



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

16th June, 2023 | Volume - 9 - 03/06

<p>Economy contracts 11.5% in 1Q</p> <p>Daily Mirror 15th June</p> <p>Sri Lanka's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is estimated to have contracted 11.5 percent in the first quarter of 2023 from a year ago, the Department of Census and Statistics said, today.</p> <p>During the quarter under review, agricultural activities expanded by 0.8 percent from a year ago while industry and services declined by 23.4 percent and 5 percent, respectively.</p> <p>Sri Lanka's economy is estimated to have contracted 7.8 percent in 2022.</p> <p>The government expects economic growth to turn positive in the final quarter of this year.</p>	<p>Indian minister: Bangladesh, Bengal, NE states should act as hub to boost trade with SE Asia</p> <p>Dhaka Tribune 16th June</p> <p>Rajkumar Ranjan Singh, India's union minister of state for external affairs and education, on Thursday emphasized the need for West Bengal, Bangladesh, and the North East region to form a compact area along with South East Asia to enhance trade with other countries globally.</p> <p>"West Bengal, Bangladesh and North Eastern states will act as a compact hub in boosting trade with South East Asia. It has been suggested by the Japanese government</p>	<p>Pakistan, Russia to exchange statistical data on mutual trade</p> <p>The News 15th June</p> <p>Pakistan and Russia on Thursday agreed to exchange statistical data on mutual trade and signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) between the customs departments of both countries.</p> <p>The MoU ceremony was held on the sidelines of the Saint Petersburg International Economic Forum between the Pakistan Customs and the Federal Customs Service (Russian Federation), said the statement by the Embassy of Pakistan in Russia.</p>
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PAKISTAN

[Baku to start shipping 'cheap' LNG from next month](#)

Dawn | 16th June

Following a two-day visit by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Azerbaijan on Thursday agreed to start shipments of LNG cargoes to Pakistan at "cheaper rates" from next month, said the Prime Minister's Office in a statement.

According to the Prime Minister's Office, the prime minister held a meeting with Azerbaijan President Ilham Aliyev at Zagulba Palace wherein it was decided that Azerbaijan will start sending shipments of LNG to Pakistan from next month. Every month, one cargo on concessional rates will reach Pakistan.

[Dar says no to IMF diktat](#)

The Express Tribune | 16th June

What appears to be an end of a thorny four-year relationship, Finance Minister Ishaq Dar on Thursday refused to take the International Monetary Fund's advice on the issue of giving tax exemptions while terming its attitude "not professional".

In a strongly-worded response to the IMF's statement about the new budget and the tax amnesty scheme, Dar came down hard on the global lender. He appeared before the Senate Standing Committee on Finance and criticised the IMF attitude since October last year.

[Pakistan, EU vow to promote peace and prosperity](#)

The Nation | 16th June

Pakistan and the European Union yesterday vowed to promote peace and prosperity. Minister of State for the Foreign Affairs Hina Rabbani Khar met the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission (HR/VP) Josep Borrell in Strasbourg.

Recalling her meeting with the High Representative on the sidelines of the second EU Indo-Pacific Ministerial Forum in Stockholm on May 13, the minister expressed satisfaction on the ongoing cooperation between Pakistan and the EU based on the Strategic Engagement Plan, said a Foreign Office statement.

SRI LANKA

[Sri Lanka promotes business opportunities in Niigata Prefecture in Japan](#)

Colombo Page | 16th June

The Embassy of Sri Lanka in Tokyo, in collaboration with Samurai Lanka Co., Ltd., a Sri Lankan-owned enterprise in Niigata, and the Niigata Chamber of Commerce and Industry (NCCI), organized a Sri Lanka Business Promotion Seminar at Niigata City Tenjuen Hall on June 8, 2023.

The seminar was held with the objective of educating Japanese enterprises in Niigata prefecture about current business opportunities and inviting them to consider Sri Lanka as a business destination.

[Sri Lanka possibly joining RCEP trade deal: ASEAN](#)

The Island | 16th June

Jakarta. ASEAN recently hinted at the possibility of Sri Lanka joining the world's largest trade deal, Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) agreement, which is set to give its signatories including Indonesia even more benefits. ASEAN Secretary-General Kao Kim Hourn on Wednesday met with the Sri Lankan presidential secretariat, led by the president's senior economic adviser Dr. R.H.S. Samaratinga, in Jakarta.

"They discussed Sri Lanka's economic reform agenda, including Sri Lanka's possible interest in acceding to the RCEP in the future," an ASEAN press statement reads.

AFGHANISTAN

[Afghanistan: Chinese Investors Keen on Investing in Different Sectors](#)

The Khaama Press | 14th June

Recently, several Chinese investors have traveled to Maidan Wardak to assess potential business opportunities in the central Afghan provinces, official sources said.

During the visit, Chinese investors met with the governor of Maidan Wardak province Qari Bakhtyar Mouaz and stated they are interested to build production plants of kitchen utensils, wire nets, and diapers, according to reports.

The report added, these foreign investors would like to invest an estimated amount of \$250,000 for a starter and will increase their investment in a gradual manner.

[UNICEF: 16M Children Need Protection and Humanitarian Assistance](#)

TOLO News | 15th June

UNICEF's representative in Afghanistan Fran Equiza said that "16 million children" are in need of protection and humanitarian assistance.

Fran Equiza added that in Afghanistan, children's rights are eroded every day and too many kids are burdened with responsibilities way beyond their age.

"That smile gives me hope. This smile and this child-friendly space, in a country with almost 16 million children, need protection and humanitarian assistance.

[Taliban invited to Oslo meeting on Afghanistan](#)

Afghanistan Times | 14th June

Norwegian government has invited the Taliban administration to a meeting to be convened on Afghanistan issues with representatives and civil activists of various countries in Oslo this week.

According to official sources, Norway's foreign ministry invited a second-level Taliban delegation instead of their foreign minister Amir Khan Muttaqi and Anas Haqqani to Oslo Freedom Forum despite opposition from Afghan civil activists and politicians. The conference is aimed discussing and resolving Afghanistan issues and establishing peace through dialogue.

BANGLADESH

[Bangladesh now holds economically dignified position in world: PM](#)

Bangladesh Post | 15th June

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on Thursday said Bangladesh is now enjoying an economically dignified position across the globe only for persistence of democracy and stability since 2009.

The Premier made this remarks while speaking at the programme titled "A talk at the event on New Economy and Society in Smart Bangladesh" organised by the World Economic Forum (WEF) at its office in Geneva, Switzerland.

[Bangladesh has 10-year reserve of natural gas: Nasrul Hamid](#)

Prothom Alo | 15th June

State minister for Power, Energy and Mineral Resources Nasrul Hamid said the country has a 10-year reserve of natural gas as, on an average, 2200 million cubic feet of gas is being produced daily in the country, reports BSS.

The state minister said this while responding to a star-mark question made by Kazim Uddin Ahmed of Mymensingh-11 at the question-answer session at the Jatiya Sangsad. Speaker Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury was in the chair.

BHUTAN

[Govt. optimistic about benefits of transit agreement for Bhutan](#)

Kuensel | 15th June

During the ongoing National Assembly (NA) session, the opposition leader (OL), Dorji Wangdi, called for maximising the benefits to Bhutan from the agreement on the movement of traffic-in-transit between Bhutan and Bangladesh.

Raising concerns, the OL emphasised that the government should strive to fulfil this mandate, considering the country's current challenges.

[52% of Bhutan under protected areas](#)

Business Bhutan | 14th June

The NA to deliberate on declaration of Sakteng Wildlife Sanctuary and Bomdeling Wildlife Sanctuary as Biological Corridors taking Bhutan's protected area coverage to 52% from 51.44%

During the first day of the 3rd Parliament's 9th session, the National Assembly (NA) declared Sakteng Wildlife Sanctuary and Bomdeling Wildlife Sanctuary as a Biological Corridor (BC). This geographically defined area aims to preserve biodiversity, ecological processes, and evolutionary pathways by providing connectivity between landscapes, ecosystems, and habitats.

MALDIVES

[State revenue exceeds MVR 14 billion](#)

Raajje | 16th June

Ministry of Finance has revealed that the state revenue has exceeded MVR 14 billion so far in 2023.

Statistics released by the Finance Ministry shows that the state revenue has reached MVR 14.5 billion by 08 June 2023. The state revenue at 08 June, 2022 was MVR 11.9 billion.

The Ministry's statistics shows that income generated from tax currently sits at MVR 11 billion. During the same period last year, the state earned MVR 8.7 billion as tax revenue.

Statistics shows that the state received MVR 1.8 billion as General Goods and Services Tax and MVR 4.6 billion as Tourism Goods and Services Tax, by 08 June.

[Maldives and Seychelles agree to start direct flights, sign visa waiver agreement](#)

Sun | 12th June

Maldives and Seychelles have signed an agreement on mutual exemption of visa requirements.

The agreement allows for exemption from visas for single or multiple entry, exit or transit for both countries' nationals, for a period of 30 days.

The agreement, along with three other key bilateral agreements, were signed following official talks between Maldivian President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih and visiting Seychellois President Wavel Ramkalawan on Monday.

[Maldives makes progress towards visa-free travel to EU nations](#)

The Edition | 15th June

The government has announced significant progress towards facilitating visa-free travel for Maldivians to European Union (EU) nations.

The announcement was made in a joint statement issued following the fourth session of meetings between senior officials from the EU and the Maldives.

According to the statement, the discussions had focused on the Maldives' request for visa-free travel for Maldivian nationals visiting EU Member States. The statement also highlighted that this request will be considered during the next visa list review among the 26 European member states, although the specific date for the review was not specified.

MYANMAR

[Thailand to Broker Talks for ASEAN to Reengage with Myanmar Junta Leaders](#)

The Irrawaddy | 16th June

Thailand will hold an informal ministerial meeting with some regional countries next week to prepare the way for the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to "fully re-engage Myanmar at the leaders' level," according to the meeting invitation letter from the Thai Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The letter, viewed by The Irrawaddy, said informal talks will be held in Thailand on Monday.

Thailand's outgoing Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Affairs Minister Don Pramudwinai said in the letter that the meeting is a follow-up to "the unequivocal statement by a member nation of ASEAN" during the summit in Indonesia in May that it was time for the bloc to fully "re-engage Myanmar at the leaders' level."

[Myanmar junta's steel industry aided by secretive Italian firm Danieli](#)

Myanmar Now | 16th June

During a recent visit to a newly recommissioned military-controlled steel mill in Mandalay's Myingyan Township, junta chief Min Aung Hlaing confirmed the long-suspected involvement of Italy's Danieli Co., Ltd. in the regime's burgeoning domestic metals industry.

The coup leader was described in military-controlled media on June 2 as having "presented a fruit basket for foreign experts serving at the plant," and was pictured on May 31 holding the gift alongside three men wearing protective gear and uniforms bearing the logo of Danieli—also formally known as Danieli & C. S.p.A.—which claims to be one of the top three plant and machine manufacturers in the steel industry globally.

NEPAL

['Financial stability, inflation control main responsibility of NRB'](#)

The Himalayan Times | 15th June

Nepal Rastra Bank Governor Maha Prasad Adhikari has said that the first responsibility of the central bank is to maintain stability in the financial and external sectors as well as to control inflation.

Speaking at a discussion programme on Monetary Policy for the fiscal year 2023-24 organised by the Management Association of Nepal (MAN), Governor Adhikari said that the countries globally are going through issues related to the economic slowdown and stagflation at present and that the central bank is working towards preparing the Monetary Policy for the upcoming fiscal year and expects to receive suggestions from all the concerned stakeholders to tackle the situation.

[Nepal confirms first case of monkeypox](#)

The Kathmandu Post | 16th June

Nepal on Saturday confirmed its first case of monkeypox infection.

According to the Ministry of the Health and Population, a 60-year-old foreign national has tested positive for monkeypox infection.

"Health condition of the woman, who is a foreign national, is normal," said Dr Samir Kumar Adhikari, joint spokesperson of the Health ministry. "She is under observation of doctors at the isolation ward of a Kathmandu hospital."

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