

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

June 21st, 2017 | Volume: 3 - 9/6

[Modi thanks Ghani for Afghanistan-India air corridor initiative](#)

Khaama Press | 20th June
The Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi thanked the Afghan President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani for the initiative to launch the Afghanistan-India air corridor. Modi expressed optimism regarding the inauguration of the air corridor as he welcomed the arrival of the first flight to New Delhi from Kabul. In a twitter post, Modi said "Happy to welcome the first Air Freight Corridor flight from Kabul."

[UNFC conference begins in Chiang Mai](#)

Mizzima | 21st June
Although five armed groups have submitted applications to join the United Nationalities Federal Council (UNFC), the current UNFC conference will not decide right now whether they will be accepted as member groups or not, said the UNFC vice chairman Nai Hong Sar. "IF KIO resigns from the UNFC, KNO will likely re-join the UNFC. When the UNFC was formed, KNO was a member. We temporarily dismissed CNF from the UNFC. But they want to re-join the UNFC. And the Kuki National Organization also submitted an application to join UNFC a long time. So, we will consider them, too. Another group is Zomi. We will have to consider them too," said Nai Hong Sar.

[UN chief says meetings with Nawaz, Modi will resolve Kashmir dispute](#)

Dawn | 21st June
United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres has suggested meetings with Indian and Pakistani leaders as a means to facilitate dialogue between the two adversaries over the Kashmir dispute. At his maiden press conference at the UN headquarters on Tuesday he was asked: "Are you involved in bringing about a dialogue between India and Pakistan to resolve the Kashmir dispute?" The UN chief responded rhetorically "Why do you think I met three times the prime minister of Pakistan and two times the prime minister of India. For someone accused of doing nothing it is quite a number of meetings".

AFGHANISTAN

[US Has no Strategy to Break Stalemate in Afghanistan: Senator McCain](#)

Outlook Afghanistan/ Sputnik | 20th June

The United States has no strategy to end the stalemate in Afghanistan, US Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman John McCain said in a statement on Monday. "After nearly 16 years of war, we are at a stalemate in Afghanistan. Worse, we have no strategy to end that stalemate and achieve victory," McCain said. The US senator from Arizona recalled that Defense Secretary James Mattis had told the Armed Service Committee last week the United States was not winning the war in Afghanistan.

[Sunni-Shiite Harmony in Afghanistan Unique: Ghani](#)

Outlook Afghanistan/Pajhwok | 21st June

President Ashraf Ghani on Tuesday said Afghanistan was not a place for religious conflicts and the Afghans both Sunni and Shia had sacrificed their lives for the protection of each other and the defense of the country. Addressing a ceremony honoring the revelation of the Holy Quran at the Presidential Palace, Ghani said Islam was the religion of humanity, unity, solidarity and brotherhood. Participated by many Islamic scholars, the president told the event that it was the responsibility of ulema to spread awareness about Islamic rules.

[Afghanistan's Chief Executive Hails Iran for Hosting Afghan Refugees](#)

Outlook Afghanistan/ IRNA | 21st June

Afghanistan's Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah appreciated Iran for hosting the Afghan refugees during the past three decades. Abdullah made the remarks in a meeting attended by several foreign ambassadors, UN and EU representatives residing in Afghanistan. He also urged foreign countries to observe security status before deciding to repatriate Afghan refugees. Afghanistan security condition is deteriorating. The increasing trend of terrorist and suicide attacks in several Afghan provinces, which have been skyrocketed during the past two years and

BANGLADESH

[Bangladeshi UN staff in NY arrested for 'visa fraud'](#)

The Daily Star | 21st June

A Bangladeshi UN staff has been arrested in New York over charges of visa fraud by bringing in a domestic worker from Bangladesh and then failing to pay her a lawful wage. Hamidur Rashid was charged with visa fraud in foreign labor contracting and aggravated identity theft in a criminal complaint unsealed on Tuesday in Manhattan federal court. Rashid, 50, appeared at a brief court hearing on Tuesday afternoon before US Magistrate Judge James Cott, and was released on bail, reports Reuters news agency.

[Bangladeshi tourists to India jump by 30 per cent in 2017](#)

The Financial Express | 20th June

Arrival of Bangladeshi tourists to India jumped up by 30 per cent in the first five months of the current calendar year. Statistics available with the Indian tourism ministry revealed that some 0.70 million Bangladeshi tourists visited India during January-May period of the current year.

[Bangladesh's trade with BRICS registers modest growth, but deficit surges](#)

The Financial Express | 20th June

Bangladesh's trade with the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) increased modestly in the past year. Data generated from the International Trade Centre's (ITC) Trade Map showed that bilateral trade with BRICS, an alliance of advanced developing countries, stood at \$24.53 billion in 2016. The value of the bilateral

trade was \$23.42 billion in 2015. Thus bilateral trade with BRICS registered 4.73 per cent growth during the period under review.

[Bangladesh infrastructure is world's costliest, says World Bank](#)

bdnews24 | 20th June

Building infrastructure in Bangladesh is costliest in the world, the World Bank said in a briefing on the national budget. The global lender made the statement as it presented a comparison of infrastructure spending from other countries. "Bangladesh's spending for each kilometre of track is higher than in China and India," said Zahid Hussain, the World Bank's lead economist for its Dhaka office. He said the absence of competition in the bidding process for these works amount to corruption.

BHUTAN

[Govt. will exceed 11th Plan targets: PM](#)

Kuensel Online | 20th June

The government will not only achieve but exceed most of the 11th Plan targets by the end of its period, the Prime Minister assured in his state of the nation report that was presented to the Parliament yesterday. The most challenging part in implementing the 11th Plan was that the Plan was not finalised and required funds were not secured when the government took over. "The government took it as a challenge and mobilised the required funds. In fact, the Plan size increased from the earlier Nu 209B to Nu 216B and later to Nu 221B to give in desired impetus to realise the Plan goals," the state of the nation report stated.

MALDIVES

[Maldives President ratifies 2nd Amendment Bill to Judicature Act](#)

Sun Online | 18th June

President Abdulla Yameen Abdul Gayoom has ratified the 2nd Amendment Bill to the Judicature Act (Act No. 22/2010) increasing the number of High Court Judges from 9 to 11. The Amendment submitted by the MP for Inguraidhoo constituency, Ibrahim Falaah was passed by the Parliament at the 6th sitting of its second session, on 14th June 2017 with the vote of 43 MPs while 29 voted against it.

[Government: Adheeb may flee if medical visit is granted](#)

Sun Online | 20th June

The Maldivian government has said that the former Vice President Ahmed Adheeb Abdul Gafoor, currently serving a prison sentence, may flee if he is granted a medical visit abroad. Speaking at a press conference today the President's Office today, the Attorney General, Mohamed Anil said that allowing the former Vice President currently serving 33 years for a number of convictions, to go abroad for medical treatment is "opening a door" for him to escape and allowing anyone to escape is difficult for the government..

MYANMAR

[Promise and hurdles for foreign investment in Myanmar](#)

Mizzima | 17th June

Having been observer and participant in the Myanmar's transition since socio political changes commencing in 2011, it came as no surprise to those that know me, when I wrote a number of articles on the importance of sound Corporate Governance. As a serial entrepreneur, Myanmar represented a frontier market that was open for investment with a promise of good returns. A key risk to Myanmar as it transitioned to a parliamentary

democracy was the lack of sound corporate governance and an integrated legal system. However I have a recently somewhat diminished belief in the economic miracle that awaits Myanmar.

[China freezes Myanmar accounts over gambling](#)

Mizzima | 21st June

China has temporarily frozen accounts of Myanmar traders as part of investigations into gambling in Southwest China's Yunnan Province, officials said Tuesday. However, Foreign Ministry spokesperson Geng Shuang told a daily briefing on Tuesday that the investigations will not affect legitimate cross-border trade. Geng said China and Myanmar are working closely together to crack down on cross-border crimes and will continue to communicate to maintain order along the border.

NEPAL

[Nepal-China Joint Mechanism reviews status of bilateral relations](#)

Rastriya Samachar Samiti / The Himalayan Times | 20th June

The 11th meeting of Joint Consultation Mechanism between Nepal and China assessed the progress made in the implementation of agreements/MoUs reached between the two sides in the past. During the meeting held at the Foreign Ministry on Tuesday, the two sides expressed commitment to further promote cooperation in mutually agreed areas. Both sides also agreed to work in realisation of economic opportunities available for mutual benefits.

[Nepalis waiting endlessly to exchange Indian notes](#)

The Kathmandu Post | 21st June

It has been more than seven months since the Indian government pulled 500- and 1,000-rupee banknotes out of circulation, but it has not provided exchange facilities to Nepali citizens holding the demonetized bills. The Finance Ministry wrote to the Indian government more than three weeks ago requesting it to make arrangements to exchange them for legal tender currency, but it has got no response. The Finance Ministry wrote to the Indian government following the request of Nepal Rastra Bank (NRB) to take up the matter at the top level.

PAKISTAN

[NEPRA, power ministry fail to agree on amendments to regulations](#)

Express Tribune | 21st June

The Ministry of Water and Power and the National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (Nepra) have failed to reach common ground on the proposed amendments to the Regulation of Generation, Transmission and Distribution of Electric Power Act 1997. A senior official of Nepra, the power sector regulator, while talking to journalists on Monday, said the federal government had not shared proposed changes to the Nepra Act for its comments and input and these were also not cleared by the inter-provincial Council of Common Interests (CCI).

[Pakistan, Afghan envoys in US trade barbs at Washington moot](#)

Dawn | 21st June

Afghanistan cannot blame Pakistan for all its ills, as terrorist attacks happening there originate in that country,

says Ambassador Aizaz Chaudhry, Islamabad's envoy in Washington. His Afghan counterpart Hamdullah Mohib argues that Afghanistan is not alone in blaming Pakistan; other neighbours, including Iran, also accuse it of interfering in their internal affairs. "Only the fish (of the Arabian Sea) do not because fish do not complain." The two ambassadors met on Monday afternoon in a dialogue on 'Pakistan & Afghanistan relations, diplomacy & security challenges', organised by a Washington-based think-tank, Indus, at Carnegie Endowment.

SRILANKA

[Two French naval ships arrive at Sri Lanka port on a goodwill mission](#)

Colombo Page | 20th June

Sri Lanka Navy, in accordance with naval traditions, ceremonially welcomed two French naval ships Mistral and Courbet arrived at the Port of Colombo on a goodwill visit Tuesday (June 20). The naval vessel FNS Mistral has a complement of 431 including 56 officers while, there are 157 naval personnel onboard FNS Courbet together with 18 officers.

[Human Rights Watch slams Sri Lanka's Justice Minister threatening a defender of minority rights](#)

Colombo Page | 20th June

The global rights organization, Human Rights Watch (HRW) accused Sri Lanka's justice minister of threatening to disbar a prominent lawyer for speaking out against attacks on religious minorities and called on the government to immediately reject the Minister's statement.

[Sri Lanka accuses UN's Pinto of falling prey to NGOs](#)

Colombo Gazette | 20th June

Sri Lanka today accused the former UN Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers Mónica Pinto of falling prey to Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO) when compiling a report on Sri Lanka. In a hard hitting statement, Justice Minister Wijeyadasa Rajapakshe told Parliament today Mónica Pinto could not have compiled a full report on Sri Lanka after spending just a few days in the country. He said it was clear she was misled by NGOs and that the report was based on information provided by NGOs and not based on Pinto's Sri Lanka visit. Pinto's report was submitted to the UN Human Rights Council when it convened for its June session in Geneva recently. He said the report by the Special Rapporteur on the Independence of Judges and Lawyers Monica Pinto was a harm to Sri Lanka's sovereignty.

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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