

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

March 1st, 2017 | Volume: 3 - 1/3

[Afghan military summoned Pakistani ambassador over artillery shelling](#)

Khaama Press | 1st March

The Pakistani Ambassador to Afghanistan was summoned in the Ministry of Defense of Afghanistan over persistent artillery shelling in eastern provinces of the country. Ambassador Abrar Hussain was reportedly summoned by General Murad Ali Murad, the deputy chief of staff of the Ministry of Defense of Afghanistan. The military attaché of the Pakistani Embassy General Farooq Zaman was also summoned to respond regarding the indiscriminate artillery shelling in Kunar and Nangarhar provinces. Gen. Murad said the artillery shelling must stop immediately considering the sensitivities along the two sides of the Durand Line.

[Fresh census of Rohingyas begins](#)

The Daily Star | 1st March

The Bangladesh government yesterday started counting the number of Rohingyas who took shelter in Cox's Bazar district on fleeing a four-month army crackdown beginning in October last year in neighbouring Myanmar's Rakhine state. The Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) deployed 200 trained teams of two, one supervisor and one enumerator, since 8:00am to initially cover Ukhia and Teknaf upazilas before moving on to Cox's Bazar sadar, Ramu and Chakaria. Expected to complete by March 10, the census is part of a government plan to relocate the refugees to Noakhali's Thengar Char, an island in the Bay of Bengal.

[US plan against IS includes Pak-Afghan region](#)

Dawn | 1st March

US Defence Secretary James Mattis has delivered to the White House a new plan for combating the militant Islamic State group (IS), which calls for using both military and non-military means for defeating the extremist organisation. As Pentagon officials said that the plan went beyond Iraq and Syria, the commander of the US forces in Afghanistan warned that the IS had a significant presence in the Pak-Afghan region as well.

AFGHANISTAN

[Taliban commander among 5 killed or wounded in Nangarhar drone strike](#)

Khaama Press | 28th February

A commander of the Taliban group was among at least five militants killed or wounded in a US drone strike in eastern Nangarhar province of Afghanistan. According to the local security officials, the airstrike was carried out late on Monday night in Chaparhar district. Provincial police spokesman Hazrat Hussain Mashrafi confirmed that the militants were targeted in Sangini area of Chaparhar late on Monday night. He said a commander of the Taliban group was killed along with another insurgent and at least three others were wounded.

[Kabul Pushes for Regional Alliance Against Terrorism, Extremism](#)

Outlook Afghanistan/ Tolonews | 1st March

The Afghan Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) on Tuesday said that regional countries need to join hands and fight terrorism strategically in the region. “The Afghan government has always stressed the need for wider cooperation between the countries of the region in the fight against terror. The fight against terrorism must be carried out at the regional level on the basis of a combined strategy,” said MoFA deputy spokesman Khairullah Azad. In the past Afghan officials also expressed deep concerns over the thaw in relations between the Taliban and the Russian government. “Any decision taken by Tajikistan and Russia, is their own business. Afghanistan, however, will never allow any terrorist groups to use Afghan soil against another country,” said a defense ministry spokesman Dawlat Waziri.

[Afghanistan is Not a Threat to Any Country: Ghani](#)

Outlook Afghanistan/ Tolonews | 28th February

“Afghanistan is not a threat to any country, Afghanistan is an independent country and will remain so for hundreds of years to come,” President Ashraf Ghani said on Monday. He was speaking at the ceremony marking the National Day of Security Forces held at the Kabul military airport. In attendance were senior military officials, National Security Advisor, Haneef Atmar and other military officials. “Those who want to change Afghanistan into a battle field, will take their wishes to the grave with them,” Ghani said.

[An economic slap in the face of Pakistan](#)

Afghanistan Times | 28th February

The Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce and Industries (ACCI), on Tuesday came hard over closure of Torkham and Spinboldak crossing points by the Pakistani government, calling on World Trade Organization (WTO) to address the issue as it is against WTO agreement. Pakistan is one of the members of WTO, and violated the agreement words through banning crossings. The ACCI informed that around three thousands Afghan trucks ‘full of fresh fruits, vegetable, poultry, and other transit goods have been stopped since one and half weeks in both side of Torkham and Spinboldak crossing due to its closure by Pakistani government. Moreover, the ACCI also hinted toward standstill of Afghan goods in Karachi port.

BANGLADESH

[IMF diagnoses Bangladesh economic uplift challenges](#)

The Financial Express | 1st March

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) pinpointed boosting both private and public investments and pursuance of capital-market development for facilitating long-term investment among the major challenges for Bangladesh's economic uplift. It also suggested structural reforms, strengthened institutions, and capacity development and maintaining a stable security situation to avoid adverse effects on market confidence so that Bangladesh is able to leap to the next stage of development.

[Child Marriage Act: Rights bodies decry special provision](#)

The Daily Star | 1st March

Samajik Protirodh Committee (SPC), a platform of 70 women, rights and development organisations, yesterday denounced the enactment of the Child Marriage Restraint Bill 2017 with keeping intact a provision for “special circumstances” Meanwhile, Child Rights Advocacy Coalition in Bangladesh (CRACB) in a separate statement also expressed its concern over the special provision.

[Internet banking transactions record phenomenal growth in 2016](#)

The Financial Express | 1st March

Internet banking finds a fast rise, with over 41 per cent growth recorded in the country in 2016, amid a healthy growth in real-time fund transfers, e-commerce and online penetration. A total of Tk 307.52 billion was transacted through internet banking in the past year, according to latest statistics obtained from the central bank this week. The figure is up from Tk 217.57 billion that was transacted in the previous year (2015).

BHUTAN

[A fruitful year for Bhutan's Parliament](#)

Kuensel Online | 25th February

The last two sessions of Parliament were largely fruitful both in terms of fostering democratic practices and enactment of laws. The eighth session of Parliament that concluded on December 9 last year adopted two Bills and as many international conventions. However, consensus could not be reached between the Assembly and the National Council on the Customs Bill of Bhutan and the Motor Vehicle Agreement between Bhutan, Bangladesh, India and Nepal (BBIN).

MALDIVES

[Maldives calls on Israel to leave Palestine lands](#)

Sun Online | 28th February

Maldivian government has called for Israel to leave the illegally occupied lands of Palestine. Addressing the Human Rights Council for the first time at the High-Level Segment of the Thirty Fourth Session of the Human Rights Council, Maldivian Foreign Minister, Dr. Mohamed Asim said that a culture of respect among the nations are needed in the world today. Highlighting the Palestine issue, Dr. Asim said that Palestine and Israel cannot be established as peaceful states without a culture of respect. Last year, the UN Security Council passed a resolution calling to leave the Palestinian lands occupied by Israel.

MYANMAR

[Bangladesh starts head count for Rohingya relocation](#)

Mizzima | 1st March

Bangladesh authorities have begun a census of Rohingya refugees living in the country's southeast as part of a controversial move to relocate them to an uninhabited island, officials said Tuesday. The government statistics officers fanned out in refugee camps in Cox's Bazar district to count the number of refugees who have fled persecution in Rakhine state in neighbouring Myanmar. "Initially we'll make a list of families of Myanmar nationals who are living in the camps and outside, then we'll do the head count," said Wahidur Rahman, an official of the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics.

[At least 160 killed in clashes on Myanmar-China border: army](#)

Mizzima | 1st March

At least 160 people have died in three months of clashes between the military and ethnic armed groups in Myanmar's Shan state, a senior army official said Tuesday, amid efforts to revive flagging peace talks. More than 20,000 people have been displaced since fighting between the army and several armed ethnic groups erupted near the border with China in late November.

NEPAL

[Envoy Rae completes tenure, leaving today](#)

The Kathmandu Post | 1st March

Indian Ambassador to Nepal Ranjit Rae completed his three-and-a-half-year tenure in Kathmandu on Tuesday and is leaving for New Delhi on Wednesday. But the Indian government has failed to send Rae's successor probably for the first time in Nepal. The Indian government does not have the practice of keeping its Kathmandu mission vacant for long.

[Indian, Chinese envoys call on PM Dahal](#)

RSS / The Kathmandu Post | 28th February

Indian Ambassador and Chinese Ambassador to Nepal Ranjit Rae and Yu Hong separately called on Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal at the latter's residence in Baluwatar on Tuesday. During the meeting with Chinese Ambassador, PM Dahal said that the expansion of connectivity between the two countries, infrastructure development and the implementation of the past agreements were moving ahead effectively.

[Cabinet okays policies related to minerals and intellectual property rights](#)

Himalayan News Service/ The Himalayan Times | 28th February

The meeting of the council of ministers today gave approval to the draft bill of National Mineral Policy and National Intellectual Property Policy that was tabled by the Ministry of Industry.

PAKISTAN

[Senate panel wants Pakistan's interests fully protected under CPEC](#)

Dawn | 1st March

The Senate's Standing Committee on Planning and Development expressed fears on Tuesday that the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) could build or ruin Pakistan and its future if the country's interests were not safeguarded and watched. The committee urged the government to have everything in black and white with Chinese to avoid any misunderstanding between the two brotherly countries in future and form a panel of international and local experts to handle all aspects of the CPEC in a professional manner.

[ECO sets example of regional cooperation: PM](#)

Geotv | 1st March

The 13th Economic Cooperation Organisation (ECO) summit, aimed at enhancing regional integration, connectivity and advancing economic prosperity in the region commenced Wednesday. Addressing the attendees, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif said: "I feel great pleasure to welcome all guests." The prime minister emphasized on greater connectivity and trade links between member countries. "The ECO region is rich in resources and capabilities. It is time to make momentous advancements," he said.

[Pakistan to repay \\$6.5b debt over next 15 months](#)

The Express Tribune | 1st March

Pakistan will return \$6.5 billion external public debt in the next 15 months alone. This repayment will take the total official debt repayments during the five-year tenure of the PML-N government to a whopping \$21 billion. The Ministry of Finance shared these staggering figures with the Senate Standing Committee on Finance and Revenue on Tuesday. The \$6.5 billion repayments will be made from February this year to June 2018 excluding the interest paid on the principal amount, said the ministry.

SRI LANKA

[Mangala tells UNHRC, Sri Lanka determined to address concerns](#)

Colombo Gazette | 28th February

Foreign Minister Mangala Samaraweera told the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC), Sri Lanka is determined to address concerns on human rights. He said this while addressing the high-level segment of the 34th session of the UNHRC in Geneva today. The Foreign Minister said that Sri Lanka has made progress on several fronts over the past two years. The Minister also said that some elements are attempting to derail the ongoing reconciliation process.

[U.S. congressional delegation reaffirms bipartisan support for Sri Lanka](#)

Colombo Page | 28th February

A delegation from the U.S. House of Representatives led by Congressman Bob Goodlatte, Chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, departed Colombo on February 25 following a two-day visit to Colombo. The delegation visited Sri Lanka to discuss strategic issues affecting vital sea lanes in the Indo-Pacific, learn about Sri Lanka's progress in forging lasting reconciliation and a non-recurrence of conflict, including a new constitution and to learn more about economic reforms which could increase bilateral trade and investment between the United States and Sri Lanka.

[Inflation in Sri Lanka capital Colombo rises to 6.8 percent in February 2017](#)

Colombo Page | 28th February

Sri Lanka's inflation, as measured by the change in the Colombo Consumers' Price Index (CCPI), increased to 6.8 percent in February 2017 from 5.5 percent in January, the Department of Census and Statistics reported on Tuesday. The CCPI for all items for the month of February marginally increased by 0.5 percent to 116.7 from 116.1 recorded in January 2017. The increase in the index point was due to the increases of food items by 0.36 percent and non-food items by 0.10 percent.

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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