

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

**May 2nd, 2017| Volume: 3 - 2/5**

[Bangladesh govt stifles freedom of expression: Amnesty](#)

bdnews24 | 2nd May

The Bangladeshi government has stifled freedom of expression by failing to protect dissenters and using repressive laws and tactics, London-based Amnesty International has said in a report. "Between the violence of armed groups and state repression of the state, secular voices in Bangladesh are being consistently silenced," said Amnesty's Bangladesh researcher Olof Blomqvist.

[ISI chief to visit Kabul as efforts underway to mend Pak-Afghan ties](#)

Khaama Press | 2nd May

The Inter-Services Intelligence chief, Pakistan military's intelligence, Gen. Naveed Mukhtar is expected to visit Kabul in near future as efforts are underway to mend the Pak-Afghan ties which witnessed an all-time low during the past one year. According to the informed sources, Gen. Mukhtar is expected to visit Kabul at the end of the current week to meet with the Afghan officials. This comes as a delegation of the Pakistani parliamentarians visited Kabul last week and met with the Afghan president and other high level government officials to bridge the gap between the two nations and improve bilateral relations between the two neighboring countries.

[Pakistan to work with Kabul, Delhi on water management](#)

Dawn | 3rd May

The government is seeking a joint mechanism with India and Afghanistan for joint watershed management and trans-boundary aquifer sharing to minimise the negative impact of development projects of neighbours. Watershed management relates to the land and water management practices that can help protect and improve the water quality, while aquifer refers to the underground layer of rock or minerals that holds water.

**AFGHANISTAN**

[Investment increased by 152pc this year](#)

Afghanistan Times | 2<sup>nd</sup> May

Ministry of Commerce and Industries (MoCI) on Tuesday during inauguration of first ever plastic exhibition said that investment increased by 152 percent across the country this year. "\$1.7 billion investment recorded this year, which reveal 152 percent increase," said Acting Deputy Minister for MoCI, Qurban Haqjo. \$682 million was invested in the country last year. He said that establishing of policies for motivation of investment was the main factor behind significant increase of investment this year.

[Explosion rocks Kabul city](#)

Khaama Press | 3<sup>rd</sup> May

An explosion took place in Kabul city on Wednesday morning with the preliminary reports suggesting the blast has taken place due to a suicide attack. The incident has taken place close to Abdul Haq Square targeting a convoy of the armored military vehicles. Eyewitnesses in Macroryan area are saying that of the security forces, apparently belonging to the coalition forces were targeted by a suicide bomber as they were crossing the area.

[Afghanistan Sets New Record in Opium Production](#)

Outlook Afghanistan/ Tolonews | 3<sup>rd</sup> May

Afghanistan set new records for opium production in 2016 despite an \$8.5 billion USD counternarcotics campaign

investment by U.S agencies, the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction's (SIGAR) stated in its latest quarterly report to Congress. The report said that opium production increased 43 percent in 2016, while poppy eradication hit a 10-year low and was "nearly imperceptible."

#### [Afghanistan is a mess in Anti-Terror War: Poe](#)

Outlook Afghanistan/ Pajhwok | 3<sup>rd</sup> May

In the so-called war on terrorism, Afghanistan is in a mess, a top American lawmaker says, alleging Pakistan continues to use proxies against its neighbour and give terrorists safe havens. "I believe Pakistan is playing us, they launched what they called counterterrorism operations in the tribal areas, but it quickly became clear they were only targeting the Pakistani Taliban and not the Afghan Taliban," Congressman Ted Poe said.

### **BANGLADESH**

#### [Bangladesh Bank advises banks to fix rational rate of forex](#)

The Financial Express | 1<sup>st</sup> May

The central bank has advised the banks to fix rationally the exchange rate of local currency against the US dollar, officials and bankers said Sunday. The instruction was given at a review meeting on the recent foreign exchange market volatility at Bangladesh Bank (BB) headquarters in the capital Sunday.

#### [Digital Security Act in the offing: Law minister](#)

Prothom Alo | 2<sup>nd</sup> May

Law minister Anisul Huq said on Tuesday the government is working to enact a new law styled Digital Security Act. Addressing a programme in the capital, the law minister also said the much-criticised Section 57 of the ICT law will be repealed as everything about the Section 57 (of the ICT law) will be stated clearly in the proposed law.

### **BHUTAN**

#### [BBIN rises again](#)

Kuensel | 27<sup>th</sup> April

The BBIN motor vehicle agreement is back on the agenda for an upcoming joint session of Parliament where it will be put to a vote. Going by the current state of affairs, the government is unlikely to garner the required 48 votes, and the agreement faces the death knell. The government anticipating such a tragedy, attempted to withdraw the agreement, in a bid to buy more time to convince critics and opponents, and reintroduce the bill at a later date.

### **MALDIVES**

#### [High Court rules in favor of Qasim's 15-day remand extension](#)

Sun Online | 2<sup>nd</sup> May

High Court has ruled in favor of Criminal Court's decision to remand Jumhoory Party (JP) Leader Qasim Ibrahim to 15 more days in police custody. Qasim was arrested for the second time on April 20; he was remanded to police custody for 15 days by Criminal Court on April 21. Upon appeal, High Court ruled this Tuesday that Qasim was arrested through a court order requested by Prosecutor General.

### **MYANMAR**

#### [Burma, EU at Odds Over UN Fact-finding Mission](#)

Reuters / The Irrawaddy | 3<sup>rd</sup> May

The European Union clashed with visiting Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, by publicly supporting an international mission to look into alleged human rights abuses by the country's security forces against Rohingya Muslims. The EU's top diplomat Federica Mogherini, speaking at a news conference with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, said an agreed resolution of the UN Human Rights Council would help clear up uncertainty about allegations of killings, torture and rape against Rohingya.

### **NEPAL**

#### [Constitutional Council nominates Deep Basnyat for CIAA chief](#)

The Himalayan Times | 2<sup>nd</sup> May

The Constitutional Council on Tuesday recommended to appoint Deep Basnyat the chief of the Commission for the Investigation of Abuse of Authority. Basnyat is currently the anti-graft body's officiating chief. Basnyat, a CIAA commissioner, took up the responsibility in October last year after Lok Man Singh Karki faced automatic suspension following the registration of an impeachment motion against him at the Parliament.

#### [Local unit candidacies filed in 34 districts](#)

My Republica | 3<sup>rd</sup> May

Political parties and independent candidates in 34 districts of three of the provinces registered their candidacies for the first phase local elections scheduled for May 14. Candidacy registrations were largely peaceful. Encouraged by the looming elections, leaders and cadres of major political parties and independent candidates reached the local election offices and registered their candidacies with fanfare. The elections are taking place after a gap of 19 years.

#### [Writ against CJ impeachment motion](#)

The Kathmandu Post | 3<sup>rd</sup> May

A writ petition has been filed at the Supreme Court against the two ruling parties' bid to impeach Chief Justice Sushila Karki. Lawyer Sunil Ranjan Singh filed the petition at the apex court on Tuesday, two days after 249 lawmakers from the Nepali Congress and CPN (Maoist Centre) registered an impeachment motion against Karki. The court administration, however, will decide on Wednesday whether to entertain or reject the petition, according to a source at the apex court.

#### [MoF prepares framework to allocate grant](#)

Himalayan News Service / The Himalayan Times | 3<sup>rd</sup> May

The Ministry of Finance (MoF) has prepared a framework to allocate grant to 744 local bodies. As local bodies will be directly provided grant in various forms — conditional, unconditional, counterpart and privileged grant — as per a provision in the constitution, the ministry has to allocate grants to the newly established local bodies.

### PAKISTAN

#### ['Special' tax regime likely to be withdrawn for booming construction sector](#)

Express Tribune|3<sup>rd</sup> May

The government may withdraw the special income tax regime that was extended to builders and land developers in the previous budget, after revenues from the construction sector dipped to a meagre Rs112 million against conservative official annual estimates of Rs8 billion. The dismally low revenue generation from a booming sector belies tall claims of the sector that lured tax authorities into believing that the builders and land developers would pay Rs28 billion in income tax under the new final tax regime in fiscal year 2016-17.

#### [Four 'hardcore terrorists' tried by military courts hanged: ISPR](#)

Dawn|3<sup>rd</sup> May

Four "hardcore terrorists" tried by military courts were hanged on Wednesday, an Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) statement said. The four were said to be involved in "committing heinous offences related to terrorism, including killing of innocent civilians, attacking armed forces of Pakistan and law enforcement agencies (LEAs)," ISPR said. The suspected terrorists were active members of the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan and were awarded the death sentence by military courts.

### SRI LANKA

#### [Russia invites Sri Lanka for international economic conference](#)

Colombo Page| 2<sup>nd</sup> May

Russia has invited Sri Lanka to showcase its investment and export portfolios to the emerging markets as well as the huge Russian region at the premier global forum, St. Petersburg International Economic Forum (SPIEF) this year.

#### [Indian High Commission in SL to open doors to discuss issues](#)

Colombo Page| 2<sup>nd</sup> May

The Indian High Commission in Colombo today announced that it will hold an Open House to discuss several issues. The High Commission says it has been a constant endeavour of the High Commission of India in Colombo to make its services transparent and more accessible to Indian nationals in Sri Lanka.

#### [Pakistan naval ship arrives at Sri Lanka port on a goodwill mission](#)

Colombo Gazette| 2<sup>nd</sup> May

Sri Lanka Navy, in accordance with naval traditions, ceremonially welcomed the Pakistan Maritime Security Ship (PMSS) Dasht arrived at the Port of Colombo Wednesday, May 03, on a goodwill visit. Recently built in China and equipped with state-of-the-art guns, PMSS Dasht is part of the Pakistan navy.

#### [EU notes commitment for freedom of expression in Sri Lanka](#)

Colombo Gazette| 2<sup>nd</sup> May

The European Union (EU) says it is committed to enhancing the quality of journalism, access to public information and freedom of expression in Sri Lanka. The EU office in Colombo said that the Catamaran (thecatamaran.org), a tri-lingual portal publishing work by local journalists, presents the diverse experiences of people and communities from around Sri Lanka. The published stories call attention to underreported topics, with analyses of socio-political and socio-economic issues.

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### ***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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