



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

**June 30th, 2017 | Volume: 3 - 11/6**

[Sri Lanka in talks with Russia to credit purchase Gepard 5.1 frigates](#)

Colombo Page | 29<sup>th</sup> June

Russia and Sri Lanka is in talks of purchase of Gepard-class frigates, according to Russia's Federal Service for Military-Technical Cooperation (FSMTC). Russia is in talks with Sri Lanka on the credit purchase of Gepard-class Project 1166.1 frigates, the Gepard 5.1, Russian news agency Sputnik reported quoting FSMTC spokeswoman on Thursday. "The delivery of the project Gepard 5.1 to Sri Lanka is planned on the basis of an intergovernmental agreement on providing a state export credit for its financing," Maria Vorobyeva said. She said the issue is being addressed with government bodies including the Russian Finance Ministry.

[Bangladeshis' deposits in Swiss banks rise 20% in 2016](#)

bdnews24 | 30<sup>th</sup> June

Deposits by Bangladeshis in Switzerland's banks rose by about 20 percent year-on-year in 2016. The amount rose to 661.96 million Swiss francs or Tk 55.86 billion in 2016 from 550.85 million francs in the previous year, according to data released by Swiss National Bank or SNB on Thursday. Zurich-based SNB published the data in its annual report titled 'Banks in Switzerland 2016'. Money parked by Bangladeshis in the Swiss banks totalled around 506.05m francs in 2014.

[Road construction inside Bhutanese territory violates agreements: MFA](#)

Kuensel Online | 30<sup>th</sup> June

Bhutan has conveyed to China, both on the ground and through the diplomatic channel that the construction of the road inside Bhutanese territory is a direct violation of the agreements and affects the process of demarcating the boundary between the two countries, the foreign ministry has stated in a press release it issued yesterday. The press release was issued following recent queries and reports on the Bhutan-China boundary in the Doklam area.

**AFGHANISTAN**

[India, US agree to strengthen ties to ensure peace in Afghan](#)

Afghanistan Times | 27<sup>th</sup> June

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and US President Donald Trump today agreed to continue strengthening coordination for ensuring peace and stability in Afghanistan as they expressed concern over rising instability in

the war-torn country caused by terrorism. Trump thanked the Indian people for their “contributions to the effort in Afghanistan, and for joining us in applying new sanctions against the North Korean regime.” Prime Minister Narendra Modi and US President Donald Trump discussed in depth several regional issues, including Afghanistan during their meeting. Modi said the rising instability in Afghanistan due to terrorism is a cause of mutual concern for both India and the US.

#### [‘Afghanistan’s security is our security’, says NATO SG while reaffirming enduring support](#)

Khaama Press | 29<sup>th</sup> June

The NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg reaffirmed the alliance’s enduring support to Afghanistan, emphasizing that ‘Afghanistan’s security is our security’. In his speech after the conclusion of the meeting with the NATO-led Resolute Support operational partner nations, Stoltenberg said “Today, Afghan security forces are fully responsible for security across the country. Every day they demonstrate bravery and resilience, leading the fight to defeat terrorists and protect their people,” he said in his speech after the conclusion of the meeting with the Resolute Support operational partner nations and while noting the alliance’s support to the country.

#### [Contracts worth 4 billion Afghanis approved in NPC meeting chaired by Ghani](#)

Khaama Press | 29<sup>th</sup> June

The Afghan government has approved a total of twelve contracts worth around four billion Afghanis during a meeting of the national procurement commission chaired by President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani. The Office of the President, ARG Palace, said the meeting of the national procurement commission was organized in the presidential palace on Wednesday evening.

## **BANGLADESH**

#### [Bangladesh's export to Spain up](#)

The Financial Express | 29<sup>th</sup> June

The country's export to Spain stood at US \$ 1,833.65 million in the first 11 months of the current fiscal year (2016-2017). The value was \$ 1791.04 million in the same period of the past fiscal year (2015-2016). Thus, Bangladesh's export to Spain grew by 2.3 per cent in July-May period of the outgoing fiscal year (FY17).

#### [Bangladesh to start replacing oil imports with LNG](#)

The Financial Express | 29<sup>th</sup> June

Bangladesh will begin substituting part of its oil product imports with LNG next year, as it aims to use more gas in power generation to replace oil-fired plants, Sayed Mohammad Mozammel Haque, director for Operations and Planning at Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation (BPC), told S&P Global Platts on Wednesday.

#### [PM Hasina featured among world leaders in US book](#)

BSS/ Prothom Alo | 30<sup>th</sup> June

Prime minister Sheikh Hasina has been featured in a book unveiled in the USA on Tuesday as one of the 18 current women national leaders of the world. The prime minister’s photo along with six other world leaders was printed on the cover-page of the book “Women Presidents and Prime Ministers”, said a press release of the Bangladesh Embassy in Washington.

## **BHUTAN**

### [65 km of Northern East-West Highway inaugurated in Bhutan](#)

Kuensel Online | 29<sup>th</sup> June

The first 65km of Northern East-West Highway from – Semtokha to Wangdue Zam- was inaugurated yesterday at Semtokha, Dochula and Wangdue Zam, marking the completion of the widening and up-gradation work on the highway. Work on the 510km East West Highway, which connects Thimphu to Trashigang started at the end of 2014.

## **MALDIVES**

### [Umar: MDP hijacked by anti-religious individuals](#)

Sun Online | 28<sup>th</sup> June

The first political founded in recent Maldivian history – Maldivian Democratic Party (MDP) – has been hijacked by individuals with anti-religious sentiments – led by former Maldivian President Mohamed Nasheed, says Umar Naseer. Umar made the declaration in a statement he released congratulating MDP members on the party's 12-year anniversary. Umar wrote in the statement that MDP had been founded at an opportune time, but that few with anti-religious sentiments had “hijacked” the party soon after its conception.

## **MYANMAR**

### [Religious affairs minister calls for ‘purification’ of Buddhism in Myanmar](#)

Mizzima | 30<sup>th</sup> June

Minister for Culture and Religion Thura Aung Ko said that his ministry would draw up a scheme for purifying Buddhism after the actions of some organizations from so-called patriots and some Sangha organizations undermined the purity and perpetuation of the faith. Under the scheme these organizations and their members would have action taken against them, the minister said. Minister Thura Aung Ko added that activities of some laypersons and Sangha organizations were contrary to fundamental rules of the Sangha and they got involved in social and political matters which suggested they had the intention of restoring dictatorship to the country.

## **NEPAL**

### [NC demands re-polling in three polling centres of Bajhang, Achham](#)

The Himalayan Times | 29<sup>th</sup> June

Nepali Congress has demanded with the Election Commission to conduct re-polling in the total three polling centres of Bajhang and Achham. The NC has demanded to this effect claiming that CPN-UML attempted to rig in the election by commanding its cadres to take hold of those polling centres and vote unilaterally. In a press statement released by the Chief Secretary of the NC's central office, Krishna Prasad Poudel on Thursday, the NC

has stressed on the re-polling in the polling centres at Sulipipalchaur Higher Secondary School in Bajhang, Baidhyanath Secondary School in Bajhang and at Chandrodaya Primary School of Sanphebagar, Achham.

#### [Counting begins in 307 local levels: CPN-UML leading in most](#)

The Himalayan Times| 30<sup>th</sup> June

The Election Commission said counting of votes had started in 307 local levels by this evening. The second phase of local level elections was held yesterday in 334 local levels of 35 districts of Provinces 1, 5 and 7. According to the preliminary vote counting data provided by the EC, 78 candidates of the main opposition party, CPN-UML, were leading in contests for posts of mayor or chairpersons of at least 78 local levels — 40 of Province 1, 22 of Province 5 and 16 of Province 7. The EC said the Nepali Congress and the CPN-Maoist Centre were in the second and third position, respectively. The preliminary results show that NC candidates were leading in contests for top posts of at least 66 local levels — 25 of Province 1, 20 of Province 5 and 21 of Province 7.

#### [BFIs need not follow consortium practice in deprived sector lending, says NRB](#)

The Himalayan Times| 30<sup>th</sup> June

Nepal Rastra Bank (NRB) — the central regulatory and monetary authority — today clarified to the class ‘A’, ‘B’ and ‘C’ financial institutions that the deprived sector credit issued to the micro finance institutions by the banks and financial institutions (BFIs) need not be converted into consortium financing. In the half-yearly review of the Monetary Policy this year had instructed BFIs to convert loans of Rs one billion and above into consortium financing if the borrower had availed that quantum of credit from multiple financial institutions within this fiscal.

#### [Nepal says his party not against Madhes](#)

The Himalayan Times| 30<sup>th</sup> June

Addressing an *Eid al-Fitr* wishes exchange programme organised by the party’s Metropolitan Organisation Committee here today, Nepal tried to dismiss ‘false’ charges against the party. “The Madhes-based parties are portraying us as anti-Madhes party, but let me clarify there is no party that has understood the Madhes and done as much for development here as our party,” he claimed. Nepal dwelt on his party’s participation in various movements for change in the country and said, “Rather than doing anything for or against one particular community, UML has served the entire nation,” he reasoned. “Who started the practice of providing vulnerable and disadvantaged groups with social security allowance? Who started landmark projects such as the proposed international airport in Nijgadh, fast-track road project and People Resident Programme? Didn’t these projects start during the UML government?” he asked.

## PAKISTAN

#### [Pakistan cautions against expansion of N-capabilities](#)

Dawn|30<sup>th</sup> June

Pakistan told the Security Council that the declared plans by one nuclear-weapons state to expand its nuclear capabilities would renew an arms race and seriously set back global disarmament efforts. Speaking in the Security Council debate on ‘Global efforts to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction by non-state actors’, Pakistan’s Ambassador to the UN Maleeha Lodhi criticised one of the P-5 states that had vowed to “greatly strengthen and expand nuclear capabilities by outmatching and outlasting potential competitors”. “This would renew a nuclear arms race,” she warned.

#### [Time for Sharif to face accountability, says Zardari](#)

Dawn|30<sup>th</sup> June

Former president and Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) co-chairman Asif Ali Zardari has criticised Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and said the latter will now understand what genuine accountability is. Addressing gatherings of PPP workers and supporters in Qalander Bux Mubejo village and Bhiria town of Naushahro Feroze district on Thursday, he claimed that Mr Sharif was nervous when his children were being questioned by the joint investigation team (JIT) constituted by the Supreme Court to investigate money laundering allegations against the Sharif family.

## **SRILANKA**

### [Sri Lankan government seeks foreign expertise to continue controversial Uma Oya multi-purpose development project](#)

Colombo Page| 29th June

Sri Lankan President Maithripala Sirisena said the government expects to get the assistance of foreign experts to continue the Uma Oya multi-purpose development project without affecting the people adversely. Speaking at an event held on June 29 in Nuwara Eliya, the President said the people in the area have to face the adverse effects of the project which had been operated only on the political decisions, neglecting the advice of the engineers. The President, commenting on the protest carrying out by the workers of the Electricity Board, stated that they are on this protest as the former government gave salary increments only for the higher posts of the Electricity Board and did not provide any pay hike for lower rankers. The President expressed his views regarding the protests against SAITM said, that issue also created by the previous government.

### [Finance minister meets provincial entrepreneurs to address their difficulties](#)

Colombo Page| 30th June

Minister of Finance and Mass Media Mangala Samaraweera recently met with the representatives of the Chamber of Provincial Entrepreneurs at the Ministry of Finance and held discussion to resolve the difficulties faced by them. The representatives briefed Minister Samaraweera on issues faced by them, especially with regard to the calculation of taxes. They also stressed on issues regarding the payment of VAT and other taxes paid by small business entrepreneurs. Finance Minister Samaraweera stated that the Treasury intends to rectify issues faced by small business owners with regard to the calculation and payment of taxes through the next budget. State Minister of Finance, Eran Wickramaratne and Secretary to the Treasury, Dr. R.H.S. Samaratunga also took part in the discussion.

### [Tamil Nadu activists refused permission to meet Lankans](#)

Colombo Gazette| 30<sup>th</sup> June

Activists of a political party in Tamil Nadu have been refused permission to meet Sri Lankan refugees at a refugee camp. Viduthalai Chiruthaigal Katchi (VCK) partymen in India are disenchanted with the police in the district after they were reportedly denied permission on Wednesday to meet Sri Lankan Tamil refugees in the settlement in Bhavani Sagar, The Hindu newspaper reported. Party functionaries led by its State deputy general secretary Vanniarasu had gone to meet the refugees on behalf of VCK leader Thol Thirumavalavan but they were not only denied permission, but also detained for about an hour.

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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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