



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

Ekonomi Haberleri

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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17 MARCH 2016

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1. IRAQ,

- **Ministers Ready to Leave Office and Stand with Abadi Reformist Files**

The Cabinet confirmed that the ministers are ready to leave office and stand with Abadi's reformist files. According to a statement from the Council, "the government performed its duties in the beginning with strategic and plans for the development of all sectors which have seen a gradual improvement and results will appear soon."

More Details:

http://www.ninanews.com/News_Details.aspx?L%252b%252bDZjoZCtgUqRSHAVpMMw%253d%253d

- **ISIS booby-traps 25 Turkoman children after kidnapping them from orphanage**

Eyewitnesses in Nineveh Province revealed, that the so-called ISIS kidnapped twenty-five Turkoman children from an orphanage in Mosul, and took them to a training camp in Talafar District. ISIS booby-trapped the children to use them as human bombs against the Iraqi joint forces in the axes of Mosul. The eyewitnesses reported for IraqiNews.com, "The terrorist organization intends to booby-trap the children to blow them up on the joint forces that are progressing to liberate the province in the near future."

More Details:

<http://www.iraqinews.com/iraq-war/isis-equips-25-turcoman-abducted-children-blow-joint-forces/>

- **Allawi, Kubiš Discuss the Latest Developments in Iraq and the Region**

Chairman of the National Coalition (Watania), Iyad Allawi discussed with Jan Kubiš, the representative of the Secretary General of the United Nations to Iraq, the latest developments in Iraq and the region. Allawi's office said in a statement, "They discussed the accelerating political and security situation in Iraq and the region."

More Details:

http://www.ninanews.com/News_Details.aspx?22CJ5fxEYbPISc8GkanMZA%253d%253d

- **ISIS launches 4 Katyusha rockets on Taza District in southern Kirkuk**

The spokesperson for al-Hashed al-Sha'bi militia Ali Husseini said on Wednesday, that the ISIS militants shelled the vicinity of Taza in southern Kirkuk by four Katyusha rockets without causing casualties. Husseini said in a brief statement obtained by IraqiNews.com, "This evening, ISIS attacked the district of Taza by launching four Katyusha rockets on the center of al-Bashir vicinity in southern

Kirkuk,” adding that, “The rocket attack did not result in the registration of any casualties,” noting that, “al-Hashed al-Sha’bi forces responded to the attack.”

More Details:

<http://www.iraqinews.com/iraq-war/isis-launches-4-katyusha-rockets-taza-district-southern-kirkuk/>

- **Abadi Holds a Meeting with State Of Law Coalition**

A political source said Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi will hold a lengthy meeting today with the state of law coalition in the presence of coalition's head, Nuri al-Maliki to discuss the paper of reform and important laws in the House of Representatives. The source told the National Iraqi News Agency / NINA / "Abadi will present, during the meeting, his vision for the political and economic reforms and the ministerial change."

More Details:

http://www.ninanews.com/News_Details.aspx?ys2cjld9Kt%252baJjHOa6VPQ%253d%253d

- **Jubouri: Iraq is keen to develop its relations with its neighboring Arab countries**

The Head of the House of Representatives Saleem al-Jubouri stated, that Iraq is keen to develop its international and regional relations, especially with the neighboring Arab countries. On the other hand, Saudi Foreign Minister Adel al-Jubeir revealed his intention to develop economic relations between the two countries. Jubouri's office said in a press statement followed by IraqiNews.com said, “Today the Parliament Speaker Salim al-Jubouri met the Saudi Foreign Minister Adel al-Jubeir,” noting that, “They discussed the means to develop relations and communication, as well as expanding the bilateral cooperation to serve the interests of the two brotherly peoples, in addition to security and stability of the entire region.”

More Details:

<http://www.iraqinews.com/baghdad-politics/jubouri-confirms-iraqs-desire-develop-relations-arab-neighbors/>

- **ISIS Loses Almost 1/4 of Territory in Iraq and Syria in 15 Months, IHS Data Shows**

ISIS has lost nearly a quarter of its territory over the past 15 months, according to a new data from a leading research company — the latest sign that the militants' once rapid advance has slowed. Data published by IHS on Wednesday showed that since January 2015 the militant group has lost 22 percent of its territory in Iraq and Syria — and 8 percent of the losses were in the past three months.

More Details:

http://www.pukmedia.com/EN/EN_Direje.aspx?Jimare=37814

- **5,000 displaced families due to airstrikes on ISIS in Heet and Kabisa in Anbar Province**

The governor of Heet District announced, that 5,000 families have fled from the district and the vicinity of Kabisa due to the air strikes launched by the international coalition aviation against ISIS sites in the district, appealing to the government and the Ministry of Immigration to help those families.

More Details:

<http://www.iraqinews.com/features/5000-displaced-families-due-airstrikes-isis-heet-kabisa-anbar-province/>

- **Iraq preparing to push Islamic State away from oil region: report**

Kurdish Peshmerga forces, an Iran-backed Shi'ite militia and Iraq's army will launch an offensive soon to push Islamic State fighters away from the northern oil region of Kirkuk, a state newspaper reported on Wednesday. The operation would bring the combined forces closer to Mosul, the largest Iraqi city still held by Islamic State, which also controls parts of neighboring Syria. The commander of the Shi'ite Badr Organisation, Hadi al-Amiri, met the Kurdish Regional Government's interior minister, Karim Sinjari, and officials from Iraq's defense ministry in Kirkuk on Tuesday, al-Sabah newspaper said.

More Details:

http://www.pukmedia.com/EN/EN_Direje.aspx?Jimare=37812

- **Ministers of Iraqi cabinet show willingness to leave their positions to support reform project**

The Iraqi Council of Ministers announced on Wednesday, that its ministers are ready to leave their positions in order to support the reform project, while also emphasized the size challenges facing Iraq. On the other hand, Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi praised the efforts that the Council of Ministers exercises amid the difficult financial, economic and security conditions.

More Details:

<http://www.iraqinews.com/features/cabinet-ministers-shows-willingness-leave-posts-support-reform-project/>

- **Iraq preparing to push Islamic State away from oil region: report**

Kurdish Peshmerga forces, an Iran-backed Shi'ite militia and Iraq's army will launch an offensive soon to push Islamic State fighters away from the northern oil region of Kirkuk, a state newspaper reported on Wednesday. The operation would bring the combined forces closer to Mosul, the largest Iraqi city still held by Islamic State, which also controls parts of neighboring Syria. The commander of

the Shi'ite Badr Organisation, Hadi al-Amiri, met the Kurdish Regional Government's interior minister, Karim Sinjari, and officials from Iraq's defense ministry in Kirkuk on Tuesday, al-Sabah newspaper said.

More Details:

<http://www.thepeninsulaqatar.com/news/middle-east/374417/iraq-preparing-to-push-islamic-state-away-from-oil-region-report>

- **Iraqi Forces Capture 149 Islamic State Fighters Blending In With Fleeing Villagers**

Iraqi security forces detained 149 Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant fighters last week as the terrorists tried to blend in with 35,000 civilians fleeing numerous small villages along the Euphrates River Valley, Combined Joint Task Force Operation Inherent Resolve spokesman Army Col. Steve Warren said today.

More Details:

<http://www.eurasiareview.com/17032016-iraqi-forces-capture-149-islamic-state-fighters-blending-in-with-fleeing-villagers/>

- **Islamic State says shot down Iraq army planes, Baghdad denies the claims**

Iraq's defense ministry and the U.S. military dismissed a claim by Islamic State on Thursday that it had shot down an Iraqi fighter plane. "The publication of these false stories is part of an unjust psychological war waged by some media outlets supporting terrorism aimed at playing down the heroics of the Iraqi army," the ministry said on its website.

More Details:

<http://ekurd.net/islamic-state-shot-iraq-plane-2016-03-17>

- **Nahyan bin Mubarak receives Iraq's Christian religious leaders**

H.H. Sheikh Nahyan bin Mubarak Al Nahyan, Minister of Culture and Knowledge Development, received today at his palace a delegation of Iraq's Christian religious leaders. The delegation includes the heads of the dioceses of Mosul and Kurdistan, the Bishops of the diocese of Mosul and the Kurdish Syriac Catholics, as well as the Archbishops of Erbil Chaldeans.

More Details:

<http://www.wam.ae/en/news/emirates/1395292985188.html?>

- **Iraq cabinet warns Sadr protest camp 'illegal'**

The Iraqi cabinet has decided not to authorise a protest camp by followers of cleric Moqtada Sadr which had been due to begin on Friday in front of the fortified "Green Zone." Tens of thousands of Sadr supporters have been preparing for a days-long sit-in in central Baghdad aimed at pressuring the government to implement deeper political reform. "Staging a sit-in is not permitted by law, especially in the current security circumstances, notably the threat by terrorist groups and the potential for this gathering to be targeted," a cabinet statement said on Wednesday.

More Details:

<http://gulftoday.ae/portal/53cf3c93-2b17-4be3-aa3d-5e2c5e9e73ef.aspx?>

- **Iran preparing to send commandos, snipers to Iraq, Syria - military official**

Iran is preparing to send its snipers and commandos as military advisers to the war-torn Iraq and Syria, a senior military official told reporters in Tehran on Wednesday, APA reports quoting TASS. "At some point we might decide to use our commandos and snipers as military advisers in Iraq and Syria," the Fars news agency quoted Deputy Chief Liaison of the Army's Ground Force General Ali Arasteh as saying. The first group of commandos and snipers already undergo training for the purpose and Iran might decide on sending them to Iraq and Syria in the near future, the official said.

More Details:

http://en.apa.az/-_240844.html?

- **Iraq President: Volunteer, Peshmerga forces united in battle for Mosul**

Iraqi President Fuad Masum says the volunteer fighters, known as the Popular Mobilization Forces or Hashd al-Shaabi, as well as Kurdish Peshmerga will definitely join the operation aimed at liberating the northern city of Mosul from the Daesh Takfiri terrorists. Masum, on Wednesday, dismissed accusations leveled by some regional countries, including Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, that the Popular Mobilization Forces are bent on a sectarian agenda, saying that the allegations are baseless and politically-motivated.

More Details:

<http://en.abna24.com/service/middle-east-west-asia/archive/2016/03/17/741576/story.html?>

- **Pakistan keen to further promote ties with Iraq: Tanveer**

Federal Minister for Defence Production Rana Tanveer Hussain Thursday said Pakistan was keen to further develop its existing cooperation with Iraq in all fields. "Expansion of bilateral cooperation between Iraq and Pakistan will provide economic underpinning to the political relationship," he said.

More Details:

http://www.app.com.pk/en_/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=394532&Itemid=38

2. SYRIA

- **Syrian Kurds 'preparing to declare self-administration'**

Kurdish-controlled areas of northern Syria are expected to declare a federal system imminently, a Kurdish official says, as peace negotiations continue to be held in Switzerland about how to end the country's five-year war.

More Details:

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/03/syrian-kurds-planning-declare-federalism-160316091206786.html>

- **Syria conflict: Government rejects direct peace talks**

Syrian government representatives have ruled out starting direct negotiations with the opposition, as UN-backed peace talks entered a third day in Geneva.

More Details:

<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-35820823>

- **Al-Jaafari: Delegation of Syrian Arab Republic presented ideas to di Mistura on reaching a peaceful solution to the crisis in Syria**

Head of the delegation of the Syrian Arab Republic to the Syrian-Syrian dialogue in Geneva, Bashar al-Jaafari, said on Wednesday that the delegation presented to UN Special Envoy for Syria Staffan di Mistura important ideas and notions in order to reach a peaceful solution to the crisis in Syria.

More Details:

<http://sana.sy/en/?p=72186>

- **Syria Kurds to declare federal system after negotiations snub**

Kurdish-led parties meeting in northern Syria on Wednesday are expected to declare a new federal system in areas under their control, two Kurdish officials said.

More Details:

<http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=75813>

- **Aleppo bishop says most Christians have fled Syria**

Two-thirds of Syria's Christians have left the country, an Aleppo bishop said Wednesday, blaming violence and insecurity spread by extremist groups and insisting most Christians still support the Syrian president.

More Details:

<http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=75818>

- **Russian senator: Fewer 'misunderstandings' with U.S. over Syria**

Russia will continue its military campaign against terrorists in Syria despite beginning a withdrawal, and it now has fewer "misunderstandings" with the United States about "who is who," a prominent Russian senator tells CNN.

More Details:

<http://edition.cnn.com/2016/03/16/world/russia-syria-andrei-klimov-amanpour/index.html>

- **Syria war: Most Russia forces to withdraw 'in days'**

Russia says it will complete the withdrawal of most of its military contingent in Syria "in two to three days", local media have reported.

More Details:

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/03/syria-war-russia-forces-withdraw-days-160317063757697.html>

- **ISIS Terrorists Lost 22% of Territory in Syria and Iraq since January 2015**

Military analysts at IHS Jane's say the Takfiri ISIS terrorist group has lost control of 22 percent of territory it held in Iraq and Syria since the beginning of 2015

More Details:

<http://en.alalam.ir/news/1799572>

- **Video emerges of Japanese journalist missing in Syria**

Jumpei Yasuda has been held hostage by Nusra Front since disappearing in June last year, alleged negotiator for group tells Japanese media.

More Details:

<http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/video-emerges-japanese-journalist-missing-syria-1795434672>

- **Turkey arrests senior Syrian rebel commander in Istanbul**

Turkish authorities arrested a Syrian rebel commander in Istanbul Ataturk Airport moments before leaving the country, sources confirmed.

More Details:

<http://en.abna24.com/service/europe/archive/2016/03/17/741588/story.html?>

3. IRAN

- **Pak eyes enhancing bilateral trade during Iran President's visit**

Pakistan's Minister of Commerce Khurram Dastgir Khan has directed officials to draft a comprehensive strategy to enhance trade cooperation with Iran ahead of Iranian President Hassan Rouhani's visit to Islamabad at the end of March.

More Details:

<http://www.aninews.in/newsdetail4/story256950/pak-eyes-enhancing-bilateral-trade-during-iran-president-039-s-visit.html?>

- **KOGAS to build Iran-Oman gas pipeline**

The media in Seoul have reported that Korea Gas Corporation (KOGAS) is considering a project to build a subsea pipeline to take natural gas from Iran to Oman – what would bring Tehran closer to an ambitious plan to become an exporter of liquefied natural gas (LNG).

More Details:

<http://iranfrontpage.com/news/business/energies/2016/03/kogas-to-build-iran-oman-gas-pipeline/?>

- **Minister Moskovski: Iran Plans Transport Corridor through Bulgaria**

Bulgarian Transport Minister Ivaylo Moskovski said that Iran has readiness to develop a transport corridor through Bulgaria Moskovski said this at the transport parliamentary committee on Wednesday, Focus news agency informs.

More Details:

<http://www.novinite.com/articles/173582/Minister+Moskovski%3A+Iran+Plans+Transport+Corridor+Through+Bulgaria?#sthash.evxJhkXf.dpuf>

- **UN: Keep Human Rights Spotlight on Iran**

The United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) should renew the mandate of its special rapporteur on Iran, 34 human rights and other organizations said today in a letter to council member countries. The UNHRC is scheduled to vote on a resolution to extend the special rapporteur's mandate for a year on March 23, 2016.

More Details:

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/03/17/un-keep-human-rights-spotlight-iran?>

- **Iran preparing to send commandos, snipers to Iraq, Syria - military official**

Iran is preparing to send its snipers and commandos as military advisers to the war-torn Iraq and Syria, a senior military official told reporters in Tehran on Wednesday, APA reports quoting TASS.

More Details:

<http://en.apa.az/- 240844.html?>

- **Deputy FM: Iran is updating Africa strategy**

Deputy Foreign Minister for Arab-African Affairs Hossein Amir-Abdollahian said on Wednesday Iran's strategy for relations with African countries is being updated.

More Details:

<http://www.irna.ir/en/News/82005462/?>

- **Iran's Larijani Calls for Closer Regional Cooperation after JCPOA**

Iranian Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani underlined that Tehran welcomes closer cooperation with regional nations in the new atmosphere created after the July 2015 nuclear deal with six world powers.

More Details:

<http://iranfrontpage.com/news/politics/foreign-policies/2016/03/irans-larijani-calls-for-closer-regional-cooperation-after-jcboa/?>

- **MasterCard warned for violating Iran bans**

The US Treasury Department has given a sanctions violation notice to the US payment system MasterCard over an alleged credit card cooperation scheme with two blacklisted Iranian banks. The Treasury in a statement has announced that its Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) has identified

dormant MasterCard accounts at Iran's Bank Melli and Bank Saderat which it has described as two blacklisted Iranian banks, presstv.ir reported.

More Details:

<http://www.iran-daily.com/News/138325.html?>

- **'Afghanistan needs Iran co-op for peace, security'**

Advisor to Afghan president said his country needs cooperation from Iran and regional countries to bring peace and security to Afghanistan. Mohammad Hanif Atmar, National Security Advisor to President of Afghanistan Ashraf Ghani, made the remarks in a meeting with Iran's Ambassador to Kabul Mohammad Reza Bahrami.

More Details:

<http://www.irna.ir/en/News/82004529/?>

- **Iran just passed an innocuous law that's actually a big step towards gender equality**

A piece of seemingly innocuous insurance legislation could be a step towards gender equality in Iran. The top legislative body of the strictly conservative Shia Islamic state has ratified a bill which will rule that female victims of car accidents should receive the same compensation as male victims.

More Details:

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/asia/iran-womens-rights-law-a6934416.html>

4. ISRAEL – PALESTINE

- **US, Germany, France criticize Israel's 'land grab' near Jericho**

'This decision sends a wrong signal at the wrong time,' says German Foreign Ministry statement, while French Foreign Ministry says it's 'extremely concerned' after Israel appropriated 2,342 dunams near the Dead Sea.

More Details:

<http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4779163,00.html>

- **49% of Poles think Israel is an aggressive country**

Poles imagine Israel as a kind of Jewish shtetl in Eastern Europe before World War II, they argue that it's a dangerous and aggressive country, and they don't believe that it's democratic, according to an opinion poll conducted among Polish citizens, the sixth largest country in Europe.

More Details:

<http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4779020,00.html>

- **Former Mossad chief Meir Dagan dies**

Dagan is identified most with Israel's clandestine efforts to frustrate the Iranian nuclear program. The former head of the Mossad, Meir Dagan died on Thursday at the age of 71 of an illness according to a press release by the Prime Minister's office.

More Details:

<http://www.jpost.com/Israel-News/Former-Mossad-chief-Meir-Dagan-dies-448269>

- **Ban, Ya'alon meet at UN, discuss Mideast peace process**

According to Ban's office, during the meeting he stressed the need for both Israel and the Palestinians to "restore a political horizon toward a peaceful two-state solution." Ban also said he believes there is a need for "substantial policy changes on the ground" and told Ya'alon he encourages Israel to take "significant steps" in line with calls by the Middle East Quartet, that would "strengthen Palestinian institutions, economic and security prospects, while respecting Israel's legitimate security concerns."

More Details:

<http://www.jpost.com/Israel-News/Politics-And-Diplomacy/Ban-Yaalon-meet-at-UN-discuss-Mideast-peace-process-448241>

- **Israel won't allow Iran, Hezbollah on Syrian border, Rivlin tells Putin**

Israeli president tells Russian counterpart enemies' presence in Golan Heights is a red line, backs return of UN peacekeepers. Israel will not allow Iran and Hezbollah to establish a foothold on the Syrian side of the Golan Heights, President Reuven Rivlin told his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin Wednesday night at a meeting in Moscow.

More Details:

<http://www.timesofisrael.com/israel-wont-allow-iran-hezbollah-on-syrian-border-rivlin-tells-putin/>

- **Fourteen Palestinians die in Jordan bus crash**

Fourteen Palestinian pilgrims were killed and 36 others injured when their bus overturned in southern Jordan near the Saudi border on Wednesday, emergency services said. Jordan's civil defense officials said the driver of the bus lost control of the vehicle around 320 kilometres (200 miles) south of Amman.

More Details:

<http://www.timesofisrael.com/fourteen-palestinians-die-in-jordan-bus-crash/>

- **PA Petroleum Directorate closes 5 gas stations in al-Eizariya**

The Palestinian General Directorate of Petroleum on Wednesday closed five gas stations that were operating without licenses or below standards in the occupied West Bank town of al-Eizariya, just east of Jerusalem, Palestinian sources said.

More Details:

<http://www.maannnews.com/Content.aspx?id=770730>

- **'State of Palestine' becomes member of Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague**

"What a waste that the Palestinians continue to invest efforts to be accepted into these kinds of bodies instead of returning to the negotiating table," Israel says of move. The Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague announced on Tuesday that the "State of Palestine" has joined it, becoming its 118th member state.

More Details:

<http://www.jpost.com/Arab-Israeli-Conflict/State-of-Palestine-becomes-member-of-Permanent-Court-of-Arbitration-in-The-Hague-448194>

- **Israel fears Russia's pullout from Syria will leave dangerous void**

Israel viewed Russian President Vladimir Putin's announcement that he was removing the bulk of his troops from Syria with a mix of surprise and concern. Israeli President Reuven Rivlin met with Putin in Moscow on Wednesday as part of a visit to mark 25 years of diplomatic ties between the two countries.

More Details:

https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/israel-fears-russias-pullout-from-syria-will-leave-a-dangerous-void/2016/03/16/8a64a21a-eb7c-11e5-a9ce-681055c7a05f_story.html

- **Deputy FM reveals Israel's secret ties with Indonesia**

Tzipi Hotovely says there is "continuous contact" between Israel and Indonesia, despite the lack of official ties, and Israel is working to improve its relations with Jakarta. Israel has unofficial diplomatic ties with Indonesia, Deputy Foreign Minister Tzipi Hotovely said, responding Wednesday to a parliamentary question from MK Ahmad Tibi about denying Indonesian Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi entry to the Palestinian Authority.

More Details:

<http://www.jpost.com/Israel-News/Politics-And-Diplomacy/Deputy-FM-reveals-Israelis-secret-ties-with-Indonesia-448128>

5. JORDAN and LEBANON

- **Saudi Arabia targets Hezbollah, and Lebanon will pay the price**

At Saudi Arabian instigation, the Arab League, normally an ineffective Egyptian-dominated talk shop, has taken a sweeping step: It has labelled the Iranian-backed Lebanese Hezbollah a terrorist organization, following by days an identical decision by the Gulf Co-operation Council.

More Details:

<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/saudi-arabia-targets-hezbollah-and-lebanon-will-pay-the-price/article29252724/>

- **The grief of returning to Lebanon in the wake of Syria's civil war**

"You should have come a few years ago. It was so much more beautiful then." This is what a Lebanese local in Beirut told me upon hearing I was visiting the country for the first time. It takes me a few days to decipher the code; she meant before the Syrian refugees arrived.

More Details:

<http://www.dailylife.com.au/news-and-views/dl-opinion/seeing-myself-in-the-syrian-refugees-wandering-lebanon-20160316-gnklvg.html>

- **Lebanese minister: Israel spies on Lebanon using illegal Internet Networks**

Lebanese telecommunications minister stated that by providing illegal internet services to Lebanese websites, Israel might spy on Lebanon's official institutions. Lebanese telecommunications Minister Boutros Harb has stated that Israeli companies provide illegal Internet services to governmental and military institutions, thereby enabling Israel intelligence services to spy on Lebanon.

More Details:

<http://www.jpost.com/Middle-East/Lebanese-minister-Israel-spies-on-Lebanon-using-illegal-Internet-networks-448276>

- **King holds summit meeting with EU leaders**

His Majesty King Abdullah on Wednesday held a summit meeting with European Union leaders that continued over a working dinner hosted by EU Council President Donald Tusk at the council's headquarters in Brussels, a Royal Court statement said.

More Details:

<http://www.jordantimes.com/news/local/king-holds-summit-meeting-eu-leaders>

- **Hizbullah, Mustaqbal Agree on Need to 'Activate Institutions, Boost Stability'**

Hizbullah and al-Mustaqbal movement agreed Wednesday on the need to activate state institutions and preserve stability in the country. "The conferees agreed to activate the work of institutions, follow up on the measures that can boost domestic stability, and support the efforts of the military and security institutions as they seek to protect the country and its citizens," the two parties said in a joint statement issued after their 26th dialogue session in Ain al-Tineh.

More Details:

<http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/204739-hizbullah-mustaqbal-agree-on-need-to-activate-institutions-boost-stability>

- **King leaves for Brussels on working visit**

His Majesty King Abdullah II on Wednesday, left on a working visit to the Belgian capital Brussels during which he will meet with senior European officials. During the visit, the King will hold talks with senior officials at the Council of Europe, the European Commission and NATO that will deal with partnership and cooperation as well as the latest regional and international developments.

More Details:

<http://en.ammonnews.net/article.aspx?articleNO=30673&title=King%20leaves%20for%20Brussels%20on%20working%20visit#.VupzR9KLRkg>

- **King receives letter from Bahraini monarch**

His Majesty King Abdullah II on Wednesday received Sheikh Abdullah Bin Issa Al Khalifah, who conveyed to the King a letter from His Majesty King Hamad Bin Issa Al Khalifah of Bahrain dealing with means to forge closer ties between the two countries.

More Details:

<http://en.ammonnews.net/article.aspx?articleNO=30670&title=King%20receives%20letter%20from%20Bahraini%20monarch#.Vup009KLRkg>

- **Qazzi Warns of Naturalization over Refugee Employment Projects**

Labor Minister Sejaan Qazzi said on Thursday that he boycotted a ministerial committee meeting to protest a decision by some donor countries to assist Lebanon by finding job opportunities for Syrian refugees. “I won’t make compromises in that regard,” Qazzi, who represents the Kataeb Party in the cabinet, told An Nahar newspaper.

More Details:

<http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/204744-qazzi-warns-of-naturalization-over-refugee-employment-projects>

- **PM to attend meeting on human rights plan**

Prime Minister Abdullah Ensour will attend on March 19, a meeting that will be held by head and members of the committee entrusted with preparing the Comprehensive National Plan on Human Rights.

More Details:

http://petra.gov.jo/Public_News/Nws_NewsDetails.aspx?lang=2&site_id=1&NewsID=243493&CatID=13

- **Interior minister meets Head of Polish National Security Bureau**

Interior Minister Salamah Hammad on Wednesday met with Head of the Polish National Security Bureau Pawel Soloch and the accompanying delegation. Talks during the meeting dealt with scopes of bilateral cooperation in the security, political and economic affairs, the latest developments in the region and the impact of the Syrian crisis at the regional and international levels.

More Details:

http://www.petra.gov.jo/Public_News/Nws_NewsDetails.aspx?Site_Id=1&lang=2&NewsID=243517&CatID=13&Type=Home>ype=1

6. ARABIAN PENINSULA AND THE GULF OF BASRA

- **KOGAS to build Iran-Oman gas pipeline**

The media in Seoul have reported that Korea Gas Corporation (KOGAS) is considering a project to build a subsea pipeline to take natural gas from Iran to Oman – what would bring Tehran closer to an ambitious plan to become an exporter of liquefied natural gas (LNG).

More Details:

<http://iranfrontpage.com/news/business/energies/2016/03/kogas-to-build-iran-oman-gas-pipeline/?>

- **Oman rules out currency devaluation rumours**

Oman's central bank said that the country is still committed to peg the rial to the United States dollar and the value of the currency in the futures market did not change.

More Details:

<http://timesofoman.com/article/79562/Oman/Government/Oman-rules-out-currency-devaluation-rumours?>

- **Kuwait moves against Hezbollah media supporters**

Authorities in Kuwait have decided not to renew the residency permits of five journalists and to ban six other media people from entering the country over their links to the Lebanese armed militia Hezbollah.

More Details:

<http://gulfnews.com/news/gulf/kuwait/kuwait-moves-against-hezbollah-media-supporters-1.1692026>

- **Kuwait bans number of Syrians, Lebanese from entering country**

Kuwait's security authorities have banned a number of people from Lebanon and Syria from entering the country due to their links with extremist and terrorist organizations such as Hezbollah and Islamic State (DAESH), official sources say.

More Details:

<http://www.arabtimesonline.com/news/kuwait-bans-number-syrians-lebanese-entering-country/>

- **Deploing airstrikes in Yemen, Ban urges conflict parties to 'cease all military activities,' begin dialogue**

Condemning the airstrikes that hit a market in northern Yemen yesterday, reportedly killing and wounding scores of civilians, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has underscored that "attacks directed against civilians and civilian objects, including populated markets, are strictly prohibited."

More Details:

<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=53458#.VupuRtKLRDA>

- **US senator to Saudis: Stop bombing civilians in Yemen**

A senator from Connecticut is raising big questions about America's unwavering support for Saudi Arabia. His comments come as the Saudis and their Arab allies begin a second year at war in Yemen. Fighting there in the past year has killed more than 3,000 civilians, many with US-made weapons.

More Details:

<http://www.pri.org/stories/2016-03-16/us-senator-saudis-stop-bombing-civilians-yemen>

- **Saudi Arabia Suggests 'NATO-Like' Islamic Military Alliance**

Pakistan's Dunya News reports Saudi Arabia has proposed a "NATO-like" military alliance of Muslim nations, meant not as a defensive alliance against a particular country, "but to combat terrorism and emerging threats like ISIS."

More Details:

<http://www.breitbart.com/national-security/2016/03/16/saudi-arabia-suggests-nato-like-islamic-military-alliance/>

- **President Obama to Visit Saudi Arabia in April**

President Barack Obama will travel to Saudi Arabia next month for a summit with Gulf Arab leaders, the White House said Wednesday, offering them a chance to repair relations strained by last year's nuclear deal with Iran.

More Details:

<http://www.wsj.com/articles/president-obama-to-visit-saudi-arabia-in-april-1458136697>

- **Yemeni President praises Bahrain's unwavering stance towards Yemen**

Yemeni President Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi underlined the key role played by Bahrain as part of the Saudi-led Arab coalition to support legitimacy in Yemen, thanking the kingdom's leadership, government and people for the honourable and unwavering stance towards Yemen.

More Details:

<http://www.bna.bh/portal/en/news/716617>

- **Two UAE pilots killed as fighter jet crashes in Yemen**

Two Emirati pilots have been killed after their fighter jet crashed in Yemen, where a Saudi-led coalition is battling rebels backed by Iran.

More Details:

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/mar/14/uae-reports-plane-missing-in-yemen>

7. EGYPT

- **After devaluation Egyptian pound still looks overvalued**

The Egyptian pound still looks overvalued even after this week's devaluation and may need to fall another 10 percent to lure dollars back into the economy and restore competitiveness. Monday's 13 percent devaluation took the pound to 8.85 per dollar and was welcomed by bond and equity markets.

More Details:

<http://thecairopost.youm7.com/news/199462/news/after-devaluation-egyptian-pound-still-looks-overvalued>

- **Russia mulls resuming direct flights to Egypt**

Russia's top diplomat has announced Moscow's intentions to resume flights to Egypt after 2015's aviation tragedy. Metrojet, the downed aircraft's operator, was banned from undertaking domestic and international flights. Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov announced on Wednesday that Moscow was working with Egyptian authorities to resume "direct air links" to Egypt, in comments carried by Russia's state-owned TASS news agency.

More Details:

<http://www.dailynewsegypt.com/2016/03/16/russia-mulls-resuming-direct-flights-to-egypt/>

- **15 Egyptian captives to be released from Libya: Foreign Ministry**

Fifteen Egyptians believed to have been kidnapped by Islamic State affiliates in Libya will be released on Wednesday, Egypt's Foreign Ministry has said. Ministry spokesperson Hesham al-Naqib quoted Egypt's ambassador to Tripoli as informing that one captive was released by Libyan authorities on Tuesday, with the rest scheduled for release on Wednesday.

More Details:

<http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/15-egyptian-captives-be-released-libya-foreign-ministry>

- **Egypt buys more wheat at premium price, even as US urges reform**

Egypt bought further wheat at prices which appeared a little over those offered importers deemed less risky, even as a US report urged the country to reform a tender process which had been marred by an "uncertain and chaotic environment".

More Details:

<http://www.agrimoney.com/news/egypt-buys-more-wheat-at-premium-price-even-as-us-urges-reform--9425.html>

- **Sisi vows to pursue Italian student's murderers**

The Egyptian team in charge of investigating the murder of an Italian researcher in Cairo will head to Rome in the upcoming days to foster mutual coordination on the case, President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi said in an interview published on Wednesday. "Egypt is keen to provide security and protection to all its visitors, particularly Italians," Sisi told Italy's La Repubblica newspaper.

More Details:

<http://en.aswatmasriya.com/news/details/16006>

- **Oil's leap may boost Gulf, Egypt's mood still bullish**

A leap of oil prices may boost Gulf stock markets on Thursday, while Egypt may remain firm on positive sentiment after this week's currency devaluation, despite a looming interest rate hike. Brent crude has risen about 6 percent to above \$40 a barrel since Wednesday afternoon, when Qatar said oil producers would meet in Doha on April 17 to discuss a proposal to freeze output.

More Details:

http://af.reuters.com/article/egyptNews/idAFL5N16P0CY?feedType=RSS&feedName=egyptNews&utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+reuters%2FAfricaEgyptNews+%28News+%2F+Africa+%2F+Egypt+News%29&rpc=401

- **Statues of Sekhmet discovered at the Temple of Amenhotep III in Egypt**

A Group Of 8 Statues Of The Egyptian Goddess Sekhmet Have Been Discovered By Members Of "The Colossi Of Memnon And Amenhotep III Temple Conservation Project" Directed By Hourig Sourouzian. In Egyptian mythology, Sekhmet was originally the warrior goddess as well as goddess of healing for Upper Egypt, when the kingdom of Egypt was divided.

More Details:

<http://www.heritagedaily.com/2016/03/statues-of-sekhmet-discovered-at-the-temple-of-amenhotep-iii-in-egypt/110011?>

- **Professor Ayman Ismail at the “Faculty at the Forefront” series: entrepreneurship is key to Egypt’s economy**

In the second series of “Faculty at the Forefront,” held at The American University in Cairo (AUC), titled “Entrepreneurship’s Role in Economic Development,” Ayman Ismail, assistant professor of management and the Abdul Latif Jameel Endowed Chair of Entrepreneurship Ismail said that unemployment rate in Egypt is 13 percent while unemployment among youth stands at 40 percent. “The number of startups has decreased in Egypt in the last five years in comparison to before 25 January, and one way to boost the economy is to encourage entrepreneurship and innovation programs.”

More Details:

<http://www.albawaba.com/business/pr/professor-ayman-ismail-%E2%80%9Cfaculty-forefront%E2%80%9D-series-entrepreneurship-key-egypt%E2%80%99s-economy-8>

- **Egypt to Participate in Salon Mondial Du Tourisme**

Egypt will participate in the Salon Mondial du Tourisme - International B to C Tourism Fair - due to open in Paris on Thursday 17/3/2016. In statements to MENA on Wednesday 16/3/2016, the tourism adviser at the Egyptian Embassy in Paris Riham Wahid said Egypt will have a big pavilion at the four-day fair to encourage French tourists to visit Egypt.

More Details:

<http://allafrica.com/stories/201603170290.html>

- **Hamas: 'Egypt’s security is Palestine's security'**

The deputy head of the Hamas movement said Wednesday that common security concerns between Palestine and Egypt were confirmed during a visit by a Hamas delegation to Cairo. “Egypt’s security is Palestine’s security,” Moussa Abu Marzouq said in a statement posted on his official Facebook page, adding that the Gaza Strip is most affected by security instability in Sinai Peninsula.

More Details:

<http://www.maannews.com/Content.aspx?ID=770727>

8. NORTH AFRICA

- **Islamic State Spreads in North Africa in Attacks Ignored by West**

The Islamic State fighters appeared at dawn in the Tunisian town of Ben Guerdane, attacking police and army barracks. Last week's clashes killed at least 58 people, including 46 militants and a 12-year-old girl. Tunisia is no stranger to jihadist violence -- three large-scale assaults last year decimated its tourism sector -- but it's the first time militants have attempted to seize territory.

More Details:

<http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2016-03-16/islamic-state-spreads-in-north-africa-in-attacks-ignored-by-west?>

- **450,000 migrants 'are on their way to Europe from Libya', warns EU chief: Numbers could eclipse last summer's wave of arrivals because of 'volatile situation' in North Africa**

An extra 450,000 migrants could attempt to reach Europe this summer as a result of the crisis in Libya, EU leaders have been warned. Border chiefs have already said the continent faces an influx of one million arrivals this year – similar to the number who travelled in 2015.

More Details:

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3496154/450-000-migrants-way-EU-Libya-Numbers-eclipse-summer-s-wave-arrivals-volatile-situation-North-Africa.html#ixzz464M0w5Aa>

- **Arab world's beloved Turkish actress 'Lamees' visits children with cancer in Algeria**

Turkish actress Tuba Büyüküstün, famously known as her character "Lamees" in the Arab world, made her first visit to Algeria on Saturday. The pretty brunette was on a humanitarian visit, where she opened the new children's ward at the Nafeesa Hammoudi Hospital in the Algerian capital.

More Details:

<http://www.albawaba.com/entertainment/arab-worlds-beloved-turkish-actress-lamees-visits-children-cancer-algeria-817994>

- **France Strengthens Support for Tunisia In the Face of Islamist Threats**

France's Foreign Minister Jean-Marc Ayrault flies to Tunisia on Thursday to reinforce security and economic ties as the North African country faces the threat of Islamic militancy spilling over the border from Libya.

More Details:

<http://time.com/4262329/tunisia-france-aid-security-ben-guerdane-isis-islamist/>?

- **Canada wants long-term plan before committing to new anti-ISIS mission in Libya**

Canada would need to hear a number of things from its allies - notably a long-term strategy - before deciding to commit troops to an Italian-led training mission in Libya to counter the advance of Islamic extremists, says Defence Minister Harjit Sajjan.

More Details:

<http://www.ctvnews.ca/politics/canada-wants-long-term-plan-before-committing-to-new-anti-isis-mission-in-libya-1.2820813>

- **Europe Tiptoes into Libya's Mess**

Satellite imagery has confirmed the arrival of European special operations forces at an air base near Benghazi, Libya. Stratfor, a geopolitical intelligence firm, released the satellite images on March 9, which showed typical Western security precautions being set up around the air base.

More Details:

<https://www.thetrumpet.com/article/13661.19.0.0/world/military/europe-tiptoes-into-libyas-mess?>

- **Libyan oil production at five year low**

A survey of oil production from Libya shows the country remains far below its peak capacity levels posted more than five years ago, before the Arab Spring. Energy reporting service Platts reports Libyan oil production in February moved lower by 10,000 barrels per day to 360,000 bpd. The drop follows a deal brokered in December by the United Nations and rival governments that led to the January seating of a unity administration.

More Details:

<http://www.albawaba.com/business/libyan-oil-production-five-year-low-818076>

- **UN deplores Rabat's Western Sahara move**

The United Nations on Wednesday condemned Morocco's decision to reduce its contribution to the world body's MINURSO mission in Western Sahara, saying it would now take "mitigating measures".

More Details:

<http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/un-deplores-rabats-western-sahara-move-842592030?sthash.SpWwM2ug.dpuf>

- **Algeria strongly condemns suicide bomb attack on mosque in Maiduguri (Nigeria)**

Algeria has strongly condemned the suicide bomb attack perpetrated Wednesday on a mosque in Maiduguri, in Nigeria, underlining that the joint efforts of the States and peoples of the sub-region will "ineluctably" lead to victory over the scourge of terrorism.

More Details:

<http://www.aps.dz/en/algeria/11503-algeria-strongly-condemns-suicide-attack-in-mosque-in-maiduguri-nigeria?>

- **Brussels police find IS flag with dead Algerian gunman**

Belgian police found an Islamic State (IS) flag next to the body of an Algerian killed during a raid in Brussels, investigators said Wednesday as they raced to track down two suspected extremists who escaped.

More Details:

<http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=75821>

9. AFGHANISTAN – PAKISTAN

- **Key Taliban leader involved in major attacks arrested in Ghazni**

A key Taliban commander involved in major terrorist activities has been arrested in southeastern Ghazni province of Afghanistan. The Afghan Intelligence – National Directorate of Security (NDS) said Qari Khalil-ur-Rehman was a senior Taliban commander was involved in organizing suicide attacks and other terrorist activities in Ghazni city.

More Details:

<http://www.khaama.com/key-taliban-leader-involved-in-major-attacks-arrested-in-ghazni-0366?>

- **Afghans, leaving in droves, say they see no future in their country**

When most American troops departed Afghanistan in 2014 and the Obama administration helped install a unity government, it was supposed to set the country on a path toward self-sustainability after two decades of Taliban rule and foreign military intervention.

More Details:

<http://www.latimes.com/world/asia/la-fg-afghan-refugees-20160317-story.html>

- **Pakistan Women go down by four runs against West Indies**

Pakistan were brilliant with the ball but struggled with bat in a tense four-run loss to West Indies in the Women's World Twenty20 match at the MA Chidambaram Stadium in Chennai on Wednesday.

More Details:

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1246106/pakistan-women-go-down-by-four-runs-against-west-indies>

- **Musharraf to undertake foreign trip soon: Kasuri**

The foreign visit for former present General (ret'd) Pervez Musharraf will be finalized in the next day or two, the former military ruler's close aide Ahmed Raza Kasuri said Wednesday. Kasuri said that Musharraf will either leave for Dubai or London in his first trip abroad in years.

More Details:

<http://www.geo.tv/latest/102383-Musharraf-to-undertake-foreign-trip-soon-Kasuri>

- **No decision by Obama administration on US troops level in Afghanistan: Pentagon**

The Pentagon announced Tuesday that no decision has been taken by President Barack Obama's administration to ramp up troops level in Afghanistan. Peter Cook, the Pentagon spokesman, said the newly-appointed commander of the US forces in Afghanistan, Gen. John Nicholson will evaluate the situation on the ground and will make proposals first.

More Details:

<http://www.khaama.com/no-decision-by-obama-administration-on-us-troops-level-in-afghanistan-pentagon-0363>

- **Unidentified gunmen kidnap 3 civilians in Nooristan**

A group of unknown armed men have kidnapped three civilians in eastern Nooristan province, an official said on Wednesday. According to the official, the three men were dragged out of a vehicle in the outskirt of Paroun, the provincial capital of Nooristan, and taken to an undisclosed location.

More Details:

<http://www.khaama.com/unidentified-gunmen-kidnap-3-civilians-in-nooristan-4749>

- **Laura Bush on Afghan women, U.S. interests and 2016**

Former first lady Laura Bush has written the introduction for a new book, We Are Afghan Women: Voices of Hope, published this month by Scribner. She sat down this week with USA TODAY's Capital Download to discuss why she hopes the United States will maintain a troop presence and continue

reconstruction aid in Afghanistan despite the public's weariness about America's longest war. She also touched briefly on the 2016 presidential race and Donald Trump. Questions and answers have been lightly edited for length and clarity.

More Details:

<http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/elections/2016/03/17/laura-bush-afghan-women-us-interests-2016/81868130/>?

- **Negotiation with Afghanistan only hope for stability in entire region: Maleeha Lodhi**

A negotiated peace in Afghanistan was the best and only hope for stability and prosperity for the country and the entire region, said Pakistan Ambassador to United Nations Maleeha Lodhi while speaking in the Security Council debate on Afghanistan. Lodhi said it was gratifying that the international community had reached a firm consensus that a political settlement was the only way to achieve peace in Afghanistan.

More Details:

<http://paktribune.com/news/Negotiation-with-Afghanistan-only-hope-for-stability-in-entire-region-Maleeha-Lodhi-275945.html>

- **India-Pakistan Combo behind Afghanistan's Fairytale Rise**

Even as it is blowing hot and cold between India and Pakistan, the duo of Manoj Prabhakar and Inzamam-ul-Haq has been helping war-ravaged Afghanistan's fortunes. The former internationals have played a huge part in shaping the determined team's campaign. 46-year-old Inzaman, as chief coach, and Prabhakar as bowling coach have made this team one of the most dangerous ones in this edition. This despite having to play the qualifying round.

More Details:

<http://www.newindianexpress.com/cricket/news/India-Pakistan-Combo-Behind-Afghanistans-Fairytale-Rise/2016/03/17/article3331314.ece?>

10.TURKEY AND THE MIDDLE EAST

- **No federations, unity needed in Syria, Turkey says**

The declaration of a federation in northern Syria would be an invalid unilateral move, said a Turkish Foreign Ministry official on Wednesday, following a statement by a high-ranked PYD representative. The United States also announced it would not recognise any self-ruled, semi-autonomous zones in Syria, State Department spokesman Mark Toner said on Wednesday.

More Details:

<http://www.trtworld.com/mea/no-federations-unity-needed-in-syria-turkey-says-69023>

- **Turkey Catches 54 Migrants Heading for Greece**

Turkey's coast guard says 54 Afghan migrants were intercepted in the Aegean Sea as their dinghy sped toward the Greek island of Lesbos, and were returned to Turkey. The coast guard released a statement and video Thursday about the interception a day earlier.

More Details:

http://hosted.ap.org/dynamic/stories/E/EU_EUROPE_MIGRANTS_THE_LATEST?SITE=AP&SECTION=HOME&TEMPLATE=DEFAULT&CTIME=2016-03-17-08-15-49

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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