



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

June 16th, 2017 | Volume: 3 - 7/6

[Trump Gives Pentagon Authority to Set Afghanistan Troop Levels](#)

Outlook Afghanistan/ UPI | 15th June
President Donald Trump granted the Pentagon the authority to manage troop levels in Afghanistan, administration officials said. Secretary of Defense Jim Mattis, who is believed to support sending additional U.S. troops to Afghanistan, will determine if the approximately 9,800 U.S. troops currently deployed in there should be reinforced. Trump gave Mattis similar authority over troop levels in Syria and Iraq in April. A formal announcement on ceding the authority to the Defense Department is expected Wednesday. The move comes earlier than anticipated; it was expected that any action on changes in U.S. troop strength in Afghanistan would come after mid-July, when the administration's strategy review is completed.

[Gulf crisis: Parliamentary panel urges govt to stay neutral](#)

Express Tribune | 16th June
The Parliamentary Committee on National Security has advised the government to stay neutral in the crisis developing between Saudi Arabia and Qatar. A meeting of the committee, headed by Speaker of the National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq, was held here on Thursday.

[Sri Lanka, Bangladesh high level trade talks next month](#)

Colombo Page | 15th June
Sri Lanka's Minister of Industries and Commerce Rishad Bathiudeen will lead a high level trade delegation to Bangladesh next month to further enhance trade and investment opportunities between the two countries. According to the Minister, the bilateral trade between the two countries tripled since 2010 but there are unexplored potentials. "The two-way trade between Sri Lanka and Bangladesh has shown a strong growth trend. Bilateral trade between the two countries tripled since 2010 but there are huge unexplored potentials that we can still work on," Minister Bathiudeen said during a meeting with the High Commissioner of Bangladesh in Sri Lanka Riaz Hamidullah on Tuesday.

[Pakistani militias fighting alongside ISIS militants: Nangarhar NDS chief](#)

Khaama Press | 16th June

The provincial director of the National Directorate of Security (NDS) in Nangarhar General Abdul Saboor Sabit said the Pakistani militias are actively participating in the fight alongside the ISIS loyalists in this province. Gen. Sabit was speaking during a press conference after the clearance of Chaparhar district, saying the fighters of the terror group are trained in the neighbor and the Pakistani militias are actively involved in the fight in Nangarahr along with the ISIS militants.

[ISIS in Afghanistan claims the capture of Bin Laden's hideout in Tora Bora](#)

Khaama Press | 15th June

The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) terrorist group's offshoot in Afghanistan, ISIS Khurasan, claims the capture of Osama Bin Laden's hideout in the remote Tora Bora valley in eastern Nangarhar province of Afghanistan. The group's loyalists informed regarding the capture of the mountainous terrain, a claim which has been rejected by the Afghan officials. The group has reportedly informed regarding the capture of Tora Bora through its radio station which was repeatedly targeted in the Afghan and US forces operations.

[No Military Solution in Afghanistan: Guterres](#)

Outlook Afghanistan/ Reuters | 15th June

There is no military solution to the conflict in Afghanistan that is forcing record numbers of people from their homes, United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres said on Wednesday, during an unannounced visit to the war-torn country. Guterres' first visit as secretary general comes as the Afghan government faces internal turmoil, insurgents make gains nationwide and the international military coalition mulls plans to send thousands more troops to help struggling Afghan forces. These combined threats have worsened the crisis for refugees and internally displaced people, forcing international bodies like the United Nations to call for emergency funding.

[Special air and ground campaign kicks off against ISIS in East of Afghanistan](#)

Khaama Press | 15th June

A special operation involving air and ground strikes has kicked off in eastern Nangarhar province of Afghanistan for the elimination of the militants affiliated with the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) terrorist group's offshoot in Afghanistan, ISIS Khurasan. The provincial governor's spokesman Ataullah Khogyani said the campaign has kicked off in Chaparhar and Pacher Agam districts. This comes as the Afghan security forces have been conducting operations against the terror group under name of Hamza operations, mainly covering the Kot and Achin districts.

BANGLADESH

[India changes its stance on AL govt: Khaleda Zia](#)

Prothom Alo | 15th June

Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) chairperson Khaleda Zia on Thursday said ruling Bangladesh Awami League will not be able to hold a lopsided election like the 5-January one further as even India has change its stance on

the current government realising its mistake, reports UNB. "An election is now very important as people have got fed-up with the country's current situation. The election that was held in 2014 can't be called an election, and no country except our neighbouring country [India] accepted it," she said.

[Dhaka, Stockholm to fight terror together](#)

BSS/ The Daily Star | 16th June

Bangladesh and Sweden yesterday pledged to work together to combat terrorism and identified new areas of cooperation, like energy security, technological innovation, trade and development of smart cities. The consensus came during the official talks between Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and her Swedish counterpart Stefan Lovfen in Stockholm.

[China to set up SEZ in Anwara, signs deal with Bangladesh](#)

The Financial Express | 16th June

The Chinese government will set up a Special Economic Zone (SEZ) on 783 acres of land in Chittagong's Anwara upazila under a government to government (G to G) deal, reports BSS. Bangladesh Economic Zones Authority (BEZA) executive chairman Paban Chowdhury and China Harbour Engineering Company Ltd. (CHEC) CFO Shengquan Xiong signed a shareholder agreement for setting up the SEZ-Chinese Economic and Industrial Zone- which is expected to attract US\$42.0 billion in investment.

[Sheikh Hasina's visit: A new trajectory in Bangladesh, Sweden relations](#)

bdnews24 | 16th June

The prime ministers of Bangladesh and Sweden have agreed to work together to take the bilateral relations to a "higher level". According to a joint statement issued on Thursday after the talks between Sheikh Hasina and Stefan Löfven, the two prime ministers agreed that economic cooperation and trade and investment constitute a "key element" for strengthening bilateral relations. They noted the ever-growing relations of 45 years and that the visit set "a new trajectory" for the 21st century.

BHUTAN

[Court sentences former Gelephu drungpa to 15 years](#)

Kuensel Online | 15th June

Gelephu drungkhag court sentenced the former Gelephu drungpa Pema Wangdi to 15 years in prison. The sentence is non-compoundable. The drungpa was sentenced to 35 years in prison for 20 charges of corruption, forgery, embezzlement, commission, omission, official misconduct, bribery, solicitation, perjury and abuse of privilege information but the court gave a concurrent sentence of 15 years imprisonment.

MALDIVES

[Majlis approves increasing number of High Court judges to 11](#)

Sun Online | 14th June

People's Majlis, this Wednesday, voted in approval amending the Courts Act to increase the number of High Court judges to 11. The bill, submitted by Inguraidhoo MP Ibrahim Falah, passed with the vote of 43 MPs present during the voting. 29 MPs voted to reject the bill. The amendment to Article 17 of Courts Act states the number of judges

who can be appointed to the High Court is. It also states that the current judges will not lose their posts despite the increase in number of judges.

[Zahid appointed to HRCM](#)

Sun Online | 15th June

Mohamed Zahid has been appointed to Human Rights Commission of the Maldives (HRCM) by President Abdulla Yameen Abdul Gayoom. Zahid took the oath of office in a function held at President's Office. The oath was administered by Supreme Court Judge Abdulla Areef.

MYANMAR

[Top UN official in Myanmar to be transferred](#)

Mizzima | 14th June

The United Nations has confirmed that its top official in Myanmar is to be transferred from her position, according to a BBC report on 13 June. Diplomatic and aid community sources in Yangon told the BBC the decision was linked to Renata Lok-Dessallien's failure to prioritise human rights, in particular this referred to the Rohingya Muslim minority, the report said. The BBC report quotes an internal document prepared for the new UN secretary general, which says the UN team in Myanmar is "glaringly dysfunctional" with "strong tensions" between different parts of the UN system.

[UN Special Rapporteur urges Myanmar to do more to protect the rights of all children](#)

Mizzima | 16th June

More must be done by the Government of Myanmar to protect children in the country, says a United Nations human rights expert. Reporting to the Human Rights Council in Geneva, the Special Rapporteur on human rights in Myanmar, Yanghee Lee, reminded the Government that this obligation extended to all children within its jurisdiction, including all those from the Rohingya minority living in Rakhine State. Expressing concern that at least 13 children were being held by police in Rakhine, the Special Rapporteur highlighted that children should be detained "strictly as a last resort."

NEPAL

[‘Nepal should ease rules to attract FDI’](#)

Himalayan News Service / The Himalayan Times | 15th June

Ambassador of India to Nepal Manjeev Singh Puri said Nepal and India shared unique partnership and friendship and there was ample scope for harnessing opportunities. Addressing an interaction organised by Nepal-India Friendship Society on 'what Nepal expects from India and what India expects from Nepal' here today, Ambassador Puri said Nepal should ease rules to attract Foreign Direct Investment.

[Polls in Province 2 deferred yet again](#)

My Republica | 16th June

Just a day before candidacy nominations, the government Thursday deferred the scheduled June 28 local election in Province 2. The election in Province 2 has been re-scheduled for September 18. Other programs designed for

second round elections in Provinces 1, 5 and 7 have also been changed without however affecting the poll date of June 28.

[Finance committee tells MoF to amend TSC Act](#)

Himalayan News Service / The Himalayan Times | 16th June

The Finance Committee of the Legislature-Parliament has instructed the government to frame transparent procedures and guidelines for tax settlement and also urged for amendment in Tax Settlement Commission (TSC) Act, 1976. The House panel, today, issued direction to the Ministry of Finance (MoF) to submit the procedures and guidelines as early as possible.

[MoHA given power to deport foreigners](#)

Himalayan News Service / The Himalayan Times | 16th June

The power of making final decision on the deportation of any foreign citizen has been delegated to the Ministry of Home Affairs. The Department of Immigration informed that a decision to this effect was recently taken by the Government of Nepal. Prior to this decision, all deportation cases had to be decided through a Cabinet meeting. An official at the immigration department said the move aimed to simplify the process of deporting any foreign citizen involved in violating immigration rules as such cases were on the rise in recent years.

PAKISTAN

[Regional affairs: Stable Afghanistan in our interest, speaker tells envoy](#)

Express Tribune | 16th June

The National Assembly speaker on Thursday told the Afghan envoy that a peaceful and stable Afghanistan is in the vital interest of Pakistan and the region. Speaker Ayaz Sadiq and Afghanistan's Ambassador in Pakistan Dr Omar Zakhilwal met at the Parliament House in Islamabad.

[ADB approves \\$300m for power sector reforms](#)

Express Tribune | 16th June

In the midst of fresh setback to the energy sector reforms plan, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) on Thursday approved a \$300 million loan for Pakistan's power sector, which will immediately serve the short-term purpose of supporting the sliding foreign currency reserves. The Manila-based lending agency approved the third sub-programme of the Sustainable Energy Sector Reforms Programme that began in April 2014.

SRILANKA

[Canada notes strength and depth of relationship with Sri Lanka](#)

Colombo Gazette | 14th June

Canada has noted the strength and the depth of its relationship with Sri Lanka. The High Commission of Canada, as Patron of the Sri Lanka Canada Business Council (SLCBC), hosted the 26th Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the SLCBC. A key stakeholder in strengthening the existing bilateral relations between Sri Lanka and Canada, the SLCBC operates under the aegis of the Ceylon Chamber of Commerce and engages with the High Commission of Canada to further enhance trade ties between the two countries. The High Commissioner of Canada, Shelley

Whiting, speaking at the event stated that ‘the Sri Lanka Canada Business Council has been a longstanding partner of the High Commission in promoting Trade.

[Government defends decision to regain EU GSP plus](#)

Colombo Gazette | 14th June

The Government today defended the decision to regain the GSP plus trade concession from the European Union (EU). Finance Minister Mangala Samaraweera noted that former President Mahinda Rajapaksa, in a statement titled ‘*Government should not create unrealistic expectations about GSP Plus*’ had said that that obtaining the GSP Plus facility is trivial, since Sri Lanka is very close to passing the threshold of an upper middle income country. “He conveniently hides a fundamental issue. A country has to be classified as “upper middle income” by the World Bank for three consecutive years in order to be no longer eligible for the GSP Plus. Even if Sri Lanka were to reach that threshold tomorrow, we would still have access to the advantages of GSP Plus for three years, and for one additional year after the decision is taken to withdraw the benefit.

[Sri Lanka's manufacturing sector expands significantly in May 2017](#)

Colombo Page | 15th June

Sri Lanka's manufacturing sector expanded significantly in May 2017 while the services sector showed a modest improvement from the previous month, the Central Bank's Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) Survey released Thursday showed. The Manufacturing Sector PMI recorded 57.9 in May which is an increase of 16.1 index points compared to April 2017 while the Services Sector PMI recorded 55.3 index points in May from 54.2 index points in April 2017. The expansion in manufacturing activities in May 2017 is largely attributed to the expansion in Production and New Orders sub-indices following the seasonal contraction observed for the month of April 2017.

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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