

IRAQ

- U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, Iraq's regional Kurdish administration in northern Baghdad between central government and, especially Kirkuk, mainly around the border problems and the sharing of oil revenue issues such as work towards a peaceful solution called. (*Türkmeneli TV*)
- Iraqi President Jalal Talabani received the head of the Iraqi Supreme Judicial Council Mr. Midhat al-Mahmoud in Baghdad City. In the negotiation, President Talabani praised the Iraqi judiciary and its integrity and justice in the current period and, Al-Mahmoud explained the Supreme Judicial Council's policies and procedures to rehabilitate the judicial system. (*PUK Media*)
- Iraq's minister of water resources Dr. Abdul Latif Jamal Rashid arrived in Cairo on Tuesday evening to participate in the preparation for the proceedings of the 1st session of Arab Water Ministers Council sponsored by Algiers to discuss a host of special issues on water in the Arab areas in the framework of the sessions by the consultative, scientific and artistic committee of Arab Water Ministers Council. (*PUK Media*)
- Missan governor announced on Wednesday the withdrawal of Iranian forces from the Fakka oilfield as a result of the diplomatic efforts exerted by the Iraqi government. (*Peyamner News Agency*)
- Chemical Ali executed was buried in the town of Ouja near Tikrit beside six other graves, including those of Saddam's sons Uday and Qusay, and near the marble tomb of Saddam himself. (*Peyamner News Agency*)
- Four policemen and one civilian were wounded in a suicide bombing attack in northwest of Mosul, a security source said. (*Aswat Al Iraq*)

- The Central Bank of Iraq's (CBI) dollar sales dropped to \$71.710 million in its daily auction on Wednesday, compared to \$125.416 million in the previous session. (*Aswat Al Iraq*)

IRAN

- Iranian Interior Minister Mostafa Mohammad Najjar took the Zionist regime responsible for the assassination of Iranian nuclear scientist Masoud Ali Mohammadi, and termed such criminal acts futile in preventing Iran's technological progress. (*Farsnews*)
- Iran is due to inaugurate a trade center in the northern Iraqi city of Soleimaniyeh by the end of March, an official announced on Wednesday. "With the inauguration of Iran's trade center in Iraq by the end of the (Iranian) year (March 20), exporters can use Iran's transit facilities and potentials to send their commodities to Iraq," Secretary-General of Iran's Chamber of Cooperatives Hossein Rahmaninia told. (*Farsnews*)
- Iran and Iraq's deputy foreign ministers for consulate affairs will start a 2-day meeting in Tehran tomorrow to explore ways to resolve the problems faced by the two countries' nationals and pilgrims. (*Farsnews*)
- Security of Pakistan is of paramount importance to Tehran, Iranian First Vice-President Mohammad Reza Rahimi said, and called for the further expansion of all-out relations between the two neighboring states. (*Farsnews*)
- London conference ignores regional cooperation as vital in Afghanistan. However, it would participate "seriously" in the Afghanistan conference in London were "regional cooperation" placed at the top of its agenda. (*IRNA*)
- Majlis Speaker Ali Larijnai said in Kuwait City on Wednesday that the Islamic states should adopt strong stand vis-a-vis the Zionist regime and fully back the legitimate rights of Palestinians. (*IRNA*)
- Iran would not attend the London Conference on Afghanistan which is to be held on Thursday as Tehran believed the continuation of the past policies would not lead to resolving the country's problems. (*IRNA*)
- In Armenian capital city, Yerevan, in the course of talks between the Armenian Prime Minister Tigran Serkisian and the Iranian Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki, ways for accelerating the trend of implementing the reached agreements and the projects being implemented, clarifying and defining new economic cooperation projects were discussed. (*IRNA*)

ISRAEL-PALESTINE

- Only if the Turkish prime minister apologizes formally for his verbal attacks on the State of Israel, some 2,000 workers' unions will lift their boycott against Turkey and may purchase vacation packages to the country. The decision was made during a tourism trade fair held in Tel Aviv over the weekend. Declaration of the boycott was in October 2009 and the realm of workers' unions participating in the boycott reached some 98% of all unions in Israel. (*Yediot Ahronot*)
- Israel is expected to invest hundreds of millions in developing small satellites that can be launched from an airplane, enabling the Israel Air Force and Intelligence Corps the ability to gather information on specific targets on short notice. (*Haaretz*)
- Gaza's Hamas rulers on Wednesday defended their actions during Israel's assault last winter, saying they did not target civilians while firing hundreds of rockets at Israeli towns, and rebuffing a UN call for a new inquiry. A Gaza-based Hamas commission of inquiry also determined on Wednesday that captive Israel Defense Forces soldier Gilad Shalit is being treated fairly and is receiving the necessary medical attention. (*Haaretz*)
- Iran's supreme leader predicted the destruction of Israel in comments posted on his Web site on Wednesday. He also accused Israel of trying to destroy the Palestinians "through continued pressure, blockades and genocide. (*Jerusalem Post*)
- Israel would be willing to begin negotiations with the Palestinian Authority at a low level to enable the PA to enter the talks, Defense Minister Ehud Barak told Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak on Wednesday, during a meeting in Sharm e-Sheikh. (*Jerusalem Post*)
- Kadima leaders are closer to compromise over primary. The head of Kadima's governing council, former minister Haim Ramon, came out in favor of advancing the next Kadima leadership race to July 2011. (*Jerusalem Post*)
- Arab League chief Amr Moussa said Wednesday that if a Palestinian state is not established soon there will be a single state for Israelis and Palestinians. (*Yediot Ahronot*)

EGYPT

- Defense Minister Ehud Barak met Egyptian officials in Sharm e-Sheikh Wednesday for "comprehensive, deep and productive talks," focusing on the peace process with the

Palestinians and the issue of captured IDF soldier Gilad Schalit, the Defense Ministry said. Barak held separate meetings with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, his Egyptian counterpart Hussein Tantawi and Egyptian intelligence chief Omar Suleiman. (*Egypt Daily News*)

- Lebanon's Prime Minister Saad Hariri has arrived in Cairo for a two-day official state visit, in which he is expected to meet with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak and his Egyptian counterpart, Ahmad Nathif, to discuss bilateral relations and regional developments. Hariri was accompanied by a delegation that includes Ministers Ali Shami, Mohammad Safadi, Tarek Mitri and Michel Pharaon. Nathif met Hariri at the airport in Cairo Earlier today Egyptian FM Ahmed Abul Gheit stressed his country's cooperation with PM Hariri and warned Israel of any assault on Lebanon. (*Ya Libnan*)

LEBANON

- Israel's Knesset House Committee Tuesday overwhelmingly rejected an appeal by Druze MK Said Naffaa for immunity in the face of an indictment that charges him with visiting Syria, an enemy state, and meeting with Palestinian militant organizations, according to Israeli media. In a 9-2 vote by the Knesset Committee on Tuesday MK Naffaa was stripped of his immunity. (*Now Lebanon*)
- Change and Reform bloc MP Abbas Hashem told OTV on Wednesday that his bloc leader, MP Michel Aoun, was "never a part of the March 8 alliance." He said that Aoun's split from March 14 in 2005 weakened the coalition. Hashem also touched on Speaker Nabih Berri's proposal to form a committee to abolish political sectarianism, saying that the issue should be gradually introduced into the Lebanese political system. (*Now Lebanon*)
- Egyptian Foreign Minister Ahmad Abu al-Gheit told Future News on Wednesday that his country rejects any possible Israeli attack against Lebanon. (*Daily Star*)
- President Michel Sleiman said on Wednesday that the Lebanese constitution gives all the country's sects a political role. He added that Lebanon is the best example of political inclusiveness. (*Daily Star*)
- The Lebanese army issued a statement on Wednesday that a number of Israeli warplanes breached Lebanese airspace. The statement added that the action was a violation of both Lebanese sovereignty and UN Security Council Resolution 1701. (*Now Lebanon*)

SYRIA

- Amnesty International (AI) issued a statement that four Kurdish political activists were detained December 26 in the northeastern Syrian town of Qamishli. (*Now Lebanon*)
- Speaker of British Government in Arabic, during a meeting with Syrian journalists, said that Syria has a crucial role for solution of the problems in the Middle East. (*SANA, Syrian Official News Agency*)

YEMEN

- World powers pledged to stand side-by-side with Yemen to tackle extremism at its roots after talks in London on how to tackle al-Qaeda militants in a state seen as a new frontier in the war against terror. In a joint news conference the foreign ministers of Yemen, Britain and the United States said Yemen's problems required a broader range of solutions than a simple crackdown on al-Qaeda affiliates. (*Al Jazeera*)

AFGHANISTAN-PAKISTAN

- World powers are preparing to meet in London for international talks on the future of Afghanistan and ways to bring an end to more than eight years of war. Officials from more than 60 countries are to gather in the British capital on Thursday for the one-day conference called to discuss strategies to stabilise the country. (*Al Jazeera*)
- Gunmen in the southern Pakistani port city of Karachi ambushed three vehicles carrying supplies for the Nato forces in neighbouring Afghanistan on Thursday, injuring three people, police said. (*Dawn, Pakistani Daily*)
- Recent Pakistani counter-insurgency operations have inflicted considerable setback to Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and its affiliates in Malakand and South Waziristan regions, U.S. Central Command chief Gen David Petraeus said. (*Pakistan Times*)