



MIDDLE EAST DAILY BULLETIN

GÜNLÜK ORTADOĐU BÜLTENİ

Domestic Policy in the Middle East Countries

Bölge Ülkelerinde İç Siyaset

The Restructuring Procces of Iraq

Irak'ın Yeniden Yapılanma Süreci

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1. IRAQ

- **Fifa lifts three-decade ban on Iraq hosting international games**

Fifa has lifted its near three-decade ban on Iraq hosting international football matches, with the cities of Erbil, Basra and Karbala being approved to stage official competitive games. The three cities had been allowed to organise friendlies in the last year on condition that the country's security situation was stable.

More Details:

<https://www.thenational.ae/world/mena/fifa-lifts-three-decade-ban-on-iraq-hosting-international-games-1.713720>

- **The Political Bureau of the National Union takes a decision to remove Barham Saleh and Najmuddin Kareem from the ranks of the party**

The Political Bureau of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan in Sulaymaniyah held a meeting to discuss the current situation and preparations for participation in the Iraqi elections. On the other hand, media sources said that the leadership of the Patriotic Union took a decision to remove Barham Saleh and Najmuddin Kareem from the ranks of the party and the Political Bureau.

More Details:

http://www.ninanews.com/News_Details.aspx?kU%252bJba3O4vfhpdlEjCafBA%253d%253d

- **Iraqis state sit-in to protest collapse of services in Baghdad**

Hundreds of Iraqis staged a sit-in in Baghdad on March 18 to protest deteriorating services in the capital's eastern part. Protesters set tires ablaze and blocked a highway linking Baghdad to the eastern province of Diyala, amid calls for Prime Minister Haidar al-Abadi to intervene to improve the quality of services in the area.

More Details:

<http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/iraqis-state-sit-in-to-protest-collapse-of-services-in-baghdad-128938>

- **Iraq rebuilding conf. shows world's desire to support stability - PM Abadi**

Iraqi Prime Minister Haidar Al-Abadi said Sunday Kuwait-hosted international conference on reconstruction of Iraq reflected the international community's support of the country's stability. "The conference in Kuwait succeeded in sending a message that the world was standing by Iraq for its reconstruction and stability, in the wake of the victory against the terrorist Islamic State," Abadi was

quoted by a government statement as saying during a meeting with European ambassadors in Baghdad.

More Details:

<https://www.kuna.net.kw/ArticleDetails.aspx?id=2703767&language=en>

- **KRG health, education workers will be paid in ‘next two days’: Iraqi gov’t**

The Iraqi government announced on Sunday that the salaries of education and health ministry employees in the Kurdistan Region will be paid in the “next two days.” Saad Hadithi, an Iraqi government spokesperson, told Iraq’s state TV Al-Iraqiya on Sunday that “in the next two days, Monday and Tuesday, the salaries of the education and health ministries will be paid by the Iraqi Federal Government.”

More Details:

<http://www.rudaw.net/english/kurdistan/180320181>

- **120 Yazidi children still captured by ISIS: MP**

Iraqi PM Vian Dakhil said Monday that 120 Yazidi children are now captured by ISIS terror group. In a statement, Dakhil said the children whose ages range from 10 to 13 years were captured by ISIS in Sinjar. They were forced to wear military uniforms, and they are expected to participate in potential terror attacks, Dakhil added.

More Details:

<http://www.thebaghdadpost.com/en/story/25008/120-Yazidi-children-still-captured-by-ISIS-MP>

- **Iraqi Security Council approves Baghdad-Tehran Intel. MoU**

The Iraqi National Security Council has approved a memorandum of understanding on intelligence cooperation and coordination between Tehran and Baghdad. According to the media office of Iraq’s prime minister, the Iraqi National Security Council in a Sunday session chaired by PM Haider al-Abadi reviewed and approved a memorandum of understanding on intelligence and security cooperation and coordination between Tehran and Baghdad.

More Details:

<https://en.mehrnews.com/news/132917/Iraqi-Security-Council-approves-Baghdad-Tehran-intel-MoU>

- **US Planning to Expand Military Bases in Iraq: Lawmaker**

An Iraqi lawmaker has warned of plots by the US to expand its military bases in Iraq, stressing that his country is no longer in need of American trainers or security advisers. MP Ali al-Morshidy said on Sunday that the US administration is plotting to expand its “military bases in Iraq under the pretext of fighting the ISIS terrorist group and providing security advice for the Iraqi government.”

More Details:

<http://alwaght.com/en/News/127040/US-Planning-to-Expand-Military-Bases-in-Iraq-Lawmaker>

- **IS bombs left 45 civilians killed, injured in past few months – Fallujah mayor**

Over 15 civilians, mostly women and children, were killed while 30 others injured in the Iraqi city of Fallujah over the past few months as bombs left by Islamic State (IS) militants went off in different parts in the city, a well-placed official was quoted as saying Sunday. Speaking to Basnews website, Fallujah’s Mayor Issa al-Sayer said “IS militants have left many explosive charges and booby-trapped houses at al-Shohada and al-Nuaimiya districts in southern Fallujah after Iraqi troops forced them out of the city in June 2016.”

More Details:

<https://www.iraqinews.com/iraq-war/is-bombs-left-45-civilians-killed-injured-in-past-few-months-fallujah-mayor/>

- **IS Attack Kills 5 Civilians Southwest Kirkuk**

At least five civilians were killed in an Islamic State (IS) attack on a village near Riyadh subdistrict of southwest of Kirkuk province, a security source said. Speaking to al-Sumariyah News, the source said one woman is among the victims. Security forces have been sent to secure the area and search for the perpetrators, according to the source.

More Details:

<http://www.basnews.com/index.php/en/news/iraq/423593>

- **Iraq seeks investors to build two southern refineries- oil ministry**

Iraq has invited foreign companies and investors to bid for the construction and operation of two new refineries in southern Iraq, the oil ministry said on Sunday. One refinery is to be built in Wasit province with a production capacity of 100,000 barrels per day (bpd), and the other in Diwaniyah province with a capacity of 70,000 bpd, the oil ministry said in two statements.

More Details:

https://www.zawya.com/mena/en/story/Iraq_seeks_investors_to_build_two_southern_refineries_or_il_ministry-TR20180318nL8N1R01IMX2/

- **Iraq nabs senior Daesh terrorist near Mosul**

Iraqi forces on Monday captured a senior Daesh terrorist near Mosul in northern Iraq, according to a local police officer. The terrorist, identified as Dawoud Mohamed Saleh, was arrested during a raid on a house in al-Shura island south of Mosul, Capt. Shakir al-Wandi told Anadolu Agency.

More Details:

<https://aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/iraq-nabs-senior-daesh-terrorist-near-mosul/1093052>

- **Iraqi court issues arrest warrant for Nineveh former governor**

On Sunday, the Nineveh Investigative Court, which is specialised in integrity issues issued an arrest warrant against Nineveh former governor, Atheel Nujaifi. The Iraqi Commission of Integrity who made the announcement did not explain the charges against Nujaifi. A source told Anadolu news agency that “the arrest warrant has been circulated to all provinces”.

More Details:

<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20180319-iraqi-court-issues-arrest-warrant-for-nineveh-former-governor/>

2. SYRIA

- **Turkish army: Afrin town center taken under control**

The Turkish military said Sunday it had taken complete control of the Afrin town center in northwestern Syria. “The Afrin town center was taken under control by Turkish Armed Forces and Free Syrian Army,” the General Staff said on its official Twitter account. A search operation for mines and improvised explosive devices is underway, it added. Earlier, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan announced that Turkey-backed forces took complete control of the town center at 08.30 a.m. local time (0500GMT).

More Details:

<https://aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/turkish-army-afrin-town-center-taken-under-control/1092240>

- **Over 73,000 People Left E Ghouta during Humanitarian Pauses - Russian MoD**

Over 73,000 civilians have left Damascus suburb of Eastern Ghouta in Syria since the opening of humanitarian corridors, the Russian Defense Ministry's Center for Syrian reconciliation said in a statement.

More Details:

<https://sputniknews.com/middleeast/201803181062666065-syria-eastern-ghouta-people-leave-during-humanitarian-pause/>

- **Syria prepares against a US offensive**

The Syrian regime is preparing countermeasures against a possible American military offensive, the London-based Arabic-language Asharq al-Awsat daily reported this morning citing Western diplomats.

More Details:

<https://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-5179044,00.html>

- **Larijani: Iran always affirms political solution to crisis in Syria**

Speaker of the Iranian Shura Council Ali Larijani said that Iran has always emphasized on the political solution to the crisis in Syria and the crises in the region. Larijani's remarks came during a meeting with Omani Minister of Foreign Affairs Yusuf bin Alawi in Tehran on Sunday.

More Details:

<https://sana.sy/en/?p=130963>

- **Astana to host 9th round on Syrian crisis settlement in May 2018**

Astana will host the 9th round of international meeting on a high level in on Syrian crisis settlement in mid of May 2018, reads the joint statement of the foreign ministers of cease fire guarantor states in Syria- Russia, Turkey and Iran.

More Details:

<http://www.kaztag.kz/en/news/detail.php?ID=606934>

- **Syria's Afrin residents welcome Turkish forces with open arms**

Locals in northwestern Syria's Afrin on Sunday welcomed Turkish Armed Forces and the Free Syrian Army (FSA) with open arms. Turkish forces took complete control of Afrin town centre early Sunday morning as part of the Operation Olive Branch.

More Details:

<https://www.trtworld.com/mea/syria-s-afrin-residents-welcome-turkish-forces-with-open-arms-16014>

- **Syria's Bashar Assad visits troops on front line near Damascus**

Syria's President Bashar Assad has visited troops on the front line in the newly captured areas of eastern Ghouta, near the capital Damascus, hailing their recent advances as a part of a larger battle against global terrorism. Standing in a neighbourhood street, Mr Assad congratulated his troops during the visit broadcast on state-run Al-Ikhbariya TV.

More Details:

http://www.heraldscotland.com/news/16095958.Syria_s_Bashar_Assad_visits_troops_on_front_line_near_Damascus/

3. IRAN

- **Insecurity detrimental to all regional countries: Iran's president**

Iranian President Hassan Rouhani says the spread of insecurity and instability in the Middle East will be highly detrimental to all regional countries.

More details:

<http://www.presstv.com/Detail/2018/03/18/555861/Rouhani-bin-Alawi-Iran-Oman-Yemen>

- **Iran will respond to U.S. nuclear deal breach: Shamkhani**

Secretary of the Supreme National Security Council Ali Shamkhani said on Saturday that Iran will respond to U.S. violations of the 2015 nuclear deal, formally known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action.

More details:

<http://www.tehrantimes.com/news/422159/Iran-will-respond-to-U-S-nuclear-deal-breach-Shamkhani>

- **US violated JCPOA 19 times: Iran MP**

United States has never been after implementation of the July 2015 nuclear deal as it has violated the deal 19 times, an Iranian lawmaker announced here on Monday. Although the world welcomed the Iran Deal known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), the US never stopped

showing its disagreement on the deal at the outset, Hossein Naqavi Hosseini told the Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA).

More Details:

<http://www.irna.ir/en/News/82866904>

- **Iran has nearly doubled gas production at South Pars:**

Iran has nearly doubled gas production from South Pars, the world's largest gas field, in the past year, said President Hassan Rouhani on Sunday. Gas production at South Pars increased from 285 million cubic meters to 555 million cubic meters in the year from March 20, 2017, Rouhani was quoted as saying by Reuters.

More details:

<http://www.iran-daily.com/News/211891.html>

- **Iran Says Welcomes Baghdad-Erbil Agreements**

Iranian Ambassador to Iraq Iraj Masjedi said the Islamic Republic welcomes recent agreements reached between Baghdad and Erbil, which lifted a nearly six-month air blockade imposed on the Iraqi Kurdistan Region.

More details:

<http://ifpnews.com/wired/iran-says-welcomes-baghdad-erbil-agreements/>

- **Iran to Stick to Constructive Int'l Interaction: President**

Iranian President Hassan Rouhani reaffirmed his administration's commitment to the policy of constructive interaction with the world in the new Iranian year (starts on March 21), also saying that the Islamic Republic will never compromise its national interests. In comments made Sunday at the final weekly Cabinet session of the current year, Rouhani said his administration would keep efforts to strengthen regional security and stability in the New Year.

More Details:

<https://www.tasnimnews.com/en/news/2018/03/18/1683928/iran-to-stick-to-constructive-int-l-interaction-president>

- **President: Iran to defend national interests despite US, allies' intention**

Iran's President Hassan Rouhani underlined his country's determination to continue efforts to establish regional stability and have constructive interaction with the world.

More details:

<http://parstoday.com/en/news/iran-i79451-president-iran-to-defend-national-interests-despite-us-allies-intention>

- **Ahmadinejad’s Confidant Arrested**

Esfandiar Rahim Mashaei, a very close ally of former president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, was arrested on the afternoon of Saturday, March 17. The pro-Ahmadinejad website Dolat-e Bahar [Persian link] was first to report the news, stating that a group of security agents stopped Mashaei in his car before arresting him.

More details:

<https://iranwire.com/en/features/5233>

4. ISRAEL – PALESTINE

- **Israeli Soldier Injured in Jerusalem: Suspected Attacker Shot Dead**

An Israeli soldier was stabbed and injured in Jerusalem’s Old City and according to an Israeli TV channel, the suspected attacker was shot dead. An Israeli police spokesperson confirmed that the suspected assailant was killed near the Western Wall. The escalation in Jerusalem followed Trump’s decision to recognize the city as Israel’s capital.

More details:

<http://www.palestinechronicle.com/israeli-soldier-injured-in-jerusalem-suspected-attacker-shot-dead-video/>

- **Hamas Positions Targeted by Israeli Airstrikes after Bomb Detonation on Gaza Border**

Israeli airforce fighters struck a series of targets in Gaza, on Saturday night, in retaliation for a bomb detonated near the border the same day, reports the Israeli military spokesperson. In a series of posts to their official twitter account, military officials claim to have targeted Hamas outposts in the central Gaza Strip.

More details:

<http://imemc.org/article/hamas-positions-targeted-by-israeli-airstrikes-after-bomb-detonation-on-gaza-border/>

- **Gaza Factions Announce Marches for the Palestinian Right of Return**

A national high committee, assembled by Palestinian factions in the Hamas-run Gaza Strip, announced on Saturday that it was coordinating a number of events that would culminate in a major a protest march that would demand the right of return for Palestinians. The events and demonstrations aim to reject any attempts to eliminate the Palestinian cause. It also seeks to lift the siege on the Gaza Strip, which Israel imposed 11 years ago.

More Details:

<https://aawsat.com/english/home/article/1208811/gaza-factions-announce-marches-palestinian-right-return>

- **Netanyahu attacks Gaza 'to deflect attention' from corruption charges**

Israel's Prime Minister uses attacks against the Gaza Strip to deflect attention from corruption charges against him, and the potential dissolution of his coalition government, Quds Press said on Sunday. The comment was made after Benjamin Netanyahu took to Twitter to point out that the Israeli occupation forces had destroyed two tunnels in Gaza. He warned the international community that money being raised to help Palestinian refugees is used by "terror" groups. "It is time for the international community to recognise that Gaza aid money is being buried underground," he alleged, in reference to the tunnels.

More Details:

<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20180319-netanyahu-attacks-gaza-to-deflect-attention-from-corruption-charges/>

- **Israel blasts Gaza underground tunnel**

Israel's military carried out an air raid overnight against an underground Hamas facility in the Gaza Strip and destroyed a separate tunnel under construction that could be used for attacks, it said Sunday. No casualties were reported in either operation, which came after an explosive device was detonated near the Gaza border with Israel, the latest in a string of such incidents.

More Details:

<http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=87719>

- **Israeli army detains 15 Palestinians in West Bank**

Israeli forces have rounded up 15 Palestinians in overnight raids across the Israeli-occupied West Bank, according to the Israeli military on Monday. The individuals were arrested for "suspected involvement in popular terrorist activities," the army said in a statement without giving further details.

More Details:

<https://aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/israeli-army-detains-15-palestinians-in-west-bank/1092889>

- **Jewish terror group sprays racist slogans on Arab homes near Jerusalem**

Members of the Jewish terror group, Price Tag, Monday sprayed racist slogans on walls and a vehicle belonging to Arab residents in the village of Hizma, northeast of Jerusalem, and slashed tires of cars, according to local sources.

More Details:

<http://english.wafa.ps/page.aspx?id=ekEjnga96949367592aekEjng>

5. JORDAN and LEBANON

- **Hariri to defend moderation as electoral race heats up**

Prime Minister Saad Hariri pledged Sunday to defend the country's Arabism, moderation and the Taif Accord, part of the Future Movement's campaigning for the upcoming parliamentary elections, whose battle is gaining momentum with more factions announcing their candidates for Lebanon's first polls in nine years. Meanwhile Lebanon, boosted by the success of last week's Rome II Conference in support of the Lebanese Army and security forces, has prepared a blueprint to forward to the CEDRE conference, also known as Paris IV, set for next month to shore up Lebanon's ailing economy and aging infrastructure, officials said Sunday.

More details:

<http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2018/Mar-19/442095-hariri-to-defend-moderation-as-electoral-race-heats-up.ashx>

- **Jumblat Criticizes 'Privatization Policies' of Electricity Sector**

Progressive Socialist Party leader MP Walid Jumblat urged the energy ministry on Monday to implement "confinement" against Debbas Group, an Electricite Du Liban contractor, after failing to pay the salaries of its employees for over three months. "Amidst the indifference of EDL officials and of Debbas Group, the staff have arrived at a state of hunger due to unpaid salaries for three months. I call on the Ministry of Energy to put the company in confinement," said Jumblat in a tweet.

More details:

<http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/243696-jumblat-criticizes-privatization-policies-of-electricity-sector>

- **Rahi, Bassil convene in Bkirki**

Maronite Patriarch, Cardinal Beshara Boutros al-Rahi, met Sunday evening in Bkirki with Foreign Affairs Minister Gebran Bassil, with talks centering on the current situation. The Patriarch later met, in the presence of Bassil, with electoral candidates: Brigadier General Shamel Roukoz, Roger Azar and Syndicate Head Sharaf Bou Sharaf, accompanied by a number of Free Patriotic Movement officials.

More details:

<http://nna-leb.gov.lb/en/show-news/89267/Rahi-Bassil-convene-in-Bkirki>

- **Sayyed Nasrallah to Announce Hezbollah Electoral Program**

Hezbollah Secretary General Sayyed Hasan Nasrallah is to announce the resistance party's electoral program on Wednesday night. Hezbollah Media Relations Office announced on Sunday that Sayyed Nasrallah is speak via Al-Manar TV on Wednesday at 8:30 p.m. (Beirut time). "Sayyed Nasrallah delivers a speech on Wednesday at 8:30 p.m. in which his eminence will announce Hezbollah's electoral program and will tackle latest political developments," a statement by the Media Relations Office read.

More details:

<http://english.almanar.com.lb/466772>

- **Canada's Trudeau calls King to discuss region, ties**

His Majesty King Abdullah on Sunday received a phone call from Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, in which they discussed mechanisms of enhancing bilateral relations between the two countries in various areas, and the latest global and regional developments, according to a Royal Court statement.

More details:

<http://jordantimes.com/news/local/canada%E2%80%99s-trudeau-calls-king-discuss-region-ties>

- **Mustaqbal-Lebanese Forces Dispute Threatens Their Electoral Alliance**

Disputes emerged on Sunday between the Mustaqbal Movement and the Lebanese Forces, indicating that the two parties will not be allied in the May 6 parliamentary elections. Reports predict that in the majority of electoral districts, the two parties would choose not to ally, except in the Alley-Chouf constituency, where both are joining hands with the Socialist Progressive Party.

More Details:

<https://aawsat.com/english/home/article/1209641/mustaqbal-lebanese-forces-dispute-threatens-their-electoral-alliance>

6. ARABIAN PENINSULA AND THE GULF OF BASRA

- **Assembly committee wants total Kuwaitization by 2023**

Head of the National Assembly's committee for the replacement of expatriates in public sector jobs MP Khalil Al-Saleh said yesterday the panel is determined that the replacement of all expatriates in government jobs must be completed by 2023 in accordance with a government plan

More Details:

<http://news.kuwaittimes.net/website/assembly-committee-wants-total-kuwaitization-by-2023/>

- **Dangers from Iran will dominate Saudi crown prince's talks with Trump**

Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman was due in Washington Monday for talks with US President Donald Trump that are likely to be dominated by concern over Iran's spreading regional influence and its ongoing nuclear program.

More Details:

<http://www.arabnews.com/node/1269001/saudi-arabia>

- **Military drills begins in Saudi Arabia**

The Gulf Shield 1 Joint drills, organised by the Ministry of Defence of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, kicked off yesterday in the Eastern Region in participation with military forces from 23 countries, as well as Saudi forces.

More Details:

<http://wam.ae/en/details/1395302675721>

- **Weapons shipment to Al Houthis is worrying**

The seizure of an arms shipment in Yemen's Marib province is troubling at a time when the conflict has shown no signs of abating. The driver of the truck transporting assault rifles says the consignment was destined for the Al Houthis fighting the internationally-recognised government of Yemeni President Abd Rabbo Mansour Hadi.

More Details:

<http://gulfnews.com/opinion/editorials/weapons-shipment-to-al-houthis-is-worrying-1.2190275>

- **Egypt, UAE Committed to Arab Boycott of Qatar**

Egypt and the United Arab Emirates renewed on Sunday the stance of the four Arab countries boycotting Qatar, urging Doha to abandon its support of terrorist organizations.

More Details:

<https://aawsat.com/english/home/article/1209626/egypt-uae-committed-arab-boycott-qatar>

- **Israel, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Bahrain, UAE, and Oman align with Trump**

It is nothing short of amazing that seven Arab states joined Israel at a White House conference on Gaza, and it is shameful that the PA declined to come. It will have to suffer the results.

More Details:

<https://www.israelnationalnews.com/Articles/Article.aspx/21867>

- **Yemen to free 800 African undocumented migrants**

The Interior Ministry of Yemen ordered the freeing of at least 800 undocumented African migrants held in southern Aden on Saturday, according to a Yemeni official. Colonel Khaled al-Ulvani, head of the Department of Refugees and Migration Issues, which is part of the ministry, told Anadolu Agency that the minister called them and instructed the freedom of more than 800 African migrants being held at the refugee center in Aden governorate's al-Burayqeh district.

More Details:

<https://aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/yemen-to-free-800-african-undocumented-migrants-/1092020>

- **Saudi crown prince says his country to seek nuclear bomb if Iran does**

Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz stated that, if Iran were to obtain a nuclear weapon, Riyadh would do likewise, ending speculation of how the kingdom would react towards what it perceives as its greatest threat. "Saudi Arabia does not want to acquire any nuclear bomb but, without a doubt, if Iran developed a nuclear bomb, we will follow suit as soon as possible," Crown Prince Mohammed, who is also the Saudi defence minister, told CBS News' "60 Minutes."

More Details:

<http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=87725>

7. EGYPT

- **African Union deploys an Election Observation Mission to Egypt's presidential election**

At the invitation of the Government and National Elections Commission of the Arab Republic of Egypt, the Chairperson of the African Union Commission (AUC), His Excellency Moussa Faki Mahamat, has approved the deployment of a Short-Term Election Observation Mission (AUEOM) to Egypt to observe the country's presidential election scheduled for 26-28 March 2018.

More Details:

<https://africabusinesscommunities.com/news/african-union-deploys-an-election-observation-mission-to-egypt%E2%80%99s-presidential-election/>

- **Egypt: 4 troops, 36 Islamic militants killed in Sinai battle**

Egypt's military says four troops and 36 Islamic militants have died in the past five days of fighting in the restive Sinai Peninsula. Monday's statement says one officer was among the four killed army personnel. It also says that eight soldiers were wounded, including two officers.

More Details:

<http://www.foxnews.com/world/2018/03/19/egypt-4-troops-36-islamic-militants-killed-in-sinai-battle.html>

- **Israeli Minister holds emergency meetings after Egypt's disruption of mobile network**

Israel's Minister of Communications, Ayoob Kara, has held emergency meetings with representatives of the country's mobile phone networks and the civic heads of southern communities to discuss the Egyptian army's allegedly deliberate disruption of the Israeli cell phone coverage, the Globe has reported. The Israeli newspaper explained that people living in southern Israel have not been able to make or receive phone calls or text messages for 20 days.

More Details:

<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20180319-israeli-minister-holds-emergency-meetings-after-egypts-disruption-of-mobile-network/>

- **Egypt and UN sign Partnership Development Framework Agreement 2018-2022**

Egypt and the United Nations signed in Cairo Sunday a \$1.2 billion agreement focusing on inclusive economic development, social justice, women's empowerment and sustainable management of natural resources. The Partnership Development Framework Agreement 2018-2022 was signed by

Minister of Investment and International Cooperation Sahar Nasr and UN resident coordinator in Egypt Richard Dictus.

More Details:

<http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/3/12/293051/-.aspx>

- **Egypt resumes natural gas transfers to Jordan in early 2019: oil minister**

Egypt's Minister of Oil Tarek El Mula stated on Saturday that Egypt will resume natural gas transfers to Jordan in early 2019 after it had been suspended in 2014 following a bombing of the gas pipeline in the Lahfan area in al-Arish city of Egypt's North Sinai.

More Details:

<http://www.egyptindependent.com/egypt-resumes-natural-gas-transfers-to-jordan-in-early-2019-oil-minister/>

- **UAE, Egypt discuss opportunities in 13 sectors**

The Joint UAE-Egypt Economic Committee discussed opportunities, challenges and the potential prospects of cooperation in several vital sectors between the countries during a meeting in Cairo, Egypt, recently. The meeting was held in the presence of Eng Sultan bin Saeed Al Mansoori, UAE Minister of Economy, and Tariq Qabeel, Egypt Minister of Trade and Industry, said a statement.

More Details:

http://www.tradearabia.com/news/IND_338058.html

- **Egypt Presidential Elections: Expatriate Voting Ends as Saudi Arabia Records Highest Turnout**

Committees assigned with organizing Egypt's presidential elections, with ballots being set up in Egyptian embassies around the world, will end their work by Sunday, three days after they were opened. The elections see two candidates, incumbent and favorite President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi and his rival al-Ghad party leader Moussa Mustafa Moussa.

More Details:

<https://aawsat.com/english/home/article/1208711/egypt-presidential-elections-expatriate-voting-ends-saudi-arabia-records>

8. NORTH AFRICA

- **Women's involvement in politics: Algerian State to work for implementation of recommendations**

Minister of Interior, Local Authorities and National Planning Nouredine Bedoui affirmed Sunday, in Algiers, that the Algerian State "will work for the implementation of the recommendations of the international conference on women's involvement in politics to make from it a roadmap which enshrines and strengthens the principles of the Constitutions in terms of promoting women's political rights.

More Details:

<http://en.aps.dz/algeria/23351-women-s-involvement-in-politics-algerian-state-to-work-for-implementation-of-recommendations>

- **Conference in Paris on "transition in Tunisia and its repercussions on Europe"**

"The transition in Tunisia and its repercussions on Europe" was the theme of the conference held Saturday by the Union of Arab published at the Paris Book Fair being organised from March 16 to 19. National Constituent Assembly (NCA) members, Nadia Chaabane and Selim Ben Abdesslem, authors of "Tunisia, second Republic: chronicle of a constituent assembly 2011-2014" and "the parenthesis of the constituent assembly (Volume I): from dream to nightmare and the parenthesis of the constituent assembly (Volume II): from fracture to compromise", respectively, as well as academic Baccar Ghérib, author of the book: "Thinking the transition with Gramsci", analyzed the political events in Tunisia and the progress of the democratic transition in the country.

More Details:

<https://www.tap.info.tn/en/Portal-Politics/9972488-conference-in-paris>

- **Saif Gaddafi for Libya President: Press Conference in Tunisia**

Local Tunisian media and social media activists circulated over the last two days an invitation for the press to attend a press conference in Tunis to shed light on Saif Al-Islam Gaddafi's presidential bid. "Mr. Ayman Abu Ras – the spokesman for the Libyan Popular Front – will hold a presser on Monday at 10.30 a.m." The ad for the Moamar Gaddafi son's quest to come back to Libya as the leader says.

More Details:

<http://www.libyanexpress.com/saif-gaddafi-for-libya-president-press-conference-in-tunisia/>

- **Morocco says ready to host World Cup 2026 in 14 stadiums**

Morocco on Saturday pushed its bid to host the 2026 World Cup in the name of Africa despite tough competition from a joint effort by the United States, Canada and Mexico. Two days after officially submitting Morocco's bid book to FIFA, the head of the bid committee Moulay Hafid Elalamy outlined to the press the country's readiness and determination to host the game.

More Details:

<https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/294078-morocco-says-ready-to-host-world-cup-2026-in-14-stadiums>

- **Algeria: Feminist Groups Arbitrarily Suspended**

Algerian authorities sealed the premises of two women's rights associations on February 27 on the grounds that they were not registered, Human Rights Watch said today. The groups were allowed to reopen "temporarily" on March 5.

More Details:

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/03/19/algeria-feminist-groups-arbitrarily-suspended>

- **Algeria Army Chief of Staff says sovereignty is red line**

Algerian Army Chief of Staff on Sunday warned that Algeria's sovereignty, security and stability is a red line that no one can cross. Lieutenant-General Ahmed Gaid Salah said there is "no room" to harm the country's "security, stability and the capabilities of its people." He said so in a statement during a visit to the eastern province of Constantine, pointing out that Algeria, which suffered in the past colonialism, managed to reach independence thanks to a massive popular revolution.

More Details:

http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-03/19/c_137048504.htm

- **Tunisia's Central Bank targets inflation but may hurt growth prospects**

The Central Bank of Tunisia tightened its monetary policy in an attempt to control inflation, a move that risks complicating the government's efforts to spur economic recovery and deliver requested reforms. Tunisian economists said the bank's interest rate increase could backfire, arguing that higher inflation rates were the result of the increase in non-essential imports. They said soaring import bills widened the current account deficit and weakened the Tunisian dinar, causing a rise in prices while the country's foreign currency reserves were shrinking.

More Details:

<http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=87722>

9. AFGHANISTAN – PAKISTAN

- **Researchers Release Chabahar Port Analysis**

Chabahar Port's Strategic Analysis was released on Sunday in Kabul and highlights the importance of the port in terms of economic benefits.

More details:

<https://www.tolonews.com/business/researchers-release-chabahar-port-analysis>

- **Afghan Security, Stability Top UK Agenda**

The security, development and governance of Afghanistan remains crucial to reducing the terrorist threat to the UK, the Defense Secretary reaffirmed in his first visit to Afghanistan.

More details:

<http://www.bakhtarnews.com.af/eng/politics/item/32429-afghan-security-stability-top-uk-agenda.html>

- **Islamabad seeks rehabilitation of Taliban in Kabul's political setup**

Amid ongoing efforts to end the violence through reconciliation by reaching a peace agreement with the Taliban, reports indicate that Islamabad is seeking the rehabilitation of the Taliban into the future political setup of Afghanistan.

More details:

<https://www.khaama.com/islamabad-seeks-rehabilitation-of-taliban-in-kabuls-political-setup-04678/>

- **Supreme Court summons airline officials over Rao Anwar's bid to flee abroad**

The Supreme Court resumed hearing today the suo motu case of Naqeebullah Mehsud's extra-judicial murder and the hunt for wanted police officer Rao Anwar.

More details:

<https://www.geo.tv/latest/186991-rao-anwars-arrest-sindh-ig-to-submit-progress-report-in-supreme-court-today>

- **China-Afghanistan Friendship as Old as the Silk Road**

Afghanistan is one of China's important neighboring countries. Sitting at the heart of Asia, it has land routes connecting different parts of the continent and used to be a bright pearl of the ancient Silk Road. The long-lasting friendship between China and Afghanistan since ancient times now is the solid foundation of the two-country's relationship, which never stops moving forward.

More details:

<http://en.people.cn/n3/2018/0319/c90000-9438954.html>

- **Pakistan seeks rehabilitation of Taliban in Kabul setup**

Pakistan is apparently pushing for the rehabilitation of the Taliban leadership in a future setup in Afghanistan, as both Washing-ton and Kabul increase efforts to end the Afghan insurgency.

More details:

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1396188/pakistan-seeks-rehabilitation-of-taliban-in-kabul-setup>

- **4 Suspected Suicide Bombers Detained in Kabul: officials**

Afghan Special Forces Arrested 4 suspected suicide bombers on Sunday 18 March in capital Kabul, according to the National Directorate of Security.

More details:

<http://didpress.com/en/?p=6251>

- **IEC hints at 3-month delay in WJ election**

The Independent Election Commission (IEC) on Sunday hinted at three months delay to the Wolesi Jirga (WJ) and District Councils Elections and said the process of voters' registration would start in a month

More details:

<https://www.pajhwok.com/en/2018/03/18/iec-hints-3-month-delay-wj-election>

10. TURKEY AND THE MIDDLE EAST

- **More Kurdish villages cleared as Operation Olive Branch pushes ahead**

As Turkey's Operation Olive Branch enters its third phase, more villages in Syria's Afrin region were freed from YPG control. In January, Turkey launched Operation Olive Branch to push out the YPG/PKK terrorist organisations from Afrin.

More Details:

<https://www.trtworld.com/turkey/more-kurdish-villages-cleared-as-operation-olive-branch-pushes-ahead-15978>

- **'Still work to do' in Afrin says Ibrahim Kalin**

Turkey's presidential spokesman described the clearing of YPG/PKK-ISIL terrorists from the town center of Afrin, Syria as a key stage of the counter-terrorist campaign, but with more work ahead. "An important stage of the operation has been completed, there is still work to do," Ibrahim Kalin told British Sky News late Sunday.

More Details:

<http://www.worldbulletin.net/turkey/200026/still-work-to-do-in-afrin-says-ibrahim-kalin>

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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