

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

May 12th, 2017 | Volume: 3 - 5/5

[Afghan govt approves in principle the Chabahar port implementation plan](#)

Khaama Press | 11th May

The Afghan government has approved in principle the Chabahar port agreement implementation plan, the Office of the President, ARG Palace said. According to a statement by ARG Palace, the decision was taken during a meeting of the Afghan cabinet of ministers. The statement further added that implementation plan of Chabahar agreement was approved in principle after it was presented to the meeting by deputy finance and administrative minister of the Ministry of Transportation of Afghanistan.

[CPEC will offer militants additional targets: US](#)

Express Tribune | 12th May

The United States on Thursday claimed the emergence of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor in Pakistan would allow terrorist groups more targets for attacks. "The emerging China Pakistan Economic Corridor will probably offer militants and terrorists additional targets," Daniel Coats, director of National Intelligence, told lawmakers during a Congressional hearing. Coats was testifying before the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence along with other top intelligence officials.

[Modi assures Sri Lanka support for nation-building](#)

Colombo Gazette | 12th May

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi today assured Sri Lanka support for the island's nation-building endeavours. Speaking at the International Vesak Day celebrations at the BMICH in Colombo today, Modi said that he believes that both India and Sri Lanka are at a moment of great opportunity in its relationship. "You will find in India a friend and partner that will support your nation-building endeavours," he said.

AFGHANISTAN

[ISIS leader joins peace process in East of Afghanistan](#)

Khaama Press | 11th May

A key leader of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) terror group's offshoot in Afghanistan has joined peace process in Nangarhar province. The provincial government in a statement said the ISIS group leader identified as Wafadar was in charge of a group of at least 15 insurgents. The statement further added that Wafadar was previously involved in terrorist related activities in Chaparhar, Haska Mina, and Kot districts. Wafadar joined peace process after reaching to a conclusion and understanding the realities on the ground due to the efforts of the Afghan intelligence operatives, the statement said, adding that he has also handed over a pistol, a communications device, and two hand grenades to the government authorities.

[Decision on increasing NATO troops in Afghanistan to be taken soon: Stoltenberg](#)

Khaama Press | 11th May

The NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg has said the alliance will soon decide regarding the request to increase the number of troops in Afghanistan. Speaking to media during his trip to London, Stoltenberg said "We have received a request from our military authorities to increase our military presence in Afghanistan with a few thousand troops." Stoltenberg further added "We are now assessing that request; we will make decisions on the scale and the scope of the mission within weeks." However, he said this is not about returning back to a combat operation in Afghanistan and it will continue to be a train, assist and advice operation.

[TIR Conference Begins in Kabul](#)

Outlook Afghanistan/PR | 11th May

Turning Afghanistan into a transit hub in the heart of Asia was the main topic for representatives from the Afghan government, private sector and donor community who met Wednesday during the Transports International Routiers (TIR) National Conference to discuss the future plan of transportation in the country. The event was organized by Ministry of Transport and Civil Aviation and Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce and Industries with the support of USAID's Afghanistan Trade and Revenue (ATAR) Project.

[Political interference, mismanagement is key factor behind crisis](#)

Afghanistan Times | 11th May

A large number of Jihadi leaders in a gathering titled “assessment of current situation of the country” on Thursday criticized the National Unity Government’s over its failure in the past two years. They termed mismanagement, political interference in security organs, dividing of organs based on party and tribes as a significant factor behind current crisis across the country. Criticizing government, the former Interior Minister, Mohammad Omar Daudzai termed political interference in security institutions, and division of key organizations based on party or tribal basis as one of focal point behind ongoing uncertainty. He warned that hiring, firing and changes in security organs have to be followed through military rules and regulation, rather than political and tribal basis.

BANGLADESH

[Employment Injury Scheme soon for workers: PM](#)

UNB / the Daily Star | 11th May

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina today said her government is going to introduce a long-term and sustainable Employment Injury Scheme soon to ensure better benefits and support for workers. "In the wake of recent incidents in RMG factories, we've got an impression that we need huge funds to provide compensations in case of any severe accident. The way-out is to introduce a long-term and sustainable employment injury scheme. We've already started working to this end," she said.

[Beijing to fund Dhaka for 9th Friendship Bridge](#)

IANS / Prothom Alo | 12th May

Beijing will fund Dhaka for construction of the ninth Bangladesh-China Friendship Bridge and other infrastructure development projects, officials here said. Bangladesh's Economic Relations Department (ERD) secretary Kazi Shofiqul Azam and Chinese ambassador to Bangladesh Ma Mingqiang signed an agreement in this regard on Thursday, Xinhua news agency reported. Ma said China has been supporting Bangladesh's infrastructure development to help it realise its economic development goals.

[Bangladesh to do ‘everything’ to take back illegal citizens from Europe: Minister](#)

bdnews24 | 11th May

Law Minister Annisul Huq has assured European Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship Dimitris Avramopoulos of taking back illegal Bangladeshis living in parts of the world. Bangladesh will “do everything” for that, Huq said. They were meeting in Brussels where the law minister and State Minister for Foreign Affairs Md Shahriar Alam are currently visiting, the foreign ministry said in a statement on Thursday. Referring to almost 10 million skilled and semi-skilled Bangladeshi workers abroad, Huq said Bangladesh always promotes “safe, orderly and regular migration”.

[Bangladesh’s first LNG-run power plant by June 2019](#)

The Financial Express | 11th May

First power plant of Bangladesh that will run on regasified imported LNG will be set up by mid-June 2019, a senior official at the Ministry of Power, Energy and Mineral Resources said Thursday. State-owned North West Power Generation Company Ltd., or NWPGL, has issued an invitation of pre-qualification for engineering, procurement, construction and commissioning of the 800-MW combined cycle power plant at Rupsha in the country's southern Khulna region.

BHUTAN

[Lawyers welcome establishment of Bar Council](#)

Kuensel | 11th May

Fourteen years after the Jabmi Act was enacted by the Parliament, one of the most critical elements of the Act has been constituted with the establishment of the Bar Council of Bhutan (Jabmi tshogdey) yesterday. The Jabmi Act remained on paper until the amendment by the Parliament last year. It was amended to suit the changing needs and circumstances in the field of law.

MALDIVES

[ACC says it doesn’t discriminate when investigating complaints](#)

Sun Online | 10th May

The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) does not discriminate when investigating complaints filed with the commission, says President of ACC, Hassan Luthufy in response to allegations of discrimination. Luthufy made the comment during the opening ceremony of ACC’s National Conference this Wednesday at Islamic University of Maldives. Speaking during the ceremony, Luthufy said that organizations which investigate corruption are under intense scrutiny not just in Maldives, but across the world.

[MIRA earns MVR 1.1 billion in April](#)

Sun Online | 11th May

Maldives Inland Revenue Authority (MIRA) reports it earned an income of MVR 1.1 billion in April. MIRA's financial report for the month of April shows it earned MVR 1,126,163,857 – including USD 43.1 million. The biggest income generator for MIRA in the month of April was from Goods and Service Tax (GST) and Tourism Goods and Service Tax (TGST). MIRA earned MVR 412 million in TGST and MVR 246 million in GST – a total of MVR 658 million.

MYANMAR

[Aung San Suu Kyi to attend Belt and Road forum in Beijing](#)

Mizzima | 12th May

Myanmar State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi will attend the Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation scheduled for Sunday and Monday in Beijing, the Myanmar Foreign Ministry announced Thursday. This will be Aung San Suu Kyi's second trip to China since her National League for Democracy took power in April 2016.

[China, Myanmar must cooperate to overcome challenges on Belt and Road](#)

Global Times/ Mizzima | 11th May

China's Belt and Road initiative conforms to the interests of both Beijing and Nay Pyi Taw. While China wants Myanmar's support to promote the initiative, infrastructural cooperation with China will benefit Myanmar's economic and societal growth.

NEPAL

[President Bhandari flies off to Sri Lanka via Thailand](#)

My Republica | 12th May

President Bidya Devi Bhandari left Kathmandu on Friday on her official visit to Sri Lanka. Vice President Nanda Bahadur Pun, Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal, Speaker Onsari Gharti Magar and other government officials bade farewell to the President Bhandari at the Tribhuvan International Airport. President is scheduled to visit Sri Lanka until May 16. She is visiting Sri Lanka at the cordial invitation of the President of Sri Lanka, Maithripala Sirisena. According to Foreign Ministry, the President will spend a day in Thailand on her way to Sri Lanka.

[Nepal officially signs OBOR](#)

My Republica | 12th May

Nepal has officially signed a memorandum of understanding with China's One Belt and One Road initiatives. Chinese Ambassador to Nepal Yu Hong and Nepal's Foreign Secretary Shankar Bairagi signed the MoU at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Singhadurbar, Kathmandu. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance Krishna Bahadur Mahara and Minister for Foreign Affairs Prakash Sharan Mahat were present at the signing ceremony.

PAKISTAN

[Nawaz apprises army chief regarding meeting with Jindal: report](#)

Express Tribune | 12th May

Pakistan's civilian leadership has informed senior military officials that Indian steel magnate Sajjan Jindal's meeting with Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif last month, was part of backchannel diplomacy between Islamabad and New Delhi, BBC Urdu reported. An Indian delegation led by Jindal – a close friend of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi – met Premier Nawaz at his private residence in Murree late April, away from media glare.

[PM, chief ministers travel to China to attend Belt and Road Forum](#)

Dawn | 12th May

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif is traveling to Beijing to attend a two-day international gathering promoting China's plan for a vast trade network, a spokesman said Friday. The Prime Minister's Office said in a statement that the premier leaves for China later Friday at the invitation of the President Xi Jinping to attend the event which is part of "Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road" initiative, which was launched by Xi in 2013. Sharif will be accompanied on the visit by a high-level delegation and chief ministers of the four provinces, the statement said.

[Ministry, KP directed to book Ehsan in Malala case](#)

Dawn | 12th May

The Senate's Standing Committee on Interior has issued directives to the ministry of interior, the government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and police to include Ehsanullah Ehsan as a suspect in the Malala Yousafzai attack

case. Moreover, it was suggested that a Joint Investigation Team (JIT) should be constituted to interrogate him [Ehsan] as he had first-hand information of the case.

[PM relaxes fiscal deficit limit for next three years](#)

Dawn | 12th May

Showing signs of a popular budget ahead of the next year's general election, the government on Thursday decided to maximise spending in 2017-18 with a six per cent growth target for the national economy. As a consequence, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif agreed to relax the limit for the fiscal deficit for the next three years. Incentives will be provided to the farmers' community and key investments will focus on the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), energy, communications and poverty reduction, according to an official announcement.

SRI LANKA

[Sri Lanka's economic growth expected to rebound modestly to 4.8-4.9 percent in 2017/18](#)

Colombo Page | 12th May

Sri Lanka's Economic growth is expected to rebound modestly to 4.8-4.9 percent in 2017 and 2018, according to a recent report of a survey by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP). The Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific 2017 released by UNESCAP earlier this month expects the agricultural activity to recover from adverse weather conditions experienced last year and in the early months of this year.

[Sri Lanka rejects Chinese request to dock submarine amid Indian Premier's visit - report](#)

Colombo Page | 11th May

Sri Lanka has rejected China's request to dock one of its submarines in Colombo this month, two senior government officials said on Thursday (May 11) as the Indian prime minister landed in the island nation, according to a Reuters' report. A senior Sri Lankan government official has said that China's request to dock one of its submarines in Colombo this month had been rejected and it is "unlikely" that the government would agree to China's request to dock the submarine at any time, given India's concerns.

[China actively promoting FTA deal with Sri Lanka](#)

Colombo Gazette | 11th May

China is actively promoting Free Trade Agreement (FTA) talks with Sri Lanka, China's Vice-Minister of Commerce Qian Keming said. He said China will continue to push forward free trade agreement talks with more than 20 economies along the Belt and Road Initiative this year after clinching 11 such deals in the region, the China Daily reported. China will sign an FTA with Georgia and launch an FTA feasibility study with Mongolia during the Belt and Road Forum of International Cooperation in Beijing this weekend, Qian Keming said.

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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