

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

February 26th, 2017 | Volume: 3 - 11/2

[Afghan, Indian officials discuss air trade](#)

Afghanistan Times | 26th February
Afghan and Indian officials talked on a joint procedure based on which, the air trade would be accelerated. Deputy foreign minister Nasir Andisha in meeting with Indian ambassador Manpreet Vohra also discussed the increase of export-import between the two countries through air transport, quality of the goods and facilities for custom duties and encouraging private sector to take more part in this regard. As a landlocked country, Afghanistan is linked to the world markets through the neighboring countries' seaports. The recent agreement among Afghanistan, Iran and India is believed to help Afghan business to get more access to the international markets.

[Bangladesh, India sign MoU to develop Sylhet city](#)

The Financial Express | 24th February
A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed in Sylhet between India and Bangladesh for undertaking three projects for the sustainable development of the north-east city. Indian High Commissioner Harsh Vardhan Shringla, Additional Secretary of the Economic Relations Division Shah Md. Aminul Haque and Sylhet City Corporation CEO Enamul Habib signed the tripartite agreement on Friday in Sylhet.

[Nepal to sign OBOR MoU with China soon: PM](#)

My Republica | 27th February
Prime Minister of Nepal Pushpa Kamal Dahal has said that Nepal will soon formally sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with China to become part of its One Belt One Road (OBOR) initiative. During a meeting with a 41-member OBOR delegation at his residence at Baluwatar on Sunday morning, Prime Minister Dahal said Nepal expects to benefit from the opportunities that China's OBOR project offers. "We will soon sign an MoU to formally become a part of the OBOR, and benefit as much as possible from it," advisor to the OBOR Trade and Investment Platform-Nepal Kush Kumar Joshi quoted the prime minister as telling the delegation at the meeting.

AFGHANISTAN

[Afghanistan again summons Pakistani ambassador over artillery shelling](#)

Khaama Press | 26th February

The Pakistani Ambassador to Afghanistan was summoned in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan regarding the persistent artillery shelling in eastern provinces of Afghanistan. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) said Ambassador Syed Abrar Hussain was summoned and a protest was lodged by deputy foreign minister for administrative affairs Dr. Nasir Ahmad Andisha. Dr. Andisha strongly condemned the artillery shelling on Sarkano district of Kunar and Goshta district of Nangarhar which resulted into a blaze in a jungle in Shangari area of Sarkano.

[Unity government has clear definition for enemies and friends: Abdullah](#)

Khaama Press | 26th February

The national unity government has a clear definition for friends and foes, the chief executive of the government

Abdullah Abdullah said Sunday. He made the remarks during a meeting with the youths and activists of the Afghanistan Intellectuals Process. Clarifying the stance of the government in fight against terrorism, Abdullah said a clear definition for the friends and foes currently exist as compared to the previous administration led by Hamid Karzai where there were no definitions for the same.

[300,000 Afghan Girls Benefited from UK Education Program](#)

Outlook Afghanistan|26th February

More than 300,000 Afghan girls have benefited from the program of The United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID) since 2012, Priti Patel, the UK's Secretary of State for International Development said on Sunday. In a trip to Kabul, she said that UK had also built nearly a thousand classrooms and distributed more than 500,000 books to the girl students. The program, carried out within the framework of 'The Girls' Education Challenges', is aimed at helping Afghan girls in remote regions across the nation to have an opportunity to improve their lives through education.

[In 'Special Message', Taliban Leader Urges Afghans to Plant More Trees](#)

Outlook Afghanistan/ Reuters|26th February

The Taliban group in Afghanistan on Sunday used a rare public statement in the name of its leader, Haibatullah Akhundzada, to call on Afghans to plant more trees for worldly and other-worldly good. Official Taliban outlets released the "special message" under Akhundzada's name, an uncommon move for the group that has recently published unsigned statements on a range of issues such as civilian casualties, upcoming military operations, and the anniversary of the withdrawal of Soviet troops in the 1980s. Akhundzada, a cleric, is believed to have been in hiding since becoming Taliban leader in May 2016 following the death of his predecessor in a U.S. drone strike in Pakistan.

[Pakistan, Afghanistan to Hold Counterterrorism Talks](#)

Afghanistan Times/ VoA|26th February

Pakistan disclosed Saturday that it is engaged in negotiations with Afghanistan on developing a joint "mechanism" to address mutual cross-border terrorism concerns, and both sides could formalize a deal next week. Sartaj Aziz, the prime minister's adviser on foreign policy, told reporters in Islamabad that he will hold further talks on the subject when he meets with Afghan Foreign Minister Salahuddin Rabbani on the sidelines of a regional summit opening in Islamabad on Sunday. He said that Rabbani has confirmed his participation in the 10-nation Economic Cooperation Organization, or ECO, along with other senior Afghan officials. Aziz went on to say that both sides see terrorism as a "common enemy" and have agreed that there is a need for cooperation.

[US welcomes Afghan law on combat trafficking](#)

Afghanistan Times|26th February

The United States says it welcomes the new law on the trafficking in person and smuggling migrants, saying it would provide "significant advancements to protect human rights". "The United States is proud of our assistance to the Ministry of Justice in support of the multi-year project. In particular, the new law represents a major achievement in strengthening the rule of law and protecting Afghanistan's most vulnerable populations," the US special charge d'affaires ambassador Hugo Llorens was quoted in a statement from the US embassy to Kabul. "The United States will continue to support the efforts of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to strengthen the rule of law, respect human rights, and provide citizens access to fair, efficient, independent, and transparent justice based on Afghan law and international obligations."

BANGLADESH

[Bangladesh's Shahabuddin Ahmed becomes first foreign 'Artist-In-Residence' in India's Rashtrapati Bhavan](#)

bdnews24 | 26th February

Bangladesh's preeminent artist and freedom fighter Shahabuddin Ahmed has become the first foreign 'Artist-In-Residence' in India's Rashtrapati Bhavan or presidential palace. President Pranab Mukherjee accorded the honour to Shahabuddin who stayed at Rashtrapati Bhavan from Feb 18 to Feb 22 as a presidential guest. "He is

the first foreign artist to live in Rashtrapati Bhavan as a guest of President Pranab Mukherjee,” according to a statement posted at President of India website.

[Muhith plans Tk 4.2tr budget for next fiscal](#)

Star Online | 26th February

Finance Minister AMA Muhith today said the outlay of the budget for the coming 2017-2018 fiscal could be as high as Taka 420,000 crore (Tk 4.2 trillion). The minister made the statement before journalists after emerging from a pre-budget conference of leading economists in state guest house Padma in Dhaka. Muhith said he initially planned the budget for the next fiscal to be within Taka 4 trillion, but since “this would be the last budget to be fully implemented by him in the present tenure”, the budget size would be bigger.

[Hasina calls for re-electing her party to ‘maintain peace’](#)

BSS/ Prothom Alo | 26th February

Bangladesh Awami League (AL) president and prime minister Sheikh Hasina has urged the people to re-elect her party to continue the country's peace, progress and development, saying that all uplift activities would be halted if the BNP-Jamaat nexus comes to power. Sheikh Hasina said if her party is reelected, development of everybody will be made and their life would be beautiful. “But there would be no uplift and all development activities would be stopped if the BNP-Jamaat, the plunderers, terrorists, militants and illegal power grabbers, comes to power. They won't give anything, rather they would eat everything,” said Hasina while addressing a public rally at Shantahar Stadium in Bogra this afternoon.

[Bangladesh opens first solar-powered silo with climate-controlled facility](#)

bdnew24 | 26th February

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has opened Bangladesh's first multi-storey, solar-powered silo in Bogra. The climate controlled facilities at the northern district's Santahar can store approximately 25,000 tonnes of food. Officials say all types of food can be stored in the warehouse. The prime minister arrived in Bogra around 12pm on Sunday to inaugurate a number of development projects. The Santahar silo was the prime minister's first stop after arriving in the northern district. The high-tech food storage project began in 2009 and was completed with the financial and technical support of the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA).

BHUTAN

[A productive year for agriculture in Bhutan](#)

Kuensel Online | 25th February

The agriculture sector, that 58 percent of the population depends on for their livelihood, experienced some major milestones in the year of the Monkey. Bhutan exported eggs to Kolkata, India for the first time. The Farm Mechanisation Corporation was established and will provide farmers with machinery and mechanisation services at low and subsidised rates.

[Stabilising the economy](#)

Kuensel Online | 25th February

The Monkey has built its fortune by bolstering the humble coffer it inherited. As the time approached for the Monkey to pass its heirloom to the bird, a trifling bug seems to have infested the coffer. The economy has more or less recovered from shocks of the INR shortage, credit and import restrictions. Economic growth rebounded from an all time low of 2.05 percent to 5.5 percent to 6.5 percent in the Monkey year.

MALDIVES

[Assistance from Indian Airforce requested to find the missing fishing boat](#)

Sun Online | 27th February

Maldives National Defence Force (MNDF) has requested assistance from the Airforce of the neighboring India in the week-long search for the missing fishing boat “Blue Fish 1”. The MNDF previously said that that the last know location of the 87-foot long vessel was out off Kaafu atoll Dhiffushi according to the owner of the vessel. Media of Official of the MNDF, Captain Azim has previously said that the information they have tells that the vessel should

have enough food for 12 days. And so the MNDF has requested assistance from the Maritime Rescue Coordination Center of the Sri Lankan and Indian Coastguard.

[Dunya: Women need to be economically sustained](#)

Sun Online | 26th February

State Minister at the Health Ministry, Dunya Maumoon has said that women need to become economically sustained and not depend on anyone else. During her visit to the women's expo "Heevaagi Kanbalhun" organized with the initiation of First Lady Fathimath Ibrahim, Dunya said that the expo is an important initiative by the President and the First Lady. The State Minister said that financial stability for women is something that the country needs to strengthen at the moment.

[President launches 2-week campaign to eradicate measles](#)

Sun Online | 26th February

President Abdulla Yameen Abdul Gayoom has launched a two-week national campaign to eradicate measles from the country. The campaign was launched in a ceremony held at President's Office this Sunday. Speaking to press after the launch, Minister of Health, Abdulla Nazim Ibrahim said the campaign was of high priority to the government.

MYANMAR

[Myanmar's Suu Kyi breaks silence on killing of top lawyer](#)

Mizzima | 27th February

Myanmar's de facto leader Aung San Suu Kyi has broken a month long silence on the daylight assassination of her advisor, calling his killing a "great loss" for the country's democracy struggle. Ko Ni, a prominent Muslim lawyer and critic of Myanmar's powerful military, was shot dead on 29 January outside Yangon airport in a murder that sent shockwaves through the country's young civilian government.

[NGO calls on the UN to support resolution on human rights in Myanmar](#)

Mizzima | 25th February

Human Rights Watch (HRW) is calling on the UN Human Rights Council to adopt a strong resolution on the human rights situation in Myanmar. In a press release issued on February 24, the NGO called on Permanent Representatives of Member and Observer States of the UN Human Rights Council to take action over what it called the "serious human rights crisis" in Myanmar.

NEPAL

[ADB funded projects set record in Nepal](#)

Kathmandu Post | 27th February

The performance of projects funded by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) in Nepal "improved notably" in 2016, with the government setting new records in fund disbursement and contract awards. The ADB, a Manila-based multilateral lending institution, set a target of disbursing \$247 million in Nepal in 2016. Of this, \$221 was disbursed, achieving 89.5 percent of the target. The ADB had also set a target of awarding contracts worth \$414 million in 2016. By the end of last year, contracts worth \$369 million were awarded, which was 89 percent of the target.

[Nepalis in Saudi Arabia being barred from returning home](#)

RASTRIYA SAMACHAR SAMITI/ the Himalayan Times | 25th February

Kalicharan Sah of Saptari had left for Saudi Arabia five years ago on a two-year labour permit. But, he is yet to return home despite several attempts. Sah could not return because he did not receive the mandatory permit from his employer company. The law of Saudi Arabia requires a worker to receive an exit visa from his/her employer to return home, even after the end of the contract.

PAKISTAN

[PSM land allocated for industrial park under CPEC](#)

Dawn | 27th February

Pending a strategic decision on its privatisation, Pakistan Steel Mills (PSM) continues to lose its land — this time to an industrial park to be set up under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. A government official told Dawn that Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif had approved allocation of 1,500 acres of PSM land for the industrial park. The

prime minister has “desired that it (matter) may be taken up with the Privatisation Commission and Board of Directors of PSM,” said an order issued by the industries and production ministry.

[Border closed to stop terrorist infiltration, Pak envoy tells Afghan FO](#)

Geo.tv | 26th February

Afghanistan Foreign Office on Sunday summoned Pakistan’s ambassador to Kabul and complained that due to the closure of the Pak-Afghan border people are facing difficulties. Afghan officials said that Pakistan is shelling across the border. The Pakistani Ambassador responded to the concerns, saying that to stop infiltration of terrorists the border was closed. He said that Pakistan wants peace in Afghanistan and has initiated Operation Radd-ul-Fasaad. To ensure peace, closing the border was imperative, he said. The ambassador further said that Pakistani posts were being attacked and the army was only retaliating.

[Pakistan assures Afghanistan of full assistance](#)

The Express Tribune | 27th February

Foreign Secretary Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry on Sunday said that Pakistan had faced the brunt of terrorism and was greatly affected by Afghanistan’s instability. Terming Afghanistan as its twin brother and extending full support for the country’s peace process, the foreign secretary welcomed the upcoming Economic Cooperation Organisation’s special meeting on Afghanistan in Kabul.

[India fails to substantiate claim of Pakistan’s involvement in Uri attack](#)

The Express Tribune | 26th February

India’s National Investigative Agency (NIA) has decided to file a closure report after failing to find any evidence against two men from Azad Jammu & Kashmir (AJK) whom it accused of facilitating the Uri army base attack. The decision also seriously undercuts New Delhi’s claims of Pakistani involvement in the attack. India’s Ministry of External Affairs had earlier claimed to have “proof of the cross-border origins of Uri attacks”, on September 18 last year, which left at least 18 soldiers dead. Days after the attack, the Indian foreign secretary had called Pakistani High Commissioner Abdul Basit to inform him about the arrest of two guides who allegedly helped four gunmen to infiltrate the country and later attack the Indian Army’s brigade headquarters in Uri.

SRI LANKA

[Thousands sign petition against deporting Lankan in UK](#)

Colombo Gazette | 26th February

Thousands of people have signed a petition to stop the deportation of Sri Lankan student at Bangor University in the UK, the BBC reported. Shiromini Satkunarajah, 20, who was born in Sri Lanka but has lived in the UK for eight years, is due to finish her electrical engineering degree this summer. She was arrested on Tuesday and taken to a detention centre to await deportation on 28 February.

[India’s Congress sacks official over gold smuggled from Lanka](#)

Colombo Gazette | 25th February

Tamil Nadu Congress Committee chief Su Thirunavukkarasar today sacked a party functionary from a key post, days after the man was arrested in connection with gold smuggled from Sri Lanka, the Press Trust of India reported. “Good Luck Rajendran is being removed as the President of Ramanathapuram District Congress Committee for bringing disrepute to the party,” he said in a statement. Rajendran was being replaced by M Deivendran, he added.

[Sri Lankan President reiterates stance of no foreign judges in war crime probes](#)

Colombo Page | 26th February

Sri Lankan President Maithripala Sirisena reiterated his stance that there will be no foreign judges in the domestic mechanism which is to be established to probe the alleged war crimes and human right violations during the three-decade long conflict with the Tamil Tiger terrorists. President Sirisena said that the government was able to bring an end to the issue of international judges called for judicial investigations to be carried out on the alleged war crimes. The President made this statement at the ceremony to lay foundation for a new court complex in Polonnaruwa on Saturday.

About Ananta Aspen Centre

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