

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

January 19th, 2018 | Volume: 4 - 7/01

[Pakistani officials says Taliban delegation refuse talks with Afghan govt](#)

Khaama Press | 18th January
The Pakistani officials have said the Taliban group is not prepared to hold talks with the government as reports indicate that the Taliban supreme leader Mullah Hebatullah Akhundzada has sent a delegation to Islamabad to explore ways for reviving peace talks. Pakistani officials privy of the development have confirmed to Dawn News that a delegation of the Taliban including Shababuddin Dilawar and Malawi Rasool, came from Qatar to explore prospects of resuming talks.

[Bangladesh-India ties are at their best: Foreign minister](#)

bdnews24 | 18th January
Foreign Minister AH Mahmood Ali has said Bangladesh and India are enjoying “the best of relations” as the ties between the “most trusted” neighbours have flourished in depth and dimensions in recent years. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina’s government has taken “landmark steps towards improving relations with India”, Ali said.

[Pakistan made aware of reservations, should prosecute Hafiz Saeed: US](#)

Geo News | 19th January
The United States reiterated its prior call to Pakistan to prosecute Hafiz Saeed — the accused mastermind behind the 2008 Mumbai attacks — a senior administration official said in a press briefing. The US has sent a message to Islamabad to conduct precise operation against Saeed, Heather Nauert — the spokesperson for the US Department of State — stated. The designated terrorist should be “prosecuted to the fullest extent of law”, Nauert said, responding to a question on Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi’s decision to not prosecute Saeed.

AFGHANISTAN

[Chief Executive, US ambassador to Kabul discuss preparations for possible repatriation of Afghan refugees](#)

The Kabul Times | 17th January

Chief Executive Dr. Abdullah Abdullah met with US ambassador to Kabul John Bass. In the meeting, both sides considered recent visit of the UNSC delegation to Kabul as positive and expressed hope related to results and consequences of the delegation’s visit. They also exchanged view in connection with new cooperation between Kabul and Washington.

[US Again Asks Pakistan to Launch Crackdown on Haqqanis](#)

Daily Outlook Afghanistan (Pajhwok) | 18th January

A senior Trump administration official has once again asked Pakistan to clear its territory of externally-focused terrorist organisations. Assistant Secretary of State Alice Wells called for Pakistan to address the continuing presence of the Haqqani network and other terrorist groups on its soil. A statement from the US embassy: “Ambassador Wells urged the government of Pakistan to address the continuing presence of the Haqqani network and other terrorist groups within its territory,” During her two-day visit, she told her interlocutors in Islamabad that the US wanted to shift to a “new relationship with Pakistan” based on “mutual interest”.

BANGLADESH

[Govt seeks development partners' financing for achieving SDGs](#)

Financial Express | 18th January

Finance Minister Abul Maal Abdul Muhith has sought financing by development partners for successfully attaining the SDGs. The minister also asked them not to take away their attention from Bangladesh even after the country becomes a middle-income one. "Bangladesh will become a mid-income country. But, I request you not to take your attention away from Bangladesh after that," he said.

[Higher economic growth hinges on investments, skills](#)

The Daily Star | 19th January

Bangladesh has to mobilise private investment and improve skills of the manpower to achieve its desired economic growth, Asian Development Bank's Vice President Wencai Zhang said. Zhang said replying to a query on the country's strong economic growth in recent years while job creation remained slow. He spoke at a press meet at the ADB's Dhaka office, to share his experience of attending the two-day Bangladesh Development Forum meeting that ended.

BHUTAN

[More than 6,000 students pass class X examinations](#)

Kuensel | 18th January

With the cut off percentage set at 60.2, only 53.7 percent or 6,187 students who passed the Bhutan Certificate of Secondary Education (BCSE) last year will enroll into a government higher secondary school this year. The remaining 5,335 students have to seek admission in private higher secondary schools or the technical institutes in the country.

MALDIVES

[Suspension of the Maafushi Council has been lifted](#)

Sun Online | 18th January

Local Government Authority (LGA) has lifted the indefinite suspension of all the members of the Kaafu atoll Maafushi Island Council. Vice President of the Maafushi Council, Nasheeda Adam told Sun Media that the indefinite suspension by the LGA placed on the Council yesterday has been lifted. Nasheeda said that they were notified about the suspension being lifted by the atoll council.

[Oppositions share concerns with British Ambassador](#)

Sun Online | 18th January

The opposition coalition has shared their concerns with the British Ambassador Sri Lanka and the Maldives, James Dauris. Ambassador Dauris shared pictures of the meeting on Twitter after the meeting in Sri Lanka. In his tweet, Ambassador Dauris said that members of the Maldivian opposition parties have shared concerns with him regarding the Presidential Election this year as they believe it is not "shaping up" to be fair and that parliament has been brought to a halt. He said that 2018 will be a big year for democracy in the Maldives.

MYANMAR

[Myanmar celebrates the first Forum on Ethnic Sustainable Development](#)

Mizzima | 19th January

The first Ethnic Sustainable Development Forum was opened yesterday at the Mingalar Thiri Hotel in Nay Pyi Taw, according to a statement. Hosted by the Ministry of Ethnic Affairs, the two-day forum is being attended by stakeholders from across the country, as well as local and international organisations. A number of topics will be discussed at the forum, including the development of ethnic media, the economy and the peace process. The Minister for Pa-O Ethnic Affairs, Nan San Wint Khine delivered a message on behalf of State Counsellor Her Excellency Daw Aung San Suu Kyi on the occasion of the Ethnic Sustainable Development Forum.

[Labour law reform is key to sustainable development for Myanmar - Forum](#)

Mizzima | 18th January

Representatives of the Myanmar government, employers, workers, civil society and international partners gathered for the third time since 2015, in a forum to discuss progress and challenges in labour market reforms as part of the 'Initiative to Promote Fundamental Labour Rights and Practices' in Myanmar. The forum kicked off in Nay Pyi Taw on 17 January, hosted by the Government of Myanmar and funded by the European Union. Myanmar Union Minister of Labour, Immigration and Population, U Thein Swe, opened the two-day Forum reaffirming the commitment of the Union Government to reforming Myanmar's labour laws and strengthening social dialogue

with employers' and workers' organizations.

[Myanmar makes record drug bust with 30 million meth pills](#)

AFP / Mizzima | 19th January

Myanmar has seized 30 million meth pills along with more than two tonnes of "ice" and heroin in a record bust, the government said Thursday, as drugs pour from labs in lawless border regions. The operation in a remote part of northern Myanmar came after the Tuesday arrests of four suspected traffickers who led police to a house in Shan State's Kutkai township where the haul was discovered, the Ministry of Home Affairs said in a statement.

NEPAL

[Nepal's export to India takes a steep dive](#)

The Himalayan Times | 18th January

The country's export to India slowed to a crawl in the first five months (mid-July to mid-December) of this fiscal as major export items recorded negative growth in the review period. According to macroeconomic data of the first five months unveiled by Nepal Rastra Bank (NRB), while India's share in total import of Nepal is increasing, export to India in terms of total export has been falling gradually over the months of this fiscal after the southern neighbour enforced goods and services tax (GST) on July 1.

[Border pillars missing](#)

Kathmandu Post | 19th January

Purna Bahadur Khadka, surveyor of Nepali side, confirmed that most of the border pillars were either missing or in a dilapidated state in the district. The team is studying border pillars from Dokebazaar of Punsarbas Municipality to Bramhadev area.

PAKISTAN

[Baloch activist backs Indian narrative on Jadhav](#)

The Express Tribune | 19th January

A Baloch activist, Qadeer Baloch backs India's narrative about condemned spy Kulbhoshan Jadhav, claiming that the RAW [Research and Analysis Wing] agent was kidnapped in Iran and that he was convicted without evidence. In an interview with an English-language India-based news channel, Baloch offered his help to Jadhav in any court of law. Baloch, who also goes by the name of Mama Qadeer, claimed that an Iranian cleric Mulla Umer Balochi Irani had kidnapped Jadhav and sold him for Rs 40-50 million. "Jadhav was not a spy, he never entered Balochistan," the channel quoted Baloch as saying.

[Pakistan, US engaged in quiet diplomacy: FO](#)

DAWN | 19th January

Foreign Office spokesman Dr Muhammad Faisal disclosed that Pakistan and the United States were engaged in negotiations, which are "ongoing and outside public domain" and that cooperation with the US has remained unaffected despite recent developments. He did not go into details and only said that no demands were being made from the US in the negotiations.

SRI LANKA

[Sri Lanka PM to fully support the implementation of Bond Commission recommendations to recover losses](#)

Colombo Page | 18th January

Sri Lanka's Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe said he will provide his fullest support to implement the recommendations made by the Presidential Commission appointed to investigate the Central Bank bond issues and recover the billions of rupees lost to the government. Making a special statement to the nation, the Prime Minister pointed out that ever since the bond issue came to light, he took measures to assist the inquiry into the bond scam by the Perpetual Treasuries Ltd. with the involvement of the then Central Bank governor Arjun Mahendran, who was appointed in 2015 by the current government.

[Sri Lanka, India undertook a challenging path to socio-economic development since Independence - Indian HC](#)

Colombo Page | 19th January

High Commission of India in Colombo organized a special cultural event "Bollywood and Beyond" Wednesday in Colombo to jointly celebrate 70 years of independence of India and Sri Lanka, popularly termed as "India and Sri

Lanka @ 70". President Maithripala Sirisena, Speaker Karu Jayasuriya, former President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga, a number of Ministers, Members of Parliament, senior officials and diplomats were among the dignitaries who participated in the special cultural event "Bollywood and Beyond".

[Sri Lanka sets an export target of US\\$ 20 billion by 2020](#)

Colombo Page | 18th January

The Sri Lanka Export Development Board (EDB) in collaboration with Asian Development Bank (ADB) and rubber sector stakeholders officially launched a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) known as Lanka Rubber Global Consortium Pvt Ltd (LRGC). The motive of establishing SME clusters by way of formation of a SPV is to create local brands more competitive in the global arena as this would help to improve the country to drive towards a highly competitive export oriented economy, the Government Information Department said.

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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