



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

February 21, 2018 | Volume - 9/02

Russia will continue to boost Pakistan's counterterrorism capacity, says FM Lavrov

Dawn | 21th February
Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said that Russia will continue to assist Pakistan to bolster its counterterrorism capabilities, and the two countries will also form a commission for military cooperation, TASS news agency reported. "We have confirmed Russia's readiness to continue boosting Pakistan's counterterrorism capacity, which is in the entire region's interests," he said while addressing a press conference with his Pakistani counterpart Khawaja Asif. Lavrov said fighting terrorism was a priority area of Russia-Pakistan cooperation, but his country also sees other opportunities for bilateral trade and economic cooperation with Pakistan, especially in the energy sector.

UN blocks deployment of Sri Lankan military officer to Lebanon

Colombo Gazette | 20th February
The United Nations (UN) has blocked the deployment of a Sri Lankan military officer to Lebanon for peacekeeping operations. UN Deputy Spokesman Farhan Haq said that following questions raised, the deployment of Rathnappuli Wasantha Kumara Hewage has been suspended, Innercity Press reported.

Foreign circles attempting to sabotage peace efforts, claims Khalili

Khaama Press | 20th February
The chairman of the Afghan High Peace Council (AHPC) Mohammad Karim Khalili claims that the certain foreign circles are attempting to sabotage the peace efforts. Khalili made the remarks during a conference attended by the local tribal and Jihaid leaders from all 34 provinces of the country. He said the Afghan government is committed to peace efforts in a bid to end the ongoing violence and conflict in the country. However, he said certain foreign circles are attempting to sabotage the peace efforts and the recent attacks are just some of the examples of the sabotage efforts.

AFGHANISTAN

[Afghan Security: Britain 'Should Commit More Troops'](#)

Daily Outlook Afghanistan | 20th February

Britain should commit more troops to help stabilise Afghanistan and be prepared to remain in the country for many more years, a former Head of the British Armed Forces has said. Speaking to Sky News, Lord Richards of Herstmonceux said the UK should support the recent American surge ordered by US President Donald Trump to deal with a resurgent Taliban. "I think we should be much more involved in the support role," Lord Richards said. "The sort of things that the Americans are asking of us, we should be prepared to step up to the mark on. Lord Richards, who was also the senior NATO commander in Afghanistan between 2006 and 2008, said the UK could offer air and logistical support to its American partners.

BANGLADESH

['Media role vital to cement Indo-Bangla relations'](#)

Daily Sun | 21st February

Journalists from Bangladesh and India emphasised the need for wider roles of media to remove anti-Indian sentiments in Bangladesh. They also underscored that Indian media will have to play similar roles in removing anti-Bangladeshi sentiments in India. The journalists came up with the remarks while addressing the first session of the second day of Bangladesh-India Media Dialogue- 2018 at Radisson Blu Dhaka Water Garden in the capital. With the theme 'Bilateral relation between Bangladesh and India in last nine years and way forward', Institute of Conflict, Law and Development Studies (ICLDS) has organised the three-day dialogue.

[Bangladesh Ad Market: Two global giants gobble up mos](#)

The Daily Star | 21st February

Companies in Bangladesh are spending nearly Tk 1,000 crore every year on digital marketing on Facebook and Google to reach their target audience. The reasons for digital campaigns' fast rise in popularity are that people are progressively gathering on social media and increasing sophistication of algorithms means the ads can be accurately targeted. The digital campaigns allow people to see local ads sitting in Bangladesh whilst browsing sites in any country, including the US, the UK, and Australia. In 2017, about Tk 110 crore was spent on digital marketing campaigns, according to Asif Iqbal, an expert in this field. Of the sum, 50 percent went to Facebook and the rest to Google and others.

BHUTAN

[Meet the people programme suspended during election period](#)

Kuensel | 20th February

Following the Election Commission of Bhutan's public advisory to avoid public meetings and gatherings from February to May and August to October this year, the weekly Meet the People Programme has been suspended until the National Council (NC) elections are over. According to records with the Cabinet secretariat, 200 meet the people sessions have been conducted since it started in 2013. It has so far attended to more than 1,500 applicants. The programme is conducted every Saturday. People's Democratic Party's (PDP) general secretary,

Sonam Jatso, said the programme tries to address problems related to public service delivery or government related services and that the programme does not entertain legal issues, kidu cases or issues related to constitutional agencies.

MALDIVES

[Maldivian government assures EU it will uphold the law](#)

Sun Online | 20th February

Maldivian government has provided assurance to the European Union (EU) it will uphold the rule of law in the country. Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr. Mohamed Asim met with EU Ambassador to Maldives, Tung-Lai Margue to discuss the Maldivian political situation. During the meeting, Dr. Asim expressed appreciation for continued support by EU to Maldives, noting especially the organization's advice and assistance in strengthening democratic principles in the country. Dr. Asim said that upholding the rule of law was the Maldivian government's biggest priority.

[Defence: No naval ships inside the Maldivian borders](#)

Sun Online | 20th February

Ministry of Defence and National Security has said that there are no foreign military naval ships operating inside the Maldivian border. A statement issued by the ministry today said that the Maldives National Defence Force is protecting the economic border of the Maldives. The Ministry advised against spreading rumors that could jeopardize the national security especially at such a politically critical time in the country. At this time of political unrest in the Maldives, a group of people have been calling on India to invade the country.

MYANMAR

[Myanmar to implement 10-year elephant conservation action plan](#)

Mizzima | 21st February

Myanmar's government has planned to conduct a 10-year action plan on elephant conservation (2018-2027), which is aimed at preventing a decrease in the number of wildlife elephants and a reduction of their pasture land, the official Global New Light of Myanmar reported Tuesday. The action plan covers protection of wild elephants and their pasture land, solving human-elephant conflict, prevention of and enforcing action against illegal trading of elephants and their body parts as well as managing tame elephants. According to reports, the number of wild elephants in Myanmar has dropped due to fewer wild elephant corridors, a reduction of their pasture land and human-elephant conflict.

[KBZ Bank partners with Action Aid Myanmar to assist female farmers for financial assistance](#)

Mizzima | 20th February

Kanbawza Bank (KBZ Bank), the largest privately-owned bank in Myanmar, is to support the improvement of the standards of living for women agricultural producers in the central part of Myanmar by providing access for financing, partnering with Action Aid Myanmar, a non-profit organisation operating here since 2006. "As the first

year pilot phase, we have been investing around MMK 100 million to 120 women farmers and traders in Pakokku, Magway region, who have been unable to access the country's financial system," Soe Tin Maung Zaw, senior general manager at KBZ Bank, said. According to the pilot phase, KBZ Bank and Action Aid Myanmar allocated and invested the finance to support MMK one million to one and half million for each female farmer with an interest rate of 13 percent per year, with the coordination of the central bank of Myanmar.

NEPAL

[Govt likely to have 18 ministries: PM MAY EXPAND CABINET TODAY, ROPING IN CPN-MC](#)

The Himalayan Times | 21st February

The new government is likely to have 18 ministries, three more than the Sher Bahadur Deuba-led government. As per discussion between Prime Minister and CPN-UML Chairman KP Sharma Oli and CPN-Maoist Centre Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal, the government may include Madhes-based parties to make the government inclusive and have two-thirds majority in the Parliament.

[Export cash incentive scheme fails to deliver](#)

The Himalayan Times | 21st February

Export incentive program, which was introduced by the government in FY2011/12 to ramp up exports, has failed to achieve desired results, an analysis of country's export and incentive distribution shows. Country's export income has remained stable or increased slightly after the introduction of the scheme. However, distribution of cash incentives has increased over the years.

PAKISTAN

[Pakistan given three-month reprieve over terrorist financing watchlist: minister](#)

Reuters | 21st February

Pakistan has been given a three-month reprieve by a global watchdog over a U.S.-led motion to put the South Asian country on a terrorist financing watchlist, Pakistan's Foreign Minister Khawaja Asif said late on Tuesday. Pakistan has been scrambling in recent months to avoid being added to a list of countries deemed non-compliant with anti-money laundering and terrorist financing regulations by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), a measure that officials fear could hurt its economy. FATF member states have been meeting this week in Paris, where it was expected that they would decide on a U.S. motion, backed by Britain, France and Germany, to have Pakistan added to the so-called "grey list" of countries which are not doing enough to comply with terrorist-funding regulations.

[Pakistan wins EU praise for meeting GSP Plus criteria](#)

The Express Tribune | 21st February

The European Parliament has expressed satisfaction on the progress achieved by Pakistan in enacting new laws and developing new institutions for implementation of 27 core conventions of GSP Plus, according to a press statement released by the Ministry of Commerce. The statement added that the International Committee on International Trade also agreed to deliberate upon the possibility of up-scaling the relationship with Pakistan from a beneficiary of GSP Plus Scheme to a FTA partner in the future. The meeting of the International Trade

Committee (INTA) of the Parliament, held in Brussels, was called to discuss the 2nd Biennial Assessment Report of GSP Plus, the release stated.

SRI LANKA

[Sri Lanka to introduce a new economic plan next week](#)

Colombo Gazette | 20th February

A new economic plan is to be introduced for Sri Lanka next week, the National Economic Council said. The National Economic Council which met under the leadership of President Maithripala Sirisena decided to introduce the new economic plan with speedy management changes. During the meeting, detailed discussions were held on the rapid changes required in the country and short term and long term programmes needed to be implemented and the decision to be taken to speed up economic development.

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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