



MIDDLE EAST DAILY BULLETIN

GÜNLÜK ORTADOĐU BÜLTENİ

Domestic Policy in the Middle East Countries

Bölge Ülkelerinde İç Siyaset

The Restructuring Procees of Iraq

Irak'ın Yeniden Yapılanma Süreci

Energy Security

Enerji Güvenliđi

Economy News

Ekonomi Haberleri

Peace Process

Barış Süreci

Ethnic and Secterian Groups

Etnik ve Mezhepsel Gruplar

Non State Actors

Devlet-dış Aktörler

Relations with the West

Batı'yla İlişkiler



MIDDLE EAST DAILY BULLETIN

14 FEBRUARY 2013

NO: 1550

1. IRAQ.....	3
• Attack on Camp Liberty Unveils Deep Differences between MKO, Western Lobbyists (Fars News).....	3
• Iraqi MP: MKO's Return to Camp Ashraf "Impossible" (Fars News)	4
• France supports transferring MKO members outside Iraq (Aswat all-Iraq).....	4
• Postponement of a unified prayer in Adhamiya (NINA)	5
• Decision to cancel demonstrations in Baghdad due to threats for national unity, says Awadi (alliraqnews).....	5
• Barazani discusses with Kurdish parties protests in some province (NINA)	6
• Conference of Samarra: demonstrations represent legitimate duty, demand Shiite Clerics to stand by demonstrators demands (NINA).....	6
• Iraqi leader calls for unity (UPI)	7
• Maliki instructs to prepare reports to evaluate government performance in 2012 (alliraqnews).....	7
• Al-Nujaifi orders lawmakers to continue attending until approving budget (Aswat all-Iraq).....	8
• Nada Jubouri: crisis already presents (NINA)	8
• Kurdistan Parliament resumes its session (Shafaq News).....	9
• Compensations for terrorism victims distributed (alliraqnews)	9
• Sari warns from Baathists, Saddamists' return (alliraqnews)	10
• JAC reveals involving Mahmoud in its procedures (alliraqnews).....	10
• IHEC approves processes of voting, counting votes for PCs' elections (alliraqnews)	11
• Nijaifi discusses with Qatar's Crown Prince Iraq-Qatar relations, means to develop them (NINA).....	11
• Zebari affirms FM seeks release French journalist Dandon (NINA)	12
• Versar continues Iraq work (UPI)	12
2. IRAN	13
• Spokesman: Western Powers Lack Necessary Will to End Standoff with Iran.....	13
• Larijani: Iran-Pakistan Gas Pipeline Guarantees Regional Development.....	15
• Iran Cautions Turkey against Patriot Missile Deployment	16
• Iran-US talks would yield no results without Washington's goodwill: Iran.....	18
• Ceremony held at UN to mark Iran's National Day	20
• Iran, Tajikistan call for enhancement of mutual ties.....	21
3. ISRAEL - PALESTINE	21
• Netanyahu's coalition options seen to be closing.....	21
• 'Israel to allow Turkey to build Gaza hospital'.....	24
• Israeli forces arrest Hamas-affiliates across West Bank.....	25
• Fatah, Hamas to meet in Cairo Feb. 19, official says.....	26
• Gaza ministry denies Egypt closed tunnels	26
• Obama "to arrive in Jerusalem on March 20"	27
4. AFRICA and EGYPT	28
• Egypt cleric to be questioned over murder call	28



• Egypt police clash with protesters at Morsi's palace	29
• Libyan leaders visit Benghazi.....	30
• Civilians caught between Mali terrorists, troops	32
5. JORDAN and LEBANON.....	34
• Lebanese judge issues arrest warrant in Harb assassination case	34
• Lebanese lawmaker accuses energy minister of supporting Syrian regime	34
• Lebanese MP: Supplying Syria with fuel "a scandal"	35
6. SYRIA.....	36
• Turkish PM says car blast on Syria border was bomb attack	36
• UN chief appeals to Syria as Assad vows to fight on.....	37
• Syrian minister willing to meet opposition chief abroad	39
7. ARABIAN PENINSULA AND THE GULF OF BASRA.....	41
• Yemenis celebrate uprising's second anniversary.....	41
• Revolts happened because 'smart' Arabs do not believe lies: UAE's PM	42
• U.S. names UAE as largest trading partner in Arab region: ambassador	44
8. AFGHANISTAN - PAKISTAN	44
• Afghan Panel Says Prison Torture Not Systematic	44
• US hinders reconciliation efforts across Afghanistan: Sasha Knezev	45
• 18 Taliban rebels surrender in E. Afghanistan.....	47
• Roadside bomb strikes Afghan army van, kills 1, wounds 1	48
• Afghan investors to shift 80 factories from Pakistan to Kandahar	48

1. IRAQ

- **Attack on Camp Liberty Unveils Deep Differences between MKO, Western Lobbyists (Fars News)**

13 Feb 2013

TEHRAN (FNA)- The recent rocket attack on Camp Liberty - the transient settlement facility of the terrorist Mojahedin-e Khalq Organization in Iraq - unveiled the deep differences between the terrorist group and its American and European lobbyists.

According to a report by Didehban center, pro-MKO lobbyists, who are mostly retired European and American politicians, have recently concluded that the criminal activities of the MKO (also known as the MEK, PMOI and NCR) will definitely prove costly for them.

They have recently increased their criticism about the "irresponsible" remarks of MKO's ringleader, Maryam Rajavi, and the negative impacts of her remarks.

These lobbyists have realized that MKO ringleaders want to massacre the group's members as they see such bloodshed as

the only way to guarantee their longer stay in Iraq, while their lobbyists such as former New York mayor Rudy Giuliani have asked for the transfer of the MKO members to the US, said the Didehban report.

In Washington on Saturday, at a convention of Iranian-Americans, Giuliani called on the United States to take in the camp residents.

"These people can all be removed within hours," Giuliani said. "Planes can be sent immediately. They can be here within a day. We have done far more difficult things than that. It's only about 3,000 people."

The report came after some media reports alleged that Katyusha rockets fired on the Camp Liberty have killed five members of the MKO. About 40 members of the terrorist group were reportedly wounded in Saturday's attack, along with three Iraqi policemen, said the reports.

<http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=9107144302>

- **Iraqi MP: MKO's Return to Camp Ashraf "Impossible" (Fars News)**

TEHRAN (FNA)- A senior Iraqi lawmaker said that the recent rocket attack on the terrorist Mojahedin-e Khalq Organization transient settlement in Camp Liberty was a move to convince Iraq to allow the MKO to return to Camp Ashraf, but such actions are futile the group's return to its main training camp is impossible.

"Attack on the MKO aimed to rally the support of the international community's public opinion for the MKO's return to the Diyala province and Camp Ashraf," Abdullah al-Naeli said on Wednesday.

"But returning the MKO's members to their previous position is not possible, specially given the fact that Diyala residents spent much efforts to expel them from their province," Naeli was quoted by Ashraf News as saying.

The Iraqi lawmaker added that the Baghdad government is seriously investigating the attack to find out the realities.

Some media reports alleged that Katyusha rockets fired on the Camp Liberty, the

transient settlement facility of the MKO (also known as the MEK, PMOI and NCR) in Iraq, have killed five members of the MKO. About 40 members of the terrorist group were reportedly wounded in Saturday's attack, along with three Iraqi policemen.

Speaking to reporters here in Tehran on Tuesday, Iran's Foreign Ministry Spokesman Ramin Mehman-Parast said that the move is part of the MKO's efforts to portray itself as an oppressed community in a bid to postpone its expulsion from Iraq's soil.

<http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=9107144248>

- **France supports transferring MKO members outside Iraq (Aswat all-Iraq)**

13 Feb 2013

BAGHDAD / Aswat al-Iraq: France expressed support over transferring members of the Mojahedin-e Khalq Organization outside Iraq, underlining its readiness to take part in coordination with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

Iranian Fars news agency quoted French Foreign Ministry Spokesman Philippe Lalliot as saying that his country supports the UN plan to move the MKO to a third country.

Head of an Iraqi human rights group had said that Iraq seeks to try in absentia the members of the Mojahedin-e Khalq Organization (MKO, also known as the MEK, NCR and PMOI) in Iraq.

He said the people of Tuz Khurmato, who are victims of the MKO and the trial is going to be held in their city, expressed happiness and satisfaction over the issue.

- **Postponement of a unified prayer in Adhamiya (NINA)**

13 Feb 2013

Ramadi / NINA /-- Sheikh Khaled Hamoud al-Jumaili organizer of Fallujah sit-ins declared the postponement of the common and unfide prayer, which was scheduled for tomorrow Friday in Adhamiya north east of Baghdad.

The source said to NINA reporter "The decision to postpone came to meet appeals by senior religious figures and prevent sedition due to the repressive

approach exercised by the government in dealing with the protesters and the sit-ins.

He explained that "the decision to postpone was taken after a long discussion with a number of clan dignitaries and religious scholars, including Mufti of Iraq Sheikh Rafie al-Rifai Jumaili confirmed "The sit-ins, demonstrations and unified prayer in Anbar and other provinces will continue through the legal, constitutional and peaceful conducts ".

- **Decision to cancel demonstrations in Baghdad due to threats for national unity, says Awadi (alliraqnews)**

13 Feb 2013

Baghdad (AIN) –MP, Ihsan al-Awadi, of the State of Law Coalition pointed out "The decision of canceling shifting the demonstrations to Baghdad came because the demonstrators were convinced that there are real threats that harm the national unity and the social texture."

He stated to AIN "We hope that the decision did not come due to the Governmental security activities rather to be due to established trust between the

Government and the demonstrators over responding to their demands.”

“The Ministerial Committee is going on in its contacts with the leading figures in the demonstrations,” he added, noting that “There are several legitimate demands and real injustice but at the same time there are political attempts to ruin the political process and to cancel the constitution.

- **Barazani discusses with Kurdish parties protests in some province (NINA)**

13 Feb 2013

Erbil (NINA) – President of Kurdistan Region, Massoud Barazani, discussed on Wednesday, Feb. 13, with a number of Kurdish parties the demonstrations and protests, some Iraqi provinces are witnessing.

Source close to the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), headed by Barazani, said that the convened discussed political developments in Iraq and demonstrations and protests in the provinces of Niniveh, Kirkuk, Anbar, Salaheddin and Diyala, as well as other parts of the country.

He added that in the meeting, discussion covered President Barazani's visit to Germany and his participation in the World Economic Forum in Davos, as well as his official visit North Ireland, in addition to developments in the area, including the crisis in Syria.

The source went on saying that the convened Kurdish parties stressed the necessity to deal with all of Iraq's problems through peaceful means toward reaching a comprehensive agreement that ends all tensions the country is witnessing.

- **Conference of Samarra: demonstrations represent legitimate duty, demand Shiite Clerics to stand by demonstrators demands (NINA)**

13 Feb 2013

Tikrit / NINA/--The thoroughly Conference of scholars and dignitaries of / 6 / provinces counted demonstrations and sit-ins and participate in a legitimate duty.

The conference called in a final statement in Samarra today Shiite Clerics to exercise pressure on the government to meet the legitimate and just demands of the protesters and to abolish any aspect of sectarian in state institutions.

The statement stressed on the unity of Iraq and reject the sectarian slogans." Calling the protesters and demonstrators to "continue unified prayers and sit-in in their yards and their provinces.

- **Iraqi leader calls for unity (UPI)**

BAGHDAD, Feb. 13 (UPI) -- A Shiite lawmaker on a social affairs committee in Iraq said government leaders need to do more to prevent an escalation of sectarian violence.

Conflict between members of the Shiite and Sunni communities has been on the rise since December 2011, when U.S. forces left the country. Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, a Shiite, called for the arrest of Sunni Vice President Tariq al-Hashemi shortly after they left.

Rising political violence in Iraq prompted Martin Kobler, U.N. special envoy to Iraq, in January to call on Iraqi leaders to "take all necessary steps" to address mounting security woes.

Ali al-Alaq, a Shiite member of Iraq's social affairs committee, told the United

Nations' humanitarian news agency IRIN that power should extend across Sunni and Shiite lines.

"We ... have to empower moderate society leaders among the Sunnis and the Shiites," he said. "Politicians must be aware and speak with a calm tone to prevent the political crises from being reflected onto the streets."

http://www.upi.com/Top_News/Special/2013/02/13/Iraqi-leader-calls-for-unity/UPI-92411360775508/

- **Maliki instructs to prepare reports to evaluate government performance in 2012 (alliraqnews)**

13 Feb 2013

Baghdad (AIN) –On the bases of the instructions of the Prime Minister, Nouri al-Maliki, the Governmental Cooperation Directorate within the Secretariat General of the Cabinet organized a workshop regarding observing the governmental activities to identify the yearly performance of Government and what has been achieved from productive targets or services to citizens.

The Secretariat General reported in statement received by AIN "A meeting was chaired by the Secretary General for Ministries and Provinces Affairs, Rahman Issa Hassan, discussed the indicators that will be adopted in preparing the detailed report regarding annual performance of the Government."

"The report aims to identify the services and activates that the Government provides to citizens and to calculate the cost of social services for each individual," the statement added.

- **Al-Nujaifi orders lawmakers to continue attending until approving budget (Aswat all-Iraq)**

13 Feb 2013

BAGHDAD / Aswat al-Iraq: Iraq's Parliament Speaker Osama al-Nujaifi ordered parliamentarians to keep attending sessions until approving the 2013 budget.

The parliament's chairmanship adjourned the regular session two days ago, until drafting the 2013 federal budget draft law, a media source said.

The bill had been delayed several times for the lack of consensus among parliamentary blocs.

- **Nada Jubouri: crisis already presents (NINA)**

13 Feb 2013

Baghdad/ NINA /--MP , Nada Jubori for Iraqiya Slate said : "The current crisis already prevailing in the country, and didn't created by the House of Representatives or Speaker Osama Nujaifi, as some MPs said.

Jubori added in a statement to NINA : "The parliament and Speaker Nujaifi, have no hand in creating this crisis, noting that the evidence of is the hundreds of thousands of citizens who merge since about three months to demonstrate and to sit-in, demanding usurped rights in line with Constitution in several province and in Baghdad.

It is noteworthy to mention in this context that MP, Mohammed Sayhood for State of Law coalition headed by PM ,Nuri al-Maliki accused the parliament Osama Nujaifi, as: "part of the current crisis steaming from sectarian political project, he said .adding that Nujaifi encouraged demonstrations in

a number of provinces for illegal demands,he said ".

- **Kurdistan Parliament resumes its session (Shafaq News)**

13 Feb 2013

Shafaq News / Kurdistan Parliament resumed on Wednesday afternoon meetings to discuss the draft law of the general budget of the region, after meeting the parliament speaker , Arslan Baez with heads of the opposition blocs that have withdrawn from yesterday's session in protest against the adoption of some of items.

"Shafaq News", reporter in Erbil said that "the parliament resumed its sessions this afternoon to discuss the terms of the draft budget law of the region for the current year, which sparked a controversy between the Kurdish bloc supportive to the government blocs and the opposition that caused its withdrawal from yesterday's session by the Parliament speaker, Arslan Baez by delaying it to today."

He pointed out that "Baez had met this morning with the heads of opposition

blocs and persuaded them to return to the parliament and resume the session".

He pointed out that "Article six is related to the allocation of 120 billion dinars for the continuation of implementing development projects and human capacity development in Kurdistan Region."

<http://www.shafaq.com/en/news/5151-kurdistan-parliament-resumes-its-session-.html>

- **Compensations for terrorism victims distributed (alliraqnews)**

13 Feb 2013

Baghdad (AIN) –The Central Committee for compensating Victims of terrorism and military mistakes within the Secretariat General of the Cabinet announced the accomplishment of (3,223) cases of terrorism's victims in January 2013.

The official spokesperson of the committee, Jasim al-Arabi, reported in statement received by AIN on Wednesday "The sub-committees for terrorism victims' compensations in Baghdad have accomplished (3,223) cases for people who were affected due to terrorism," noting that "The cases of compensations

were sent to the Ministry of Finance to distribute the financial allocations within seventh group after the endorsement of Federal budget."

"The Sub-Committees for compensations are preparing to distribute the compensations of the sixth group of families of martyrs, wounded and people who were lost their properties due to terrorism according to legal article No. (20) of 2009," the statement added

- **Sari warns from Baathists, Saddamists' return (alliraqnews)**

13 Feb 2013

Baghdad (AIN) –The Secretary General of Jihad and Construction Movement, Hasan al-Sari, warned from the return of the Baathists and the Saddamists who were involved in killing Iraqis.

Speaking to AIN, he mentioned "The Baathists' return threatens the civil peace in the country since most of them have committed crimes against the Iraqis."

Sari "Warned the Government from bringing back the Baathists before being fair with the oppressed people who were victims to Baath Party."

It is worth mentioning that the Iraqi National Alliance submitted a law to ban the former Baath Party in the country.

- **JAC reveals involving Mahmoud in its procedures (alliraqnews)**

13 Feb 2013

Baghdad (AIN) –The Justice and Accountability Commission revealed that issuing a resolution over involving the head of the Supreme Federal Council, Midhat al-Mahmoud, with its procedures.

The Deputy Head of the Commission, Bakhtiyar Omar, stated to AIN "During the meeting of the JAC, It was decided to involve Mahmoud in the JAC's procedures on the bases of files possessed by the Commission previously over him."

"The JAC made use of the official documents presented by the Independent MP, Sabah al-Saadi, over Mahmoud," he concluded.

Earlier, Saadi announced that 24 Judges including Mahmoud are involved in the JAC procedures.

- **IHEC approves processes of voting, counting votes for PCs' elections (alliraqnews)**

13 Feb 2013

Baghdad (AIN) –The Independent High Electoral Commission approved holding the processes of voting and counting the votes of the next elections of the Provincial Councils.

The spokesperson of the IHEC, Safa I-Mousawi, stated to All Iraq News Agency (AIN) on Wednesday "The board of commissioners approved holding the process of voting and counting the votes for the next PCs' elections in addition to the voting process of the immigrants in absentia."

Al-Maliki says Iraq seeks strategic relations with Britain (Aswat all-Iraq)

13 Feb 2013

BAGHDAD / Aswat all-Iraq: Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki welcomed on Wednesday any initiative that aims to develop Iraqi-British relations and expands cooperation in various domains.

"Al-Maliki received at his office in Baghdad a British delegation led by Foreign Office Minister for the Middle East

and North Africa Alistair Burt, with whom he expressed hope to bolster strategic relations," al-Maliki's office said in a statement received by Aswat al-Iraq news agency.

Talks also dwelt with the latest developments in the region, mainly the Syria crisis.

They agreed to form a ministerial committee to facilitate all difficulties facing the development of bilateral relations.

- **Nijaifi discusses with Qatar's Crown Prince Iraq-Qatar relations, means to develop them (NINA)**

13 Feb 2013

Baghdad (NINA) – Speaker of Parliament, Usama al-Nijaifi, discussed with Qatar's Deputy Emir and Crown Prince, Sheikh Tameem Bin Hamad Al-Thani, the relations between Iraq and Qatar and means to develop them.

Qatar News Agency reported on Wednesday, Feb.. 13, that Al-Thani met with Nijaifi, who is on a visit to Qatar, reviewing the relations between the two

countries and means to develop them, especially on parliamentary level.

Lawmaker from State of Law Alliance, Yaseen Majeed, has demanded the Speaker of Parliament, Usama al-Nijaifi, to submit a report to Parliament on his visit to Qatar.

In a press conference Majeed asked whether Nijaifi's visit is private or official? If it official is the Foreign Ministry knows about it, as the visits of the President and the Prime Minister? He pointed out that if it is private, then it is provocative, since the relations between Iraq and Qatar are tense

- **Zebari affirms FM seeks release French journalist Dandon (NINA)**

13 Feb 2013

Baghdad (NINA) – Foreign Minister, Hoshyar Zebari, discussed on Wednesday, Feb. 13, with French Ambassador to Iraq, Denys Gauer, the relations between Iraq and France and the Foreign Ministry's efforts to release the French Journalist, Nadir Dandon, detained in Iraq.

Dandon was arrested while taking pictures in Baghdad without having obtained official permission.

A statement issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said that in the meeting, the two discussed facilitating the works of French Embassy in Iraq to overcome the obstacles hindering its activities, as well as for other embassies present in Iraq.

In the meeting, Zebari affirmed Iraqi Government and Foreign Ministry keenness to develop Iraq-France relations in all fields.

On the other hand, Zebari received on Wednesday copy of credential of new Swiss none resident Ambassador, Michel Wizeb.

In the ceremony, relations between Iraq and Switzerland discussed as well as means to activate bilateral relations toward more developments and cooperation.

- **Versar continues Iraq work (UPI)**

SPRINGFIELD, Va., Feb. 13 (UPI) -- Versar Inc., a U.S. project management company, is continuing its support of U.S. Department of Defense reconstruction work in Iraq.

The renewal of company work in the country comes under a Personal Services and Support contract originally awarded a year ago by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Middle East District.

Versar said the contract option exercised is for one year and can be worth up to \$4.4 million. The specific nature of the contracted support wasn't disclosed.

"Versar is honored to continue to provide our support to USACE and to those deployed in Iraq," said Versar President Jeff Wagonhurst. "The continuation of this contract is a testament to the value of the personal services and assistance we provide in Iraq and an example of our worldwide reach and capabilities.

"The extension of this contract also means Versar is providing personal services to USACE in both contingency theaters -- Iraq and Afghanistan. We look forward to

providing continued high value services to USACE in the coming year."

Versar, which has headquarters in Virginia, said it has assisted in U.S. reconstruction efforts in Iraq since 2004.

http://www.upi.com/Business_News/Security-Industry/2013/02/13/Versar-continues-Iraq-work/UPI-80431360770541/

2. IRAN

- **Spokesman: Western Powers Lack Necessary Will to End Standoff with Iran**

TEHRAN (FNA)- Iranian Foreign Ministry Spokesman Ramin Mehman-Parast said Iran pursues a clear stance in its talks with the G5+1 (the five permanent UN Security Council members plus Germany), but the western members of the group lack the necessary will to end disputes with Tehran.

Speaking to reporters in his weekly press conference here in Tehran on Tuesday, Mehman-Parast complained that the western members of the G5+1 (the US, France, Britain and Germany) have

adopted a political attitude towards Iran's nuclear issue.

"The reason why the (Iran-G5+1) talks are not yielding desirable results is that the necessary political will for the resolution of the issue is not visible in the western side," Mehman-Parast noted.

The spokesman, however, said Iran is seeking to secure nothing more than the Iranian nation's inalienable rights and is ready to continue talks.

"We have always said that we are ready to hold talks and negotiations to secure the Iranian nation's rights."

Earlier this month, Deputy chief negotiators of Iran and the Group 5+1 (the five permanent UN Security Council members plus Germany) agreed on the date and venue of the next round of talks between Iran and the six world powers.



Iran's deputy chief negotiator Ali Baqeri and EU foreign policy deputy chief Helga Schmitt in a phone talk on February 5 agreed that the next round of talks between Tehran and the Group 5+1 be held in Kazakhstan on February 26.

The last round of talks between Iran and the five permanent members of the UN Security Council plus Germany was held in Moscow in June.

Washington and its Western allies accuse Iran of trying to develop nuclear weapons under the cover of a civilian nuclear program, while they have never presented any corroborative evidence to substantiate their allegations. Iran denies the charges and insists that its nuclear program is for peaceful purposes only.

Tehran stresses that the country has always pursued a civilian path to provide power to the growing number of Iranian population, whose fossil fuel would eventually run dry.

Despite the rules enshrined in the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) entitling every member state, including Iran, to the right of uranium enrichment, Tehran is now

under four rounds of UN Security Council sanctions for turning down West's calls to give up its right of uranium enrichment.

Tehran has dismissed West's demands as politically tainted and illogical, stressing that sanctions and pressures merely consolidate Iranians' national resolve to continue the path.

Tehran has repeatedly said that it considers its nuclear case closed as it has come clean of International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)'s questions and suspicions about its past nuclear activities.

<http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=9107143918>

- **Larijani: Iran-Pakistan Gas Pipeline Guarantees Regional Development**

TEHRAN (FNA)- Iranian Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani underlined that implementation of the major gas pipeline project, which is due to take Iran's rich gas reserves to Pakistan, is of crucial importance for the development of the region.



Addressing a meeting of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Economic Cooperation Organization (PAECO) in Islamabad, Pakistan, Larijani said Iran will do its best to help construct the gas pipeline.

"Iran spares no effort to help construct the peace pipelines because the pipeline not only serves the interests of Iran and Pakistan but also guarantees regional states' economic and trade progress," Larijani stated.

Last week, Pakistani Ambassador to Tehran Khaled Aziz Babar said that an Iranian company is slated to begin construction work of the Pakistani side of the multi-billion-dollar IP gas pipeline soon.

The Pakistani cabinet, in a recent meeting, okayed a waiver of the Public Procurement Regulatory Authority (PPRA) rules in order to award the contract directly to the Iranian firm.

"The Iranian company will begin the construction of the pipeline soon," Aziz Babar told FNA last Wednesday.

He noted that the project is underway and it should be completed by December 2015 as per the signed contract.

The project envisages gas inflows of 750 mlm cubic feet per day by the end of December 2014, which will be consumed by power plants to generate around 4,000 megawatts of electricity.

According to the project proposal, the pipeline will begin from Iran's Assalouyeh Energy Zone in the south and stretch over 1,100 km through Iran. In Pakistan, it will pass through Baluchistan and Sindh but officials now say the route may be changed if China agrees to the project.

The gas will be supplied from the South Pars gas field in the Iranian southern province of Bushehr. The initial capacity of the pipeline will be 22 billion cubic meters of natural gas per annum, which is expected to be later raised to 55 billion cubic meters. It is expected to cost \$7.4 billion.

Iran has already built more than 900 kilometers of the pipeline on its soil.

<http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=9107143910>

- **Iran Cautions Turkey against Patriot Missile Deployment**

TEHRAN (FNA)- Iranian Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani in a meeting with his Turkish counterpart Cemil Cicek cautioned Ankara against the deployment of NATO's patriot missiles along Turkey-Syria borders.

During the meeting held in Islamabad on the sidelines of a meeting of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Economic Cooperation Organization (PAECO), the two speakers explored avenues for the expansion of bilateral ties and mutual cooperation between the two countries.

Also during the meeting, Larijani expressed dissatisfaction with the deployment of NATO's Patriot missiles along Turkey-Syria border, and said, "According to our experience with the westerners, they will not give up this issue

(continued deployment of patriot missiles) easily."

"Big countries come to the region and create havoc and spark war among other countries, and then go," the Iranian parliament speaker said, reminding that regional problems will involve all countries of the region.

Meantime, Larijani pointed to Iran-Turkey good relations, specially in economic fields, and noted that the Islamic Republic is willing to further strengthen these relations.

Cicek, for his part, underlined that Iran is always considered a friendly and brotherly country for Turkey, and said that the two countries' relations have historical roots.

Last month, an Iranian foreign ministry spokesman lashed out at Ankara for its decision to deploy NATO's Patriot missile batteries, but meantime said that Turkey has assured the Iranian officials that it will not attend any military action against Tehran.

Turkey will neither participate in any military action against Iran nor allow its

airspace to be used against Iran, but added that the control of the Patriot missile system was in the hands of the NATO and the West, Iranian Foreign Ministry Spokesman Ramin Mehman-Parast said in an interview with al-Manar TV.

"Iran, however, believes that Western countries and the NATO have deployed the system in Turkey with the aim of supporting the Zionist regime so that in case of an Israeli military adventurism against Iran and Iran's response to the measure, Western countries can safeguard Israel with the help of the missile system," he added.

On December 4, NATO approved Turkey's request for the deployment of Patriot surface-to-air missiles along its border with Syria.

Meantime, people in Turkey took to the streets and hold massive rallies across the country during the past few weeks to show anger at the possible deployment of NATO's Patriot missiles along their country's border with Syria.

The protesters, who carried placards in condemnation of the Turkish government's demand for the deployment of the NATO Patriot missile systems, set the US and NATO's flags ablaze.

<http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=9107143902>

- **Iran-US talks would yield no results without Washington's goodwill: Iran**

It is natural that a negotiation where the opposite side has no honesty and does not intend to cooperate and [show] goodwill and claims to seek talks at the same time as [employing] pressure and threats will not produce any results.”

Iran's Foreign Ministry Spokesman Ramin Mehmanparast

Iran's Foreign Ministry Spokesman Ramin Mehmanparast says direct talks between the Islamic Republic and the United States would not yield any results when Washington shows no goodwill.

“It is natural that a negotiation where the opposite side has no honesty and does not intend to cooperate and [show] goodwill and claims to seek talks at the same time

as [employing] pressure and threats will not produce any results,” Mehmanparast said during his weekly press conference on Tuesday.

The Iranian official said that Washington needs to stop its hostile policies toward Iran before the Iranian nation considers any such talks.

At the 49th annual Munich Security Conference in Germany on February 2, US Vice President Joe Biden said Washington was ready to hold direct talks with Iran over the country's nuclear energy program.

However, he noted, “There will be continued pressure.”

On February 6, Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei rejected talks with the United States under pressure and threats.

“An offer of talks makes sense only when the side [that makes the offer] shows its goodwill,” Ayatollah Khamenei said.

The US has spearheaded several rounds of sanctions against Iran in recent years,

based on the unfounded accusation that Iran is pursuing non-civilian objectives in its nuclear energy program.

Iran vehemently rejects the allegation, arguing that as a committed signatory to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and a member of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), it has the right to use nuclear technology for peaceful purposes.

The AMIA issue

Referring to the agreement between Iran and Argentina to set up a fact-finding committee to investigate the 1994 bombing attack on the Argentine Israelite Mutual Association (AMIA), Mehmanparast said, “The officials of Iran and Argentina held talks and agreed to cooperate to clarify the AMIA issue and these agreements are taking their natural course.”

Cooperation between the officials of the two countries would definitely help resolve the issue, he added.

On January 27, Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Salehi and his Argentinean

counterpart signed a memorandum of understanding for the two countries to shed light on the bombing of the AMIA building in Buenos Aires, which killed 85 people.

Under intense political pressure imposed by the US and Israel, Argentina formally accused Iran of having carried out the bomb attack. The Islamic Republic has categorically denied any involvement in the terrorist bombing.

The Israeli regime reacted angrily to the deal a day after it was signed. “We are stunned by this news item and we will want to receive from the Argentine government a complete picture as to what was agreed upon because this entire affair affects Israel directly,” the Israeli Foreign Ministry spokesperson, Yigal Palmor, said on January 28.

In a statement on January 30, however, the Argentinean Foreign Ministry said Israel’s demand for an explanation over the agreement was an “improper action that is strongly rejected.”

<http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2013/02/12/288587/iran-us-talks-would-lead-no-results/>

- **Ceremony held at UN to mark Iran's National Day**



A ceremony commemorating the 34th anniversary of the victory of Iran's 1979 Islamic Revolution has been held at the headquarters of the United Nations in New York City.

On Monday, Iran's Ambassador to the UN Mohammad Khaza'ee as well as a number of high-ranking UN officials, the ambassadors of various countries to the UN, diplomats, journalists and reporters attended the event, named Iran's National Day.

Pointing to the wide participation of political figures in the ceremony, Khaza'ee said, "The glorious holding of a ceremony

to mark a country's national day is indicative of the lofty political standing of that country."

Special ceremonies were also held at home and abroad on January 31 to remember the day in 1979 when the late founder of the Islamic Revolution, Ayatollah Khomeini, returned to the Iranian capital after 15 years in exile.

The day of Imam Khomeini's return to Iran marks the beginning of the celebrations, dubbed Ten Days of Dawn, that culminate in the anniversary of the victory of the Islamic Revolution on February 10.

The Iranian nation toppled the US-backed Pahlavi regime 34 years ago, ending 2,500 years of monarchic rule in the country.

The Islamic Revolution, under the guidance of Imam Khomeini, established a new political system based on Islamic values and democracy.

<http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2013/02/12/288572/iran-national-day-ceremony-held-at-un/>

- **Iran, Tajikistan call for enhancement of mutual ties**

Iran's Majlis Speaker Ali Larijani and his Tajik counterpart have stressed the expansion of bilateral relations between Tehran and Dushanbe in various spheres.

"There are many grounds for cooperation between Tehran and Dushanbe that should be enhanced," Larijani said in a meeting with Shukurjon Zuhurov in the Pakistani capital, Islamabad, on Tuesday.

Larijani expressed the Islamic Republic's readiness to implement various projects in Tajikistan, saying, "Iran and Tajikistan can have good cooperation in the fields of water, gas and electricity."

Zuhuro, for his part, hailed the growing economic ties between Tehran and Dushanbe and stressed mutual cooperation in transportation, particularly railway transport.

Larijani arrived in Islamabad on Monday to attend the conference of the Parliamentary Assembly of Economic Cooperation Organization (PAECO).

The first PAECO conference, presided over by the Speaker of Pakistan's National Assembly Fahmida Mirza, opened on Monday and will run until February 12.

During the event, the representatives of the ECO member countries are scheduled to deliver speeches on the role of parliaments in the promotion of regional trade and investment to ensure sustainable social and economic development in the region.

<http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2013/02/12/288556/iran-tajikistan-stress-expansion-of-ties/>

3. ISRAEL - PALESTINE

- **Netanyahu's coalition options seen to be closing**

By GIL HOFFMAN

Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu's efforts to build a broad national unity government suffered multiple setbacks on Monday when his potential coalition partners refused to compromise on key issues.

The first setback occurred when Netanyahu met Bayit Yehudi leader Naftali

Bennett at the Prime Minister's Office in Tel Aviv. While both sides declined to reveal what was discussed at the meeting, both said afterward that Bayit Yehudi would continue coordinating coalition strategy with Yesh Atid.

Netanyahu had wanted to break the unwritten understanding between Bayit Yehudi and Yesh Atid, in which neither party would join the coalition without the other.

But Likud officials said Bayit Yehudi and Yesh Atid were fully coordinating their negotiation strategy on every issue.

Due to that deal, Netanyahu cannot threaten Yesh Atid leader Yair Lapid that he will build a coalition without him. The prime minister cannot even build a cohesive coalition of the 61 MKs on the Center-Right.

A statement released after the Netanyahu-Bennett meeting said only that they had discussed the "issues of the day" and planned to meet again. Unlike official statements released following the prime minister's previous meetings with party

leaders, this statement did not mention a "good atmosphere."

But the Likud spokeswoman who issued the statement said it was not dictated by Netanyahu and that she actually had no idea how the meeting went.

The negotiating teams of Likud and Bayit Yehudi will meet in Ramat Gan on Tuesday, after the Likud met Monday with a team from Yesh Atid.

In the meeting with Yesh Atid, Prof. Eugene Kandell, who heads the National Economic Council, presented the Likud's plan for equalizing the burden of military and civilian national service. The plan calls for the IDF to set gradually rising targets for drafting haredim. If the targets are not met, the yeshivas will be fined.

But Yesh Atid wants to see limits placed on the number of ultra-Orthodox men who avoid the army rather than the institution of manpower targets for the draft.

Although the party's negotiators did not reject the Likud's plan outright, they did

give an impression that there was little chance they would accept the plan.

One issue Likud and Yesh Atid negotiators did not discuss was portfolios. Lapid wants that issue kept for the very end of the talks because he fears that otherwise he will lose leverage on key issues that are important to his party.

“About 99.9 percent of what you read in the papers about the negotiations is not actually happening,” Lapid told his Knesset faction. “There are no discussions on portfolios. No one spoke to our negotiating team on that. Whatever you are reading is mere speculation that is not connected to us.”

Shas co-chairman Eli Yishai attacked Lapid at a meeting of the Shas faction. He said Lapid was working to ensure that the government would lack haredi parties, even though Lapid has never said that he wants a coalition without Shas and United Torah Judaism.

MK Tzipi Livni told her Knesset faction that Netanyahu cannot take for granted that her Tzipi Livni Party would join the government. She said her negotiators

were conducting talks with Likud quietly, “without press briefings and political spin.”

Labor leader Shelly Yacimovich started preparing for the possibility that Yesh Atid would not be part of the government on Monday. She met Arab MKs and asked for their support if there is a race in the Knesset for head of the opposition between her and Lapid.

Yacimovich took pains to deny a rumor that she would agree to bring Labor into the government if she was offered the Finance Ministry.

“There is no truth to the rumors that if I am given the Finance portfolio, we will sit in the government,” Yacimovich wrote on Facebook.

“We will not return to being the contractors of Netanyahu. It will not happen.

Whoever insists on making this a debate on portfolios is making a mistake ethically and politically,” she said.

“It is not about portfolios,” she added.

“It is about our path. The portfolios that are most dear to our hearts are the ones that someone intends to use to bankrupt our economy, with dangerous policies that are being crafted as we speak.”

<http://www.ipost.com/DiplomacyAndPolitics/Article.aspx?id=302969>

- **'Israel to allow Turkey to build Gaza hospital'**

Israel has authorized Turkey to transport construction materials into the Gaza Strip in order to build a Turkish-funded hospital in the coastal territory, Turkish daily Hurriyet reported on Monday.

According to the report, the hospital will be inaugurated within a year's time, and the ceremony will be attended by Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

The Israeli government gave the authorization earlier this month after studying a list of materials the Turks were asking to import to Gaza. Hurriyet stated that Israel gave permission to transport the construction materials to Gaza as a gesture of goodwill toward Turkey.

Turkey has long opposed Israel's naval blockade of the Gaza Strip and relations between the countries deteriorated in the aftermath of the IDF's raid of the Gaza-bound Mavi Marmara vessel in May 2010, in which nine Turkish pro-Palestinian activists were killed.

The hospital is slated to contain 150 beds, making it Gaza's biggest hospital, Hurriyet reported.

In addition to serving as a goodwill gesture to Ankara, the Israeli move was also described by Hurriyet as part of Israel's softening of the Gaza blockade in the aftermath of Operation Pillar of Defense.

Turkey has called for the lifting of the Gaza blockade, as well as an apology to Turkey for the Mavi Marmara raid and compensation for the families of those killed, as conditions to normalize relations between the countries.

Hurriyet quoted diplomatic sources in Ankara as saying the January 22 Knesset election in Israel could provide a new opportunity to pacify relations between the countries.

“Although I do not want to seem too optimistic over reconciliation between the two countries, I see a window of opportunity in light of the election results,” the sources told Hurriyet.

<http://www.ipost.com/DiplomacyAndPolitics/Article.aspx?id=302913>

- **Israeli forces arrest Hamas-affiliates across West Bank**

BETHLEHEM (Ma'an) -- Israeli forces launched multiple arrest raids overnight Monday against Hamas affiliates in the West Bank, Hamas sources and locals said.

Hamas leader Rafat Jamil Nasif, 45, was detained in Tulkarem in an arrest raid on his home, sources in the Islamist movement said. Nasif's family were forced to stand outside in the cold while sniffer dogs searched his home.

Musab al-Ashqar, Abdullah Ismail al-Khalil and Ammar Jihad Ameir, students at al-Khadouri university, were also arrested in Tulkarem, together with the local Imam's son Qitad Amar Bidawi.

In Nablus, Israeli forces detained a local Islamist student leader Mathni Jamil

Eshtayeh and students Osama Khalid Yamin and Walid Gamal Asida from An-Najah university, locals said.

Mousa Ahmad Yamin and Abed al-Ghani Ayeshe Samara were also detained in nearby villages.

Four people were arrested in Qalandia refugee camp in Ramallah, including two ex-prisoners, and in Hebron two other students were detained.

An Israeli army spokeswoman said that 13 people were detained overnight, including four in Nablus, five in Tulkarem, three in Bethlehem and one in Hebron.

The latest detentions follow a sweep of arrests of Hamas-affiliated officials in the West Bank over the past week.

Last Tuesday, Israeli forces arrested 12 people including at least three Hamas-affiliates.

A day earlier, Israeli soldiers arrested 23 members of Hamas, including three lawmakers -- Ahmed Attoun in al-Bireh, Hatem Qafisha in Hebron and Mohammed al-Tal in al-Dhahiriyya.

Hamas condemned the arrests as a "criminal act."

<http://www.maannews.net/eng/ViewDetails.aspx?ID=564448>

- **Fatah, Hamas to meet in Cairo Feb. 19, official says**

BETHLEHEM (Ma'an) -- Fatah and Hamas will meet in Cairo on Feb. 19 to continue reconciliation talks, a Fatah official said Tuesday.

Sakhr Bseiso told Ma'an that the factions will meet under Egypt-mediation a day after the Central Elections Commission has finished updating the election register in Gaza.

The rival factions met in Cairo to discuss reconciliation over the weekend, but reached no agreement on the formation of a unity government or on a revision of the Palestine Liberation Organization.

"The Cairo talks did not achieve the breakthrough that we had hoped for, but they did not collapse," said Haniyeh.

A Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine official said Sunday that neither Fatah or Hamas have any real will to end the division.

The voter registration process is due to be completed by Feb. 18 and, in theory, an election could then be called three months later.

The last parliamentary vote was held in 2006, when Hamas swept to power, ending the dominance of Fatah. The following civil war split Palestinians both geographically and politically.

<http://www.maannews.net/eng/ViewDetails.aspx?ID=564417>

- **Gaza ministry denies Egypt closed tunnels**

GAZA CITY (Ma'an) -- Gaza's Ministry of Interior on Tuesday denied reports that Egypt had closed several smuggling tunnels a day earlier, a spokesman said.

Islam Shahwan said in a statement that a network of tunnels under the Gaza-Egypt border are operating as normal, with the Interior Ministry briefly closing tunnels

last week due to adverse weather conditions.

Egyptian security officials said Monday that they had arrested 10 suspected smugglers in Rafah and shut two tunnels used to smuggle goods to the Gaza Strip.

Last November, Egyptian security services said they were planning an "extraordinary" crackdown on smuggling tunnels under the Gaza border.

An official said that the campaign to end smuggling was part of a truce agreement brokered by Cairo to end cross-border violence, which began when Israel assassinated Hamas military commander Ahmed Jabari.

www.maananews.net/eng/ViewDetails.aspx?ID=564383

- **Obama “to arrive in Jerusalem on March 20”**

US President Barack Obama is expected to arrive in Jerusalem on March 20 for a three-day trip which will also take him to the West Bank city of Ramallah, media reports and a Palestinian official said.

According to a draft itinerary published in Israel's top-selling Yediot Aharonot, Obama will begin his first-ever visit to Israel as president on March 20.

He was expected to land at Ben Gurion airport near Tel Aviv then hold talks with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu later in the day.

The next day, he would spend the morning holding talks with Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas at his West Bank headquarters in Ramallah.

A Palestinian official, speaking on condition of anonymity, concurred.

"President Obama will visit our area for two days. He will be in Israel on March 20 and March 21 in Palestine," he told AFP.

Yediot said that after the Ramallah talks Obama would return to Jerusalem and address the Israeli public.

"The Americans have asked that at least 1,000 Israelis be present as an audience," it said.

It said Obama would also hold a breakfast meeting with Netanyahu on March 22 and join him on a visit to an Iron Dome missile defense battery before leaving for neighboring Jordan.

The White House confirmed the visit last week but did not give dates for the trip, which it said would include stops in the Palestinian territories and Jordan.

It has kept expectations deliberately low about the possible outcome of the visit, saying Obama has no plans to use the trip to push new proposals to break the more than two-year deadlock in peace talks.

On Sunday, Netanyahu said his talks with Obama would focus on three issues: Iran's nuclear program, the conflict in Syria and the diplomatic process with the Palestinians.

<https://now.mmedia.me/lb/en/mena/obama-to-arrive-in-jerusalem-on-march-20>

4. AFRICA and EGYPT

- **Egypt cleric to be questioned over murder call**

Egypt's state prosecutor on Monday ordered an Islamic cleric to be brought in for questioning on suspicion that he called for the murder of opposition leaders, a judicial source said.

The cleric, Mahmud Shaaban, sparked a backlash from opposition leaders and the Islamist government itself after he said the opposition activists deserved to be executed in line with Islamic law.

His comments coincided with the assassination in Tunisia of a secular dissident, casting a shadow over the increasingly bitter power struggle in Egypt between the opposition and the ruling Islamists.

The government denounced his comments and assigned guards for some opposition leaders.

"What many don't know is that God's law stipulates the killing of the leadership of the [opposition] National Salvation Front who are clearly seeking power," Shaaban said on an Islamic television channel.

He singled out two of the opposition coalition's leaders, Nobel Peace laureate

Mohamed ElBaradei and failed presidential candidate Hamdeen Sabahi.

Two years after the overthrow of veteran president Hosni Mubarak, Egypt has become increasingly divided between Islamists and liberal opponents who accuse the fundamentalists of trying to monopolize power.

Protesters clashed again with police on Monday outside the palace of President Mohamed Morsi, who ran on the Muslim Brotherhood's ticket in the June presidential election.

Morsi sparked mass protests led by ElBaradei's coalition when he adopted sweeping powers last November that allowed the Islamists to rush a conservatively-worded constitution to referendum, in which it was passed.

<https://now.mmedia.me/lb/en/mena/egypt-cleric-to-be-questioned-over-murder-call>

- **Egypt police clash with protesters at Morsi's palace**

Egyptian police fired water cannon at stone-throwing protesters outside the

presidential palace on Monday as the opposition held rallies to mark the second anniversary of Hosni Mubarak's overthrow.

The clashes broke out after several hundred protesters marched to the palace, the site of increasingly frequent clashes, on a day of marches against Egypt's new Islamist president, Mohamed Morsi.

Opposition groups called for the protests to demand that Morsi fulfill the goals of the revolution which brought him to power along with his long-banned Muslim Brotherhood movement.

Among their key demands are a new unity government, amendments to a controversial Islamist-drafted constitution and the sacking of Egypt's prosecutor general.

Activists are also furious that no one has been held accountable for the deaths of dozens of protesters in past months in clashes with police.

"Down with Brotherhood rule," the protesters chanted as they made their

way to downtown Cairo's Tahrir Square, the symbolic heart of protests that toppled Mubarak. Other marches converged on the palace.

Earlier, protesters briefly blocked a major bridge as well as trains in a central Cairo metro station, scuffling with passengers and metro police, witnesses and state media reported.

Two years ago, Egyptians poured onto the streets to celebrate after an aide to Mubarak announced the veteran president's resignation, buoyant that democratic change was within reach.

The 84-year-old's spectacular fall from grace on February 11, 2011 after an 18-day popular revolt sent shock waves across the Middle East and beyond.

<https://now.mmedia.me/lb/en/mena/egy-pt-police-clash-with-protesters-at-morsis-palace>

- **Libyan leaders visit Benghazi**

The second largest Libyan city has turned into a "hotbed of tension", local residents say, amid local concerns about the

government's ability to effectively police Benghazi on its own.

By Essam Mohamed for Magharebia in Tripoli – 11/02/13

Amid mounting concerns about the Tripoli government's ability to restore order, Libyan General National Congress President Mohamed Magarief and Prime Minister Ali Zidan visited Benghazi on Friday (February 8th).

The national leaders met local councillors, who voiced frustration at the pace of economic and security improvements in Libya's second largest city.

A number of civil society organisations plan to march this Friday (February 15th) to push for greater federalism, as well as the formation of a 60-member constitution drafting committee.

Activists are also calling for stepping up security, activating the army and police and holding previous governments accountable.

In Benghazi, people are demanding that corporations once based in the city but

transferred to Tripoli under Kadhafi – including the National Oil Corporation, Brega Oil Company and Libyan Airways – be returned to the east.

On Saturday, a number of Benghazi political parties issued a joint statement criticising the GNC for mismanagement and inaction, and demanding that the government improve security.

Signatories to the statement included the Justice and Construction Party, the Party of Change, the Islamist al-Wattan Party and the National Front.

"Libya needs assistance and expertise in the field of security, since this is one of the biggest challenges facing it at the current stage, agreed Benghazi native Hussein Elmsallati, a 39-year-old anchor for Libya FM Channel.

"I think also that we should co-ordinate with the United Nations in terms of consultations and programmes on national reconciliation and mechanisms of action for the committees drafting the constitution," Elmsallati added.

Meanwhile, residents of Benghazi said they hoped that the visit by Zidan and Magarief could lead to change.

"This is a visit to the city where the first spark of the revolution erupted," Nahla Bashir said. "Now, this city is a hotbed of tension."

She added that the meeting with the people of the city and eastern region reassured her.

Youssef al-Oreibi, another citizen from Benghazi, said: "This unexpected visit...comes at a time when the street in Benghazi is very tense. I hope that it will be a starting point to realise tangible things for the benefit of Libya."

Engineering student Tansim al-Zubair said he thought the Benghazi visit was a "good step that will put an end to discord, federalism and centralisation".

"We hope that the general budget will be released and approved, and that the government will start working to solve many problems, overcome difficulties, open projects to revitalise economy, and in this way building will start and armed

manifestations will disappear," al-Zubair added.

http://www.magharebia.com/cocoon/awi/xhtml1/en_GB/features/awi/features/2013/02/11/feature-01

- **Civilians caught between Mali terrorists, troops**

Refugees at the M'Bera camp in south-eastern Mauritania hope that the deployment of UN peacekeepers will allow them to return to their homeland swiftly and without fear.

By Jemal Oumar for Magharebia in Nouakchott – 11/02/13

Al-Qaeda-linked Islamists launched a new attack on the northern Malian city of Gao on Sunday (February 10th), leading to an hours-long gunfight with Malian and French troops.

The skirmish left at least two Islamists and three civilians dead, AFP reported. Fifteen civilians and two Malian soldiers were also injured in the attack.

The Movement for Tawhid and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO) claimed credit for

the assault, as well as two failed suicide bombings over the weekend. On Monday, French forces launched airstrikes to repel the jihadists.

The latest flare up raised fresh fears for the hundreds of thousands of refugees forced from their homes by the Islamist-led violence.

Many of the Malian refugees are now living at the M'Bera camp but news of a proposal for UN peacekeepers has many hopeful they could soon return home.

On Wednesday (February 6th), France made a formal request to the Security Council to prepare UN peacekeepers for deployment to northern Mali, once French military operations in the region end.

French Ambassador to the UN Gérard Araud called for the world body to accelerate the deployment of peacekeepers in order to protect civilians from potential human rights abuses.

However, Radio France International reported on February 7th that the deployment may only happen in March or April.

A number of Malian refugees have reported witnessing atrocities against civilians committed by Mali's jihadist rebels. Refugees fleeing the war in Mali saw summary executions and amputations committed by the rebels, who sought to impose Sharia law in areas their forces controlled, Al Jazeera reported.

Nearly 150,000 people have crossed borders to flee the war, while the war has uprooted and internally displaced another 230,000, AFP reported on January 20th, citing the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

Zakiyatou Oualett Halatine, spokeswoman for the Association of Refugees and Victims of Repression in Azawad (ARVRA), welcomed the news of France's call for UN peacekeepers.

"I think that what the Malian refugees in Mauritania need is the provision of appropriate conditions for the return to their country, land and normal lives without fear. If the peacekeeping forces will ensure that, then they will go back to their homes," she told Magharebia.

"UN peacekeeping forces are present in all areas that have experienced a conflict," she added. "What refugees need as a substitute for their suffering is to be enabled to run their own lives."

Ibrahim Ag Bibi, a Malian who fled the war and is now living at M'Bera refugee camp, said he was encouraged by the peacekeeper proposal.

"This step is very important and welcomed, because sending those troops would spread security in the hearts of refugees who are fearful of reprisals," he said.

Ag Bibi would not rule out returning to his home in northern Mali once the region is cleared of hard line terrorist who kill people and whip women.

"There is no doubt that armed terrorist groups are the cause of so many of us leaving our homes and fleeing to Mauritania, for fear of killing and harassment," he added.

Mohamed Ould Oubeida Sharif, a journalist who covers the plight of refugees at the M'Bera camp, cautiously

welcomed word of the potential arrival of UN Peacekeepers.

"There is no doubt that sending international troops to northern Mali may relatively contribute to the return of refugees to their homes," he told Magharebia. "Yet their presence should be large and well-armed in order to confront suicide operations expected to be conducted by some terrorists."

http://www.magharebia.com/cocoon/awi/xhtml1/en_GB/features/awi/features/2013/02/11/feature-02

5. JORDAN and LEBANON

- **Lebanese judge issues arrest warrant in Harb assassination case**

A Lebanese judge issued an arrest warrant for a suspect linked to the assassination case of opposition MP Boutros Harb.

Military Investigative Judge Fadi Sawan issued an arrest warrant in absentia for Mahmoud al-Hayek, the National News Agency reported on Tuesday.

It added that the suspect remains at large.

Earlier in February, Public Prosecutor Hatem Madi requested lifting the immunity off Harb "for slanderous remarks made against the judiciary and the president," after the lawmaker had criticized the belated judiciary decision to indict the Hezbollah-affiliated suspect in his attempted murder.

In July of last year, Harb was targeted in an apparent assassination bid after an "intruder" wielding a knife was apprehended by security guards in the MP's office. That same day, two explosives detonators were found in the building Harb's office is in.

<https://now.mmedia.me/lb/en/lebanonnews/judge-issues-arrest-warrant-against-mahmoud-al-hayek-in-assassination-case-against-mp-boutros-harb>

- **Lebanese lawmaker accuses energy minister of supporting Syrian regime**

Future bloc MP Kazem al-Kheir slammed Energy Minister Gebran Bassil for allegedly providing fuel to Syria.

"There are attempts being made to strengthen the Syrian regime by supplying it with vital resources... and Bassil is

[helping to prop up] this regime without taking Lebanon’s interest into consideration,” Kheir told Free Lebanon radio station on Tuesday.

The MP also criticized the national government, saying that it should “pay more attention to the cost of fuel in the country” instead of providing its neighbor Syria with it.

He also warned that the international community may now be prone to take “certain” measures to respond to Lebanon’s “violation of sanctions against Syria.”

In turn, Future bloc MP Khaled Zahraman told Ash-Sharq radio station that the issue of “diesel smuggling to Syria” should be discussed with the leader of the Free Patriotic Movement with which the energy minister is affiliated.

“This case should be referred to MP Michel Aoun who, yesterday, took to the [political] stage to preach about honesty and transparency.”

On Monday, Aoun announced the release of a book entitled “The Impossible

Exoneration” in which he claims that the opposing political party in Lebanon was embezzling state funds.

Media outlets recently reported that a big number of Syrian registered trucks were filling their tanks with diesel fuel in Beirut before heading to Syria.

Lebanon’s political landscape is currently split between supporters of the Syrian regime and Western-backed forces, to which the Future bloc is affiliated.

The Lebanese government has meanwhile continuously stated that it has adopted a stance of neutrality on Syria, where an uprising against President Bashar al-Assad has so far killed more than 60,000 people, according to figures released by the United Nations.

<https://now.mmedia.me/lb/en/lebanonnews/lebanese-lawmaker-accuses-energy-minister-of-supporting-syrian-regime>

- **Lebanese MP: Supplying Syria with fuel "a scandal"**

Lebanon’s Future bloc MP Ahmad Fatfat denounced his country's efforts to supply Syria with fuel.

“This is a great scandal, a direct violation of previous UN Security Council decisions, and a contravention of the policy of dissociation adopted by the [Lebanese] government,” Fatfat told Voice of Lebanon (100.5) radio station on Tuesday.

“This is an indication of [Lebanese] support provided to the regime of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad.”

Meanwhile, the radio station reported that Syrian registered trucks were preparing to fill their tanks with diesel fuel near Dora in East Beirut. This news came amid reports that a number of Syrian registered trucks are en route to Syria with Lebanese diesel fuel supplies.

Lebanon’s political landscape is currently split between supporters of the Syrian regime and the Western-backed forces, to which the Future bloc is affiliated.

The Lebanese government has meanwhile continuously stated that it has adopted a neutral stance with regard to the troubles taking place in neighboring Syria.

<https://now.mmedia.me/lb/en/lebanonne/ws/opposition-mp-supplying-syria-with-fuel-a-scandal>

6. SYRIA

• Turkish PM says car blast on Syria border was bomb attack

Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan said on Tuesday that a powerful blast in a minibus on the Syrian border which killed 14 people was a bomb attack.

"A vehicle loaded with bombs was able to reach our customs gate because the customs gate on the Syrian side is not working and is not being controlled," Erdogan told parliament after Monday's incident.

Erdogan said the vehicle exploded in the buffer zone between Turkey's Cilvegozu border crossing and Syria's Bab al-Hawa post, which was seized by Syrian rebels in July.

"What we see in the footage that it is a crowded parking lot filled with pedestrians... Anybody can see the death toll would be heavy," Justice Minister Sadullah Ergin told reporters earlier.

"So we believe civilians are the clear targets," Ergin added. "I curse this act of terror."

The Cilvegozu crossing is one of seven functioning border posts along Turkey's 910 kilometer (560 mile) frontier with Syria.

It is a major gateway into Syria, with hundreds of trucks lining up every day to take humanitarian aid into the war-torn nation.

<https://now.mmedia.me/lb/en/newsyriala-testnews/turkish-pm-says-car-blast-on-syria-border-was-bomb-attack>

- **UN chief appeals to Syria as Assad vows to fight on**

UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon urged the government of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad to accept an opposition offer of peace talks, hours after Assad himself vowed to fight on.

Ban referred to an offer for talks by National Coalition leader Ahmed Moaz al-Khatib as "an opportunity we should not miss -- a chance to switch from a

devastating military logic to a promising political approach."

"This was a courageous offer by Mr. al-Khatib," he said in a speech Monday at the Council on Foreign Relations, urging both the Syrian government and the Security Council to "respond positively."

Earlier Monday, however, Assad said he would not bow to mounting pressure and "plots," state news agency SANA reported.

"Syria will remain the beating heart of the Arab world and will not give up its principles despite the intensifying pressure and diversifying plots not only targeting Syria, but all Arabs," Assad said.

He was speaking almost two years into the deadly revolt in Syria, which the United Nations says has cost more than 60,000 lives since it broke out in mid-March 2011.

National Coalition chief Khatib, head of the umbrella opposition group recognized by several Arab and Western nations, meanwhile said he had received "no clear response" from Damascus over his offer of dialogue.

He said in late January he was prepared to hold direct talks with regime representatives without "blood on their hands," on condition the talks focus on replacing Assad.

The Assad regime has said it is open to talks but without preconditions.

Khatib, speaking to reporters in Cairo, proposed that direct talks with regime representatives could take place in "liberated areas" of rebel-dominated northern Syria.

The efforts to get the opposing sides around the table came as at least 13 people were killed when a car exploded on the border between northern Syria and southeastern Turkey.

The blast, just inside Turkey, wounded dozens of others, Turkish officials said.

"We have unfortunately lost 13 people: three of them Turks and rest Syrians," Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan said.

The powerful blast was caused by explosives, and "all possibilities are on the table, including political motives," Deputy

Prime Minister Bulent Arinc said after a cabinet meeting.

The explosion coincided with the planned time of arrival of an opposition delegation at the frontier, said Abdel Basset Sayda, a top official of the opposition Syrian National Council.

The delegation's arrival had been delayed, he added.

Rebels on Monday seized control of the largest dam in Syria, a vital barrier along the Euphrates River in the northern province of Raqa that generates 880 megawatts of power, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said.

"This is the biggest economic loss for the regime since the start of the revolution," Observatory head Rami Abdel Rahman told AFP.

Rebels from the jihadist Al-Nusra Front and the Awayis al-Qurani and Ahrar al-Tabqa battalions met little resistance in the area, as loyalist security chiefs fled on board military helicopters, he said.

The capture of the dam is the latest in a string of key rebel victories in northern and eastern Syria, but the insurgents have yet to take over a major city in the war-ravaged country.

The uprising began as a series of peaceful demonstrations inspired by the so-called Arab Spring, but grew increasingly militarized after government forces opened fire on demonstrators and soon escalated into a civil war.

<https://now.mmedia.me/lb/en/newsyriala-testnews/un-chief-appeals-to-syria-as-assad-vows-to-fight-on>

- **Syrian minister willing to meet opposition chief abroad**

A Syrian minister said on Monday that he was ready to meet with National Coalition leader Ahmad Moaz al-Khatib who in late January said he is prepared to hold direct talks with regime representatives without “blood on their hands,” on condition the talks focus on replacing Assad.

“I am willing to meet Mr. Khatib in any foreign city where I can go in order to discuss preparations for a national dialogue,” Minister of National

Reconciliation Ali Haidar told The Guardian.

Haidar is a leader of the Syrian Social Nationalist Party and has been a minister since 2011. He is one of two opposition candidates granted a ministerial post.

Asked what the aim of national dialogue is, Haidar said he wished for authentic competition in Syrian politics. The end result of healthy competition is to establish a multiparty parliament as well as secure a new president when Assad’s term ends in 2014.

“The dialogue is a means to provide a mechanism for reaching free parliamentary and presidential elections. This is one of the subjects which will be discussed at the table. Such a thing could be the result of negotiations, but not a precondition,” he said. “We reject a dialogue that is just to hand power from one side to another.”

Last month, Syrian President Bashar al Assad announced he was ready for talks with the opposition but ruled out meeting groups such as Khatib’s National Coalition,

which backs armed rebels seeking to overthrow his regime.

Khatib's initiative came three weeks after Assad's announcement. It sparked a controversy amid opposition circles who some described as traitorous.

Haidar also noted that due to sanctions, he, like other Syrian ministers, is banned from the EU. He added however that Geneva is a possible location for holding the first round of talks.

"But we insist that the actual national dialogue take place on Syrian soil because it is a matter of Syrian dignity," he stated.

Commenting on some exiled politician's concerns of being arrested if they go to Syria, Haidar said: "The ministry of the interior has agreed to relax its policies and give them all the necessary documents to return and let them in even if they don't have any. I don't want to close the door to any opposition people who have concerns. I personally invite anyone to return and guarantee their safe entry and departure, if that's what they want."

He added that Khatib's altered policy, the military deadlock and the change in the regional and international climate are what gave momentum to the possibility of negotiations.

"There are hardliners on both sides but 80% on each side now realize that no military victory is possible. I'm in contact by phone with some leaders of the Free Syrian Army and they used to say, "we'll be in Damascus in a few days' time, but today they say, we've found out that the international community is playing games with us and working for their own interests only so we realize we can't defeat the Syrian army," he said.

On whether U.N. envoy Lakhdar Brahimi's mission has ended, Haidar said it has not, adding, however, that the envoy has not been frank.

"In his discussions here it was Brahimi who said it was a bit early to form a government. His point was that it's not possible because there are so many opposition factions in exile who are not yet ready to participate. Unfortunately, when he left Syria we heard something else from him," Haidar said.

“There were contradictions in his statements which weakened his position of being equidistant from all Syrians. We wouldn’t say his mission has completely failed but he has to regain his previous position of equidistance.”

<http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2013/02/12/265871.html>

7. ARABIAN PENINSULA AND THE GULF OF BASRA

- **Yemenis celebrate uprising's second anniversary**

Tens of thousands of Yemenis gathered Monday in Sanaa to celebrate the second anniversary of the launch of nationwide protests that pushed president Ali Abdullah Saleh out of power after 33 years in office.

Jubilant Yemenis gathered in the Sitin street, a capital artery that was scene of frequent protests and confrontations between anti-regime demonstrators and police and militamen backing the former leader.

The rally was organized by the committee of the Youth Revolution, which considers February 11, 2011 the day the uprising against Saleh's rule erupted, though demonstrations had begun in January 2011 taking cue from protests in Tunisia and Egypt.

"Hold your head up, you are a free Yemeni," chanted the crowds gathered in Sitin, evoking a slogan chanted during the protests against Saleh, an AFP correspondent reported.

"February 11 is a day that Yemenis will always celebrate," said a statement released by the organizing committee.

The statement urged the government, in which the former opposition now holds 50 percent of the seats, to look after the families of the "martyrs" and "complete the treatment for the wounded."

It also called for a "trial for the killers of the youths, and a return of the people's funds that were stolen."

Saleh agreed in November 2011 to step down as per a Gulf-brokered and UN-backed initiative which stipulated

presidential elections in February 2012 that brought Abdrabuh Mansur Hadi, Saleh's then deputy, as an interim president for two years.

The initiative granted Saleh and his aides immunity from prosecution but it demanded a complete restructuring of the military and security forces and a national dialogue to draft a new constitution and electoral law for general polls in 2014.

Hadi last week set March 18 as the date for the much-anticipated dialogue.

The committee organising Monday's rally in Sanaa welcomed the dialogue.

"We announce from here that we welcome setting March 18 as the date for dialogue between Yemenis," the head of the committee, Mohammed al-Sabri told demonstrators, implying that they will take part in the talks.

A similar rally was held in Taez, Yemen's second city, which was also scene to large anti-Saleh protests, as well as bloody confrontations, during the uprising.

<https://now.mmedia.me/lb/en/gulfnews/yemenis-celebrate-uprisings-second-anniversary>

- **Revolts happened because 'smart' Arabs do not believe lies: UAE's PM**

"Lies" do not work with Arab nations as they are "smart" enough to examine their realities, UAE's prime minister told hundreds of state officials on Monday during a forum to discuss his economic policies.

"[Arab] nations are smart. [Leaders] can lie for one or two years, but not for 40 years," Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid al-Maktoum said in reference to ousted dictators in all of Tunisia, Libya, Egypt and Yemen.

"Arab nations are smart and with the availability of the social media, they found out and discovered. They were patient but later they exploded."

Sheikh Maktoum said he previously advised toppled leaders to listen to their people but no avail.

"I visited Arab leaders and I confessed to some of them - some were offended and

others said “no,” that they had reports to prove otherwise. I told them that I had no boundaries with them, and I had no greedy interests in their countries. I gave my advice for their people’s interests.”

The prime minister said “revolutions happened for the Arab nation’s interests,” as the toppled leaders either took some of their nation's money, sent it abroad or gave it to other states. He added that some bluntly said that they had no money.

Unlike many other Arab countries, UAE is seen as benevolent government that shares its oil-resources with its people.

The prime minister said finding jobs for UAE citizens is one of the government’s top priorities.

The unusual event underlined the urgency with which leaders in the UAE and other oil-rich Gulf states are trying to boost employment among their citizens, to avert political discontent and prepare for any future downturn in oil prices.

Sheikh Maktoum, addressed some 1,700 government employees at the two-hour forum, pacing the stage and sometimes

calling on ministers to respond to particular points.

Reuters cited him as saying that the UAE government was working on a project to employ 120,000 UAE nationals, but did not give details. He also urged private companies to hire more UAE citizens, but did not announce new incentives or requirements for them to do so.

Special thanks to Egyptians

Meanwhile, the leader gave Egypt special attention when he openly thanked the Egyptian community for helping to develop the UAE.

“I wish the great Egyptian nation happiness, stability and prosperity... and not to forget that the Egyptian community in the UAE has helped in developing this country.”

He said that “Egypt is the heart of the Arab world and with god's willing it will do great.”

<http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2013/02/12/265774.html>

- **U.S. names UAE as largest trading partner in Arab region: ambassador**

The American ambassador to the UAE said the country is the United States' largest trading in the Middle East, reported Dubai based Gulf News on Monday.

Ambassador Michael H. Corbin stated this during a visit to the Abu Dhabi Customs Institute and further noted that the UAE is on its way to becoming a focused hub for trade, tourism and other important economic activities.

Trade between the two countries in growing at a fast rate.

"In fact, the USA's exports to UAE reached \$22.5 billion in 2012, a 40 per cent increase from 2011. Trade between the USA and UAE is even larger than our export relationship with India," said Corbin.

The ambassador also commented on the increasing focus by international airlines on the UAE, major carriers have made the country a base for their business.

Khalifa port, one of the largest in the region, is deemed just one of many reasons to ensure "continuous

cooperation with the UAE, the leader in the development of trade infrastructure, in order to enhance the exchange of knowledge and information," he said.

"This visit is an opportunity to strengthen the bonds of cooperation between the two countries since the UAE has become home to many important projects such as the Khalifa port, Abu Dhabi International Airport, Dubai International Airport and the new Etihad Railway network," added Corbin.

One Emirati official said that the visit enforced the good relations between the UAE's General Administration of Customs and the U.S.

<http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2013/02/12/265826.html>

8. AFGHANISTAN - PAKISTAN

- **Afghan Panel Says Prison Torture Not Systematic**

February 11, 2013

Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty

An Afghan government panel confirms it has found evidence of torture of

detainees, but it denied systematic abuse of prisoners.

The panel was tasked by Afghan President Hamid Karzai last month to investigate UN claims that prisoners in government custody were being tortured and sexually abused.

The panel said on February 11 that almost half the inmates it interviewed claimed being tortured.

Sixty-six percent of the inmates said they don't have access to legal services.

The panel said it spoke to some 140 inmates in Kabul, Kandahar, and Herat jails.

In a report issued in January, the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) said that "torture persists and remains a serious concern in numerous detention facilities across Afghanistan."

The report said such practices continue despite efforts by the United Nations and international forces.

Based on reporting by AP and dpa

<http://www.aopnews.com/today.html>

- **US hinders reconciliation efforts across Afghanistan: Sasha Knezev**

Interview with Sasha Knezev

Press TV

February 11, 2013

The United States policy in Afghanistan seeks to fracture relationships between the government and tribal forces in the region, an author tells Press TV.

Afghan President Hamid Karzai has said that the United States has stopped fighting against the Taliban, adding that the greatest threat to Afghanistan is not the Taliban but the interference by foreign powers.

Press TV has conducted an interview with Sasha Knezev, an author and filmmaker from Los Angeles. The following is a rough transcription of the interview.

Press TV: The US went into Afghanistan because of the Taliban and al-Qaeda. Now, Afghan President Hamid Karzai is saying the US is no longer fighting the Taliban. Doesn't this question the whole

reason for invading and occupying Afghanistan?

Knezev: I think we have to look at this in the context of the history of the Taliban. We obviously know that the Taliban was created by Zbigniew Brzezinski. This was all illustrated in his book “The Grand Chessboard”.

I think we also need to look into the history of Karzai. Remember, Karzai initially did support the Taliban in the 90s although he did believe they were being used by the ISI which was the Pakistani intelligence; but, he did initially. Then of course he changed his mind after siding with the UK and the United States. They used Karzai for other US interests that was just to enhance the fracturing and fragmentation of the area.

I think that the entire purpose of Karzai’s administration, which was also illustrated perfectly by US Army General Martin Dempsey who as recently as a couple of weeks ago stated that the United States was going to stay in Afghanistan until at least the end of 2014, that this will coincide with the beginning of the next election cycle of the United States.

This continued rupturing of the area and fragmentation between the Taliban and the Karzai administration is what the United States does, and its Western allies.

We have to remember that when the United States military goes into foreign occupying land they don’t leave. We still have troops in Kosovo. We still have troops in Japan. We see no ending to the troops in, obviously, Iraq and so on and so forth.

I think we should also look into the fact that in October of this year it will mark the 12 years of this war in Afghanistan.

Now, the war in Vietnam lasted approximately 15, 16 years. We’re almost at that point but the difference is that the United States as an industrial capacity was much more stronger in the 50s, 60s and early 70s in Vietnam.

We cannot afford this, economically. It’s time to bring our troops home. I think this is going to spell a catastrophe for the United States in terms of foreign policy and most specifically the economy.

Press TV: What now? What should we expect to see in the ties between the US and Afghanistan as well as the Taliban?

Knezev: Again, I go back to Zbigniew Brzezinski's book "The Grand Chessboard" where this was all illustrated perfectly. I think the entire pre-occupation of that area is to surround the area of Eurasia which was ultimately to put a stranglehold on Russia and on China.

This preceded the PNAC report, the Project for the New American Century, which was drafted prior to 9/11 and prior to the US troops going into Afghanistan and into Iraq. This strategy, this grand strategy of foreign policy and neo-American imperialism, again, was drafted a long time ago.

Again, this was perfectly illustrated in Zbigniew Brzezinski's book, who created openly and admittedly the Taliban.

I think ultimately the goal is to stay in Afghanistan, perpetuate this war in the Middle East and go onto the ultimate goal of surrounding the Eurasian area of Russia and China.

<http://www.aopnews.com/today.html>

- **18 Taliban rebels surrender in E. Afghanistan**

ASADABAD, Afghanistan, Feb. 11 (Xinhua) -- Up to 18 Taliban rebels renounced violence and surrendered in eastern Afghan province of Kunar on Monday, authorities said.

"An 18-member group of Taliban including their commander named Heydari laid down their arms and joined the government-initiated peace and reintegration process in Kunar earlier Monday," the provincial governor Seyyed Fazlullah Wahidi told Xinhua.

With the former insurgents' surrender, peace and stability would be further strengthened in several parts of the province with Asadabad city as its capital 185 km east of Kabul, Wahidi added.

The Afghan government set up a 70-member High Peace Council in the summer 2010 to encourage Taliban to disarm and give up militancy against the government.

Taliban militants fighting Afghan and NATO-led troops have not made any comment yet.

<http://www.aopnews.com/today.html>

- **Roadside bomb strikes Afghan army van, kills 1, wounds 1**

JALALABAD, Afghanistan, Feb. 11 (Xinhua)-
- Roadside bomb hit a vehicle of Afghan army in the eastern Nangarhar province 120 km east of Kabul on Monday, leaving one person dead and injuring another, a local official said.

"A mine planted by militants on a road in Khogyani district, struck a vehicle of national army in Mimla village at around 10:00 a.m. local time today killing a soldier and injuring another," a security official Hazrat Hussain Mashriqiwal told Xinhua.

Meantime, Zabihullah Mujahid who claims to speak for the Taliban outfit in talks with media via telephone from unknown location claimed of responsibility, stressing three soldiers were killed in the blast.

<http://www.aopnews.com/today.html>

- **Afghan investors to shift 80 factories from Pakistan to Kandahar**

By Sayed Jawad - 11 Feb 2013, 1:22 pm

Khaama Press

Afghan private sector investors are due to shift around 80 factories from Pakistan to southern Kandahar province of Afghanistan, officials announced.

Provincial private sector officials said also urged the Afghan government to provide better investment opportunities including electricity and land for the merchants in this province.

Deputy industrial chief for Kandahar province Faiz-ul-haq Mashwani said Afghan businessmen are facing lack of electricity in Kandahar province which prevents them for investment.

He said employment opportunities for almost 3000 people will be provided if the factories are shifted from Pakistan in Kandahar province.

Afghanistan's industries were left inoperative due to decades of civil strife and war. Still in an early stage of growth

before the outbreak of war, industry's development has been stunted since; those few industries that have continued production remain limited to processing of local materials.

However the government and international community encouraged the growth of a private sector, the groundwork was laid for revival of Afghanistan's factories and industries in 2005.

<http://www.aopnews.com/today.html>

derlenmektedir. Belirtilen görüşler bölge ülkelerinin haber kaynaklarına ve ismi geçen yazarlara ait olup ORSAM'ın görüşünü yansıtmamaktadır.

This media summary is prepared by **ORSAM Middle East Research Assistant Nebahat Tanrıverdi O Yaşar. 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.*

Bu bülten **ORSAM Ortadoğu Uzman Yardımcısı Nebahat Tanrıverdi O Yaşar tarafından hazırlanmaktadır. Bülten Ortadoğu ülkelerinin yerel haber kaynaklarından*