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MORNING NEWS BRIEF

Your Essential Guide to the Day's Happenings

POLITICS & GOVERNANCE

- Pakistan and India are likely to resume bilateral talks on [Kartarpur Corridor](#) after the formation of new government in New Delhi at the end of the ongoing parliamentary elections. The final results of the elections will be announced on May 23. India had expressed her reservations over the committee formed by Pakistan to facilitate the Sikh pilgrims and had suspended the talks in April. India had then said that the talks can be scheduled again “at an appropriate time after receiving Pakistan’s response.”
- Mr. Noor-ul-Haq Qadri, Minister for Religious Affairs and Inter-Faith Harmony, has strongly rejected the [statement of American President Donald Trump](#) wherein he (the President) had accused Pakistan of unfairly treating her minorities. Mr. Qadri maintained that Pakistan’s minorities are playing a pivotal role in the development of Pakistan.
- The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has released around five-and-a-half billion Pakistani Rupees (PKR) for [development of the tribal districts](#). It was reported that the amount would be spent on the construction of two hundred and forty schools and seventy hospitals in the tribal district.
- In a rare episode of cooperation, both treasury and opposition benches are expected to vote in favour of [the 26th Constitutional Amendment Bill](#) in the National Assembly on Monday. The legislation would provide for increased representation of erstwhile tribal areas in the parliament’s lower house and KP provincial legislature.
- Main Opposition party PML-N has reiterated its resolve to [oppose the new local government system](#) in Punjab.

ECONOMY

- Adviser to Prime Minister on Finance, Economic, and Revenue Affairs, Dr. Abdul Hafeez Shaikh, has confirmed that [an agreement with the International Monetary Fund \(IMF\)](#) on a bailout package had been successfully reached on May 12, 2019. He said that Pakistan would receive around \$6 billion worth of assistance from the IMF over the period of next three years. According to an IMF statement, Pakistan government, in return committed to hike in energy prices and tax tariffs, market based exchange rate, greater autonomy for State Bank, and addressing the losses being incurred by state owned enterprises.

- In what appears to be a propitious sign, Pakistan's trade deficit has been dramatically [condensed by 13.1 %](#) in the first 10 months of this fiscal year. It shrank to \$26.17 billion from \$30.11 billion of last year.
- Failure to address the two structural problems of Pakistan's economy – low investment and saving rates – the [per capita income has been reduced by 8.2%](#). It reached to three year's lowest level of \$1,516 during the first fiscal year of the PTI's government. Both public and private investments witnessed a decisive down turn.
- [Tax Amnesty Scheme](#) is likely to be introduced on Monday.

DEFENCE & SECURITY

- America's acting Defence Secretary Patrick Shanahan has revealed that \$1.5 billion that are being transferred to a fund for the construction of the Mexican border wall had been [taken from the funds meant for Afghanistan](#) and Pakistan. Despite a sharp rise in the number of attacks in Afghanistan, this decision might create further security risks for the region.
- Prime Minister Imran Khan [termed the terrorist attack on the Gwadar Pearl Continental Hotel](#) as a coward attempt aimed at sabotaging and torpedoing the prosperity and development of Balochistan. The outlawed Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) had claimed the responsibility of the attack which claimed the lives of five people including a Navy commando.
- The Ministry of Interior [has banned around 11 organisations](#) for their alleged affiliations with previously proscribed outfits - Jamaatud Dawa (JuD), Falah-i-Insaniyat Foundation (FIF), and Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM). The action has been taken under Anti-Terrorism Act (ATA) 1997.

SOUTH ASIA

- India has completed the [sixth round of its 39-day long voting process](#). More than 100 million people from seven states were eligible to vote for 59 seats. There are a total of seven rounds after which results will be announced on May 23, 2019. According to the election commission, the voter turnout stood at 63.3 per cent.
- The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL, or notorious for its acronym ISIS) claimed that it had [established a province in India](#). The claim was strongly rejected by the Indian-Occupied-Kashmir's police. ISIL's Amaq News Agency said in a statement that the new province would be called the 'Wilayah of Hind'.
- US envoy for peace in Afghanistan Zalmay Khalilzad has expressed his dissatisfaction over the pace at which talks with the Taliban are moving forward. The Taliban and American government have engaged themselves [in six rounds of direct talks since October](#) in Qatar aiming at ending the 18-year-long conflict in Afghanistan.

CHINA

- Chinese President Xi Jinping is going to deliver a keynote address at the [Conference on Dialogue of Asian Civilizations](#) likely to be held on May 15, 2019, in Beijing. Representatives from 47 Asian and other regions will participate in the conference.
- Representatives from Greece have eulogised the growth of [the Piraeus port](#) under the China's sponsored Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Greece has historically remained a maritime industrial state with promising trade prospects.
- US-China trade war has started to pile pressure on the global economy. Experts are of the opinion that despite [American rise in tariffs on Chinese goods](#), Chinese economy is less dependent on exports to US like it was a decade ago. China may further enhance its trade with other countries in case of excessive tariff war from the US.

THE MIDDLE EAST

- Amid unprecedented rise in tensions between the US and Iran, American government has given a green signal to [the deployment of a Patriot defence battery](#) and another warship to the Middle East. The USS Arlington and patriot missiles would join USS Abraham Lincoln carrier strike group and an aircraft bomber task force. Iranian government termed it as a 'Psychological Warfare' aimed at intimidating Iran.
- Belgian government is pondering over [suspension of arms sale](#) to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA). It is alleged that the KSA has been using Belgian arms and technologies in ongoing conflict with Yemen.



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Contact us: contact@ipik.org