



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

**July 26th, 2017 | Volume: 3 - 11/7**

[Iran, Afghanistan to Link Railway Networks](#)

Outlook Afghanistan | 25th July  
Iran and Afghanistan signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) on 23<sup>rd</sup> July for implementing a project linking rail networks of the two neighboring countries. The MOU, between Islamic Republic of Iran Railways (IRIR), also known as RAI, and Afghanistan Railway Authority (ARA), was signed by IRIR's Managing Director Saeed Mohammadzadeh and Afghanistan Railway Authority's Director General Mohammad Yamma Shams during a meeting at IRIR's building in Tehran. Alongside the construction of railway between Iran's city of Khaf and Afghanistan's city of Herat, the MOU calls for further railway cooperation between the two sides. During the event, the officials emphasized the importance of Iran-Afghanistan railway projects and called for acceleration of efforts from both sides for completion of Khaf-Herat railway as soon as possible.

[Another Indo-Bangladesh grid soon for power import](#)

The Financial Express | 25<sup>th</sup> July  
Bangladesh will install another cross-border high-voltage transmission line for importing 500-megawatt electricity from India, officials said Monday. This will be the second such line to be used for importing Indian electricity. Currently, 500MW power is being imported everyday from India through the first 400kv transmission grid line. The state-run Power Grid Company of Bangladesh (PGCB) will set up the 400-kilovolt (kv) high-voltage double-circuit grid line between Bheramara in Bangladesh and bordering Berhampur in India to import power from the neighbouring state, West Bengal, QM Shafiqul Islam, a superintending engineer of PGCB, told the FE.

[No victory in Afghanistan without Pakistan's support: US military chief](#)

Dawn | 26<sup>th</sup> July  
Recent experiences indicate that the United States cannot win the war in Afghanistan without Pakistan's support, says US military chief Gen Joseph Dunford. And US Defence Secretary James Mattis has said that a recent decision to stop reimbursements to the Pakistani military was not part of a tougher new US policy for Pakistan but it did reflect ground realities. Chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff General Joseph Dunford underlined Pakistan's role in bringing peace to Afghanistan at the Aspen Security Forum in California on Sunday, when he was asked if the ongoing review of the US Afghan policy included Pakistan.

## AFGHANISTAN

### [Karzai calls on Pakistan to abandon support to terrorism after deadly Lahore bombing](#)

Khaama Press | 26<sup>th</sup> July

The former Afghan President Hamid Karzai has called on Pakistan to abandon nurturing and supporting the terrorist groups after the deadly bombing Lahore city. The Office of the former Afghan President in a statement said Karzai has expressed deep concerns regarding the casualties of the civilians and the terrorist attack in Lahore. Calling the attack against the values of humanity and Islam, Karzai said Pakistan must abandon support to terrorist groups so that the region can live peacefully and specifically help Afghanistan and Pakistan to get rid of the menace of the terror.

### [New EU Strategy on Afghanistan to Support Peace, Prosperity](#)

Outlook Afghanistan/Tolonews | 26th July

The High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and the European Commission have set a proposal for a new EU strategy on Afghanistan that is “in support of peace and prosperity” in the country, according to an EU statement. “Today, the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and the European Commission have set out their vision for how the European Union can support Afghanistan both to address its challenges and to bring about positive change for the Afghan people,” the statement said. It said that in recent years, Afghanistan has been confronted with a number of challenges that threaten the progress made in its economic and social development and its democratic institutions.

### [Kabul terror attack: Modi says India stands in solidarity with Afghanistan](#)

Afghanistan Times | 24<sup>th</sup> July

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday condemned the bomb attack in Kabul and said India stood in solidarity with the people and government of Afghanistan in their fight against terrorism. At least 30 people were killed and 42 wounded after a car bomb struck a bus carrying government employees in western Kabul on Monday. “Strongly condemn the terrorist attack in Kabul. My heart goes out to the victims’ families,” Modi tweeted. The Taliban has claimed responsibility for the blast. “We stand in solidarity with people and government of Afghanistan in their fight against terrorism,” Modi added.

## BANGLADESH

### [Bangladesh ahead of India, Pakistan in GCC labour market](#)

The Financial Express | 25<sup>th</sup> July

Bangladesh accounted for a 50 per cent share in the GCC labour market from the three South Asian countries in the first half of 2017. Indians comprised just 22 per cent while Pakistanis get 28 per cent, according to emigration statistics compiled by The Indian Express from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. These six Gulf economies absorbed 19,01,356 workers in 2016 from the three major South Asian nations as against 17,52,734 workers in 2014.

### [Act tough to root out graft](#)

UNB/ The Daily Star | 26<sup>th</sup> July

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday asked the government officials to take a tough stance against corruption to root out the menace from the society. “We’ll have to eliminate corruption at any cost. We’ll have to create public awareness and take a strong stance against the threat,” she said, opening a three-day conference of deputy commissioners at her office.

### [Bangladesh nationals can use 26 points to enter, exit India](#)

bdnews24 | 26<sup>th</sup> July

Bangladeshis travelling to India will no longer have to exit the country using only their port of entry. They can now choose to enter and exit India through any of its 24 international airports and two integrated check posts, said a government handout on Tuesday.

## **BHUTAN**

### [Value chain in Agro-industries need to advance](#)

Kuensel Online | 25<sup>th</sup> July

Acquiring local farm produce does not make economic sense for the agro-industries unless a technological transformation occurs throughout the value chain. This is because the best quality locally-grown agro produce are exported and the local industries cannot afford to pay at par with the export value. Sourcing fruit concentrate from other countries are found to make economic sense to the industries. While the cost of production of fresh produce in Bhutan is comparatively higher than in India due to higher costs of inputs, labour and transportation, a study conducted by the Department of Agriculture and Marketing Cooperatives (DAMC) found that there is a general perception that Bhutanese farmers always expect a higher price than what it is really worth.

### [GST could boost business for Phuentsholing](#)

Kuensel Online | 24<sup>th</sup> July

Although the government claims that it is yet to understand the impact of India’s shift to the Goods and Services Tax (GST) regime on Bhutan, the move is expected to impact Phuentsholing differently. With zero tax on exports under this regime, import into Phuentsholing and rest of the places in the country is likely to increase. However, residents in this cross border area will get to see two different prices of the same commodities and have options to buy between Phuentsholing and Jaigaon. Unlike the current situation, Phuentsholing is expected have more advantage and could even attract customers from across the border.

## **MALDIVES**

### [Pakistan PM Nawaz Sharif arrives in Maldives](#)

Sun Online | 25<sup>th</sup> July

Prime Minister of Pakistan, Muhammad Nawaz Sharif and First Lady of Pakistan, Kalsoom Nawaz Sharif arrived in Maldives this Tuesday afternoon. They were greeted to a Guard of Honor by Maldives National Defense Force upon arrival, and were received by Maldivian President Abdulla Yameen Abdul Gayoom and First Lady Fathimath Ibrahim at Velena International Airport.

### [Progressive Party of Maldives condemns “desperate” tactics by opposition, calls for legal action](#)

Sun Online | 25<sup>th</sup> July

Progressive Party of Maldives (PPM) has condemned the breach by opposition parliamentarians of the People’s Majlis premises on July 24, calling it “irrefutable evidence of the oppositions’ desperation”. Opposition parliamentarians had held a protest on July 24, and broke through police barricades to enter People’s Majlis premises – which had been padlocked shut. The parliamentarians had demanded that the Secretariat of People’s Majlis schedule a no-confidence vote on Speaker Abdulla Maseeh Mohamed, and were evicted from the premises by police and military officers.

## MYANMAR

### [Independent UN rights expert says situation ‘worsening’ in Myanmar](#)

Mizzima | 25<sup>th</sup> July

While no one expects an overnight transition to democracy in Myanmar, there has to be real progress on human rights, an independent United Nations expert has said, highlighting reported killings, tortures, and an “ongoing humanitarian crisis” for the Rohingya people and other minorities. In a statement from the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), Special Rapporteur Yanghee Lee accused national authorities of “presiding over a worsening security and human rights situation” in the country. Ms. Lee said she catalogued a list of concerns during her 12 day visit to the country, which was held at the invitation of the Government, which also included the use of human shields by security forces and deaths in custody.

### [First privately run pharmaceutical factory in Myanmar begins operation](#)

Mizzima | 25<sup>th</sup> July

The first privately run pharmaceutical factory in Myanmar started operating yesterday morning in Yangon. Run by Pacific Medical Industries-PMI the factory includes a quality control lab, engineer office and stores for hazardous goods. In April this year, PMI got the recommendation from Food and Drug Administration-FDA to officially run the factory designed to prevent environmental contamination and facilitate sanitation and germ clearing processes. The factory located in Dagon Seikkan Township, Yangon, is expected to fulfil local pharmaceutical demands.

### [Two more die from H1N1](#)

Mizzima | 26<sup>th</sup> July

Two more people, one of them a 29-year-old pregnant woman, died after contracting H1N1 influenza in Yangon, on the day the government confirmed that more than a dozen people had contracted the virus known as swine flu, state media reported on 26 July. Health officials said a 25-year-old man and a 29-year-old pregnant woman died on Monday after being admitted with what appeared to be pneumonia symptoms in separate hospitals in Yangon. Lab tests later showed that the two died of H1N1 virus infection.

## NEPAL

### [Dispute within NC further delays cabinet expansion](#)

MyRepublica | 26<sup>th</sup> July

The delayed expansion of the cabinet has been deferred yet again following a dispute between Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba and rival leader Ram Chandra Paudel over the sharing of ministerial portfolios. Individuals familiar with internal disputes within the ruling Nepali Congress (NC) said the cabinet expansion plan was deferred for Wednesday after the Paudel faction demanded at least five ministerial portfolios against a

previous understanding on four portfolios. The Paudel faction has maintained that they would not send even a single minister into the cabinet if they are denied five portfolios.

#### [Bibeksheel and Sajha parties unifying today](#)

MyRepublica | 26th July

Newly-emerged alternative political parties -- Bibeksheel Nepali Dal and Sajha Party -- have decided to unify into one party Tuesday. According to the party leaders, the unified party's name will be 'Bibeksheel Sajha' Party. Bibeksheel Nepali Dal is led by social activist Ujjwal Thapa and Sajha Party is headed by prominent journalist and social worker Rabindra Mishra. "The party unification will be based on equality. The chiefs of both the parties, Mishra and Thapa, will be joint-coordinators of the unified party and a coordination committee will have 17 leaders each from each party," said a leader. Election symbol of the unified party will be weighing scale, which was the symbol of the Sajha Party.

#### [Nepal to receive Chinese internet bandwidth from Aug](#)

The Himalayan Times | 25th July

The Nepal Telecom (NT) officials are optimistic that Nepal will finally start getting the Chinese internet bandwidth from August as Chinese authorities are in the last stage of giving final touches to the optical fibre laying process on its side. According to NT officials, the Chinese authorities have started to re-locate the already laid optical fibre in areas around Lhasa after some fragments of the laid fibres were damaged and its maintenance became impossible owing to unfavourable weather conditions coupled with frequent avalanches.

## PAKISTAN

#### [SC orders govt to block CNICs, freeze bank accounts of absconders](#)

Dawn|26th July 2017

The Supreme Court on Tuesday directed the interior ministry, the National Database and Registration Authority (Nadra) and the provincial home authorities to block the computerised national identity cards (CNICs) of all absconders in order to secure their custody.

#### [Fuel shortage hits major cities across Pakistan](#)

Geo News|26th July 2017

A severe crisis is on the cards as several fuel stations in Karachi, Lahore, Islamabad, Peshawar, and Quetta, among other areas, have closed shop owing to lack of supply and high demand. Moreover, at the handful of fuel stations that are operating, long queues of commuters can be seen as people rush to acquire the commodity before it runs out completely.

#### [Pakistan's slippery slope as oil shortage fears come alive](#)

Express Tribune|26th July

Pakistan's will and ability to enforce regulation came under the scanner, as oil transporters drafted a 'list of demands' after talks to end the strike failed to yield a result on Tuesday. The strike, which began on Monday and has caused immense hardship to consumers already, began when the Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (OGRA) directed oil transporters to meet the safety and quality guidelines introduced in 2009. The regulator maintained that eight years is ample time to meet the requirements.

### [USAID-funded \\$15m project terminated](#)

Express Tribune | 26th July

The US government on Tuesday terminated funding to a \$15 million project of University of Agriculture Faisalabad (UAF). The US government issued a notification in this regard after completing close to 50 per cent work on the US-Pakistan Centre for Advanced Studies in Agriculture and Food Security project. The termination letter has been issued days after Pentagon announced to withhold \$50 million reimbursements under the Coalition Support Fund to Pakistan on the pretext that it is unable to verify whether Islamabad conducted adequate counter-terrorism operations against the Taliban-affiliated Haqqani network.

### [26 killed in blast near Lahore's Ferozepur Road](#)

Dawn | 24<sup>th</sup> July

At least 26 people, including nine policemen, were killed while 58 others were injured in a bombing attack near the Arfa Karim IT Tower on Lahore's Ferozepur Road on Monday afternoon.

Lahore's DIG Operations Dr Haider Ashraf said that the blast, which occurred at around 3:55pm, was a "suicide attack" and that "police were the target". The Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) claimed responsibility, stating that a "suicide attacker" had used a motorcycle bomb to target police officials.

## **SRILANKA**

### [Sri Lanka government approves Hambantota Port deal with China](#)

Colombo Page | 25<sup>th</sup> July

Sri Lanka's government on Tuesday approved the deal to lease the loss-making Hambantota Port to a State-owned Chinese conglomerate for over a billion dollars. Ports and Shipping Minister Mahinda Samarasinghe said the Cabinet today granted final approval to sell a 70 percent stake in the strategic Hambantota port for US\$1.12 billion to state-owned China Merchants Port Holdings. Under the agreement, the Chinese will manage the port operations and Sri Lanka Navy will be in charge of port security. According to the agreement the Port will be leased to the relevant company to carry out the operations. The government will also be a partner of the operations.

### [NDB records highest ever Profit After Tax of Rs. 2.3 billion for the first half of 2017](#)

Colombo Page | 26<sup>th</sup> July

National Development Bank PLC (NDB) concluded the first half of the financial year with a record Profit After Tax (PAT) of Rs. 2.3 billion (81% growth YOY). This is the highest recorded PAT for the Bank in its history for the first half of a financial year, which was supported by commendable growth in core banking operations and dividend contributions from Group companies. The reported growth levels for the Bank's Profit Before Tax (PBT) of RS. 3.814 billion was 70% over the comparative period of H1 2016.

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