

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

March 7, 2018 | Volume - 4 - 02/03

[Peace council has called on Russia to undertake the role of mediating parleys](#)

Afghanistan Times | 6th March
Afghanistan's peace council hopes Russia will play a role in the peace process between the country and the insurgent Taliban. Russia is a powerful regional stakeholder and should be included in Afghanistan's peace talks, an official at the High Peace Council said Tuesday. Hajji Din Mohammad, deputy head of the council said that Moscow has an improving relation with Pakistan and can play a key role in the Afghan peace efforts. The comments come after Russia showed interest to play mediation between Kabul, Washington and Taliban. Russia's envoy for Afghanistan, Zamir Kabulov said that it was the time for Afghans to abandon bloodshed.

[Pakistan has crucial role to play in Afghan peace process: US official](#)

The Express Tribune | 6th March
A senior American official, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Alice South and Central Asia Alice Wells on Tuesday said Pakistan has a very important role to play in the Afghan peace process. "We believe that Pakistan can certainly help to facilitate talks and to take actions that will put pressure on and encourage the Taliban to move forward towards a politically negotiated settlement," Wells said in response to a question at a briefing on the just concluded Kabul conference in Afghanistan, Hindustan Times reported. "And our engagement with Pakistan is on how we can work together, on how we can address Pakistan's legitimate concerns and Afghanistan's stability through a negotiated process as well," she said.

[Prime Minister pays homage to Bangabandhu marking historic March 7](#)

The Financial Express | 7th March
Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina this morning paid rich tributes to Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman by placing wreaths at his portrait in front of Bangabandhu Memorial Museum at Dhanmondi in the city on the occasion of the historic March 7. She first laid a wreath at the portrait of Bangabandhu as the Prime Minister. After placing the wreath, she stood in solemn silence for sometime as a mark of respect to the memory of Bangabandhu, the architect of the independence. On this day in 1971, Bangabandhu through his fiery and soulful address made a clarion call to the people to fight against the Pakistani occupation forces to achieve the long-cherished independence.

AFGHANISTAN

[Kabul-Kandahar Highway Blocked: Hundreds Demand Justice for Killed Civilians](#)

Sputnik / Daily Outlook Afghanistan | 5th March

Hundreds of people blocked the highway connecting two biggest Afghan cities of Kabul and Kandahar expressing their protest against a deadly attack on civilians in the southern province of Ghazni, local media reported. The attack took place on Friday night with several gunmen, who allegedly wore uniform of the Afghan security forces, having killed two civilians, injured two women and kidnapped two more persons in the Qarabagh district, the Pajhwok news agency reported.

[Fresh military raids take heavy toll on Taliban: NATO](#)

Afghanistan Times | 6th March

Taliban militants have suffered heavy losses during the recent joint military operations conducted by the Afghan and US Special Forces in various parts of the country, the NATO Resolute Support Mission said on Tuesday. Afghan and US Special Forces have carried out successful raids during the past two weeks, aimed at eliminating Taliban's leadership and their control over areas in remote and mountainous areas and financial resources of the group. According to Resolute Support Mission, Crisis Response Unit 222, the Special Mission Wing, and Afghan Special Forces personnel have destroyed an estimated \$8.7 million of Taliban narcotics during nighttime military operations in Khogyani district in Kandahar on Feb. 20.

[President Ghani offered Taliban peace talks, not surrender: US](#)

Khamma Press | 6th March

A top US official has said President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani has offered the Taliban group for participation in peace talks as the official insist that the offer did not mean that the group should surrender. Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary Alice Wells of the Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs told reporters that President Ghani offered a dignified process during the Kabul Process-II summit. "This is not a surrender that's being offered to the Taliban, but a dignified process for reaching a political framework. And again, he emphasized that this is negotiations without preconditions, a process that would lead to a cessation of violence, halt the ties with terrorism, and respect for the Afghanistan constitution," she added.

BANGLADESH

[Freedom fighter Ferdousi Priyabhashini dies at 71](#)

Dhaka Tribune | 7th March

Freedom fighter and renowned sculptor Ferdousi Priyabhashini passed away at a hospital in Dhaka Tuesday afternoon, two weeks after suffering a heart attack. The 71-year-old's grief-stricken daughter, Fuleshwari Priyanandini, confirmed the news that her mother had died at Labaid Specialized Hospital at Dhanmondi. Ferdousi had suffered a string of health complications in the final months of her life. In a separate message, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina expressed her own "deep shock and sorrow" at Ferdousi's death, and recalled her "outstanding contributions to the war," reports UNB. "With her demise, the nation has lost a valiant freedom fighter. Her death is an irreparable loss to the field of sculptor," Sheikh Hasina said.

[Global Prowess Index: Bangladesh military ranked 57th](#)

The Daily Star | 7th March

According to the list, the US ranked first, followed by Russia, China, and India while Pakistan and Myanmar ranked 13th and 31st. France, Germany, the UK, Japan and Israel are among the top 15 countries. The report says Bangladesh's defence budget is \$1.59 billion as against China's \$161.7b, India's \$51b, Myanmar's \$2.4b and Pakistan's \$7b. Bangladesh has an active military comprising of 160,000 personnel while India has 1362,500, China 3712,500 and Pakistan

637,000. According to the report, Bangladesh Army has 534 combat tanks, 942 armoured fighting vehicles, 18 self-propelled artillery guns, and 32 rocket projectors.

BHUTAN

[His Majesty grants Audience to youth](#)

Kuensel | 06th March

His Majesty The King granted an Audience to a group of youth participating in the Earn and Learn programme yesterday. The 359 participants who have completed a basic Japanese language course in Thimphu will leave for Japan as soon as they secure funding from financial institutions to join language institutes while working part-time jobs. Remittances from Bhutanese working abroad are increasingly becoming an important component of the economy.

[MHPA deadline extended by three months](#)

Kuensel | 06th March

The deadline to commission the 720MW Mangdechhu project has been pushed to September and October from June 30. Project's Managing Director, A K Mishra said that shortage of labour and financial constraint on part of the contractor has led to the delay. "The project has been pumping money to continue the work," he said. As for the labour, he said workers find better opportunities in India. "Earlier Jaypee had 3,500 workers and now there are hardly 1,000." Project officials said that wage contractors pay the labourers the same amount that's paid in India. "Expenses are higher in Bhutan including the call rate. Workers have to work in extreme weather conditions in winter and involves risk," one official said.

MALDIVES

[Nine bills on hold with the opposition boycott of parliament](#)

Sun Online | March 6th

Majority Leader, Ahmed Nihan Hussain Manik has said that the work of nine bills at the parliament are on hold due to the boycott of the parliament by the MPs of the opposition coalition. Before the year's session began, Attorney General, Mohamed Anil, had said that the government will be sending a number of amendments to the penal code. At a press conference held at the PPM head office to address the issued at the parliament, MP Nihan responded to a question saying that there are nine bills, submitted by the government, pending at the parliament. Nihan said that the primary reason for bills at the parliament to be in stock is the opposition MPs not entering the parliament floor and that has been preventing the constitutional obligation to have 43 MPs on the parliament floor to pass a bill directly related to the public.

[Shareef appointed President of Elections Commission](#)

Sun Online | March 6th

The newly appointed member to Elections Commission (EC), former Managing Director at Fenaka Corporation Ahmed Shareef has been appointed the President of the commission. The announcement was made by EC during a press conference held at the Elections Center this Tuesday afternoon. Shareef took his oath of office in front of President Abdulla Yameen Abdul Gayoom in a function held at President's Office this Tuesday, moments after the People's Majlis provided its approval for Shareef.

MYANMAR

[Myanmar-China border liaison office opens in Myitkyina](#)

Mizzima | 07th March

A Myanmar-China border liaison office was opened in Ayeyar Ward, Myitkyina in Kachin State yesterday, state media reported. The purpose of opening the office is to fight against the illegal drug trade and crack down on transnational crimes such as human trafficking, arms smuggling and making counterfeit money and at the same time, ensure peace, stability and rule of law

along the border between the two countries, the report said.

[Myanmar pulls back troops from Bangladeshi border](#)

Mizzima | 06th March

Myanmar has pulled back security personnel and weapons from near a no-man's land along Bangladesh's southeastern frontier, as border-guard officials from both countries met Friday after Dhaka complained about a troop build-up by Naypyidaw, RFA reported. Representatives from Myanmar said during the meeting that Naypyidaw had deployed additional troops and weaponry in the area for "internal security" reasons and these "were not targeted at Bangladesh," according to Bangladeshi officials. The meeting took place in Ghundam, in Bangladesh's Bandarban district. Dhaka had summoned Myanmar's ambassador the day before to lodge a diplomatic protest.

NEPAL

[Visiting Pakistani PM pays courtesy call on Prez Bhandari](#)

The Himalayan Times | 6th March

Visiting Pakistani Prime Minister Shahid Khequan Abbasi paid a courtesy call on President Bidya Devi Bhandari at the latter's office in Shital Niwas, Maharajgunj on Tuesday. According to a press statement issued by the President's Office today, matters related to bilateral relations and mutual interest were discussed in the meeting.

[11 Nepalis stranded in Oman sent back home](#)

Rastriya Samachar Samiti / The Himalayan Times | 6th March

As many as eleven Nepali workers, who were stranded in course of foreign employment in Oman, have been rescued and sent back to Nepal recently. They were rescued in coordination with the Nepali Embassy in the gulf state. The Embassy stated in a press release that stranded Nepali migrant workers were sent back home after completing all legal procedures of Oman. These migrant workers were denied of facilities as mentioned in their contract paper, the Embassy stated in the statement.

PAKISTAN

[Pakistan, Taliban have legitimate grievances: US](#)

Dawn | 7th March

The United States has acknowledged that both Pakistan and the Taliban have legitimate grievances and the United States is willing to address those concerns. At a Monday news briefing, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asia Alice Wells confirmed that senior US and Pakistani officials will hold a series of meetings in Washington this week, and Foreign Secretary Tehmina Janjua will lead the Pakistani delegation at these two-day talks.

[As US influence wanes, Russia embraces Pakistan with energy deals, military partnership](#)

The Express Tribune | 6th March

As US influence in Islamabad wanes, Pakistan's former adversary Russia is building military, diplomatic and economic ties that could upend historic alliances in the region and open up a fast-growing gas market for Moscow's energy companies. Russia's embrace of Pakistan comes at a time when relations between the United States and its historical ally are unraveling over the war in Afghanistan, a remarkable turnaround from the 1980s, when Pakistan helped funnel weapons and US spies across the border to aid Afghan fighters battling Soviet troops. "It is an opening," Khurram Dastgir Khan, Pakistan's defense minister, told Reuters. "Both countries have to work through the past to open the door to the future."

SRI LANKA

[Sri Lankan President not to allow foreign investments at the cost of local industries](#)

Colombo Page| 6th March

Sri Lankan President Maithripala Sirisena says he will not allow the foreign direct investments (FDI) at the cost of local industries and he would take all the necessary decisions to protect the local industries. At a discussion held regarding the issues related to local industries at the Presidential Secretariat, the President said a precise policy for economy can only be constructed when local businesses and local industries are strengthened. Relevant ministers, Ministry secretaries and a number of local Industrialists were present at the discussion.

[U.N. senior official to visit Sri Lanka this week](#)

Colombo Page| 7th March

United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs Jeffrey Feltman will visit Sri Lanka, the UN spokesman for Secretary General said, after the government declared a state of emergency to quell the anti-Muslim riots spreading in the hill country. Stéphane Dujarric, Spokesman for UN Secretary-General said the Under-Secretary-General Feltman will visit Sri Lanka from 9 to 11 March.

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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