

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

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

[Pakistan, Japan sign \\$24m accord for energy project](#)

Dawn | 5th May

Pakistan and Japan signed here on Thursday a loan agreement amounting to \$24 million for the implementation of the second phase of 'Islamabad-Burhan Transmission Line Reinforcement' project. The project will improve reliability of the national grid and meet the growing demand for electricity transmission through reinforcement of transmission lines necessary for power supply to the Islamabad capital territory and surrounding areas, thereby contributing to the improvement of economic infrastructure of Pakistan.

[Indian cabinet approves \\$4.5 LoC to Bangladesh](#)

The Financial Express | 4th May

Indian federal government approved Wednesday a \$4.5 billion Line of Credit (LoC) to Bangladesh. The Union Cabinet meeting was chaired by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, according to a report by www.thedollarbusiness.com. The Cabinet's ex-post facto approval has officially sealed India's financial participation in the infrastructural development of Bangladesh, which will also enable India's connectivity with its North Eastern neighbours

[NATO, Partners Vow Continued Support to Afghan Forces](#)

Outlook Afghanistan/

Pajhwok | 4th May

NATO Allies and Partners, together with representatives of the donors' community, reaffirmed their long-term commitment to supporting the financial sustainment of Afghan security forces. At a plenary meeting of the Afghan National Army (ANA) Trust Fund Board, participants discussed the Fund's achievements in 2016 and 2017 and plans for 2018, a statement from NATO said.

AFGHANISTAN

[Taliban are brothers , says HIA chief Gulbuddin Hekmatyar](#)

Khaama Press | 4th May

The leader of Hezb-e-Islami Gulbuddin Hekmatyar says Taliban are brothers despite the party is related to Taliban, Al-Qaeda, ISIS or any other group. Hekmatyar made the remarks during his speech in capital Kabul and in the presence of the of the former Jihadi leader leaders including Abdul Rab Rasool Sayyaf and the current government leaders including the chief executive Abdullah Abdulla. In his speech during the gathering in ARG Palace in Kabul today, Hekmatyar said the current system in Afghanistan is Presidential and we do not believe in parliamentary system and the parliamentary system is not acceptable in Afghanistan considering the current situation.

[US drone strike leaves 7 ISIS-K militants dead in East of Afghanistan](#)

Khaama Press | 4th May

At least seven militants of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) terrorist group's offshoot in Afghanistan, ISIS-Khurasan, were killed in an airstrike in eastern Nangarhar province of Afghanistan. The provincial police commandment said the airstrike was carried out in the vicinity of Gorgori area of Haska Mina district on Wednesday. The source further added that the security forces and the local residents did not suffer any casualties in the airstrike. The anti-government armed militant groups including the ISIS-K loyalists have not commented regarding the report so far.

[Massive corruption involved in mines contracts in Afghanistan: IWA](#)

Khaama Press | 4th May

The Integrity Watch Afghanistan (IWA) informed of massive corruption involvement in the mines contracts, emphasizing that the government has failed to reduce the growing graft in the Ministry of Mines and Petroleum. The head of Integrity Watch Afghanistan Syed Ikram Afzali told reporters in Kabul that the Ministry of Mines and

Petroleum is paralyzed since two years and the officials of the ministry have not been able to execute even smaller works during this period. Criticizing the senior leaders of the government of national unity, Mr. Afzali said the leaders of the government are to be blamed for the growing corruption in the ministry.

[Rein in Terrorists for Trust Building: Ghani to ISI Chief](#)

Outlook Afghanistan/ Pajhwok | 4th May

President Ashraf Ghani has categorically told the Pakistan's spymaster that Afghanistan would not trust the neighbour until it takes action against the Taliban and other terrorist groups. A well-placed government source confided that Afghanistan handed ISI chief, Naveed Mukhtar, enough evidence of the presence of Taliban and other rebel insurgents in Pakistan. During his day-long visit to Kabul on Tuesday, the Inter-Services Intelligence chief met several Afghan officials, including President Ghani. The source revealed Ghani told the ISI chief he could not trust Pakistan until it adopted practical steps to meet Afghanistan's longstanding demands to rein in terrorists on its soil who conducted incursions in the war-torn country.

[Kabul suicide attack: Eight civilians killed, 28 others, including three NATO troops wounded](#)

Afghanistan Times | 3rd May

Eight civilians were killed and 28 others including three NATO troops wounded Wednesday after a suicide bomber rammed into NATO troops' convoy in Kabul's police district 9. "A suicide bomber targeted NATO troop's convoy at around 7:45 am in Kabul city," deputy spokesman for interior ministry said. "Women and children are among wounded people," Najeeb Danish added. Ministry of Public Health Spokesman Ismail Kawosi said that seven killed and 26 wounded people shifted to hospitals from suicide attack incident in Kabul city.

BANGLADESH

[Bangladesh Liberation War History Distortion Crime Act drafted](#)

Prothom Alo | 4th May

Parliament on Thursday unanimously adopted a resolution to enact a law for punishing those who will distort the history of 1971 liberation war and the mass killing. Giving his assent to the resolution, the law minister, Anisul Huq, told parliament that the law stipulating punishment for those who will distort the liberation war history will be enacted in the current parliament.

[Finance Minister Muhith hopes Bang will get \\$5b assistance from Japan](#)

The Financial Express | 4th May

Finance Minister AMA Muhith Thursday hoped that Bangladesh will be able to realise about \$5 billion assistance from Japan in three years as Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe promised during his visit to Bangladesh in 2014. "When Shinzo Abe visited Bangladesh, he made a very high promise of extending development cooperation. There has been an increase in development funding from Japan and it touched nearly \$1.7 billion in the current fiscal year which was only \$600 million three years back," Muhith told reporters.

BHUTAN

[Customs Bill cleared, deadlock holds BBIN agreement](#)

Kuensel | 5th May

The joint sitting of Parliament yesterday endorsed the Customs Bill, 2017 but did not deliberate on the Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal (BBIN) motor vehicle agreement. As the joint sitting began, the National Assembly Secretary General Sangay Duba read out the Royal Kasha, which stated that both the disputed bills should be deliberated and put to vote. The joint committee that was formed to resolve the differences did not present their report to the house since the committee still remains in a deadlock over the 15 disputed clauses.

MALDIVES

[4.3 rise in tourist arrivals in first 3 months](#)

Sun Online | 4th May

Statistics show a 4.3 percent rise in tourist arrivals in the first three months of 2017 compared to the first three months of 2016. Tourism arrival statistics for the month of March released by Ministry of Tourism this Thursday shows 359,053 tourists arrived in Maldives by end of March. The figure is a 4.3 percent increase compared to the 344,166 tourists who visited Maldives by end of March in 2016. Despite the overall rise in tourist arrivals, arrivals for the month of March alone shows a 2.1 percent drop compared to March of 2016.

[BML signs partnership deal to provide work experience to colleges](#)

Sun Online | 3rd May

Bank of Maldives (BML) has signed an agreement with five leading higher education institutions in the country including the Maldives National University (MNU) to collaborate in a program to provide students with practical knowledge of the workplace. The program, "BML Prospect - Connecting Talent with Opportunity", launched at a

ceremony held at the Head Office of BML where agreements were signed with MNU, Avid College, Clique College, MAPS College and Villa College.

MYANMAR

[Submarine cable link to connect Bangladesh with Myanmar](#)

Mizzima | 4th May

Bangladesh Submarine Cable Company Ltd (BSCCL) and Singapore based Blueberry Telecom Pvt Ltd are going to establish a separate regional submarine cable link to connect Bangladesh with Myanmar, the [dailystar.net](#) reported on 4 May. The cable will be 250 kilometres long and will connect Cox's Bazar and Myanmar's coastal city of Sittwe, said Monwar Hossain, managing director of BSCCL.

NEPAL

[Chief justice impeachment motion: Differences result in House meet deferral](#)

The Kathmandu Post | 5th May

Differences over whether to include the impeachment motion against Chief Justice Sushila Karki in the agenda resulted in the postponement of Thursday's scheduled Parliament meeting, which was also supposed to take up constitution amendment bill for discussions. As many as 249 lawmakers from the Nepali Congress and CPN (Maoist Centre) on Sunday registered the impeachment motion against Karki.

[Govt decides to hand over Kathmandu-Tarai Fast Track to Nepal Army](#)

The Kathmandu Post | 5th May

The government has decided to hand over the much touted Kathmandu Tarai Fast Track road project to Nepal Army. A Cabinet meeting on Thursday took the decision paving the way for Nepal Army to build a 76-km expressway linking Kathmandu with Nijgadh of Bara district. The road project has been in limbo for the past one-decade.

[MoFALD proposes Rs 387bn grant for local bodies](#)

The Himalayan Times | 5th May

A total grant of Rs 387 billion has been proposed for local units for the fiscal budget 2017-18. The Ministry of Federal Affairs and Local Development has finalised the grant requirement for 744 local bodies — four metropolitan cities, 13 sub-metropolitan cities, 246 municipalities and 481 rural municipalities — and forwarded it to the Ministry of Finance to allocate resources accordingly, according to Dinesh Kumar Thapaliya, MoFALD secretary.

PAKISTAN

[CPEC power project: Seizure of Chinese firm's accounts lands taxman in trouble](#)

Express Tribune | 5th May

The government on Thursday ordered an inquiry against taxman for seizing the bank accounts of a Chinese company working on the \$1.5 billion Karot hydropower project, which is a part of the multibillion-dollar China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). The Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) had acted against the Chinese company which had no tax liability, The Express Tribune has learnt. Minister for Planning and Development Ahsan Iqbal ordered an inquiry as soon as the matter was brought into his notice during a progress review meeting of CPEC projects.

[Civilian killed, 18 injured in firing by Afghan forces in Chaman: ISPR](#)

Dawn | 5th May

At least one civilian was killed and 18 others injured as the Afghan Border Police opened fire on Frontier Corps (FC) personnel detailed for the security of a census team in Balochistan's Chaman area early Friday, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said. Four FC Balochistan men are among those injured. "Since 30th April, Afghan Border Police had been creating hurdles in [the] conduct of census in divided villages of Killi Luqman and Killi Luqman in Chaman area, on Pakistani side of the border," the military's media wing said.

SRI LANKA

[Sri Lanka's trade balance widens over 35% in January 2017 as import expenditure rises](#)

Colombo Page | 4th May

Sri Lanka's external sector recorded a modest performance in January 2017 with a deterioration in the trade deficit as a result of higher import expenditure and a decline in export earnings, the Central Bank said in its External Sector Performance Review released on Thursday.

[France to grant Sri Lanka euro 30 million for green energy development](#)

Colombo Page | 4th May

Sri Lanka will enter into a loan agreement with the French Agency for Development (AFD) for the Green energy development and energy efficiency improvement investment program. The AFD has agreed to provide Euro 30 million (USD 32 million) to bear a portion of the total cost of USD 260 million of the program, which is to be implemented under three subprojects.

[Four charged in India over arrest of boat people in Sri Lanka](#)

Colombo Page | 5th May

Four Indians and 30 Rohingya refugees from Myanmar have been booked in India for allegedly undertaking an illegal voyage to Australia in a boat via Sri Lanka from Thanjavu, the Press Trust of India reported. Following information on arrest of the refugees in Sri Lanka, Tamil Nadu police had launched a probe and found that the boat used for the illegal transportation was from Adirampattinam, they said.

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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