



MIDDLE EAST DAILY BULLETIN

GÜNLÜK ORTADOĞU BÜLTENİ

Domestic Policy in the Middle East Countries

Bölge Ülkelerinde İç Siyaset

The Restructuring Proces of Iraq

Irak'ın Yeniden Yapılanma Süreci

Energy Security

Enerji Güvenliği

Economy News

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Peace Process

Barış Süreci

Ethnic and Secterian Groups

Etnik ve Mezhepsel Gruplar

Non State Actors

Devlet-dışı Aktörler

Relations with the West

Batı'yla İlişkiler

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15 MARCH 2017

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1. IRAQ

- **Iraqi PM Abadi says won't let threats from Iraqi territory reach Turkey**

Prime Minister Yıldırım and his Iraqi counterpart Haider al-Abadi discussed a range of issues, from security and economy, to bilateral relations and regional issues in a phone call on Tuesday. The Iraqi premier reassured Yıldırım that the country will not let any threat from Iraqi territory reach Turkey.

More details:

<https://www.dailysabah.com/diplomacy/2017/03/14/iraqi-pm-abadi-says-wont-let-threats-from-iraqi-territory-reach-turkey>

- **Syrian Kurdish journalist released after days of detention in Iraqi Kurdistan**

Kurdish journalist Ciwan Şihab, a photographer and video producer at Arta FM and Jin FM in northern Syria, was released on Monday after being captured on 4 March subsequent to tensions in the Yazidi region of Sinjar.

More details:

<http://aranews.net/2017/03/syrian-kurdish-journalist-released-after-days-of-detention-in-iraqi-kurdistan/>

- **Shiite Militia-Financed PKK Terrorists Have 'No Place' in Iraq**

The State Department is trying to push members of the U.S.-designated terrorist group known as the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) out of northern Iraq's Sinjar region where the outlawed Kurdish group claims it is protecting the Yazidi minority community.

More details:

<http://www.breitbart.com/national-security/2017/03/14/state-dept-pkk-terrorists-no-place-iraq/>

- **90 Killed in Iraq, Including ISIS Commander in Mosul**

On Tuesday, tensions between Kurdish Peshmerga fighters and supporters of the Kurdistan Workers Party (P.K.K.) escalated in Sinjar. Naze Naif Qavaland, a councilmember in the Freedom Movement of the Ezidkhan Women (T.A.J.E.) — which is affiliated with the P.K.K. — was killed in the protest. The demonstrators were protesting the presence of Syrian Peshmerga. The government of Iraqi Kurdistan accused the P.K.K. of importing protesters from Syria.

More details:

<http://original.antiwar.com/updates/2017/03/14/90-killed-in-iraq-including-isis-commander-in-mosul/>

- **Iran starts early production from joint oil field with Iraq**

Iran Oil Pension Fund Investment Co. (OPIC) and Oil Industries' Engineering & Construction Group OIEC are developing the project. Azer is a joint field between Iran Iraq, with 2.5 billion barrels of in-situ reserves and 16 percent recovery rate.

More details:

<http://en.trend.az/iran/business/2731900.html>

- **Iraqi forces recapture Nineveh train station in western-Mosul**

At least four Iraqi soldiers and 16 Daesh terrorists were killed in Tuesday clashes near the Nineveh Train Station and the Baghdad Garage district in western Mosul, according to an Iraqi security source.

More details:

<http://www.albawaba.com/news/iraqi-forces-recapture-nineveh-train-station-western-mosul-950016>

- **Mosul battle reaching final stages: Abadi**

Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi said the government offensive to recapture the city of Mosul from Islamic State militants was in its final stages. Speaking at a news conference on Tuesday night, he warned the insurgents that they must surrender or be killed.

More details:

<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-abadi-idUSKBN16M0M6?rpc=401&>

- **West Mosul to fall by mid-year, Australian defence department warns**

Defence expects west Mosul will be reclaimed from Islamic State militants by the middle of the year. While east Mosul has been liberated, an estimated 750,000 civilians are under siege across the Tigris River in the city's west. So far Iraqi forces are in control of 30 per cent of the city's west.

More details:

<http://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/2017/03/15/west-mosul-fall-mid-year-australian-defence-department-warns>

- **Baghdad holds detainees in ‘horrendous conditions’: HRW**

Iraq’s Interior Ministry is holding over 1,200 men and boys suspected of ties to Daesh in “horrendous conditions” without charge at facilities south of Mosul, Human Rights Watch (HRW) said Tuesday. Security forces are searching for Daesh elements trying to sneak out of the city among civilians.

More details:

<http://www.arabnews.com/node/1068286/middle-east>

- **Clashes between Rival Iraqi Kurds Fuel Fears of Proxy War**

Fears are growing the mountainous Iraqi Sinjar region is becoming the focal point of a proxy conflict in the region. The conflict turned fatal earlier this month with armed clashes between rival Kurdish groups of peshmergas of the Iraqi Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and Kurdistan Workers' Party- (PKK) backed forces.

More details:

<http://www.voanews.com/a/iraq-kurds-turkey-proxy-war/3765706.html>

- **Isis commander of Mosul's Old City killed as government troops near key bridge over Tigris River**

Iraqi government forces have killed the Islamic State commander of Mosul's Old City, as the battle for the militants' last stronghold in Iraq focused on a bridge crossing the Tigris River.

More details:

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/islamic-state-isis-mosul-iraq-battle-commander-old-city-killed-abu-abdul-rahman-al-ansary-a7630296.html>

- **Eight Kurdish Yezidis Freed from IS Captivity**

Kurdistan Region’s Directorate of Yezidi Abductee Affairs has revealed that eight Kurdish Yezidis were freed from Islamic State (IS) captivity on Tuesday and brought to safety in Kurdistan Region.

More details:

<http://www.iraqinews.com/iraq-war/eight-kurdish-yezidis-freed-captivity/>

- **US wants only KRG, Iraqi forces in Sinjar**

US Special Presidential Envoy for the Global Coalition to Counter Daesh Brett McGurk on Monday confirmed that Washington does not want any other forces except the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) and Iraqi forces in Sinjar.

More details:

<https://www.dailysabah.com/war-on-terror/2017/03/15/mcgurk-us-wants-only-krq-iraqi-forces-in-sinjar>

- **Police chief says 90% of Mosul's old city retaken from Islamic State**

Iraq's Federal Police chief said Tuesday security forces had retaken 90 percent of central Mosul's Old City, a most-wanted target in operations against the Islamic State in western Mosul.

More details:

<http://www.iraqinews.com/features/police-chief-says-90-mosuls-old-city-retaken-islamic-state/>

- **Kurdish officials announce participation in anti-ISIS talks in the US**

After Monday's meeting in Erbil between US officials and Kurdish President Masoud Barzani, Kurdish officials indicated they would participate in the March 22 meeting in Washington, DC, where members from the international coalition will meet to discuss defeating ISIS.

More details:

<http://www.rudaw.net/english/kurdistan/14032017>

- **Iraq: Fighting Surrounds Great Mosque**

Iraqi troops battled Isis terrorists yesterday around Mosul's Great Mosque — where the so-called Islamic State was declared in 2014. Federal police and the army's rapid-response division advanced through the narrow, winding streets of the Old City, capturing the central railway station on the west side of the Old Bridge.

More details:

<http://www.morningstaronline.co.uk/a-645b-Iraq-Fighting-surrounds-Great-Mosque>

- **Terrorist were on our roof: Iraqi woman reveals details of Mosul liberation**

An Iraqi woman from Mosul, Nur al Hadi, spoke to Sputnik Arabic in an interview sharing her story about the last month of life under Daesh rule before the operation to liberate the city commenced on October 17, 2016. According to Nur, her cousin was imprisoned by Daesh for smoking cigarettes. He told her that while in prison, a man came to them and kept saying that Daesh will lose Mosul as it had already lost Fallujah, which was a formidable fortress and the first stronghold of the terrorists in Iraq.

More details:

<https://sputniknews.com/middleeast/201703141051581389-iraq-mosul-woman-reveals-liberation-details/>

- **KRG PM says 3,600 Halted Projects in the Region are to resume**

The Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) Prime Minister, Nechirvan Barzani, said halted projects in the region will be resumed after paying contractors. Barzani in a visit to Duhok province on Monday (March 14) said work will resume at 3,600 projects which had been stopped in the region due to the economic crisis.

More details:

<http://www.iraqdailyjournal.com/story-z14952299>

2. SYRIA

- **David Miliband makes 'humanity' plea as Syrian conflict enters seventh year**

David Miliband has urged the world to "put the humanity back" into the pursuit of peace in Syria as the conflict enters its seventh year. The former foreign secretary, who heads up the International Rescue Committee (IRC), said too many civilians had lost their lives through the "extraordinary abuse of international law" during the bitter struggle.

More Details

<http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/uk/david-miliband-makes-humanity-plea-as-syrian-conflict-enters-seventh-year-35532852.html>

- **Iranian delegation starts consultations in Astana talks**

An Iranian delegation headed by Deputy Foreign Minister for Arab-African Affairs Hossein Jaber-Ansari started talks with various parties in the capital city of Kazakhstan, Astana, where Syrian government and opposition groups are trying to find a solution to Syria war.

More Details

<http://www.irna.ir/en/News/82465237/>

- **Syrian peace talks in Astana very complex: Kremlin**

Syrian peace talks in Kazakhstan are "hugely complex," said Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov on Tuesday when he was asked to comment on the Syrian opposition delegation's refusal to attend the meeting.

More Details

<http://akipress.com/news:590078/>

- **Trilateral meeting discusses Syrian ceasefire in Astana**

Delegations from Russia, Turkey and Iran met on Tuesday at the first round of trilateral talks on Syria's peace process in Kazakh capital. Delegations of Iran, Russia and Turkey attending the third round of Syrian talks in the Kazakh capital sat together Tuesday afternoon after bilateral talks. Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister for Arab-African Affairs Hossein Jaber Ansari, Vladimir Putin's special envoy for Syria Alexander Lavrentiev, and Turkish Deputy Foreign Minister Sedat Onal are heading the talks in Astana while the representatives of the Syrian opposition groups announced on Tuesday that they wouldn't took part at the process.

More Details

<http://en.mehrnews.com/news/124243/Trilateral-meeting-discusses-Syrian-ceasefire-in-Astana>

- **Indonesian Islamic State Fighter Bahrumsyah Reportedly Killed in Syria**

Bahrumsyah, Indonesian fighter from the Islamic State militant group in Syria, died in an attempted suicide attack on Syrian troops on Monday (13/03), local media reported. A source told Al-Masdar News that the suicide bomber, identified as Abou Muhammad al-Indonesi, died after his car heading towards a Syrian Arab Army unit in Palmyra exploded ahead of time.

More Details

<http://jakartaglobe.id/news/indonesian-islamic-state-fighter-bahrumsyah-reportedly-killed-syria/>

- **Understanding the Syrian matrix, six years later**

This week marks the sixth anniversary of the Syria war, which started on March 15 back in 2011. Complicating the conflict while prolonging it as well have been a handful of outside players and mercenaries that entered the Syrian battlefield, starting with Iran and Hezbollah in 2012, running through Daesh (the self-proclaimed Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant) in 2014.

More Details

<http://gulfnews.com/opinion/thinkers/understanding-the-syrian-matrix-six-years-later-1.1993857>

- **Zaorálek: Czechs may participate in Syria, Iraq's reconstruction**

The Czech Republic has a chance of participating in the reconstruction of Iraq and Syria thanks to its operation in the two countries as yet, Foreign Minister Lubomir Zaoralek said on Tuesday when

assessing Czech foreign trade last year. He said he believes that the war with Islamic State will soon end in Iraq and that the reconstruction of the destroyed country will start.

More Details

<http://www.praguemonitor.com/2017/03/15/zaor%C3%A1lek-czechs-may-participate-syria-iraqs-reconstruction>

- **Can the US and Russia devise a plan for Syria?**

The advent of a new administration in Washington, one with the declared intention to improve relations with Moscow, presents an opportunity for a fresh approach to resolve the dire problem of Syria. Currently a grim balance has established itself in a civil war where all contending parties appear to believe they have more to gain by fighting on than by seeking peace.

More Details

<https://www.aspistrategist.org.au/can-us-russia-devise-plan-syria/>

- **Health care a casualty of 6 years of war in the Syrian Arab Republic**

This week the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic enters its seventh year. Over the past 6 years access to health services for the civilian population in the country has seriously deteriorated. More than half of public hospitals and primary health centres in the Syrian Arab Republic have either closed or are only partially functioning. Almost two-thirds of health care workers have fled. Many health care facilities that are open lack clean water, electricity, and sufficient medical and surgical supplies.

More Details:

<http://www.who.int/mediacentre/news/releases/2017/syria-six-years/en/>

- **UNICEF release eye-opening video to mark anniversary of war in Syria**

Last year was the worst yet for Syria's rising generation, with at least 652 children killed in 2016, the United Nations' child relief agency has said. To mark the 6th anniversary of the war in Syria, UNICEF have released 'Song for Syria', which is performed by a 10-year-old girl who was born blind.

More Details:

<http://www.independent.ie/world-news/middle-east/unicef-release-eyeopening-video-to-mark-anniversary-of-war-in-syria-35533410.html>

3. IRAN

- **Syrian opposition to meet Russia, Iran and Turkey on March 16**

The Syrian armed opposition will hold a meeting with experts from the countries that act as the guarantors of the Syrian ceasefire (Russia, Iran and Turkey), Kazakhstan's Foreign Ministry Spokesman, Anuar Zhainakov, said on Wednesday.

More Details

<http://tass.com/world/935558>

- **Iran: "Death to Mullahs' Regime" And "Mullahs Must Be Killed" Heard in Fire Festivities**

Political prisoners in hall 12 of ward 4 in Karaj's Gohardasht Prison, west of Tehran, celebrated "Fire Festivities" marking the last Tuesday night of the Iranian calendar year, expressing their hatred of the mullahs' regime chanting "Death to Dictator" and "Death to Mullahs' Regime". These celebrations were held despite intense pressures and restrictions imposed by the Iranian regime. Prison authorities had also deprived the prisoners any fresh air time.

More Details

<http://www.ncr-iran.org/en/ncri-statements/iran-protests/22372-iran-death-to-mullahs-regime-and-mullahs-must-be-killed-heard-in-fire-festivities>

- **Zarif knows Jewish history better than Jewish State PM: Haaretz editor**

Foreign News Editor of Israeli newspaper Haaretz, Asaf Ronel, in a twitter message said Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif knows Jewish history better than Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

More Details

http://en.abna24.com/news/middle-east/zarif-knows-jewish-history-better-than-jewish-state-pm-haaretz-editor_817866.html

- **Iranian Diplomats in Astana Syria Talks Hold Separate Meetings**

An Iranian diplomatic delegation attending the third round of negotiations between the Syrian government and the rebel groups in Kazakhstan held several meetings with representatives of the UN and the other countries participating in the peace talks.

More Details

<https://www.tasnimnews.com/en/news/2017/03/15/1356062/iranian-diplomats-in-astana-syria-talks-hold-separate-meetings>

- **Iran could have a completely green electricity grid by 2030**

A Finnish university study found that Iran could achieve a zero-emissions grid by 2030 with a capital expenditure of €167 billion (\$187 billion). Iran, one of the world's largest oil producers, would need to develop about 49 gigawatts of solar power, 77 gigawatts of wind energy and 21 gigawatts of hydropower. A green grid could also make water desalinization cost-effective. Water scarcity is a serious and growing problem in Iran.

More Details

<http://realiran.org/iran-could-have-a-completely-green-electricity-grid-by-2030/>

- **Iran's new business visa facilitation hailed in Pakistan**

The business community of Pakistan's Punjab province has cheered Iran's new business visa policy, appreciating the introduction of business visa drop box facility for Pakistani nationals.

More Details

<http://www.irna.ir/en/News/82465332/>

- **Iran's Jewish Lawmaker: Netanyahu an 'Insane Vampire'**

On Saturday night, the start of the Purim holiday, Netanyahu visited an Israeli synagogue, where he told children celebrating Purim that Iran seeks to kill the Jews just as the Persians did. "Netanyahu is an insane vampire drowned in crimes from head to toe, and the recent remarks made by the racist Israeli prime minister is not surprising to me," Siamak Mareh Sedq, who represents the Jews of Iran in the government, said Tuesday during an open session of parliament, the semi-official Fars News Agency reported.

More Details

<http://www.jpost.com/Middle-East/Iran-News/Irans-Jewish-lawmaker-Netanyahu-an-insane-vampire-484215>

- **Iran's Relations with Al-Qaeda: Al Arabiya**

Iran is attempting to transfer the \$1.6 billion frozen in Luxembourg. This money, according to a U.S. court ruling, has been frozen to compensate family members of 9/11 victims. This ruling proves Iran's relations with al-Qaeda prior to 9/11.

More Details

<http://www.ncr-iran.org/en/news/terrorism-fundamentalism/22369-iran-s-relations-with-al-qaeda-al-arabiya>

- **Iran's Biggest Cargo Shipper Eyes London IPO**

Iran's top cargo shipping company has held meetings in London to discuss a possible listing on London Stock Exchange, but has so far been thwarted by US sanctions that still scare banks off Iranian business, reads an exclusive Reuters report, citing four Iranian and two western sources.

More Details

<https://financialtribune.com/articles/economy-business-and-markets/61472/iran-s-biggest-cargo-shipper-eyes-london-ipo>

- **Iran Continues To Ignore the OPEC Deal**

OPEC crude oil production dropped to 31,958,000 bpd in January. That was a drop of 140,000 bpd. In January OPEC production dropped 930,000 bpd for a two-month total of 1,070,000 bpd.

More Details

<http://oilprice.com/Energy/Crude-Oil/Iran-Continues-To-Ignore-The-OPEC-Deal.html>

4. ISRAEL – PALESTINE

- **Jpost editorial: Learning from King Hussein**

"Disconnect" is the word that best describes relations between Israel and Jordan. On the official, governmental level, ties between the countries are at a new apex. Never since 1994, when Yitzhak Rabin and King Hussein ended decades of conflict with the signing of a peace agreement, have relations between Amman and Jerusalem been so good. And that is primarily because the two countries have many shared interests.

More Details:

<http://www.jpost.com/Opinion/JPost-Editorial-Learning-from-King-Hussein-484177>

- **Israeli settlers assemble new outpost on Palestinian land in Ramallah**

Israeli settlers have started to assemble a new settlement outpost on Palestinian land in the central occupied West Bank district of Ramallah, a local activist told Ma'an on Tuesday.

More Details:

<http://www.maannews.com/Content.aspx?id=775950>

- **Israeli Soldiers Injure Five Palestinians, Abduct One, In Deheishe Refugee Camp**

Israeli soldiers invaded, on Wednesday at dawn, Deheishe refugee camp, south of the West Bank city of Bethlehem, and clashed with local youths, wounding five Palestinians, including one who suffered a head injury. The soldiers also searched homes, and abducted a former political prisoner.

More Details:

<http://imemc.org/article/israeli-soldiers-injure-five-palestinians-abduct-one-in-deheishe-refugee-camp/>

- **Israel closes Palestinian map bureau, arrests its head**

Israeli force on Tuesday closed a Palestinian research centre in Jerusalem and briefly arrested its director, a prominent cartographer, accusing him of working for the Palestinian security services.

More Details:

<http://jordantimes.com/news/region/israel-closes-palestinian-map-bureau-arrests-its-head>

- **'India wants to strengthen ties with Israel'**

Former Shin Bet internal security agency chief MK Avi Dichter (Likud) met earlier this week with Indian leaders, who the MK says are seeking closer ties with the Jewish state.

More Details:

<http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/226711>

- **Benjamin and Sara Netanyahu sue over report she kicked him out of car during row**

Tel Aviv: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his wife testified in court on Tuesday that a journalist had invented a story that Sara Netanyahu once ordered her husband out of their car during a row.

More Details:

<http://www.theage.com.au/world/benjamin-and-sara-netanyahu-sue-over-report-she-kicked-him-out-of-car-during-row-20170314-guy8ja.html>

- **Israeli Finance Minister Comes Out Against Bill That Puts Broadcast Media under Political Control**

Finance Minister Moshe Kahlon will oppose Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's proposed legislation aimed at ensuring political control over Israel's broadcast media unless changes are made to it, treasury sources said on Tuesday.

More Details:

<http://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/business/1.777292>

- **Iran and Israel played different roles in Syria: Assad**

Syrian President Bashar al-Assad differentiated between the role that is being played by Iran in Syria and that being played by Israel.

More Details:

http://en.abna24.com/news/middle-east/iran-and-israel-played-different-roles-in-syria-assad_817754.html

- **Israel treats more than 2,600 wounded Syrians: army**

Israel's medical services have treated more than 2,600 Syrians wounded during their country's conflict since 2013, despite the two nations being officially at war, the Israeli army said Tuesday.

More Details:

<http://www.france24.com/en/20170314-israel-treats-more-2600-wounded-syrians-army>

- **250,000 Palestinians injured since First Intifada**

Some 250,000 Palestinians have been injured by Israeli forces since the First Intifada in 1987, including 110,000 in the Gaza Strip, A Palestinian NGO revealed yesterday.

More Details:

<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20170314-250000-palestinians-injured-since-first-intifada/>

5. JORDAN and LEBANON

- **Jordan calls for more aid to address economic challenges**

Jordan on Tuesday called for more aid from international community to address economic challenges and pressure imposed by Syrian refugees, the state-run Petra news agency reported.

More Details:

http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-03/15/c_136128420.htm

- **MPs refer gas deal with Israel to House's energy committee**

Lawmakers on Tuesday voted to refer a controversial gas deal with Israel to the House's Energy and Mineral Resources Committee, pronouncing that the issue was "not fit for discussion under the Dome yet", pending feedback from the panel.

More Details:

<http://www.jordantimes.com/news/local/mps-refer-gas-deal-israel-house%E2%80%99s-energy-committee>

- **The EU must do more to aid Refugees Trapped in Syria's Neighbor, Lebanon**

Lost in Lebanon, which premiered at the Human Rights Watch Film Festival last night, follows the stories of four Syrian refugees in Lebanon as they struggle to come to terms with their new lives.

More Details:

<http://europe.newsweek.com/lost-lebanon-eu-aid-refugees-trapped-syria-neighbor-567806?rm=eu>

- **Aoun to Meet Pope Francis on Thursday**

President Michel Aoun makes his first official visit to Europe and has traveled on Wednesday to the Vatican for a meeting with Pope Francis to discuss the latest developments since his election as president.

More Details:

<http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/226965-aoun-to-meet-pope-francis-on-thursday>

- **Army: Israeli enemy warplane violates Lebanese airspace**

An Israeli reconnaissance warplane violated on Tuesday at 7:40 the Lebanese airspace and executed circular maneuvers over Baabda, Beirut and its suburbs, South and West Bekaa, then left at 16:30 towards the occupied territories, the Army directorate said in a statement.

More Details:

<http://nna-leb.gov.lb/en/show-news/76614/Army-Israeli-enemy-warplane-violates-Lebanese-airspace>

- **Gemayel on March 14 Anniversary: Lebanese Army must be State's Only Army**

Kataeb Party chief MP Sami Gemayel stressed Tuesday that the Lebanese army must be the sole armed force in Lebanon, urging "respect for the constitution, the rotation of power and constitutional deadlines."

More Details:

<http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/226954-gemayel-on-march-14-anniversary-lebanese-army-must-be-state-s-only-army>

- **France Signs Agreement Welcoming Refugees from Lebanese camps**

The French Government and Christian charities launched on Tuesday an effort to bring 500 Syrian and Iraqi refugees to France to prevent them from turning to taking dangerous sea crossings into Europe through traffickers.

More Details:

<http://www.jpost.com/Breaking-News/France-signs-agreement-welcoming-refugees-from-Lebanese-camps-484159>

- **Lebanon aims to endorse first state budget in 12 years on Friday**

An evening cabinet meeting devoted to study and approve Lebanon's 2017 state budget, did not finalize the needed discussions as anticipated by Prime Minister Saad Hariri who scheduled a final session for Friday to endorse the plan for the first time in 12 years, reports said on Tuesday.

More Details:

<http://www.albawaba.com/business/lebanon-2017-budget--949718>

- **Has Hezbollah developed a domestic arms industry with Iranian support?**

On Mar. 11, Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) sources revealed to Kuwaiti newspaper Al-Jarida that the IRGC has built weapons factories for Hezbollah in Lebanon and handed them over to the Shiite organization. This comes one week after Iranian Defense Minister Hussein Dehqan declared that Hezbollah “now possesses the capabilities to build and produce any projectile or missile” capable of reaching any location in Israel.

More Details:

<http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2017/03/has-hezbollah-developed-a-domestic-arms-industry-with-iranian-support.php>

6. ARABIAN PENINSULA AND THE GULF OF BASRA

- **Ministry portraying real image of Bahrain, says Al Rumaihi**

Information Affairs Minister, Ali bin Mohammed Al Rumaihi, has said that the Ministry is keen on portraying the real image of the Kingdom in the media.

More details:

<http://www.newsofbahrain.com/viewNews.php?ppld=31295&TYPE=Posts&pid=21&MNU=2&SUB=2>

- **Gulf set to consolidate, Khaleeji's Dubai plan may buy some stocks**

Gulf stock markets look set to consolidate on Wednesday ahead of an expected U.S. interest rate hike late in the day, but anticipation of a listing of Bahrain's Khaleeji Commercial Bank in Dubai may buoy related stocks.

More details:

<http://www.reuters.com/article/mideast-stocks-idUSL5N1GS0JT?rpc=401&>

- **Oman UAE Exchange signs partnership deal with Al Suwaiq Club**

A major partnership deal with leading remittance and Foreign Exchange brand in the sultanate, Oman UAE Exchange, is set to give a major boost to two-time His Majesty's Cup football champion and Batinah region's leading club, Al Suwaiq.

More details:

<http://www.muscatdaily.com/Archive/Oman/Oman-UAE-Exchange-signs-partnership-deal-with-Al-Suwaiq-Club-4z3y#ixzz4bNbEGgSQ>

- **Minister sees bright prospects for Qatar-Kyrgyz trade ties**

HE the Minister of Economy and Commerce Sheikh Ahmed bin Jassim bin Mohamed al-Thani and the Minister of Economy of Kyrgyzstan Arzybek Kozhoshev signing the minutes of the meeting of the Qatari-Kyrgyz Joint Committee on Economic, Commercial and Technical Co-operation, which concluded in Doha yesterday.

More details:

<http://www.gulf-times.com/story/537555/Minister-sees-bright-prospects-for-Qatar-Kyrgyz-tr>

- **Berdimuhamedov pays official visit to Qatar**

Official visit of the President of Turkmenistan Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov to Qatar is set to start on March 15, official media report.

More details:

<http://akipress.com/news:590067/>

- **Saudi king's slight**

Saudi Arabia's King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud was visiting China on the final leg of his one-month six-nation Asia swing that included Japan. South Korea was conspicuously absent on the king's itinerary.

More details:

http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/opinion/2017/03/202_225750.html

- **Trump's Meeting with the Saudi Prince is being praised as a 'Historical Turning Point'**

Saudi Arabia hailed a "historical turning point" in U.S.- Saudi relations after a meeting between U.S. President Donald Trump and Deputy Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman highlighted the two leaders' shared view that Iran posed a regional security threat.

More details:

<http://fortune.com/2017/03/15/donald-trump-saudi-arabia-prince/>

- **Shashank Manohar steps down as ICC chairman with immediate effect**

In an expected turn of events, International Cricket Council (ICC) chairman Shashank Manohar has stepped down from his role on Wednesday. The former BCCI president, who was elected unopposed as the independent ICC chairman in May last year, cited personal reasons to quit ICC top post after eight months.

More details:

<http://www.deccanchronicle.com/sports/cricket/150317/shashank-manohar-steps-down-as-icc-chairman-with-immediate-effect.html>

- **Dubai Crown Prince visits new SAP MENA headquarters in Dubai**

Sheikh Hamdan bin Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Crown Prince of Dubai, was briefed about SAP SE's operations and activities in Dubai, UAE and the region, during a visit of the new SAP MENA headquarters in Dubai Internet City on Tuesday.

More details:

<http://www.emirates247.com/news/government/dubai-crown-prince-visits-new-sap-mena-headquarters-in-dubai-2017-03-15-1.649703>

- **Education 'vital' for development; Ministry promotes culture of research and innovation**

Prime Minister and Interior Minister H E Sheikh Abdullah bin Nasser bin Khalifa Al Thani yesterday attended the opening ceremony of the Education Conference and National Scientific Research Week, organised by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, in collaboration with Qatar National Research Fund (QNRF) at Qatar National Convention Center (QNCC).

More details:

<http://thepeninsulaqatar.com/article/15/03/2017/Education-vital-for-development-Ministry-promotes-culture-of-research-and-innovation>

7. EGYPT

- **NCWR's president to participate in 61st CSW session**

Maya Morsi, president of the government-funded National Council for Women Rights (NCWR) will participate in the 61st session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) that will take place at the UN headquarters in New York, the council said.

More details:

<http://www.dailynewsegypt.com/2017/03/14/ncwrs-president-participate-61st-csw-session/>

- **Parliament postpones discussions of Judicial Authority Law**

The parliamentary Constitutional and Legislation Affairs Committee postponed on Monday discussions on the amendment of the Judicial Authority Law, in response to a request by the undersecretary of the committee, Ahmed El-Sherif.

More details:

<http://www.dailynewsegypt.com/2017/03/14/618460/>

- **Egypt-Iran: A possible thaw in relations?**

Despite recent backstage talks, Egypt and Iran are unlikely to re-establish full diplomatic relations any time soon, say Iranian analysts.

More details:

<http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2017/03/egypt-iran-thaw-relations-170306090741403.html>

- **Egypt Appoints Ambassador to NATO**

That will strengthen the cooperation, the partnership between NATO and Egypt.

More details:

<http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/natosource/egypt-appoints-ambassador-to-nato>

- **Egypt: Minister Wants 'Contaminated Food' From Egypt Blocked**

The Minister of Industry demanded to stop the import of food products from Egypt as he claims that contaminated food has entered Sudan and put the health of citizens at risk.

More details:

<http://allafrica.com/stories/201703150077.html>

- **Egypt releases 203 prisoners jailed for protesting**

Egypt on Tuesday released 203 prisoners who received a presidential pardon after having been jailed for taking part in “unauthorised protests,” security and prison officials said.

More details:

<https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/news/2017/3/15/egypt-releases-203-prisoners-jailed-for-protesting>

- **Egypt's parliament to discuss Tiran and Sanafir deal despite court ruling voiding the agreement**

Egyptian parliament speaker Ali Abdel-Aal confirmed on Tuesday that the House will discuss a controversial deal involving the transfer of two Red Sea islands under Egyptian control to Saudi Arabia, despite the agreement being annulled by a final court ruling earlier this year, state news agency MENA reported.

More details:

<http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/260946/-.aspx>

- **'Egypt is on brink of ridding Sinai of terrorism,' army general tells MPs**

Major General Mamdouh Shahin, the Egyptian defence minister's deputy for legislative and constitutional affairs, told MPs on Tuesday that the army is on the brink of eliminating terrorism in North Sinai.

More details:

<http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/260929/-.aspx>

- **ACT aims to increase its business volume to EGP 1.2bn this year**

The Advanced Computer Technology (ACT) Company aims to increase the volume of its business this year by 100%, bringing it to EGP 1.2bn compared to EGP 600m in 2016. The company seeks to form coalitions with four companies in the sector of Egyptian information technology in order to offer technological solutions in the New Administrative Capital. The company aims to announce the coalition during the second half of this year.

More details:

<http://www.dailynewsegypt.com/2017/03/15/618452/>

8. NORTH AFRICA

- **Khalifa Haftar forces capture key Libya oil terminals**

East-based forces claim they have regained control of two oil installations of Ras Lanuf and Es Sider from rival forces.

More details:

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/03/khalifa-haftar-forces-capture-key-libya-oil-terminals-170314155659506.html>

- **Strategy for New Approach to Moroccan Diplomacy in Mexico and Latin America**

My work in Mexico and with El Salvador during the 1990s gave me a front-row seat to the inworkings of the Algeria-Polisario diplomatic machine in Latin America.

More details:

<https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2017/03/210928/strategy-new-approach-moroccan-diplomacy-mexico-latin-america/>

- **EU urges Russia's man in Libya to give back ports**

EU states and the US have urged a Russia-backed Libyan warlord to hand back oil ports, after a US warning that Russia was trying to do in Libya what it did in Syria. The British, French, Italian, and US ambassadors to Libya said oil facilities “belong to the Libyan people and must remain under the exclusive control” of central authorities.

More details:

<https://euobserver.com/foreign/137246>

- **Libya’s PM to visit Sudan to boost ties**

Libyan prime minister is to start a two-day visit to Sudan on Wednesday to boost bilateral ties, said Sudan's foreign minister in a statement on Tuesday.

More details:

http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-03/15/c_136128643.htm

- **Morocco opens retrial of 25 Sahrawis accused of murdering 13**

A Moroccan court yesterday resumed the trial of 25 Sahrawis accused of murdering 13 people in November 2010. The majority of those killed were security forces based in the contested Western Sahara’s Gdeim Izik camp. They were killed when they were ordered to clear the camp following a riot near the city of Laayoune.

More details:

<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20170314-morocco-opens-retrial-of-25-sahrawis-accused-of-murdering-13/>

- **Morocco Arrests Hizbullah-Linked Businessman at Washington's Request**

Prominent Lebanese businessman Qassem Tajeddine, who is close to Hizbullah, has been arrested in Morocco at Washington's request, media reports said on Tuesday. LBCI television said Tajeddine, 61, was arrested at Casablanca's airport on Monday morning.

More details:

<http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/226958-reports-morocco-arrests-hizbullah-linked-businessman-at-washington-s-request>

- **Morocco, France discuss means to further strengthen military cooperation**

The Inspector General of Morocco's army Fathallah El Ouarrak and the Chief of Staff of the French Army Jean-Pierre Dosser discussed here on Monday means to further develop military cooperation.

More details:

http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-03/14/c_136126136.htm

- **Nuclear disarmament: Algeria member of UN expert group on elaboration of draft international treaty**

Algeria has become a member of a United Nations high-level expert group on the elaboration of a draft international treaty aimed at banning the production of fissile materials for the manufacturing of nuclear weapons, said Tuesday Algeria's diplomatic representation to the United Nations.

More details:

<http://en.aps.dz/algeria/17310-nuclear-disarmament-algeria-member-of-un-expert-group-on-elaboration-of-draft-international-treaty>

- **Sheikha Moza meets Tunisia president, PM**

Sheikha Moza bint Nasser, advocate for the UN Sustainable Development Goals, yesterday met Tunisian President Beji Caid Essebsi at the presidential palace as part of her visit to witness some of the employment projects in Tunisia.

More details:

<http://www.gulf-times.com/story/537560/Sheikha-Moza-meets-Tunisia-president-PM>

- **Russia on Tunisia's borders**

The late Tunisian President, Habib Bourguiba, was cautious in his relations with Russia, as his main reliance, after independence, was to depend on Europe and America strategically without provoking the Soviet Union or engaging the country in a military alliance that will only result in peril. Even when Bourguiba decided to freeze the Communist Party in Tunisia in the early 1960s, he made sure this did not affect the stability in Tunisia, as he preferred what he considered an internal affair to having "normalised" ties with the socialist camp.

More details:

<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20170314-russia-on-tunisias-borders/>

9. AFGHANISTAN – PAKISTAN

- **Pakistan seeks to forge air, rail links with Kyrgyzstan**

Water and Power Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif has underlined the need for developing more economical air and rail routes to push trade and cooperation with Kyrgyzstan as the Central Asian state invites Pakistan business community to invest in its agriculture, mining, pharmaceutical and manufacturing sectors.

More Details

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1355308/pakistan-seeks-forge-air-rail-links-kyrgyzstan/>

- **Pakistan, US should work together to destroy IS in Afghanistan, says Aizaz Chaudhry**

Pakistan's new ambassador to the United States Aizaz Chaudhry has expressed the confidence that President Trump and his new administration will engage positively with Pakistan, saying the two nations have been partners for last seven decades and their multifaceted ties have benefited both.

More Details

<http://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2017/03/15/pakistan-us-should-destroy-is-together-before-it-establishes-in-afghanistan/>

- **Pakistan seeking help of regional countries to fight terrorism: Senate Chairman**

In an interview with IRNA on the sidelines of the meeting of special committee on creation of 'Asian Parliament' in Islamabad, he said Pakistan has been continuously a victim of terrorism on both external and internal fronts.

More Details

<http://www.irna.ir/en/News/82465537/>

- **Security high as Pakistan launches census**

Pakistan launched its first census in nearly two decades Wednesday, with security high as thousands of enumerators backed by the military began the enormous, politically-charged count. The weeks-long process, a challenge in a country known for corruption and dysfunction, will deploy a team of more than 300,000 people and involve 55 million forms — as well as a second, separate form distributed by the military.

More Details

<http://www.thenational.ae/world/south-asia/security-high-as-pakistan-launches-census>

- **Afghan Official: 50 Killed in last week's Attack on Hospital**

An Afghan official says the official death toll from last week's militant assault on a Kabul military hospital has risen to 50. Officials originally set the death toll at 30 for the March 8 attack. But Gen. Helaludin Helal, the deputy defense minister and head of the team investigating the attack and its aftermath, released the new number in a press conference Wednesday.

More Details

http://hosted.ap.org/dynamic/stories/A/AS_AFGHANISTAN?SITE=AP&SECTION=HOME&TEMPLATE=DEFAULT&CTIME=2017-03-15-04-25-01

- **The case for a larger force in Afghanistan**

In testimony on Capitol Hill on February 9, General John Nicholson, commander of the NATO-led mission in Afghanistan, described the war as “a stalemate,” and estimated that coalition forces have a “shortfall of a few thousand” troops in the country. On March 9, General Joseph Votel of Central Command backed up his Afghanistan commander, seconding his view that more coalition personnel might be needed—not as main combat troops, but as advisors.

More Details

<https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2017/03/14/the-case-for-a-larger-force-in-afghanistan/>

- **Exclude Afghans from census, BHC tells PBS**

The Balochistan High Court (BHC) has ordered authorities to ensure that the Afghan refugees are not included in the population headcount that is to begin on Wednesday (today). The court has also asked to take all possible care in counting the Temporarily Displaced Persons (TDPs) of Balochistan.

More Details

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1355455/exclude-afghans-census-bhc-tells-pbs/>

- **Afghan Migrant the New Pablo Picasso in Serbia**

Young artist and his family are stuck in a refugee camp with thousands of other migrants who hoping to reach Western Europe. Farhad Nouri, a 10 years old from Afghanistan living in Serbia with his family, has become the new Pablo Picasso for his unique ability to draw and for his love of the famous Spanish painter.

More Details

<http://www.tolonews.com/afghanistan/afghan-migrant-new-pablo-picasso-serbia>

- **17 foreign ISIS militants killed in US airstrikes in East of Afghanistan**

At least seventeen militants affiliated with the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) terrorist group have been killed in a series of airstrikes in eastern Nangarhar province of Afghanistan. The provincial police commandment in a statement said the airstrikes were carried out late on Tuesday night in Achin district.

More Details

<http://www.khaama.com/17-foreign-isis-militants-killed-in-us-airstrikes-in-east-of-afghanistan-02402>

10.TURKEY AND THE MIDDLE EAST

- **Turkish, Iraqi premiers discuss fight against terror**

Turkish Prime Minister Binali Yildirim spoke with Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi over the phone on Tuesday about the fight against the Daesh terror group, according to the Prime Ministry's press office in Ankara. Yildirim said Turkey's contribution to the international coalition in the fight against Daesh would continue.

More details:

<http://aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/turkish-iraqi-premiers-discuss-fight-against-terror-/771538>

- **Anti-Turkey 'smears' by Iran harming ties: Ambassador**

Turkish Ambassador to Iran Riza Hakan Tekin has warned that Iranian “smear campaigns” against Turkey were harming bilateral relations. Tekin said tourism provided a means for people to meet, appreciate each other’s culture and enhance economic and cultural cooperation. This weekend, Iran’s Foreign Ministry urged Iranians to avoid making unnecessary trips to Turkey during the upcoming Nowruz (Iranian New Year) holiday.

More Details:

<http://www.worldbulletin.net/turkey/186248/anti-turkey-smears-by-iran-harming-ties-ambassador>

This media summary is prepared by **ORSAM Middle East Research Assistant Firuze Yağmur Gökler. It covers news and commentaries as reported by the national media sources publishing in the Middle Eastern countries. The views expressed are not those of ORSAM and their inclusion does not imply factual accuracy.*

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