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MORNING NEWS BRIEF

Your Essential Guide to the Day's Happenings

POLITICS & GOVERNANCE

- Prime Minister Imran Khan has constituted [a committee to control devaluation of Rupee and flight of capital](#) from Pakistan. The body was formed a day after the value of rupee plunged further against foreign currencies. A proposal for slashing the amount of foreign exchange a traveler can carry while travelling abroad to \$3000 from current ceiling of \$10000 is also under consideration. The latest devaluation of rupee happened after Pakistan in its staff level agreement with IMF for a bailout package agreed to market determined exchange rate.
- PPP leader Asif Ali Zardari, who is facing graft charges, has threatened to launch [agitation against government after Eidul Fitr](#). Earlier JUI-F had expressed similar intentions.
- Political parties look to be in a race for introducing [legislation on creation of new provinces](#), but doing little for building consensus on the issue. In a latest development PTI has through media sought PML-N support for [creation of South Punjab province](#).
- Pakistan has further extended the [ban on use of airspace](#) for flights to and from India till May 30. Foreign carriers flying through Indian airspace cannot either enter Pakistani airspace. Pakistan had closed its airspace after Feb 26 aerial incursions by India, and later partially relaxed it in March.
- Pakistan has [condemned the Houthi drone attacks](#) on Saudi state owned oil company Aramco's oil pumping stations. An interesting element of the statement has, however, been the expression of support not only for the Kingdom, but also for international community. It should be remembered that the latest attack has taken place in the backdrop of escalation between US and Iran after which the former has brought in significant military assets into the region.

DEFENCE & SECURITY

- Prime Minister Imran Khan and Army Chief Gen Qamar Bajwa in [a meeting](#) discussed the security situation in the country. There has lately been a surge in terrorism incidents across the country.

- Abdul Rehman Makki, a senior leader of the banned Jamaat-ud-Dawa (JuD) and brother-in-law of the outlawed group's head, Hafiz Saeed, [was arrested under the Maintenance of Public Order Act](#). Mr. Makki was designated by the United States of America in 2010 and later the US States' Rewards for Justice program announced \$2 million reward for Makki's capture in 2012.

SOUTH ASIA

- A Sri Lankan minister has said that there were possibilities that [violence unleashed on the Sri Lankan Muslims was being orchestrated by Buddhist groups](#). An anti-Muslim wave was fanned in the aftermath of Easter bombings, which claimed more than 250 lives. Among scores of suspected rioters arrested so far, three of them have been identified as Sinhala Buddhist hardliners who were being investigated for the similar actions in the central province of Kandy in 2018.
- [The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees \(UNHCR\) has repatriated](#) around 389 registered Afghan families comprising 1528 people to Afghanistan from Pakistan. The repatriation took place between December 2018 and February 2019. According to a report published by the UNHCR, each refugee received cash grant of two hundred dollars on arrival in Afghanistan.
- [Alice Wells, US Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asia, met with Afghan President Ashraf Ghani](#). They discussed wide range of topics including peace process in Afghanistan and the upcoming presidential elections in Afghanistan. A statement issued by the Presidential Palace said that discussion on US-Afghan Civilian Assistance Review was also part of the meeting.

CHINA

- China's Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Geng Shuang [has implicitly warned the US](#) by stating that China has ample confidence and capacity to fend off any adversary. China and the US have locked horns over trade tariffs. International economists have termed the crisis as a global threat.
- Chinese President Xi Jinping has delivered a keynote speech at the opening ceremony of the Conference on Dialogue of Asian Civilizations (CDAC). [He encouraged all the states to treat each other on equal terms](#) by turning down the concept of "Clash of Civilizations" as baseless and unfounded.
- China has asked US to make [responsible and constructive efforts](#) for defusing the crisis in the Gulf.

- Qatar has come [forward to play a role for defusing tensions](#) between Iran and the US in the Persian Gulf. Qatari Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani visited Iran and held talks with his Iranian counterpart, Mohammad Javad Zarif on the latest escalation in the Persian Gulf. Qatar is hosting the US Bombers Task Force of B-52 bombers that were moved to the region during the latest escalation.
- The Saudi cabinet is deliberating over a proposed scheme to issue '[Privileged Iqamas](#)' to expatriates that would allow them to become permanent residents, own properties and start businesses in the kingdom without the need of local sponsors called *kafeel*.
- In what appears to be an apparent blow to the hopes of democracy in Sudan, [military leaders have suspended talks](#) over the makeup of the sovereign council designed to steer the country towards democracy. A spokesman for the Alliance for Freedom and Change told that the military halted the negotiations under the pretext of demonstrators using barricades to stop the army's way to capital.



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