

IRAQ

- Iraqi Interior Minister Jawad al Bolani and top security officers showed off the new border security fence with Syria, explaining to reporters that it will reduce both terrorism and smuggling between the two countries. Iraqi officials have complained bitterly in recent months that high-profile terrorist attacks in Baghdad were plotted and executed from inside Syria. (*www.kerkuk.net*)
- The toll from the suicide bombing that targeted Shiite pilgrims in Baghdad earlier today has reached 147, an official spokesperson said. (*Peyamner News Agency*)
- A female suicide bomber walking among Shia pilgrims in northern Baghdad detonated an explosives belt today, killing at least 41 people and wounding more than 100, officials said. The bombing was the first major strike this year against pilgrims making their way to the southern city of Kerbala to mark a Shia holy day. (*PUK Media*)
- Iran and Iraq have signed one hundred memorandums of understanding since 2003 to boost their economic cooperation, an Iranian official says. (*PUK Media*)
- Five wanted persons were arrested and an explosive device was defused during search raids in different parts of Basra, a local police source said. (*Aswat Al Iraq*)
- Security forces arrested in Karbala a number of operatives affiliated with Al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) Organization, National Security Minister Sherwan al-Waeli said. (*Aswat Al Iraq*)
- The Central Bank of Iraq's (CBI) dollar sales dramatically increased to \$195.655 million in its daily auction, compared to \$77.529 million in the previous session. (*Aswat Al Iraq*)

- Iraq's Deputy Prime Minister Rafie al-Issawi has met with the special representative of the United Nations secretary general for Iraq, Ad Melkert, to discuss the upcoming legislative election and means of consolidating national unity. (*Aswat Al Iraq*)

IRAN

- Iranian Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki met with Portugal's Foreign Minister Luis Filipe Marques Amado at the sidelines of the 14th African Union summit in Ethiopia. In this meeting, Amado said reaching an agreement on Tehran reactor could be an important step towards mutual confidence-building. He also stressed the necessity of holding constructive talks between Iran and other European states as well. (*IRNA*)
- Iranian Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki who is in Ethiopia for the African Union (AU) summit announced that Tehran seeks multilateral cooperation with the African nations. He also added that Iran and the African Union are to form a technical committee in the next two months and the move will foster bilateral cooperation between two sides. (*Farsnews*)
- Majlis Speaker Ali Larijani said on Monday that the Islamic states should possess technology to produce nuclear energy. (*IRNA*)
- Iranian Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki on Sunday dismissed effectiveness of the US administration's move to raise pressures on Iran over its nuclear program, and called on his US counterpart to avoid repeating the same mistakes made by Washington during the Bush era. (*Farsnews*)
- The 21st meeting of Iran-Turkey joint commission on economic and trade cooperation opened in Ankara on Monday. Ways of bolstering trade and economic ties, banking, investment, railway, air and marine transportation and removing the problems hindering Tehran-Ankara mutual ties will be addressed during the preliminary meeting. (*IRNA*)

ISRAEL-PALESTINE

- In Zvi Bar'el's article, titled "It's all Obama's fault", published by Haaretz, it was claimed that countries like Saudi Arabia, Iran, Syria and Turkey manage their own policies and create agendas for the US, not the vice versa. The article emphasizes Turkey's policy of enlarging its sphere of influence in the Middle East and Central Asia. (*Haaretz*)

- Israel has no intention of acceding to Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas's call for a freeze of all construction in West Bank settlements and in east Jerusalem for three months, in order to resume direct negotiations with the PA, a senior government official said on Monday. (*Jerusalem Post*)
- According to Palestine Information Center, during a televised interview with Euronews satellite channel, Prime Minister Erdogan warned Israel that it should reconsider its relations with its neighboring countries and be careful when dealing with other countries especially Turkey, which has a unique history, if it likes to be part of this world. (*Palestine Information Center*)
- Israeli newspaper Jerusalem Post reported on Monday that Israeli intelligence believes Hamas would try to strike at the country's overseas targets in response to the January assassination of top Hamas official Mahmoud Abdel Raouf al-Mabhouh in Dubai. (*Jerusalem Post*)
- The Palestinian Authority will respond within a week to a proposal made by US Special Envoy to the Middle East George Mitchell to push forward the Middle East peace process, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas said on Monday. (*Haaretz*)
- Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi arrived in Israel on Monday for a historic first joint-meeting of the Israeli and Italian cabinets. The PM expressed his belief that Israel's future belongs with the European Union. (*Haaretz*)

LEBANON

- The Tawhid Movement issued a statement on Monday calling for Prime Minister Saad Hariri to transform the commemoration of the 2005 assassination of Premier Rafik Hariri into a national event, rather than one that is restricted to certain parties. (*Now Lebanon*)
- The Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a statement Monday saying that continuing Israel breaches to UN Security Resolution 1701 cause the major challenge to implementing the resolution. (*Now Lebanon*)
- The Change and Reform bloc issued a statement Friday that its leader, MP Michel Aoun, received in Rabieh Palestinian Authority Labor Minister Ahmad Majdalawi. Following the meeting, Majdalawi said that Palestinians would abide by Lebanese authorities and would not involve themselves in internal Lebanese conflicts. (*Now Lebanon*)

- The government once again failed on Monday to reach an agreement on reforms presented by Interior Minister Ziyad Baroud related to the municipal electoral law. (*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

- In the absence of a peace deal with Syria, Israel could find itself at war with its neighbor to the north, Defense Minister Ehud Barak warned on Monday. (*Jerusalem Post*)
- Assistant Minister of Interior Gen. Ibrahim Salman Ali on Monday said Syria is keen on bolstering international cooperation to combat terrorism and all forms of crimes. (*SANA, Syrian Official News Agency*)

YEMEN

- Police in Yemen were on Monday searching for a man suspected of trying to blow up an oil pipeline that carries crude to a Red Sea port, the interior ministry said. The motives behind the attempted bombing and the identity of the perpetrator were not disclosed. Al-Qaeda's branch in Yemen, which is facing an intensified military campaign by the government, has in the past targeted oil installations. (*Asharq Alawsat*)
- The U.S. said on Sunday that there had been no U.S. troops sent to Yemen, nor does it plan to send troops, dismissing previous reports U.S. troops would arrive in the country in weeks to speed the training of counterterror forces. The announcement was made by head of the State Department bureau of Near Eastern Affairs Jeffrey Fletman. (*SABA, Yemen News Network*)

- Violence in Karachi continues. At least seven more persons were shot dead on Monday in two separate incidents which the police blamed on the violence that has been raging in Qasba Colony and neighbouring Orangi Town since Friday evening. The death toll in the three-day violence climbed to 23 as a bullet-riddled body was found in Qasba Morr on Monday morning while six persons were shot dead later in the evening in Nazimabad. The fragile law and order situation forced the Sindh government to impose Section 144 of the criminal procedure code in Orangi Town. (Dawn, Pakistani Daily)
- Insurgents in North Waziristan threatened the government with a “big war” if it continued to violate a peace accord, US monitors of extremist websites said Monday. The North Waziristan faction of the Shura Ittihadul Mujahideen also called on residents to form a council of elders and seek haven from Afghan President Hamid Karzai should war break out, the SITE monitoring group said. North Waziristan is a bastion of Al-Qaeda-linked militants and believed to be home to Afghan Taliban leader Sirajuddin Haqqani. The pamphlet accused the Pakistani government of breaking a peace deal by establishing check points and a network of spies to help the US conduct deadly strikes with unmanned drones. (Dawn, Pakistani Daily)
- The Taliban have denied meeting the United Nations’ special representative in Afghanistan and have vowed to persist in their war “against the invaders”. The denial came in response to news reports that Kai Eide, the outgoing UN envoy, held a meeting in Dubai last month with members of the Taliban leadership. (World News Network)