



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

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Pakistan looks to China, Saudi Arabia for succour

The Express Tribune | 19th February

State officials have sought assistance from its long-standing strategic partners China and Saudi Arabia to convince US to soften its aggressive approach against Pakistan. The move comes after the efforts to iron out differences with Washington by Islamabad are not making headway. An official said the decision was made to acquire more weightage to Pakistan's perspective. He complained that the United States was only giving selective hearing to their concerns.

Ghani Meets Australian Defense Minister

Daily Outlook Afghanistan | 18th February

President Ghani and Australian defense minister talked about strengthening bilateral cooperation, counterterrorism and training of Afghan forces. President Ashraf Ghani met Australian Defense Minister Marise Payne on Friday, Feb 16th, afternoon where they discussed bilateral ties and other mutual interest issues. The statement said the two sides also talked about expanding bilateral cooperation, counterterrorism and training of Afghan National Defense and Security Forces. The Australian minister said her country is ready to cooperate with Afghanistan in providing higher education for Afghans, especially in military sector, read the statement. She said her country supports Afghanistan's strategy in peace, counterterrorism and expansion of cooperation in the

UN welcomes decision adopted under Sri Lanka's Presidency to advance work of the Conference on Disarmament

Colombo Page | 18th February

The Conference on Disarmament (CD) presided over by Sri Lanka's Permanent Representative to the UN in Geneva, Ambassador Ravinatha Aryasinha has adopted a decision to establish five subsidiary bodies to discuss all items in its agenda, with a view to advance the substantive work of the Conference. The Decision described as a "well-brokered balance between flexibility and safeguards and offered a framework for a more focused and continued debate on core issues", seeks to bring the CD back to its original mandate of negotiating disarmament instruments.

region.

AFGHANISTAN

[Millions of Afghans Submit War Crimes Claims](#)

Daily Outlook Afghanistan | 17th February

Since the International Criminal Court began collecting material three months ago for a possible war crimes case involving Afghanistan, it has gotten a staggering 1.17 million statements from Afghans who say they were victims. The statements include accounts of alleged atrocities not only by groups like the Taliban and the Islamic State, but also involving Afghan Security Forces and government-affiliated warlords, the U.S.-led coalition, and foreign and domestic spy agencies, said Abdul Wadood Pedram of the Human Rights and Eradication of Violence Organization. Based in part on the many statements, ICC judges in The Hague would then have to decide whether to seek a war crimes investigation. It's uncertain when that decision will be made.

BANGLADESH

[Albania thanks Bangladesh for recognising Kosovo](#)

bdnews24 | 19th February

Albania has thanked Bangladesh for recognising its neighbour Kosovo during a bilateral meeting in Tirana. State Minister for Foreign Affairs Md Shahriar Alam met his Albanian counterpart Etjen Xhafaj for talks on Saturday. The official meeting was the first in quite a long time between the countries, the foreign ministry said. Alam will lead the first-ever Bangladesh delegation to Kosovo after Dhaka officially recognised the country last year February.

[Panic, concern, confusion grip banking sector](#)

Prothom Alo | 19th February

Many depositors are withdrawing money from commercial banks -- a trend that has made bankers concerned about the near future situation in the sector. Bangladesh Bank governor Fazle Kabir has acknowledged the panic, and sought the finance minister's intervention in addressing the situation. In view of the situation, investors have also become confused about their course, the bankers admitted. A number of government organisations are withdrawing money from the banks, especially new generation bankers that were licensed on political consideration.

BHUTAN

[Judiciary strives to maintain public trust](#)

Kuensel | 17th February

The fire female bird year started on a positive note for the judiciary with the institution agreeing to endorse

regulation on accountability in March. Referred as the Judicial Responsibility and Accountability Regulations, it is the process of initiating a complaint, investigation, and possible actions that can be taken against judicial personnel. Her Royal Highness Princess Sonam Dechan Wangchuck, the President of Bhutan National Legal Institute and Jigme Singye Wangchuck School Of Law called on the judiciary to shoulder more responsibility by emphasising that judiciary must strive for people's trust. HRH said the judiciary should make concerted efforts to maintain the trust and confidence of the people and be able to change their perceptions.

MALDIVES

[President requests 30-day extension to State of Emergency](#)

Sun Online | 19th February

President Abdulla Yameen Abdul Gayoom has requested the People's Majlis for a 30-day extension to the 15-day State of Emergency declared in Maldives on February 5. The request was submitted by the President at the extraordinary People's Majlis sitting, outside the normal legislative session, held Monday morning. "As, based on information received by security services, the situation warranting a State of Emergency remains unchanged, I, with the power bestowed upon me as the President as per Article 257 (c) of the Constitution, ask the honorable People's Majlis to grant a 30-day extension to the decree for State of Emergency and two decrees to revise the original decree, with the power bestowed upon the People's Majlis as per Article 257 (b) (ii) of the Constitution," reads the President's request. The request for a 30-day extension has now been sent to the National Security Committee of the Majlis.

[Security forces close down streets surrounding Parliament](#)

Sun Online | 19th February

Security forces have closed down all the streets surrounding the People's Majlis premises ahead of the extraordinary Majlis session scheduled for 11 am this Monday to make a decision on the State of Emergency. President Abdulla Yameen invoked a State of Emergency in the country on February 5, following an unprecedented order by the Supreme Court to release nine politicians and reinstate 12 MPs, on February 1, which the government says was part of a coup attempt. The Supreme Court has since annulled its order to release nine politicians, and on Sunday, ordered a stay on the reinstatement on 12 MPs. Access to the Majlis has also been denied to the media.

MYANMAR

[Border trade between Myanmar and Bangladesh increases](#)

Mizzima | 19th 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."

[Myanmar farmers going against the grain with apps](#)

Mizzima | 19th February

A free app on farmer San San Hla's smartphone is her new weapon in the war against the dreaded stem borer moth that blighted her rice paddy in southern Myanmar for the last two years. As she watches her workers haul in this year's harvest, the 35-year-old is in a triumphant mood, ascribing her victory over the seasonal scourge to advice received via the app about effective pesticide use. "We used to just farm the way our parents showed us," she told AFP, in her village of Aye Ywar west of Yangon. "But after getting the app, I now see how we should be doing it... it's better to use proper techniques rather than just working blindly."

NEPAL

[Prez calls federal parliamentary meet](#)

MyRepublica | 19th February

President Bidhya Devi Bhandari has called for a federal parliamentary conference on March 5, 2018 at the International Conference Center, New Baneshwor. Acting on Nepal's constitution, Clause 93's sub-clause 1, the President has called for the session, a press release issued by the Office of the President said.

[18,000 Chinese tourists entered Nepal via Rasuwagadhi in 2017](#)

MyRepublica | 19th February

Nearly 18,000 Chinese tourists entered Nepal via Rasuwagadhi border in Rasuwa district in 2017. According to Immigration Office at Timure, a total of 17,620 Chinese tourists visited Nepal via Rasuwagadhi border in 2017. According to the statistics provided by the Immigration Office, 342 Chinese tourists visited Nepal via the border point in January, 515 in February, 784 in March, 1,151 in April, 2,953 in May and 2,172 in June. Likewise, 2,463 Chinese entered Nepal via Rasuwagadhi in July, 2,285 in August, 1,944 in September, 1,834 in October, 1,063 in November and 714 in December.

PAKISTAN

[Foreign minister visits Moscow on invitation of Russian counterpart](#)

The Express Tribune | 19th February

Foreign Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif is visiting Moscow at the invitation of Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov of the Russian Federation from February 19 to 22, stated a press release by the Foreign Office. During his stay in Moscow, the foreign minister will be holding official talks with his Russian counterpart. The two sides will deliberate upon the entire spectrum of bilateral relations as well as regional and international issues of mutual interest.

[Declaring Pakistan state sponsor of terrorism will not help: scholars](#)

Dawn | 19th February

Declaring Pakistan a state sponsor of terrorism will create a situation that will be difficult to reverse, will fail in forcing Islamabad to change its policies and will not help the US cause in Afghanistan. These were the arguments

that all three panelists made this week in a discussion at a Washington think tank Woodrow Wilson Centre's Asia Programme to reject the suggestion.

SRI LANKA

[Sri Lanka, UAE sign MoU on cooperation in labor sector facilitating recruitment of domestic workers](#)

Colombo Page| 18th February

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Sri Lanka have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to foster cooperation in the labor and manpower fields facilitating the recruitment of domestic workers. UAE Minister of Human Resources and Emiratization Nasser bin Thani Al Hamli and Sri Lanka's Minister of Justice and Foreign Employment, Thalatha Athukorala signed the MoU in the presence of a number of officials from both parties, according to the UAE official news agency WAM.

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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