



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

Economy News

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Peace Process

Barış Süreci

Ethnic and Secterian Groups

Etnik ve Mezhepsel Gruplar

Non State Actors

Devlet-dış Aktörler

Relations with the West

Batı'yla İlişkiler

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24 FEBRUARY 2017

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1. IRAQ

- **US Changes Rules of Engagement for Mosul Fight in Iraq**

U.S. Army Lt. Col. James Browning juggled phone calls on an overstuffed sofa in a small village south of Mosul. His counterparts in the Iraqi army's 9th Division were pushing toward western Mosul, just a few miles away and were coming under mortar fire from the Islamic State group as they moved on a power station.

More details:

http://hosted.ap.org/dynamic/stories/M/ML_IRAQ_US_TROOPS?SITE=AP&SECTION=HOME&TEMPLATE=DEFAULT&CTIME=2017-02-24-01-10-38

- **ISIS Chaining Up Children and Using Them as Bombs: Islamic State Desperate and Violent In Its Final Days**

As U.S.-backed Iraqi security forces continue their efforts to retake Mosul from the Islamic State group, jihadists are using desperate and violent tactics to maintain their ground in the region. ISIS militants are using children and disabled people as bombs by forcing them into explosives-laden trucks, a general from the U.S.-led coalition told Agence France-Presse this week.

More details:

<http://www.ibtimes.com/isis-chaining-children-using-them-bombs-islamic-state-desperate-violent-its-final-2497114>

- **27 PKK terrorists killed in airstrikes in Iraq's Qandil**

A total of 27 PKK terrorists were killed in airstrikes carried out by Turkish military in northern Iraq's Qandil Mountains on Wednesday, Turkish General Staff announced Friday. In a brief statement, the military said the operation was launched between 2.30 p.m. (1130 GMT) and 3.15 p.m. (1215 GMT) local time.

More details:

<https://www.dailysabah.com/war-on-terror/2017/02/24/27-pkk-terrorists-killed-in-airstrikes-in-iraqs-qandil>

- **Pentagon to Expand US Fight Against ISIS beyond Iraq, Syria**

A Pentagon-led plan to defeat the Islamic State group, due in draft form by Monday, will look beyond Iraq and Syria to include the threat from extremists around the world fueling the conflict, U.S.'s top general said Thursday.

More details:

<http://www.telesurtv.net/english/news/Pentagon-to-Expand-US-Fight-Against-ISIS-Beyond-Iraq-Syria-20170223-0046.html>

- **US mulling 'long-term commitment' in Iraq**

The US military is contemplating a long-term presence in Iraq to stabilize the country after the anticipated defeat of ISIS, America's top military officer said Thursday. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs Gen. Joseph Dunford said that both the US and NATO have begun discussions with Iraq about the possibility.

More details:

<http://us.cnn.com/2017/02/23/politics/dunford-us-iraq-commitment/index.html>

- **Trump's Plans to Obliterate ISIS May Look A Lot like Obama's Strategy**

President Donald Trump repeatedly slammed Obama for failing to defeat ISIS fast enough. His options for defeating the militants in Iraq and Syria may ramp up airstrikes but otherwise look pretty similar to what the US-led coalition is already doing.

More details:

https://www.buzzfeed.com/nancyoussef/trumps-plans-to-obliterate-isis-may-look-a-lot-like-obamas-s?utm_term=.sdD6wpzBwV#.bikao8zlob

- **Families of IS members evicted from liberated areas in Iraq**

Families of Islamic State members have been evicted from the liberated areas in Iraq by the local authorities or security forces, to avoid revenge and conflict in the local communities.

More details:

<http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2017/02/iraq-isis-families-eviction.html>

- **Mattis in Iraq**

On his first trip to Baghdad as defense secretary, Jim Mattis praised the Iraqi army for its resilience and noted the forces are now focused on liberating west Mosul.

More details:

<http://editorials.voa.gov/a/mattis-in-iraq/3737456.html>

- **Corruption in Iraq Allowing Islamic State to ‘Seep Back’ into Liberated Areas**

Rampant corruption among Iraq’s security forces and law enforcement officials is making it possible for Islamic State jihadists to return to areas it once controlled as it loses territory in Mosul, reports the Washington Post (WaPo).

More details:

<http://www.breitbart.com/national-security/2017/02/23/report-corruption-iraq-allowing-islamic-state-seep-back-liberated-areas/>

- **Al-Hashd militia kill IS Emir in Tal Afar**

A security source revealed that the al-Hashd al-Shaabi forces killed one of the Islamic State’s Emirs, west of Tal afar, Baghdad Times reported on Thursday. The source said, “Forces from al-Hashd al-Shaabi managed to kill one of the Islamic State’s Emirs, known as Abu Dujana al-Tunsi, west of Tal Afar District.”

More details:

<http://www.iraqinews.com/iraq-war/al-hashd-militia-kill-emir-tal-afar/>

- **ISIS suicide bomber’s post-Gitmo TV interview surfaces**

The smiling British terrorist who blew himself up in a suicide attack in Iraq said he had such hatred for his American captors while being held in Guantanamo Bay that he wanted to spit in their faces.

More details:

<http://nypost.com/2017/02/23/isis-suicide-bombers-post-gitmo-tv-interview-surfaces/>

- **On Mosul Airport Road: Rockets and Gunfire**

Mosul- There was still morning mist in the air when Iraq’s Rapid Response units began their push to take Mosul airport from ISIS on Thursday. Agence France Presse said that on a hilltop outside the village of Al-Buseif, the soldiers watched as helicopters fired rockets towards the airport and the adjacent sugar factory, held by the jihadist group since 2014.

More details:

<http://english.aawsat.com/2017/02/article55368054/mosul-airport-road-rockets-gunfire>

- **Security forces kill suicide bomber southeast of Baghdad**

Baghdad Operations Command announced on Thursday, that security forces killed a suicide bomber, driving a booby-trapped vehicle, southeast of the capital.

More details:

<http://www.iraqnews.com/iraq-war/security-forces-kill-suicide-bomber-southeast-baghdad/>

- **Ministry of Oil New Refinery Investment**

Iraq's Ministry of Oil has announced the offering of a new investment refinery in Basra province.

More details:

<http://www.iraq-businessnews.com/2017/02/23/ministry-of-oil-announces-new-refinery-investment/>

- **Pentagon plan to defeat Islamic State to look beyond Iraq, Syria**

A Pentagon-led plan to defeat Islamic State, due in draft form by Monday, will look beyond Iraq and Syria to include the threat from jihadists around the world fueling the conflict, America's top general said on Thursday.

More details:

<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-trump-pentagon-idUSKBN163019>

- **Key reason why it will take more than a few months' to free western Mosul**

The complexity of urban warfare and Daesh's level of preparedness to fight for their key stronghold in Iraq indicate that the operation aimed at liberating western Mosul will take much time, Dr. Theodore Karasik, a senior advisor at Gulf State Analytics, told Radio Sputnik.

More details:

<https://sputniknews.com/middleeast/201702241051001778-western-mosul-operation/>

- **Battle for west of Mosul, southernmost district in sight**

Iraqi elite Counter Terrorism Service (ICTS) and the Rapid Response of the interior ministry, alongside the Federal Police are set to launch their offensive on the first western district of Mosul on Friday, preceded by heavy shower of airstrikes on ISIS position in the southern most district of al-Maamun, Rudaw's Sidad Lakhri who is embedded with the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) on the ground reports.

More details:

<http://www.rudaw.net/english/middleeast/iraq/24022017>

2. SYRIA

- **Russia Heralds In End of Syrian Civil War In Favor Of Moscow**

Russian Defense Minister, Sergei Shoigu, celebrated the lasting reign of Syrian President, Bashar Al Assad, during a speech to parliament on Wednesday, according to INTERFAX.

More details:

http://oilprice.com/Latest-Energy-News/World-News/Russia-Heralds-In-End-Of-Syrian-Civil-War-In-Favor-Of-Moscow.html?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+oilpricecom+%28Oil+Price.com+Daily+News+Update%29

- **Syria's warring sides face off as U.N. tells them: end the nightmare**

Opposing sides in the Syrian war came face-to-face in U.N. peace talks for the first time in three years on Thursday, to hear mediator Staffan de Mistura implore them to cooperate to find a way out of almost six years of war.

More details:

<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-un-idUSKBN16217C>

- **Russian Military Brings 1.5 Tonnes of Food to Displaced Palmyra Residents**

Russian military brought 1.5 tonnes of food to Syrians camping in southern Homs after fleeing the Islamist-controlled city of Palmyra, a spokesperson for the Russian reconciliation center said Friday.

More details:

<https://sputniknews.com/middleeast/201702241051001031-russia-syria-fugitives-camp/>

- **Syria talks hit snag before opening ceremony in Geneva**

Negotiations off to rocky start after opposition threatens to skip opening ceremony over disagreements.

More details:

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/02/syria-talks-geneva-170223213801586.html>

- **Syria, India discuss enhancing cooperation in agricultural sector**

Indian Minister of State for Agriculture & Farmers Welfare Surendrajeet Singh Ahluwalia affirmed India's readiness to help Syria in the agricultural sector and provide the required expertise to contribute to developing this sector which been affected heavily due to the war.

More details:

<http://sana.sy/en/?p=100825>

- **130 Bodies of Fighters Beheaded By Rival Jihadists Found in Syria Mass Graves**

The bodies of some 130 fighters shot execution-style or beheaded by rival jihadists have been found in mass graves in northwestern Syria, a monitoring group and rebel sources said today.

More details:

<http://www.outlookindia.com/newswire/story/130-bodies-of-fighters-beheaded-by-rival-jihadists-found-in-syria-mass-graves/966201>

- **Security Council to vote on Syria sanctions**

Security Council likely to vote on resolution sanctioning Syrian officials over chemical weapons attacks as early as next week.

More details:

<http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/225583>

- **GOP divided over calling out Assad war crimes**

Senate Republicans are deeply divided over how — or whether — to address alleged war crimes by Syria's Bashar al-Assad and his allies, complicating any congressional action on the issue.

More details:

<http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2017/02/congress-gop-divide-syria-assad-war-crimes.html#ixzz4Zac83i8X>

- **Tehran Rally Highlights Iranian Support for Afghan Refugees on Syrian Front**

After at first covertly sending thousands of undocumented Afghans to fight on the Syrian front, Iran is trumpeting their sacrifice with increasingly public funerals for the fallen and a giant rally planned for Friday in a Tehran square.

More details:

<http://www.voanews.com/a/tehran-rally-highlights-iranian-support-for-afghan-refugees-on-syrian-front-/3737905.html>

3. IRAN

- **Iran to Sell Russia 1.5 Mln Barrels of Oil in Exchange for Technology, Services**

Iran plans to start selling 100,000 barrels of oil a day to Russia within the next 15 days, Iranian Student New Agency (ISNA) wrote, citing the country's Oil Minister Bijan Zanganeh.

More details:

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/feb/23/iraqi-forces-storm-mosul-airport-seize-isis>

- **Terrorism, enemy's strategy to counter Iran's progress: Military official**

Deputy Chief of Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces Brigadier General Mostafa Izadi said that the enemy is pursuing its objective of blocking Iran's progress through backing terrorism, waging proxy and soft wars.

More details:

<http://www.irna.ir/en/News/82442549/>

- **Iran, Azerbaijan relations improving: Minister**

Iran and Azerbaijan Republic's economic relations are improving, Iranian Communications and Information Technology Minister Mahmoud Vaezi said.

More details:

<http://www.irna.ir/en/News/82442461/>

- **Syrian Opposition Leader Labels Iran 'Main Obstacle' To Peace Deal**

The lead negotiator for the Syrian opposition at peace talks in Geneva has singled out Iran as the biggest obstacle to settling the conflict in Syria.

More details:

<http://www.rferl.org/a/syrian-opposition-leader-hariri-fingers-iran-main-obstacle-peace-deal/28328412.html>

- **Iran says has increased precision of its long-range ballistic missiles**

Iran now has long-range ballistic missiles with greater precision, its defense minister said on Thursday, rejecting reports that Tehran has halted its missile program after a recent missile launch that drew a response from Washington.

More details:

<http://www.tehrantimes.com/news/411375/Iran-says-has-increased-precision-of-its-long-range-ballistic>

- **Iran, Romania keen on boosting cooperation**

Iran's Ambassador in Bucharest Hamid Moayer in a meeting with Romanian Foreign Minister Teodor Melescanu on Thursday discussed avenues for promoting bilateral cooperation in the fields of politics, economy and research.

More details:

<http://www.irna.ir/en/News/82442497/>

- **Iran plans to buy 12 Superjet-100 aircrafts from Russia in near future**

He also noted that Russia is interested in establishing production of components for Russian aircraft in Iran, and, in case of the corresponding proposal is ready to consider such possibility, Tass reported.

More details:

<http://www.tehrantimes.com/news/411362/Iran-plans-to-buy-12-Superjet-100-aircrafts-from-Russia-in-near>

- **Iran increased precision of ballistic missiles: defense minister**

Iran has, to a great extent, increased the precision of its long-range ballistic missiles, Iran's Defense Minister Hossein Dehqan said here on Thursday.

More details:

http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-02/24/c_136080770.htm

- **Minister to visit Iran and UAE**

Primary Industries Minister departs for Iran and the United Arab Emirates today on a trip to build closer trading relationships.

More details:

<http://www.scoop.co.nz/stories/PA1702/S00344/minister-to-visit-iran-and-uae.htm>

4. ISRAEL – PALESTINE

- **Plan B: The one-state solution**

Although the fight for a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is not over yet, it seems that it is fading away. On the one hand, the current US administration is not enthusiastic about it, and EU foreign policy looks in disarray regarding the Middle East. On the other hand, the Arabs are incapable of doing anything positive and the Palestinian leadership is powerless, and don't forget that it is divided between Gaza and Ramallah. Gathering more strength from the whole situation, Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu is moving swiftly forward to kill any opportunity for two states, one for the Israelis and one for the Palestinians, on the land between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea.

More details:

<http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/News/19721.aspx>

- **Trump likes two-state solution, but says he will leave it up to Israelis, Palestinians**

U.S. President Donald Trump said on Thursday he likes the concept of a two-state solution to the Israel-Palestinian conflict, expressing his preference on the issue for the first time since sparking international criticism for appearing to back away from the longstanding bedrock of Middle East policy. But in an interview with Reuters, Trump stopped short of reasserting a U.S. commitment to eventual Palestinian statehood and instead said again that he would be "satisfied with whatever makes both parties happy."

More details:

<http://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-usa-trump-israel-palestinians-exclusi-idUKKBN163021?rpc=401&>

- **Flags, Spirits High as Week of Action in Hebron Comes to Climax**

Dozens of Hebron residents and local activists gathered at the entrance to Shuhada Street on Wednesday to hoist and release a Palestinian flag over the main commercial thoroughfare in Hebron. A checkpoint and electrical gate tightly control Palestinian access to Shuhada Street, while armed settlers are able to walk in the area freely.

More details:

<http://imemc.org/article/flags-spirits-high-as-week-of-action-in-hebron-comes-to-climax/>

- **PA accuses Israel of 'terrorism' against schools**

The Palestinian Authority (PA) on Thursday blasted as “terrorism” Israel’s decision to close an Arab elementary school in Jerusalem due to its spreading of incitement., The Al Nkhba School in the Sur Baher neighborhood of eastern Jerusalem was ordered to be closed after it was discovered that the school had been established by officials affiliated with the Hamas terrorist organization, and that the curriculum included severe incitement against the State of Israel.

More details:

<http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/225591>

- **Palestinian Lands in Salfit Razed for Settlement Expansion**

Israeli forces, on Thursday morning, leveled Palestinian lands in Salfit city, northern occupied West Bank, for the purpose of settlement expansion. Palestinian farmers in Qarawat Bani Hassan and Deir Istiya, to the west of Salift, said that Israeli bulldozers have been leveling their land lots in an attempt to expand the adjacent (and illegal) Hafat Yair settlement outpost.

More details:

<http://imemc.org/article/palestinian-lands-in-salfit-razed-for-settlement-expansion/>

- **Israel, Russia to discuss Syria conflict**

Israel’s Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu plans to meet with the Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin in two weeks in the Russian capital Moscow, Israel’s foreign ministry announced on Thursday. The meeting will discuss the Syria conflict, military coordination, and the growing threat of Iranian dominance in the region.

More details:

<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20170223-israel-russia-to-discuss-syria-conflict/>

- **Netanyahu: Hebron Shooter should be pardoned**

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Thursday he remains in favor of a pardon for Hebron shooter Elor Azariya, saying that the “problem” was not the sentence, but rather the “circumstances” that created the incident. Netanyahu told reporters it was necessary to take into consideration the difficult circumstances young soldiers are thrust into during a wave of terrorism, when they have to make extremely difficult decisions. His concern, he said, is that the next soldier might feel threatened, and not know “where the limits are.”

More details:

<http://www.jpost.com/Israel-News/Benjamin-Netanyahu/Netanyahu-Hebron-shooter-should-be-pardoned-482491>

- **India approves purchase of Israeli missile system**

India's Prime Minister approves \$2.5 billion purchase of Israeli-made Barak 8 anti-aircraft missile system "In a meeting of the cabinet committee on security headed by the prime minister, the proposal for procuring the MR-SAM air defense system for the army was approved and these would be deployed by the army," a senior government source was quoted as having told India's Mail Today newspaper.

More details:

<http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/225596>

- **Israel: Human Rights Watch Denied Work Permit**

Israeli authorities denied Human Rights Watch's application for a work permit for its Israel and Palestine director on the grounds that it is not a real human rights group, the organization said today. In its February 20, 2017 letter denying a work permit for Omar Shakir, the Interior Ministry cited an opinion received from the Foreign Ministry that Human Rights Watch's "public activities and reports have engaged in politics in the service of Palestinian propaganda, while falsely raising the banner of 'human rights.'" The denial comes as the authorities seek to limit the space for local and international human rights groups to operate in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

More details:

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/02/24/israel-human-rights-watch-denied-work-permit>

- **Israel's Leviathan gas field developers approve \$3.75bn investment**

Developers of Leviathan natural gas field approved a plan to invest \$3.75bn in the first phase of Israel's biggest offshore field. The final investment decision has been approved by the partners which includes Noble Energy and Delek Group.

More details:

<http://explorationanddevelopment.energy-business-review.com/news/israels-leviathan-gas-field-developers-approve-375bn-investment-240217-5748461>

5. JORDAN and LEBANON

- **Hajj Hassan: to increase Egyptian imports to Lebanon, Lebanese exports to Egypt**

Industry Minister, Hussein Hajj Hassan, called on Thursday during a special session on industrial exchange between Egypt and Lebanon for decreasing the Lebanese imports from USD 19 billion to 15 and the increase of exports from USD 2.5 billion to 5 during the coming years. Minister Hajj Hassan's call aims at reducing the deficit and indebtedness as well as protecting Lebanese institutions and job opportunities. Hajj Hassan said that there were no problems in increasing Egyptian imports to Lebanon along with increasing Lebanese exports to Egypt, stressing the necessity to convince Lebanese traders of reducing imports from other countries.

More details:

<http://nna-leb.gov.lb/en/show-news/75693/Hajj-Hassan-To-increase-Egyptian-imports-to-Lebanon-Lebanese-exports-to-Egypt>

- **Gemayel Slams Ruling Class, Warns against Hiking Taxes to Fund Wage Scale**

Kataeb Party chief MP Sami Gemayel on Thursday launched a scathing attack on the country's ruling class, accusing it of impotence and of stealing public money. "Kataeb is worried over the situation we're going through and we're concerned about the country and its stability," said Gemayel at a press conference.

More details:

<http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/225913-gemayel-slams-ruling-class-warns-against-hiking-taxes-to-fund-wage-scale>

- **Old quarrels in Lebanon**

Disputes over Lebanon's parliamentary elections law are reviving old quarrels between the country's Druze and Maronite Christians. When Michel Aoun was elected president of Lebanon, some observers believed that the country's crises had ended and there would be a time of stability and reconciliation after years of turmoil. However, experts on Lebanese affairs understood before the president's election that this was not the end of the road and that disputes over the country's parliamentary elections law were just as difficult as the problems of the presidency.

More details:

<http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/News/19746.aspx>

- **The Problem of the Lebanese Army**

Should the United States be giving military assistance to the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF)? According to the U.S. ambassador to Lebanon (speaking last summer), “In this year alone we provided over \$221 million in equipment and training to the Lebanese security forces.” That number presumably includes aid to Lebanon’s police and Internal Security Forces, but given the small size of the country it is a hefty sum.

More details:

<http://blogs.cfr.org/abrams/2017/02/23/the-problem-of-the-lebanese-army/>

- **Jordan votes to extend validity of temporary passports for Gazans**

Jordan's cabinet on Wednesday decided to extend the validity of Gazans’ temporary passports from two to five years, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported. Among several economic measures, the government has recently decided to raise the renewal fees of passports for Gazan residents in Jordan from JD25 to JD200.

More details:

<http://www.albawaba.com/business/jordan-votes-extend-validity-temporary-passports-gazans-941676>

- **Fakhoury urges MCC to continue support for Jordan after ‘successful’ projects**

International Cooperation Imad Fakhoury on Thursday held a meeting with a delegation from the American Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC). The delegation, headed by Fatema Sumar, is currently visiting the Kingdom to mark the end of MCC’s projects carried out in Jordan, according to a statement released by the ministry.

More details:

<http://jordantimes.com/news/local/fakhoury-urges-mcc-continue-support-jordan-after-successful%E2%80%99-projects>

- **Concern grips border town as fighting escalates in Syria’s Daraa**

As fighting escalates across the border with war-torn Syria, Ramtha residents on Thursday expressed concern over ongoing clashes in the nearby battlefield of Syria’s Daraa, while authorities stressed that “our side of the border is protected”. Ramtha, in Irbid, is only a few kilometres from the southern Syrian province of Daraa which has been witnessing intensified fighting between the government forces and the rebels over the past few days.

More Details:

<http://jordantimes.com/news/local/concern-grips-border-town-fighting-escalates-syria%E2%80%99s-daraa>

- **King congratulates emir of Kuwait on national day**

His Majesty King Abdullah II on Thursday sent a cable to Emir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al Ahmed Al Jaber Al Sabah congratulating him on the occasion of his country's national day. The King wished Sheikh Sabah continued good health and the people of Kuwait further progress and prosperity.

More details:

http://petra.gov.jo/Public_News/Nws_NewsDetails.aspx?lang=2&site_id=1&NewsID=290598&CatID=13

6. ARABIAN PENINSULA AND THE GULF OF BASRA

- **Saudi-Somali Summit Discusses Bilateral Cooperation, Regional Developments**

The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz and Somali President Mohamed Abdullahi Farmajo have discussed aspects of bilateral cooperation and the developments in the region.

More Details:

<http://english.aawsat.com/2017/02/article55368059/saudi-somali-summit-discusses-bilateral-cooperation-regional-developments>

- **Iran to launch platform at field jointly owned with SA**

Iran has completed construction of the F18 platform to be launched at the Foroozan field, jointly owned with Saudi Arabia, IRNA reported Feb. 23.

More Details:

<http://en.trend.az/iran/business/2725026.html>

- **Suicide Bomber kills at least 5 Soldiers in Yemen's Zinjibar**

A Suicide bomber killed at least five soldiers in an attack on a military camp in Yemen's southern city of Zinjibar, the capital of Abyan province, at dawn on Friday, a local official and residents said.

More Details:

<http://www.jpost.com/Breaking-News/Suicide-bomber-kills-at-least-5-soldiers-in-Yemens-Zinjibar-482500>

- **UN Security Council extends Yemen sanctions**

The UN Security Council adopted a resolution Thursday to renew Yemen sanction measures until Feb. 26, 2018, after determining that "the situation in Yemen continues to constitute a threat to international peace and security."

More Details:

http://www.china.org.cn/world/2017-02/24/content_40351776.htm

- **Qatar takes part in Somali president's inauguration ceremony**

Mogadishu: The State of Qatar participated in the inaugural ceremony of President of Somalia Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed Farmajo as new President of the Federal Republic of Somalia which was attended by a number of Heads of State, senior officials and representatives of international and regional organizations.

More Details:

<http://thepeninsulaqatar.com/article/23/02/2017/Qatar-takes-part-in-Somali-president-s-inauguration-ceremony>

- **UAE signs arms deals worth \$5bn at Abu Dhabi exhibition**

The United Arab Emirates, a key partner in the bloody Saudi war on Yemen, has struck arms deals worth of over five billion dollars at an international exhibition of weapons and military equipment in Abu Dhabi.

More Details:

<http://www.presstv.com/Detail/2017/02/24/511850/UAE-IDEX-UK-US-Yemen-Saudi-Arabia>

- **'Terrorist blast' injures woman in Bahrain: Interior Ministry**

A "terrorist blast" slightly injured a woman near the Bahraini capital on Thursday, the Interior Ministry said on its Twitter account, in the latest in a series of explosions in the small Western-allied kingdom.

More Details:

http://www.reuters.com/article/us-bahrain-security-blast-idUSKBN1622H9?feedType=RSS&feedName=worldNews&utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+Reuters%2FworldNews+%28Reuters+World+News%29&&rpc=401

- **Oman oil price rises 30 cents**

Dubai Mercantile Exchange (DME) said that Oman oil price (April delivery) reached 55.66 US dollars.

More Details:

<http://timesofoman.com/article/103566/Business/Energy/Oman-oil-price-rises-30-cents>

- **Emir of Kuwait Concludes Visit to Oman**

Emir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al Ahmed Al Jabir Al Sabah and his accompanying delegation left Oman on Wednesday after a three-day state visit to the country.

More Details:

<http://english.aawsat.com/2017/02/article55368014/emir-kuwait-concludes-visit-oman>

7. EGYPT

- **New era of US-Egypt cooperation at hand: Rep. congressman Rohrabacher**

US Representative for California and co-chair of the Congressional Egypt Caucus Dana Rohrabacher visited Egypt last week, heading a US delegation that met with President Abdel-Fattah El-Sisi and Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry. The parties discussed Egypt-US relations after the election of US President Donald Trump.

More Details:

<http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/258749/Egypt/Politics-/New-era-of-USEgypt-cooperation-at-hand-Rep-congres.aspx>

- **Ministry of Trade and Industry approves 226 new industrial projects with EGP 8bn investments**

Tarek Kabil, Minister of Trade and Industry, announced on Thursday that 226 industrial projects have received approvals during the month of January, with total investments worth EGP 8bn, compared to 180 projects with total investments of EGP 3bn during the same period in 2016.

More Details:

<http://www.dailynewsegypt.com/2017/02/23/ministry-trade-industry-approves-226-new-industrial-projects-egp-8bn-investments/>

- **Lebanon hails relationship with Egypt**

Lebanon's Prime Minister Saad Hariri lauded Thursday the decades-long relationship between Lebanon and Egypt, and thanked the latter for having always been a source of support for Lebanon and its people during the most difficult times, the National News Agency (NNA) reported.

More Details:

http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-02/24/c_136080580.htm

- **Egypt Officials: Christian Killed in Sinai, sixth in a month**

Egyptian security officials say suspected Islamic militants gunned down a Coptic Christian inside his home in northern Sinai, the sixth such killing in a month's time in the restive region.

More Details:

http://hosted.ap.org/dynamic/stories/M/ML_EGYPT?SITE=AP&SECTION=HOME&TEMPLATE=DEFAULT&CTIME=2017-02-24-02-43-25

- **Egypt to import wheat from Russia, Ukraine**

Egypt's General Authority for Supply Commodities (GASC) has signed an agreement to import 360,000 tons of Russian and Ukrainian wheat, a statement by the Egyptian Ministry of Supply revealed on Thursday.

More Details:

<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20170224-egypt-to-import-wheat-from-russia-ukraine/>

- **Egypt denies any plans to give Sinai to Palestinians**

Spokesman for President Sissi says possibility raised by Israeli minister is 'unrealistic and unacceptable'

More Deetails:

<http://www.timesofisrael.com/egypt-denies-any-plans-to-give-sinai-to-palestinians/>

- **Reforms open window for new investment in Egypt**

The current economic reforms in Egypt, in particular the draft investment law and the floatation of the pound, herald a new era for the country and present the time for business expansion and foreign investment, said an industry expert.

More Details:

http://www.tradearabia.com/news/REAL_321138.html

- **Egypt FM to visit Washington on Sunday**

Diplomatic and US sources told Arab News that Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry will be making his first official visit to Washington to meet with the Donald Trump administration this weekend.

More Details:

<http://www.arabnews.com/node/1058911/middle-east>

- **Iraq's first crude shipment to arrive in Egypt by March-end: ambassador**

An energy agreement bringing Iraqi crude oil to Egypt is being finalised and a first shipment of 1 million barrels per month will arrive in the last 10 days of March, Iraq's ambassador in Cairo announced late Wednesday.

More Details:

<http://en.amwalalghad.com/investment-news/industry-trade/55190-iraqs-first-crude-shipment-to-arrive-in-egypt-by-march-end-ambassador.html>

- **Immigration Minister hosts Egypt's first workshop on harnessing migration for development**

The Egyptian Ministry for Immigration and Egyptian Expatriate Affairs and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) have hosted Egypt's first international partners round table on harnessing the development impact of migration.

More Details:

<http://www.dailynewsegypt.com/2017/02/23/immigration-minister-abdel-shahid-hosts-egypts-first-international-partners-workshop-harnessing-migration-development/>

8. NORTH AFRICA

- **Residents trapped in Libya Tripoli amid Militia Fighting**

Heavy fighting erupted in the Libyan capital among militias allied to the UN-backed government and rivals. The violence came amid accusations of abductions.

More Details

http://hosted.ap.org/dynamic/stories/M/ML_LIBYA?SITE=AP&SECTION=HOME&TEMPLATE=DEFAULT&CTIME=2017-02-23-19-05-15

- **Only solution for Libya**

It was an image that told Libya's story in a nutshell. Last week Fayez al Sarraj, designated leader of the country's proposed unity government, sat alone in a Cairo hotel room waiting for a phone call to meet with his country's most powerful military leader, Field Marshall Khalifa Haftar.

More Details

<http://www.timesofmalta.com/articles/view/20170224/opinion/Only-solution-for-Libya.640570>

- **Thousands of Libyan families return to post-Daesh Sirte**

More than 5,000 Libyan families have returned to their homes in Sirte two months after the city's recapture from the Daesh terrorist group. "Some 5,325 families have recently returned to eight districts of the city," forces loyal to Libya's Tripoli-based national unity government said in a Wednesday statement posted on Facebook.

More Details

<http://www.albawaba.com/news/thousands-libyan-families-return-post-daesh-sirte-942042>

- **Tunisia parliament adopts law to fight corruption**

Tunisia's parliament on Wednesday approved a law to fight widespread corruption that has plagued the North African country's economy since the 2011 revolution. One hundred and forty-five lawmakers out of 217 voted to pass the 36-article law, which criminalises any retribution against whistleblowers including any disciplinary measures against civil servants.

More Details

<http://gulftoday.ae/portal/a9462e1d-1cd7-49db-8b99-b2c3d223034c.aspx>

- **Algeria, U.S. discuss security, counter terrorism cooperation**

Algerian Minister for Maghreb, African Union and Arab League, Abdelkader Messahel, on Thursday met with a group of U.S. military and security officials, as they discussed bilateral cooperation in different fields, including in the fight against terrorism and extremism, APS news agency reported.

More Details

http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-02/24/c_136080627.htm

- **Legislative elections: Bedoui calls for massive vote to stand in way of detractors of Algeria**

Minister of Interior and Local Assemblies Noureddine Bedoui called Thursday in Tizi Ouzou for a massive participation in the upcoming legislative elections (on 4th May 2017) to “stand in the way of the detractors of Algeria.” Bedoui, who paid a working visit to the province, denounced “a minority that attacks Algeria.”

More Details

<http://en.aps.dz/algeria/16913-legislative-elections-bedoui-calls-for-massive-vote-to-stand-in-way-of-detractors-of-algeria>

- **The Dark Reality for Women Migrants in Morocco**

Morocco’s policy toward migrants is more generous than most, issuing work permits and refusing to evict undocumented refugees. But it does little to account for gender, leaving women living in refugee camps vulnerable to exploitation and abuse.

More Details

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/dark-reality-for-women-migrants-in-morocco_us_58af460be4b060480e05fb62?f6wl39ttug9r90ms4i§ion=us_world

- **Western Sahara edges closer to renewed conflict**

According to the map sold in the gift shop at the airport in Laayoune, the capital of Western Sahara, the territory belongs solely to Morocco. But the airport itself contains signs that this is contested land. Planes bearing the UN’s marking sit on the runway, while its soldiers, sporting blue berets, roam the arrivals hall. They are there to keep the peace between Morocco and the Polisario Front, a nationalist movement that has fought for independence for more than 40 years.

More Details

<http://www.economist.com/news/middle-east-and-africa/21717383-back-spotlight-fate-western-sahara-no-closer>

- **Spain Recognizes Morocco’s “Hard Work” on Illegal Immigration**

The Spanish minister of Interior, Juan Ignacio Zoido praised the cooperation of Morocco on the prevention of irregular immigration to Spanish press on February 21, 2017. In a brief press conference after a meeting with the European Security commissioner, Julian King, Zoido publically recognized the “hard work of Moroccan security forces for stopping massive immigration attempts to the borders of Ceuta and Melilla from within Moroccan borders,” reported La Gaceta.

More Details

<https://www.morocoworldnews.com/2017/02/209210/spain-recognizes-moroccos-hard-work-on-illegal-immigration/>

- **Tunisia keeps up the pace for peace**

Tunisia is keeping up the pace in the search for a Libyan political compromise. Today Tunisian president Beji Caid Essebsi had talks with State Council chairman Abdulrahman Sewehli. Yesterday foreign minister Khemaies Jhinaoui met former Presidency Council member Musa Koni, who quit Faiez Serraj's government last month saying that the Council had failed to deliver which meant that he too had failed.

More Details

<https://www.libyaherald.com/2017/02/23/tunisia-keeps-up-the-pace-for-peace/>

9. AFGHANISTAN – PAKISTAN

- **Closure of Afghan border illegal: envoy**

Afghan Ambassador to Pakistan Omar Zakhilwal has said the closure of the Pak-Afghan border is illegal under the Afghanistan-Pakistan Trade and Transit Agreement (APTTA). The security arrangements along Torkharm, Spin Boldak, Chaman, and other crossing points are heavily regulated.

More Details

<http://dailytimes.com.pk/pakistan/24-Feb-17/closure-of-afghan-border-illegal-envoy>

- **Govt to respect SC's Panama Leaks decision**

Minister of State for Capital Administration and Development Division (CADD), Dr Tariq Fazal Chaudhry here on Thursday said that Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) had failed to submit any solid evidence against Sharif family as party was doing politics of agitation.

More Details

<http://pakobserver.net/govt-to-respect-scs-panama-leaks-decision/>

- **Lahore blast wasn't an act of terror, it was an accident: Rana Sanaullah**

Punjab Law Minister Rana Sanaullah said on Friday that the bomb blast that had occurred a day before in the city had been an accidental one since no evidence of the presence of explosive material could be found.

More Details

<https://www.thenews.com.pk/latest/188497-Lahore-blast-wasnt-an-act-of-terror-it-was-an-accident-Rana-Sanaullah>

- **PM should have cancelled Turkey visit, says Imran**

Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf chairman Imran Khan has said that Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif should have cancelled his Turkey visit to announce the launch of operation Raddul Fasaad himself.

More Details

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1316696/pm-should-have-cancelled-turkey-visit-says-imran>

- **Chief Minister seeks report on DHA blast**

Punjab Chief Minister Shahbaz Sharif Thursday condemned in strongest possible terms the explosion in the Defence Housing Authority and expressed his heartfelt grief and sorrow over the loss of precious lives. He directed the health authorities to provide the best medical treatment to the injured. He also directed the senior officers of the Health Department to monitor the medical facilities provided to the injured.

More Details

<http://dailytimes.com.pk/punjab/24-Feb-17/chief-minister-seeks-report-on-dha-blast>

- **Afghanistan May Seek Sanctions on Suspected Terror Networks**

A government official says Afghanistan is ready to seek United Nations sanctions against suspected terrorist networks and their supporters, a veiled reference to neighbor Pakistan - whom Kabul accuses of aiding Taliban insurgents, particularly the Haqqani network.

More Details

http://hosted.ap.org/dynamic/stories/A/AS_AFGHANISTAN?SITE=AP&SECTION=HOME&TEMPLATE=DEFAULT&CTIME=2017-02-23-08-13-53

- **TAPI an ambitious gas project**

The agreement of Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) gas pipeline project is now closer to a reality. Energy starving India and Pakistan have joined hands with Afghanistan and struck a deal with Turkmenistan to build a gas pipeline at a cost of \$10b. The project was signed in 2016. President Ashraf Ghani in that time called TAPI as a new silk route. The project will also revive Afghanistan's importance in the region. This is a national and regional project to defend the country's future

generation. TAPI is not a simple project—if one look deeply in it can easily realize that this project would steer Asian countries toward more progress and development.

More Details

<http://afghanistantimes.af/editorial-tapi-an-ambitious-gas-project/>

- **Border closure hits Pakistani, Afghan traders**

Traders and transporters in Pakistan and Afghanistan are keeping their fingers crossed amid fears of losing millions of rupees as hundreds of trucks carrying trade goods, including perishable items, are lined up on both sides of the border after the closing of two key crossings following a wave of deadly attacks allegedly being planned and executed from the neighbouring country.

More Details

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1316681/border-closure-hits-pakistani-afghan-traders>

- **Afghan Taliban commander gunned down in Peshawar**

Unidentified assailants gunned down an Afghan Taliban commander here on Thursday. “Haji Khona, Taliban commander in the Shinwari region of Nangarhar province of Afghanistan, was shot dead by unknown gunmen near the refugee camp in Shamshato area,” sources told the Afghan Islamic Press (AIP).

More Details

<https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/188453-Afghan-Taliban-commander-gunned-down-in-Peshawar>

- **Female officers among 343 graduated from Kabul military academy**

At least 343 army officers including several female officers graduated from Kabul military academy on Thursday. The newly-graduated army officers received their graduation certificates during a ceremony attended by high level government officials, including President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani.

More Details

<http://www.khaama.com/female-officers-among-343-graduated-from-kabul-military-academy-02969>

10. TURKEY AND THE MIDDLE EAST

- **Turkey's Erdogan to meet Iraqi Kurdish leader**

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan is due to meet the leader of Iraq's Kurdish region in Istanbul on Sunday, a Foreign Ministry official said Thursday. The meeting between Erdogan and Masoud Barzani, president of the Kurdish Regional Government, was trailed by Erdogan's spokesman Ibrahim Kalin on Wednesday.

More Details:

<http://www.worldbulletin.net/turkey/185289/turkeys-erdogan-to-meet-iraqi-kurdish-leader>

- **Only Turkey truly fights against Daesh: Turkish PM**

Turkey is the only country that is truly fighting against the Daesh terrorist organization, Prime Minister Binali Yildirim said on Friday. Speaking at an opening ceremony of environmental projects in Ankara, Yildirim said the world was pretending to fight against the terror group, while Turkey was doing the actual fight.

More Details:

<http://aa.com.tr/en/politics/only-turkey-truly-fights-against-daesh-turkish-pm/758430>

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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