



MIDDLE EAST DAILY BULLETIN

GÜNLÜK ORTADOĐU BÜLTENİ

Domestic Policy in the Middle East Countries

Bölge Ülkelerinde İç Siyaset

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1. IRAQ

- **During his meeting with Al-Jubouri, the Speaker of the Kuwaiti National Assembly affirmed his country's support for Iraq and its people in the reconstruction of its liberated cities**

Speaker of the National Assembly Marzouq Al-Ghanim affirmed his country's support for Iraq and its people in the reconstruction of its liberated cities and the return of displaced families. "Speaker of the House of Representatives Salim Al-Jubouri met with Speaker of the National Assembly Marzouq Al-Ghanim and discussed, during the meeting , relations between the two countries and means of enhancing them to ensure the interests of the two brotherly peoples, and the latest development on the local and regional arenas, as well as the file of returning displaced people to the liberated areas destroyed by terrorism and the mechanism to implement the decisions of the conference of donor countries to Iraq held in Kuwait last month. "

More Details:

http://www.ninanews.com/News_Details.aspx?9fOzK4UMSFsumMHfcdIN4Q%253d%253d

- **Iraqi govt denies arrival of U.S. troops on mission to secure elections**

The Iraqi government denied on Monday arrival of U.S. forces in Iraq to secure parliamentary elections in three governorates, stressing that the polls will be only secured by Iraq's police and army. In exclusive statements to Baghdad Today news website, Saad al-Hadithi, a spokesman of Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi's media office, termed as "baseless" all reports about deployment of U.S. forces in Iraq to secure polling stations, confirming that neither U.S. nor any other country will take part in securing the polls.

More Details:

<https://www.iraqinews.com/iraq-war/iraqi-govt-denies-arrival-of-u-s-troops-on-mission-to-secure-elections/>

- **Propagandists Working for IS News Agency Captured in Mosul**

Iraqi security forces captured on Sunday a number of people in the northern city of Mosul whom are suspected of working for the Islamic State (IS) news agency known as Amaq. Security sources confirmed the report to Iraqi media, but the number of captured suspects is not clear.

More Details:

<http://www.basnews.com/index.php/en/news/iraq/419958>

- **‘Big Fat Brick into Hornet's Nest’: Trump Reportedly Calls Invasion of Iraq ‘Worst Decision Ever’**

Trump has reportedly scorched former President George W. Bush's decision to invade Iraq, calling it “worst decision ever made” and compared the war to throwing a “big fat brick” into hornet’s nest. The remarks were made by Trump during a fundraiser at his Mar-a-Lago resort on Saturday, CNN reported, claiming it obtained a recording of the event. Trump reportedly turned on Bush over his decision on to invade Iraq in 2003.

More Details:

http://www.shafaaq.com/en/En_NewsReader/b19e4e9b-1e35-4a0d-8949-c52086ccc1b1

- **UN Casualty Figures for Iraq for the Month of February 2018**

A total of 91 Iraqi civilians were killed and another 208 injured in acts of terrorism, violence and armed conflict in Iraq in February 2018*, according to casualty figures recorded by the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI). The figures include ordinary civilians and others who can be considered civilian at the time of death or injury - police in non-combat function, civil defence, Personal Security Details, facilities protection police, and fire department personnel.

More Details:

http://www.pukmedia.com/EN/EN_Direje.aspx?Jimare=42864

- **ISIS launches multiple attacks across Iraq**

On Saturday, the Islamic State terrorist group carried out a number of big attacks across Iraq against government forces, targeting their movements, positions and gatherings in the administrative provinces of Diyala, Kirkuk and Anbar. In Diyala, ISIS attacked a patrol of the Popular Mobilization Units (PMU) on the road between Khanaqin to Sadiyah reportedly destroying two armed vehicles during the engagement.

More Details:

<https://www.almasdarnews.com/article/breaking-isis-launches-multiple-attacks-across-iraq/>

- **Muqtada al-Sadr calls on supports to vote in elections**

Muqtada al-Sadr called on his supporters on Monday to 'save' Iraq from corrupts, by taking part in the upcoming election in May. "Voting is a legitimate obligation before being a national duty," the Shia cleric said on Monday.

More Details:

<http://www.thebaghdadpost.com/en/story/24465/Muqtada-al-Sadr-calls-on-supports-to-vote-in-elections>

- **Iraq increases taxes amid public discontent**

The Iraqi government sent to parliament a revised version of the 2018 budget bill for the fourth time Feb. 11. The budget proposal includes a new 10% tax on sales at commercial centers, restaurants and barbershops. Iraq lacks the appropriate environment to collect new taxes because sales are made in cash, not credit cards. This reality will likely impose obstacles on tax collection as both citizens and shop owners can find ways to evade taxes. This is not to mention the influence peddling in the tax collection departments, where some officials could add the taxes to their personal accounts instead of state coffers.

More Details:

<https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2018/03/iraq-tax-budget-oil-corruption.html>

- **Iraq 'will never allow US bases on its soil'**

Iraq says it will under no circumstances permit the United States to build permanent military bases on its soil, which would be a violation of its sovereignty. "Baghdad firmly rejects the construction of US military bases on its soil," said Iraqi Foreign Minister Ibrahim Jaafari at the end of an extended visit to Russia on Friday.

More Details:

<http://www.presstv.com/Detail/2018/03/03/554166/Iraq-US-permanent-military-bases-Jaafari>

- **Iran exports \$5.5bn non-oil products to Iraq**

Iran has exported 12 million tons of non-oil products worth \$5.5bn to Iraq during the 11 months of the current Iranian calendar year (ending on March 20, 2018). The figure includes 18% of Iran's total exports, Iran commercial attaché to Iraq Naser Behzad said.

More Details:

<http://www.irna.ir/en/News/82849499>

- **Iran, Iraq enjoying \$12bn trade volume in last 11 months**

Naser Behzad, the Commercial Attaché at the Iranian Embassy in Baghdad says that the amount of Iran-Iraq trade volume in the last 11 months has been \$12 billion. "In the past 11 months of the current Iranian calendar year of 1396, Iran has exported 12 million tons of non-oil goods with the

value of 5.5 billion dollars to Iraq,” said Naser Behzad, the Commercial Attaché at the Iranian Embassy in Baghdad on Saturday.

More Details:

<https://en.mehrnews.com/news/132562/Iran-Iraq-enjoying-12bn-trade-volume-in-last-11-months>

- **Months after ISIS, Much Of Iraq's Mosul Is Still Rubble**

Ziad Abdul Qader came back to his house in the Iraqi city of Mosul recently to find a pile of charred human bones in the courtyard. He'd seen the bodies of the two ISIS fighters when he came to check on the house months ago and hurriedly left. When he returned in mid-February, they had been set on fire. "A group was going around burning bodies because they were worried about disease," he says.

More Details:

<https://www.npr.org/sections/parallels/2018/03/03/587726649/months-after-isis-much-of-iraqs-mosul-is-still-rubble>

- **Iraq's new budget allocates \$20.8 billion for investments**

Iraq's parliament on Saturday adopted an \$88.5 billion budget for 2018, with Kurdish lawmakers boycotting the vote to protest against a cut in the amount allocated to their autonomous region. The reduction comes after a controversial independence reference by the Kurds last year sparked a furious dispute with the central government.

More Details:

[http://saudigazette.com.sa/article/529645/BUSINESS/Iraqs-new-budget-allocates-\\$208-billion-for-investments](http://saudigazette.com.sa/article/529645/BUSINESS/Iraqs-new-budget-allocates-$208-billion-for-investments)

- **Amid Kurdish Boycott, Iraq Approves New Budget**

Despite a Kurdish boycott, the Iraqi parliament approved on Saturday a long-delayed budget. This will be Iraq's first budget since the country declared its victory against the ISIS terrorist group in 2017 after a three-year battle. The Kurds boycotted the parliament session in protest against budget cuts against the semi-autonomous region.

More Details:

<https://aawsat.com/english/home/article/1193571/amid-kurdish-boycott-iraq-approves-new-budget>

- **Police officer assassinated by unknown gunmen in Iraq's Tuz Khurmatu**

A police officer was assassinated Sunday in Tuz Khurmatu district in Salahuddin as unknown gunmen continue to target security men and citizens in retaliation for the country's victory over terrorism last year, a security source was quoted as saying. "Unknown gunmen targeted in the wee hours of Sunday First-Lieutenant Asaad al-Shammari from the Rapid Response Force's 2nd brigade, leaving him dead," the source, who spoke on condition of anonymity, told Alghad Press.

More Details:

<https://www.iraqinews.com/iraq-war/police-officer-assassinated-unknown-gunmen-iraqs-tuz-khurmatu/>

- **Iraq's ambassador calls on displaced Iraqis to return voluntarily to their country**

Iraq's Ambassador to Lebanon, Ali Bandar Al-Amri, called Sunday on all displaced Iraqis, including Christians, to return voluntarily to their country since their regions were now secure. In an interview with Radio Lebanon this morning, the Iraqi diplomat said that his Embassy, in cooperation with the Lebanese authorities, has managed to ensure the repatriation of a large number of displaced Iraqis and to settle their legal status in Lebanon.

More Details:

<http://nna-leb.gov.lb/en/show-news/88816/Iraq-39-Ambassador-calls-on-displaced-Iraqis-to-return-voluntarily-to-their-country>

- **Iraq government urged to seize assets from Saddam relatives and officials**

An Iraqi parliamentary committee on Monday urged the government to authorise the confiscation of the assets of former dictator Saddam Hussein's relatives and officials within his regime. The National Reconciliation, Accountability and Justice Committee made the call – the first of its kind since Saddam's fall in 2003 – in a letter sent to the prime minister's office as well as to the ministries of finance, justice and agriculture.

More Details:

<https://www.thenational.ae/world/mena/iraq-government-urged-to-seize-assets-from-saddam-relatives-and-officials-1.710342>

2. SYRIA

- **Israel Vows to Prevent Iran's Permanent Military Presence in Syria**

Israel is not interested in the escalation in Syria, but will respond if Iran continues to "provoke" the situation on the Syrian border, Foreign Ministry's Deputy Director General Alexander Ben-Zvi said Monday.

More Details:

<https://sputniknews.com/middleeast/201803051062227333-israel-iran-military-presence-syria/>

- **Syria's Assad: Operations in Eastern Ghouta will continue**

In defiance of the international community, Syrian President Bashar al-Assad declared that military operations in the rebel-held enclave of Eastern Ghouta would continue as the bombardment of the area moves into its third week.

More Details:

<https://us.cnn.com/2018/03/05/middleeast/syria-assad-ghouta-operations-intl/index.html>

- **Syria's bombing blitz blocks aid for 180,000 people trapped in besieged Eastern Ghouta**

It is believed that President Bashar al-Assad's advancing army refused to pause attacks so they could move in. An aid convoy bringing food and medicine to 180,000 civilians trapped in besieged Eastern Ghouta has been blocked from entering, as bombing raids continue.

More Details:

<https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/world-news/syrias-bombing-blitz-blocks-aid-12127061>

- **Trump and May blame Russia, Syria for E Ghouta suffering**

Russia and Syria are responsible for the "heart-breaking human suffering" in the Syrian rebel-held enclave of Eastern Ghouta, US President Donald Trump and his British counterpart Theresa May said today. The two leaders discussed the "appalling humanitarian situation in Eastern Ghouta" during a phone call today/

More Details:

https://article.wn.com/view/2018/03/05/Trump_and_May_blame_Russia_Syria_for_E_Ghouta_suffering

- **Talks on boosting media ties between Syria and Iran**

Iranian Deputy Culture Minister for Press Affairs, Mohammad Soltanifar, affirmed the importance of boosting joint media cooperation with Syria in all aspects, especially in the field of media and culture.

More Details:

<https://sana.sy/en/?p=129214>

- **Kurds 'suffer the most' due to YPG/PKK terror in Syria**

Kurds have suffered the most due to the presence of YPG/PKK terror group in Syria, according to a Syrian journalist living in Turkey. Journalist Omar Madaniah has been living in Reyhanli district of Turkey's southern province of Hatay bordering Syria after he fled the war in northwestern Syrian port city of Latakia three years ago.

More Details:

<https://aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/kurds-suffer-the-most-due-to-ypg-pkk-terror-in-syria/1080223>

- **Aid Convoy Entering Syria's Ghouta Stripped of Medical Supplies**

The World Health Organization (WHO) decried the Syrian regime on Monday for stripping a convoy of medical supplies before being granted access into the besieged Eastern Ghouta region. A WHO official said regime authorities had stripped most medical material from UN vehicles, preventing surgical kits, insulin, dialysis equipment and other supplies from reaching the enclave of 400,000 people.

More Details:

<https://aawsat.com/english/home/article/1194656/aid-convoy-entering-syria%E2%80%99s-ghouta-stripped-medical-supplies>

- **Syrian Observatory - one third of Syria's Ghouta enclave taken by government**

The Syrian army and its allies have captured more than a third of the rebel enclave in eastern Ghouta near Damascus since starting a ground offensive there a week ago, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said on Monday. The Britain-based war monitor said more than 700 people have been killed in eastern Ghouta in the past two weeks, since the government and its allies began a massive bombardment of the area on Feb. 18 in preparation for the attack.

More Details:

<https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-mideast-crisis-syria-ghouta/syrian-observatory-one-third-of-syrias-ghouta-enclave-taken-by-government-idUKKBN1GH0WE?rpc=401&>

3. IRAN

- **Iran Defies France's Alleged Concerns about Missile Program**

The Iranian foreign ministry dismissed the French officials' alleged concerns about the country's missile program and regional influence, stressing that Tehran will continue its defense policies independently.

More details:

<http://en.farsnews.com/newstext.aspx?nn=13961213001614>

- **Iran, France presidents discuss nuclear deal, Syria's Ghouta by phone**

Iranian President Hassan Rouhani and his French counterpart, Emmanuel Macron, have discussed the latest developments regarding Iran's nuclear deal with the P5+1 group of countries and the current situation in Syria's Eastern Ghouta.

More details:

<http://www.presstv.com/Detail/2018/03/04/554356/Rouhani-Macron-Eastern-Ghouta-Syria>

- **Weapon of mass seduction lands in Tehran**

His people are known for seductiveness, but it would be naive to think it only means in love. In what would naturally pass as a friendly visit to Tehran, which would include opening a branch of The Louvre, the French foreign minister has some hard talk to deliver.

More details:

<http://www.tehrantimes.com/news/421765/Weapon-of-mass-seduction-lands-in-Tehran>

- **Iran urges EU to play active role in resolution of Yemen conflict**

Iranian foreign minister called on the European Union to play active role in resolution of the Yemen conflict, and said that Tehran is ready for cooperation in this regard. Mohammad Javad Zarif said in an interview released on Sunday that if the European side is ready for 'serious' work for resolution of regional problems, we are 'serious'.

More details:

<http://www.irna.ir/en/News/82851532>

- **Iran's biggest carmaker IKCO registers output, sale growth**

Iran Khodro (IKCO), the Islamic Republic's biggest automaker company, has manufactured over 644,900 passenger cars during the first 11 months of the current fiscal year (started March 20, 2017). The figure indicates a rise by 9 percent compared to the same period of the preceding year, the company said. Iran Khodro's output in 11th Iranian calendar month (Jan. 20-Feb. 20) reached 67,500 cars.

More details:

<https://en.trend.az/iran/business/2868613.html>

- **Iran to Ink Three Oil Deals This Month**

Iran will sign three oil deals before the end of the current Persian year this month which will include operation of the fields for 20 years, Managing Director of the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) said on Saturday.

More detail:

<http://ifpnews.com/wired/iran-ink-three-oil-deals-month/>

- **Iran's Air Force Flies American-Made F-14 Tomcats**

Whether it's producing parts itself or acquiring them abroad, Iran is clearly succeeding in its efforts to supply its F-14 squadrons. In October 2013, Taghvaei estimated that more than 40 of Tehran's surviving F-14s were in flyable condition, possibly the highest number since the mid-1970s. Iran has begun upgrading the Tomcats with new radar components, radios, navigation systems and wiring while also adding compatibility with R-73 and Hawk missiles.

More Details:

<http://nationalinterest.org/blog/the-buzz/irans-air-force-flies-american-made-f-14-tomcats-24750>

4. ISRAEL – PALESTINE

- **Guatemala to move embassy to Jerusalem 2 days after US embassy move**

President Jimmy Morales tells AIPAC conference the decision to return his country's embassy to Israel's capital 'strongly evidences Guatemala's continued support and solidarity with the people of Israel'; in unofficial talks, Guatemala asks Israel to help fund the move, and Israel is expected to comply with the request.

More details:

<https://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-5145367,00.html>

- **Netanyahu and Trump to Meet Today to Discuss Iran, U.S. Embassy Move**

U.S. officials are expected to bring up with Netanyahu the peace deal the Trump administration still hopes to present, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu will meet with U.S. President Donald Trump on Monday for what will be their fifth meeting in the last year.

More details:

<https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-netanyahu-to-discuss-iran-u-s-embassy-move-in-meeting-with-trump-1.5869552>

- **Euro-Med Warns: Decline of UNRWA's Services Will Lead to 'Catastrophic' Consequence**

The Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Monitor published a report today detailing the series of measures to reduce relief services and staff by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA), investigating the resulting catastrophic impact on Palestinian refugees residing in the agency's five fields of operations.

More details:

<http://www.palestinechronicle.com/euro-med-warns-decline-unrwas-services-will-lead-catastrophic-consequence/>

- **Abbas: Trump's plan was coordinated with Israel**

Fatah rejects Trump's peace plan, calls for "popular resistance" against the "occupation and its settlers". The Fatah Revolutionary Council on Sunday declared its support for its "President" Mahmoud Abbas and his political outlook and warned against attempts to undermine Palestinian legitimacy.

More details:

<http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/242711>

- **AIPAC chief affirms support for Palestinian statehood**

The head of the pro-Israel lobby AIPAC, Howard Kohr expressed his support for Palestinian statehood on Sunday and affirmed his desire to achieve a durable peace between Israelis and Palestinians amid less enthusiastic support by both the Israeli premier and his US counterpart, the Times of Israel reported. During a presentation to an audience of 18,000 at the lobby's annual policy conference in Washington DC, Kohr called for "two states for two peoples" and said that it was "tragic" that this scenario was far away.

More details:

<https://www.i24news.tv/en/news/international/169125-180305-aipac-chief-affirms-support-for-palestinian-statehood>

- **Israeli army orders 16 Palestinian families to leave homes for military drill**

The Israeli military ordered on Sunday night 16 Palestinian families in Khirbit Ibziq, east of Tubas, to leave their homes because the army will be conducting military drills in the area, according to a local official. Mutaz Bisharat, in charge of Jordan Valley file in the Tubas governorate, said the army told the 16 families, whose members number about 80 people, to leave their homes from 7 in the morning until 6 in the evening on Monday and go elsewhere as the military carries out training with live ammunition.

More details:

<http://english.wafa.ps/page.aspx?id=BTg71ka96758065239aBTg71k>

- **Palestinian man shot, injured over alleged car-ramming attack**

A middle-aged Palestinian man has sustained serious gunshot wounds over an alleged car-ramming attack in the northern part of the occupied Palestinian territories as tensions continue to simmer in the aftermath of US President Donald Trump's recent declaration of Jerusalem al-Quds as the capital of Israel. Israeli media outlets alleged that a 51-year-old Arab man from the town of Shfaram, whose identity was not immediately available, began his rampage in the northern coastal city of Acre on Sunday morning, after receiving a parking ticket of 1,000 Israeli shekels (\$290.60).

More details:

<http://www.presstv.com/Detail/2018/03/04/554331/Palestinian-man-shot-injured-over-alleged-carramming-attack>

- **Israel Labor leader calls for 'demilitarized' Palestine**

Israeli opposition leader Avi Gabay has called for the establishment of a "demilitarized" Palestinian state with a view to "separating" the Palestinians from Israel and preserving the latter's "Jewish majority". Gabay, leader of the Israeli Labor Party, made the remarks at the annual conference of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), which convened Sunday evening in Washington D.C.

More Details:

<https://aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/israel-labor-leader-calls-for-demilitarized-palestine/1080263>

- **Envoy: Palestine seeks new strategy in peace talks**

The Palestinian-Israeli conflict is the cause of all problems in the Middle East region and there can be no peace without solving it, the Palestinian Authority's diplomatic representative to Britain said. Speaking at MEMO's conference on Jerusalem in London on Saturday, Manuel Hassassian said the US lost its status as a trustworthy peace broker after President Donald Trump's decision to unilaterally recognise Jerusalem as the capital of Israel.

More Details:

<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20180305-envoy-palestine-seeks-new-strategy-in-peace-talks/>

5. JORDAN and LEBANON

- **Jordan, Brazil set to expand economic relations**

His Majesty King Abdullah on Sunday met with Brazilian Foreign Minister Aloysio Nunes, a Royal Court statement said. During the meeting, Nunes handed His Majesty a letter from Brazil President Michel Temer that tackled ways to improve bilateral relations between the two countries.

More Details:

<http://jordantimes.com/news/local/jordan-brazil-set-expand-economic-relations>

- **Jordan, UNHCR Seek to Improve the Status of Syrian Refugees in Urban Areas**

The campaign will run until the 27th of September 2018, UNHCR said in a statement emailed to The Jordan Times on Sunday. The campaign is directed to Syrian nationals registered in the camps who left without an official authorization before the 1st of July 2017 and did not return. Syrians who arrived to Jordan and have never registered with UNHCR and the Government of Jordan can also benefit from this campaign, according to the UN agency's statement.

More Details:

<https://www.albawaba.com/news/jordan-unhcr-seek-improve-status-syrian-refugees-urban-areas-1097318>

- **Jordan chairs 49th session of Arab Health Ministers Council**

Minister of Health Mahmoud Al Shayyab called for boosting joint Arab action as well as efforts to protect Arab health systems from the prevailing conditions.

More Details:

<http://en.ammonnews.net/article.aspx?articleNO=37318>

- **Fight against terror not against any religion: PM**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Jordan King Abdullah II bin Al Hussein on Thursday expressed their firm resolve to combat terrorism and radicalization as their two countries signed a dozen agreements, including one for cooperation in the key area of defence.

More Details:

<https://www.thestatesman.com/india/fight-terror-not-religion-pm-1502594338.html>

- **Bou Assi: we cannot relax since the elections outcome is not guaranteed with the new law**

Social Affairs Minister Pierre Bou Assi stressed Sunday that mobilization is necessary until May 6th, since the results of the parliamentary elections are not guaranteed with the new vote law. "There can be no politics without identity, a sense of belonging and values, and our policy as Lebanese Forces holds our identity, our belonging and our values," said Bou Assi.

More Details:

<http://nna-leb.gov.lb/en/show-news/88825/Bou-Assi-We-cannot-relax-since-the-elections-outcome-is-not-guaranteed-with-the-new-law>

- **Lebanese Prime Minister Leaves Riyadh**

At King Khalid international Airport, the Lebanese Prime Minister was seen off by Prince Mohammed bin Abdurrahman bin Abdulaziz, Deputy Governor of Riyadh Region; Lebanese Ambassador to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Fawzi Kabara and a representative of the Royal Protocol.

More Details:

<http://alriyadhdaily.com/article/4dbacb9a6e914598a56c2f031cc27aab>

- **Hariri Deems Saudi Visit a Success: We Will See its Support to Lebanon**

Lebanese Prime Minister Saad Hariri deemed on Sunday his recent visit to Saudi Arabia a success, saying that the Kingdom will take part in upcoming conferences aimed at backing his country.

More Details:

<https://aawsat.com/english/home/article/1194576/hariri-deems-saudi-visit-success-we-will-see-its-support-lebanon>

- **Beirut firm aims to give migrants, employers relief**

Thomson Reuters Foundation, BEIRUT-When Jane arrived in Lebanon from the Philippines as a domestic worker to cook, clean and care for children, she only met her new boss on the day she moved into her house — and was unhappy from the outset.

More Details:

<http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/biz/archives/2018/03/04/2003688632>

6. ARABIAN PENINSULA AND THE GULF OF BASRA

- **- Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed, Sisi hold talks in Egypt**

Prince Mohammed and Sisi agree in talks to bolster economic ties and launch joint projects, particularly in tourism sector on Red Sea, Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman held talks with President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi in the Egyptian capital on Sunday at the start of his first foreign tour as heir to the throne. A beaming Sisi greeted the prince at Cairo airport after he descended the red-carpeted steps of his plane.

More details:

<http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/saudi-crown-prince-mohammed-sisi-hold-talks-egypt-874977621>

- **After Two Years in Jail, Houthi Rebels Release Two Yemeni Journalists**

Houthi rebels on Sunday released two Yemeni journalists after nearly two years of detention, according to a Yemen NGO. “The two journalists were set free two years after being abducted in Dhamar, some 100 km south of Sanaa,” Hussein al-Sufi, head of the National Organization of Yemeni Media (SADA), told Anadolu Agency by phone. He said the two had never been charged since their detention. According to al-Sufi, there are 13 other journalists still languishing in Houthi-run prisons in Yemen. He went on to call on human rights groups and the Yemeni government to pile pressures on Houthis to free journalists held by the Shia group.

More details:

<https://www.albawaba.com/news/after-two-years-jail-houthi-rebels-release-two-yemeni-journalists-1097380>

- **Al Jazeera reveals new details on 1996 coup attempt against Qatar**

Exclusive Al Jazeera documentary uncovers new evidence of Saudi, UAE, and Bahrain involvement in the 1996 foiled coup. An exclusive Al Jazeera documentary has uncovered evidence of the

involvement of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Bahrain in supporting a foiled coup attempt to overthrow the Qatari government in 1996. Airing for the first time on Sunday, the first episode of the investigative documentary incorporates interviews with leaders of the coup attempt who testify of the role of these countries played in plotting the overthrow. It also brings to light documents belonging to Saudi intelligence and the Saudi monarch about the plot.

More details:

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/03/al-jazeera-reveals-details-1996-coup-attempt-qatar-180304200532130.html>

- **5,000 held in Saudi state security jails: Press report**

Following a string of recent arrests, the number of people languishing in Saudi state security prisons now stands at more than 5,000, local media reported Monday. Detainees include 4,419 Saudi nationals, 68 Egyptians, 315 Yemenis, 204 Syrians, 18 Jordanians, 13 Bahrainis and five Iraqis, prominent Saudi daily Okaz reported.

More Details:

<https://aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/5-000-held-in-saudi-state-security-jails-press-report/1080286>

- **UAE prepares Dahlan for elections**

The Fatah movement, headed by Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, is preparing to face off against an old rival, Mohammed Dahlan, and a new political faction, which intends to form. According to exclusive information obtained by Al-Khaleej Online Dahlan has finally obtained approval to form a new party to compete for the next legislative and presidential elections.

More Details:

<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20180305-uae-prepares-dahlan-for-elections/>

- **Kuwait: Parliament Approves Army Law without Amendments**

Kuwait's House of Representatives Affairs and Defense Committee unanimously approved on Sunday a draft law on amending the army's law as passed by the National Assembly and rejected a proposal to amend the law to equate Gulf and stateless military personnel with their Kuwaiti counterparts. The head of the committee, deputy Askar al-Enezi said in a televised statement that the report will be submitted to the Council to be discussed in the meeting on Tuesday.

More Details:

<https://aawsat.com/english/home/article/1194621/kuwait-parliament-approves-army-law-without-amendments>

- **Yemen: The international community must unite to stop export of Iranian weapons to the Houthis**

The Yemeni government reiterated its call for the international community to join forces to stop the continued export of Iranian weapons to Houthi militia, Saudi state-news channel Al-Ekhbariya reported. The exports are a violation of UN Security Council resolutions and contribute to the continuation of the war and instability in the region, the government said.

More Details:

<http://www.arabnews.com/node/1259321/middle-east>

7. EGYPT

- **Soldiers, 10 Jihadists Killed in Egypt Sinai Campaign**

Egypt's military said on Sunday four soldiers and 10 jihadists were killed in a military operation in Sinai against Islamic State group jihadists. The deaths raise military casualties to at least 16 dead, along with more than 100 jihadists, since the start of the operation on February 9, according to previous army tolls. The army launched the campaign after Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, who is standing in elections for his second term this month, gave them a three-month deadline to crush IS in Sinai.

More details:

<http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/242948-4-soldiers-10-jihadists-killed-in-egypt-sinai-campaign>

- **Hamas - Egypt entente for reconciliation with Fatah**

Hamas and Cairo are trying to salvage the reconciliation agreement with extended talks and a roadmap, reports Amira Howeidy It's more than two weeks since a senior Hamas delegation from Gaza arrived in Cairo to meet with Egypt's General Intelligence (GI) and discuss efforts to resuscitate the reconciliation agreement between Hamas and its rival Fatah.

More details:

<http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/News/23943.aspx>

- **Egypt parliament amends law to allow private sector to manage railways**

Egypt's House of Representatives approved on Sunday a bill amending certain provisions of Law No. 152 of 1980 establishing the National Railways Authority, including allowing private actors to manage and operate the national railway network.

More Details:

<http://www.egyptindependent.com/egypt-parliament-amends-law-to-allow-private-sector-to-manage-railways/>

- **Crown prince signs \$10 billion deal on mega-city during Cairo visit**

Saudi Arabia and Egypt set up a \$10 billion joint fund on Sunday to develop a planned mega-city, committing more than 1,000 square kilometers in the south Sinai, as Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman met President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi in Cairo.

More Details:

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-saudi-egypt/crown-prince-signs-10-billion-deal-on-mega-city-during-cairo-visit-idUSKBN1GG0QD>

- **Need a North Korean Missile? Call the Cairo Embassy**

On an island in the Suez Canal, a towering AK-47 rifle, its muzzle and bayonet pointed skyward, symbolizes one of Egypt's most enduring alliances. Decades ago, North Korea presented it to Egypt to commemorate the 1973 war against Israel, when North Korean pilots fought and died on the Egyptian side.

More Details:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/03/world/middleeast/egypt-north-korea-sanctions-arms-dealing.html>

- **Sudan to return ambassador to Cairo: foreign minister**

Sudan will send its ambassador back to neighboring Egypt on Monday, Foreign Minister Ibrahim Ghandour said, two months after withdrawing him amid heightened tensions.

More Details:

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-sudan-egypt/sudan-to-return-ambassador-to-cairo-foreign-minister-idUSKCN1GF06W>

- **Egyptian government targets journalists, labels them 'forces of evil'**

The Egyptian government is cracking down on journalists who report critically on the country's security forces, saying it considered such "false" journalism an act of "high treason."

More Details:

<http://abcnews.go.com/International/egyptian-government-targets-journalists-labels-forces-evil/story?id=53501531>

- **Economy and military cooperation: Mohammed bin Salman strengthens ties with Egypt**

The Saudi hereditary prince is in Cairo, for the first trip abroad since his ascent to power. He will also fly to Britain and the United States. A 10 billion dollar fund for the development of a megalopolis in southern Sinai. Egypt "gives" disputed Red Sea islands to Riyadh.

More Details:

<http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Economy-and-military-cooperation:-Mohammed-bin-Salman-strengthens-ties-with-Egypt-43263.html>

8. NORTH AFRICA

- **Tunisia's foreign exchange reserves fall to \$4.6bn**

Tunisia's central bank has said that the country's foreign exchange reserves fell to 11.3 billion Tunisian dinars (\$4.6 billion). The figure does not include more than 80 days' worth of the country's imports, it was reported. The bank attributed the decline to the country's need to use foreign exchange funds at the beginning of each year to provide the necessary stocks of energy, food and industrial raw materials, in addition to servicing foreign debt.

More Details:

<http://tdailynews.net/story-z9853610>

- **Tunisia to invest \$5 billion in Energy Projects by 2020**

Tunisia will invest about \$ 5 billion (12 billion dinars) in electricity and energy projects, between 2018 and 2020. According to a statement released by the government, the electrical projects include the construction of a submarine power- transmission line, with a transmission capacity of 600 MW. The infrastructure to link the country to Italy is expected to cost over \$ 735 million.

More details:

<http://northafricapost.com/22509-tunisia-invest-5-billion-energy-projects-2020.html>

- **Libya's eastern Abidat tribe rejects calls for separation**

A group from the Abidat tribe in the eastern region has rejected the calls for separation, describing those behind the calls as mere advertisers who are unaware of the consequences of such acts that would push the country to the unknown. In a statement, the group said that "the indigenous Arab

Abidat tribe that boasts of having a long list of martyrs, which marked the glorious history of the homeland, and which had the honour to write the Harabi treaty that was a key to the founding of the State, declares its innocence of every call to divide the country."

More details:

<https://www.libyaobserver.ly/news/libya%E2%80%99s-eastern-abidat-tribe-rejects-calls-separation>

- **Biggest Libya Oil Field Stops Pumping on Pipeline Halt**

Libya's Sharara oil field stopped pumping crude oil several days after output plunged at another of the OPEC member's biggest deposits. The halt resulted from the closing of a pipeline from Sharara to the Zawiya refinery, according to a person with knowledge of the matter. The North African country's largest field stopped production on Sunday, a second person with knowledge said. Libya had been pumping 1.1 million barrels a day as of March 1, with Sharara contributing 300,000 of that. The field is run by a joint venture between the National Oil Corp. and Repsol SA, Total SA, OMV AG and Statoil ASA.

More details:

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-03-04/biggest-libya-oil-field-is-said-to-stop-pumping-on-pipeline-halt>

- **Algeria attacks false Qatari media reports of conflict with Saudi Arabia, UAE**

Algeria's Foreign Ministry has criticized false press reports published by Qatari media outlets' claims of conflict in relations between Algiers and Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. Spokesman for the Foreign Ministry, Abdulaziz ben Ali Shareef said that "Algeria's position on the Gulf crisis is clear, it stands at a distance from all its parties," stressing that the information published by international and Gulf media on the existence of differences between Algeria, Saudi Arabia and the UAE were "wrong, if not fake".

More details:

<https://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/north-africa/2018/03/05/Algeria-attacks-false-Qatari-media-reports-of-conflict-with-Saudi-Arabia-UAE.html>

- **Algeria condemns Burkina Faso's car bomb attacks**

Algeria on Sunday condemned the terrorist attacks that targeted Burkina Faso's military headquarters and French embassy in Ouagadougou. In a statement to APS news agency, spokesman for Algerian Foreign Ministry, Abdelaziz Benali Cherif, stressed that his country "firmly and unequivocally condemns terrorism under all its forms."

More details:

http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-03/05/c_137015977.htm

- **Tunisia, battling rough economy, looks to expand ties with Spain**

Spain and Tunisia pledged to strengthen economic and military ties during a visit by Spanish Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy to Tunis. The official visit, the first by a Spanish prime minister to Tunisia since the “Arab spring” uprisings in 2011, saw the two countries sign eight memorandums and agreements on economic, cultural and educational matters. Spain also announced a \$30.8 million line of credit for small and medium-sized businesses in Tunisia.

More details:

<https://thearabweekly.com/tunisia-battling-rough-economy-looks-expand-ties-spain>

9. AFGHANISTAN – PAKISTAN

- **Respect Afghan constitution, Pentagon tells Taliban**

The Trump administration has once again asked the Taliban to abandon terror and respect Afghanistan’s constitution

More details:

<https://www.pajhwok.com/en/2018/03/05/respect-afghan-constitution-pentagon-tells-taliban>

- **22 militants killed in Uruzgan and Helmand airstrikes**

At least twenty two militants were killed in a series of airstrikes conducted in southern Helmand and Uruzgan provinces of Afghanistan.

More details:

<https://www.khaama.com/22-militants-killed-in-uruzgan-and-helmand-airstrikes-mod-04577/>

- **Pentagon urges Pakistan to avail new opportunities for defeating terrorism**

As the United States and Pakistan reengage on Tuesday in efforts to improve their ties, the Pentagon reminded Islamabad that war against terrorism in the South Asian region has reached an inflection point and it should use this opportunity to defeat terrorists.

More details:

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1393247/pentagon-urges-pakistan-to-avail-new-opportunities-for-defeating-terrorism>

- **They can't erase us by snatching our electoral symbol, says Nawaz**

Former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif spoke on Monday against the recent decision of the Supreme Court barring his party members from contesting any elections as Pakistan Muslim League-N candidates.

More details:

<https://www.geo.tv/latest/184808-people-had-rejected-decision-against-me-since-day-one-says-nawaz>

- **Cabinet Holds Extraordinary Meeting**

Chaired by President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani, the cabinet meeting was held, with the justice minister presenting the bankruptcy draft law, which was approved with some changes, said the Presidential Press Office in a statement Sunday.

More details:

<http://www.bakhtarnews.com.af/eng/politics/item/32246-cabinet-holds-extraordinary-meeting.html>

- **42 Daesh And Taliban Fighters Killed In Afghan Airstrikes**

Afghan Army forces conducted several airstrikes in the past 24 hours and at least 42 insurgents including Daesh militants were killed.

More details:

<https://www.tolonews.com/afghanistan/42-daesh-and-taliban-fighters-killed-afghan-airstrikes>

- **Pakistan's free trade agreement talks with Turkey nearing collapse**

The commerce ministry has asked the government for clearance to take a long simmering dispute with Turkey to the World Trade Organisation (WTO) after prolonged discussions on a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between the two countries have hit an impasse.

More detail:

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1392850/pakistans-free-trade-agreement-talks-with-turkey-nearing-collapse>

- **Herat On Threshold Of Holding Civil Services Entry Test**

Herat (BNA) Mass entry test of civil services will be held during the current week in Herat. Hundreds of Herat residents including women and men have electronically registered so far for the entry test.

More details:

<http://www.bakhtarnews.com.af/eng/social/item/32247-herat-on-threshold-of-holding-civil-services-entry-test.html>

- **ECP ordered to withhold notifications of senators-elect believed to be dual nationals**

Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Mian Saqib Nisar on Monday ordered the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) to withhold notifications announcing the victory of senators-elect believed to be holding dual nationalities. During the hearing of a suo motu case concerning civil servants holding dual nationality, Justice Nisar inquired how many senators were dual nationals.

More Details:

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1393344/ecp-ordered-to-withhold-notifications-of-senators-elect-believed-to-be-dual-nationals>

10.TURKEY AND THE MIDDLE EAST

- **Rouhani, Erdoğan slated to meet in April**

Iranian President Hassan Rouhani and his Turkish counterpart Recep Tayyip Erdoğan are scheduled to meet next month, Chairman of Turkish Parliament's Foreign Committee Volkan Bozkir said Sunday.

More details:

<https://en.mehrnews.com/news/132606/Rouhani-Erdoğan-slated-to-meet-in-April>

- **Turkish warplanes hit pro-Assad militants in Afrin - monitor**

Turkish warplanes struck pro-Assad militants in the northwestern Afrin region of Syria on Saturday, killing at least 36, as Turkey's assault in the region gathered pace, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said. On January 20, Turkey launched Operation Olive Branch to clear YPG/PKK and Daesh militants from Afrin.

More Details:

<https://www.trtworld.com/turkey/turkish-warplanes-hit-pro-assad-militants-in-afrin-monitor-15650>

- **Turkish, French leaders exchange views on Syria**

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and his French counterpart Emmanuel Macron discussed over the phone the humanitarian crisis in Syria's besieged Eastern Ghouta region, a presidential source said on Sunday. The phone conversation came as Bashar al-Assad regime forces' attacks

continued on civilians in the opposition-hold area near capital Damascus despite decisions to implement a ceasefire made separately by Russia and the UN Security Council.

More Details:

<http://www.worldbulletin.net/turkey/199433/turkish-french-leaders-exchange-views-on-syria>

- **Countering terror Turkey's 'most legitimate right': PM**

The fight against terrorism is Turkey's "most legitimate right", Prime Minister Binali Yildirim said on Sunday. "Wherever the threat -- directed to our country -- comes from, that place is a target for us. The fight against terrorism is our most legitimate right," Yildirim said during ruling Justice and Development (AK) Party's provincial women's congress in western Mugla province.

More Details:

<https://aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/countering-terror-turkeys-most-legitimate-right-pm/1079522>

- **Turkish military forces destroy 924 terror targets during Operation Olive Branch**

924 terror targets have been destroyed by Turkish military forces since the launch of Operation Olive Branch in Syria's northwestern Afrin region. A total of 924 PKK/KCK/PYD-YPG, Daesh terrorist targets have been destroyed in airstrikes since the launch of Operation Olive Branch in Syria's northwestern Afrin region, the Turkish General Staff said in a statement on Saturday.

More Details:

<http://www.aneas.com.tr/turkey/2018/03/03/turkish-military-forces-destroy-924-terror-targets-during-operation-olive-branch>

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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