti-Pakistan rhetoric after recent terrorists attacks in Afghanistan. According to the Pakistani army's media wing, Gen. Bajwa said Pakistan had conducted operations against terrorists of all "hue and colour" and there were no safe havens in Pakistan that were used against Afghanistan.

[EU co-hosts forum to combat anti-Muslim discrimination](#)

Afghanistan Times | 18th January

The European Union delegation to the United Nation together with the permanent mission of Canada, the United States and the Organization of the Islamic Cooperation, is co-host a forum on combating anti-Muslim discrimination and hatred in New York on Tuesday. EU in a statement sent to Afghanistan Times said that the participant in the event will examine the rise of anti-Muslim discrimination and hatred globally from the perspective of governmental, non-governmental and private sector representatives, and provide recommendations for effective responses addressing this challenge in the future.

BANGLADESH

[President urges all pol parties to hold talks between them](#)

Prothom Alo | 17th January

President Abdul Hamid on Tuesday urged all political parties of the country to hold talks between them to reduce the difference to pave the way for holding fair polls. "There is no alternative to free and fair polls for democracy and all political parties should come forward and play an effective role," said the president as reported by state-run BSS news agency. The president said this when two delegations of Khelafat Majlish and Jamiat-e-Ulama-e-Islam Bangladesh met him separately at Bangabhaban responding to his move to hold talks with political parties over reconstitution of the election commission (EC), president's press secretary Joynal Abedin told BSS.

[IMF iterates below 7pc growth for Bangladesh](#)

Prothom Alo | 17th January

International Monetary Fund (IMF), in a new report, has bracketed Bangladesh in the category of countries that are likely to attain 6.3 per cent growth in 2017.

However, the global agency, earlier in October 2016, projected the country's growth at 6.9 per cent although it then forecast a subdued global growth.

[BB reserve heist: CID again fail to press charges](#)

The Financial Express | 17th January

The Criminal Investigation Department (CID) of police have failed for the tenth time to submit chargesheet in the much-talked about Bangladesh Bank reserves heist case. The Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate had fixed Tuesday as the day for filing the chargesheet. When CID Additional SP Raihan Uddin Khan failed to do so, the court on Tuesday fixed February 15 as the next date.

[Bangladesh takes up \\$1 billion project to reach internet to remote parts](#)

bdnews24 | 18th January

The Ministry of Information Communication Technology has taken up a \$1 billion project in a bid to take the internet to every citizen's doorstep. The 'Establishing Digital Connectivity' project will be co-funded by the Chinese aid and partly by the government. Speaking to bdnews24.com, State Minister for ICT Zunaid Ahmed Palak said the project would clear the way for the formation of a single payment gateway and usher in a host of other facilities that would enable easier digital trade.

BHUTAN

[Electoral laws to be reviewed by National Law Review Taskforce](#)

Kuensel | 17th January

The National Law Review Taskforce (NLRT) will review and propose changes to harmonise the conflicting provisions of the electoral laws with the Constitution although the Supreme Court (SC) earlier said a commission should be constituted for the same. Issuing a writ on August 5 last year, the apex court stated that a high-level commission comprising experts from relevant fields should review and harmonise the Election Act 2008, the Local Government Act and the Constitution. Some provisions of the Acts are inconsistent with the Constitution.

MALDIVES

[Dhunya: Role of women in politics significant despite challenges](#)

Sun Online | 17th January

State Minister of Ministry of Health, Dhunya Maumoon has commented that the role of women in Maldivian politics was significant despite challenges. Dhunya made the comment during her speech as chief guest of the regional conference of South Asian Women's Alliance (SAWA) being held in Islamabad, Pakistan.

[Anti Corruption Commission: Rent of vehicles for SAARC Summit is corruption-free](#)

Sun Online | 17th January

Anti-Corruption Commission has announced there was no corruption involved in the rent of 21 vehicles for the 17th South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation Summit held in Addu City in 2011. The announcement was made in a statement issued by ACC this Tuesday regarding the conclusion of its investigation into issues noted in the audit report regarding the transaction.

MYANMAR

[China denies refusing Myanmar refugees entry](#)

Mizzima | 18th January

China has denied media reports in Myanmar that the country has been refusing refugees from border conflicts in the neighbouring country. China has never prevented Myanmar residents from trying to escape from the war and entering China, said a spokesperson at the Chinese Embassy in Myanmar.

[New public bus system in Yangon causes confusion](#)

Mizzima | 17th January

A new public bus system that reduced and coordinated the number of bus lines from more than 300 to 70 launched in Yangon yesterday, easing traffic congestion but causing some chaos among confused passengers, state media reported on 17 January. The first day of the new system saw fewer buses than expected, though more than 3,700 buses were expected to operate on the first day, according to Yangon Region Transport Authorities.

[Myanmar's 'smiling' Irrawaddy dolphins on brink of extinction](#)

AFP / Mizzima | 18th January

Tears fill Maung Lay's eyes as he describes losing the dolphin he knew since his childhood, the latest casualty of a battle against pollution and electrofishing that may see the species disappear in Myanmar. Loved for generations for corralling the catch into fishermen's nets, the 'smiling' Irrawaddy dolphins are being killed in record numbers by rogue gangs who use car batteries to stun aquatic life.

NEPAL

[PM calls for foreign investment in Nepal hydropower](#)

The Himalayan Times | 16th January

Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal on Monday called the world investors to invest in Nepal's energy and hydropower sectors. Addressing the opening ceremony of the tenth session of World Future Energy Summit in Abu Dhabi of the United Arab Emirates today, the Prime Minister said, "Nepal welcomes the investment venture from firms across the world in its energy sector. We have a favourable policy environment and growing domestic market."

[EC seeks laws pronto for local polls in May](#)

The Kathmandu Post | 18th January

The Election Commission (EC) has said all election-related laws must be in place by the end of this month if local level elections have to be conducted by mid-May. "We have already conveyed the message to political parties that January-end is the cut-off date on our part if local level elections are to be held by mid-May," Chief Election Commissioner Ayodhee Prasad Yadav told the Post.

[Indian Army chief to visit Nepal in Feb](#)

The Kathmandu Post | 18th January

The government has extended an invitation to Indian Army Chief General Bipin Rawat to visit Nepal in February. A Cabinet meeting recently approved the visit of the new Indian army chief. President Bidya Devi Bhandari, who is also the supreme commander of the Nepal Army, will confer the honorary title of the chief of the Nepal Army on Gen Rawat amid a function to be organised at Sheetal Niwas.

[Ex FM Thapa raps govt for failing to implement Nepal-China deals](#)

My Republica | 18th January

Addressing the opening ceremony of a two-day China-Nepal Think Tank Conference in Kathmandu on Tuesday, Former Minister Thapa said it is high time Nepal further deepened relations with China, given the huge opportunities that China's miraculous economic success could offer to Nepal. "This was what we exactly tried to do during the premiership of K P Oli in which I was privileged to serve as foreign minister. What we tried to do was in the interests of Nepal," he further said.

PAKISTAN

[Trump will not be unfriendly towards Pakistan, says aide](#)

Dawn | 18th January

The Trump administration, which assumes power on Friday, has no plans to "unfriend" Pakistan but its relations with India will be even closer than those of the Obama administration, says Sajid Tarar, a prominent Pakistani supporter of President-elect Donald Trump. Mr Tarar, who spoke at the Republican National Convention in July and prayed for Mr Trump's victory, will also address the prayer breakfast for the new president. The ceremony will be held at Washington's National Cathedral on Jan 21, a day after Mr Trump takes oath as the 45th president of the United States.

[Senate passes bill to curb benami transactions](#)

Dawn | 18th January

The Senate on Tuesday unanimously passed a bill providing for confiscation of benami properties, at a time when the Panamagate scandal — involving politicians not disclosing wealth stashed abroad — is dominating the country's courtrooms and headlines. Over a dozen amendments were made to the Benami Transactions (Prohibition) Bill, 2016, by the Senate Standing Committee on Finance and Revenue. One more amendment, to make the bill enforceable at once, was moved by Leader of the Opposition in Senate Aitzaz Ahsan. In its original form, the bill is to come into force from a date to be notified by the government.

[Transmission line approved for Karachi N-power plants](#)

Dawn | 18th January

The Central Development Working Party (CDWP) cleared on Tuesday 18 projects worth Rs 154 billion, including a key transmission line to distribute 2,200MW electricity from Karachi's two upcoming nuclear power stations. A meeting of the CDWP, presided over by Planning and Development Minister Ahsan Iqbal and attended by representatives of the provincial governments and the federal ministries concerned, cleared technical and financial parameters of the transmission line for evacuation of electricity from the two nuclear coastal power plants (K-2 and K-3) of 1,100MW each being set up at Paradise Point, about 11 kilometres from the city (Karachi) centre.

[Intelligence sharing needed on global level to combat terrorism: Raheel Sharif](#)

Dawn | 18th January

Former army chief General (retd) Raheel Sharif said 2016 witnessed a significant decrease in terrorism and that "intelligence sharing is a very important component of strategy to combat terrorism." Addressing a session at the World Economic Forum (WEF) titled 'Terrorism in the digital age', he said: "Terrorism is a global issue and the global community will have to get united if it wants to defeat terrorism."

SRI LANKA

[Sri Lanka is making its contribution to the economic integration in South Asia - Prime Minister](#)

Colombo Page | 17th January

Sri Lanka is making its contribution to the economic integration in South Asia by making Sri Lanka the hub of Indian Ocean, Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe said today. Addressing a press conference at the World Economic Forum annual meeting in Davos, Switzerland on Tuesday along with Ministers Malik Samarawickrema, Ravi Karunanayake and Harin Fernando, the Premier said with Sri Lanka's hub concept, logistics and the business hub, the integration will become more viable.

[Power Ministry secretary demands resignation of Coal Chairman](#)

Colombo Gazette | 17th January

Secretary to the Ministry of Power and Renewable Energy BMS Batagoda has written to President Maithripala Sirisena demanding the resignation of Maithri Gunaratne, Chairman of Lanka Coal Company (Pvt) Ltd, who had continuously opposed attempts to sign an unfavourable deal to import coal to Sri Lanka, the Anti Corruption Front (ACF) said.

[Ven. Rathana forms National Council to 'steer country on right path'](#)

Daily News | 17th January

Senior consultant to the President and MP Ven. Athuraliye Rathana Thera said he has set up a 'National Council' with the participation of people from all walks of life - especially professionals, intellectuals and academics. "The national council will be the alternative Parliament in Sri Lanka. Anyone can join this council," the Thera said. "I will lead this council which will tell the country where it should head. It will support any force or regime which takes the country on the right path," he said.

[SL-Thailand FTA study to conclude by August](#)

Daily News | 18th January

The Sri Lanka Thailand Free Trade Agreement (FTA) study is set to conclude by August 2017. Sri Lanka is also looking for sugar purchases from Thailand. During his visit to Thailand to take part in the APTA Ministerial Council Minister of Industry and Commerce Rishad Bathiudeen met Thai Minister of Commerce Apiradi Tantraporn. He also met Thai Consumer goods exporters to Sri Lanka, a leading sugar exporting company Mitrphol and also product manufacturer and a consultant of the Thai government's OTOP project.

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