

## IRAQ

- A police source said that the joint forces launched a crackdown in Hor, Mahot, Koba and other areas in southern Kirkuk. The forces were able to arrest 16 terrorists and suspects and seized weaponry and ammunition. (*PUK Media*)
- Iraq and Syria signed a memorandum, according to which the Syrian side will provide a bunch of logistic support procedures to render the coming parliamentary elections a success for Iraqis living in Syria, head of the Independent High Electoral Commission said. (*Aswat Al Iraq*)
- One civilian was killed and a policeman was injured in clashes with armed men in southern Falluja, according to a police source. (*Aswat Al Iraq*)
- More than 5000 displaced families from other provinces to Kirkuk will participate in the upcoming parliamentary elections, the director of the emigrants and displaced peoples office said. (*Aswat Al Iraq*)
- Thousands of Iraqis took to the streets some in support and others against the decision to ban 500 candidates from running in Iraq's Parliamentary elections due on March 7 due to links with Baath Party. (*Al Sumaria*)
- Iraqi National Coalition urged Parliament to hold an urgent session in order to discuss recent developments on candidate ban mainly the appeals panel work and performance. (*Al Sumaria*)

## IRAN

- Foreign Ministry spokesman Ramin Mehmanparast said that the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) is legally obligated to supply nuclear fuel to its members if requested. (*Tahrn Times*)
- Iran's envoy to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) said Monday that the window for nuclear negotiations is still open. Referring to the possibility of new international sanctions against his country, Ali-Asghar Soltanieh told CNN's Christiane Amanpour, "If they (other countries) come to the conclusion that they had better have a cooperative environment or approach rather than the language of threat, and they are ready to come to the negotiating table, our proposal is still on the table." (*Tahrn Times*)
- Iranian Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki on Wednesday underlined Tehran's determination to promote economic cooperation with the African Union and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA). "Iran has drawn a comprehensive plan for cooperation with Africa in different fields," Mottaki said in a meeting with COMESA Secretary General Sindiso Ngwenya here in Tehran today. "We are ready to design a proper mechanism with COMESA for cooperation in agriculture, car manufacturing, and implementation of technical and engineering service projects and for supplying Africa with commercial merchandise and products as well as other fields," the Iranian foreign minister added. (*Farsnews*)
- Iranian President's Chief of Staff Esfandiar Rahim Mashae'i on Wednesday urged for the development of bilateral relations and cooperation between Tehran and Doha. He also reiterated that the two nations' intimacy and enthusiasm for each other as well as the good relations between the Iranian and Qatari governments have brought mutual understanding to the two sides. (*Farsnews*)
- Britain should correct its attitude and policies towards Iran if it intends to repair the damaged wall of trust and confidence between the two countries, a senior Iranian legislator said on Wednesday. (*Farsnews*)
- Pakistani Prime Minister Syed Yusuf Raza Gilani greeted IRI President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad on National Iran Day making the fall of former Iranian monarchy on February 11th, the Prime Minister Office said. (*IRNA*)
- Thousands of pro-government Iranians are rallying to mark the 31st anniversary of the Islamic Revolution. Opposition leaders have also called for a huge turnout of their supporters, and there are unconfirmed reports of demonstrations in Tehran and Tabriz. It

is the most important day in Iran's political calendar. The government has warned protests will be dealt with. (*BBC*)

## ISRAEL-PALESTINE

- Lebanese Prime Minister Saad al-Hariri voiced concern about Israeli threats and escalating military activity in a BBC interview broadcast Wednesday. "We hear a lot of Israeli threats day in and day out, and not only threats," Hariri told the British broadcaster. (*Al Arabiya*)
- Ismail Haneyya has strongly condemned the IOF troops assault on the Shafat refugee camp in the occupied city of Jerusalem, stressing that the Palestinian uprising in the camp proves that all attempts to liquidate the spirit of resistance among the Palestinian people have failed. (*Palestine Information Center*)
- A delegation of the Arab parliamentary union (APU) is to visit the Gaza Strip by mid February after the Egyptian authorities gave permission for the delegates to cross into the Strip via Rafah terminal. (*Palestine Information Center*)
- Hebron resident Amin Jamil Amro was sentenced to 33 months in prison Wednesday for sending a threatening fax to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. (*Yediot Ahronot*)

## SYRIA

- Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad told Syrian President Bashar Assad that Israel "must be resisted" and finished off "once and for all" if it launches a military operation in the Middle East, Reuters cited an Iranian report on Thursday. "We have reliable information ... that the Zionist regime is after finding a way to compensate for its ridiculous defeats from the people of Gaza and Lebanon's Hizbullah," Ahmadinejad told his Syrian counterpart in a phone conversation on Wednesday evening, according to IRIB, Iran's state broadcaster. (*Jerusalem Post*)
- President Bashar al-Assad on Wednesday received a letter from King Abdullah II of Jordan on bilateral relations and the latest developments in the Arab arena handed over by Jordanian Prime Minister Samir al-Rifai. (*SANA, Syria Official News Agency*)
- Deputy Foreign Minister Fayssal Mikdad discussed on Wednesday with Norwegian Foreign Ministry's Special Envoy for Middle East Affairs Jon Hanssen-Bauer the latest

developments in the Middle East. Mikdad called on the International community to exert pressure on Israel to stop those practices in violation of the International Law and the UN resolutions and compelling it to end its occupation of the Arab lands, including the Syrian Golan. (*SANA, Syria Official News Agency*)

- On the 31st anniversary of the Islamic Revolution and the National Day of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Iranian Ambassador said relations between Iran and Syria are enhancing, reminding of the two historic late leaders President Hafez al-Assad and Imam Khomeini in setting a firm ground for these relations. (*SANA, Syria Official News Agency*)

## LEBANON

- Free Patriotic Movement leader MP Michel Aoun is expected to visit Progressive Socialist Party leader MP Walid Jumblatt in Mukhtara on February 20. The visit comes after President Michel Sleiman hosted a meeting at the Presidential Palace in Baabda last November to reconcile Jumblatt and Aoun. (*Now Lebanon*)
- Public Works and Transportation Minister Ghazi Aridi will visit Damascus in the coming few days to pave the way for Progressive Socialist Party leader MP Walid Jumblatt's expected trip to Syria. Following a series of bellicose Syria-Israel exchanges in the past week, Lebanon entered the fray Wednesday, with Lebanese Prime Minister Saad Hariri saying his government would support Hizbullah if a new confrontation breaks out with Israel. (*Ya Libnan*)

## EYGP

- Police Sources reported that Egypt opened border crossing with the Gaza Strip Wednesday to allow Palestinian medical patients on both sides to cross in and out of the territory, according to *Earth Times*. (*Egypt Daily News*)

## AFGANİSTAN-PAKİSTAN

- At least 166 people have been killed in avalanches that blocked a mountain pass north of the Afghan capital, according to official sources. Afghan troops helped dig a footpath through snow alongside miles of stranded cars in the Salang Pass on Wednesday. (*Al*

*Jazeera)*

- An attack by a suicide bomber has killed more than 10 people, including seven policemen, in northwest Pakistan, on the border with Afghanistan, officials say. The blast destroyed the vehicle the police were in as it drove on Wednesday through the Wazirand area of Khyber, the district that straddles a main supply line for Nato troops in Afghanistan. (*Al Jazeera*)
- US Vice President Joe Biden said Wednesday that his greatest concern was not Afghanistan, not Iraq, nor the Iranian nuclear crisis, but Pakistan. US officials have long been concerned that elements in the Pakistani establishment support extremists, despite the nation's offensives against Taliban strongholds in border areas. They have urged Pakistan to expand its offensive against militants to North Waziristan, a stronghold for Al-Qaeda and the Haqqani network, known for attacking US and NATO troops in Afghanistan. But Pakistan has chosen not to target so-called Afghan Taliban or some other groups so far and analysts say Islamabad has retained ties to some Islamist militants as a hedge to protect its influence in neighboring Afghanistan. (*Dawn*)