



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

30th August, 2023 | Volume - 9 - 05/08

<p>Sri Lanka logs highest HIV cases in single quarter</p> <p>Daily Mirror 29th August</p> <p>Sri Lanka has experienced a dramatic surge in HIV/AIDS cases during the second half of 2023, marking the highest number of cases reported in a single quarter since 2009. According to the National STD/AIDS Control Programme, Sri Lanka has recorded 181 new HIV cases, reflecting a nine percent increase compared to the previous quarter in 2022, which saw 165 cases. The second quarter ranges from April to June.</p>	<p>China expands footprint in Afghanistan for its fears of Uyghurs militants</p> <p>Afghanistan Times 28th August</p> <p>In what seems to be a high-stakes geopolitical maneuver, China is strategically engaging with the Taliban regime in Afghanistan to both check the influence of Uyghur freedom activists and tap into the country's vast natural resources. The uneasy relationship between Beijing and the Taliban, attributed to concerns over Uyghur activists finding refuge in Afghanistan, ...</p>	<p>Pakistan working towards polio eradication: minister</p> <p>Dawn 29th August</p> <p>Caretaker Health Minister Dr Nadeem Jan on Monday said they were determined to eradicate polio from the country and would work towards achieving it on an emergency basis. The minister said this during his meeting with Brazilian Ambassador to Pakistan Olyntho Vieira. Health Secretary Iftikhar Ali Shallwani was also present on the occasion, says a press release.</p>
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PAKISTAN

[IHC suspends Imran's sentence in Toshakhana case, orders release](#)

The Express Tribune | 29th August

The Islamabad High Court (IHC) suspended PTI Chairperson Imran Khan's sentence in the Toshakhana case on Tuesday and ordered his release.

A division bench of the IHC, comprising Chief Justice Aamer Farooq and Tariq Mehmood Jahangir announced the much-anticipated reserved decision.

The court said that the copy of the judgement will be available shortly.

[PM Kakar to leave for Kenya on three-day official visit next month](#)

The Nation | 29th August

Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar will visit Kenya in September first week following invitation extended by the Kenyan President.

Caretaker cabinet members, advisers and special assistants will also accompany the PM on a three-day visit.

According to officials, relations between Kenya and Pakistan, trade issues and bilateral cooperation will be discussed while trade and investment opportunities, agreements and memorandums of understanding will also be signed.

SRI LANKA

[Sri Lanka, Thailand bilateral political consultations focus on mutual collaboration in a range of sectors](#)

Colombo Page | 28th August

The 05th Round of Sri Lanka - Thailand Bilateral Political Consultations was held on 28 August 2023 at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Colombo.

The Sri Lanka delegation was led by Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs Aruni Wijewardane, and the Thai delegation was headed by Permanent Secretary for Foreign Affairs of Thailand Sarun Charoensuwan.

During the discussion, a wide range of areas of mutual collaboration in the fields of trade & investment, defense, culture, fisheries and tourism were reviewed for further progress.

[Lanka looking for cheaper three-year private power to plug capacity gap](#)

The Island | 27th August

Sri Lanka's state-run Ceylon Electricity Board is looking for cheaper private power to plug near term gaps in supply and to offset high-cost power at the margin of costly generators owned by the utility, Energy Minister Kanchana Wijesekera said.

The CEB has advertised for firm energy above 50 Mega Watts that can be dispatched at any time for one, two and three years.

“Objective of this endeavor is to serve the nation with low-cost electricity while maintaining an uninterrupted power supply in the country for 24 hours during any period of the year even in a natural disaster or a technical failure of an existing plant,” the tender notice said.

AFGHANISTAN

[24 mothers die daily from maternal mortality in Afghanistan: WHO](#)

The Khaama Press | 29th August

The World Health Organization (WHO) has issued a clear warning about the situation in Afghanistan. Every day, around 24 mothers lose their lives due to preventable maternal causes. This tragic loss of life directly results from these mothers not receiving the necessary health assistance. This problem has been further exacerbated by a shortfall in funding, making it imperative to address these challenges promptly.

The WHO warned on a social media platform X, “Estimated 24 mothers die each day of preventable maternal mortality causes under the current funding.”

[Japanese Envoy Urges Afghan Interim Govt to Strengthen Internal Legitimacy](#)

TOLO News | 28th August

The Japanese Ambassador in Kabul, Takashi Okada, called on the Afghan “de facto” authorities to strengthen legitimacy within the country to expand international cooperation.

Speaking at a signing ceremony for “Enhancing Agriculture Production through Community-Led Irrigation between the Embassy of Japan and FAO”, Okada said:

“For the expansion of international cooperation, the de facto authorities first need to strengthen... legitimacy within the country by prioritizing people’s needs. When it happens, its external relations will be improved.”

BANGLADESH

[Deaths in dengue cross 300 in August](#)

Prothom Alo | 28th August

The number of deaths in the mosquito-borne disease, dengue, crossed 300 in August with eight more patients succumbed in the previous 24 hours by 8:00 am Monday. No month had seen so many deaths in the mosquito-borne disease in the country so far.

With the new deaths, so far 556 people died in the disease in this year. Of them, 305 died in August alone, said a media release sent by Emergency Operation Centre and Control Room of the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

[ADB provides \\$300m to make labourers skilled](#)

Bangladesh Post | 28th August

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the Government of Bangladesh on Monday signed a \$300 million loan agreement to strengthen the skills base and training programmes for Bangladesh's workforce.

Sharifa Khan, Secretary, Economic Relations Division, and Jiangbo Ning, [ADB](#) Deputy Country Director for Bangladesh signed the agreement on behalf of Bangladesh and ADB, respectively.

[Unveiling Indo-Pacific realities: NSU seminar explores impact on Canada, Bangladesh](#)

Dhaka Tribune | 29th August

North South University on Monday hosted a seminar titled "Indo-Pacific – Canada's Strategy and Bangladesh's Outlook: A Deeper Look into the Key Areas" aiming to foster a profound comprehension of the Indo-Pacific dynamics and their implications for Canada and Bangladesh.

Held at NSU's Syndicate Hall, the seminar was jointly organized by the Center for Peace Studies (CPS) of the South Asian Institute of Policy and Governance (SIPG) of NSU and the Canadian High Commission of Bangladesh, reads a press release.

BHUTAN

[Bhutan's environmental conservation commitment highlighted at GEF7 Assembly](#)

Kuensel | 29th August

Finance Minister Namgay Tshering led a five-member Bhutanese delegation to the seventh Assembly of the Global Environment Facility (GEF7) in Vancouver, Canada from August 22 to 26.

The assembly hosted plenary sessions, workshops, and networking events for participants of various backgrounds.

Lyonpo shared Bhutan's experience in aligning national policies with the Gross National Happiness development philosophy and constitutional mandates for environmental conservation and forest cover maintenance.

[Royal Government of Bhutan Introduces Incentives for the Tourism Sector](#)

Daily Bhutan | 26th August

On the 25th August 2023, The Royal Government of Bhutan published a press release to announce additional incentives and policy measures to boost the tourism sector in Bhutan. This is in view of the important role of the tourism sector in generating employment; earning foreign exchange; realizing the potential for spillover benefits for ancillary industries; and in boosting overall economic growth.

The incentives and measures shall consist of the following:

1. A fifty percent discount shall be granted on the prevailing SDF of USD 200 for US Dollar paying tourists visiting Bhutan. The effective SDF with the discount shall be USD 100 per person per day for US Dollar paying tourists.

[BHTF on course with the vision](#)

Business Bhutan | 28th August

A milestone in Bhutan's health sector was the establishment of the Bhutan Health Trust Fund (BHTF), which was officially launched on May 12, 1998, at the World Health Organization (WHO) headquarters in Geneva with an initial target of USD 24 million. A Royal Charter from His Majesty the Fourth Druk Gyalpo in 2000 formally established the Trust with fund capitalization to be done through contributions from donors and the royal government on a one-to-one partnership.

MALDIVES

[President Solih aims for 5 million annual tourists](#)

The Edition | 28th August

Maldivian Democratic Party (MDP) candidate and incumbent president Ibrahim Mohamed Solih has shared his vision to attract three million annual tourists during his second term, and increase the annual tourist arrival number to five million.

President Solih made this announcement while addressing residents of Thaa atoll Vilufushi. His visit to the atoll is part of his presidential campaign leading up to the election scheduled for September 9.

[Presidential Election 2023: candidates to sign voters' list from August 25 – 27](#)

Raajje | 25th August

Candidates competing in the fast-approaching presidential election will be signing the final list of eligible voters from August 25 – 27.

This was revealed by Vice President of the Elections Commission Ismail Habeeb.

Habeeb revealed that the final voters' list for the September polls will be printed out and signing on behalf of the candidates will take place at Dharubaaruge in the capital Malé City from August 25 – 27.

Habeeb went on to reveal that the candidates have been informed that they have the option to provide signatures of five representatives on behalf of each candidate.

MYANMAR

[Thailand Reaffirms Bonds With Myanmar Junta](#)

The Irrawaddy | 25th August

Myanmar's junta leader Min Aung Hlaing and Thai Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha, who also seized power in a coup, exchanged messages on Thursday to mark 75 years of diplomatic ties.

The Thai ex-general reaffirmed Thailand's support for Myanmar's pursuit of a peaceful and prosperous democratic federal union. Prayut is set to transfer power to property tycoon Srettha Thavisin, who was selected by the parliament in Bangkok this week.

[Myanmar expels top East Timor diplomat](#)

Myanmar Now | 28th August

Myanmar's junta on Sunday ordered the expulsion of East Timor's top diplomat in the country over a meeting his government held with a banned shadow administration.

The Southeast Asian nation has been locked in crisis since the military seized power in February 2021, ending a brief experiment with democracy and sparking violent clashes.

The military has designated the shadow administration known as the National Unity Government (NUG) – dominated by exiled lawmakers working overseas to overturn the coup – as a terror organisation.

NEPAL

[Government focussed on good governance, social justice: PM Dahal](#)

The Himalayan Times | 29th August

Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' has said the government performance is centered on the establishment and promotion of good governance, prosperity and social justice.

In his replies to questions from the lawmakers in the House of Representatives (HoR) session today, the Prime Minister said the government is committed to

increasing people's access to public service and accelerating the development endeavours.

[Dahal says opening new border point will be on agenda for China visit](#)

The Kathmandu Post | 29th August

Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal on Tuesday said he will discuss with the Chinese side on opening a new border point during his visit to the northern neighbour.

The prime minister said so during a question-answer session in Parliament after Ain Bahadur Shahi, a lawmaker from Mugu, asked the prime minister if discussions would be held on opening the Nara Lagna border point.

“Talks will be held on opening the new border point for trade. It is almost certain that the border point will be on the agenda,” said Dahal in response.

[Investment Board Nepal approves investment for four hydropower projects](#)

Onlinekhabar | 25th August

The Investment Board Nepal (IBN) has approved an investment equivalent to Rs 36.37 billion for the development of four hydropower projects.

A meeting of IBN chaired by Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal on Friday endorsed the investment for the Rolwaling Khola, Chhujung Khola, Dana Khola and Sanibheri hydropower projects.

The meeting reviewed the developments so far regarding moving ahead with the implementation of the Tamor reservoir-based hydropower project and decided to constitute a high-level committee to give suggestions regarding the project's future course of action.

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