



MIDDLE EAST DAILY BULLETIN

GÜNLÜK ORTADOĐU BÜLTENİ

Domestic Policy in the Middle East Countries

Bölge Ülkelerinde İç Siyaset

The Restructuring Procces of Iraq

Irak'ın Yeniden Yapılanma Süreci

Energy Security

Enerji Güvenliđi

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Peace Process

Barıő Süreci

Ethnic and Secterian Groups

Etnik ve Mezhepsel Gruplar

Non State Actors

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1. IRAQ

- **Health Minister of Daesh, Other Senior Officials, Killed In A Joint Operation In Mosul**

Anti-terrorism institution in the Kurdistan region announced the killing of the Minister of Health of Daesh and a number of leaders during a special operation backed by the international coalition forces in Mosul, confirmed that the operation resulted in the deaths of a number of other important leaders in the organization.

More Details:

http://www.ninanews.com/News_Details.aspx?IrxRMVosDbdrzGvzDSU5Xg%253d%253d

- **Sadr proposes post-Mosul roadmap, conditions U.S. troops pullout**

Shia cleric Muqtada al-Sadr has proposed a roadmap for the period following the anticipated liberation of Mosul from Islamic State, setting the withdrawal of foreign troops as a condition. In a statement by his office on Monday, the firebrand cleric set out a 29-point roadmap for political and social co-existence in Iraq following the recapture of Iraq's second largest city from the extremist group. Among those points was a demand for the Iraqi government to urge "occupier troops, even the so-called friendly ones, from Iraqi territories so as to preserve the state' prestige and sovereignty," as he put it.

More Details:

<http://www.iraqinews.com/baghdad-politics/sadr-proposes-post-mosul-roadmap-conditions-u-s-troops-pullout/>

- **ISF Retakes Strategic Villages South Of Mosul**

The Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) recaptured three strategically important villages south of the city of Mosul as part of the ongoing offensive against the Islamic State (IS) in Western Mosul, an Iraqi army source said. The representative of the Iraqi United Forces, Brigadier-General Yahij Rasul, who spoke to Sputnik on Sunday said that the forces from the 9th Armored Division of the Iraqi army and the federal police have recaptured the villages of al-Jamasiya, Kuneitra and al-Bujuwar located south of Mosul, along the shores of the Tigris river.

More Details:

<http://www.basnews.com/index.php/en/news/iraq/331690>

- **Daesh Militants Engage in Gender-Based Violence against Iraqi Sunni Women**

Human Rights Watch researchers revealed cases of destruction of property, physical violence, forced marriage and sexual abuse against Sunni Arab women living under Daesh rule. Islamic State militants (ISIL or Daesh, outlawed in Russia) in Iraq are detaining, abusing and forcing Sunni Arab women into marriage, a prominent rights watchdog said on Monday.

More Details:

http://www.pukmedia.com/EN/EN_Direje.aspx?Jimare=39804

- **Shiite parties perplexed after US defense secretary's visit to Baghdad**

The armed wings of the Shiite parties in Baghdad and the central and southern Iraqi governorates have been engulfed with a state of perplexity in the wake of US Defense Secretary Jim Mattis' visit to Baghdad on Monday, sources told Baghdad Post. The Shiite parties are not certain about the situation of Iraq regarding the Iran-run Shiitte parties in Iraq.

More Details:

<http://www.thebaghdadpost.com/en/story/6285/Shiite-parties-perplexed-after-US-defense-secretary-s-visit-to-Baghdad>

- **British ISIS suicide bomber attacks Iraqi Army near Mosul (video + pictures)**

On Monday, the Islamic State tried to curtail the Iraqi Army's ongoing west Mosul offensive by deploying multiple suicide bombers and planting mines along the frontline. In total, four Islamic State VBIED's (vehicle-born improvised explosive device) drove towards the countryside southwest of Mosul and detonated their explosives-laden vehicles in and around the village of Tal Kisum.

More Details:

<https://www.almasdarnews.com/article/british-isis-suicide-bomber-attacks-iraqi-army-near-mosul-video-pictures/>

- **Canadian forces in Iraq mount pressure on Islamic State near Mosul**

Canadian Special Forces have shifted their operations in northern Iraq to put pressure on ISIL in places outside the strategic city of Mosul — including along the border with Syria. The objective: To figure out the good guys from the bad so Iraqi military forces and coalition aircraft can attack.

More Details:

<http://ekurd.net/canadian-troops-iraq-mosul-2017-02-21>

- **Rosneft signs offtake contract with Kurdistan regional government of Iraq**

Rosneft and the Kurdistan Regional Government of Iraq signed an agreement on the sidelines of the IP week conference in London, which stipulates oil purchases by Russia's top oil producer in the period between 2017 and 2019, Rosneft said in a press release on Tuesday. "Pursuant to the cooperation agreement the parties signed a pre-financed crude oil purchase and sale contract of Kurdistan Region crude oil over the period 2017-2019. The purchaser of crude will be Rosneft's trading arm - Rosneft Trading SA," the report said.

More Details:

<http://tass.com/economy/932047>

- **Pentagon Chief Says U.S. Military 'Not In Iraq To Seize Anybody's Oil'**

The U.S. military is "not in Iraq to seize anybody's oil," Defense Secretary Jim Mattis has said, distancing himself from remarks by President Donald Trump in talks with Iraqi leaders. Mattis is the highest-ranking U.S. official to visit Iraq since Trump irked Iraqis by imposing a temporary ban on travel to the United States and suggesting that Americans should have seized Iraq's oil after toppling Saddam Hussein in 2003.

More Details:

<http://www.rferl.org/a/us-defense-chief-mattis-military-not-in-iraq-seize-anybodys-oil-trump-remarks-distance/28321850.html>

- **Six Royal Navy personnel killed in Iraq**

The helicopters were from 849 Squadron A Flight, which is based at the Royal Naval Air Station Culdrose, in Cornwall. The crash was not the result of enemy action and tragically there were no survivors from the six British and one US crew members aboard.

More Details:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/fatalities/lieutenant-philip-d-green-rn>

- **Non-combat Death of U.S. Servicemember; 144 Others Killed in Iraq**

United States Secretary of Defense James Mattis was in Baghdad on Monday to meet with Iraqi officials including Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi. Coincidentally, a U.S. Servicemember died of non-combat-related causes near Ramadi. Iraqi forces advancing on Mosul from the south reached the Aqrab checkpoint, which is the southern gate to the city. The strategic Albu Saif area near the airport was also captured. Militiamen further west expanded their control of areas near Tal Afar, capturing the last village on the Mosul-Tal Afar Highway still held by the Islamic State militants. On Sunday, the phase to recover the western half of Mosul began.

More Details:

<http://original.antiwar.com/updates/2017/02/20/non-combat-death-of-u-s-servicemember-144-others-killed-in-iraq/>

- **US to continue Iraq battle against Islamic extremists**

U.S. Defense Secretary Jim Mattis said Monday he believes U.S. forces will be in Iraq and in the fight against Islamic State militants for a while, despite some rocky times between the two nations. Speaking at the end of a day of meetings in Baghdad with military commanders and Iraqi political leaders, Mattis said he is open to any request from his military commanders to aid the battle to retake Mosul and launch a major battle to oust IS from the base of its so-called caliphate in Raqqa, Syria. He would not provide details.

More Details:

<http://www.thestandard.com.hk/breaking-news.php?id=85181>

- **Iran, Iraq ink tie-up in petroleum sector**

Petroleum ministers of Iran and Iraq have signed Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on cooperation in different fields of oil and gas, a report said. Issues such as development of oil and gas fields in common borders, exporting engineering and technical services, exporting goods and cooperation in the field of petroleum and derivatives were mentioned in the MoU, reported Irna.

More Details:

http://www.tradearabia.com/news/OGN_320995.html

- **Iraq Supports Russia in Preserving Ceasefire in Syria**

leaders support Russia's intent to secure the ceasefire in Syria, the Russian Foreign Ministry said Monday after the visit of Mikhail Bogdanov, Deputy Foreign Minister and Special Presidential Representative for the Middle East and Africa, to Baghdad. "The Iraqi leadership expressed support for Russia's principled line aimed at securing the ceasefire regime in Syria within the Astana talks as the essential preconditions for the early political settlement of the Syrian crisis on the basis of resolution 2254 of the UN Security Council," the Foreign Ministry statement read.

More Details:

<https://sputniknews.com/middleeast/201702211050883580-iraq-supports-russia-syria-ceasefire/>

- **Leftover Daesh bomb kills 3 child shepherds in Iraq**

Three child shepherds were killed in western Iraq on Sunday when one of them stepped on a roadside bomb planted by the Daesh group, local officials said. “Three children were killed today by a leftover improvised explosive device planted by the Daesh organisation north of Al-Baghdadi,” said the mayor, Sharhabeel al-Obeidi.

More Details:

<http://gulftoday.ae/portal/3374273d-ab2a-4ec5-a23f-39d5d5031073.aspx>

- **Vice President Mike Pence tells Barzani U.S. support ‘unified Iraq’**

U.S. Vice President Mike Pence, during a meeting with Massoud Barzani on the sidelines of the Munich Security Conference on Friday, expressed his country’s support for a “unified, federal and democratic Iraq.” The Vice President office said in a statement released on Saturday that Pence “encouraged close cooperation between the Government of Iraq and Kurdistan Regional Government [KRG].”

More Details:

<http://ekurd.net/us-unified-iraq-barzani-2017-02-20>

- **Iraq Poised For Disaster As 750,000 Civilians Remain Trapped In ISIS-Held Mosul**

Humanitarian charities are poised for disaster as Iraqi forces close in on ISIS-held western Mosul, which still contains an estimated 750,000 civilians. US-backed Iraqi forces engaged Islamic State fighters on Monday clearing the way to Mosul's airport, as the ground offensive on the jihadists' remaining stronghold entered its second day.

More Details:

<http://www.christiantoday.com/article/iraq.poised.for.disaster.as.750000.civilians.remain.trapped.in.isis.held.mosul/104867.htm>

2. SYRIA

- **Syrian army command calls on east Aleppo residents to return home**

The General Command of the Syrian Army and Armed Forces called on citizens to return to their homes in 44 towns and villages in the eastern countryside of Aleppo province to which security and stability have been restored.

More Details:

<http://en.mehrnews.com/news/123719/Syrian-army-command-calls-on-east-Aleppo-residents-to-return>

- **Russia's Reconciliation Center Providing Aid for Most Affected Aleppo Districts**

Russia's center for Syrian reconciliation said it provides humanitarian aid for the most devastated districts of Aleppo.

More details:

<https://sputniknews.com/middleeast/201702211050888452-russia-aleppo-humanitarian-aid/>

- **Four Russian soldiers killed in Syria blast**

Four Russian military personnel were killed and two injured when their vehicle was targeted with explosives in central Syria last week, a defence ministry statement quoted by Russian agencies said Monday.

More details:

<http://www.albawaba.com/news/four-russian-soldiers-killed-syria-blast-940510>

- **French Far-Right Leader Says Backing Assad 'Least Bad Option' In Syria**

French far-right presidential candidate Marine Le Pen said allowing Syrian President Bashar al-Assad to stay in power may be the "least bad option" for ending the Syrian civil war and stemming the flow of refugees into Europe.

More details:

<http://www.rferl.org/a/french-far-right-leader-le-pen-says-backing-assad-least-bad-option-syrian-peace-refugee-islamic-state-lebanon/28321839.html>

- **Syrian airstrikes kill at least seven in Damascus**

Airstrikes in the Syrian capital, Damascus, killed at least seven people yesterday. Activists reported a third straight day of escalations by pro-government forces against opposition-held areas in and around the capital.

More details:

http://www.nzherald.co.nz/world/news/article.cfm?c_id=2&objectid=11804525

- **Regime ramps up shelling near Damascus**

Syrian government forces on Monday escalated their bombing campaign around Damascus, raining shells down on rebel territory and sending out a “bloody message” just days before renewed peace talks in Geneva.

More details:

<http://gulftoday.ae/portal/a8ffd0ab-a0d2-4f4f-bb9f-220f335e719a.aspx>

- **Mikdad: Confronting Takfiri mentality, which is the core of terrorism in the region is a must**

Deputy Foreign and Expatriates Minister Fayssal Mikdad said that liberating Aleppo city constitutes a prominent historic triumph as it has changed the international equations in Syria, pointing out that the Syrian government has gained the upper hand in the political process.

More details:

<http://sana.sy/en/?p=100527>

- **Al-Nusra Front Attacks UN Aid Convoy with Mortars, Machine-Guns in Syria**

Al-Nusra Front terrorists attacked a UN humanitarian aid convoy in Syria on February 20, a diplomatic source told Sputnik on Tuesday.

More details:

<https://sputniknews.com/middleeast/201702211050893529-nusra-un-convoy-syria/>

- **Qatar says it is interested in joining Syria peace talks in Astana**

Russian Ambassador to Qatar Nurmakhmad Kholov told TASS on Monday that Qatar take’s Moscow’s stance that only the people of Syria can choose the country’s future leader.

More details:

<https://www.almasdarnews.com/article/qatar-says-interested-joining-syria-peace-talks-astana/>

- **Tens of Terrorists Killed in Syrian Army Ambushes in Lattakia, Sweida Provinces**

The army soldiers ambushed terrorists South of the key town of Kabani, killing 25 militants and wounding tens of others.

More details:

<http://en.farsnews.com/newstext.aspx?nn=13951203000451>

3. IRAN

- **Iran, Albania to bolster news cooperation**

Director General of Culture and Islamic Guidance Ministry's Foreign Media Department and Director General of Albanian Telegraphic Agency (ATA) Gezim Podgorica underlined the need for promoting news cooperation between Tehran and Tirana.

More details:

<http://www.irna.ir/en/News/82438611/>

- **FM Highlights Low Risk of Investment in Iran**

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif encouraged the European economies, Germany in particular, to invest in Iran, assuring them of low investment risks in comparison to the other regional countries.

More details:

<https://www.tasnimnews.com/en/news/2017/02/21/1334658/fm-highlights-low-risk-of-investment-in-iran>

- **Egyptian official reveals efforts to open GCC-Iran dialogue**

A spokesman for the Egyptian Foreign Ministry revealed on Saturday details of the efforts made to open a dialogue between Iran and the members of the Gulf Cooperation Council.

More details:

<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20170220-egyptian-official-reveals-efforts-to-open-gcc-iran-dialogue/>

- **FM Calls on US to Avoid Anti-Iran Rhetoric**

"The Iranian people have shown that they will not tolerate language of threat," Zarif said in Munich on Monday night. Zarif is currently in Germany to attend 2017 Munich Security Conference.

More details:

<http://en.farsnews.com/newstext.aspx?nn=13951202001760>

- **Ten things Iranians can do to preempt a Trump war**

Donald Trump wants the US to go to war with Iran, but Iranians can still stop or at least delegitimise his efforts.

More details:

<http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2017/02/ten-iranians-preempt-trump-war-170220032936103.html>

- **Azeri pres. calls for increasing working hours of border crossings with Iran**

Azerbaijan President Ilham Aliyev in an order to develop tourism urged increasing the working hours of Azerbaijan's common borders with Iran.

More details:

<http://www.irna.ir/en/News/82438815/>

- **Pakistan foreign adviser leaves for official visit to Iran**

Pakistani Adviser to Prime Minister on Foreign Affairs Sartaj Aziz on Tuesday left for a two-day official visit to Tehran to hold talks with the Iranian officials to strengthen bilateral relations and cooperation in diverse fields.

More details:

<http://www.irna.ir/en/News/82438551/>

- **All Muslim countries have responsibility to support Palestinian resistance: Leader**

Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei says all Muslim countries have a responsibility to support Palestinian resistance, which should be a source of unity in the Islamic world.

More details:

<http://www.presstv.ir/Detail/2017/02/21/511421/Iran-Leader-speech-Intifada-conference-Tehran>

- **IRGC Ground Force Launches Field Hospital in Northeast Iran**

The Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Ground Force launched a field hospital in Taybad in the northeastern province of Khorasan Razavi. According to Tasnim dispatches, as the IRGC Ground Force continued a large-scale military war game in the northeastern parts of the country, a 120-bed field hospital was opened in Kariz County in Taybad.

More Details:

<https://www.tasnimnews.com/en/news/2017/02/21/1334788/irgc-ground-force-launches-field-hospital-in-northeast-iran>

- **Iran, Greece launch joint chamber of commerce**

Head of Iran-Greece joint chamber of commerce said Greece can play an important role in the development of tourism industry due to its valuable experiences in the field. During the General Assembly meeting of Iran-Greece chamber of commerce, attended by active members, Mehdi Jahangiri outlined that Greece is one of the major trading partners of Iran and urged the economic actors in the private sector to help improve the economy during the difficult situation.

More Details:

<http://en.mehrnews.com/news/123727/Iran-Greece-launch-joint-chamber-of-commerce>

4. ISRAEL – PALESTINE

- **New Palestinian Intifada to Inflict another Defeat on Israel: Leader**

Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei said the third Palestinian intifada (uprising) will begin a very important chapter in the history of Palestinian nation's fighting and will inflict another defeat on the Zionist regime of Israel.

More details:

<https://www.tasnimnews.com/en/news/2017/02/21/1334819/new-palestinian-intifada-to-inflict-another-defeat-on-israel-leader>

- **Israeli court to sentence soldier for killing Palestinian**

An Israeli military court will on Tuesday sentence a soldier convicted of the manslaughter of a Palestinian in a case which has stoked passions, debate and protest.

More details:

<http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/israeli-court-sentence-soldier-killing-palestinian-939090255>

- **Sayed Hassan Nasrallah praises Iran's support for Palestine**

During an interview with IRIB on Monday, Nasrallah stressed that Iran was sending a strong message of solidarity to the people of Palestine by hosting a conference in support of the Palestinian Intifada (uprising).

More details:

<http://en.abna24.com/news/middle-east/sayyed-hassan-nasrallah-praises-iran%E2%80%99s-support-for-palestine.html>

- **Israeli forces fire towards Palestinian fishermen in northern Gaza**

Israeli naval forces opened fire at Palestinian fishermen sailing off the coast of the besieged Gaza Strip on Tuesday morning, witnesses said.

More details:

<http://www.maannews.com/Content.aspx?ID=775575>

- **Riyadh reaffirms support for two-state solution to Israeli-Palestinian conflict**

Saudi Arabia has reasserted support for a Palestinian state after US President Donald Trump said Middle East peace does not depend on a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

More details:

<http://www.arabnews.com/node/1057446/saudi-arabia>

- **Nasrallah: Hezbollah will have 'no Red Lines' in next war with Israel**

Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah on Tuesday continued in his string of threats against Israel, charging that his Lebanese terrorist group will have "no red lines in the next war with Israel."

More Details

<http://www.jpost.com/Arab-Israeli-Conflict/Nasrallah-Hezbollah-will-have-no-red-lines-in-next-war-with-Israel-482159>

- **Netanyahu to Australia amid Calls by Former Prime Ministers to Recognize 'Palestine'**

PM Benjamin Netanyahu wrapped up a 36-hour visit to Singapore on Tuesday that focused on economic and security issues, and headed to Sydney where he is expected to hear much more – at least from opposition politicians and the media – about the Palestinian issue.

More Details

<http://www.jpost.com/Israel-News/Politics-And-Diplomacy/Netanyahu-to-Australia-amid-calls-by-former-PMs-to-recognize-Palestine-482157>

- **US-Israel Security Alliance mission targets UN Resolution**

On Wednesday, as Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu made his first visit with President Trump, the United States-Israel Security Alliance - a bi-partisan ad-hoc committee - convened on Capitol Hill to thank leading and influential members of the Senate who have shown unwavering support to Israel, and to urge them to continue to fight to protect Israel.

More Details

<http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/225388>

- **Creating divisions among Muslims ensuring Israel's interests: Berri**

Berri also highlighted the significance of the conference in support of Palestine, saying, "Unfortunately, after the occupation of Palestine by the Zionists in 1948, we have forgotten our first Qibla and political Qibla." Palestine can serve as a means of convergence among the Muslims, he said, adding that all the efforts to create division among the Arabs or Muslims are solely aimed at ensuring Israeli interests.

More Details

<http://www.irna.ir/en/News/82438634/>

- **Israel to ease regulations on arms and defense exports**

Israel is set to relax its regulations on the exports of arms and defense products, amid a reform program for the industry undertaken by the Defense Export Controls Agency, a branch of the Defense Ministry.

More Details

<http://www.timesofisrael.com/israel-to-relax-regulations-on-arms-and-defense-exports/>

5. JORDAN and LEBANON

- **Jordan urges Denmark for more support to address challenges**

Jordan on Monday called on the Danish government to increase its support for Jordan to help address challenges the country is facing. The remarks were made by Minister of Planning and International Cooperation Imad N. Fakhoury during a meeting with a Danish delegation headed by the Minister for Development Cooperation Ula Tornis, said a statement the ministry emailed to Xinhua.

More Details:

http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-02/20/c_136071315.htm

- **Guidanian discusses religious tourism with Jordanian Minister of Tourism**

Minister of Tourism, Avedis Guidanian, met on Monday his Jordanian counterpart, Minister Lina Annab, who came to the Ministry along a delegation to hold discussions on bilateral cooperation in the field of tourism.

More Details:

<http://nna-leb.gov.lb/en/show-news/75542/Guidanian-discusses-religious-tourism-with-Jordanian-Minister-of-Tourism>

- **France's far right presidential hopeful Le Pen meets Lebanon's Aoun to discuss extremism**

French far-right leader Marine Le Pen Monday said that Syrian President Bashar Assad was a "much more reassuring solution" for France than Daesh (ISIS) rule in the country. "There is no viable and plausible solution other than this binary choice, which is Bashar Assad on one hand and Daesh on the other hand," Le Pen said after talks with Prime Minister Saad Hariri at the Grand Serail.

More Details:

<http://www.albawaba.com/news/france%E2%80%99s-far-right-presidential-hopeful-le-pen-meets-lebanon%E2%80%99s-aoun-discuss-extremism-940332>

- **Nasrallah Lauds Palestinian Intifada Conference in Tehran**

The secretary general of the Lebanese Hezbollah resistance movement, Seyed Hassan Nasrallah, has praised Iran's steadfast support for Palestinian causes at a time that other countries are siding with Israel.

More Details:

<https://www.tasnimnews.com/en/news/2017/02/21/1332408/nasrallah-lauds-palestinian-intifada-conference-in-tehran>

- **French Senate delegation, economists arrive in Beirut**

A delegation of French senators and economists arrived last night in Beirut, for talks with former Prime Minister Najib Miakti and ex-minister Faisal Karami, National News Agency correspondent reported on Tuesday.

More Details:

<http://nna-leb.gov.lb/en/show-news/75576/French-Senate-delegation-economists-arrive-in-Beirut>

- **Israel Warned Hezbollah against Attacks**

Via Arab countries, Israel has reportedly warned Lebanon-based, Iran-backed terror group Hezbollah that it would respond forcefully if attacked from Syria or Lebanon, the London-based Al Hayat newspaper reported on Sunday.

More Details:

<http://www.breitbart.com/jerusalem/2017/02/20/arab-media-reports-israeli-warning-against-hezbollah-attacks/>

- **Lebanon PM says Muslims are first target of terrorism**

Lebanon's Prime Minister Saad Hariri said Monday that "the moderates who constitute the overwhelming majority of Muslims in the World are the first target of terrorism because they are in fact the first bulwark against extremism."

More Details:

http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-02/21/c_136071529.htm

- **Russia Willing to Help Lebanon with Electoral Law**

Russia is likely to give Lebanon a helping hand in finding a new parliamentary electoral law format acceptable by all political parties, to save the country from "sliding into a political crisis," al-Akhbar daily reported on Monday.

More Details:

<http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/225716-report-russia-willing-to-help-lebanon-with-electoral-law>

- **'Jihadist threat' to Irish peacekeepers in south Lebanon**

Irish and other peacekeepers serving in south Lebanon are target for militant jihadists, according to the commander of the UN force there. Speaking to RTÉ's This Week programme, UNIFIL Force Commander Major General Michael Beary said: "Probably the biggest concern for me is the jihadist threat and any threat that would develop with regard to UNIFIL."

More Details:

<http://www.rte.ie/news/2017/0219/853762-peacekeepers-unifil/>

- **Tax hikes will have negative effect on growth and investments: Lebanese economic associations**

Representatives of economic associations in Lebanon issued a statement Sunday urging the government to drop the idea of raising taxes in the 2017 draft budget.

More Details:

<http://www.albawaba.com/business/lebanon-tax-hikes-will-have-negative-effect-on-growth-and-investments-economic-associations-939964>

6. ARABIAN PENINSULA AND THE GULF OF BASRA

- **Saudi Arabia Seeks Death for Suspect in Germans' Shooting**

Prosecutors in Saudi Arabia are seeking the death penalty for a suspect accused of opening fire on German diplomats, a newspaper reported on Monday. The two envoys escaped unharmed when bullets hit their car in the Shiite-dominated Awamiya area three years ago, police said at the time.

More Details:

<http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/225763-saudi-arabia-seeks-death-for-suspect-in-germans-shooting>

- **King Salman Briefs National Cabinet on Talks with Turkish President Erdogan**

Saudi Arabia's King Salman bin Abdulaziz chaired the cabinet's session at Al-Yamamah palace in Riyadh on Monday afternoon. At the outset of the session, the King briefed cabinet members on his talks with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and his meeting with Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Crown Prince, Deputy Supreme Commander and First Deputy Premier of the Kingdom of Bahrain during which they reviewed close bilateral ties between the Kingdom and the two countries.

More Details:

<http://english.aawsat.com/2017/02/article55367810/king-salman-briefs-national-cabinet-talks-turkish-president-erdogan>

- **Major Yemeni tribes denounce latest Saudi strikes**

Members of two major Yemeni tribes have held rallies, with arms in their hands, in denunciation of Saudi strikes against civilian gatherings in their country. They described the attacks as grave violations of international laws and vowed to give Riyadh a harsh response. Press TV's correspondent Mohammad al-Attab attended the event to cover the story.

More Details:

<http://www.presstv.com/Detail/2017/02/21/511412/Yemen-Saudi-Arabia->

- **FM sends message to Italian counterpart**

He the Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohamed bin Abdulrahman al-Thani has sent a written message to Italian Foreign Minister Angelino Alfano pertaining to bilateral relations between Qatar and Italy and means of developing them.

More Details:

<http://www.gulf-times.com/story/533730/FM-sends-message-to-Italian-counterpart>

- **NP Qatar acquisitions Paiton Energy at US\$1.3 billion**

The Qatari State Owned Enterprise, Nebras Power (NP), has completed an acquisition of PT. Paiton Energy Indonesia worth US\$1.3 billion or 35.5 percent of the shares through its subsidiary of Nebras Power Netherland BV, a statement from the Indonesian Embassy in Doha, Qatar received by ANTARA here on Monday.

More Details:

<http://www.antaranews.com/en/news/109549/np-qatar-acquisitions-paiton-energy-at-us13-billion>

- **Abu Dhabi defense fair sees blns USD deals**

The ongoing International Defense Exhibition and Conference (IDEX), the biggest of its kind in the Middle East, saw the value of deals on Monday amounted to 11.34 billion dirham (3.08 billion U.S. dollars).

More Details:

http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-02/21/c_136071556.htm

- **Russia and UAE to Work on Fifth Generation Fighter Jet**

Russia and the United Arab Emirates will pool efforts to develop a light fifth generation jet, Russian Minister of Industry and Trade Denis Manturov said on Monday.

More Details:

<http://www.defencetalk.com/russia-and-uae-to-work-on-fifth-generation-fighter-jet-69209/>

- **Bahrain, Russia for greater business ties**

The Bahrain Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BCCI) hosted yesterday a Russian business delegation and mulled business opportunities with the local business owners and investors.

More Details:

<http://www.newsofbahrain.com/viewNews.php?ppld=30621&TYPE=Posts&pid=21&MNU=2&SUB=2>

- **Anti-Regime Rallies Continue in Bahrain**

The Bahraini people once again took to streets in the suburbs of the capital, Manama, to voice their outrage over the Al Khalifa regime's clampdown on dissent and killing of the citizens of the Persian Gulf country, activists said.

More Details:

<https://www.tasnimnews.com/en/news/2017/02/20/1334320/anti-regime-rallies-continue-in-bahrain-photos>

- **Turkish Warship Visits Oman to Enhance Ties**

To enhance bilateral ties, including military, Turkish Navy's frigate TCG Gelibolu is on a visit to Port Sultan Qaboos (PSQ) in Muscat till Tuesday. A reception was held on board the vessel with the participation of officials from the Royal Army of Oman, Royal Navy of Oman and embassies.

More Details:

<http://www.muscatdaily.com/Archive/Oman/Turkish-warship-visits-Oman-to-enhance-ties-4yda>

7. EGYPT

- **Egyptian president Sisi responds to rumors that he held a 'secret summit' with Netanyahu**

The Egyptian presidency issued a statement on Sunday to comment on recently published press reports suggesting that President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi participated in a "secret summit" between Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, former US secretary of state John Kerry, and Arab leaders. The report suggested that Netanyahu had rejected a proposal for renewed peace talks during the summit.

More Details:

<http://www.albawaba.com/news/egyptian-president-sisi-responds-rumors-he-held-%E2%80%98secret-summit%E2%80%99-netanyahu-940316>

- **IS lashes out at Egypt and threatens Salafis, Sunnis, MB and Copts**

The Islamic State group has threatened Coptic Christians, the Muslim Brotherhood, Salafists, and al-Azhar clerics in wide-ranging video promising more attacks in Egypt similar to a church bombing in December.

More Details:

<http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/threaten-egypts-copts-mb-salafists-and-al-azhar-latest-video-411759788>

- **Parliament's Constitutional and Legislation Affairs Committee to issue decision on Al-Sadat's dismissal on 26 February**

The parliamentary Constitutional and Legislation Affairs Committee said on Sunday that it will issue its decision regarding the dismissal of Member of Parliament (MP) Mohamed Anwar Al-Sadat from the parliament on 26 February, state-owned media Al-Ahram reported.

More Details:

<http://www.dailynewsegypt.com/2017/02/20/parliaments-constitutional-legislation-affairs-committee-issue-decision-al-sadats-dismissal-26-february/>

- **Egypt to officially start marketing for Dabaa project on Saturday**

Egypt will officially start its marketing for the Dabaa nuclear plant, through a global conference in Marsa Matruh next Saturday that will be the first of its kind, Electricity Ministry sources said. The conference will showcase the Dabaa project's popular support to international parties and Russian experts who would be attending the conference, the sources added.

More Details:

<http://www.egyptindependent.com//news/egypt-officially-start-marketing-dabaa-project-saturday>

- **Egyptian man claims to have found missile launcher near airport**

A shoulder-launched anti-aircraft missile launcher has reportedly been found among dumped rubbish next to Cairo's main international airport. Egyptian man Ibrahim Yousry said he found an SA-7 missile launcher beside the road about 2km north of Cairo International Airport on his way to work, reports The Telegraph.

More Details:

<http://www.9news.com.au/world/2017/02/21/12/48/egyptian-man-finds-missile-launcher-near-airport>

- **Sisi's war on Egyptian NGOs**

When the body of Giulio Regeni, a Cambridge researcher who was studying Egyptian labour unions, surfaced by the side of a desert road on Cairo's periphery in February 2016, it bore the hallmarks of security apparatus torture techniques.

More Details:

<http://www.middleeasteye.net/columns/sisi-s-war-egyptian-ngos-1474564096>

- **Cairo Opposition Platform Wants to See Moscow Group in Geneva Talks**

Jihad Makdissi, leader of the Cairo group of the Syrian opposition stated that the Moscow Syrian opposition group should participate in the intra-Syrian reconciliation talks in Geneva.

More Details:

<https://sputniknews.com/middleeast/201702201050867293-geneva-talks-syria-cairo-oppositon/>

- **EU pushes migration talks with Tunisia, Egypt**

The European Union is offering simplified visa procedures and increased economic aid to Tunisia and Egypt in exchange for smoother deportations of unwanted African migrants, two senior officials in Brussels said.

More Details:

<http://www.nasdaq.com/article/eu-pushes-migration-talks-with-tunisia-egypt-20170220-00251>

- **Egypt trade minister in Paris to promote investments**

Egypt's Trade Minister Tarek Qabil fled to Paris Sunday to strengthen economic ties between the two countries and attract more French investments to the Egyptian market.

More Details:

<http://en.amwalalghad.com/investment-news/industry-trade/55109-egypt-trade-minister-in-paris-to-promote-investments.html>

- **Egyptian lawyers file lawsuit to prevent settling Palestinians in Sinai**

A group of prominent Egyptian lawyers have filed a lawsuit against the Egyptian government aimed at blocking any moves to resettle Palestinians in the Sinai Peninsula, following a report last week that Israel was set to discuss with Washington a plan to establish a Palestinian state in Sinai.

More Details:

<http://www.timesofisrael.com/egyptian-lawyers-file-lawsuit-to-prevent-settling-palestinians-in-sinai/>

8. NORTH AFRICA

- **Libyan crisis: Tripartite meeting wraps up with signing of Tunis Declaration**

The ministerial tripartite (Algeria-Tunisia-Egypt) meeting wrapped up, Monday in Tunis, with the signing of "Tunis Declaration," which supports the political resolution of the crisis in Libya and rejects any military solution.

More Details

<http://en.aps.dz/world/16843-libyan-crisis-tripartite-meeting-wraps-up-with-signing-of-tunis-declaration>

- **Libya's head of 'unity government' survives assassination attempt**

The head of Libya's UN-backed unity government survived an assassination attempt on Monday, according to local reports. Fayez al-Sarraj's government is locked in a power struggle with a rival administration in eastern Libya led by a former general named Khalifa Haftar.

More Details

<https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/news/2017/2/20/libyas-head-of-unity-government-survives-assassination-attempt>

- **Al-Serraj wants Russia to persuade Haftar to be part of Libya's GNA**

The Head of the Presidential Council of the Government of National Accord (GNA) Fayez Al-Serraj, said he would like to see Russia helping his government to overcome crisis in Libya. Fayez Al-Serraj told Reuters on Sunday that he is hopeful that Russia might act as an intermediary between him and Khalifa Haftar, the eastern commander of the Operation Dignity backed by the Tobruk-based House of Representatives (HoR) and strongly favoured by The Kremlin.

More Details

<http://www.libyanexpress.com/al-serraj-wants-russia-to-persuade-haftar-to-be-part-of-libyas-gna/>

- **Tunisia's image of democratic reform tarnished by torture accusations**

Tunisia's security forces are still relying on the brutal tactics of the past, including torture, arbitrary arrests, detentions and restrictions on travel of suspects - as well as harassment of their family members - and it is threatening the country's road to reform, Amnesty International has warned. Six

years after the country's revolution, such abuses pose a real risk of jeopardising gains made in the North African country.

More Details

<http://www.albawaba.com/news/tunisia%E2%80%99s-image-democratic-reform-tarnished-torture-accusations-940308>

- **Shoukry meets Tunisian president, Algerian FM to activate tripartite summit to resolve Libyan crisis**

Egypt's minister of foreign affairs Sameh Shoukry met with Tunisian president Beji Caid Essebsi and Algeria's foreign affairs minister Ramtane Lamamra on Monday to continue discussions over Libya's situation and further steps to activate the Tunisian initiative to resolve the Libyan crisis by the cooperation and coordination of the three countries.

More Details

<http://www.dailynewsegypt.com/2017/02/20/615827/>

- **PM hopes for enhanced cooperation with Morocco, Timor Leste**

Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc expressed his hope that Morocco would expand multifaceted cooperation with ASEAN, including Việt Nam. Receiving newly appointed Moroccan Ambassador to Việt Nam Azzeddiine Farhane in Hà Nội on February 20, the Government leader spoke highly of Morocco's socio-economic development achievements, especially in tourism and renewable energy.

More Details

<http://vietnamnews.vn/politics-laws/351553/pm-hopes-for-enhanced-cooperation-with-morocco-timor-leste.html#SYWJRuyfgcJPJ9Wv.97>

- **Merkel calls off Algeria visit after Bouteflika falls ill**

German Chancellor Angela Merkel was forced to call off her visit to Algeria at the last minute on Monday due to President Abdelaziz Bouteflika's ill health, raising further speculation about the frail leader's medical condition.

More Details

<https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/news/2017/2/20/merkel-calls-off-algeria-visit-after-bouteflika-falls-ill>

- **KSA woos Algerian investors**

Saudi Minister of Commerce and Investments Majid Al-Qassabi said there are several mutually beneficial trade and investment opportunities between his country and Algeria.

More Details

<http://www.arabnews.com/node/1057236/saudi-arabia>

- **Algeria's Trade Deficit Falls Sharply In January on Higher Export Revenue**

Algeria's trade deficit fell sharply to US\$585 million in January this year, a drop of 68 per cent from the deficit of US\$1.82 billion recorded in January last year, according to the latest statistics from Algerian Customs. The drop resulted mainly from the rise in exports to US\$3.3 billion in the month, from US\$2.05 billion in January last year, a rise of 60.74 per cent, or US\$1.25 billion, the Algerian Customs' National Centre of Data Processing and Statistics (CNIS) reported here Monday.

More Details

<http://www.bernama.com/bernama/v8/wn/newsworld.php?id=1331242>

- **Libya's Neighbors Meet to Discuss Solutions, Haftar's Role**

A tripartite meeting that included the foreign ministers of Egypt, Tunisia and Algeria was held on Sunday in Tunisia with the aim of finding a solution to the Libyan crisis. Tunisian sources reported that the meeting discussed the possible political role of Khalifa Haftar, who is backed by several regional parties, and the involvement of Islamist forces supported by Nahda movement. The meeting also tackled developments in the Libyan crisis, in addition to coordinating efforts to find solutions among Libya's three neighboring countries. The ministers also discussed the outcomes of the meeting held recently in Cairo among Libyan rival parties.

More Details

<http://english.aawsat.com/2017/02/article55367755/libyas-neighbors-meet-discuss-solutions-haftars-role>

9. AFGHANISTAN – PAKISTAN

- **Afghanistan sees terrorist groups common threat to world stability, CE**

Chaired by chief executive Dr. Abdullah Abdullah, council of ministers' session was held Monday. In the session, the country's chief executive in his speech pointed to recent incidents in Pakistan and said Afghanistan government was strongly condemning recent terrorist attacks in particular the

terrorist attack on Lal Shahbaz Qalandar shrine and expressing sympathy in this regard with the people and government of Pakistan.

More Details

<http://thekabultimes.gov.af/index.php/newsnational/13115-afghanistan-sees-terrorist-groups-common-threat-to-world-stability-ce.html>

- **Afghanistan hands over list of 32 terrorist trainings centers operating in Pak soil**

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs gave a list of 32 terrorist training centers that are operating on Pakistani soil against Afghanistan to Pakistani authorities through Afghan Ambassador to Islamabad and asked for immediate action against these centers.

More Details

<http://thekabultimes.gov.af/index.php/newsnational/13112-afghanistan-hands-over-list-of-32-terrorist-trainings-centers-operating-in-pak-soil.html>

- **Ata Mohammad Noor appointed as Balkh governor**

Ata Mohammad Noor has been once again appointed as the provincial governor of northern Balkh province of Afghanistan, almost two and half years after working as the acting governor.

More Details

<http://www.khaama.com/ata-mohammad-noor-appointed-as-balkh-governor-02937>

- **Afghanistan and EU sign cooperation deal**

The European Union vowed support for the Afghan people Saturday as it signed a Cooperation Agreement on Partnership and Development with the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.

More Details

<http://www.eubusiness.com/news-eu/afghanistan-eu.19lw>

- **Afghanistan Demands Pakistan Hand over Militants, Close Training Camps**

Afghanistan's government has demanded that Pakistan hand over terrorists operating on its soil and close tens of training camps for suspected terrorists, the Foreign Ministry in Kabul said February 20. The tit-for-tat move came after similar action by Pakistan last week, after a terrorist attack on a Sufi shrine in southern Pakistan's Sindh Province killed more than 80 civilians and wounded some 250.

More Details

<http://www.rferl.org/a/afghanistan-demands-pakistan-battle-militants-close-camps/28321111.html>

- **Pakistan invites Chinese entrepreneurs to invest in textile, garments sector**

Pakistan Ambassador to China, Masood Khalid Tuesday invited the Chinese companies to take advantage of investment-friendly policies of present government and come forward to invest in textile and garments sectors in Pakistan. "The government is focusing for the development of textile and garments sectors in Pakistan as it is considered to be the backbone of Pakistan's economy," he said while addressing the representatives of about 76 Chinese companies at a road-show of Quaid-e-Azam Apparel Park (QAAP), Sheikhpura, held here.

More Details

<http://www.brecorder.com/2017/02/21/337502>

- **Pakistani PM to visit Turkey for strategic cooperation council**

Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif will pay a three-day visit to Turkey from Feb. 22 for the fifth session of the Pakistan-Turkey High Level Strategic Cooperation Council (HLSCC) to be held in Ankara on Feb. 23, according to the Foreign Ministry here Tuesday. A high-level delegation, consisting of ministers and senior officials, will accompany the prime minister during the visit. Sharif is expected to have wide-ranging consultations with the Turkish leadership on bilateral, regional and international issues, the ministry said in a statement.

More Details

http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-02/21/c_136073615.htm

- **For saying Hafiz Saeed is threat to country, Pakistan's defence minister is being called 'India's mouthpiece'**

A day after he said that terrorist Hafiz Saeed is a threat to his country, Pakistan's defence minister is being called "India's mouthpiece" by a variety of political and religious leaders there who believe Saeed "is a patriotic leader", reports The News International.

More Details

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/world/pakistan/for-saying-hafiz-saeed-is-threat-to-country-pakistans-defence-minister-is-being-called-indias-mouthpiece/articleshow/57266187.cms>

- **Pak allows its Army to take action against terrorists across border**

Pakistan's Finance Minister Ishaq Dar has told the Senate that the country's Army had been allowed to take action against terrorists across the border after strong evidence of Afghan soil being used to launch recent acts of terrorism in the country was obtained. Various important issues were discussed

during the Senate's session on Monday including the current law and order situation and exclusion of senators from consultations on the revival of military courts.

More Details

<http://www.aninews.in/newsdetail-NA/MzAwODQ4/pak-allows-its-army-to-take-action-against-terrorists-across-border.html>

- **Pakistan foreign adviser leaves for official visit to Iran**

Secretary Defense, Lt General (Retd) Zameer-UI-Hassan Shah and Secretary Water and Power Younus Dagha are also accompanying the Pakistani adviser in the visit.

More Details

<http://www.irna.ir/en/News/82438551/>

10.TURKEY AND THE MIDDLE EAST

- **Turkish Foreign Ministry slams Iranian envoy's remarks**

Turkish Foreign Ministry has denounced Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman's remarks that Turkey should not test Iran's patience. "It is neither acceptable nor comprehensible for a country [Iran] -- which does not even hesitate to push to the battlefield the refugees seeking shelter from crises -- to accuse others of being responsible for regional tensions and instability," Foreign Ministry spokesman Huseyin Muftuoglu told reporters in Ankara on Monday.

More Details:

<http://www.worldbulletin.net/turkey/185113/turkish-foreign-ministry-slams-iranian-envoys-remarks>

- **Al-Bab model can be used in Raqqah: Turkish deputy PM**

Deputy Prime Minister Numan Kurtulmus has said the international community should support the local population in Raqqah once the city is cleared of Daesh terrorists. Speaking after a meeting of the Council of Ministers in Ankara on Monday, Kurtulmus shared Turkey's point of view over the joint operation to recapture the Syrian city of Raqqah from the Daesh terror group.

More Details:

<http://aa.com.tr/en/todays-headlines/al-bab-model-can-be-used-in-raqqah-turkish-deputy-pm/754565>

- **15 Daesh terrorists killed in airstrikes, shelling in northern Syria**

Turkish airstrikes and shelling have killed 15 Daesh terrorists as part of the operation to liberate the northern Syrian town of al-Bab from terrorists, the military said on Tuesday. The Turkish military shelled a total of 109 identified targets, including some shelters, defense positions, command centers, weapons and vehicles used by Daesh terrorists.

More Details:

<https://www.dailysabah.com/war-on-terror/2017/02/21/15-daesh-terrorists-killed-in-airstrikes-shelling-in-northern-syria>

This media summary is prepared by **ORSAM Middle East Research Assistant Firuze Yağmur Gökler. It covers news and commentaries as reported by the national media sources publishing in the Middle Eastern countries. The views expressed are not those of ORSAM and their inclusion does not imply factual accuracy.*

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