

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

May 24th, 2017 | Volume: 3 - 9/5

TAPI a Purely Economic Project: Turkmenistan

Outlook Afghanistan/ Pajhwok | 24th May

A long-delayed four nation's gas pipeline project is seen as an essential element of economic cooperation between and Turkmenistan. The Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) gas pipeline is a purely economic project, Turkmenistan's Ambassador to India Parakhat Durdyev said on Monday. Sputnik, a Russian news outlet, quoted the diplomat as saying: "Our idea is to make India even closer to us connected through the pipeline which is a vital ingredient of the economic cooperation." Conceived in the 1990s, the project has been delayed repeatedly due to conflict and political insecurity in the region. In 2015, the ground-breaking ceremony for it was finally held in Turkmenistan.

CPEC may further ignite India-Pakistan tension: UN report

Express Tribune | 24th May

A UN report has stated concerns that the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor may create more tension between India and Pakistan. The report titled 'The Belt and Road Initiative and the Role of Escap' was released by the UN's Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (Escap) at China's request. The report considers the Pakistan-India dispute over Kashmir as a source of concern, stating CPEC might create "geopolitical tensions with India and ignite further political instability."

Jadhav's trial: Pakistan will forcefully present its case at ICJ, says speaker

Express Tribune | 24th May

National Assembly Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq has said that Pakistan will forcefully present its case on Indian spy Kulbhushan Jadhav during the next hearing at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) scheduled for June 8. Sadiq was talking to the media on Tuesday after a meeting of the Parliamentary Committee on National Security discussed Pakistan's performance at The Hague court. The international court had stayed Jadhav's execution till a final outcome of the hearing. Jadhav was awarded death sentence by a military court in Pakistan for spying and subversive activities in the country.

AFGHANISTAN

ISIS leaders among 10 killed in East of Afghanistan

Khaama Press | 24th May

At least ten militants affiliated with the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) terrorist group's offshoot in Afghanistan, ISIS Khurasan, were killed during the ongoing counter-terrorism operations in eastern Nangarhar province of Afghanistan. The provincial government in a statement said the militants were killed during the Hamza counter-terrorism operations conducted in the vicinity of Achin district. The statement further added that the militants were targeted in Pekha and Gawdara aras of Achin, leaving ten of them dead including four of their leaders.

US Committed to Fighting Terror in Afghanistan: McMaster

Outlook Afghanistan/ Pajhwok | 24th May

US National Security Advisor (NSA) Gen. HR McMaster has renewed Washington's commitment to supporting Kabul in diverse fields and in the fight against terrorism, a statement from the Presidential Palace here said on Monday. President Ashraf Ghani met McMaster in Riyadh, the Saudi capital, on the sidelines of an international summit, with both the sides stressing the need for joint efforts at eradicating terrorism and extremism, the statement said. Heads of state from more than 50 countries, including President Ghani and US President Donald Trump attended to the summit. It was Trump's first international trip as president.

BANGLADESH

[PM Hasina condemns 'barbaric terrorist attack' in Manchester](#)

bdnews24 | 24th May

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has condemned the terrorist attack in the northern English city of Manchester and in a message to her British counterpart Theresa May, she said she is “deeply shocked”. “On behalf of the Government and people of Bangladesh, I extend deepest condolences to you and the people of the UK. Our thoughts and prayers are with the grieving families at this difficult hour,” read the message. British police on Tuesday identified the suicide bomber who killed 22 people, including children, in an attack on a crowded concert hall in Manchester, and said they were trying to establish whether he had acted alone or with help from others. Theresa May called it an act of “sickening cowardice” targeting “defenceless children and young people” enjoying a concert.

[£6.0m grant fund for innovative MSEs](#)

The Financial Express | 23rd May

The third round of Business Finance Challenge Fund (BFCF) worth around 6.0 million pound launched Tuesday to provide grant financing for the potential Micro and Small Enterprises (MSEs) in the country. The BFCF is a component of 'Business Finance for the Poor in Bangladesh (BFP-B), a programme funded by the UK Aid of the UK government. The fund is implemented by the Nathan Associates London Ltd and Oxford Policy Management, well-known international consulting firms and research institutions.

[Bangladesh to impose carbon tax in June](#)

The Financial Express | 23rd May

Bangladesh is set to impose its own carbon tax on fuel next month – despite the climate-vulnerable country producing relatively small per capita emissions, reports Reuters. The tax is expected to be put in place on June 1 as part of the country’s annual budget and will be part of a larger bundle of ‘green’ measures, Nojibur Rahman, chair of the National Board of Revenue, told the Thomson Reuters Foundation in a telephone interview.

BHUTAN

[Going organic by 2020 questionable](#)

KuensalOnline | 23rd May

Bhutan’s vision to become organic by 2020 is questionable, said the National Organic Programme’s (NOP) coordinator Kesang Tshomo during the first day of the national workshop on a roadmap for organic agriculture policy in Bhutan in Thimphu yesterday. Agriculture and forests ministry developed and launched the National Framework for Organic Farming in Bhutan in 2007 with a vision to become organic by 2020. Kesang Tshomo said that the organic programme was established to implement the framework. But the question is: can the country achieve the targets? “These questions could have been answered if we were able to implement the national framework,” Kesang Tshomo said.

MALDIVES

[MMC’s President terminated from government post](#)

Sun Online | 23rd May

Maldives Media Council’s President Abdul Mueed Hassan has been terminated from his post as Chief Executive at Ministry of Housing and Infrastructure. Educated in civil engineering, Mueed had been filling different government housing positions since the days of the Male’ Municipality. “Sun” has been informed by a reliable source that Mueed was terminated from his post this Tuesday. The reason for the decision is unclear at this point.

MYANMAR

[Residents protest Chinese oil tankers in Kyaukphyu](#)

Mizzima | 23rd May

About 600 residents of the deep-water port town of Kyaukphyu in western Myanmar’s Rakhine state on Monday protested against Chinese oil tankers moving into the area, as the operation of a long-delayed and controversial U.S. \$1.5-billion pipeline gets under way, RFA reported on 22 May. The residents boarded more than 100 motorboats and piloted them from Kyaukphyu to Maday Island, site of the local office of the Chinese state-owned oil company China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC), or Petro China, which operates the tankers.

[Myanmar army clears itself of Rohingya atrocity claims](#)

AFP / Mizzima | 24th May

Myanmar's army cleared itself of allegations that troops may have carried out ethnic cleansing of Rohingya Muslims, but said a soldier had been jailed for taking a motorbike. More than 70,000 members of the persecuted minority fled to neighbouring Bangladesh after the military launched a widespread crackdown late last year in the north of Rakhine state to hunt down insurgents who attacked police border posts.

NEPAL

[‘Reforms necessary to address tepid growth’](#)

The Himalayan Times | 24th May

The World Bank said that a comprehensive effort by the government to address different long-standing challenges is the only way for Nepal to escape its low-growth trap. Unveiling the Nepal Country Economic Memorandum titled ‘Climbing Higher: Towards a Middle-Income Nation’ today, the World Bank said that the current development path of Nepal is not helping the country to get away from the low-growth trap despite rapid reduction in poverty.

PAKISTAN

[Pakistan Navy warship in Singapore event](#)

Express Tribune | 24th May

Pakistan Navy Ship ZULFIQUAR with embarked helicopter (Alouette) recently undertook goodwill cum training visit of Singapore and participated in Republic of Singapore Navy’s (RSN) 50th anniversary celebrations. During its stay at Singapore port, the ship actively participated in International Maritime Review (IMR) 2017, International Maritime Defence Exhibition Asia (IMDEX) 2017 and Maritime Information Sharing Exercise 2017.

[PCB, BCCI officials to meet in Dubai](#)

Dawn | 24th May

Top officials of the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) and the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) are set to meet in Dubai on May 29 and begin negotiations over the financial loss suffered by the former due to India’s constant refusal to resume bilateral series with Pakistan, well-placed sources told Dawn on Tuesday. The BCCI signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the PCB in 2014 for six bilateral series between two countries between 2015 and 2023 with Pakistan hosting four and India two.

[Govt plans to draw ‘red lines’ for social media in Pakistan](#)

Dawn | 24th May

As the controversy over the crackdown against online anti-army campaigners heats up, the government on Tuesday revealed its plan to draw red lines for the social media service providers for operating in Pakistan. “There will be no restrictions on social media. But, yes, there will be red lines in accordance with the law and Constitution of the country,” Interior Minister Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan told a press conference, after a meeting with a representative delegation of the All Pakistan Newspapers Society (APNS), the Council of Pakistan Newspaper Editors (CPNE) and the Pakistan Broadcasters Association (PBA).

SRI LANKA

[Australian PM sees Sri Lanka President's visit as an opportunity to advance key areas of bilateral cooperation](#)

Colombo Page | 24th May

Sri Lanka's President Maithripala Sirisena commencing his three-day state visit to Australia on the invitation of the Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull arrived in Canberra Wednesday morning (May 24).

[U.S. FY 2018 budget requests \\$ 2.88 million to support Sri Lanka's demining and border control programs](#)

Colombo Page | 24th May

The United States Department of State's FY 2018 budget requests a total of \$2.88 million to support Sri Lankan government's demining and border control programs. Adhering to his "America First" agenda, the U.S. President Donald Trump has requested \$37.6 billion for the Department of State and U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) budget in Fiscal Year (FY) 2018. It's a more than 11-fold reduction from the FY2017 request of US\$ 440.7 billion.

[CBK says SAARC, BIMSTEC inactive and ineffective](#)

Colombo Gazette | 24th May

Former President Chandrika Bandarnaike Kumaratunga has slammed the SAARC and BIMSTEC for not doing anything to solve the regional crises, BD News 24 reported. “Both regional organisations failed to resolve any political problems,” she said, delivering a lecture in Dhaka on Tuesday.

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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