

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

May 19th, 2017 | Volume: 3 - 7/5

[Bangladesh plans to construct S Asia's largest int'l airport](#)

The Financial Express | 19th May
Bangladesh is contemplating to construct a mega international airport on the outskirts of capital Dhaka, as part of its efforts to have a new international airport, a Planning Ministry official told Xinhua Thursday, reports Xinhua. Planning Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal said the government will construct a new airport, which is to be the largest in South Asia, on the west bank of Padma River where wide-bodied aircraft equivalent to Airbus A380 could land and take off.

[Modi's Sri Lanka visit was a grand success, says Minister](#)

Colombo Gazette | 18th May
Prime Minister Narendra Modi's recent visit to Sri Lanka was a "grand success" and enabled both countries to finalise a number of projects, including the Trincomalee port project, a Minister said. Sri Lanka's Minister on Special Assignments Sarath Amanugama, who was part of the official delegation headed by Sri Lankan Prime Minister Ranil Wickremeshinghe that took part in the 'One Belt One Road' initiative in Beijing, said talks were underway with India for its participation in free trade zones in Trincomalee, Hambantota as well as the Colombo port, the Press Trust of India reported.

[NATO Chiefs of Defense vow to help fulfill 4-year roadmap of Afghan forces](#)

Khaama Press | 18th May
The Chiefs of Defense of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) have reaffirmed support to help the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF) fulfill their four year roadmap. The Allied Chiefs of Defence gathered in Brussels on 17th May 2017 for their second meeting of the year, ahead of the Heads of State and Government meeting on 25th May 2017, according to a statement by the alliance. "On Afghanistan, the Chiefs of Defence reiterated their long term commitment to the RESOLUTE SUPPORT Mission building the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces (ANDSF), including by assisting the ANDSF to fulfil their four year Roadmap," the statement said.

AFGHANISTAN

[45 rockets fired on Nangarhar from other side of Durand Line: Khogyani](#)

Khaama Press | 18th May

At least forty five rockets fired from the other side of Durand Line landed in eastern Nangarhar province of Afghanistan, the local officials said Thursday. Provincial governor's spokesman Ataullah Khogyani said the rockets were fired on Wednesday and landed in Lalpur district. Khogyani further added that the rockets landed in Rina Parcha areas but the attack did not incur any casualties to the local residents.

[Ghani inaugurates road project worth \\$204 million in Bamyan province](#)

Khaama Press | 18th May

President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani inaugurated a road construction project worth \$204 million in central Bamyan province of Afghanistan. The Office of the President, ARG Palace, said President Ghani visited Bamyan province, accompanied by high level government officials and inaugurated the Dara-e-Suf to Yakawlang road construction project. The project was awarded to a Chinese construction firm by the Afghan government earlier in the month of January this year.

[Revisiting Durand Line is only solution to win war on terror](#)

Afghanistan Times | 17th May

The Afghan masses and Baluch people living on both sides of the Durand Line have warmly welcomed the opinion

piece by the Ryszard Czarnecki, Vice President of European Parliament (EP) that was published in EP titled, "Time to Revisit the Durand Line." The Czarnecki has emphasized on the western countries to take a hard look at this artificial border of Durand Line, and restore the natural and historical frontier between Afghanistan and Pakistan for the sake of peace in the region.

[TAPI awareness workshop soon in Kandahar](#)

Afghanistan Times | 17th May

Public awareness workshop on the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPA) gas pipeline project is planned to be kicked off by the Ministry of Mines and Petroleum in southern Kandahar province, an official said on Wednesday. The provincial governor spokesman, Samim Khpalwak told Pajhwk Afghan News that Eng. Abdul Rahman, social affairs for the TAPI project, recently visited the province and spoke of the plan to conduct the awareness program. "People would be made aware of the importance of multibillion dollars project, and their viewpoint regarding better implementation of the schemes would be heard," Khpalwak said. The massive energy project will pass through Afghanistan's Herat, Farah, Helmand and Kandahar provinces before reaching Pakistan. It will carry natural gas from Central Asia to South Asia.

BANGLADESH

[Bangladesh's best days are ahead, says USTR](#)

bdnews24 | 19th May

Assistant US Trade Representative Mark Linscott sees a bright future for Bangladesh as he has lauded the commitment of local stakeholders for working toward economic prosperity. He is the first trade representative visiting Dhaka after the Trump administration took office in Washington in January. "I leave Dhaka with an even greater sense of excitement and optimism that Bangladesh's best days are ahead," he said, speaking at the concluding session of the third review of the 'Sustainability Compact' which was rolled out in 2013 after the Rana Plaza building collapse. The Bangladesh government, the European Union where all Bangladeshi products get duty and quota-free access, the US, Canada and the ILO are the partners of the Compact.

[It's India which should take the decision](#)

Prothom Alo | 18th May

Bangladesh's Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, before the end of her trip to India, and also when she returned to Dhaka, told the media rather ironically, "I wanted Teesta's water, but didi [Mamata Banerjee] offered extra electricity instead." This statement indicated that India's domestic political dynamics were involved in the issue. Sheikh Hasina's remark that she "got something, at least", reeked of regret, at the remorse of being given the short shrift. Before leaving New Delhi, Hasina told Bangladeshi industrialists and businessmen who were members of her entourage, "Now it is for you to say if I am returning home with something or returning home after selling out the country."

BHUTAN

[Abuse of functions top ACC complaints](#)

KuenselOnline | 18th May

Complaints on abuse of functions by public servants continue to be prevalent. It comprised nearly half (42.6 percent) of the total complaints received last year, according to the Anti Corruption Commission's (ACC) annual report. The largest number of 153 complaints received in the reporting period pertains to complaints that were either grievances or those that did not constitute a corruption offence particularly but were the means to corrupt acts such as deception, coercion, forgery and collusion. The ACC report stated that substantial resources are spent on dealing with such complaints, which affect the efficiency and effectiveness of ACC.

MALDIVES

[Azzam appointed CEO of NSPA](#)

Sun Online | 18th May

Ismail Azzam Wajeeth has been appointed to the position of Chief Operating Officer at National Social Protection Agency (NSPA), reports President's Office. The appointment comes after Spokesperson at President's Office, Ibrahim Muaz Ali announced in a tweet this Thursday that Mujuthaba Jaleel – who had been serving as CEO of NSPA – has been appointed to the position of Deputy Minister at Ministry of Economic Development.

MYANMAR

[China to help Myanmar achieve peace](#)

Mizzima | 17th May

Chinese President Xi Jinping has told State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi that China would continue to help the country achieve peace, and called for both sides to maintain stability on their shared border, according to Chinese state media.

Fighting in March between the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA) and Government forces

on Myanmar's north-eastern border pushed thousands of people into China to seek refuge prompting Beijing to call for a ceasefire between ethnic troops and Chinese security forces to carry out military drills along the border.

[EU pushes Myanmar for aid access in northern Rakhine](#)

AFP / Mizzima | 15th May

A senior European Union official has urged Myanmar to allow full aid access to the north of Rakhine state, where thousands have fled their homes after a months-long army crackdown on Rohingya Muslims. The area along the country's northwestern border has been under lockdown since October, when the military launched a campaign to hunt down Rohingya militants who staged deadly attacks on police posts.

NEPAL

[Vote count concluded in 161 local bodies, 5960 representatives elected](#)

The Himalayan Times | 19th May

The Election Commission has informed that 5960 local representatives have been elected until 10:00 am Friday, saying the counting of votes in 161 local bodies has concluded. However, the counting of votes is underway as the local level polls were held to select representatives in 281 local bodies of 34 districts of Province 3, 4 and 6 on May 14. The second round of elections will be held in 41 districts of Province 1, 2, 5 and 7 on June 14.

[PM to resign by May 24](#)

The Himalayan Times | 19th May

Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal's Political Adviser Chakrapani Khanal told THT that the PM planned to resign any day between May 22 and 24 after forging consensus with the Nepali Congress on matters related to the government's policy and programmes and the new fiscal budget. Khanal added that some NC leaders were, however, in favour of letting the Dahal-led government continue till the second phase of elections scheduled for June 14.

PAKISTAN

[Pakistan Army 'has satellite proof' of Afghan involvement in cross-border terrorism](#)

Express Tribune | 19th May

The Pakistan Army "has satellite images and ground reports that prove Afghanistan's involvement" in cross-border terrorist acts and infiltration of Afghan militants into Pakistan. "Satellite images show that the Afghan border area of Parchow in Nangarhar district had been utilised by the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), Khalid Sajna and Da'ish groups to train militants," said Lieutenant Colonel Haroon on Thursday while briefing Peshawar-based journalists at the North Waziristan headquarters.

[Hyundai partners with local player to set up assembly plant](#)

Express Tribune | 19th May

Al-Haj Group in partnership with Hyundai Motor Company (HMC) has decided to assemble different truck variants and luxury buses in Pakistan at an expected investments of Rs4 billion. The company has already purchased 30 acres of land outside Karachi as it aims to start production in the next 12 months. In Phase 1, Al-Haj Hyundai (Pvt) Limited, a separate company, will initially invest Rs1.5 billion through its own resources.

[ICJ's order: Legal experts blame FO for 'poor' case handling](#)

Express Tribune | 19th May

In the wake of the International Court of Justice's [ICJ] order to stay Indian spy Kulbhushan Jadhav's execution, the legal experts are blaming the foreign office's officials for handling the case poorly and not giving proper advice to the relevant quarters. A senior lawyer, who has vast experience of international arbitration cases, believes that it is need of the hour that the legal wing of the foreign office be revamped as its officials have failed to give proper advice to deal with Jadhav's case.

[PM's adviser asks Senate body to 'shut down' PIA](#)

Dawn | 19th May

The government on Thursday sought support from lawmakers across party lines to declare the loss-making Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) 'bankrupt' and eventually shut it down. Speaking before the Senate Special Committee on the Performance of PIA, Prime Minister's Adviser on Aviation Sardar Mehtab Abbasi said: "Such a recommendation from a parliamentary committee will help the government take the difficult decision that it is otherwise hesitating to take." The committee, which met to discuss the status of its recommendations to overhaul PIA, also took up the incidents that had occurred over the past month that had given a bad name to both the national flag carrier and the country.

SRI LANKA

[Sri Lanka-Norway relations have entered a new and dynamic phase- Finance Minister](#)

Colombo Page | 18th May

Sri Lanka-Norway diplomatic relations spanning over 60 years since 1950 have entered a new and dynamic phase strengthening the relations and bilateral cooperation between the two countries, Finance Minister Ravi Karunanayake said. Minister Karunanayake was the Chief Guest at the Norwegian National Day celebrations held Wednesday at the Galle Face Hotel.

[German investments to provide free air and land ambulance service in Sri Lanka](#)

Colombo Page| 19th May

Two giant European industry leaders, the Airbus and Mercedes-Benz have agreed to invest in an air and land ambulance service in Sri Lanka, Minister of Health, Nutrition and Indigenous Medicine Dr. Rajitha Senaratne said yesterday. Minister Senaratne who is on a visit to Germany, was given the assurance on the investment when he met with representatives of the two companies and German Government Economic and Finance grant bank officers on Tuesday (16 May).

[Granting of GSP plus to Sri Lanka printed in EU official journal](#)

Colombo Gazette| 19th May

The decision by the European Commission to grant GSP plus to Sri Lanka has been printed in the official journal of the European Union (EU) and Sri Lanka has access to the EU market under the special scheme from today. The official journal of the EU issued yesterday (Thursday) amends an earlier decision to withdraw the GSP plus scheme granted to Sri Lanka. In January this year the European Commission had noted that on 12 July 2016, the Commission received a GSP+ request from 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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