

Business & Politics in the Muslim World
News Monitoring
Weekly Report
Jan 8 to 14, 2010
Central Asia
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Azerbaijan

Political Front

- U.S., Norwegian Officials Kept From Azerbaijani Village

BAKU -- Officials from the U.S. and Norwegian embassies in Azerbaijan were blocked today from entering a village in the exclave of Naxcivan, where clashes between police and locals occurred earlier last week, RFE/RL's Azerbaijani Service reports.

- Journalist released from jail in Azerbaijan

A jailed journalist was released from jail in Azerbaijan on Jan. 8. Senior adviser to Nota Bene newspaper Faramaz Novruzoglu was released from penitentiary No. 16 upon termination of his term of sentence.

- Azerbaijani CEC announces final results of municipal elections

Azerbaijan Central Election Commission (CEC) has announced the final results of the municipal elections in Azerbaijan. CEC chairman Mazahir Panahov said at the meeting that CEC received 1,718 protocols after the voting and each of the protocols was investigated.“

- Azerbaijan Central Election Commission cancels outcome of municipal vote in some municipalities

The Azerbaijan Central Election Commission has dissolved one Constituency Election Commission and chairman of another. Azerbaijan's Central Election Commission (CEC) has nullified local election results in several constituencies and polling stations after investigation into Dec. 23 elections.

Geo Strategic Front

- Turkmenistan not to annul visa requirements with Azerbaijan

No discussions are being held to cancel visa requirements between Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan's ambassador to Azerbaijan Annamammad Mammadov said at a news conference.

- Turkmenistan's ambassador Caspian Sea delimitation will not affect Turkmenistan-Azerbaijan good-neighborly relations

The Caspian Sea delimitation will not affect the good-neighborly relations between Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan, Turkmen ambassador to Azerbaijan Annamamed Mammadov said at the news conference in Baku. "This issue should be resolved in a civilized manner and on the basis of international law," he said. According to

Mammadov, the sides are holding negotiations on the delimitation of the Caspian Sea on both bilateral and multilateral levels.

- Azerbaijan ready to update Partnership and Co-operation Agreement with EU
The Partnership and Co-operation Agreement signed between Azerbaijan and the European Union in 1996 can be updated. Deputy Foreign Minister Mahmud Mammadgulyev says that Azerbaijan has already notified the European Commission about readiness for PCA renewal negotiations.“

- Date set for OSCE Chairman-in-Office's Azerbaijan visit
OSCE Chairman-in-Office, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan Kanat Saudabayev will visit the South Caucasus countries in Feb.

- Former U.S. congressman: Peace impossible in S. Caucasus without Azerbaijan
It is impossible to establish peace in the South Caucasus without Azerbaijan, former U.S. Congressman Robert Wexler said. Wexler took the post of president of the Center for Middle East Peace and Economic Cooperation on Jan. 11."Azerbaijan's point of view must be taken into account while normalizing Turkey-Armenia relations," Wexler added.

Economic /Energy Front

- The Future of Nabucco relies on the relations between Azerbaijan and Turkey
PhD candidate at Bordo-based Institute of Political Studies Samuel Lussac expressed his view on the recently activated gas transportation from Azerbaijan to Russia. Lussac believes, that this transportation can not be considered a threat to Nabucco project.

- 36.2 million tons of Azerbaijani oil transported via BTC in 2009
The State Oil Company of Azerbaijan Republic (SOCAR) has renewed statistical data on Azerbaijani oil export via the major pipeline Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) named after Heydar Aliyev. SOCAR said that 2.8 million tons of Azeri oil was delivered via BTC to Turkey's Ceyhan port in Dec. 2009.“

- Iran increases gas imports from Azerbaijan
The Islamic Republic of Iran will sign a 5-year contract with Azerbaijan to import 5 billion cubic meters of natural gas annually.

- SOCAR to invest \$28 million in Georgia's gas distribution system in second trading year

The State Oil Company of Azerbaijan (SOCAR) plans to realize an investment plan for the first fiscal year of management of gas distribution networks of Georgia and even expand it in 2010 through its sub-company Socar Georgia Gas (SGG) LLC. SGG fiscal year does not coincide with calendar year and will complete till March 1.

Social Front

- Azerbaijani FM comments on destruction of Azerbaijani cemetery by Armenians
The issue on destruction of tombstones in Gizilhajili cemetery in Azerbaijan's Gazakh region is in the focus of attention of Azerbaijani Foreign Ministry. Spokesman for Foreign Ministry Elkhan Polukhov said that the ministry was waiting for results of the investigation.“Azerbaijan will appeal to the international organizations once it is proved that it was committed by Armenians,” he said.

Kazakhstan

Political Front

- CPJ Urges Kazakhstan To Close Cases Against Activists
The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) has condemned the prosecution of media activists in Kazakhstan, RFE/RL's Kazakh Service reports.

- **Kazakh President's Nephew Gets Post In Security Service**

ASTANA -- Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbaev has appointed his nephew to head the National Security Service's (KNB) human resources department, RFE/RL's Kazakh Service reports.

- **Wife Of Jailed Kazakh Editor On Trial For Protest**

ALMATY -- A trial for three organizers of a rally supporting jailed journalists in Kazakhstan began today in Almaty, RFE/RL's Kazakh Service reports. Raushan Esergepova, the wife of the jailed "Alma-Ata info" newspaper editor Ramazan Esergepov; Vladimir Kozlov, leader of the unregistered opposition group Alga; and Rozlana Taukina, the head of the Kazakh nongovernmental organization Journalists in Trouble, are accused of violating a law on the holding of rallies, marches, and demonstrations in holding a rally last week. The three say the charges against them are politically motivated.

Geo Strategic Front

- **Kazakhstan Lays Out Vision For Controversial OSCE Chairmanship**

Kazakh Foreign Minister Kanat Saudabaev laid out a wide-ranging agenda for his country's 2010 chairmanship of the OSCE in Vienna today.

Kazakhstan today formally began its one-year chairmanship of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

- **Kazakhstan Names Envoy To Uzbekistan After Long Break**

TASHKENT -- Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbaev has appointed an ambassador to Uzbekistan after 17 months without a diplomat in Tashkent, RFE/RL's Uzbek Service reports. Nazarbaev's press service reported that Boribay Zheksemin, the former governor of Kazakhstan's southern Dzhambyl region, has been named ambassador to Uzbekistan. Kazakh Foreign Ministry spokesman Askar Abdrakhmanov told RFE/RL that Zheksemin's experience governing Dzhambyl -- which borders Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan -- will be useful in his new position.

Economic /Energy Front

- **1.9 million tons of Kazakh oil transported via BTC pipeline in 2009**

Transportation of Kazakh oil via Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) launched in Oct. 2008 stabilized in Dec. 2009.

- **China tightens grip on Kazakh gas**

Chinese President Hu Jintao and his Kazakh counterpart, Nursultan Nazarbayev, were liberal with their profuse eulogies such as a "milestone in Sino-Kazakh relations" and "an epoch-making event" after their talks in Astana on December 12. Hu had every reason to describe his official visit to Kazakhstan as a success.

- **Kazakhstan, Iran deny uranium deal**

(AFP) - Kazakhstan angrily denied on Wednesday that it planned to sell purified uranium ore to Iran, calling media reports to this effect "groundless insinuations."

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- **Romanian oil group buys Kazakh company**

(SRI) - Romania's Petrom, the largest oil and gas group in Southeastern Europe, has bought Korneed LLP, a Kazakhstan-focused oil company, for an undisclosed price. Korneed owns an exploration license of the Kultuk oil field, adjacent to Petrom's Komsomolskoye field, the Romanian company said in a statement. The acquisition

agreement was signed on October 29, 2009, and the transaction was closed on December 31, 2009, after all approvals had been obtained from Kazakh authorities.

- 2009 inflation in Kazakhstan 6.2 percent
(SRI) - Inflation in Kazakhstan amounted to 6.2 percent in 2009, according to the State Statistical Agency.
- Iran's Ahmadinejad hails new Turkmenistan gas link
(AFP) - Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad on Tuesday hailed the launch of a gas pipeline link to Iran from its energy-rich neighbor Turkmenistan, while on a visit to the Central Asian state. Iran's Ahmadinejad hails new Turkmenistan gas link

Social Front

- Kazakhstan customs discover contraband weapons in cargo from U.S.
Astana. January 10. Interfax-Kazakhstan - A batch of contraband ammunition has been found in a cargo that has arrived in Kazakhstan from the United States.
The contraband weapons and ammunition were discovered at the Dostyk customs checkpoint on the Kazakh-Chinese border on January 8, when customs officials were examining a container, marked "used cars," sent to Almaty from the United States, the Kazakh Finance Ministry's Customs Control Committee has reported.

Kyrgyzstan

Political Front

- Former Kyrgyz Defense Minister Sentenced To Eight Years
WATCH: Ismail Isakov's sentencing in the Bishkek Military Court to eight years in prison for corruption sparked scuffles. Isakov's supporters shouted "Damnation! Damnation" as he was led from the courtroom.
- Kyrgyz Opposition Criticizes U.S. Reaction To Rights Violations
BISHKEK -- A Kyrgyz opposition leader has criticized the United States for not speaking out about media freedom and other rights violations in Kyrgyzstan, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports. Opposition Social Democratic Party (SDP) leader Almazbek Atambaev told RFE/RL today that the U.S. Embassy in Kyrgyzstan used to express its concern about the human rights situation in the country, but that American officials find maintaining the air base in Bishkek -- known as the NATO Transit Center at Manas Airport -- more important than criticizing the human rights situation in Kyrgyzstan.
- Judge held with bribe in Kyrgyzstan
Kyrgyz national security agents have caught a judge of the Karakol town court red handed with a fifty-thousand-soms bribe, the press service of the agency reported.
- Kyrgyz opposition to go on hunger strike on January 13
Members of Kyrgyz opposition plan to go on a hunger strike on January 13, Azimbek Beknazarov, one of the members of the Joined People's Movement and attorney of the Ismail Isakov -- a former defense minister, sentenced to eight years in prison - told the news agency 24.kg on Tuesday.

Geo Strategic Front

Economic /Energy Front

- Financial police to control every economic wrongdoing in Kyrgyzstan
President of Kyrgyzstan, Kurmanbek Bakiyev, signed a decree passing control over all economic crimes to the State Financial Police department. The decree signed on Monday,

January 11th, gives the body authority to prevent, suppress, solve and investigate all kinds of economic wrongdoings in the country.

- Kyrgyzstan announces 2010 Year of Heritage

Kyrgyzstan's State Culture Agency has announced 2010 the Year of Heritage, press service of the agency reported. As to Sultan Raev, Director of the institution, a large-scale plan on retaining, development and enrichment of all cultural heritage objects, including great non-material (folklore works, epics), material historical and cultural values has been developed in the republic.

- Kyrgyzstan to pay \$220 for gas in 2010

In 2010 Kyrgyzstan will pay \$220 per one thousand of gas cubic meters, which is \$25 less than last year, the Kyrgyzgas company told 24.kg Monday.

Social Front

Tajikistan

Political Front

- Minister of labor expected to be speaker of lower house of parliament of new convocation

DUSHANBE, January 14, 2010, Asia-Plus -- Saydullo Khairulloev, speaker of the Majlisi Namoyandagon (Tajikistan's lower chamber of parliament) has decided not to run in the upcoming parliamentary elections, Asia-Plus has learned from the source at parliament's lower house.

- TV Channel Safina ready to provide air time to all political parties for pre-election debates

DUSHANBE, January 13, 2010, Asia-Plus -- Tajik national TV channel, Safina, is ready provide air time to all political parties for pre-election debates, the Safina director Lutfullo Davlatov announced at a news conference in Dushanbe today.

- President signs a number of laws adopted by parliament last year

DUSHANBE, January 13, 2010, Asia-Plus -- On Tuesday January 12, President Emomali Rahmon signed a number of laws that were adopted by the Majlisi Namoyandagon (Tajikistan's lower chamber of parliament) and seconded by the Majlisi Milli (Tajikistan's upper chamber of parliament) last year, according to presidential press service.

- PDPT nominates candidates for parliament in both single-mandate constituencies in GBAO

KHOROG, January 11, 2010, Asia-Plus -- Extraordinary conferences of the regional organization of the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDPT) for Gorno Badakhshan that took place in Khorog and Rushan district on January 10 nominated candidates to run for election to the Majlisi Namoyandagon in single-mandate constituencies ## 40 and 41 that had been set up in the region. Otamsho Maqboulshoyev, head of the regional electoral commission, told Asia-Plus that PDPT had nominated Mirgand Shabozov to run for the parliament in Khorog single-mandate constituency # 41.

- Only 19 women to run in parliamentary elections in Tajikistan through proportional party list system

DUSHANBE, January 9, Asia-Plus -- 127 candidates have been nominated to run in parliamentary elections through a proportional, party list system from a single, countrywide constituency and only 19 of them are women, Professor Iborhim Usmonov

remarked at a roundtable dedicated to the 2010 parliament elections that took place in Dushanbe on January 8.

- **Uzbekistan Blocking Rail Traffic Into Tajikistan**

DUSHANBE -- Tajikistan's Foreign Ministry says it is hopeful that Uzbek officials will soon allow about 1,000 stranded railroad cars carrying construction materials and foodstuffs to move into Tajikistan, RFE/RL's Tajik Service reports.

- **Relationship between Iran, Tajikistan solid in all cooperation spheres, says IKRC chairman**

DUSHANBE, January 14, 2010, Asia-Plus -- On Wednesday January 13, President Rahmon received visiting chairman of Iran's Imam Khomeini Relief Committee (IKRC), Mr. Husein Anvari. The two discussed the committee's activities in Tajikistan. Speaking to reporters after a meeting with President Rahmon, Anvari noted that relationship between Iran and Tajikistan is solid in all spheres of cooperation and the countries share common views on many regional and international problems.

Economic /Energy Front

Social Front

- **Tajikistan Readies Plan To Control Islamic Study Abroad**

DUSHANBE -- The Tajik Culture Ministry is preparing tighter controls for allowing Tajiks to study at Islamic universities and madrasahs abroad, RFE/RL's Tajik Service reports. Idibek Ziyoev, the head of the ministry's religion department, told RFE/RL that hundreds of young Tajiks go unregistered to such foreign schools because the country doesn't sign bilateral agreements to coordinate the flow of Tajiks who attend Islamic schools. He said such measures would be forthcoming, without providing details.

- **Tajik Officials Say Russian Officer Killed By Colleague**

KULOB, Tajikistan -- Tajik officials say a police investigation shows Russian army officer Valery Mikhailov was killed by another Russian officer during a dispute, RFE/RL's Tajik Service reports.

- **Tajik Deputies Propose Signing 'Marriage Contracts'**

DUSHANBE -- Tajik legislators have proposed a draft law that would regulate marriages with a contract between husband and wife, RFE/RL's Tajik Service reports. Khayriniso Yusufi, the head of parliament's Women's Affairs Committee, told RFE/RL that in the case of a divorce or legal separation a "marriage contract" would help to fairly divide the couple's common property and save women from being left on the street or without any income.

- **EU to continue providing assistance to Tajikistan in future as well**

DUSHANBE, January 14, 2010, Asia-Plus -- The European Union is ready provide 60 million U.S. dollars to Tajikistan for modernization of the Qairoqqum HPP in the north of the country and construction of a number of small hydropower plants on the Surkhob River in the eastern part of the republic, Mr. Pierre Morel, EU Special Envoy for Central Asia and Crisis Situations in Georgia, told reporters in Dushanbe today, following his meeting with President Emomali Rahmon.

- **World Hindi Day celebrated in Tajik capital**

DUSHANBE, January 11, 2010, Asia-Plus -- Indian Embassy in Dushanbe is celebrating World Hindi Day today in its premise. According to the Indian Embassy, they are organizing various events on this occasion, which include a Hindi Speech by Cd'A,

Speech by Mr. Umonov M in Hindi, poetry recitation by Tajik National University students and Hindi students of the embassy, play by Hindi students etc

Turkmenistan

Political Front

Geo Strategic Front

- Turkmenistan not to annul visa requirements with Azerbaijan

No discussions are being held to cancel visa requirements between Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan's ambassador to Azerbaijan Annamammad Mammadov said at a news conference. Turkmenistan is the only country in CIS that applies visa regime with the member states.

- Turkmenistan's ambassador Caspian Sea delimitation will not affect Turkmenistan-Azerbaijan good-neighborly relations

The Caspian Sea delimitation will not affect the good-neighborly relations between Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan, Turkmen ambassador to Azerbaijan Annamamed Mammadov said at the news conference in Baku.

- Turkmen President to visit France in February

On January 7, President of Turkmenistan Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov received Senator Aymeri de Montesquiou Fezensaka, Special Envoy of the President of France on development of political and economic relations between France and Central Asia.

- President of Turkmenistan invited to UAE

On January 11, Turkmen President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov received Special Representative of the President of the United Arab Emirates, Khalfan Sultan Al-Ketbi. Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United Arab Emirates to Turkmenistan Hasan Abdullah Al-Adab also attended the meeting.

- UN supports Turkmen stance on Afghan settlement

The United Nations wholeheartedly welcomes the position of Turkmenistan playing a special role in the process of building peaceful life and socio-economic development in neighboring Afghanistan. As the Ashgabat correspondent of Turkmenistan.ru reports, the UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy for Afghanistan Kai Eide stated about that yesterday during the talks with Turkmen President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov. According to him, "the active cooperation between Turkmenistan and the UN is an important factor in strengthening peace and security in Central Asia".

Economic /Energy Front

- New EU Energy Commissioner Seeks Balanced Russia Policy

BRUSSELS -- Germany's Guenther Oettinger has been nominated to one of the most powerful positions in the EU's executive arm.

The energy commissioner straddles economic and foreign policy, exercising a potentially crucial influence over policies in areas such as climate change, the bloc's economic rejuvenation, and relations with Russia, the Caucasus, and Central Asia.

- Turkmenistan resumes deliveries of natural gas to Russia

On January 9, Turkmengas state concern began exports of natural gas to Russia via gas main Dovletabat - Deryalyk. As "Neutral Turkmenistan" newspaper wrote today, "the start of natural gas deliveries in the northern direction suggests that Turkmenistan and Russia, having confirmed their status of strategic partners in the energy sector, have taken the bilateral relations to a level that meets both the nature of the mutually beneficial

cooperation between the two friendly countries and contemporary realities of the international energy market."

- Turkmen and Uzbeks to create new joint ventures

The fifth meeting of the joint Turkmen-Uzbek Commission for Trade, Economic, Scientific, Technical and Cultural Cooperation was held in Ashgabat, January 13. The delegation of the Republic of Uzbekistan led by Minister of Foreign Economic Relations, Investments and Trade Elyor Ganiev, the Co-chairman from the Uzbek side, arrived in the Turkmen capital to participate in the meeting.

- Turkmenistan elected to Bureau of Group of Landlocked Developing Countries
Turkmenistan has been elected to the Bureau of the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries, the Turkmen State News Agency of Turkmenistan (TDH) reports referring to the country's Permanent Mission to the United Nations.

- Russia to buy 11 billion cubic meters of Turkmen natural gas in 2010

Turkmen gas supplies to Russia since their resumption in January 2010 total 30 million cubic meters a day, "Interfax-AGI" information agency said citing "Gazprom" company. The plan of supplies for January accounts for 934.2 million cubic meters of gas, which is about 11 billion cubic meters on an annualized basis (with the traditional annual two-week pause for preventive works).

- Turkmenistan sets up Office of Financial Monitoring

In the course of an expanded government meeting in Ashgabat today, Turkmen President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov signed a decree on the establishment of the Office of Financial Monitoring under the Ministry of Finance of Turkmenistan.

Social Front

- Director of Turkmen TV "Yashlyk" channel reprimanded

President of Turkmenistan Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov reprimanded Director of "Yashlyk" channel of the General Directorate of Turkmen TV Begench Abaev.

- Turkmenistan sends US \$ 500 thousand for earthquake victims in Haiti

At an expanded government meeting in Ashgabat on January 15, President of Turkmenistan Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov signed a document authorizing the transfer of US \$ 500 thousand as humanitarian assistance for people of Haiti affected by the earthquake.

Uzbekistan

Political Front

- Media Watchdog Alarmed By Interrogations Of Uzbek Journalists

The media watchdog Reporters Without Borders (RSF) says it is alarmed by the recent interrogation of five independent journalists by Uzbek officials, RFE/RL's Uzbek Service reports. RSF's Europe and former USSR desk chief Elsa Vidal told RFE/RL on January 13 that the organization is concerned the interrogations might be part of a new crackdown on journalists.

- Uzbek secret services collect the records about independent journalists

The Tashkent Public Prosecutor's office conducted the series of interrogations of several independent journalists, working in Uzbekistan. On January 7 five of them – Vasiliy Markov, Sid Yanyshhev, Abdumalik Boboev, Khusniddin Kutbiddinov and Marina Kozlova (that cooperated with various foreign mass media) were called for "an interview" with Bakhrom Nurmatov, the assistant Public Prosecutor of Tashkent.

Geo Strategic Front

- **Uzbekistan Blocking Rail Traffic Into Tajikistan**

DUSHANBE -- Tajikistan's Foreign Ministry says it is hopeful that Uzbek officials will soon allow about 1,000 stranded railroad cars carrying construction materials and foodstuffs to move into Tajikistan, RFE/RL's Tajik Service reports. Tajik Foreign Ministry spokesman Davlat Nazriev told RFE/RL that the cargo is being held up by the Uzbek railroad company and customs and border officials.

Economic /Energy Front

Social Front

- **Uzbekistan Replaces Soviet Soldier Monument In Tashkent**

TASHKENT -- Uzbek President Islam Karimov has unveiled a new monument as a replacement for Soviet monuments in downtown Tashkent that were taken down last year, RFE/RL's Uzbek Service reports.

- **Uzbek Woman Tells Of Sisters' Alleged Rapes In Prison**

TASHKENT -- An Uzbek woman has given details of her experience in prison during which she alleges she and her two sisters were beaten and gang-raped, RFE/RL's Uzbek Service reports. Khosiyat Soatova, 23, the youngest of the sisters, told RFE/RL that she and her two sisters were detained in Tashkent on May 9 during a domestic dispute.

- **Uzbekistan: The plane trees are cut off in the central part of Samarqand (photo)**

The various types of spruces replaced the cut off plane trees in the central park of recreation and leisure in Samarqand. In the beginning of New Year the perennial trees were cut off by local authorities.

Detailed Report

Azerbaijan

Political Front

- **U.S., Norwegian Officials Kept From Azerbaijani Village**

BAKU -- Officials from the U.S. and Norwegian embassies in Azerbaijan were blocked today from entering a village in the exclave of Naxcivan, where clashes between police and locals occurred earlier last week, RFE/RL's Azerbaijani Service reports.

U.S. officials on the fact-finding trip told RFE/RL they were met by a large group of villagers before they could enter the village of Bananyar and were told to leave the area. The embassy officials included Joanna Ganson, the political adviser at the U.S. Embassy. People who live in Bananyar told RFE/RL that the group that blocked the delegation of embassy officials from entering their village were mainly from Abraqunus and other nearby villages and had been organized by government officials to deter the diplomats. Disturbances broke out between police and people in Bananyar first on December 28 -- the day after Ashura -- and again on January 5, with security forces beating and detaining more than 100 people. Most have since been released, although two villagers are known to be held in a mental institution and several others are still jailed, including local opposition leader Rza Nuriyev.

Meanwhile, local human rights activists cancelled a planned visit to Naxcivan today. Activist Saadat Bananyarli told RFE/RL they were waiting for official permission from Naxcivan for the visit but received no reply from authorities. Naxcivan is an Azerbaijani exclave that is bordered by Iran, Armenia, and Turkey.

http://www.rferl.org/content/US_Norwegian_Officials_Kept_From_Azerbaijani_Village/1928693.html

- Journalist released from jail in Azerbaijan

A jailed journalist was released from jail in Azerbaijan on Jan. 8. Senior adviser to Nota Bene newspaper Faramaz Novruzoglu was released from penitentiary No. 16 upon termination of his term of sentence. According to the lawsuit filed by the Internal Troops Command and the chairman of the Union of Freedom Movements Tahmasib Novruzov, the Nizami district court of Baku sentenced Noat Bene newspaper's editor-in-chief Sardar Alibeyli for 4 months and the newspaper's senior adviser Faramaz Novruzoglu for 3 months in jail.

URL: <http://www.today.az/news/politics/59122.html>

- Azerbaijani CEC announces final results of municipal elections

Azerbaijan Central Election Commission (CEC) has announced the final results of the municipal elections in Azerbaijan. CEC chairman Mazahir Panahov said at the meeting that CEC received 1,718 protocols after the voting and each of the protocols was investigated. "The investigation was carried out by the CEC members and officers of the secretariat," he said. CEC secretary Natig Mammadov said 32.4 percent of the voters participated in the local elections held on Dec. 23. Mammadov gave statistical information about the candidates, municipalities and added that the election was in line with the legislation. "About 31,000 candidates participated in the elections." "All the shortcomings before and after the voting were eliminated. All measures were taken to declare the results of the elections in time. The protocols were investigated within 20 days. Unfortunately, there were reasons to invalidate results presented by some polling stations. The activity of some polling stations and constituencies was not in line with the law. Some reports need to be investigated by the prosecuting authorities," he said.

In some polling stations the election was not in line with the law, it was impossible to determine the will of the voters. Therefore, the results of the elections were invalidated in 33 polling stations and 9 municipalities, he noted.

URL: <http://www.today.az/news/politics/59256.html>

- Azerbaijani Central Election Commission cancels outcome of municipal vote in some municipalities

The Azerbaijan Central Election Commission has dissolved one Constituency Election Commission and chairman of another. Azerbaijan's Central Election Commission (CEC) has nullified local election results in several constituencies and polling stations after investigation into Dec. 23 elections. According to discussions, chairman of Gobustan-Khizi-Guba Constituency Election Commission (ConEC) No. 50 was dismissed due to his failure to comply with the requirements. Besides, Masalli city constituency election commission No. 70 was fully dissolved and results of elections in Sarkhanli municipality in Imishli-Beylegan election constituency No. 80, Boradigah and Erkivan municipalities in Masalli election constituency No. 71, Naftalan city municipality in Goranboy-Naftalan election constituency No. 96, Marzali municipality in Imishli election constituency No. 79, Shahriyar municipality in Sabirabad election constituency No. 64 were declared invalid. Also, the CEC ordered a recount in polling station NO. 3 in Masalli city election constituency NO. 70 and dissolution of 7 polling station staffs in Imishli election constituency No. 79. The meeting also considered complaints about several polling stations by Umid (Hope) Party. According to CEC member Ramiz Ibrahimov, Umid

Party representatives wrote in their statements that there were no problems. "They said in their statement that voting was fair and no irregularity occurred. They also said Umid Party had no observers in these polling stations. So, the party's complaint was disproved," he added.

URL: <http://www.today.az/news/politics/59196.html>

Geo Strategic Front

- Turkmenistan not to annul visa requirements with Azerbaijan

No discussions are being held to cancel visa requirements between Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan's ambassador to Azerbaijan Annamammad Mammadov said at a news conference. Turkmenistan is the only country in CIS that applies visa regime with the member states.

URL: <http://www.today.az/news/politics/59134.html>

- Turkmenistan's ambassador Caspian Sea delimitation will not affect Turkmenistan-Azerbaijan good-neighborly relations

The Caspian Sea delimitation will not affect the good-neighborly relations between Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan, Turkmen ambassador to Azerbaijan Annamammad Mammadov said at the news conference in Baku. "This issue should be resolved in a civilized manner and on the basis of international law," he said. According to Mammadov, the sides are holding negotiations on the delimitation of the Caspian Sea on both bilateral and multilateral levels. "Work on the Caspian Sea delimitation is underway," Mammadov added. The Caspian littoral countries signed the Framework Convention for the Protection of the Caspian Sea Marine Environment in Nov. 2003. In July 1998, Kazakhstan and Russia signed an agreement on delimitation of the northern part of the Caspian Sea to realize sovereign rights for subsoil use, and in May 2002 - a Protocol to the Agreement. Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan signed agreement on the delimitation of the Caspian seabed and the appropriate protocol Nov.29, 2001 and Feb. 27, 2003. May 14, 2003, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan and Russia signed an agreement on the junction point of the delimitation of adjacent sections of the Caspian Sea.

URL: <http://www.today.az/news/politics/59124.html>

- Azerbaijan ready to update Partnership and Co-operation Agreement with EU

The Partnership and Co-operation Agreement signed between Azerbaijan and the European Union in 1996 can be updated. Deputy Foreign Minister Mahmud Mammadgulyev says that Azerbaijan has already notified the European Commission about readiness for PCA renewal negotiations. "The Agreement has been valid for 10 years and should be updated in connection with development of ties between the parties. Our European partners have already launched working out the matter," the deputy minister said. Azerbaijan is a member of programs European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) and Eastern Partnership. The latter supposes an opportunity of associative agreement signing between Azerbaijan and the EU.

URL: <http://www.today.az/news/politics/59326.html>

- Date set for OSCE Chairman-in-Office's Azerbaijan visit

OSCE Chairman-in-Office, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan Kanat Saudabayev will visit the South Caucasus countries in Feb. Diplomatic sources told said Saudabayev will visit Azerbaijan first within his tour and then Armenia and Georgia. Kazakhstan said

it would attach special attention to the solution to protracted conflicts during its presidency in OSCE.

URL: <http://www.today.az/news/politics/59325.html>

- Former U.S. congressman: Peace impossible in S. Caucasus without Azerbaijan

It is impossible to establish peace in the South Caucasus without Azerbaijan, former U.S. Congressman Robert Wexler said. Wexler took the post of president of the Center for Middle East Peace and Economic Cooperation on Jan. 11. "Azerbaijan's point of view must be taken into account while normalizing Turkey-Armenia relations," Wexler added. "The normalization of Turkey-Armenia relations must be stimulating process for the sides," Wexler said. Wexler said Turkey and Azerbaijan have a positive political will to bring dynamism to the region. "The U.S. continues to see Turkey and Azerbaijan as its main allies in the region," he added. As a congressman, Wexler worked in the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the House of Representatives from the date of his election to Congress in 1997. Since then, he has actively supported the close cooperation of the U.S. with several countries, including Azerbaijan. Wexler also served as co-chairman and founder of the Turkish faction.

URL: <http://www.today.az/news/politics/59303.html>

Economic /Energy Front

- The Future of Nabucco relies on the relations between Azerbaijan and Turkey
PhD candidate at Bordo-based Institute of Political Studies Samuel Lussac expressed his view on the recently activated gas transportation from Azerbaijan to Russia. Lussac believes, that this transportation can not be considered a threat to Nabucco project. "To be implemented, Nabucco needs to receive at least 8 bcm a year. Such volumes can only come from the phase 2 of Shah Deniz. Some feared that the 30 June 2009-deal may be a first step before SOCAR and Gazprom negotiate the transportation of Shah Deniz's gas through Russian pipelines. But the Azerbaijani oil company has thoroughly taken care to convince its partners in Shah Deniz and the companies in the Nabucco consortium that the agreements with Iran and Russia were not aimed at "killing" Nabucco. They are just part of the diversification of gas exports wanted by Azerbaijan and SOCAR," said Lussac. Expert also thinks that the relations between Azerbaijan and Turkey are the future of the Nabucco project."The cornerstone regarding the future of Nabucco is not so much the discussions between Gazprom and SOCAR but rather the relationship between Azerbaijan and Turkey. The future of Nabucco, as well as the other pipelines projects running through Turkey, lies in the progress of the negotiations between Ankara and Baku. While the political tensions between them are decreasing now, this difficult and sensitive process may come to an end and an agreement between the two parties is becoming more likely week after week." he said.

URL: <http://www.today.az/news/business/59006.html>

- 36.2 million tons of Azerbaijani oil transported via BTC in 2009
The State Oil Company of Azerbaijan Republic (SOCAR) has renewed statistical data on Azerbaijani oil export via the major pipeline Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) named after Heydar Aliyev. SOCAR said that 2.8 million tons of Azeri oil was delivered via BTC to Turkey's Ceyhan port in Dec. 2009. "In 2009, transport of Azerbaijani oil totaled 36.2 million tons," SOCAR said. Roughly 106.5 million tons were supplied via BTC to Ceyhan port of Turkey since the pipeline was launched. BTC transportation totaled 3.1 million tons in March, a little less than 3 million tons in April, 3.3 million tons in May,

3.3 million in June, 3.193 million tons in July, 3.28 million tons in Aug., 3.07 million tons in Sept., 3.2 million tons in Oct. and 2.9 million tons in Nov.

URL: <http://www.today.az/news/business/59167.html>

- Russian expert: It is profitable for Azerbaijan to sell gas to Russia

Russian political expert, Head of the Political Forecasting Center for Post-Soviet Area Studies Alexander Karavaev does not believe delivery of Azerbaijani gas to Russia might somehow affect the latter's position in the Nagorno-Karabakh problem. The expert says the gas supply has nothing to do with the conflict resolution. "This is not a complete reorientation of hydrocarbon supplies from Azerbaijan through Russia. We can not say that Azerbaijan has made a stake on Russia's influence on settlement of the Karabakh conflict with reorientation of gas being cost of that stake. "In other words, Azerbaijan sells all hydrocarbons in Russia or through Russia, and Russia, in turn, will take some concrete steps in favor of Azerbaijan in terms of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict."

"If it were so, we could talk about real things and real facts without assumptions. But the picture is different, it is a small supply of gas. There has never been a such direct effect on sale of resources and acquisition of political influence on a particular issue in the former Soviet Union," the expert noted. "When we talk about "how Russia could impact the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict, because Azerbaijan sells it its gas", here we restrict a political strategy. It is much more complicated. I would not seek a double bottom here, or to ascribe more sense to this trade and economic cooperation," Karavayev said.

He said it is profitable for Azerbaijan to sell gas to Russia.

"Experts in Russia was arguing that such an outcome is obvious - if the Gazprom's policy is in the same vein, that is, in line with the strategy of attracting the Central Asian and Caspian resources by increasing the cost in a bid to block other pipelines, it will make sale of Azerbaijani gas to Russia profitable, especially, if there are problems with Turkey or with the Nabucco project. I would not link it with the Nagorno-Karabakh problem," the political expert said.

URL: <http://www.today.az/news/politics/59221.html>

- Iran increases gas imports from Azerbaijan

The Islamic Republic of Iran will sign a 5-year contract with Azerbaijan to import 5 billion cubic meters of natural gas annually. The contract will be signed next week. Once the contract is signed, Iran's gas imports from Azerbaijan will increase to 19 billion cubic meters annually. Azerbaijan's gas output will increase to 28 billion cubic meters in 2010.

URL: <http://www.today.az/news/business/59245.html>

- SOCAR to invest \$28 million in Georgia's gas distribution system in second trading year

The State Oil Company of Azerbaijan (SOCAR) plans to realize an investment plan for the first fiscal year of management of gas distribution networks of Georgia and even expand it in 2010 through its sub-company Socar Georgia Gas (SGG) LLC. SGG fiscal year does not coincide with calendar year and will complete till March 1. The Socar Energy Georgia President Mahir Mammadov says that with the \$23 million investment plan for the first fiscal year they have spent \$15-16 million for Georgia's gas supply.

"We have a month or a month and a half for full completion of the investment plan. During the second fiscal year we will add overhaul of gas networks to our gas supply challenges. We expect to earmark \$7-8 million for this purpose and due to that the investment program for the second fiscal year can total \$27-28 million," Mammadov

said. Under the contract, SOCAR will supply 30 cities and districts (over 150,000 gas consumers) in regions of Georgia with gas and invest \$40 million in industry development. SOCAR operates at the retail gas market of Georgia through its sub-company SOCAR Georgia Gas.

URL: <http://www.today.az/news/business/59236.html>

Social Front

- Azerbaijani FM comments on destruction of Azerbaijani cemetery by Armenians

The issue on destruction of tombstones in Gizilhajili cemetery in Azerbaijan's Gazakh region is in the focus of attention of Azerbaijani Foreign Ministry. Spokesman for Foreign Ministry Elkhan Polukhov said that the ministry was waiting for results of the investigation. "Azerbaijan will appeal to the international organizations once it is proved that it was committed by Armenians," he said. According to the diplomat, Azerbaijan raised the issue of destruction of historical monuments in the occupied Azerbaijani territories to the UN two years ago. The cemetery in the occupied Gizilhajili village of Gazakh region has been destroyed by Armenians on Jan. 8, Deputy Chief of Gazakh region Police Office Adalat Sadigov said. According to him, though the village is under occupation, the cemetery has not been occupied. The residents of the village bury their relatives there. Sadigov said they did not doubt that the vandalism had been committed by Armenians. He added that the fact was being investigated.

URL: <http://www.today.az/news/politics/59186.html>

Kazakhstan

Political Front

- CPJ Urges Kazakhstan To Close Cases Against Activists

The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) has condemned the prosecution of media activists in Kazakhstan, RFE/RL's Kazakh Service reports. The New-York based group issued a statement calling for Kazakh officials to "immediately stop the unfounded prosecution" of Raushan Esergepova, the wife of jailed "Alma-Ata Info" newspaper editor Ramazan Esergepov; Rozlana Taukina, the head of the Kazakh nongovernmental organization Journalists in Trouble; and Vladimir Kozlov, the leader of the unregistered opposition group Alga. Kozlov was found guilty on January 12 for violating a law on holding rallies and ordered to pay a fine of about \$50. Esergepova's administrative trial began today, while the court case of Taukina was postponed indefinitely. All three rally organizers said the charges against them are politically motivated. CPJ Europe and Central Asia Program Coordinator Nina Ognianova said on January 11 that the Kazakh government "must demonstrate tolerance for freedom of expression that becomes their newly assumed role of Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe chair."

The three organized a flash-mob protest on January 6 in central Almaty under the banner "Freedom To Journalists Convicted For Their Professional Activities," in support of jailed journalists, including Esergepov; "Vremya" newspaper correspondent Tohniyaz Kuchukov; writer Alpamys Bekturganov; and "Law and Justice" editor in chief Tokbergen Abiev. Esergepov was found guilty in August of revealing state secrets after publishing some government documents. Abiev was convicted for investigating judicial corruption. Bekturganov was imprisoned after writing a critical article about West Kazakhstan Governor Baktykozha Izmukhambetov, who won a libel case against him.

http://www.rferl.org/content/CPJ_Urges_Kazakhstan_To_Close_Cases_Against_Activists/1928487.html

- **Kazakh President's Nephew Gets Post In Security Service**

ASTANA -- Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbaev has appointed his nephew to head the National Security Service's (KNB) human resources department, RFE/RL's Kazakh Service reports. The KNB spokesman Kenzhebulat Beknazarov told RFE/RL that Nazarbaev named Samat Abish to the post on December 29. Beknazarov said Abish, a lieutenant-colonel, "is not just a random person." He added that Abish, 32, graduated from the Russian Academy of Foreign Intelligence and had previously worked in the KNB. Abish is the son of one of Nazarbaev's brothers. He was born in the Almaty region and has two higher education degrees. Abish worked from 2006-2008 as deputy chairman of the registration service in the Justice Ministry, and has been a secretary in the ministry since October 2008. Kazakh Communist Party leader Serikbolsyn Abdildin told RFE/RL that Abish's appointment proves that Nazarbaev wants to have "faithful" people in key positions. He said Nazarbaev considers loyalty more important than professional ability. Ualikhan Kalizhan, a member of the presidential party Nur-Otan, told RFE/RL he has met Abish several times and considers him a good "specialist." He said he welcomes Abish's appointment and hopes it will improve the atmosphere in the KNB. Kazakh opposition member Alikhan Ramazanov told RFE/RL he thinks Nazarbaev does not trust anyone and therefore has appointed "his own man" in the KNB. The appointment of Nazarbaev's relatives to state positions is not uncommon. His nephew Kayrat Satybaldy (formerly Nazarbaev) and former son-in-law Rakhat Aliev have held important positions in the KNB. In the late 1990s Kayrat Nazarbaev, then 30, was named deputy governor of Astana. He was later appointed to leading positions in the KNB and the oil company Kazakhoil. At 35, Kayrat Nazarbaev received a major-general rank under a new surname, Satybaldy. Later, he left the military and worked in the state transport company, Kazakhstan Temir Joly.

http://www.rferl.org/content/Kazakh_Presidents_Nephew_Gets_Post_In_Security_Service/1926946.html

- **Wife Of Jailed Kazakh Editor On Trial For Protest**

ALMATY -- A trial for three organizers of a rally supporting jailed journalists in Kazakhstan began today in Almaty, RFE/RL's Kazakh Service reports. Raushan Esergepova, the wife of the jailed "Alma-Ata info" newspaper editor Ramazan Esergepov; Vladimir Kozlov, leader of the unregistered opposition group Alga; and Rozlana Taukina, the head of the Kazakh nongovernmental organization Journalists in Trouble, are accused of violating a law on the holding of rallies, marches, and demonstrations in holding a rally last week. The three say the charges against them are politically motivated. On January 6, a flash-mob protest action was held in central Almaty to support jailed journalists, including Esergepov, "Vremya" newspaper correspondent Tohniyaz Kuchukov, writer Alpamys Bekturganov, and "Law and Justice" editor in chief Tokbergen Abiev. Esergepov was found guilty in August of revealing state secrets after publishing some government documents. Abiev was convicted for investigating judicial corruption. Writer and journalist Alpamys Bekturganov was imprisoned after writing a critical article about West Kazakhstan Governor Baktykozha Izmukhambetov, who won a libel case against him.

<http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1926321.html>

Geo Strategic Front

- **Kazakhstan Lays Out Vision For Controversial OSCE Chairmanship**

Kazakh Foreign Minister Kanat Saudabaev laid out a wide-ranging agenda for his country's 2010 chairmanship of the OSCE in Vienna today.

Kazakhstan today formally began its one-year chairmanship of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Speaking in measured, businesslike tones at a session of the organization's Permanent Council in Vienna, Kazakh Foreign Minister Kanat Saudabaev expressed his country's intention of aggressively supporting all of the main activities of the OSCE, including security cooperation, economic development, and the support of democracy and human rights. Saudabaev also said Kazakhstan will continue the OSCE's reexamination of the current security architecture in Europe, mentioning in particular a new draft security treaty proposed by Russian President Dmitry Medvedev last November. Former OSCE Chair Says Time Ripe For 'Serious' Reform Saudabaev added that he will be making his first official trip as OSCE chairman in office to the South Caucasus in the middle of next month as part of the OSCE's ongoing emphasis on regulating the post-Soviet frozen conflicts. "Assisting in resolution of 'protracted conflicts' remains a priority for any chairmanship," he said, "and we shall endeavor to do all we can to make a contribution to this difficult process. At the same time, our organization must try to find a way of preventing the emergence of similar conflicts which result in human tragedy and humanitarian disasters." He expressed support for the OSCE's Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), its high commissioner for national minorities, its representative on freedom of the media, and for its missions in various member countries. However, he urged the ODIHR and the OSCE parliamentary assembly "to do everything possible to ensure that the election-monitoring process is objective and constructive." The new chairmanship will also "focus particular attention on Afghanistan," Saudabaev said.

http://www.rferl.org/content/Kazakhstan_Lays_Out_Vision_For_Controversial_OSCE_Chairmanship/1929378.html

- **Kazakhstan Names Envoy To Uzbekistan After Long Break**

TASHKENT -- Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbaev has appointed an ambassador to Uzbekistan after 17 months without a diplomat in Tashkent, RFE/RL's Uzbek Service reports. Nazarbaev's press service reported that Boribay Zheksemin, the former governor of Kazakhstan's southern Dzhambyl region, has been named ambassador to Uzbekistan. Kazakh Foreign Ministry spokesman Askar Abdrakhmanov told RFE/RL that Zheksemin's experience governing Dzhambyl -- which borders Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan -- will be useful in his new position. He said Zheksemin, 57, is familiar with border and economic affairs between the two countries. Abdrakhmanov added that the position was vacant for so long because a lengthy search was conducted to find a suitable candidate. He said both countries are seen as leaders in Central Asia, and their cooperation "defines progress in the region." Kazakh political analyst Eduard Poletaev told RFE/RL that the two states face numerous problems over specific issues such as border closures and general topics like political cooperation. He said an "unhealthy" competition between the two countries derives from a longstanding personal rivalry between Nazarbaev and Uzbek President Islam Karimov. Poletaev said that Karimov has rejected Nazarbaev's plan to establish an economic union among Central Asian countries.

The last Kazakh ambassador to Uzbekistan, Zautbek Turisbekov, was appointed envoy to Russia on August 14, 2009, leaving the post in Tashkent vacant. Trade turnover between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan was some \$1.5 billion last year. There are some 200 Kazakh firms operating in Uzbekistan and a reported 715 Uzbek companies in Kazakhstan.

http://www.rferl.org/content/Kazakhstan_Names_Envoy_To_Uzbekistan_After_Long_Break/1926950.html

Economic /Energy Front

- 1.9 million tons of Kazakh oil transported via BTC pipeline in 2009

Transportation of Kazakh oil via Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) launched in Oct. 2008 stabilized in Dec. 2009. The Azerbaijani State Statistics Committee (SSC) said Kazakh oil transportation via BTC pipeline totaled about 1.8 million tons in Jan.-Nov. 2009. In Dec., 175,300 tons were transported compared to 188,700 tons in Nov., 187,300 tons in Oct., 100,000 tons in Sept., 200,000 tons in Aug., 92,300 tons in July, 152,900 in June, 163,000 tons in May, 137,700 tons in April, 152,800 tons in March, 240,200 tons in February and 161,100 tons in Jan. 2009. "From Oct. 2008 to 1 Jan. 2008, Kazakh oil transit via BTC pipeline totaled 2.2 million tons," it was reported. In Oct.-Dec. 2008, Kazakh oil transit via BTC pipeline totaled 285,100 tons.

URL: <http://www.today.az/news/business/59166.html>

- China tightens grip on Kazakh gas

Chinese President Hu Jintao and his Kazakh counterpart, Nursultan Nazarbayev, were liberal with their profuse eulogies such as a "milestone in Sino-Kazakh relations" and "an epoch-making event" after their talks in Astana on December 12. Hu had every reason to describe his official visit to Kazakhstan as a success. The two leaders signed three important documents relating to cooperation in the development of renewable energy resources, a joint memorandum on financing the second section of a gas pipeline from Kazakhstan to China and a credit agreement for the reconstruction of Atyrau oil refinery in West Kazakhstan. Hu and Nazarbayev attended the launching ceremony of the first 1,304 kilometers section of the gas pipeline stretching from the

Kazakh-Uzbek border to Khorgos on the border with China through Zhambyl, in southern Kazakhstan and Almaty regions. It took the Kazakh-Chinese joint venture set up by state-controlled KazTransGaz and Trans-Asia Gas Pipeline Ltd, affiliated with the China National Petroleum Company (CNPC) 14 months to implement the \$6.7 billion project, with an estimated capacity of 4.5 billion cubic meters (bcm) of gas to be delivered to China annually in its first phase. The volume of gas deliveries is planned to reach 40 bcm per year. The opening of the gas pipeline from Central Asia to energy-hungry China, bypassing Russia, came as an unpleasant surprise to the Kremlin, which had pinned much hope on the reconstruction of an existing but dilapidated gas pipeline and laying an additional parallel pipeline. Preliminary agreements on this project were reached between Russia, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan in 2007.

But the Chinese, effectively forestalling the Russians in muted competition for gas resources of Central Asia, dashed all hope of successfully carrying out the plan. Russia's Gazprom and Lukoil still retain significant positions in Uzbekistan, but the successful launch of the new pipeline points to the weakening energy alliance between Russia,

Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan. Once the construction of the second gas route to China from western Kazakhstan through Beineu, Bozoy, Shalkar and Samsonovka is completed in the coming spring, China will secure access to long-coveted Caspian oil and gas. The second 1,500 kilometers pipeline section to the Chinese border is expected to supply 10 bcm of gas annually. Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan will have to be content playing the role of transit countries, while China will receive its main bulk of gas supplies (up to 30 bcm annually) from Turkmenistan and nearly half of that volume from the Samandele fields. Potentially, Kazakhstan's Zhanazhol gas deposits in Aqtobe region can attract Chinese companies, but its estimated reserves are insufficient to secure long-term supplies to China. The most important Kashagan fields are not expected to operate earlier than 2013. Many experts in Astana regard the rapidly developing pipeline projects as part of Beijing's economic expansion into Kazakhstan. Chinese investment volumes into Kazakhstan's economy are likewise growing at a staggering speed. Analysts expect investment flowing from China to exceed US\$20 billion within two to three years. Some Kazakh members of parliament expressed alarm over the growth of the national debt to China - from \$4 billion in 2008 to \$7.9 billion in the first six months of 2009. China currently ranks fourth among the main lender countries to Kazakhstan after the Netherlands, United States and the UK.

The increasing budget deficit, the growing need to update the oil and gas infrastructure, and inefficient financial management compels the Kazakh government to rely on Chinese investments, which, unlike Western financial aid, comes without any political price attached. In April 2009, during his official visit to China, Nazarbayev secured \$10 billion from Beijing for the KazMunaiGaz state-controlled oil company and the Development Bank of Kazakhstan. The Samruk-Kazyna Foundation, set up by presidential decree in 2009 to promote business projects, concluded an agreement with the State Bank of China to borrow \$3 billion. Large-scale financial investment into Kazakhstan's economy enables China to inch forward into the country's energy sector. In November 2009, KazMunaiGaz and China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) purchased a 100% share of Mangistau Munaigaz, one of the largest Kazakh oil and gas companies, from Indonesian Central Asia Petroleum Ltd. Astana also granted China licenses to develop uranium deposits in Kazakhstan. Unsurprisingly, Chinese Sinopec readily offered to implement the modernization project at Atyrau oil refinery in western Kazakhstan, estimated to cost \$3.4 billion by the Japanese Marubeni Company, for \$1.4 billion.

In his talks in Astana, Hu demonstrated his readiness to make some political concessions, stating that the long-debated issues on the joint use of trans-border rivers would be settled jointly, and that China would refrain from any action against Kazakhstan's national interests. A few days before Hu's trip to Astana, a bilateral agreement was reached on the shipment of 3 million tonnes of Kazakh grain to South East Asia through China. Most likely, Beijing will make additional friendly gestures to Astana in future. However, few understand what underlies such Chinese generosity.

http://www.atimes.com/atimes/China_Business/LA08Cb01.html

- Kazakhstan, Iran deny uranium deal
(AFP) - Kazakhstan angrily denied on Wednesday that it planned to sell purified uranium ore to Iran, calling media reports to this effect "groundless insinuations."
Kazakhstan angrily denied on Wednesday that it planned to sell purified uranium ore to Iran, calling media reports to this effect "groundless insinuations."The story was also

denied by Tehran, which called it "utterly fabricated and baseless." Kazakhstan "categorically repudiates certain news media reports alleging Kazakhstan's connection to a possible deal to supply uranium to the Islamic Republic of Iran," the country's foreign ministry said. The government "considers them groundless insinuations damaging the reputation of our country." In Tehran, the foreign ministry said "the news circulating in some media that Iran is on the threshold of inking a covert deal to import 1,350 tonnes of purified uranium ore from Kazakhstan is utterly fabricated and baseless." "This propaganda is one of the links in the chain that serves the political intentions of the oppressive powers," a statement added. The denials by both countries came a day after the United States, reacting to media reports that a deal was close to being sealed, warned that such a transfer was prohibited under UN sanctions on Iran. "The transfer of uranium to Iran is prohibited, unless the uranium in question is low enriched and the uranium is incorporated in assembled nuclear fuel elements for use in light water reactors (LWRs)," US State Department spokesman Ian Kelly said in Washington. Concern over Iran's nuclear plans is again rising. On Tuesday, Washington warned Tehran that December was "a very real deadline" to accept a UN-drafted deal to swap enriched uranium for nuclear fuel or face further sanctions. The United States and some other Western countries suspect Iran is seeking to develop nuclear weapons under the guise of a civilian nuclear power programme. Tehran adamantly denies this, saying its nuclear programme is strictly for the production of energy. Kazakhstan, which on January 1 becomes the first ex-Soviet republic to take the helm of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), stressed that it is committed to international nuclear non-proliferation rules. "Kazakhstan is firmly committed to the principles of non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and tough control over the turnover of dual-use materials," the foreign ministry statement said. It noted that Kazakhstan had renounced the world's fourth-largest nuclear and missile arsenal -- a stockpile it inherited from the days it was part of the Soviet Union -- and had shut down its Soviet-era nuclear test site. The Central Asian state also called on the Vienna-based UN nuclear watchdog, the International Atomic Energy Agency, to weigh in publicly on the reports saying Kazakhstan was to ship uranium to Iran.

"Kazakhstan expects the IAEA to give an appropriate assessment of the information being disseminated by the news media," the statement said. It said all operations involving nuclear materials, "including our cooperation regarding peaceful use of atomic energy with foreign countries, are subject to IAEA comprehensive safeguards." Separately, Kazakhstan said it had become the world's largest producer of uranium, overtaking Canada, after it increased production by 63 percent in 2009. Kazatomprom said it had mined 13,500 tonnes of the radioactive metal as of December 21 and will have mined at least another 400 tonnes by year's end. Citing the Ux Consulting Company, a US nuclear consulting firm, the statement said Canada was expected to produce 9,934 tonnes of uranium and Australia 8,022 tonnes this year. Kazakhstan plans to increase production to 18,000 tonnes in 2010, Nurlan Ryspanov, Kazatomprom vice-president said in a statement. "The republic will gain the leading position in uranium mining at the time of maximum demand for it," Ryspanov said.

<http://silkkroadintelligencer.com/2009/12/30/kazakhstan-iran-deny-uranium-deal/>

- Romanian oil group buys Kazakh company

(SRI) - Romania's Petrom, the largest oil and gas group in Southeastern Europe, has bought Korneo LLP, a Kazakhstan-focused oil company, for an undisclosed price. Korneo owns an exploration license of the Kultuk oil field, adjacent to Petrom's Komsomolskoye field, the Romanian company said in a statement. The acquisition agreement was signed on October 29, 2009, and the transaction was closed on December 31, 2009, after all approvals had been obtained from Kazakh authorities. Petrom has entered Kazakhstan in 1998 and owns exploration and production licenses for five oil fields including the Komsomolskoye field. Austrian oil and gas group OMV owns 51 percent of the company while the Romanian economy ministry owns 20.6 percent and Fondul Proprietatea, a fund set up by the state to compensate Romanians whose properties were seized under communism, holds a 20.1-percent stake. The remainder is listed on the Bucharest stock exchange.

<http://silkroadintelligencer.com/2010/01/11/romanian-oil-group-buys-kazakh-company/>

- 2009 inflation in Kazakhstan 6.2 percent

(SRI) - Inflation in Kazakhstan amounted to 6.2 percent in 2009, according to the State Statistical Agency. In December, prices increased 0.6 percent. At the beginning of 2009, the National Bank of Kazakhstan expected 2009 inflation to reach 8.0-8.5 percent but repeatedly revised its forecasts. Last month, the central bank predicted 2009 inflation would not exceed 6.5 percent. In 2008, inflation was 9.5 percent.

<http://silkroadintelligencer.com/2010/01/12/2009-inflation-in-kazakhstan-62-percent/>

- Iran's Ahmadinejad hails new Turkmenistan gas link

(AFP) - Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad on Tuesday hailed the launch of a gas pipeline link to Iran from its energy-rich neighbor Turkmenistan, while on a visit to the Central Asian state. Iran's Ahmadinejad hails new Turkmenistan gas link

Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad on Tuesday hailed the launch of a gas pipeline link to Iran from its energy-rich neighbor Turkmenistan, while on a visit to the Central Asian state. Ahmadinejad and his Turkmen counterpart Gurbanguly Berdimukhamedov are set to inaugurate the new pipeline which will more than double gas trade between their two states in a ceremony Wednesday.

The trip is also the Iranian president's first abroad since a crackdown on opposition supporters in Tehran left at least eight dead. "The realisation of the gas pipeline plays a big role in strengthening the energy security of the countries of the region," Ahmadinejad told reporters after talks with Berdimukhamedov in the capital. "The Turkmenistan-Iran pipeline is not only an economic project but an event uniting our countries with the aim of strengthening our partnership," he said. The 30.5-kilometre (19-mile) pipeline from Turkmenistan's southwest Dovletabad field will supply Iran's Khangiran gas refinery initially with 6.0 billion cubic metres of gas per year, according to the Turkmen energy ministry. "The Turkmenistan-Iran gas pipeline that we are opening tomorrow is an important moment for both states' energy partnership as we continue to develop our ties in the gas sphere," Berdimukhamedov in turn told reporters. The new Dovletabad-Sarakhs-Khangiran gas pipeline will raise Turkmenistan's total yearly gas supplies to Iran to up to 20 billion cubic metres, including through an existing pipeline link, the energy ministry said. Previously, gas from the Dovletabad field was used exclusively for export to Russia but Turkmenistan hailed the new project as a means of diversifying its exports from its former Soviet overlord. The new pipeline "is the logical continuation of

Turkmenistan's politics of diversification of its gas pipeline network... to expand and add to traditional routes in order to access new, promising markets," the foreign ministry said in a statement. Last month, Turkmenistan unveiled a landmark 7,000-kilometre (4,350-mile) pipeline to supply Turkmen gas to energy-hungry China. The move came amid an eight-month interruption in gas shipments to Russia that raised questions on Moscow's sway in the energy-rich state, with Turkmenistan seeking closer relations with China and Iran. The Central Asian state and Russia sealed a new gas accord to resume supplies in December.

<http://silkbroadintelligencer.com/2010/01/12/irans-ahmadinejad-hails-new-turkmenistan-gas-link/>

Social Front

- Kazakhstan customs discover contraband weapons in cargo from U.S.
Astana. January 10. Interfax-Kazakhstan - A batch of contraband ammunition has been found in a cargo that has arrived in Kazakhstan from the United States. The contraband weapons and ammunition were discovered at the Dostyk customs checkpoint on the Kazakh-Chinese border on January 8, when customs officials were examining a container, marked "used cars," sent to Almaty from the United States, the Kazakh Finance Ministry's Customs Control Committee has reported. Customs personnel discovered and seized 3,603 undeclared cartridges, two pistols, a pneumatic gun with an optical sight, 160 gas cylinders and six metal boxes filled with cartridges for pneumatic guns, it said.

An inquiry has been launched, the committee said.

http://www.interfax.kz/?lang=eng&int_id=10&news_id=3199

Kyrgyzstan

Political Front

- Former Kyrgyz Defense Minister Sentenced To Eight Years
WATCH: Ismail Isakov's sentencing in the Bishkek Military Court to eight years in prison for corruption sparked scuffles. Isakov's supporters shouted "Damnation! Damnation" as he was led from the courtroom.

BISHKEK -- A Bishkek military court today sentenced former Kyrgyz Defense Minister Ismail Isakov to eight years in prison for corruption while in office, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports. After the verdict was announced, Isakov said: "All the [Kyrgyz] people, I suppose, will not be indifferent to these kinds of cases. If we don't stand up to the oppression [by the state], to the despotic will, to the politics of repression of our own nation, the politics of the [state's] rejection of its own people's view today, then tomorrow it will be too late." Isakov, a lieutenant general who was defense minister from 2005 to 2008, was found guilty of issuing an apartment to his son based on false documents. Other charges of corruption and financial mismanagement were dismissed. He was also stripped of his military rank. A motion by prosecutors to seize his property was rejected by the court. Many witnesses in the trial testified in favor of the defendant. In his final statement during the trial, Isakov said the criminal charges against him are politically motivated. He called on the judge "not to commit the sin of making a politically ordered verdict." Meanwhile, Isakov's supporters held rallies in Bishkek and his native Alai region, where some 300 people came out in the southern region to protest and demand his release from jail. The demonstrators in Alai said they will march to Osh and Bishkek to

protest the verdict. Isakov was a close associate of President Kurmanbek Bakiev. He became defense minister shortly after the "Tulip Revolution" in March 2005 that brought Bakiev to power. Isakov was appointed secretary of the National Security Council in May 2008. He left the post in October 2008 and joined Kyrgyzstan's political opposition. His colleagues, relatives, and human rights groups said the lawsuit against Isakov is in retaliation for his opposition activity.

http://www.rferl.org/content/Former_Kyrgyz_Defense_Minister_Sentenced_To_Eight_Years_/1926297.html

- **Kyrgyz Opposition Criticizes U.S. Reaction To Rights Violations**

BISHKEK -- A Kyrgyz opposition leader has criticized the United States for not speaking out about media freedom and other rights violations in Kyrgyzstan, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports. Opposition Social Democratic Party (SDP) leader Almazbek Atambaev told RFE/RL today that the U.S. Embassy in Kyrgyzstan used to express its concern about the human rights situation in the country, but that American officials find maintaining the air base in Bishkek -- known as the NATO Transit Center at Manas Airport -- more important than criticizing the human rights situation in Kyrgyzstan. Meanwhile, nine Kyrgyz opposition activists started a hunger strike in Bishkek today in support of former Defense Minister Ismail Isakov. The action is led by Topchubek Turgunaliyev of the United Popular Movement (UPM), an umbrella group of opposition blocs and parties. Isakov was found guilty of corruption and sentenced to eight years in prison by a Bishkek Military Court on January 11. He was also stripped of his military rank. Some 70 relatives and supporters of Isakov are holding a rally in his support and are putting up tents in Isakov's native Alai region, a mountainous area in

southern Kyrgyzstan. On January 12, several opposition activists established a Committee in Defense of General Isakov, demanding an end to the persecution of opposition activists and independent journalists as well as for Isakov to be acquitted of all charges. Isakov, a lieutenant-general who served as Kyrgyzstan's defense minister from 2005-2008, was sentenced for granting an apartment to someone based on false documents. In a final statement at the trial, Isakov said the criminal charges against him are politically motivated and he urged the judge not to issue a verdict that was ordered by the government. Isakov was a close associate of Kyrgyz President Kurmanbek Bakiev and became defense minister shortly after the March 2005 Tulip Revolution that brought Bakiev to power. Isakov was appointed secretary of the National Security Council in May 2008. He left the post in October 2008 and joined Kyrgyzstan's political opposition. Colleagues and human rights groups have said the case against Isakov is in retaliation for his opposition activity.

http://www.rferl.org/content/Kyrgyz_Opposition_Criticizes_US_Reaction_To_Rights_Violations/1928855.html

- **Judge held with bribe in Kyrgyzstan**

Kyrgyz national security agents have caught a judge of the Karakol town court red handed with a fifty-thousand-soms bribe, the press service of the agency reported. The judge reportedly extorted \$1,000 from a citizen for an affirmative solution of a crime case and already received \$950. The investigation is underway.

URL: <http://eng.24.kg/investigation/2010/01/11/10072.html>

- **Kyrgyz opposition to go on hunger strike on January 13**

Members of Kyrgyz opposition plan to go on a hunger strike on January 13, Azimbek Beknazarov, one of the members of the Joined People's Movement and attorney of the Ismail Isakov – a former defense minister, sentenced to eight years in prison - told the news agency 24.kg on Tuesday. The decision was reportedly made by a majority vote at a special session of the movement. As to Beknazarov, the opposition has established a committee on protection of political prisoners and intends to go on mass hunger strike in support of their illegally arrested and sentenced associates. The committee, headed by Topchubek Turgunaliyev, a well-known human rights activist, one of the opposition's leaders, reportedly includes Azimbek Beknazarov, Asiya Sasykbaeva, Roza Otunbaeva - deputy of the parliament from Social Democratic Party and "many others as elders so journalists." The strike will start at 2:00 PM and will be held all over the republic. In such a way the opposition plans to draw attention of authorities and the public to "illegal political persecution of the opposition's members and dissentients." The attorney expressed confidence that a lot of Kyrgyzstan's residents would join the protest action.

URL: <http://eng.24.kg/politic/2010/01/12/10086.html>

Geo Strategic Front

Economic /Energy Front

- Financial police to control every economic wrongdoing in Kyrgyzstan

President of Kyrgyzstan, Kurmanbek Bakiev, signed a decree passing control over all economic crimes to the State Financial Police department. The decree signed on Monday, January 11th, gives the body authority to prevent, suppress, solve and investigate all kinds of economic wrongdoings in the country. According to the presidential press service, the measure has been taken to tighten control over economic malefactions and eradicate duplicating functions of the administrating officials. With the present decree, the president tasked the Ministry of Interior Affairs to delegate staff, functions, logistic basics and special equipment to the department for immediate start of work. Therewith, the government has to regulate all organizational and financial issues.

URL: <http://eng.24.kg/politic/2010/01/11/10076.html>

- Kyrgyzstan announces 2010 Year of Heritage

Kyrgyzstan's State Culture Agency has announced 2010 the Year of Heritage, press service of the agency reported. As to Sultan Raev, Director of the institution, a large-scale plan on retaining, development and enrichment of all cultural heritage objects, including great non-material (folklore works, epics), material historical and cultural values has been developed in the republic. World Epics Festival, jubilees of Murataly Kurenkeev - one of the founders of the Kyrgyz professional music art, outstanding Kyrgyz composers, a well-known opera singer Bulat Minjilkiev are reportedly scheduled for September 2010 in Bishkek. The agency has also drawn up large projects on retaining of the Kyrgyz heritage and nomadic civilization.

URL: <http://eng.24.kg/culture/2010/01/11/10074.html>

- Kyrgyzstan to pay \$220 for gas in 2010

In 2010 Kyrgyzstan will pay \$220 per one thousand of gas cubic meters, which is \$25 less than last year, the Kyrgyzgas company told 24.kg Monday. Therewith Kyrgyzstan will buy gas cheaper than Tajikistan, Russia and Kazakhstan (\$230 per 1000m³). The new gas deal has been already signed for the first 250 million m³ to be supplied to the country in the immediate future.

URL: <http://eng.24.kg/business/2010/01/11/10073.html>

Social Front

Tajikistan

Political Front

- Minister of labor expected to be speaker of lower house of parliament of new convocation

DUSHANBE, January 14, 2010, Asia-Plus -- Saydullo Khairulloyev, speaker of the Majlisi Namoyandagon (Tajikistan's lower chamber of parliament) has decided not to run in the upcoming parliamentary elections, Asia-Plus has learned from the source at parliament's lower house. We will recall that Saydullo Khairulloyev who has been speaker of the Majlisi Namoyandagon since 2000 was reelected to the parliament in 2005 from the Rasht single-mandate constituency. Meanwhile, the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDPT) has nominated Minister of Labor and Social Protection Shukurjon Zuhurov as its candidate to run for election to the Majlisi Namoyandagon in this constituency. Most Tajik experts believe that most likely Shukurjon Zuhurov will be elected speaker of the Majlisi Namoyandagon of new convocation. In the meantime, the source at the Majlisi Namoyandagon noted that of 63 current members of the lower house of the parliament only 20 had been nominated again to run in the upcoming parliamentary elections through a proportional, party list system from a single, countrywide constituency and single-mandate constituencies.

Of 63 seats in the Majlisi Namoyandagon, 22 seats come from party lists and the remainder is elected in first-past-the-post races.

<http://www.asiaplus.tj/en/news/311/61502.html>

- TV Channel Safina ready to provide air time to all political parties for pre-election debates

DUSHANBE, January 13, 2010, Asia-Plus -- Tajik national TV channel, Safina, is ready provide air time to all political parties for pre-election debates, the Safina director Lutfullo Davlatov announced at a news conference in Dushanbe today.

According to him, there are no any restrictions for political parties to make appearance on the channel. "If political parties have any specific proposals, we are ready to consider them," Mr. Davlatov stressed. He added that the channel editors always invited representatives of different political parties to take part in programs having political or socioeconomic character. "Safina already has a call-in program, in which ministers and other high-ranking officials take part," said the Safina director, "However, I would like to note that Safina is neither political nor news channel. We mostly produce youth and cultural programs."

<http://www.asiaplus.tj/en/news/41/61450.html>

- President signs a number of laws adopted by parliament last year

DUSHANBE, January 13, 2010, Asia-Plus -- On Tuesday January 12, President Emomali Rahmon signed a number of laws that were adopted by the Majlisi Namoyandagon (Tajikistan's lower chamber of parliament) and seconded by the Majlisi Milli (Tajikistan's upper chamber of parliament) last year, according to presidential press service. Among them are laws on national statistics, insurance and state pensions, Tajikistan's Red Crescent Society (RCS), use of renewable energy sources, and the law

on amendments to the law on veterans. Under the law on insurance and state pensions, new rules of granting and paying pensions will be introduced in the country beginning on January 1, 2011. The law on use of renewable energy sources determines principles of organizational and legal use of the renewable energy sources. Amendments made to the Constitutional law on courts and the code of civil procedure provide for establishment of boards on family and administrative cases at the Supreme Court, regional courts, and Dushanbe's courts, presidential press service said.

<http://www.asiaplus.tj/en/news/16/61430.html>

- PDPT nominates candidates for parliament in both single-mandate constituencies in GBAO

KHOROG, January 11, 2010, Asia-Plus -- Extraordinary conferences of the regional organization of the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDPT) for Gorno Badakhshan that took place in Khorog and Rushan district on January 10 nominated candidates to run for election to the Majlisi Namoyandagon in single-mandate constituencies ## 40 and 41 that had been set up in the region. Otamsho Maqboulshoyev, head of the regional electoral commission, told Asia-Plus that PDPT had nominated Mirgand Shabozov to run for the parliament in Khorog single-mandate constituency # 41. Mirgand Shabozov, 59, academician, Doctor of Sciences in Mathematics. He is chairman of the State Committee for Statistics. We will recall that the Social-Democratic Party (SDPT) on January 9 nominated Alim Sherzamonov, head the SDPT organization for Gorno Badakhshan, to run for the parliament in this constituency. In Vanj single-mandate constituency # 40, PDPT nominated Narzullo Jonov to run for election to the Majlisi Namoyandagon.

Narzullo Jonov, 55, is chairman of the Vanj district also member of the Majlisi Milli (Tajikistan's upper chamber of parliament). He graduated from Tajik Polytechnic Institute in 1977.

<http://www.asiaplus.tj/en/news/311/61369.html>

- Only 19 women to run in parliamentary elections in Tajikistan through proportional party list system

DUSHANBE, January 9, Asia-Plus -- 127 candidates have been nominated to run in parliamentary elections through a proportional, party list system from a single, countrywide constituency and only 19 of them are women, Professor Iborhim Usmonov remarked at a roundtable dedicated to the 2010 parliament elections that took place in Dushanbe on January 8. According to him, the majority of political parties in Tajikistan nominate women just for appearances' sake to show that they do not have gender quality problems. "Even in the Soviet time, more women had been elected to parliament," said the expert, "Thus in 1937, women constituted some 33 percent of people's deputies in Tajikistan." He noted that the People's Democratic Party (PDPT) and the Social-Democratic Party (SDPT) had nominated six women each, the Islamic Revival Party (IRPT) had nominated four women, while the remaining parties had nominated only one or two women each through the party list system. Of 63 seats in the Majlisi Namoyandagon, 22 seats come from party lists and the remainder is elected in first-past-the-post races. We will recall that only nine women were elected to the Majlisi Namoyandagon (Tajikistan's lower chamber of parliament) in 2005.

<http://www.asiaplus.tj/en/news/311/61298.html>

Geo Strategic Front

- Uzbekistan Blocking Rail Traffic Into Tajikistan

DUSHANBE -- Tajikistan's Foreign Ministry says it is hopeful that Uzbek officials will soon allow about 1,000 stranded railroad cars carrying construction materials and foodstuffs to move into Tajikistan, RFE/RL's Tajik Service reports. Tajik Foreign Ministry spokesman Davlat Nazriev told RFE/RL that the cargo is being held up by the Uzbek railroad company and customs and border officials. The goods -- which are mainly from Russia and Iran -- have been held at the Uzbek-Tajik border for several weeks. Tajik businessman Sherali Muqimov said that in November he was sent 76 railroad cars of cement and other construction materials from Iran that are still being held by Uzbek railroad officials. He said he is worried that the quality of the cement is lessening as it sits on the tracks under rain and snow. Jovid Sharifov, a Tajik customs service official, said that according to Commonwealth of Independent States legal agreements, the country in which a product in transit is spoiled is required to reimburse the owner for all damages. In September, some 200 Tajik railroad cars with food and construction materials were also stranded on Uzbek territory. Uzbek deputy customs chief Bakhtiyor Hakimov told RFE/RL then that there was a small technical problem that would be solved quickly. But Tajik analysts said they believe the real problem with the stalled railroad shipments is political and results from the Uzbek government's dissatisfaction with the construction of Tajikistan's new hydropower projects, which Tashkent says will harm its agriculture. http://www.rferl.org/content/Uzbekistan_Blocking_Rail_Traffic_Into_Tajikistan/1924103.html

- Relationship between Iran, Tajikistan solid in all cooperation spheres, says IKRC chairman

DUSHANBE, January 14, 2010, Asia-Plus -- On Wednesday January 13, President Rahmon received visiting chairman of Iran's Imam Khomeini Relief Committee (IKRC), Mr. Husein Anvari. The two discussed the committee's activities in Tajikistan. Speaking to reporters after a meeting with President Rahmon, Anvari noted that relationship between Iran and Tajikistan is solid in all spheres of cooperation and the countries share common views on many regional and international problems. According to him, President Rahmon expressed satisfaction with activities of the Imam Khomeini Relief Committee in Tajikistan. "IKRC now has 10 training centers in the country that instruct local people, especially women, in starting small business," Anvari said, noting that the committee is seeking new ways to improve living conditions of vulnerable people, especially widows, in Tajikistan.

He noted that they would open a semi-precious stone faceting training in Tajikistan within the next few days. Special equipment for this center was already delivered to Tajikistan and the center will train all those interested in this trade, Anvari said. Imam Khomeini's Relief Committee (also Imam Khomeini's Relief Foundation) was founded in March 1979 as a charity organization to provide support for poor families. The aim is to help such families regain financial stability. This foundation is supported by Iranian government and also receives the Islamic taxes of Khums and Zakat, as well as Zakat al-fitr. Also, the foundation has charity boxes installed all across the country to gather donations.

<http://www.asiaplus.tj/en/news/287/61464.html>

Economic /Energy Front

Social Front

- Tajikistan Readies Plan To Control Islamic Study Abroads

DUSHANBE -- The Tajik Culture Ministry is preparing tighter controls for allowing Tajiks to study at Islamic universities and madrasahs abroad, RFE/RL's Tajik Service reports. Idibek Ziyoev, the head of the ministry's religion department, told RFE/RL that hundreds of young Tajiks go unregistered to such foreign schools because the country doesn't sign bilateral agreements to coordinate the flow of Tajiks who attend Islamic schools. He said such measures would be forthcoming, without providing details.

Ziyoev said there are no reliable statistics on the number of Tajiks who are studying at Islamic schools abroad and officials fear a lack of control over the process could lead to some students joining hard-line Islamic groups. Abdujalol Alizoda, the head of the pro-government Tajik Islamic Institute, told RFE/RL that some students who have graduated from foreign religious schools have returned to Tajikistan with fundamentalist Islamic theories, which he said are held by members of the Salafiya branch of Islam. He said this can cause religious confrontation within Tajik families, most of whom practice the Hanafi version of Islam. Tajik officials are reported to be especially concerned by students who study Islam in unofficial or semiofficial madrasahs in Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and Iran. Some such schools are blamed for spreading extremism that then gets reimported to students' home countries. But Amrullo Nizom, who studied at an Islamic school in Pakistan, told RFE/RL that such concerns by the government are unjustified.

Another Tajik who studied at a Saudi Islamic university said young Tajiks will continue to travel to foreign religious schools because the schools in Tajikistan are too poor and only teach Islam in a manner approved by the government.

http://www.rferl.org/content/Tajikistan_Readies_Plan_To_Control_Islamic_Studies_Abr_oaod/1929588.html

- Tajik Officials Say Russian Officer Killed By Colleague

KULOB, Tajikistan -- Tajik officials say a police investigation shows Russian army officer Valery Mikhailov was killed by another Russian officer during a dispute, RFE/RL's Tajik Service reports. Ozar Isoev, the deputy prosecutor in the southern Tajik city of Kulob, said on January 11 that an investigation concluded that a Russian officer identified as "Khitrin" was responsible for Mikhailov's death. Mikhailov's body was found on January 6 in Kulob's Victory Park. Isoev said that on January 6 Mikhailov and Khitrin left the Russian base in Kulob with two other officers. Isoev said Khitrin and Mikhailov began arguing in the park and that Khitrin stabbed Mikhailov, who was left unattended in the park. Isoev said Mikhailov could have been saved if he had received immediate medical assistance. Residents of Kulob have often complained that Russian soldiers from the military base -- which is located in the city center -- often leave the base to drink alcohol and then get into trouble. Two Russian officers were charged with killing a Tajik man in Kulob last year. There are some 5,000 Russian soldiers stationed at three military bases in Tajikistan.

http://www.rferl.org/content/Tajik_Officials_Say-Russian_Officer_Killed_By_Colleague/1927687.html

- Tajik Deputies Propose Signing 'Marriage Contracts'

DUSHANBE -- Tajik legislators have proposed a draft law that would regulate marriages with a contract between husband and wife, RFE/RL's Tajik Service reports. Khayriniso Yusufi, the head of parliament's Women's Affairs Committee, told RFE/RL that in the case of a divorce or legal separation a "marriage contract" would help to fairly divide the

couple's common property and save women from being left on the street or without any income. Yusufi said many Tajik women receive nothing after a divorce and usually must take care of the couple's children. She said she is worried by the increasing number of divorces in the country, where there were 5,840 divorces in 2009. Mariam Davlatova, the head of a Dushanbe-based nongovernmental organization on women's affairs, said a marriage contract would not lead to a decrease in the number of divorces but would certainly help provide women with some assets after divorces. Tajik divorce law currently calls for the equal division of property between spouses but this practice is often not followed.

The issue of marriage contracts became topical after the media wrote several articles about dowries, the presents of money that men provide a future wife's family. The custom, known in Tajikistan as "mahr" or "qalin," is mainly practiced in eastern and southern Tajikistan. Zubaidulloh Roziq, an Islamic scholar and leading member of the Islamic Renaissance Party, noted the tradition of sending food, furniture, and money by the husband's family before a wedding is against Islamic law and no one -- including parents -- have the right to ask for such gifts.

But Roziq said in some parts of Tajikistan people pay a symbolic price of the "mother's milk," in local jargon, which can be as little as \$200 but has nothing to do with Islam.

http://www.rferl.org/content/Tajik_Deputies_Propose_Signing_Marriage_Contracts/1927680.html

- EU to continue providing assistance to Tajikistan in future as well

DUSHANBE, January 14, 2010, Asia-Plus -- The European Union is ready provide 60 million U.S. dollars to Tajikistan for modernization of the Qairoqqum HPP in the north of the country and construction of a number of small hydropower plants on the Surkhob River in the eastern part of the republic, Mr. Pierre Morel, EU Special Envoy for Central Asia and Crisis Situations in Georgia, told reporters in Dushanbe today, following his meeting with President Emomali Rahmon.

According to him, they discussed a broad range of issues related to cooperation between the European Union and Tajikistan as well as the progress of implementation of agreements that were reached during last year's visit of President Rahmon to Brussels. "Tajikistan is the first in Central Asia to ratify cooperation agreement with the European Investment Bank and the European Union is ready to provide 60 million U.S. dollars to the country for modernization of the Qairoqqum hydroelectric power plant (HPP) and construction of a number of small hydropower plants on the Surkhob River," said Mr. Morel, "Besides, we are ready to provide humanitarian aid to the tremor-affected residents of the Vanj district and the volume of this assistance will be determined in the near future." The EU special envoy also noted that the European Union planned to provide 75 million euros for strengthening of Tajikistan's pension and retirement system. The country's government last year took the wise step of redirecting the agrarian sector from cotton to production of foodstuffs and Tajikistan can count on UE's support in this case, Mr. Morel said. He added that he and President Rahmon also discussed the regional cooperation in Central Asia, including use of water-and-energy resources and border control issues. "To tackle problem arising in these directions the Central Asian nations must carry out constructive dialogue and the European Union is ready to assist with carrying out such a dialogue," Morel said, noting that they also discussed the latest developments in neighboring Afghanistan. In his opinion, Tajikistan can play a

noticeable role in holding an international conference on the Afghan problems that will take place in London on January 28. Mr. Morel also noted that one of purposes for his visit to Tajikistan was to discuss with Tajik authorities and political parties the upcoming parliamentary elections in the country. "Yesterday, I had an open and useful meeting with representatives of political parties of Tajikistan, and I think fair and transparent elections in Tajikistan will be a model for all Central Asia's countries," EU special envoy stressed.

<http://www.asiaplus.tj/en/news/48/61491.html>

- World Hindi Day celebrated in Tajik capital

DUSHANBE, January 11, 2010, Asia-Plus -- Indian Embassy in Dushanbe is celebrating World Hindi Day today in its premise. According to the Indian Embassy, they are organizing various events on this occasion, which include a Hindi Speech by Cd'A, Speech by Mr. Umonov M in Hindi, poetry recitation by Tajik National University students and Hindi students of the embassy, play by Hindi students etc. Professor Rajabov will speak about Hindi books translated in Tajik. The event is also including question and answers in Hindi language. A cultural program would also be performed by the Indian Culture Center (ICC) students. The event would conclude with prize distribution to the winners in three different categories. World Hindi Day is actually celebrated world over on January 10 every year to promote the use of Hindi language all over. First World Hindi Conference took place on January 10, 1975 and January 10 was declared as World Hindi Day and it is celebrated across India and outside also. Seminars and various competitions are organized. Prizes are distributed to certain persons for their achievements to the Hindi literature, in various organizations, schools and universities. Since 2006, Indian embassies throughout the world have celebrated World Hindi Day.

<http://www.asiaplus.tj/en/news/44/61324.html>

Turkmenistan

Political Front

Geo Strategic Front

- Turkmenistan not to annul visa requirements with Azerbaijan

No discussions are being held to cancel visa requirements between Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan's ambassador to Azerbaijan Annamammad Mammadov said at a news conference. Turkmenistan is the only country in CIS that applies visa regime with the member states.

URL: <http://www.today.az/news/politics/59134.html>

- Turkmenistan's ambassador Caspian Sea delimitation will not affect Turkmenistan-Azerbaijan good-neighborly relations

The Caspian Sea delimitation will not affect the good-neighborly relations between Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan, Turkmen ambassador to Azerbaijan Annamamed Mammadov said at the news conference in Baku. "This issue should be resolved in a civilized manner and on the basis of international law," he said. According to Mammadov, the sides are holding negotiations on the delimitation of the Caspian Sea on both bilateral and multilateral levels. "Work on the Caspian Sea delimitation is underway," Mammadov added. The Caspian littoral countries signed the Framework Convention for the Protection of the Caspian Sea Marine Environment in Nov. 2003.

In July 1998, Kazakhstan and Russia signed an agreement on delimitation of the northern part of the Caspian Sea to realize sovereign rights for subsoil use, and in May 2002 - a Protocol to the Agreement. Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan signed agreement on the delimitation of the Caspian seabed and the appropriate protocol Nov.29, 2001 and Feb. 27, 2003. May 14, 2003, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan and Russia signed an agreement on the junction point of the delimitation of adjacent sections of the Caspian Sea.

URL: <http://www.today.az/news/politics/59124.html>

- Turkmen President to visit France in February

On January 7, President of Turkmenistan Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov received Senator Aymeri de Montesquiou Fezensaka, Special Envoy of the President of France on development of political and economic relations between France and Central Asia. The guest handed a letter from French President Nicolas Sarkozy to the President of Turkmenistan. In his letter the French President thanked the Turkmen leader for New Year congratulations and wished Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov and the Turkmen people happiness and prosperity in 2010. The letter was published in the central Turkmen print media. According to Nicolas Sarkozy, France regards Turkmenistan "as a key partner for maintaining peace in the region and energy security of Europe." "I view Central Asia as a strategic region, and development of our relations as a necessity, because key issues of international peace and security are being addressed here today," President of the French Republic said. In this context, Nicolas Sarkozy referred to the Turkmen leader's visit to France in February as a milestone in the history of interstate relations. As the French leader noted, he attaches great importance to political and cultural agreements to be signed during this visit because they will strengthen bilateral relations in all areas. During the meeting, the President of Turkmenistan and the Special Envoy of the French President exchanged views on the status and prospects of Turkmen-French cooperation. They also noted with satisfaction the high level of the intergovernmental dialogue

http://www.turkmenistan.ru/?page_id=3&lang_id=en&elem_id=16121&type=event&sort=date_desc

- President of Turkmenistan invited to UAE

On January 11, Turkmen President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov received Special Representative of the President of the United Arab Emirates, Khalfan Sultan Al-Ketbi. Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United Arab Emirates to Turkmenistan Hasan Abdullah Al-Adab also attended the meeting. As the Turkmenistan.ru correspondent reports from Ashgabat quoting the press service of the Turkmen leader, the guest handed over an invitation from UAE President Sheikh Khalifa Bin Zayed Al-Nahyan to the President of Turkmenistan to visit the United Arab Emirates. "It is a great honor for us to invite Your Excellency to pay a visit to the United Arab Emirates in order to strengthen the bonds of friendship between us personally and at the official level, and for the sake of continuing the dialogue and exchange of views on issues of mutual interest," the head of the UAE said in the invitation which was published in the central Turkmen press. President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov gratefully accepted the invitation and said he would be happy to use the upcoming opportunity to meet with his brother, His Highness Sheikh Khalifa Bin Zayed Al Nahayan - during a visit, the timing of which would be discussed through diplomatic channels, the official report says. During the meeting, the President of Turkmenistan and Khalfan Sultan Al-Ketbi noted the high level of inter-state dialogue. According to the sides, of particular importance in this

regard is the forthcoming Investment Forum of Turkmenistan, scheduled for early February in the city of Abu Dhabi, that "will help intensify and further strengthen economic and trade ties between the two countries."

http://www.turkmenistan.ru/?page_id=3&lang_id=en&elem_id=16131&type=event&sort=date_desc

- UN supports Turkmen stance on Afghan settlement

The United Nations wholeheartedly welcomes the position of Turkmenistan playing a special role in the process of building peaceful life and socio-economic development in neighboring Afghanistan. As the Ashgabat correspondent of Turkmenistan.ru reports, the UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy for Afghanistan Kai Eide stated about that yesterday during the talks with Turkmen President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov. According to him, "the active cooperation between Turkmenistan and the UN is an important factor in strengthening peace and security in Central Asia".

"Turkmenistan as well as the entire world community is interested in establishing lasting peace in Afghanistan", Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov said during the meeting. "Today our countries have ambitious plans. They primarily relate to the important projects in energy and transport initiated by the Turkmen side. According to the president, these projects will create favorable conditions for the stabilization of Afghanistan and will be an important factor in strengthening the regional cooperation.

Turkmenistan supplies liquefied gas and electricity to Afghanistan at reduced prices, provides ongoing humanitarian assistance and implements a number of important projects in various fields at its own expense.

http://www.turkmenistan.ru/?page_id=3&lang_id=en&elem_id=16147&type=event&sort=date_desc

Economic /Energy Front

- New EU Energy Commissioner Seeks Balanced Russia Policy

BRUSSELS -- Germany's Guenther Oettinger has been nominated to one of the most powerful positions in the EU's executive arm.

The energy commissioner straddles economic and foreign policy, exercising a potentially crucial influence over policies in areas such as climate change, the bloc's economic rejuvenation, and relations with Russia, the Caucasus, and Central Asia. It was clearly with Russia in mind that Berlin targeted the energy portfolio for Oettinger, a regional-level mover and shaker in German politics. Germany's central location on the European continent means it has a vital geopolitical interest in maintaining a stable relationship with Russia, politically as well as economically. Oettinger's performance during his three-hour grilling by the European Parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee was therefore very much a balancing act. On the one hand, he argued, an overdependence on Russian energy deliveries is bad for Europe. On the other, Russia must not be alienated.

This was manifested by Oettinger's cautious approach to the strategically key issue of the planned Nabucco gas pipeline -- designed to tap into reserves surrounding the Caspian Sea and transported in a way that circumvents Russia. Giving the EU a means of directly reaching Azerbaijani and Turkmen energy is a good thing, Oettinger said -- but added the effort must not alienate Russia. "I also see an opportunity to complement our dependence on Russia -- thereby limiting it -- without taking anything away from the partnership with Russia that has been formed over the past decades and will continue to be developed in the decades to come," he said. Russia is seeking "influence" in Europe, Oettinger

acknowledged. But the EU must not panic and make dependence a "two-way street" by engaging Russia in a wide-ranging partnership of investment and trade.

http://www.rferl.org/content/New_EU_Energy_Commissioner_Seeks_Balanced_Russia_Policy/1929776.html

- Turkmenistan resumes deliveries of natural gas to Russia

On January 9, Turkmengas state concern began exports of natural gas to Russia via gas main Dovletabat - Deryalyk. As "Neutral Turkmenistan" newspaper wrote today, "the start of natural gas deliveries in the northern direction suggests that Turkmenistan and Russia, having confirmed their status of strategic partners in the energy sector, have taken the bilateral relations to a level that meets both the nature of the mutually beneficial cooperation between the two friendly countries and contemporary realities of the international energy market."

It should be recalled that in December 2009 Turkmenistan and Russia agreed to resume deliveries of Turkmen gas amounting to 30 billion cubic meters annually. Relevant amendments and additions to the long-term contract on the purchase and sale of natural gas were made after talks between Presidents Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov and Dmitriy Medvedev in Ashgabat. The document provides that gas supplies "will be based on the price formula that fully complies with conditions of the European gas market.

http://www.turkmenistan.ru/?page_id=3&lang_id=en&elem_id=16126&type=event&sort=date_desc

- Turkmen and Uzbeks to create new joint ventures

The fifth meeting of the joint Turkmen-Uzbek Commission for Trade, Economic, Scientific, Technical and Cultural Cooperation was held in Ashgabat, January 13. The delegation of the Republic of Uzbekistan led by Minister of Foreign Economic Relations, Investments and Trade Elyor Ganiev, the Co-chairman from the Uzbek side, arrived in the Turkmen capital to participate in the meeting. Nokerguly Ataguliev, Minister of Trade and Foreign Economic Relations of Turkmenistan, headed the Commission from the Turkmen side. It is comprised of the heads and leading specialists from a number of ministries and departments of the country. During the talks the sides noted the steady growth of trade turnover between Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan and stressed the importance of further expanding the range of products and increasing their mutual supplies, as well as creating new joint ventures. The Turkmen-Uzavto Economic Society, a joint venture specializing in selling and technical maintenance of cars in Turkmenistan, was pointed out as a successful example of cooperation. According to the Turkmen State News Agency of Turkmenistan (TDH), on the same day the Minister of Foreign Economic Relations, Investments and Trade of Uzbekistan and members of his delegation were received at the Cabinet of Ministers and relevant ministries and departments of Turkmenistan, where the detailed discussion of the prospects of bilateral cooperation in a number of key areas was held.

http://www.turkmenistan.ru/?page_id=3&lang_id=en&elem_id=16136&type=event&sort=date_desc

- Turkmenistan elected to Bureau of Group of Landlocked Developing Countries

Turkmenistan has been elected to the Bureau of the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries, the Turkmen State News Agency of Turkmenistan (TDH) reports referring to the country's Permanent Mission to the United Nations.

According to the Agency, in 2003, the UN General Assembly specifically established the Office of the High Representative to ensure compliance with international agreements to support 31 landlocked developing countries, including the Central Asian ones, which are the UN member states. The Almaty Program of Action adopted in the same year provides for financial and technical assistance to this Group of countries, and contains specific measures and recommendations regarding the policies in the field of transit transport, transport infrastructure development and trade promotion.

"This election of our country to a new UN structure is logical and well-deserved. Taking into account the peculiarities of its geographical location, Turkmenistan, which from time immemorial was called "the crossroads of seven roads of the world", has been attaching primary importance to the development of modern transport and communications infrastructure from the first days of independence", the TDH writes. The railway line Tejen-Sarabs-Mashhad, which has become an important transit corridor connecting the Central Asian States and Europe, was called one of the large-scale projects implemented in recent years.

It also emphasizes the construction of the North-South railway trunk initiated by Turkmenistan and realization of projects of major export gas pipelines, which involves the creation of relevant infrastructure, including the construction of connecting communications, will give additional impetus to intensification of the interstate and interregional relations.

http://www.turkmenistan.ru/?page_id=3&lang_id=en&elem_id=16137&type=event&sort=date_desc

- Russia to buy 11 billion cubic meters of Turkmen natural gas in 2010
Turkmen gas supplies to Russia since their resumption in January 2010 total 30 million cubic meters a day, "Interfax-AGI" information agency said citing "Gazprom" company. The plan of supplies for January accounts for 934.2 million cubic meters of gas, which is about 11 billion cubic meters on an annualized basis (with the traditional annual two-week pause for preventive works).

It should be recalled that starting from January 9 Turkmengas state concern "started exports of natural gas to Russia via gas main Dovletabat - Deryalyk. The sides agreed in December last year to resume supplies of Turkmen gas amounting to 30 billion cubic meters annually. Relevant amendments and additions were made to the long-term contract on the purchase and sale of natural gas on the result of talks between Presidents Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov and Dmitriy Medvedev in Ashgabat. The document says that gas supplies "will be based on the price formula, which corresponds to the conditions of the European gas market."

http://www.turkmenistan.ru/?page_id=3&lang_id=en&elem_id=16153&type=event&sort=date_desc

- Turkmenistan sets up Office of Financial Monitoring
In the course of an expanded government meeting in Ashgabat today, Turkmen President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov signed a decree on the establishment of the Office of Financial Monitoring under the Ministry of Finance of Turkmenistan.
The decision was made by the head of state with a view to enhancing the efficiency of activities related to prevention, detection and suppression of money laundering and terrorism financing, as well as executing the Law of Turkmenistan "On Combating Legalization of Profits Obtained through Criminal Activities and Financing of

Terrorism," the Turkmenistan.ru correspondent reported quoting the press service of the Turkmen Foreign Ministry.

Thus, the new structure will be the confirmation of the practical steps of Turkmenistan on the implementation at the national level of the Convention of United Nations, the UN General Assembly decisions and relevant resolutions of the Security Council on combating terrorism, the ministry noted.

http://www.turkmenistan.ru/?page_id=3&lang_id=en&elem_id=16157&type=event&sort=date_desc

Social Front

- Director of Turkmen TV "Yashlyk" channel reprimanded
President of Turkmenistan Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov reprimanded Director of "Yashlyk" channel of the General Directorate of Turkmen TV Begench Abaev.

As the Turkmenistan.ru correspondent reports quoting the press service of the Turkmen leader, the head of state signed a decree reprimanding Begench Abaev "for weakening control over proper organization of programs on Yashlyk channel and decline in their quality."

http://www.turkmenistan.ru/?page_id=3&lang_id=en&elem_id=16125&type=event&sort=date_desc

- Turkmenistan sends US \$ 500 thousand for earthquake victims in Haiti

At an expanded government meeting in Ashgabat on January 15, President of Turkmenistan Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov signed a document authorizing the transfer of US \$ 500 thousand as humanitarian assistance for people of Haiti affected by the earthquake. Turkmenistan will transfer funds to the special account of the United Nations to assist the victims of the disaster, the Turkmenistan.ru correspondent reports quoting the press service of the Turkmen Foreign Ministry.

It should be recalled that on January 12 two devastating earthquakes with magnitude of 7.0 and 5.9 respectively struck with a short interval the area off the coast of Haiti. Experts say the earthquake can be regarded as one of the worst in terms of the number of victims over the past decades and even centuries.

http://www.turkmenistan.ru/?page_id=3&lang_id=en&elem_id=16156&type=event&sort=date_desc

Uzbekistan

Political Front

- Media Watchdog Alarmed By Interrogations Of Uzbek Journalists

The media watchdog Reporters Without Borders (RSF) says it is alarmed by the recent interrogation of five independent journalists by Uzbek officials, RFE/RL's Uzbek Service reports. RSF's Europe and former USSR desk chief Elsa Vidal told RFE/RL on January 13 that the organization is concerned the interrogations might be part of a new crackdown on journalists. Vidal said RSF notes that the journalists who were interrogated and accused of cooperating with foreign media outlets are working in difficult conditions.

Vidal said the European Union "must [continue] to defend human rights." She added that Uzbek civil society is in great need of help. On January 7, assistant Tashkent prosecutor Bahram Nurmatov "invited" several journalists who have worked or currently work for foreign media outlets to the Prosecutor-General's Office for meetings. Invitees included Vasil Markov, Sid Yanishev (also known as Said Abdurakhimov), Marina Kozlova, and former RFE/RL correspondent Khusnitdin Kutbitdinov.

The next day, journalists Aleksei Volosevich and Andrei Kudryashov received similar invitations. Yanishev and Kutbitdinov said they were told the questioning was initiated after National Security Service and Foreign Ministry files on the journalists' activities were sent to the prosecutor's office. Both said they were questioned about their professional activities and foreign payments they received.

Nurmatov reportedly described some of their articles as "biased and tendentious" and as a "slight on the dignity of the Uzbek government."

http://www.rferl.org/content/Media_Watchdog_Alarmed_By_Interrogations_Of_Uzbek_Journalists/1929343.html

- Uzbek secret services collect the records about independent journalists

The Tashkent Public Prosecutor's office conducted the series of interrogations of several independent journalists, working in Uzbekistan. On January 7 five of them – Vasiliy Markov, Sid Yanyshov, Abdumalik Boboev, Khusniddin Kutbiddinov and Marina Kozlova (that cooperated with various foreign mass media) were called for "an interview" with Bakhrom Nurmatov, the assistant Public Prosecutor of Tashkent. Vasiliy Markov and Abdumalik Boboev refused to show up without official notice; the rest of journalists met Mr. Nurmatov. Each of the journalists was presented their own detailed record with articles, bio and other documents. Mr. Nurmatov informed that these documents were delivered from National Security Service (NSS) and Uzbek Foreign Affairs Ministry. According to Khusniddin Kutbiddinov, Bakhrom Nurmatov named four or five author pseudonyms from the opposition websites. He inquired if the journalist was working for such websites as Turonzamin, Ferghana.Ru, Centrasia. Nurmatov also asked about money transfers from abroad, his relations with the family of convicted journalist Dilmurod Sayid, cooperation with Human Rights Watch, Freedom House and Ezgulik. Bakhrom Nurmatov was also concerned if Kutbiddinov ever provided negative information about Uzbekistan.

Khusniddin Kutbiddinov

"I did not know others were also invited. I had the impression that Public Prosecutor's office had certain suspicions – Khusniddin said. – However, leaving the office I noticed other guys" Sid Yanyshov shared that Bakhrom Nurmatov invited him for a talk and affirmed there was legal persecution of the journalist. "He asked about my participation in the international conferences, our (together with Vasiliy Markov) trip to the Andijan Oblast, our detention by the border service guards, law enforcement and national security officers. Nurmatov also inquired about my possible cooperation with Galima Bukharbaeva (the editor of independent Uznews.net website) and IWPR (British Institute for War and Peace)" Sid Yanyshov highlighted.

Sid Yanyshov

Responding to Nurmatov's argument on "biased" and "tendentious" coverage Sid said that, vice versa, he always gave different opinions on the issue. "He asked me to describe my journalist activity – employers, conferences and negative comments about Uzbekistan". Yanyshov said that the goal of the interrogation is still unclear to him; he was just told that his record was provided by NSS and Foreign ministry.

Similar questions were addressed to Marina Kozlova that cooperated with Transition online and Associated Press few years ago; however, when the authorities rejected her accreditation application as AP correspondent she quitted the job with AP. On the day, following the interrogation date, Marina left for Chisinau. Her mother informed that

Public Prosecutor officers asked about revenues, articles, written under pseudonyms. Yet, Nurmatov underlined that no criminal case has been filed against Marina and she is able to leave Uzbekistan. It has to be underlined that these were unofficial meetings with no official claims. At the same time, the journalists de facto learned that their activities are being monitored and treated as "undesirable". I showed up in the public prosecutor's office on January 8.

Alexey Volosevich

Bakhrom Nurmatov showed me the folder, provided by Foreign Ministry, while my publications were carefully piled up by the monitoring department (The Center for mass media monitoring under Uzbek agency for communication and information), special structure, established in 2002 instead of the censorship institute. The Center monitors the content of media and web pages in the search for "suspicious" articles. Overall, Nurmatov asked the same questions about my employers, membership in the news agencies. He inquired about my attendance of international seminars and cooperation with Uznews.net and IWPR. Again, I was told that my articles are "biased" and "tendentious". As an example, he named few of my articles. I wrote down the statement that my articles were not biased. This is the first act of intimidation against journalists in Uzbekistan. The most of the named journalists are not in the staff of news agencies, but free-lance reporters. Since it is impossible to fire Internet-journalist or put the pressure on his employer the only instrument of law enforcement bodies is the legal persecution. Three months ago Andrey Kudryashov, the famous journalist and Ferghana.Ru reporter, personally met Ishnor Djaborov, the press-secretary of Foreign Ministry.

Andrey Kudryashov

"I was officially registered as Ferghana.Ru news agency correspondent in the Republic of Uzbekistan in 2005-2007 – Andrey Kudryashov shares. – In this period I had no conflicts with the authorities. After the expiration of license I quitted full-time commitment with Ferghana.Ru although I still published few non-journalist stories about historical and natural beauties of Uzbekistan and other Central Asian countries. By the way, many of them were reprinted by the number of governmental and oblast-based newspapers of Uzbekistan (such Khoresmskaya Pravda, Gzt.uz and others) without mentioning the author. I showed understanding since many editions in Uzbekistan may have deficit of interesting stories.

On October 16, 2009 I was invited for a talk at the Foreign Ministry where I was told that my publications contain "biased" opinion. I argued that I always underlined my personal, subjective opinion that does not have to become the common opinion. I also explained that due to health issues I was not working for media sources – no contracts, no tasks. This is another reason why I am not able to bear responsibility for reprinting and citing of my texts and phrases both in Uzbekistan and abroad. Afterwards, I was offered to sign the statement where I confirmed I was aware of responsibility for cooperating with foreign mass media without authorization in Uzbek Foreign Ministry.

I believe once EU cancelled last sanctions against Uzbekistan and considering new friendship period with USA, the pressure campaign – the shutdown of Cinema Museum, criminal persecution of artist Umida Khamidova and interrogations of independent journalists – has the common goal to intimidate liberal thinkers so that other were afraid to write, photograph and produce movies without official authorization. I was never the opposition member. However, I see high risk of turning into totalitarian society.

Authoritarian rule suppresses the political opponents. Totalitarian regime punishes everyone for counteraction, lack of loyalty, independence and free thinking – Andrey Kudryashov notes.

I interpret this story as the attempt to muzzle very few independent journalists. After Andijan massacre in May of 2005 high pressure was imposed on foreign media and their staff. IWPR, BBC, Ozodlik Radio (Uzbek Service of RFE/RL) left the republic. The pressure on independent opinion has continued since 2005. In February, 2006 the government issued a decree, according to which foreign correspondents were not allowed running activities without the authorization of Foreign Ministry. The decree was granted absolute priority over all other laws in the republic. On March 23, 2006 Tashkent Public Prosecutor's Office filed the criminal case against Natalia Beshueva, the correspondent of Deutche Welle, for "tax avoidance" charges (although Uzbekistan and Germany signed the agreement on avoidance of double taxation in 1999). The journalist was also accused of working without Foreign Ministry's accreditation (the first precedent since the adoption of new rules). Natalia Bushueva had to go through the number of challenges. In one night the unknown group of people posted the announcement that the journalist was selling 3-bed room apartment and offering intimate service. Natalia was bombarded by the phone calls. To summarize, the Deutche Welle correspondents in Uzbekistan had to stop working for the radio station while Natalia Bushueva left the country. In 2008 the correspondents of Associated Press and Reuters stopped operations.

Today, only 38 foreign journalists have accreditation from Uzbek Foreign Ministry, most of which represent super-loyal to the government Russian, Chinese, Turkish, Kyrgyz, Azerbaijani, Iranian and other "friendly" mass media and very few western (France-Presse, Le Suar) correspondents that carefully analyze their for "the bias". Besides, all government-sponsored media journalists are also strictly controlled by the government. The inexcusable actions for them are, for example, educational trips to western countries. In 2009 Sobirjon Yakubov and Bekkul Egamkulov, the journalists of Uzbek newspapers, were fired for "suspicious" trip to Paris. Dmitry Povarov, one of the best economics journalists in Uzbekistan, was dismissed for several months stay in France. The others are simply placed in jail. According to New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists, as of December 1, 2009 Uzbekistan ranked 6 in the world by the number of journalist prisoners after China (24), Iran (23), Cuba (22), Eritrea (19) and Burma (9). There are 7 journalist prisoners in Uzbekistan: Mukhammad Bekzhanov, Yusuf Ruzimuradov, Gairat Mekhliboev, Ortikali Namazov, Djamshid Karimov, Solijon Abdurakhmanov and Dilmurod Sayid. At the beginning of 2005 Uzbekistan had 80-100 western and independent journalists while today their number dropped to 15-20. The sources of news for population are such radio stations as Ozodlik, BBC, Voice of America and Free Dolina as well as Internet although most of the news and human rights websites, covering the events in Uzbekistan, are blocked.

According to Press Freedom Index from Reporters Without Borders – Uzbekistan ranks 160th out of 175 surveyed countries. In the similar Freedom House rating Uzbekistan is placed in 189th position out of 195. In this concern, the statements of US government, indicating the serious improvements of human rights situation in Uzbekistan, are at least not too sincere.

<http://enews.ferghana.ru/article.php?id=260>

Geo Strategic Front

- **Uzbekistan Blocking Rail Traffic Into Tajikistan**

DUSHANBE -- Tajikistan's Foreign Ministry says it is hopeful that Uzbek officials will soon allow about 1,000 stranded railroad cars carrying construction materials and foodstuffs to move into Tajikistan, RFE/RL's Tajik Service reports. Tajik Foreign Ministry spokesman Davlat Nazriev told RFE/RL that the cargo is being held up by the Uzbek railroad company and customs and border officials.

The goods -- which are mainly from Russia and Iran -- have been held at the Uzbek-Tajik border for several weeks. Tajik businessman Sherali Muqimov said that in November he was sent 76 railroad cars of cement and other construction materials from Iran that are still being held by Uzbek railroad officials. He said he is worried that the quality of the cement is lessening as it sits on the tracks under rain and snow. Jovid Sharifov, a Tajik customs service official, said that according to Commonwealth of Independent States legal agreements, the country in which a product in transit is spoiled is required to reimburse the owner for all damages. In September, some 200 Tajik railroad cars with food and construction materials were also stranded on Uzbek territory. Uzbek deputy customs chief Bakhtiyor Hakimov told RFE/RL then that there was a small technical problem that would be solved quickly. But Tajik analysts said they believe the real problem with the stalled railroad shipments is political and results from the Uzbek government's dissatisfaction with the construction of Tajikistan's new hydropower projects, which Tashkent says will harm its agriculture.

http://www.rferl.org/content/Uzbekistan_Blocking_Rail_Traffic_Into_Tajikistan/1924103.html

Economic /Energy Front

Social Front

- **Uzbekistan Replaces Soviet Soldier Monument In Tashkent**

TASHKENT -- Uzbek President Islam Karimov has unveiled a new monument as a replacement for Soviet monuments in downtown Tashkent that were taken down last year, RFE/RL's Uzbek Service reports. Called the Oath to the Motherland, the new monument features a gold-plated statue of an Uzbek soldier kneeling to kiss the national flag and a praying soldier's mother in the background. Karimov said at the opening ceremony that "We may be proud that over a short period of time in Uzbekistan a mobile, well-armed, and technically equipped army...[that can] repulse any aggressor" has been created. An Uzbek Academy of Arts official told RFE/RL that the monument by sculptor Jaloliddin Mirtojiev was created in one month.

A Defense Ministry official said the Defender of the Motherland statue, the Soviet monument that was removed from the park by authorities, did not represent the values and the current state of the Uzbek army. An official from Uzbekistan's monument preservation office told RFE/RL that the Soviet monument was moved to a workshop where several other Soviet-era monuments are kept. In November, officials removed all the monuments in Tashkent's Park of Military Glory, including the Defender of the Motherland, devoted to Soviet soldiers, as well as Soviet planes, rockets, tanks, and cannons. The park was built in 1973. An Uzbek Defense Ministry official said the move ends the contradiction that existed between the old Soviet monuments and the nearby Uzbek Armed Forces Museum, as well as the modern reading of Uzbek history.

http://www.rferl.org/content/Uzbekistan_Replaces_Soviet_Soldier_Monument_In_Tashkent/1928820.html

- Uzbek Woman Tells Of Sisters' Alleged Rapes In Prison

TASHKENT -- An Uzbek woman has given details of her experience in prison during which she alleges she and her two sisters were beaten and gang-raped, RFE/RL's Uzbek Service reports. Khosiyat Soatova, 23, the youngest of the sisters, told RFE/RL that she and her two sisters were detained in Tashkent on May 9 during a domestic dispute.

She said that the next day, her sister Raykhon, 28, was gang-raped by policemen in the Tashkent prison. Khosiyat said Raykhon was beaten unconscious by police in a prison basement before being raped. Raykhon was reportedly threatened that her sisters would also be raped if she spoke about the abuse. Khosiyat said she has no specific information about her other sister, Nargiza. But Abdusamat Soatov, the sisters' brother, said in mid-December that all three sisters had reported being abused and raped in prison. In December, Raykhon gave birth in a prison hospital to a premature baby girl who she said is the result of the sexual assaults. Khosiyat said that she was beaten, sexually abused, and tortured so severely during an interrogation session on May 16 that she was taken to a prison hospital, where she remained for two months. Khosiyat -- who was sentenced to six years and two months in jail -- was released on bail in the summer after recovering from her injuries. Her sisters remain in prison. They were all sentenced to between six and seven years in prison on hooliganism and robbery charges after being arrested on May 9 during a dispute with the alleged mistress of Nargiza's husband.

Khosiyat said that in Uzbekistan, laws and justice exist only for wealthy people.

Following RFE/RL's reporting of the sisters' allegations of abuse in jail, the Tashkent prosecutor's office opened a criminal case on charges of attempted sexual assault. The office initially rejected the abuse allegations and refused to investigate the charges.

http://www.rferl.org/content/Uzbek_Woman_Tells_Of_Sisters_Alleged_Rapes_In_Prison/1928516.html

- Uzbekistan: The plane trees are cut off in the central part of Samarqand (photo)

The various types of spruces replaced the cut off plane trees in the central park of recreation and leisure in Samarqand. In the beginning of New Year the perennial trees were cut off by local authorities.

The deforestation of plane trees in the central park of Samarqand. Photo © Ferghana.Ru. January, 2010

In the Soviet times and prior to the modernization of central park (former park of recreation and leisure, named after Gorky) used to be the favorite place of the city dwellers: there were bunch of café, many entertainment options. Besides, people could have a rest under big perennial trees. However, the modernization process eliminated few café and amusement options, cut off many tree and the park became less popular among the dwellers.

The ornamental trees have been cut off in Samarqand for few dozens of years. In the last years only coniferous species of trees have been planted here in early spring at the background of mass deforestation of plane trees and other green plantings.

In the opinion of townfolk, the elimination of plane trees makes it less comfortable living in the city, especially during the summer. As a rule, the fir trees produce no shade and the dwellers are destined to stay under withering shoots of sunlight. No rescue is guaranteed even in central park that used to have spreading branches of perennial plane

trees in the past. The central park of Samarqand used to be green and umbrageous. Photo © Ferghana.Ru. 2007

On the other hand, not only the residents of Samarqand face such problem: the perennial trees are being cut off everywhere where the authorities conduct modernization or rearrangement. The local wisecrackers say that in few years Samarqand will look like taiga city, buried in softwood forest. However, it looks like the dwellers of Samarqand are not going to see softwood forest: the fir trees are dying under burning Asian sun.

The deforestation used to be an important process in the East. People believed that plane trees absorb aura and outside information. There was special ceremony of cutting off the plane trees. Seven elders had to make the appropriate decision "to kill" the plane tree. These seven elders sawed the tree in order to share the responsibility for its elimination.

Saadi Sherozi, one of the most respected oriental poets, wrote: "Allah will strictly punish the sinner that will cut off the tree before the due date".

The residents of Samarqand are seriously concerned about such environmental rearrangement. In the light of recent events, they are mostly concerned about the University Boulevard that used to be the local attraction. There are not only several hundred plane trees but also the number of exotic and very rare trees. Many local dwellers are concerned that the boulevard trees will be cut off as it happened with the Tashkent public garden that was turned into big lawn.

<http://enews.ferghana.ru/news.php?id=1527&mode=snews>