

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

May 15th, 2017 | Volume: 3 - 6/5

[Nawaz, Trump to meet this week](#)

Express Tribune | 15th May
Almost six months after their 'remarkable and unprecedented' telephonic conversation, US President Donald Trump and Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif will get a first chance to speak to each other face-to-face later this week. Both leaders are among around two dozen heads of governments and states who are gathering in Saudi Arabia on May 21 for US-Arab Islamic summit. Foreign Office officials confirmed to The Express Tribune that efforts were underway to arrange a maiden bilateral meeting between Trump and Nawaz at the sidelines of the summit.

[OBOR forum begins in Beijing, BD to discuss BCIM corridor](#)

The Financial Express | 14th May
"One Belt, One Road" (OBOR) forum kicked off on Sunday in Beijing. Dozens of heads of state and government, along with financial organisations and hundreds of business representatives and entrepreneurs of 28 countries are at the forum for international cooperation of shared and equal socio-economic outcomes. A high-level delegation from Bangladesh is also attending the forum to discuss various issues like prospects of BCIM (Bangladesh, China, India and Myanmar) economic corridor which is a key OBOR project connecting to resourceful Indian Ocean, according to a FE report.

["Nepal in talks with China to build \\$8 bln cross-border rail link"](#)

Reuters / The Himalayan Times | 14th May
Nepal is in talks with China to build a cross-border rail link that may cost up to \$8 billion, and funding could be expected after Nepal formally signed up to Beijing's Belt and Road initiative, a Nepali finance ministry official said. Yug Raj Pandey, an under secretary at Nepal's Ministry of Finance, told Reuters the proposed 550 kilometre-long railway would connect China's western Tibet region to Nepal's capital of Kathmandu and will carry goods and passengers.

AFGHANISTAN

[No casualties reported in Kabul explosion: Danish](#)

Khaama Press | 15th May

An explosion took place in west of Kabul city on Sunday night causing panic among the local residents but the security officials are saying that no one was hurt in the incident. The Ministry of Interior spokesman Najib Danish confirmed the incident took place in the vicinity of the third police district of the city. Danish further added that a magnetic bomb planted in a Ranger vehicle went off but no casualties were reported. The eyewitnesses earlier said an education official was injured after a magnetic bomb planted in his vehicle went off.

[Anti-Corruption Efforts 'Failing' Due to Absence of Law: HOOC](#)

Outlook Afghanistan/ Tolonews | 15th May

The head of the High Office of Oversight and Anti-Corruption (HOOC), Ghulam Hussain Fakhri, on Sunday said anti-corruption efforts by the HOOC have largely failed because there is no anti-corruption law in place. Six months ago the anti-corruption law was sent to parliament by President Ashraf Ghani but MPs failed to approve the law and instead moved to dissolve the High Office of Oversight and Anti-Corruption. The HOOC has however continued to operate. Fakhri however said MPs failed to approve the law as they would then be required to register their assets. "The important reason for not approving the law by the MPs is that they would have to register their assets," said Fakhri.

[MoF Adds 5.2bn Afs to this Year's National Budget](#)

Outlook Afghanistan/ Tolonews | 15th May

In a recent cabinet meeting, government accepted to add 5.2 billion AFs to the national budget of the current fiscal year in order to address the needs of the Defense Ministry and a number of other government institutions, the Ministry of Finance (MoF) said on Saturday. The Finance Ministry spokesman Ajmal Hamid Abdul Rahimzai

said that despite an increase in this year's budget, a number of budgetary units are faced with challenges in spending their allocated budget.

[Key Taliban commanders killed in Samangan](#)

Afghanistan Times/Pajhwok | 14th May

The Interior Ministry (MoI) in a statement on Sunday said that Taliban's shadow deputy governor and shadow district governor, including six other militants have been killed in an operations conducted by the Afghan Special Forces in Samanagan province on Saturday. The statement added that the Taliban's shadow deputy governor for Samanagan, Maulvi Jalal and Maulvi Gheyasuddin, also known as Mujahheed who was serving as shadow district governor for Doab district of Samangan have been killed by Afghan forces. The statement added, the Taliban's leaders and other insurgents were killed in a targeted operation, carried out in Ab Khorak area of Doab district. Moreover, fifteen other militants sustained injuries during the operation, statement furthered.

BANGLADESH

[Bangladesh Govt claims a record 7.24pc GDP growth](#)

The Daily Star | 15th May

World Bank sticks to its projection of 6.8pc this year; ADB, IMF also project below 7pc. The government yesterday announced that the country's GDP growth would hit a record 7.24 percent in the outgoing fiscal year, while the World Bank sticks to its earlier growth projection of 6.8 percent. Another multilateral lender, the Asian Development Bank last month predicted that Bangladesh's economy would grow 6.9 percent this fiscal year. In the same month, the International Monetary Fund made a similar projection. Lower GDP growth forecast by the WB and other development partners is nothing new for Bangladesh. This happens almost every year.

[Bangladesh launches Remediation Coordination Cell to ensure garment industry safety](#)

bdnews24 | 15th May

A Remediation Coordination Cell (RCC) has been launched which the UN labour agency says will take the safety of the Bangladesh garment industry "a further step forward". Launched in Dhaka on Sunday, the RCC is supported by the International Labour Organization (ILO) with funding from Canada, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. It will focus on managing the remediation process for garment factories under the Bangladesh government's National Initiative.

BHUTAN

[Fiscal measures designed to achieve self-reliance](#)

Kuensel Online | 13th May

Finance Minister Namgay Dorji has said that economic self-reliance is a common goal and that the government's fiscal measures are designed to achieve the same. The government during the recently held donors' conference in Thimphu acknowledged that the country will not achieve the national objective by 2020. Presenting the annual budget 2017-18 to National Assembly on May 8, the finance minister said that most of the economic challenges that the country had to grapple with when the present government took over have been addressed through various fiscal and monetary policy measures.

MALDIVES

[MP Faris Maumoon's passport held](#)

Sun Online | 14th May

Authorities have put a hold on the passport of Dhiggaru MP Ahmed Faris Maumoon, barring him from traveling outside the country. Faris issued a statement this Sunday in which he said that he had checked-in at the airport to travel to Bangalore, India and gone to the Immigration counter when he was informed that his passport was being held, and that he was not allowed to travel out of the country.

MYANMAR

[Ethnic States Win Right to Draft Constitutions](#)

The Irrawaddy | 12th May

Burma's seven ethnic states have won the right to draft their own constitutions, an unprecedented breakthrough in their fight for equality and self-determination, according to the leader of an armed ethnic group. After the Friday morning meeting of the Union Peace Dialogue Joint Committee (UPDJC), Col. Hkun Okkar of the Pa-O National Liberation Organization (PNLO) told reporters "the government has acknowledged the right to self-determination for the state as we are allowed to draft the state constitution."

[1st Myanmar-China Think Tank Forum held in China](#)

Mizzima | 13th May

The first Myanmar-China Think Tank Forum was held in Mangshi which is in the Dohong Dai and Jingpo Autonomous Prefecture of China from 9 May to 11 May, 2017. It was sponsored by the Institute of Myanmar Studies, Yunnan Academy of Social Sciences (YASS)/Chinese Academy of South and Southeast Asian Studies

(Kunming), and Myanmar Institute for Strategic and International Studies (MISIS) together with CPC Committee of the Dehong Dai and Jingpo Autonomous Prefecture and People's Government of the Dehong Dai and Jingpo Autonomous Prefecture.

NEPAL

[Election peaceful by and large, voter turnout spikes 71 per cent](#)

The Himalayan Times | 14th May

At least 71 per cent voters in 34 districts on Sunday took part in the local level elections that were held for the first time after Nepal's new constitution was promulgated in September 2015, according to the Election Commission. A few incidents of disruption and violence in some districts notwithstanding, Chief Election Commissioner Dr Ayodhee Prasad Yadav said in a press conference, voting concluded peacefully and in free and fair manner.

PAKISTAN

[Terrorist attacks: Nawaz moves to allay Chinese leadership's concerns](#)

Express Tribune | 15th May

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif has assured the Chinese leadership that 'troublemakers' who want to sabotage the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and Gwadar Port would be 'taken care of' and Chinese personnel working in Pakistan would be provided foolproof security. The assurance was given against the backdrop of a recent terrorist attack in Gwadar that left at least 10 labourers dead. Even though no Chinese national was among the dead or injured, the incident has mounted Beijing's concerns given its extensive involvement in development projects in Pakistan linked to the Gwadar Port and CPEC.

[Railways' profit surges to Rs8.38b, NA told](#)

Express Tribune | 15th May

Pakistan Railways reported earning Rs21,704 million with a profit amounting to Rs8,380 million in 2016-17 on passenger trains, the railways ministry stated in response to a question raised by a lawmaker in the National Assembly. In monetary terms, passenger trains earned an average of Rs62 million per day. The railways routinely incurred huge losses with huge gaps in its earning and expenditure till June 2013.

[Exclusive: CPEC master plan revealed](#)

Dawn | 15th May

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif arrived in Beijing over the weekend to participate in the One Belt, One Road summit, and the top item on his agenda is to finalise the Long Term Plan (LTP) for the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. Dawn has acquired exclusive access to the original document, and for the first time its details are being publically disclosed here. The plan lays out in detail what Chinese intentions and priorities are in Pakistan for the next decade and a half, details that have not been discussed in public thus far.

[New policy will apply both to Afghanistan and Pakistan: McMaster](#)

Dawn | 15th May

US National Security Adviser Gen H.R. McMaster has said that the Trump administration is working on a policy which would apply to both Pakistan and Afghanistan, and would be announced soon. This marks the first time a senior US official has said that the new policy would also cover Pakistan as previous statements defined it only as the Afghan policy. "And so what we'll have at the end of the next few weeks here is an opportunity for a much more effective strategy for the problem set in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and the region broadly," Gen McMaster told a White House news briefing this weekend. The adviser said the administration was considering a proposal to send thousands of additional troops to Afghanistan and President Donald Trump would decide when to do so after he returns from his foreign trips later this month.

SRI LANKA

[Sri Lanka PM meets Malaysia, Myanmar leaders at Belt and Road Forum](#)

Colombo Page | 14th May

Sri Lanka's Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe today met with several world leaders on the sidelines of China's Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation and held bilateral discussions. Meeting with Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak, the Premier discussed the background to create a free-trade agreement between Sri Lanka and Malaysia.

[Hackers offered Sri Lanka as carrot to Indian Army](#)

Colombo Gazette | 15th May

A massive cyber attack on the computers of Indian Army officers has been thwarted. Suspected Pakistani and Chinese hackers attempted to inject data stealing malware on military systems by luring army officers by offering a foreign posting to Sri Lanka.

[High-profile Chinese delegation to attend China-Sri Lanka Economic and Trade Cooperation Forum in Colombo](#)

Colombo Page| 15th May

A 70-member high profile delegation, led by Peng Qinghua, Secretary, Communist Party of Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region will arrive in Colombo this week on the invitation of Minister of Industry and Commerce Rishad Bathiudeen to attend the Guangxi, China-Sri Lanka Economic & Trade Cooperation Forum. The objective of the visit is to actively promote the economic and trade cooperation between Sri Lanka and Guangxi autonomous region of the Peoples Republic of China.

[World Bank grants Sri Lanka US\\$ 100 million assistance to improve higher education](#)

Colombo Page| 14th May

The World Bank Board of Directors Friday has approved US\$100 million in financing to support Sri Lanka's higher education sector. This new initiative will help increase enrollment in priority disciplines, improve the quality of degree programs and promote research and innovation in the higher education sector, the World Bank said in a statement.

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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