

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

March 27th, 2017 | Volume: 3 - 7/3

[Bangladesh-India defence coop framework finalised](#)

Prothom Alo | 23rd March
Bangladesh and India are to sign a five-year memorandum of understanding (MoU) to formalise defence cooperation between the two countries, officials concerned confirmed. The draft of MoU includes cooperation in the defence industry and joint initiatives for its development, defence technology, research and maritime infrastructure development.

[Pakistan-Afghanistan Dialogue Start in Islamabad](#)

Outlook Afghanistan/ Xinhua | 27th March
Pakistani and Afghan lawmakers, former officials, members of civil society and media will hold a three-day dialogue here from Monday to explore ways to bring ties closer, organizers said on Sunday. Independent think tank the Center for Research and Security Studies in Islamabad and the Kabul-based Women & Peace Studies Organization will hold the talks at a time when tensions have affected bilateral official contacts.

[Sri Lanka and India in talks over advanced light helicopter](#)

Colombo Gazette | 27th March
As part of efforts to enhance defence cooperation and boost exports with friendly countries, India is in discussions with Sri Lanka and several Southeast Asian nations for the supply of Dhruv, the indigenously developed advanced light helicopter (ALH). Supplying defence equipment and providing assistance in setting up domestic manufacturing capability have become the new normal in India's defence cooperation with regional countries.

AFGHANISTAN

[Ghani meets Afghan MPs amid rumors of disbanding of parliament](#)

Khaama Press | 26th March

President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani met with some of the Afghan lawmakers amid rumors that the President has warned to dissolve the parliament. The Office of the President, ARG Palace, said President Ghani met with the administrative delegation and heads of the parliamentary commissions as part of the routine meetings with the members of the parliament. According to a statement by ARG Palace, President Ghani discussed regarding the security and economic issues with the parliamentary delegation and commission heads. Calling the consultations of the parliament members regarding the issues of the country as vital, President Ghani said the government will continue to seek advises from the lawmakers regarding the state affairs.

[ISIS execute 3 civilians on charges of supporting police in North of Afghanistan](#)

Khaama Press | 26th March

At least three civilians have been executed in northern Jawzjan province of Afghanistan by militants affiliated with the offshoot of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) terrorist group. According to the local officials, the incident took place in the restive Darzab district and the victims were all ordinary civilians. Provincial police chief Abdul Hafiz Khashi confirmed the incident but rejected the allegations against the victims. He said the three civilians had no links or cooperation with any government or security institution as claimed by the ISIS loyalists.

['Failure in Afghanistan embolden terrorist globally': US Gen. Nicholson requests more troops to quell Daesh threat](#)

Afghanistan Times | 27th March

General John Nicholson, US top commander in Afghanistan has requested for more troops to prevent the country from becoming a safe hideout for the Islamic State (IS), which is also known as Daesh terrorist group. He said that the US and Europe need to send 5,000 more forces to Afghanistan. "We cannot afford to walk away from Afghanistan," Nicholson told The Sunday Times of London. "This is where the war against terrorism started on 9/11. Failure here would embolden terrorist globally." Nicholson will ask for additional troops at NATO Summit in May with the backing of US Defense Secretary, James Mattis and National Security Adviser H.R. McMaster, the report said.

BANGLADESH

[Dream of a militancy-free Bangladesh on Independence Day](#)

bdnews24 | 24th March

'Militancy' seems to be the number one concern in people's mind as they observe 46th Independence Day of Bangladesh as they aspire for a militancy-free prosperous Bangladesh. People from all walks of life, who gathered to pay tribute to the Liberation War martyrs at the National Memorial on Sunday, spoke of their hopes and aspiration about the country they want to see. On Sunday, all roads led to the National Memorial at Savar where people pay their respects to those who sacrificed their lives to free the Bengalis from subjugation and gave them a piece of land what they proudly call independent Bangladesh.

[India to focus on blue economy during Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's visit](#)

The Financial Express | 27th March

India and Bangladesh are expected to unveil a joint roadmap for cooperation in the Bay of Bengal region during Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's visit to India next month. This is in keeping with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's initiative to develop blue economy partnerships with the littoral states of the Indian Ocean Region to harness maritime resources and ensure peace. The two neighbours are likely to sign their first comprehensive defence cooperation agreement during Hasina's trip, from April 7-10, which will help maintain peace in the common maritime region in Bay of Bengal amid an increase in terrorism and presence of extraregional powers, people aware of the matter said, reports India's Economic Times.

[Army-led Operation in Sylhet: Two militants killed, raid on](#)

The Daily Star | 27th March

Two militants were killed during the army-led operation inside the terror den at Atia Mahal in Sylhet yesterday, as the raid to take on the terrorists holed up there entered its third day, making it one of the longest anti-terror operations. However, the operation codenamed "Operation Twilight" was far from over as more militants were believed to be still inside the five-storey apartment. The Para Commandos are taking time because of the high risk involved as the militants have planted a huge stash of Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) in the building, mostly on the ground floor and the staircase, the army said.

BHUTAN

[A new party in the making](#)

Kuensel Online | 25th March

Efforts are being made to form yet another new political party. A former civil servant, Jigme Drukpa, from the Menbi-Tshenkar constituency of Lhuentse is coordinating the efforts. Jigme Drukpa said the party will be called the Druk Kuenphen Tshogpa (DKT). Jigme Dukpa said he will be the party's interim president. He resigned in January from the civil service. He said he had been a chief administrative officer with the Ministry of Labour and Human Resources.

MALDIVES

[Police: Information says plans are being made to disrupt peace](#)

Sun Online | 26th March

Maldives National Defence Force (MNDF) and the Maldives Police Service have said that they have received information that there is a group of people planning to disrupt the peace and create conflict in the country. Speaking at a joint press conference by the Police and MNDF at the Iskandharu Koshi tonight, the Chief Superintendent of Police, Hamdhoon Rasheed said that they would not allow plans to vandalise homes and damage property. Superintendent Hamdhoon said that the Police will work indifferently in the protection of the elected government and the people.

[MDP Parliamentary Group issued three-line whip against Maseeh](#)

Sun Online | 26th March

The Parliamentary Group of MDP has issued a three-line whip against the Speaker of the Parliament, Abdulla Maseeh in the no-confidence vote against him set for tomorrow.

A tweet sent out by the MDP Parliamentary Group member, Abdulla Shaahid, he said that a three-line whip has been issued to attend and vote in favor of the no-confidence motion against the Speaker.

[PPM: Maumoon not yet dismissed from the party](#)

Sun Online | 26th March

Progressive Party of Maldives (PPM), currently run under the President Abdulla Yameen Abdul Gayoom, has said that the party has not yet dismissed the President of the Party, Maumoon Abdul Gayoom from the party. Speaker of the PPM disciplinary committee under President Yameen, Ali Waheed told Sun Media that Maumoon will lose his membership from a decision from the disciplinary committee and the committee has not yet received such case.

MYANMAR

[UN to 'urgently' send rights probe to Myanmar](#)

Mizzima | 25th March

The UN rights council agreed Friday to "urgently" launch an investigation into violations against Myanmar's Rohingya Muslims, including torture, murder and rapes allegedly committed by troops. The Geneva-based body decided to "dispatch urgently an independent international fact-finding mission" to Myanmar, particularly focused in northern Rakhine state, in a resolution adopted by consensus.

[Trade between Myanmar, Middle East reaches over 300 million USD in past 10 months to January](#)

Mizzima | 27th March

Total trade value between Myanmar and Middle East countries reached 332.874 million US dollars in the first 10 months of this fiscal year 2016-2017 as of January, official media reported Sunday. Myanmar fetched 100 million US dollars through export to these countries during the period while the import value reached over 231 million US dollars.

NEPAL

[Indian envoy Puri presents letter of credence to Prez Bhandari](#)

The Kathmandu Post | 26th March

Newly appointed Ambassador of India to Nepal, Manjeev Singh Puri presented his credentials to the President Bidya Devi Bhandari on Sunday. Envoy Puri, the 24th ambassador of India to Nepal, presented letter of credence to President Bhandari amid a special ceremony held at SheetalNiwas, Kathmandu.

[Nepal, India to sign new petro supply agreement next week](#)

The Kathmandu Post | 26th March

Nepal Oil Corporation (NOC) and Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) are all set to sign a new petroleum supply agreement next week in a bid to smoothen the supply of petrol, diesel and cooking gas from India. A team of officials of the Ministry of Supplies and NOC is heading to Mumbai, India, on Sunday to seal the deal.

[PM: Partnership with China can change our economic landscape](#)

The Kathmandu Post | 27th March

Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal has claimed that partnership between Nepal and China in various sectors can change the economic landscape of Nepal. Delivering a speech at the Beijing Foreign Studies University on Sunday, Dahal said China's One Belt One Road initiative offers tremendous opportunities for collaboration and partnership, according to a statement issued by the PM's secretariat.

PAKISTAN

[Pakistan urges Afghan Taliban to shun violence](#)

Express Tribune | 27th March 2017

Pakistan has urged the Afghan Taliban to scale down violence and join the peace reconciliation process in a recent high-level contact with senior insurgent leaders, sources told The Express Tribune on Sunday. Pakistan's call came at a time when the Taliban are preparing for their Spring Offensive (fighting season) while Afghan government forces are readying for a counter offensive.

[PML-N, PPP at loggerheads](#)

Express Tribune | 27th March 2017

With the existing tensions between the ruling Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz and the Pakistan Peoples Party, a recent move of the Azad Jammu and Kashmir might just add fuel to the fire to further flare up the situation. Lately, the AJK government has sped up its anti-corruption drive which focuses primarily on the corruption in government funds in the past few years. This mainly implicates the top leadership of PPP AJK chapter that has been long accused of rampant corruption when the political party was in power (July 2011- July 2016).

[Can Pakistan's infrastructure spending spree help win the economic marathon?](#)

Express Tribune | 27th March 2017

Pakistan is aggressively pursuing infrastructure megaprojects at the moment – as are other countries which include the United States, China and Canada. And why not? It sounds like a perfect strategy as governments take advantage of low-interest rates to finance lucrative megaprojects. During the 2008 global financial crisis, megaprojects stayed recession-proof; and have been since seen as a convenient policy lever to stimulate growth and fabricate aggregate demand.

[Punjab receiving lion's share of new gas schemes](#)

Dawn | 27th March 2017

The government has approved 97 natural gas expansion schemes worth more than Rs37 billion on the recommendations of members of parliament, most of whom belong to the ruling party's political base – Punjab. The 97 schemes were all approved after the Prime Minister recently relaxed a moratorium on the expansion of gas supply schemes in Punjab. Twenty schemes were either meant for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Balochistan and Sindh – where expansion schemes can be undertaken due to their higher shares in gas production – or were announced directly by the prime minister during his public meetings in certain constituencies.

SRI LANKA

[Sri Lanka Finance Minister says trustworthy environment built in the country to attract foreign investments](#)

Colombo Page | 26th March

Sri Lanka's Minister of Finance Ravi Karunanayake says an environment that strikes International Investors as trustworthy has been built in the country to attract foreign investments. Minister Karunanayake said the current government has taken the necessary measures to encourage the local as well as foreign investors.

[Sri Lanka and India to conduct joint oceanographic survey](#)

Colombo Gazette | 26th March

The Indian Navy and Sri Lanka Navy will be conducting a joint oceanographic survey off the Southern Coast of Sri Lanka from 30 March to 11 May 2017, the Indian High Commission in Colombo said today. The aim of the joint survey is to update all the navigational charts covering the southern Sri Lankan waters with the latest hydrographic data and to further cooperation between the two countries in the field of hydrography. The survey

will be useful in enhancing the level of navigational safety of all ships visiting Sri Lanka.

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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