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MIDDLE EAST DAILY BULLETIN

GÜNLÜK ORTADOĞU BÜLTENİ

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Bölge Ülkelerinde İç Siyaset

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1. IRAQ

Alewi urges Turkish people to topple Erdoğan

MP, Kareem Alewi, of the Iraqi National Alliance described the Turkish Premier, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, as “The Tyrent who participates in every plot against the region through his strong relations with Israel and terrorism.”

Turkey witnesses waves of demonstrations in a number of major cities in the country especially Istanbul calling for toppling the government of Erdoğan.

Alewi stated to AIN “The Turkish Government is careless towards the Turkish people and the regional peoples,” noting that “Erdoğan appointed himself as a military commander for the middle east.”

“Erdoğan is not suitable for the current stage because he created negative relations for Turkey with the neighboring countries,” he added.

He urged “The Turkish people to topple Erdoğan who wants to involve Turkey in wars through his strong relations with Israel, terrorism and Qaeda.”

http://www.alliraqnews.com/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=35388:alewi-urges-turkish-people-to-topple-erdoan-&catid=35:political&Itemid=2

Haji: SLC seeks forming expanded political front for next Parlaimentary elections

Baghdad (AIN) -MP, Mahdi Haji, of the Kurdistan Alliance confirmed that the State of Law Coalition has lost in the last Provincial elections so it seeks forming expanded political front to restore its position in the next Parlaimentary elections.

He stated to AIN “Forming such front aims at expanding the foundation of the Government since the SLC has lost in the last provincial elections where its seats were won by the Supreme Iraqi Islamic Council and the Sadr Trend.”

“The SLC want to win more Parlaimentary seats by forming this front,” he concluded.

It is worth mentioning that the Premier, Nouri al-Maliki, revealed “We seek reaching a wide national political frame to preserve the unity of Iraq.”

Speaking to the Iraqiya Satellite Channel, he said “We are working to achieve such comprehensive and wide alliance to preserve the unity of Iraq.”

A source from the Premier’s Office announced that we do not have information about the issue of forming a new political front by the Premier, Nouri al-Maliki.

Iraqiya Satellite Channel assured “A source from the Premier’s Office confirmed that they do not have information about this issue.”

Earlier, a new agency mentioned that a new political bloc will be formed by Maliki under the name of “National Rescue Front” where Maliki is its head and Salih al-Mutleg as well as Khudair al-Khuzayi is his deputies.

http://www.alliraqnews.com/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=35385:haji-slc-seeks-forming-expanded-political-front-for-next-parliamentary-elections&catid=35:political&Itemid=2

IHEC completes its preparations for KR elections

The Independent High Electoral Commission announced completing the preparations for conducting the elections of Kurdistan Region.

The Deputy Head of the Commissioners Council, Kati al-Zubayi, stated to AIN “The preparations are going on for KR elections according to a plan set by the Council and it will be based on the system of the biggest loser unlike the Provincial Councils elections.”

He added “The registration of the political alliances and coalitions has started in KR where the IHEC is available in KR for supervising the electoral process.”

“The number of the political entities reached 29 approved entities and later on the nomination for the Presidential post will be started,” he continued.

Concerning the elections of Anbar and Nineveh Provincial Councils, he said “The logistic and the technical preparations are done.”

http://www.alliraqnews.com/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=35389:ihec-completes-its-preparations-for-kr-elections-&catid=35:political&Itemid=2

Baldawi: Implementing Turkish-Israeli project in Iraq to cause civil war

“Implementing the Turkish-Israeli in Iraq will cause a civil war through forming a region involves Nineveh, Salah-il-Din, Diyala and Anbar provinces.”

He stated to AIN “A number of tribes in these provinces reject the project of forming a region on sectarian basis.”

“This project is adopted by Turkey and Israel to weaken Iraq,” he stressed.

“The SLC does not support this project due to its negative consequences,” he concluded.

http://www.alliraqnews.com/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=35392:baldawi-implementing-turkish-israeli-project-in-iraq-to-cause-civil-war-&catid=35:political&Itemid=2

MP attributes deterioration of banking sector in Iraq to political disputes, observatory sides

MP, Younam Yohana, of the Parliamentary Economic Committee attributed the deterioration of the banking sector in Iraq to the political disputes and the observatory sides such as the parliament.

Speaking to All Iraq News Agency (AIN), he said “The corruption in Iraq has a big role in the deterioration of the banking sector in Iraq where it must be eliminated, but the political disputes and the lack of experience also has a role in this deterioration.”

“There should be some means and techniques to avoid wasting the public fund,” he added, noting that “The accusations against some officials are

behind the deterioration of the banking sector.”

http://www.alliraqnews.com/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=35401:mp-attributes-deterioration-of-banking-sector-in-iraq-to-political-disputes-observatory-sides-&catid=35:political&Itemid=2

Zirqani: Maliki's visit to Erbil affirms that the Kurds, Region are inseparable part of Iraq

Lawmaker from the State of Law Alliance, Fatima al-Zirqani, said that, "The upcoming visit of Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki to Erbil affirms that the Kurds and Kurdistan Region are inseparable part of Iraq."

In a statement to the press on Friday, June 7, Zirqani said that Maliki's visit to Erbil is going to refute all recent allegations that problems between the Federal Government and the Government of Kurdistan Region are unsolvable, and there is disaffection between the two governments.

She added that the visit will break the ice between the two, and is going to activate concluded agreements between the two governments, as well as to discuss results of joint committees.

The Cabinet is scheduled to hold its next meeting on Sunday in Erbil.

The Prime Minister's Media Advisor, Ali al-Musawi, said that Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki is going to chair a joint meeting of the Federal and the Region governments to discuss issues of common interest.

Mosawi added that during the visit, Maliki is to meet with the Region's President,

Massoud Barazani, and other political leaders.

http://www.ninanews.com/english/News_Details.asp?ar95_VQ=GIFHF1

2. IRAN

Supreme Leader Calls for Muslims' Vigilance against Enemies' Plots

Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei urged the Muslim nations to be vigilant against the plots hatched by the enemies to create rift among them..

"Hegemonic powers intend to sow discord among Muslims in order to distract them from their main issues and making the necessary progress," Ayatollah Khamenei said.

The Supreme Leader noted that the most important duty of Muslim nations under the present conditions is to remain vigilant against the enemy plots in a bid to be able to take appropriate measures and avoid mistakes.

"The enemy's main scheme is to create rifts and conflict among Muslims. So, unity, solidarity and cooperation are the most pressing needs of the Muslim world," Ayatollah Khamenei underlined.

He said that the enemies seek to drive a wedge between Muslims to deflect their attention from their main enemies which are corrupt capitalism and the Zionist regime of Israel.

Last month, Ayatollah Khamenei said that enemy states are exercising plots to discourage the Iranian nation from participating in the upcoming presidential election, but to no avail.

"The aliens first sought to cancel the election, but now that they can't do so, they are trying to discourage the people (from voting), cool the election and affect the people's choice," Ayatollah Khamenei said, addressing a large gathering of the Iranian people in Tehran.

He said discouraging the people is one of the enemies' main tactics in election, and said, "They want to inspire the public opinion with the idea that voting and participating in the election is of no use."

Ayatollah Khamenei warned that the enemy wants to coax the Iranian nation into electing a person who will push the country towards dependence, weakness, backwardness in different fields and put Iran on the path of compliance with the aliens' policies. Yet, the Leader underlined that the Iranian nation is wise and vigilant and will elect the best person for ruling the country as president.

<http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=9202247938>

MP: US Sanctions Seeking to Dismay Iranians ahead of Presidential Election

Last week, the US blacklisted eight companies in Iran's petrochemical industry. Most of the companies are private. The petrochemical companies owned or controlled by the Iranian government that are on the Treasury Department list include Bandar Imam Petrochemical Co, Bou Ali Sina Petrochemical Co and Mobin Petrochemical Co.

"Under existing conditions, new sanctions that target our country's petrochemical companies on the verge of the election are for psychological effect, as the West seeks to discourage the people from participating in this election with this psychological shock,"

member of the parliament's Energy Commission Mousa Ahmadi said on Thursday.

The Iranian legislator noted that the US and its allies know that the sanctions cannot prevent the petrochemical industry from making progress.

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 and the western embargos 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=9202247934>

16 Iranian pilgrims killed in Baquba bomb attack.

Sixteen Iranians are among several pilgrims killed in a terrorist bomb attack that hit their convoy near the Iraqi city of Baquba, north of the capital Baghdad.

The incident occurred on Friday morning when an explosive-laden vehicle detonated in Muqdadiyah, which is located about 90 kilometers north of Baghdad.

Nearly 20 people were killed when the blast ripped through the bus as the vehicle packed with pilgrims was heading for the holy city of Najaf.

At least 45 other people, many of them thought to be Iranians, were also wounded in the bombing.

No group has claimed the responsibility for the deadly bombing yet. The terrorist attack comes on the heels of Thursday's deadly shootings and bombings that left at least 10 people dead and over 50 injured across Iraq.

<http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2013/06/07/307648/six-iranians-killed-in-iraq-bomb-attack/>

Enemy plotting rifts to hinder Muslims' progress: Leader

Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei has warned against enemy plots to create divisions among Muslim nations to impede their progress.

"Hegemonic powers intend to sow discord among Muslims in order to distract them from their main issues and making the necessary progress," Ayatollah Khamenei said in a meeting with Iranian officials, and ambassadors of Muslim countries in Tehran

on Friday on the occasion of Mab'ath - the anniversary of the appointment of Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) to prophethood.

The most important duty of Muslim nations at this juncture is to remain vigilant and to know their roadmap and enemy plots in order to be able to take appropriate measures and avoid mistakes, Ayatollah Khamenei stressed.

"The enemy's main scheme is to create rifts and conflict among Muslims. So, unity, solidarity, cooperation and rapport are the most pressing needs of the Muslim world."

The Leader said the enemy seeks to drive a wedge between Muslims to deflect their attention from their main enemies which are corrupt capitalism and the Zionist regime of Israel.

Ayatollah Khamenei added that sacrilegious acts against Islam and Islamophobia campaigns cannot have been orchestrated without the design and finance of superpowers and their intelligence services.

<http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2013/06/07/307639/west-plotting-rifts-to-hold-muslims-back/>

Qusayr victory brings stability to Syria: Iran envoy

Iran's ambassador to Damascus hails the Syrian Army's recent recapturing of the strategic town of al-Qusayr, saying the triumph has brought stability to the crisis-hit country.

"The recent victories by the Syrian Army and popular forces in al-Qusayr region have brought stability to Syria. This will ease people's sufferings," Mohammad-Reza Raouf-

Sheibani said in a meeting with Syrian Prime Minister Wael al-Halqi on Thursday.

He added that the Syrian people's resistance against international plots over the past two years is in itself a victory over the country's enemies.

The Syrian Army managed to fully recapture the western town of al-Qusayr, an important center and supply route for the foreign-sponsored militants fighting against the Arab state, following three weeks of combat, Syria's state television reported on Wednesday.

Many foreign-backed militants and members of armed groups were reportedly killed or injured during the Syrian Army operation to clean Qusayr from terrorists.

Halqi, for his part, appreciated Iran's support for Syria, adding that the victories scored by the Syrian Army, particularly in Qusayr region, paved the way to clear a major hub of terrorists backed by the Israeli regime.

Syria's recent military and political victories have played a leading role in increasing public support for the Syrian government, the premier added.

A day after Syrian Army troops fully purged Qusayr from foreign-sponsored militants, they took control of al-Daba'a town in the central province of Homs.

Syria has been gripped by a deadly unrest since March 2011, and many people, including large numbers of government forces, have been killed in the violence.

Damascus says the chaos is being orchestrated from outside the country, and there are reports that a very large number of the militants are foreign nationals.

<http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2013/06/07/307626/qusayr-victory-brings-stability-to-syria/>

Iran's president congratulates Nawaz Sharif on election as Pakistan PM

The Iranian president has congratulated the Pakistani people and Nawaz Sharif on his recent election as Pakistan's prime minister.

In a message, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad expressed confidence that the brotherly relations between the two countries would flourish under Sharif's leadership, Pakistani Foreign Ministry reported on Thursday.

In a separate message, Iran's Majlis Speaker Ali Larijani also congratulated the new Pakistani premier, saying the peaceful and democratic transition of power to Pakistan's Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) was indicative of the Pakistani people's great confidence in Sharif and his party.

Larijani expressed hope that Tehran and Islamabad would improve their parliamentary ties in the future.

After taking his oath of office, Sharif delivered a message to all heads of Pakistani missions abroad, expressing the desire to deepen relations with Islamabad's friends in the Middle East, East Asia and elsewhere.

The Pakistani prime minister stated that Iran is a friendly country with which Islamabad shall continue to pursue close cooperation.

On Wednesday, Pakistani lawmakers endorsed Sharif as the country's new prime minister, electing him to an unprecedented third term more than a decade after he was ousted in a coup.

During general elections held on May 11, Sharif's center-right party secured 176 seats of the 342-member lower house of the assembly. Sharif later won 244 votes to become prime minister.

<http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2013/06/07/307609/irans-president-congratulates-sharif/>

3. ISRAEL – PALESTINE

As fighting looms closer to home, IDF confronts increased jihadi presence in Golan Heights

The Golan Heights have seen major changes in the last few months, most of all in the increased presence of al-Qaeda and Global Jihad terrorists in the Jamla area, IDF Golan Division commander Arik Chen said in a special report on the Syrian conflict aired Friday on Channel 2.

Chen said the terrorists gathering around Jamla, who were affiliated mostly with the al-Qaeda and Global Jihad organizations, had established themselves in the Golan Heights with the aim of securing the Quneitra area — and the border zone with Israel — for rebels fighting to topple Syrian President Bashar Assad.

Syrian troops backed by Hezbollah fighters pressed on Friday with their offensive in the country's opposition heartland, taking two small villages near a strategic town that was captured by the government this week.

Following Wednesday's capture of Qusair, Assad's forces faced little resistance Friday as they took control of the central villages of Salhiyeh and Masoudiyeh, just north of Qusair. On Thursday, the rebels also lost control of the nearby village of Dabaa.

However, the Israeli military is still wary of rebel presence in the area.

"Obviously, at the end of the day this [fighting] can and will be directed towards us," Chen said. He added that the insurgents have tanks and hold regular training exercises before beginning their offensives against Assad's troops.

"Their aim is to connect the Bir Ajam region to the Jubata area," both in the vicinity of the border, he said.

According to Chen, the new reality in the north has also forced Israel to change its military strategy. It was no longer gathering intelligence on the Syrian military only, but investigating every movement and occurrence along the border.

"Everything is investigated," said Chen, from animals grazing near the fence to people and vehicles.

He added that new fences, similar to the ones demarcating Israel's border with Egypt, were also being built along the northern border.

He said, however, that Israel had no intention of escalating the conflict or causing friction on the northern front. Israel, he stressed, wasn't looking to fight the Syrian army.

Instead, the IDF was operating on a smaller scale, going on the offensive when danger was present, when fire was directed against it or when its freedom of movement along the border fence was impeded.

"Then, we can operate in a localized way," said Chen.

Israel's greatest challenge along its northern border, concluded Channel 2 military reporter

Roni Daniel, is not Assad's army but the jihadi insurgents gathering there, some of whom are likely to be plotting terrorist attacks on Israel.

Also Friday, Channel 2 quoted Hezbollah's al-Manar TV as saying that in the aftermath of Assad's offensive on the rebel stronghold of Qusair, weapons bearing Hebrew letters were found in the town.

<http://www.timesofisrael.com/as-fighting-looms-closer-to-home-idf-confronts-increased-presence-of-jihad-fighters-in-golan-heights/>

Palestine became a member of the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) during the meeting in Dublin Castle, on June 6. Palestinian Journalists' Syndicate head, Abdul-Nasser An-Najjar, was elected as a member of the IFJ Executive Committee by 283 votes out of 369.

During the meeting, the IFJ re-elected Jim Boumelha (NUJ, UK & Ireland) as the President for another three years. Journalists Syndicates from 130 countries around the world participated in the election, the Maan News Agency has reported.

The IFJ demanded Israel to stop the assaults against Palestinian journalists, and strongly denounced the murder of journalists Husam Salama, Mohammad Abu Aisha and Mahmoud Al-Komy, who were killed by Israeli military fire and shells during the war on Gaza last year.

Furthermore, An-Najjar demanded Journalist Unions around the world to be involved in the efforts to reveal the whereabouts of Palestinian journalists Bashar Qaddoumy and Moheeb An-Nawaty who went missing in Syria.

In his speech at the Dublin Conference, International Relations Department head of the Palestinian Journalists Syndicate, Nabhan Khreisha, called for practicing pressure on the

Israeli government to stop its violations against the Palestinian journalists, and to oblige to recognize ID cards issued by the International Federation of Journalists to Palestinian journalists.

General Assembly member of the Palestinian Journalist Syndicate, Omar Nazzal, stated that the syndicate launched an international campaign to pressure Israel into removing the restrictions on Palestinian journalists, and to allow them to move freely between Jerusalem, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

Furthermore, Secretary General of the Palestinian Journalists Syndicate, Yousef Al-Ostath, stated that Palestine garnered the highest global vote, and said; "this victory is a victory to the martyrs among the Palestinian journalists, killed by the Israeli army, this is a victory to their sacrifices, a victory that exposed the crimes of the Israeli occupation".

<http://williambowles.info/2013/06/08/vtjp-occupied-palestine-and-israel-news-and-articles-7-june-2013-the-euro-american-blindness-in-the-middle-east/>

Settlers Burn A Palestinian Car In Jerusalem

Najib said that his car was burnt approximately at three at dawn; it was parked it in front of his home.

His neighbors told him that they saw extremist settlers around his home close to midnight, the Palestine News Network has reported.

Najib also stated that the area where he lives, close to the Shimon Tezek illegal outpost, witnesses frequent settler attacks, and that two weeks ago, settlers punctured tires of several Palestinian cars.

In related news, several extremist settlers attacked, on Friday morning, Palestinian farmers in Rojeeb village, near the northern West Bank city of Nablus.

Medical sources have reported that the settlers assaulted resident Salah Kamel Dweikat and his sons, before Palestinian farmers managed to force the settlers away.

On Friday, 31 May 2013, settlers wrote anti-Christian graffiti on the back wall of the Church of Zion near the southern wall of the old city of occupied East Jerusalem.

The graffiti written on the wall of the church included various vulgar and racist statements, such as “Christians are slaves,” “Christians are Monkeys,” in addition to “Price Tag”.

Also on Friday, a group of settlers attempted to seize an apartment in Jaber family's building in Sho'fat neighborhood in the north of Jerusalem by manipulating an order of the Israeli Magistrate's Court.

According to sources from Sho'fat neighborhood, approximately 15 settlers raided the apartment in the evening in an attempt to seize it, but the Israeli police arrived at the scene and forced them to leave; however, 1 settler stayed in it.

<http://www.imemc.org/article/65639>

UN To Grant Urgent Aid To Palestinian Victims Of Settler Violence

Israeli daily, Haaretz, has reported that the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) is seeking aid from international organizations to provide the compensations based on criteria it is currently working on.

The sought aid is will not only be financial, and would be based on estimates done by the UN regarding the amount of damage inflicted in each individual case.

Haaretz said that the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank does not have the means to provide compensation for Palestinian victims of settler violence, and quoted an official stating that Israel is responsible for the settlers and their actions in the occupied territories.

The official told Haaretz that when the settlers for instance burn a mosque, there is no problem is raising money to repair it, but the real issue is raising money for individuals harmed by the settlers and their escalating attacks.

According to Haaretz, Palestinians who are hurt in Jewish nationalistic attacks in the occupied territories are not granted compensation from the state, as hate crimes law in Israel does not include those Palestinians.

Yet, if Palestinians legally enter Israel, after being granted permits, and are subject to Israeli violence, then they are entitled to compensation from the Israeli Tax Authority or the National Insurance Institute.

Haaretz further said that, in 1999, Israel formed a committee in charge of compensations for Palestinians hurt by Israel violence. Supreme Court Justice (then Attorney General), Elyakim Rubinstein, recommended forming the committee.

The recommendations took effect 2000; they specifically state that compensation is paid for victims of violence not carried out by the Israeli army, and that the victims of this violence are not taking legal civil actions against the state, aka suing the state.

Furthermore, Haaretz said that another committee, known as the "Others Committee", is in charge of compensating Palestinian victims of Israeli military violence, but the committee does not have a big budget, does not even have a website, and pays hundreds of thousands of Israeli Shekels each year.

It also said that the website of the Israeli Defense Ministry does not even have instructions on how to contact this committee, and added that this committee handed a few cases of settler violence that took place against the Palestinians in 2008 when the army evicted settlers from a Palestinian property in the southern West Bank city of Hebron.

Israeli Television has reported that this committee recently paid a Palestinian the amount of NIS 140.000 following an injury he suffered when extremist settlers hurled a rock at him near the Yitzhar illegal settlement, in the northern West Bank district of Nablus.

Another Palestinian received NIS 27000 after being violently beaten and assaulted by Israeli settlers, and a third received NIS 28000 after the settlers torched his car, and a fourth was paid NIS 20000 when settlers destroyed his olive grove, Haaretz reported.

Extremist settler groups are responsible for hundreds of attacks against the Palestinians, their property and orchards, in addition to escalating attacks against Islamic and Christian holy sites and graveyards.

<http://www.imemc.org/article/65637>

4. AFRICA and EGYPT

Two Tunisian army officers were killed Thursday (June 6th) in the Jebel Chaambi

region, the defence ministry confirmed, calling it "a serious development".

The home-made bomb exploded during the ongoing military campaign to hunt down terrorists holed up in the mountain forests near Algeria.

This latest incident in Dhogra "targeted all those who use the track, whether citizens, military or security personnel", the defence ministry said, urging "all citizens to be cautious and deal positively with the military and security forces to protect the country and people against this imminent danger".

Some 45 suspects have been arrested in connection with the terrorism in Jebel Chaambi. Saber Mechri, owner of the storehouse where a large quantity of weapons was found in Mnihla, was among the detainees.

Members of radical salafist group Ansar al-Sharia are among the militants fighting Tunisian forces in the mountains, the interior ministry said.

"Those involved in Jebel Chaambi events include Kamel Gadhgadi, presumed killer of prominent opposition leader Chokri Belaid, and Abou Iyadh, leader of Tunisia's jihadist salafists who is wanted for planning the attack on the US embassy," the interior ministry said.

On Thursday morning, specialised security units raided the Hammam-Lif home of Abou Iyadh (real name Seif Allah Ibn Hussein) but the fugitive was not there.

Also on Thursday, Defence Minister Rachid Sabbagh confirmed that "terrorist elements holed up in Jebel Chaambi in Kasserine province are about to move", adding that "they receive assistance from other entities".

Army forces would soon receive "new equipment and devices to monitor landmines and track these terrorist elements", he added.

For his part, Prime Minister Ali Larayedh said that Tunisia's "position from terrorism and criminality hasn't changed, but has even grown firmer".

"We'll continue with our efforts until we dismantle this terrorist group and all those who have a proven link to these events. We'll also develop our counter-terrorism methods and plans," Larayedh said.

A key part of the strategy to combat the extremists includes revamping the country's counter-terror laws.

In that vein, a rights committee has been working for months on refining the counter-terrorism law by incorporating respect of human rights and international treaties signed by Tunisia, which provide guarantees for a fair trial.

At a seminar on the topic last week, Human Rights Minister Samir Dilou said that his ministry would speed up the bill drafting and refer it to the government and Constituent Assembly for revision and approval.

The current statute dates back to 2003. But the law has faced criticism for alleged over-reach during the regime of ousted President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali.

In a statement released May 23rd, the interior ministry said seven extremists were charged under the law for allegedly killing an officer on May 2nd in Jebel Jelloud, south of Tunis.

But activist groups, including Human Rights Watch, have said that the law carries loose definitions of terrorism and undermines defendants' rights.

http://magharebia.com/en_GB/articles/awi/features/2013/06/07/feature-01

Al-Qaeda swaps Mali for Libya

Ever since the liberation of northern Mali by French and African forces, some observers have been asking the same question: where did al-Qaeda fighters go?

A spate of deadly incidents indicates that the terrorists and armed Islamists routed from northern Mali have found a new home in the southern Libya desert and Jebel Chaambi's mountainous region between Algeria and Tunisia.

After al-Qaeda fighters were pushed out of Mali, they "hit the soft belly of coalition country Niger, via the place with the most fragile security system in the Maghreb - southern Libya," terrorism analyst Abdul Hamid Ansari says.

"This augurs further unrest and insecurity in North Africa and the Sahel region," he says. Forced to flee northern Mali, al-Qaeda elements moved to the Libyan desert to replenish ranks and regroup, Algerian newspaper Ennahar noted last month. The revolution that toppled Moamer Kadhafi allowed al-Qaeda brigades and allies to find a safe haven in a newly unstable country, the paper posited.

And then they struck back.

On May 23rd, former Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) emir Mokhtar Belmokhtar (aka "Laaouar") and his "Signed in Blood" gang mounted twin suicide car bombings that killed at least 20 people in Niger.

The attacks on a military camp in Agadez and a French-operated uranium mine in Arlit were to avenge the February killing of terrorist Abdelhamid Abou Zeid at the hands of the French army in Mali.

Less than a week after the Niger attacks, President Mahamadou Issoufou added a new twist to Belmokhtar's claim.

It was not just al-Qaeda, the Niger president said. It was al-Qaeda from Libya.

"I assure you that the attack on the north of our country came from the south of Libya, which poses a major threat to security in the Sahel-Sahara strip," Issoufou said May 28th during the memorial service for the victims of the Agadez suicide bombing.

Issoufou described southern Libya as fertile ground for those seeking to destabilise security in the Sahel and Sahara. He warned that al-Qaeda was planning another attack from its strongholds in southern Libya against the Republic of Chad.

A day after Issoufou spoke about the AQIM-Libya connection, French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius also warned African countries about the growing influence of Islamist militants in the Libyan desert. He called from Niger for concerted efforts from Tunisia, Algeria, Chad, Mali and Egypt to tackle the threat.

The problem in southern Libya now haunts the entire Sahel, observers warn. Maghreb countries indeed have reason to fear that the volatile situation in Libya might spread.

"The south of Libya has become indeed a hotbed for hard-line terrorist groups," says Hassan Ag Midal, a Touareg blogger and journalist from the north of Niger who follows militant groups in the Sahel.

It is only natural for these armed extremists to settle in southern Libya, he tells Magharebia, "because the place offers almost the same conditions as northern Mali".

"It's got large numbers of Touareg refugees, the same social and ethnic composition - particularly in the cities of Ubari and Sabha, and populations suffering from poverty and underdevelopment," he says.

And then there is the lack of security.

Ag Midal adds, "The Libyan army is not imposing its control over that region and the borders with Niger are very large and difficult to monitor continuously."

"The south of Libya is like an open continent, a place where there is everything," says Mohamed Oumar Gharsallah, a Libyan academic and former diplomat to Nouakchott.

"The absence of central authority poses a problem not only in the south but in the whole country. Weapon storehouses were looted and the army was destroyed and completely disappeared, after being the sixth largest in the Arab world," he says.

In addition to the terrorists, "there are drug traffickers and smugglers of goods and fuel, as well as tribes and militant groups", he notes.

And if al-Qaeda is looking for recruits, southern Libya is another place where "ordinary young people are mobilised as mercenaries in battles that are part of international manoeuvring".

"The region suffers from a problem of development, not a problem of Islam," the Libyan diplomat adds. "The failures of political regimes to address local development, the inflexibility of the political systems and the denial of local conditions have only exacerbated this problem."

The terror organisation has a plan for its forces in the Libyan desert. According to Mauritanian analyst Mohamed Ould Zein, "al-Qaeda is today centred on conducting retaliatory attacks against countries that contributed directly to their expulsion from northern Mali, such as Niger and Chad."

"But the next target to be targeted are the states that indirectly supported the war in Mali," he warns.

That means the Maghreb.Libya attention turns south. Following the comments by the Niger president and the French foreign minister about the al-Qaeda influx, Libya on Sunday (June 2nd) unveiled new measures to tighten security in the south and south-west.

Prime Minister Ali Zidan told reporters that the government had agreed upon a two-pronged approach.

"The first is to maintain order in the towns, including Ghat, Ubari, Murzuq, Wadi al-Shatie, Sabha and Kufra. The second is related to protecting and controlling the border and not allowing any infiltration by suspicious elements," Zidan said.

Soldiers and thwars will be paid bonuses to work in the desert region, he said. Due to the tough living conditions and weather in the southern zone, police and army personnel would also be eligible for pay hikes.

"We hope to realise what we have promised about the south and security arrangements," Zidan added. "I call upon all sides, foremost among them the revolutionaries... to co-operate."

The European Union will also be sending a team to help with protection of the border, he added.

"They are going to be civilian advisors," he assured lawmakers.

To underscore the timeliness of the new security plan, Zidan disclosed details about a major arrest.

"Security authorities in Jaghbub, near the Egyptian border, intercepted a group trying to smuggle 10 MILAN missiles and 50 Grad missiles in Qaryat al-Majouri. They were trying to get these missiles into Egypt, but the missiles were seized and the group members were caught," he said.

"Everyone must know that the government gives special attention to controlling the border, and that stopping smuggling is an essential part of security," Zidan added.

New Interior Minister Mohammed al-Sheikh this week presented a new security plan to the General National Congress (GNC). The strategy complements the work of his predecessor by keeping some existing security agencies in place to avoid a potential vacuum. A national

security doctrine would be promoted to minimise regionalism.

His proposal also calls for rebuilding lost confidence between the people and their security institutions.

The government strategists face an uphill battle.

"The problem is that the south has been divided into three parts," Sabha resident Ali Lemrabet tells Magharebia.

"The first is still waiting for Kadhafi to return and doesn't care about the country and the second supported the revolution, were told that good times were coming, and so they shut their doors and are now just waiting for the changes to happen. The third seized opportunity early, because they have the nature of a thief," he says.

http://magharebia.com/en_GB/articles/awi/reportage/2013/06/07/reportage-01

Constitution Fails to Meet “Expectations of Tunisia,” Say Critics

Amnesty International officials have joined a number of parties within Tunisia’s National Constituent Assembly (NCA) in criticizing the latest draft of Tunisia’s new constitution, released on June 1.

In an analysis posted on the organization’s website, Amnesty International UK states that the June 1 version of Tunisia’s constitution fails to sufficiently conform with international human rights doctrine.

Amnesty International claims that the current draft of the constitution restricts various basic human rights, including “the rights to freedom

of expression, peaceful assembly and association, and to freedom of movement.”

Moreover, according to Amnesty International, the most recent draft constitution does not provide adequate “guarantees for the independence of the judiciary and to protect against torture and other forms of ill-treatment.”

The advocacy organization notes that the deficient state of human rights under the dictatorial regime of Tunisia’s ousted President Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali could be reproduced in post-revolutionary Tunisia, if changes are not made to the June 1 draft.

Stating that Tunisia’s 2011 revolution was fueled by hopes to curb the injustice of decades of Tunisian dictatorship, Amnesty International’s analysis urges that the country’s new constitution “signal a real departure from a past marred by abuses.”

In an interview today with Tunisia Live, Lotfi Azzouz, Executive Director of Amnesty International’s Tunisia office, affirmed that the present version of the constitution “does not meet the expectations of Tunisia after the revolution.”

Azzouz conceded that, from a human rights perspective, this version of the constitution has improved from previous drafts. However, he said that trouble could arise through the way in which the text is interpreted, as specific rights are not explicitly guaranteed.

“There are many rights that have been stated, but the problem is the way that they are stated,” he told Tunisia Live.

Another obstacle that Azzouz foresees for human rights guarantees in Tunisia is the June 1 draft's emphasis on preserving Tunisia's Islamic identity.

The Amnesty International executive director asserted that during the drafting process, such an emphasis sometimes came at the expense of guaranteeing human rights.

"When you read [this draft of] the constitution, you feel as if the constitution is protecting our religion, not the people and their rights," he asserted.

Hichem Hosni, a member of the opposition Popular Progressivist Party (PPP), agrees that human rights guarantees in the current draft of the constitution are lacking.

Along with members of various other parties within the NCA, Hosni and his party have also criticized this draft of the constitution for another reason, however.

Such parties, including the Congress for the Republic (CPR) party, a member of the ruling coalition, have claimed that the June 1 constitution is illegal because the Committee of Drafting and Coordination went beyond its legal authority to change the document.

Hosni told Tunisia Live that the PPP has filed a claim with the administrative courts today over the issue.

He added that his party is in favor of bringing the constitution to a referendum vote. This is the alternative if, after having been presented to the NCA, the constitution does not receive a two-thirds majority vote.

"If we resort to a referendum, we will make the constitution more democratic because we

will ask for the people's consent," Hosni explained.

On the other hand, Mouldi Fahem, spokesperson of the opposition Al Joumhour party, fears the repercussions of resorting to a referendum.

If the referendum failed, he explained, Tunisia would find itself in a precarious position. Not only would the NCA need to be dissolved, but a new NCA would have to be elected, and a new constitution would have to be drafted.

"It [the process] could take 2 years," he warned. "That is a waste of time."

"We should put pressure on the ruling parties so that we reach an agreement together instead," he proposed.

For Azzouz, however, reaching a mere political consensus within the NCA is not enough.

"The agreement must center on human rights," he asserted.

<http://www.tunisia-live.net/2013/06/07/amnesty-international-joins-in-criticism-of-draft-constitution/#sthash.mXOPkvmd.dpuf>

5. JORDAN and LEBANON

Jordan blocks newspaper edition over story on 'secret' Abbas plan

Jordanian authorities should lift their ban on today's edition of an independent paper, the Committee to Protect Journalists said. Fahd al-Rimawi, editor of the weekly Al-Majd, told CPJ that security agents moved Sunday to prevent printing of the edition because of a front-page

story about a “secret plan” to oust the Hamas-led Palestinian government.

Al-Rimawi said security officials told him they would ban the April 30 edition if he did not remove the article, The Associated Press reported. In an interview with CPJ, al-Rimawi said the issue had already been sent out for printing. Like many small tabloids in Jordan, Al-Majd is printed by larger publications that own printing presses. In this case, the leading pro-government daily Al-Rai handles Al-Majd’s printing.

The ban was triggered by Al-Majd’s publication of a purported 16-page secret plan, devised by U.S. and unnamed Arab “sides,” that would enable Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas to oust the rival Hamas-led Palestinian government from power. The article, which included documents and details of the purported plan, could still be viewed late today on Al-Majd’s Web site.

“This flagrant act of censorship is further evidence of the poor state of press freedom in Jordan,” CPJ Executive Director Joel Simon said. “Officials should allow Al-Majd to be printed immediately.”

CPJ has documented two previous occasions, in March 2002 and May 2005, in which Al-Majd has been censored because of sensitive articles. Al-Majd is licensed to publish weekly but currently comes out twice per month.

In at least two recent cases, Jordanian authorities seized interviews deemed harmful to national security or relations with neighboring countries. On April 18, the Jordanian government seized a taped Al-Jazeera interview with former crown prince Hassan bin Talal over fears it might harm its relationship with Saudi Arabia.

In June 2006, Jordanian security services abruptly halted a live Al-Jazeera interview with Abu Musab al-Zarqawi’s brother-in-law following the Al-Qaeda leader’s death, and briefly detained the satellite channel’s interviewer Yasser Abu Hilala, and his crew in al-Zarqa, north of Amman.

<http://electronicintifada.net/content/jordan-blocks-newspaper-edition-over-story-secret-abbas-plan/3235>

Egypt remembers Khaled Saied

Several parties and movements commemorated the anniversary of Khaled Saied’s death on Thursday in several governorates.

In Cairo, the Free Egyptians Party organised human chains wearing black and holding candles on QasrAl-Nil Bridge to commemorate the death of Saied who is considered one of the reasons behind the 2011 January revolution.

The party also organised another human chain in front of Saied’s house in Alexandria.

“There were two marches from Zizinia and Al-Qa’ed Ibrahim mosque in Alexandria, they stopped under the house on Thursday afternoon” said Zahra, Khaled Saied’s sister.

She added that participants in the march included Mohamed (Jika) Gaber’s mother, Hassan Mostafa’s mother as well Alaa Abdel Fattah and Former Presidential Candidate Abou El-Ezz El-Hariry.

The protesters showed a short presentation about Khaled Saied, revolutionary martyrs and victims of torture.

NGOs and movements including Tamarod and a Nation without Torture participated in the march.

Other protests were held in Suez, Damietta, Behaira, and Kafr El-Sheikh as well as in front of security directorates in Gharbeya and Assuit among other governorates. Some held banners demanding harsh punishment for Saied's murderers while others chanted against the regime calling for participation in 30 June protests organised by the opposition.

Saied was allegedly dragged outside an internet cafe and beaten by two policemen in Alexandria in 2010; they smashed his head against marble stairs which led to his death, according to witnesses. The police then claimed he was a drug dealer who had choked on a packet of drugs he swallowed.

An independent forensic report showed the packet was forced into his throat after his death

The trial of the two policemen accused of killing Khaled Saied will resume on 6 July.

<http://www.dailynewsegypt.com/2013/06/07/egypt-remembers-khaled-saied/>

Tamarod attacked twice overnight

More than 24 people were injured in clashes between members of opposition parties and the Muslim Brotherhood in Damanhur, Beheira governorate.

The Union for Professional Syndicates was holding a seminar at the Lawyers' Syndicate in Damanhur on Thursday; members of political parties that belong to the opposition were attacked when they tried to attend the seminar.

"The seminar was open to the public and we wanted to attend; members of the Muslim Brotherhood locked us in and attacked us" said Islam Bassiony, a member of Al-Tayar Al-Sha'aby in Damanhur.

He added that a number of Tamarod members who were organizing a protest for the anniversary of Khaled Saied rushed to the lawyers' syndicate to help them.

Tamarod, a campaign working to gather signatures to withdraw confidence from President Morsi has stirred controversy especially after gathering more than seven million signatures; the movement had announced protests against the regime on 30 June.

"A number of members protested on the anniversary of Khaled Saied's death demanding his rights, they were attacked by Brotherhood 'militias' 18 were injured in the clashes" said Mai Wahba, the head of Tamarod media office.

Wahba denied claims that Tamarod members stormed the lawyers' syndicate to attack the seminar.

Meanwhile Tamarod's main headquarters in downtown Cairo was set ablaze early on Friday; media spokesperson of the movement Hassan Shahin was injured in the fire trying to save the signatures collected.

"In a new episode of terror, President Morsi's regime continues to rule the country through militias and thuggary" read a statement issued by Tamarod on Friday.

They added that the regime committed two crimes in just a few hours; attacking members of political parties in Damanhur and burning the headquarters in Cairo.

“This reflects how weak and frightened this regime is; its end is certainly near” the statement read.

Head of Tamarod media office Mai Wahba said that they filed a report against President Mohamed Morsi, the Supreme Guide of the Muslim Brotherhood Mohamed Badeei and his deputy Khairat El-Shater as well Assem Abdel Maged leader of Al-Jamaa Al-Islamiya and the Tagarod campaign that was established to counter Tamarod.

“We accused them of attempted murder against members of Tamarod and burning the headquarters” Wahba said.

Tamarod said in their statements that the attacks will not discourage them from proceeding with 30 June protests calling for early presidential elections.

“The Brotherhood has to understand Tamarod has become a popular trend... Egyptians have decided to take control of their destiny and hold early elections” the statement read.

The Muslim Brotherhood spokespeople could not be reached for comment.

<http://www.dailynewsegypt.com/2013/06/07/tamarod-attacked-twice-overnight/>

6. SYRIA

After Qusair, Is Hezbollah Finished in Syria?

The battle for Qusair ended when the Syrian city fell to Hezbollah and Syrian regime forces on June 5 after a three-week assault against militant rebel fighters. It is no longer a secret that Hezbollah units were the main fighting force in the conflict, with the Syrian army's role limited mostly to providing weapons support. During the fighting, Hezbollah carried

out dozens of land assault operations. According to accounts attributed to Hezbollah fighters returning from the field, during the first days of the assault, the organization's units faced problems that its military leadership had not foreseen and that led to a number of losses among attacking units. Based on these accounts, the problems can be surmised as follows.

Hezbollah was surprised that many of its supposedly secret military tactics were known by the militants in Qusair, allowing them to prepare effective countermeasures. It is now widely believed within the party's ranks that it was Hamas that divulged these secrets to the Qusair militants. Hezbollah and Hamas had had close military and security ties going back two decades. According to information leaked by sources inside Hezbollah, most of the sniping and booby-trap tactics that the party had shared with Hamas during joint training exercises in Lebanon and Syria were also used by the militants in Qusair. This, it is said, proves that Hamas partnered with Syrian opposition forces in the battle, at least in terms of providing technical assistance. Other information, as of yet unconfirmed, supposedly points to Hamas directly taking part in the Qusair battle with fighting units of its own.

The second problem Hezbollah faced during the first phase of the attack involved security breaches within the Syrian army. Although limited, they had a negative impact on the execution of the plans laid to vanquish the militants and drive them from their fortified positions in the context of a logistically complicated battle, such as that waged in Qusair.

The third problem stemmed from Hezbollah underestimating the ferocity and advanced fighting skills of the militants. As a result, the party was forced to modify its offensive tactics on more than one occasion, ultimately deciding to slow its rate of attack and ordering its units to advance and take control of small areas where a defensive perimeter had been established and backed by a rear line of support. Following each successful advance, the units would then move on to occupy new, equally small areas. This revised tactic, combined with effective tackling of the other problems encountered, led to a significant reduction in casualties among the party's ranks during the last week of the battle.

According to sources close to Hezbollah, Qusair represented a test during which the party's fighting capabilities were measured on more than one strategic level. First, the organization tested the cohesiveness of its popular base and the latter's trust in the weighty decisions taken by its leadership. The sources noted that Hezbollah's leadership was itself surprised by the level of support exhibited by its base, which took the lead in this battle and proved that it was willing to offer the most precious of sacrifices toward its success.

Second, the party's fighting units for the first time waged a battle against forces similarly driven by a strong religious ideology and utilizing much of the same war-fighting tactics as Hezbollah. The party's military leadership is being lauded as having proven itself capable of learning in the heat of battle and militarily adapting to developments on the ground.

<http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2013/06/hezbollah-battle-qusair-syria-lebanon.html>

For Hezbollah, What is Victory In Syria?

A debate is under way within Hezbollah's milieu about the objectives behind the party's participation in the Syrian civil war. Yet, the question now has gone beyond the issue of why it chose to enter this war, as the party's popular base and its most influential internal elites are seemingly convinced by the explanation offered by Hezbollah Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah. The latter said that instead of waiting for the extremist Islamists to come fight us on our doorsteps here in Lebanon, we decided to choose the time and place of this confrontation, which they initiated.

As a result, a different, much more complicated issue is currently being discussed inside the party, and the discussion is growing in intensity behind the closed ironclad walls that surround the party's decision-making fortress. The issue at hand relates to the objectives of this battle, and the goals that, once attained, would allow Hezbollah to proclaim that it has in fact achieved the military objectives that drove it to participate in this war.

In other words, when will Hezbollah's fighters return home from Syria? And when will Nasrallah announce to his popular base that the military mission in Syria has been successfully completed, its goals reached, and the victory that he promised his audience to "again deliver," won?

For now, this question remains without official and satisfactory answers. But leaked perceptions from inside the party point to the possible nature of the answers to come. Yet, everything remains within the realm of

conjecture until Nasrallah speaks his piece about the matter; for a remarkable phenomenon permeates the party, and revolves around the fact that its supporters, when faced with difficult situations, patiently wait for Nasrallah to appear on their television screens to present them with clarifications about the issue at hand. Until then, all potential answers remain fodder for their continued puzzlement and concern.

The issue of the physical and temporal horizon for Hezbollah's involvement in Syria remains the source of anxiety for the party's popular base because of Nasrallah's continued silence about the matter. The reason for this anxiety emanates from subtle factors that may be invisible to those not privy to the psychology that drives Hezbollah's social base. For the people's fear has nothing to do with the human cost that might be paid. Although present among the party's supporters, this factor can be easily remedied with ideological and religious mobilization efforts. Martyrdom in defense of the Sayyida Zaynab shrine has great appeal within Lebanon's Shiite community. It is considered a goal worthy of sending their children to die for, in search of gloried martyrdom for the sake of Sayyida Zaynab, the Prophet Muhammad's daughter and the woman considered to be the jewel of his household, whose members the Shiites revere and consider rightful heirs to the caliphate.

The fact is that the source of concern lies within the Shiite social framework from whence Hezbollah's social base emanates. For this framework easily glorifies the party's past victories against Israel, but is wary of the party possibly embarking on adventures with unforeseen consequences, and therefore

prefers that such adventures be ended as quickly as possible.

On the other hand, the main issue within the party's direct social construct revolves around the nature of the victory that Hezbollah must achieve in this battle. Is its goal keeping President Bashar al-Assad in power, even if achieving that requires staying on the Syrian battlefield for years? Or does the goal revolve around protecting the resistance's back, which also is not a short-term endeavor, and requires that the party fights wars on two different fronts: that of defense against Israel, as well as the one needed to keep supply routes open from Syria to the resistance (Hezbollah).

As part of this debate, mitigating answers are given, which indicate that the party's involvement in the fighting in Syria was not the result of it getting unintentionally embroiled in something that needs to quickly end. In fact, its involvement is a reflection of the party being part of a strong alliance that is fighting in Syria — an alliance that extends from Russia, to Iran, through Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki's Iraq, and all the way to Lebanon. And, as part of this alliance, the party has gained regional stature that increases its defensive capabilities, and not the other way around.

Also, within the party's elite circles, inferences have been made, albeit not confirmed by substantiated information, that Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Mikhail Bogdanov's visit to Lebanon after spending time in Tehran last month, and his meeting with Nasrallah, was for the purpose of coordinating the party's effective entry into the war in Syria. Regardless of the accuracy of said information, its dissemination is meant to

indicate that the decision to partake in the war was built upon strong calculations.

In the speech during which he announced the party's involvement in the Syrian war, Nasrallah alluded to the direct objectives his party sought to achieve, and defined them as meant to put an end to the Syrian opposition's military presence in three different areas: The Damascus' countryside, which is home to the Sayyida Zaynab shrine; the Homs' countryside, which includes the city of Qusair and surrounding villages; and the Qalamoun area, which includes the Zabadani region. While the battle for Damascus' countryside takes on a religious dimension because it relates to the defense of the Sayyida Zaynab shrine, the battle for Qusair takes on a geopolitical dimension because controlling it safeguards the supply routes between the Shiite areas in this region of Syria and their counterparts in the adjacent Hermel region of Lebanon. It should be noted that the Shiite inhabitants of villages in the Qusair countryside have strong clan ties with their brethren in the Lebanese city of Hermel. The battle for Qalamoun, on the other hand, is expected to start soon, for its importance, in Hezbollah's calculations, is that it would serve to isolate Syrian opposition forces in the Zabadani region from the Lebanese Salafists located in the town of Aarsal and its surrounding vast wastelands.

From a preliminary standpoint, control of the three previously mentioned regions comprise Hezbollah's operational objectives in Syria. It is therefore expected that Nasrallah would announce the end of the party's involvement in combat there once their controlled is achieved.

Yet two factors are creating doubt about this prevalent expectation that Hezbollah's

supporters have pertaining to the party's direct military objectives in the Syrian confrontation. First, the battle is not linked to specific military objectives, but is a battle for survival, and therefore, the fighting in Syria is a long-term affair that goes beyond a quick military raid or skirmish. Second, Hezbollah did not enter Syria with plans to exit it: The roles that it and the Syrian regime played in their common confrontation against mutual foes have become so intertwined that they are no longer distinct. The reality on the ground now necessitates that they both be part of a unified military effort that stretches from Iran to Lebanon, via Iraq and Syria.

<http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2013/06/hezbollah-objectives-syria-war.html#ixzz2WkYIipzb>

Will Qusair's Fall Change The Balance of Power in Lebanon?

Yesterday [June 5], the Lebanese awoke to news from across the border that the Syrian opposition's "Stalingrad" had fallen. The Lebanese are divided between those who "celebrated" the fall of Qusair into the hands of the Syrian army and its ally Hezbollah, and those who are frustrated by the Syrian opposition's successive failures and their high cost on the revolutionaries and their Lebanese supporters.

For Hezbollah's public, it was a new "divine victory," like that of summer 2006. Today, the official Syrian flag is fluttering in the main square of Qusair, which has been reduced to rubble mixed with the bodies of dead fighters. The Lebanese people's opposing feelings were reflected in social media, where some Lebanese celebrated while others mourned.

The morale of some became sky high, while for others it dropped to the ground. That is nothing new given how the Lebanese are divided over the Syrian regime and over Hezbollah's involvement in the battles of Qusair.

The Lebanese have opposing assessments of the situation. Those who oppose Hezbollah's involvement consider Qusair, which is near the Lebanese border, as just a small part of the Syrian revolution, with no special strategic value. For them, Qusair is not the Bekaa Valley's gateway to Homs, nor a main event in the two-year Syrian war.

For Hezbollah's supporters, Qusair is the heart of Damascus because it links the Syrian coast with Syria's south and center. This means that Qusair's fall will reopen the supply lines between the coast and the interior. Moreover, Qusair connects the south to the north and after it is cleared, the Syrian army will be free to go to Aleppo, Idlib and Damascus to complete its mission.

From the perspective of those on Hezbollah's side, Qusair's fall means that the bet on ousting President Bashar al-Assad has failed. The Syrian army has the initiative on the ground and the opposition cannot raise its ambitions. Rather, the opposition should read between the lines regarding the US-Russian dialogue, which will produce a new reality.

The first result of Qusair's fall is the weakening of the divided Syrian opposition on the eve of the Geneva II international dialogue conference, where the opposition would be unable to ask for more than a few reforms. With each passing day, the opposition is moving closer to accepting that the balance of power is in the regime's favor, and thus must lower its ambitions.

The Lebanese believe that Qusair's fall will separate the Lebanese and Syrian events. In other words, the cutting of the main smuggling routes for weapons and fighters between Akkar and the Bekaa on the one hand and Homs on the other will end the interdependence of the military situations in Lebanon and Syria.

Some argue that Qusair's fall may cool the tempers of some of the hotheads in Lebanon, especially since Tripoli's volcano would not have erupted had they known that the situation in Qusair would end in Hezbollah's favor. So the situation in Qusair might make the March 14 movement reconsider its calculations and agree to a formula that would finally give birth to Lebanese Prime Minister Tammam Salam's cabinet.

But Hezbollah's haters are minimizing the importance of Qusair's fall. They think that Hezbollah needed a "jihadist" mission in Syria after its prior excuses of defending Shiite shrines became unconvincing.

Hezbollah's haters believe that Hezbollah is trying to exaggerate the significance of Qusair's fall to mark a moral victory that would allow Hezbollah to continue its fight in Syria. Hezbollah's opponents think that the Syrian army's mission is not just Qusair; the Syrian army must also take the large cities, or the regime may not last.

So the withdrawal of the opposition fighters from Qusair does not mean, in the opinion of the March 14 movement, that the opposition has given up on that town, which the opposition may seek to recover. In classical warfare, armies should avoid entering cities. So Hezbollah's opponents think that the party committed a strategic mistake by entering Qusair.

On that basis, Hezbollah's opponents do not see a strategic victory for Hezbollah because the party cannot convert Qusair's fall into political gains in Lebanon. Hezbollah's opponents think that Lebanon is awaiting the outcome of the entire Syrian crisis. According to the March 14 movement, whether Qusair falls into the hands of the Syrian army or its opponents changes nothing for Lebanon.

<http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/politics/2013/06/qusair-syria-balance-power-lebanon.html#ixzz2WkYe09YR>

Arab Dreams for Adopting Turkish Model Up in Smoke at Gezi Park

When Mohammed Bouazizi set himself ablaze in Tunisia, sparking the Arab uprising, former Tunisian President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali did not call him a "vagabond hawker." On the contrary, he visited him in the hospital. In Egypt, former President Hosni Mubarak pledged to meet the demands of the people and addressed the rioting masses not as rebels but as "noble youngsters." Both leaders eventually ordered deadly crackdowns that brought about their ends. But to give them their due, they never insulted the demonstrators.

As the dictators bid farewell, the model offered to Arabs as to how Islam and democracy could tie the knot was the Turkey of the Justice and Development Party (AKP). The Islamists in Tunisia and Egypt needed a guide, and they found it in the AKP, their sympathizer. The sheer number of interviews with Arab figures praising the Turkish model, conducted since 2011 by Anatolia News Agency alone could easily fill several volumes.

The admired Turkey

According to a YouGov opinion poll taken in January-February 2012, commissioned by the Doha Meetings, 72% of Arabs believed that Turkey was the best model for countries such as Egypt, Tunisia and Libya looking for a new direction.

But the fervently promoted "Turkish model" myth has gone up in smoke with the pepper spray billowing from Gezi Park. AKP sympathizers aside, the Arabs suddenly came to see that the Turkey they were shown as a model was confronting the Turkey they admired. They are confused, asking why the Turks have risen up.

Those who had refused to heed the "Turkish model" cliché see a common trigger in the Arab and the Turkish street: dignity. The Arab revolt sought to destroy the existing order. In Turkey, many have realized, the problem is not the regime but the authoritarianism embodied in a democratically elected leader.

Why are celebrities at Taksim?

It is important to understand how the Arabs see Gezi Park. Cairo-based Turkish journalist Aydogan Kalabalik tweeted that the presenters of Sada el Balad and Nile television stations asked him why Turkish soap opera stars had joined the demonstrations. The soap operas have been influential in the Arab attraction to Turkey. In Egypt, the Elbashayer.com Internet site published photos of actor Halit Ergenc at Gezi Park under a headline reading: "Celebrities Refuse to Bow Down to Turkey's Sultan."

It is apparent that comparisons to Tahrir are not given much credit. The Lebanese As-Safir newspaper, for instance, commented: "We do not believe the revolt will topple Erdogan

since the AKP has changed the balances of social and economic power.”

A more analytical view about the reasons behind the revolt came from Iran. In response to “why Erdogan has fallen out of favor,” IRD writer Ali Bahmani Kajar wrote that, “The uprising, ignited by objections to the construction of a shopping mall at Gezi Park, is so deeply rooted that it could lead to bigger problems for Turkey.” He then listed the following reasons:

Economic growth without social justice.

Regional disparities: In 14 provinces, the standard of living is comparable to that in the world’s developed countries, while it is quite bad in 27 others.

Backlash to great power ambitions: The AKP’s attempt to become a powerhouse, driven by Ottomanist ambitions, troubled those in the grip of poverty and economic inequality. Wary of the fate of the Ottoman Empire, which disintegrated while aspiring for great power, the people grew anxious that they could lose also the Turkish identity, shaped by the policies of Atatürk, which carried Turkey to the 20th century on an agenda of Pan-Turkism rather than Pan-Islamism.

Pakistanization fear: The creation of the Taliban in Afghanistan by secular Pakistan led to fragmentation. Turkey faces a similar threat due to its Syria policy.

Weakening nationalism: Peace talks with the PKK [Kurdistan Workers Party] and debates of federalism for the Kurds irked the nationalist parties.

Secular reactions: Secular Turks are worried about their lifestyle because of the

government’s stance on issues such as alcohol.

Oppression: Turkey is the country with the largest number of journalists in jail. Censorship and restrictions on the media have increased.

US-friendly policies are opposed by leftist quarters.

Syria’s sarcasm:

The scenes of violence have led to delirious joy in Syria. A “bed of roses” itself, the country warned its citizens to avoid traveling to Turkey on security grounds! Information Minister Omran al-Zoubi accused Erdogan of terrorizing his own people: “The Turkish people don’t deserve all this violence. The prime minister should resign and seek asylum in Doha.” Dampress, meanwhile, jibed that “the scared Syrian opposition is fleeing Istanbul.”

<http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/politics/2013/06/turkish-model-arab-dreams-gezi-park.html#ixzz2WkZ9FjY>

7. ARABIA& PENINSULA AND THE GULF OF BASRA

‘Pakistan’s natural resources can solve energy crisis’

Pakistan’s newly elected government faces many challenges including terrorism, endemic corruption and an energy crisis that require integrated, urgent and concrete measures, said a noted Pakistani scientist famous for his association with the country’s 1998 nuclear tests.

Dr. Samar Mubarakmund was speaking at a workshop on “Energy Production using

Natural Resources,” organized in Jeddah by the Engineers Welfare Forum (EWF) and Institute of Engineers Pakistan in collaboration with the Jeddah Chamber of Commerce and Industry (JCCI).

Scientists and technocrats including Dr. Shahid Munir from Pakistan; Talal Samarqandi, head of the JCCI’s engineering committee; Dr. Umer Chappra, a noted scholar and adviser to the Islamic Development Bank (IDB); and Pakistan Consul General Aftab Khokhar were among those who attended the function.

“Almost 90 percent of Pakistan’s wealth lies underground but needs major investments for exploration,” he said.

Referring to the Thar coal and Recodec copper mines projects, which he has been working on since 2007, the scientist said these huge resources could catapult the country from a third world nation to a developed one.

“The Thar coal reserves are worth over \$ 12 trillion and if we use them to produce 100,000MW (five times the country’s present demand) the resources can expect to last for at least 500 years,” Mubarakmund said.

“Both projects are managed totally by Pakistani expertise and we will soon be able to resolve the energy crisis,” he said.

Munir, in his presentation on “Fuel staging of sugarcane bagasse,” outlined how sugarcane waste could be used to produce energy.

He said Pakistan was the fifth-largest producer of sugarcane in the world. This raw material was widely available at low cost. If used properly, it could produce over 2,000MW of electricity.

Samarqandi outlined the JCCI’s relationship with the EWF that includes scientific and vocational training, trade, site visits and professional training, which he said would benefit the professionals and engineers of Saudi Arabia and foreign nations.

Presenting his paper on “Green Buildings in Saudi Arabia,” Samarqandi highlighted ways for proper utilization of resources.

The JCCI official said it was important to consider six points for green buildings: proper selection of sites, limiting unplanned construction, public transportation, material usage, water efficiency to avoid leakages and power efficiency.

He cited an example of the 2009 flood in the area of Umm Al-Khair, which sank because the dam near it was built in the wrong location.

He said high-grade insulation and high quality materials used in building construction could save energy for the future. He said that oil dependence should be reduced. Over 25 percent of the oil produced is consumed in the country, he added.

He said Makkah and Jeddah municipalities, King Abdullah University of Science and Technology (KAUST), Saudi Basic Industries Corporation (SABIC), and other companies were already working on ways to control electricity use.

Earlier, EWF President Dr. Abdul Aleem Khan said the forum’s activities include publication of a technical magazine, organizing workshops and seminars to help Pakistani engineers seek jobs and financial assistance for top performing and needy engineering students.

Dr. Khan said that EWF also helped Haj pilgrims last year by providing 400

wheelchairs, and guidance on how to use the facilities.

<http://www.arabnews.com/news/454358>

Traffic congestion in Riyadh under review

The traffic congestion on Riyadh's roads is being addressed by a special committee set up by Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah.

Riyadh Gov. Prince Khalid bin Bandar said the committee consists of members from the Higher Commission for the Development of Riyadh and the municipality.

The prince said the committee was working with other government departments. He added that other projects are currently underway to ease the traffic congestion.

He said the commission was working on completing technical studies, tenders and budgets related to the Riyadh metro.

Prince Khalid made the comments on Monday when he launched the electronic board on King Abdul Aziz Highway overpass.

During his tour of the highway, the prince was shown the second stage of the project being implemented including a bridge, tunnel and a crossing. These developments are taking place between King Abdullah Highway and Abu Baker Al-Siddeeq Road, Othman bin Affaan Road and Khalid bin Al-Waleed Road.

The plan is to ensure there is smooth traffic on the highway, governed by advanced traffic systems and in line with environmental and economic criteria. The highway has been developed to accommodate the electronic rail network.

The prince was also shown the eastern side of the King Abdullah Highway, eight kilometers from the bridge, which will be completed in the coming six months. The other six kilometers will be completed at the end of the year.

<http://www.arabnews.com/news/454277>

240,000 legalize status

Nearly 240,000 expatriates have so far corrected their work status by transferring their sponsorship to companies where they presently work or to new employers, since the announcement of an amnesty for illegals two months ago.

"A total of 239,883 expat workers have corrected their status so far," the Ministry of Labor said in a statement, adding that 34,262 workers on average across the Kingdom had their status corrected every week.

The ministry added that 221,262 foreign workers had changed their profession during the amnesty period, with 30,180 workers on average receiving the service weekly.

"Thus, as many as 461,145 expats have so far made use of the ministry's services," the statement said.

The ministry's Riyadh offices extended their services to 78,833 workers to change their sponsorship. The Makkah region came second with 45,576 transferring their sponsorships. The Baha office had the lowest number of 2,104 transfer cases. As a result of the huge crowd of expatriates who want to correct their status before the expiry of the amnesty on July 3, the ministry has canceled the annual leave of its workers at headquarters as well as branch offices this summer.

“The leave has been cancelled to help as many expatriates as possible to correct their status,” the ministry said, adding that employees would be allowed to enjoy their leave soon after the end of the amnesty period.

“Those who wish to surrender their leave will be compensated,” the ministry said.

Employers whose foreign workers have been allowed to transfer their sponsorships without their permission would be compensated with recruitment visas if labor offices found their demand genuine.

In a related development, Brig. Mohammed Al-Anazi, director of expatriates department at the Passport Office in Riyadh, said that more than 150,000 illegals have already left the Kingdom.

<http://www.arabnews.com/news/454260>

Saudis fleeing Syria war offered good life in KSA

Saudi families returning from Syria will be provided jobs and accommodation and their children will be given education, a local Arabic daily reported yesterday quoting an informed source at the Foreign Ministry.

Meanwhile, Foreign Minister Prince Saud Al-Faisal urged Lebanon's people to act “wisely” and end their fighting in the city of Tripoli, wracked by a wave of bloody violence linked to the conflict in Syria.

He said the Kingdom was following “with deep concern the bloody events taking place in Tripoli ... that benefit nobody but those who do not mean well for Lebanon and its people.”

Prince Saud added: “Saudi Arabia urges all parties involved to put an end to this fighting

and act wisely.” He reaffirmed Riyadh’s stand that the Lebanese state should strengthen its control over all its territories.

A new wave of Syria-linked clashes between Sunni and Alawite residents of the northern Lebanese city of Tripoli has killed eight people since the weekend.

<http://www.arabnews.com/news/454255>

World’s largest desal plant 75% complete

The Saline Water Conversion Corporation (SWCC) announced yesterday that the world's largest desalination project in Ras Al-Khair is 75 percent complete and will start production in the third quarter of this year.

The capacity of the plant is over one million cubic meters of desalinated water and 2,400MW of electricity. The total investment in the project is SR 23 billion (\$ 6.1 billion).

The announcement was made yesterday at a press conference in Ras Al-Khair by SWCC Gov. Abdulrahman Al-Ibrahim.

“The project has been completed 75 percent so far and will start production in the third quarter of this year. Electricity production will start in the third quarter and water production at the end of the year,” said Al-Ibrahim.

He said the SWCC's Jubail plants cover the electricity needs of Al-Maaden Company; and have also provided electricity to the factories of Saudi Electricity Company (SEC) since last December.

“The SWCC signed an agreement with the SEC to supply Al-Maaden factories in the summer season with 450MW,” said Al-Ibrahim.

He said he had a meeting with the SEC and Aramco to identify specific projects in the

Kingdom that needs water and electricity. "During the meeting we discussed the upcoming plans. The first project will be in Jubail 3, which will supply 1.5 million cubic meters of water and 3,000MW of electricity."

"We are concerned about consuming fuel in stations. However, we are planning to raise the production of these stations by 50 percent to meet this percentage of fuel consumption," said Al-Ibrahim.

Answering a question, Al-Ibrahim said the Kingdom has a strategic plan to rehabilitate outdated stations with modern technology that will reduce fuel consumption and produce larger quantities of water. "Jeddah 2 is an example of this. It has been renovated to produce between 40,000 and 240,000 cubic meters."

Al-Ibrahim said there would be electricity production of up to 416MW at the beginning of the third quarter of this year and 830MW by the end of the year. Water production will begin from the reverse osmosis unit by the end of this year, with a supply of 150,000 cubic meters.

Regarding Saudization, Al-Ibrahim said the project would generate 1,300 jobs, which includes 200 Saudi engineers, technicians and administrators.

The Ras Al-Khair plant will supply Maaden factories with 25,000 cubic meters of desalinated water and 1,350MW of electricity. It will supply Riyadh and the central region cities with 900,000 cubic meters of desalinated water, and cities north of the Eastern Province including Al-Nuairiya, Hafr Al-Baten, Al-Qarya, Al-Olaya, Al-Saeera and Al-Qasuma with 100,000 cubic meters of

desalinated water by 2014. It will supply the SEC with 1,050MW of electricity

<http://www.arabnews.com/news/454254>

Saudis prefer Western-made medicines

Saudi Arabia is the largest pharmaceutical market in the Gulf, valued at SR 19.1 billion, according to a report issued by Alpen Capital on the GCC pharmaceutical market. Despite these figures, Saudi customers have cited concerns regarding the quality and effectiveness of locally manufactured medicine.

The Kingdom has one of the largest manufacturing industries, with around 15 to 20 manufacturing facilities. However, the majority of what is produced locally is exported, while 15 percent is supplied to the 4,000 pharmacies across the country.

In a survey conducted by Arab News, 52 percent of the 250 male and female respondents aged between 20 and 60 said they would rather purchase a Western-made brand rather than rely on Arab or locally manufactured pharmaceuticals.

Among the other participants, 24 percent indicated that they would try an Arab-made medicine, but only if it was cheaper than its Western counterpart. On the other hand, 21 percent expressed the view that they trust Arab-made medicine regardless of the price. Three percent were undecided.

The respondents, which expressed a preference for Western-made pharmaceutical brands listed trust as the main reason governing their choice.

"The reason I would rather buy medicine produced in America or Europe is because I

feel it is of better quality, as these countries adhere to strict guidelines,” Mai Ghazi, a 28-year-old Saudi mother of two, told Arab News.

She added that countries such as Syria, Egypt and Jordan do not monitor the quality of the medicine and substitute cheaper ingredients as alternatives.

“I feel that Arab drug manufacturers are just keen on making a profit without taking into consideration people’s health,” Ghazi said.

Agreeing with her, Nowaf Ibrahim, a pilot and father of one, expressed the opinion that pharmaceutical products produced in the Middle East are not as effective as their counterparts in the US or European countries.

“I have noticed that cold remedies made locally, for instance, do not treat illnesses as effectively as those produced abroad. For this reason, I usually bring medicine from America rather than rely on local products,” he said.

He added that many of the drugs produced by Arab states have been discovered to have harmful side effects, which may only be discovered years after their presence in local markets.

“I would rather purchase medicine which is more expensive than take the risk and suffer the consequences of cheaper local manufactures,” he concluded.

<http://www.arabnews.com/news/454252>

8. AFGHANISTAN – PAKISTAN

Suspected US drone strike kills seven militants in Pakistan, say officials

Pakistani intelligence officials say a suspected US drone strike has killed seven militants near the Afghanistan border.

The strike occurred tonight in the Shawal area along the border dividing the North and South Waziristan tribal regions.

The two officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to release the information.

Many Pakistanis oppose US drone strikes because they say they the strikes kill large numbers of innocent civilians - something the US denies - and end up breeding more extremism by those seeking retribution.

The country's new Prime Minister, Nawaz Sharif, has lashed out against the US drone program and called for an end to it.

<http://www.ndtv.com/article/world/suspected-us-drone-strike-kills-seven-militants-in-pakistan-say-officials-376821>

Pakistan appoints Munir Malik as new Attorney General

Legal expert Munir A Malik, who played a key role in the lawyers' movement against former military ruler Pervez Musharraf, was today named Pakistan's new Attorney General.

"Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif has been pleased to advise the President of Pakistan to appoint Mr Munir A Malik as Attorney General of Pakistan," said a statement issued by the premier's office.

Mr Malik is "held in high esteem in the country's legal fraternity," the statement said.

He served as president of the Supreme Court Bar Association and played a "leading role during the judges' restoration movement".

The Karachi-based lawyer was at the forefront of the lawyers' movement for restoring Supreme Court Chief Justice Iftikhar Chaudhry after he was deposed by Musharraf in March 2007.

He was targeted by the previous military regime and even briefly jailed.

Mr Malik will replace Irfan Qadir, who was appointed Attorney General by President Asif Ali Zardari in April last year.

<http://www.ndtv.com/article/world/pakistan-appoints-munir-malik-as-new-attorney-general-376766>

Nawaz Sharif's 25-member Pakistan cabinet takes oath

The 25-member cabinet of Pakistan's new Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif was today sworn in at a ceremony at the presidency today.

Among those who took oath were 16 federal ministers, including Ishaq Dar who is tipped to become the Finance Minister, and nine ministers of state.

They were administered the oath of office by President Asif Ali Zardari, two days after Mr Sharif was sworn in after being formally elected the Prime Minister by the National Assembly or lower house of parliament.

A majority of the new ministers are from Mr Sharif's PML-N party, which swept the May 11 general elections.

One member each from the PML-F and National People's Party was included in the cabinet.

The NPP has already announced its merger with the PML-N. Most of the new ministers are from Punjab, the traditional stronghold of the PML-N.

There were 19 ministers from the country's largest province, three from Sindh, two from Balochistan and one from Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa.

Only two women - Anusha Rehman and Saira Afzal Tarar - were included as ministers of state.

Besides Mr Dar, the other federal ministers are Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan, Khwaja Asif, Ahsan Iqbal, Zahid Hamid, Shahid Khaqan Abbasi, Lt Gen (retd) Abdul Qadir Baloch, Pervaiz Rashid, Rana Tanvir Hussain, Khwaja Saad Rafique, Sikander Bosan, Chaudhry Muhammad Barjis Tahir, Ghulam Murtaza Jatoi, Pir Sadruddin Shah Rashidi, Sardar Mohammad Yousuf and Kamran Michael.

The ministers of state are Mian Waliur Rehman, Usman Ibrahim, Sheikh Aftab Ahmed, Khurram Dastagir Khan, Anusha Rehman, Saira Afzal Tarar, Pir Aminul Hasnat, Jam Mir Kamal and Abdul Hakim Baloch.

The portfolios of the ministers were not officially announced though sources said Mr Dar, whose son is married to Mr Sharif's daughter, would be the Finance Minister.

<http://www.ndtv.com/article/world/nawaz-sharif-s-25-member-pakistan-cabinet-takes-oath-376735>

Pakistan troops open fire in Poonch, one Indian jawan killed

The Pakistan Army has violated the ceasefire in Poonch district of Jammu and Kashmir.

Pakistani troops opened fire in the Fauziyan sector of Poonch, killing an Indian junior commissioned officer or JCO.

This latest incident comes just two days after new Pakistan PM Nawaz Sharif took over. Mr Sharif has listed better relations with India as a top priority.

Last week, Pakistani troops had fired at Indian positions along the Line of Control in Nawgam sector of Kashmir valley but there were no casualties.

A week before that, a Brigadier and two jawans were injured when Pakistani troops opened fire on Indian positions in Tutmari Gali sector in Jammu and Kashmir.

The Pakistani Army also used mortars and small arms to target the Indian posts, Army sources said.

There have been 31 incidents of ceasefire violations this year.

<http://www.ndtv.com/article/india/pakistan-troops-open-fire-in-poonch-one-indian-jawan-killed-376650>

Pakistan government officials may face action for congratulatory ads

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif today warned "strict action" will be taken against government officials who issue advertisements to congratulate him on his

PML-N party's victory in the recent general election.

Sharif, 63, who has become premier for a record third term, barred ministries and government bodies from issuing advertisements to felicitate, state-run Radio Pakistan reported.

He was quoted as saying that "national wealth should not be wasted on such advertisements".

The premier warned "strict action" will be taken against those who violated his directive.

Over the past few days, Pakistani newspapers have been replete with advertisements congratulating Sharif and the PML-N on the election victory.

Most of the advertisements were issued by trade lobbies and industrial houses while several were issued by government bodies.

Sharif said the heads of government departments would have to pay the amount spent on such advertisements.

A spokesman for the Prime Minister's Office too said Sharif had expressed his concern at advertisements in the national media sponsored by government departments and public sector organisations to congratulate him on becoming the Prime Minister.

"The Prime Minister has taken strict notice of these advertisements and issued directives to relevant authorities to present before him the replies to show cause notices issued to National Highway and Motorway Police and National Bank of Pakistan for further necessary orders in the matter," the spokesman said.

Sharif acknowledges the love and affection of the country and the emotions of his supporters but wants them to "concentrate on nation building rather than sending congratulatory messages", the spokesman said.

The state-run National Bank of Pakistan and Motorway Police chief Zafar Abbas Luk had issued their advertisements to several national dailies.

The move was criticised by the media, especially in light of Sharif's commitment to cut unnecessary government spending.

<http://www.ndtv.com/article/world/pakistan-government-officials-may-face-action-for-congratulatory-ads-376560>