



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

May 26th, 2017 | Volume: 3 - 10/5

[Trump's Budget Requests Extra \\$700Mln for AAF](#)

Outlook Afghanistan/ Sputnik | 25th May
President Donald Trump's 2018 budget requests over \$700 million for Afghanistan Air Force (AAF) program, the White House proposal revealed on Tuesday. Trump's 2018 budget plan for the Department of Defense contains more that \$700 million for the Afghan forces' air lift program "[The budget plan] includes over \$700 million for the program to address aviation lift and aerial fires capability gaps and transition from Russian-manufactured to US-manufactured rotary wing assets," the document released on Tuesday stated.

[Only Indian, Bangladeshi firms can submit tenders for river dredging to ease cargo movement](#)

The Financial Express | 25th May
India will finance 80 per cent fund for dredging to maintain navigability in the Sirajganj-Daikhawa on the Jamuna Ashugunj-Karimgunj stretch of the Kushiya river in Bangladesh. The estimated cost of the project is Rs 2.20 billion (220 crore). The tender for dredging will be floated by Bangladesh Inland Waterway Transport Authority (BIWTA) and only Indian and Bangladeshi companies can take part in the tender.

[PM Dahal hands over resignation to Prez](#)

Kathmandu Post | 24th May
Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal handed over his resignation letter to President Bidhya Devi Bhandari according to Article 298 (8.1) of the constitution. After receiving the resignation from PM Dahal, President Bhandari thanked the prime minister and his cabinet members for the works carried out during his tenure, read a press statement issued by President's spokesperson Mohan Prasad Wagle.

[China vows more support to Afghan forces and peace process](#)

Khaama Press | 25th May

The Chinese officials have pledged more support by Beijing to the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF) and the Afghan peace process. The Office of the National Security Council (ONSC) in a statement said the latest commitment was made during a meeting between the Afghan and the Chinese national security advisers in Moscow. The statement further added that the national security adviser Mohammad Hanif Atmar met with his Chinese counterpart on the sidelines of the Moscow summit.

[Training local forces one of best weapons in fight against terrorism: NATO SG](#)

Khaama Press | 25th May

The NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg emphasized on the importance of training the local forces as the NATO leaders gather for a summit in Brussels to hold talks on some key issues, including fight against terrorism. In his doorstep statement ahead of the meeting, Stoltenberg said “Our largest military operation ever was launched in Afghanistan in a direct response to the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the United States.” Stoltenberg further added that “13,000 NATO troops continue to train Afghan forces. We will assess our level of support and the future of the mission.”

[Situation in Afghanistan may Deteriorate in 2018: Coats](#)

Outlook Afghanistan/ Pajhwok | 25th May

A top American spymaster, Dan Coats, warned on Tuesday that Security situation in Afghanistan country was likely to deteriorate in the year 2018. “The Intelligence Community assesses that the political and security situation in Afghanistan will almost certainly deteriorate through 2018 even with a modest increase in military assistance by the United States and its partners,” Dan Coats, Director of National Intelligence told members of the Senate Armed Services Committee during a Congressional hearing on Worldwide Threats. “This deterioration is underpinned by Afghanistan's dire economic situation. Afghanistan will struggle to curb its dependence on external support until it contains the insurgency or reaches a peace agreement with the Taliban,” Coats said painting a grim picture of this war torn country.

[Kabul military hospital attack: Senior Defense officials jailed](#)

Afghanistan Times | 25th May

Central Military Court convicted 10 officials of the Ministry of Defense (MoD), including Generals to prison over their duty negligence that led into attack in Sardar Dawod Khan—a military Hospital in Kabul, officials said. A large number of terrorist, dressed as doctors stormed country's largest military hospital on early March, opening fire at hospital staffers and patients.

BANGLADESH

[Bangladesh lauds Japan's contribution in development](#)

bdnews24 | 26th May

The foreign minister has said Japan has been playing a “significant role” in Bangladesh's socio-economic development as a “trusted friend and a reliable development partner”. AH Mahmood Ali made the comment when the visiting JICA President Shinichi Kitaoka met him on Thursday. The foreign ministry said a 12-member Japanese delegation composed of senior officials of the Japanese aid agency, JICA, and the Japanese Ambassador

to Bangladesh Masato Watanabe accompanied the JICA president. Ali recalled Japan's contribution in rebuilding Bangladesh since its independence in 1971.

[English Medium Schools: Session fees illegal: Bangladesh High Court](#)

The Daily Star | 26th May

The High Court yesterday declared illegal annual readmission and session fees charged by English medium schools, much to the relief of students and their guardians. HC bench of Justice Sheikh Hassan Arif and Justice Md Badruzzaman delivered the verdict after hearing two writ petitions filed by two guardians in 2012 and 2014, challenging the legality of the fees. The court also issued a set of directives for running the educational institutions in a smooth and transparent manner.

[Bangladesh Govt goes for time-bound action plan to address labour rights issues](#)

The Financial Express | 25th May

The government has moved to devise a time-bound action plan to address the labour rights issues in line with the recommendations put forth by International Labour Organisation (ILO) and Sustainability Compact to avert the EU's possible GSP withdrawal, officials said. The plan includes setting a deadline to bring necessary changes to the EPZ law especially in a bid to allow freedom of association and the labour law with a view to simplifying the trade union registration process following pressure from the Compact partners during the third review meeting held on May 18 in Dhaka, they said.

BHUTAN

[Finance committee calls for better coordination](#)

KuenselOnline | 25th May

Deliberations on the finance committee's report on the annual budget 2017-18 continued yesterday in the National Assembly with a focus on the sector-wise budget allocation. According to the budget report, the government has allocated the "economic and public services" sector about 34 percent of the total budget of Nu 60.77 billion (B). About Nu 20.7B has been allocated for the sector. The energy sector receives only about one percent of the total budget. During the financial year, the energy sector aims to accelerate hydropower development and enhance energy security, diversify and promote alternate renewable energy.

MALDIVES

[Minister: Still there are challenges in being a woman the workplace](#)

Sun Online | 25th May

Minister of Gender and Family, Aminath Zenysha Shaheed Zaki has said that there still challenge facing women in the work environment. The Minsiter said that even with the high number of female students achieving high awards in senior and higher secondary education, there are few women in the work environment and decision making level and there are prefered employment fields for women in the Maldives. She said that it remains so because there are challenges in the workplace for being a woman. Minister Zenysha made the remarks in the launching ceremony of the book "Ranmuiy" by Hope for Women last night.

[Arif criticizes Nasheed for speech at Oslo Freedom Forum](#)

Sun Online | 25th May

MP for the Kelaa constituency, Ali Arif has criticized the former President of the Maldives, Mohamed Nasheed for speaking at the Oslo Freedom Forum at the Norwegian capital. Speaking at a government coalition function at

the MDA hall last night, MP Arif said that a former President of the Maldives spoke at the Oslo Freedom Forum on strengthening democracy in the Maldives and worldwide.

MYANMAR

[State Counselor Will Meet Northeastern Armed Group Delegation: Spokesperson](#)

The Irrawaddy | 25th May

The government peace commission's closed-door meeting in Naypyidaw with representatives of seven northeastern armed groups morning was just a "social" event, according to the commission's Dr. Tin Myo Win. He told the reporters after the meeting that it was held in order to build trust. After peace brokering by a Chinese special envoy between the non-state armed groups and the government, the ethnic delegation arrived in the Burmese capital.

NEPAL

[President Bhandari unveils annual policy, programmes](#)

The Himalayan Times | 26th May

President Bidhya Devi Bhandari presented the government's annual policy and programmes for the fiscal year 2017-18. While presenting the document in the Parliament, President Bhandari said the new policy and programmes were based on the current fiscal year's policy and programmes, as they had to be introduced in the run-up to the second phase of local level elections considering the constitutional obligation of unveiling the new budget on May 29.

PAKISTAN

[Hundreds of additional cops to be hired to police CPEC](#)

Express Tribune | 26th May

A top cop, responsible for policing a vast swathe of highways in the north of the country, on Thursday said that the government plans to recruit hundreds of additional police officials to cater to the increased traffic which is expected once the multi-billion-dollar China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is complete.

[Incentives, tax exemptions are on the rise, but exports are not](#)

Express Tribune | 26th May

Despite incentive packages, government's promises to assist and industries' cry for help, Pakistan's export sector continued to disappoint. Close to half a billion dollars were lost due to tax exemptions for the export-oriented sectors during the first nine months of the outgoing fiscal year, according to the Pakistan Economic Survey 2016-17. Yet, Pakistan's exports dropped 2.29% in dollar-value during 10 months of the fiscal year, according to the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, decreasing from \$17.31 billion in 2015-16 to \$16.91 billion in 2016-17. "The government has sustained Rs50.4 billion in losses due to reduced rates charged from five export-oriented sectors which include textile, carpets, leather, sports and surgical," read the Economic Survey 2016-17.

[Pakistan's 'war on terror' cost down 40pc to \\$3.9bn](#)

Dawn | 26th May

Pakistan has cut direct and indirect losses to its economy on account of terrorism by slightly above 40 per cent to \$3.88 billion (Rs407.21bn) in the first nine months of this fiscal year. Economic Survey 2016-17 attributes this to an improving security condition in the wake of ongoing military-led counterterrorism operations in the nation's tribal regions and elsewhere. The latest survey, which has recorded the losses to the national economy under the

chapter 'Impact of War in Afghanistan and Ensuing Terrorism on Pakistan's Economy', shows that the losses to the economy are steadily decreasing since FY12 when they hit a peak of \$23.77bn the year before. Last year, the economic losses due to deterioration in the security conditions on account of terrorism went down by about 30pc to \$6.49bn from \$9.24bn a year earlier.

[Govt announces 5.28pc GDP growth; Dar optimistic despite missed target](#)

Dawn | 26th May

Finance Minister Ishaq Dar on Thursday announced that Pakistan's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) had grown 5.28pc in fiscal year 2016-17 (FY17), against the target of 5.7pc. "There has been visible growth in the national economy," the finance minister said at his annual press conference for the Pakistan Economic Survey. Dar said Pakistan's 'growth story' was being celebrated all over the world, and called for a collaborative effort across party lines to help Pakistan maintain its economic momentum.

SRI LANKA

[Sri Lankan President and Australian PM agree to enhance bilateral cooperation](#)

Colombo Page | 25th May

Sri Lankan President Maithripala Sirisena, who is on a three-day state visit to Australia, met Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull at the National Parliament building in Canberra on Thursday and held bilateral discussions. The two leaders, after concluding a one-on-one round of talks, held bilateral discussions, in which ministers and officials from both sides participated.

[Turnbull, Sirisena discuss fighting people-smuggling](#)

Colombo Gazette | 25th May

President Maithripala Sirisena met with Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull today with fighting people-smuggling high on the agenda. Sirisena and Turnbull agreed to expand cooperation between the two countries in several areas. The two leaders, after concluding a one-on-one round of talks, held bilateral discussions, in which ministers and officials from both sides participated.

[Iran, Sri Lanka sign 2 MoUs on science, technology cooperation](#)

Colombo Page | 26th May

Iran and Sri Lanka have signed two memoranda of understanding (MoU) on the scientific and technological cooperation, the official news agency of Iran, IRNA reported. During the signing ceremony late on Thursday, Iran's Ambassador in Colombo has conveyed Iranian Vice President Sourena Sattari's message to Sri Lanka's Minister of Science, Technology and Research Susil Premajayantha.

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.

To know more, Please log on to www.anantaaspencentre.in

