

Business & Politics in the Muslim World
News Monitoring
April 16 to 23, 2010
Weekly Report
Central Asia
Uzma Siraj

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- HRW Calls On Kyrgyzstan To Probe Violence

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- President to make annual address to parliament on April 24

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- UK intends to expand constructive dialogue with Turkmenistan
- Presidents of Turkmenistan and Iran talk over phone

Economic/Energy Front

- Chevron to make every effort to cooperate with Turkmenistan
- 1st International Gas Congress of Turkmenistan concludes in Ashgabat

Social Front

- Turkmenistan to set up e-government
- Bishop Feofilakt on Easter pastoral visits to Turkmenistan
- President of Turkmenistan named Statesman of the Year in Turkey

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- Uzbek, Russian Presidents Call For Political Stability In Kyrgyzstan
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- Islam Karimov arrives in Moscow

Economic/Energy Front

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- Uzbekistan's GDP grows 7.6% in 1Q 2010

Social Front

- Charges Dropped Against Uzbek Police In Alleged Gang Rape

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Azerbaijan

Political Front

- Another Azerbaijani Opposition Party Planning Protest In Baku

BAKU -- An Azerbaijani opposition party has requested permission from Baku city authorities to stage a picket in the city on April 25, RFE/RL's Azerbaijani Service reports. The Azerbaijan Popular Front Party (AHChP) plans to demand amendments to the election code, official observance of the right to free assembly, and transparency in ongoing talks on resolving the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

- Another Azerbaijani Opposition Party Plans Protest In Wake Of Detentions

BAKU -- An Azerbaijani opposition party has requested permission from Baku city authorities to stage a picket in the city on April 25, RFE/RL's Azerbaijani Service reports.

- Azerbaijani official: Country will prevent use of state funds for interest of certain political forces in elections

The Azerbaijani government will not allow the use of public resources designed for election in the interests of certain political forces, Azerbaijani Presidential Administration Socio-Political Department head Ali Hasanov said at the International conference on "2010 parliamentary elections in Azerbaijan: more democratic and more transparent".

Geo strategic Front

- Azerbaijan Cancels Military Exercises With United States

Azerbaijani and U.S. soldiers participate in a joint NATO military exercise outside Baku last year. BAKU -- The Azerbaijani Defense Ministry says it has canceled military computer exercises with U.S. forces that were scheduled for May, RFE/RL's Azerbaijani Service reports. Azerbaijani Defense Ministry spokesman Eldar Sabiroglu said he did not know the reasons for the cancellation.

- Azerbaijani official: We seek alternative ways to Nagorno-Karabakh conflict resolution

Azerbaijan seeks alternative ways to solve the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, Azerbaijani Presidential Administration Socio-Political Department head Ali Hasanov said. "Azerbaijan takes adequate steps in search for effective solution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

- Azerbaijan, Russia reach an agreement over disputed territories

Azerbaijan-Russia working group on delimitation of the state borders have reached an agreement during the talks held in Khachmaz region. Despite long-term negotiations the two countries couldn't solve the problem of disputed territories.

- Pakistan revealed its position on Azerbaijan's territorial integrity

Pakistan supports Azerbaijan's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and does not recognize Armenia, said Pakistan's Defense Secretary Syed Athar Ali during his meeting with Deputy Foreign Minister of Azerbaijan Khalaf Khalafov.

Economic/Energy Front

- Data On Azerbaijan's Oil Revenues Incomplete, Inconsistent

In recent years, Azerbaijan's State Oil Company (SOCAR) has reduced the volume of information in successive annual reports about its revenues, according to participants in a roundtable discussion in Baku earlier this week.

- Azerbaijan to build new complex on oil and gas processing by 2019

The process of preparing a study of a new petrochemical complex, which will be located in Garadagh district of Baku will be completed by late September, SOCAR vice president for refining David Mammadov said at a meeting with members of the Caspian-European Integration Business Club (CEIBC) today. "We are preparing a feasibility study. It will be completed by late September", Mammadov said.

- Israeli Energy Minister to arrive in Baku

Unlike other countries of the former Soviet Union, with which Israel decreased trade turnover, this figure was twice increased with Azerbaijan, Israeli ambassador to Azerbaijan Michael Lavon-Lotem said in Baku at the briefing on the 62nd anniversary of Israel's Independence Day.

Social Front

- European Court Rules Azerbaijan Should Release Jailed Journalist

The European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) today ruled that the Azerbaijani authorities should release journalist Eynulla Fatullayev from prison and pay him 25,000 euros (\$33,512) in moral damages, RFE/RL's Azerbaijani Service reports.

Kazakhstan

Political Front

Geo strategic Front

- Kazakh Torture Case Being Brought Before UN

WASHINGTON -- In March 2007, Aleksandr Gerasimov went to a local police station in Kostanay, a city in northern Kazakhstan, to ask about his stepson, who had been arrested. But instead of responding to his inquiry, police took Gerasimov into custody, accusing him of murder and beating him brutally in an attempt to force Gerasimov to confess.

- Kazakhstan's Air Astana Resumes Flights To Bishkek

ALMATY -- Kazakhstan's main airline, Air Astana, has resumed flights from Almaty to Bishkek flights, RFE/RL's Kazakh Service reports.

- Kazakhstan Tightens Regulations For CIS Visitors

ASTANA -- The Kazakh Interior Ministry has announced that all citizens from countries in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) must register with immigration authorities within five days of their arrival, RFE/RL's Kazakh Service reports.

Economic/Energy Front

- Korea keen on Kazakh uranium, grain

SEOUL, April 22 (Reuters) - Uranium and grain from Kazakhstan are attractive prospects for South Korean buyers, the presidents of the two nations said at a meeting on Thursday.

Social Front

- Italy To Erect Monument To World War II Soldiers From Kazakhstan

ASTANA -- A monument to Soviet soldiers from Kazakhstan who died in Italy during World War II will be erected in the Italian city of Trieste, RFE/RL's Kazakh Service reports.

- Kazakhstan's population exceeds 16 million people - statistics

In February 2010 the population of Kazakhstan increased by 17,800 people in number and, according to preliminary information, was 16.036 million people as at March 1, the National Statistics Agency told Interfax-Kazakhstan.

Kyrgyzstan

Political Front

- **Newly Appointed Chairwoman Of Kyrgyz Election Commission Resigns**
BISHKEK -- The newly appointed chairwoman of Kyrgyzstan's Central Election Commission has stepped down -- after just one day on the job, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports.

- **Kyrgyz Mufti Hospitalized After Escaping Kidnappers**
BISHKEK -- Kyrgyz police say the country's mufti is in the hospital after managing to free himself from a group of kidnappers, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports.

- **Bakiev Says He Doesn't Intend To Return To Kyrgyzstan As President**
Former Kyrgyz President Kurmanbek Bakiev said the resignation he signed had not come into force because the interim authorities reneged on a promise to protect his relatives. Kyrgyzstan's ousted president, Kurmanbek Bakiev, has said he does not "intend to return to Kyrgyzstan as president." "I am not clinging to the presidency," Bakiev said, adding that he was ready to help stabilize Kyrgyzstan.

- **Witness In Kyrgyz Opposition Leader's Death Found Dead**
Burned-out vehicles at the site of the disputed accident where the bodies of Medet Sadyrkulov and two other men were found.

- **Interim Kyrgyz Authorities Say Millions Seized From 'Bakiev Bank Accounts,'
Allege Embezzlement Plans**
BISHKEK -- Kyrgyzstan's interim government claims that more than \$20 million in cash and gold belonging to ousted President Kurmanbek Bakiev and members of his family has been uncovered so far in Kyrgyz banks, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports.

- **Kyrgyz Interim Government Arrests Bakiev Supporters In South**
Kyrgyzstan's interim government says it has arrested a number of allies of exiled President Kurmanbek Bakiev in the south of the country. Faizulla Rakhmanov, the self-proclaimed governor of Jalal-Abad, was among those reported by the Reuters news agency to have been detained.

- **Kyrgyz Official: Bakiev Should Be Extradited For 'Crimes'**
The chief of staff of Kyrgyzstan's interim government says former President Kurmanbek Bakiev should be held accountable for "crimes against the Kyrgyz nation," RFE/RL's Belarus Service reports. Edil Baisalov told RFE/RL's Belarus Service that Kyrgyzstan's interim government respects the decision of the "brotherly Belarusian nation to provide...Bakiev with asylum."

- **Bakiev Insists He's Still Kyrgyzstan's President**
In his first public comments from exile, Kyrgyzstan's ousted leader said he remains the legitimate president of the country and called on the international community not to recognize the interim government in Bishkek.

- **Kyrgyzstan Sets Referendum, Election Dates**
(RFE/RL) -- Kyrgyzstan's interim government has announced that the country will hold elections in October, after a referendum aimed at reducing the powers of the president.

- **New Kyrgyz Authorities Claim Legitimacy After Departure Of Bakiev**
Interim authorities in Kyrgyzstan have declared legitimacy and hopes for the end of conflict following the resignation and departure from the country of former President Kurmanbek Bakiev. Bakiev flew out of Kyrgyzstan and arrived in neighboring Kazakhstan on April 15, and interim officials said he had signed a letter of resignation.

- **Kyrgyz Interim Leaders Try To Impose Order After Unrest**

(RFE/RL) -- Kyrgyzstan's interim rulers are trying to restore order following unrest on the outskirts of the capital, Bishkek, that left at least three people dead. The April 19 clashes over land, as well as continued unrest in the south, highlight the challenges facing interim authorities who took control after ousting President Kurmanbek Bakiev two weeks ago.

Geo strategic Front

- Uzbek, Russian Presidents Call For Political Stability In Kyrgyzstan

(RFE/RL) -- Russian President Dmitry Medvedev has met with his Uzbek counterpart, Islam Karimov, in Moscow for talks seen as an attempt to boost bilateral ties. But recent developments in Kyrgyzstan appear to have taken a great part in the discussions.

- Russia Rejects Bakiev's Claim To Kyrgyz Presidency

Russia says it does not recognize a claim by deposed Kyrgyz leader Kurmanbek Bakiev that he is still president of Kyrgyzstan. Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov told a news conference today that Bakiev's handwritten resignation letter could not be reversed.

- Kyrgyz Government To Delay Decision On U.S. Military Base

The interim Kyrgyz government says it will likely delay any decision on the fate of a U.S. military base that is key for shipping supplies to international troops in Afghanistan. Omurbek Tekebaev, a deputy prime minister, told Reuters that any decision on the Manas facility, where fewer flights have reportedly been made since the ouster of President Kurmanbek Bakiev earlier this month, would likely come after elections in October.

- The EU's Silence In Kyrgyzstan

When Catherine Ashton took office late last year as the European Union's high representative for foreign policy, she promised quiet diplomacy. As far as Kyrgyzstan goes, EU diplomacy has gone one better.

Economic/Energy Front

- Kyrgyz Capital's Largest Market Closed Due To Disorder

BISHKEK -- The largest outdoor market in the Kyrgyz capital, Bishkek, has closed due to disorder in the city's outskirts, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports. Traders at the hundreds of small shops and stands at the Dordoi market removed their goods today.

Social Front

- Kyrgyz Youth Movement Wants Apology From Belarusian President

An injured protester is carried away during clashes in Bishkek. The interim government wants Bakiev to face trial for ordering security forces to open fire.

- HRW Calls On Kyrgyzstan To Probe Violence

Human Rights Watch has urged the interim authorities in Kyrgyzstan to open a probe into this month's violence that led to the ouster of President Kurmanbek Bakiev.

Tajikistan

Political Front

- Tajik Parliament's Upper Chamber Reelects Speaker

DUSHANBE -- Dushanbe Mayor Mahmadsaid Ubaidulloev has been reelected as speaker of the Majlisi Milli, the upper chamber of the Tajik parliament, RFE/RL's Tajik Service reports.

- Tajik Prosecutor General Sacks Public Prosecutors

DUSHANBE -- Tajikistan's new prosecutor-general has fired 13 public prosecutors in what he says is an effort to reform the prosecutor's office, RFE/RL's Tajik Service reports. Sherkhon Salimzoda, who was chairman of Tajikistan's Anticorruption Agency

before being named prosecutor-general in mid-February, said at a press conference in Dushanbe on April 12 that the sackings were necessary because "there were many deficiencies in the prosecutors' activities."

- President to make annual address to parliament on April 24

DUSHANBE, April 21, 2010, Asia-Plus /Payrav Chorshanbiyev/ -- The first joint meeting of the Majlisi Milli (Tajikistan's upper chamber of parliament) and the Majlisi Namoyandagon (Tajikistan's lower chamber of parliament) of the fourth convocation will take place on April 24, according to the Majlisi Namoyandagon press service.

Geo strategic Front

- Tajik Official Urges Demarcation Of Kyrgyz Border

KHUYAND, Tajikistan -- A regional Tajik official says the Kyrgyz-Tajik border urgently needs to be demarcated in order to prevent violent cross-border incidents from occurring, RFE/RL's Tajik Service reports. Qohir Rasulzoda, the governor of the northern Tajik province of Sughd, said that the lack of a defined border is the main reason for violent incidents between Kyrgyz and Tajiks along their border.

- Seminar to discuss stability and security in CA opens in Ashgabat

DUSHANBE, April 21, 2010, Asia-Plus -- A two-day international seminar on "Stability and Security in Central Asia: Interaction with International and Regional Organizations", organized by the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia (UNRCCA) has opened in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan today, press release issued by UNRCCA said.

Economic/Energy Front

- Tajik-Uzbek economic commission to consider freight hold-up problem soon

DUSHANBE, April 19, 2010, Asia-Plus -- The Tajik-Uzbek intergovernmental commission for economic and trade cooperation, co-chaired by Tajik Vice-Premier Murodali Alimardon and his Uzbek counterpart Rustam Azimov, will meet in Tashkent, Uzbekistan within the next few days and the freight hold-up problem will be one of major topics of the meeting, the First Deputy Tajik Foreign Minister, Abdullo Yuldoshev, told reporters in Dushanbe today.

Social Front

- Kazakhstan changes registration rules for Tajik and Kyrgyz nationals

DUSHANBE, April 16, 2010, Asia-Plus -- Kazakhstan has changed registration rules for nationals of Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan.

- Over one third of rural Tajiks food insecure

DUSHANBE, April 21, 2010, Asia-Plus -- The Food Security Monitoring System of the World Food Programme (WFP) reports that overall food insecurity has slightly worsened in the first quarter of 2010, leaving over one-third of the rural population in Tajikistan food-insecure, the REACT (Rapid Emergency Assessment and Coordination Team) News Bulletin # 18 reports.

- EU launches a new call for proposals to support human rights and democracy in Tajikistan

DUSHANBE, April 20, 2010, Asia-Plus -- The Delegation of the European Union to Tajikistan is seeking proposals for supporting actions in the Republic of Tajikistan with financial assistance from the Program, European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights.

Turkmenistan

Political Front

- Head of Migration Service of Turkmenistan severely reprimanded President of Turkmenistan Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov severely reprimanded the head of the Migration Service of Turkmenistan, Seyitnyyaz Balliyev by signing the appropriate order.

Geo strategic Front

- Turkmenistan to hold military-tactical exercise "Galkan-2010" Preparations are under way in Turkmenistan for the military tactical exercise "Galkan-2010" scheduled for end of April. The exercise is set to become a peculiar show of the operational readiness and technical equipment of the national army.

- Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov to pay state visit to China On April 30, President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov will start a state visit to the People's Republic of China at the head of a governmental delegation. As the Turkmenistan.ru correspondent reports from Ashgabat, preparations and the program of the visit were discussed yesterday at a meeting of the Cabinet of Ministers of Turkmenistan.

- UK intends to expand constructive dialogue with Turkmenistan On April 16, Turkmen President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov received Special Representative of the UK on international trade and investment, Prince Andrew, Duke of York.

- Presidents of Turkmenistan and Iran talk over phone President of Turkmenistan Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov and President of the Islamic Republic of Iran Mahmoud Ahmadinejad held a telephone conversation on April 16.

Economic/Energy Front

- Chevron to make every effort to cooperate with Turkmenistan Chevron, one of the sponsors of the 1st International Gas Congress in Ashgabat, will make every effort to continue the successful cooperation with Turkmenistan. As Turkmen President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov said on April 15 during a meeting with Vice-President of the US Corporation Jay Pryor, "there are all prerequisites for that, and above all the mutual desire to create a favorable environment for foreign partners."

- 1st International Gas Congress of Turkmenistan concludes in Ashgabat The 1st International Gas Congress and exhibition of the oil and gas industry concluded in the Turkmen capital. It was organized by the Turkmengaz state concern, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Turkmenistan and British company "Summit Trade Events Ltd." Over 400 delegates from 32 countries, including Germany, France, Italy, Austria, Belgium, USA, Canada, Russia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Japan, UAE, Indonesia, Iran, Turkey participated in the gas forum.

Social Front

- Turkmenistan to set up e-government The Ministry of Economy and Development and the Ministry of Communications of Turkmenistan have been instructed to create a unified system to introduce information and communication technologies into public administration, as well as create a fiber-optic communication system of the Cabinet of Ministers of Turkmenistan with the ministries and line agencies.

- Bishop Feofilakt on Easter pastoral visits to Turkmenistan

Bishop Feofilakt of Smolensk and Vyazemsk made an Easter pastoral visit to the Orthodox parishes in Turkmenistan. According to the official website of Smolensk and Vyazemsk Diocese, on April 13 Bishop Feofilakt performed a Divine Liturgy at the Church of Saint Nicholas in Ashgabat. All parishioners were blessed with icons of the Mother of God "The Virgin Hodegetria" sanctified in Smolensk. Children were also given small Easter gifts.

- President of Turkmenistan named Statesman of the Year in Turkey

The Association of Turkish Industrialists and Businessmen (TUSIAD) has awarded the title of "Statesman of the Year" to President of Turkmenistan Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov "for paternal care and assistance enabling Turkish businessmen to successfully overcome the effects of the global crisis."

Uzbekistan

Political Front

Geo strategic Front

- Uzbekistan Tightens Security In Andijon

Authorities in the eastern Uzbek city of Andijon are imposing stringent security measures on residents in the aftermath of last week's uprising that ousted Kyrgyz President Kurmanbek Bakiyev, RFE/RL's Uzbek Service reports.

- President meets Member of China's State Council

President of Uzbekistan Islam Karimov met with Meng Jianzhu, Member of State Council, Minister of Public Security of the People's Republic of China, in Oqsaroy on 23 April.

- Uzbek, Russian Presidents Call For Political Stability In Kyrgyzstan

Russian President Dmitry Medvedev (right) exchanges documents with Uzbek counterpart Islam Karimov in Moscow.

(RFE/RL) -- Russian President Dmitry Medvedev has met with his Uzbek counterpart, Islam Karimov, in Moscow for talks seen as an attempt to boost bilateral ties.

- SCO emergency bodies meet in Tashkent

The fifth session of the heads of bodies dealing with prevention and liquidation of emergency situations of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization was held in Tashkent on 21 April. Representatives of the respective bodies of China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan participated in the meeting.

- Islam Karimov arrives in Moscow

President of Uzbekistan Islam Karimov on the invitation of President of Russia Dmitry Medvedev arrived with an official visit in Moscow on 19 April.

Economic/Energy Front

- Uzbek-Malaysian business forum held

The forum of business circles of Uzbekistan and Malaysia opened in Tashkent in Wednesday. The event has been organized by the Commerce and Industry Chamber of Uzbekistan in cooperation with Malaysian People's Trust Fund (Majlis Amanah Rakyat, MARA) and International Business Women Association.

- Uzbekistan's GDP grows 7.6% in 1Q 2010

The Cabinet of Ministers of Uzbekistan held a session on 16 April to consider the results of the country's socioeconomic development in the first quarter of 2010 and

implementation of the tasks outlined by the President at the government's meeting on 29 January.

Social Front

- Charges Dropped Against Uzbek Police In Alleged Gang Rape

TASHKENT -- Criminal charges against 12 Uzbek policemen suspected of the gang rape of Raykhon Soatova and her two sisters in jail have been dropped, RFE/RL's Uzbek Service reports.

Detailed Report

Azerbaijan

Political Front

- Another Azerbaijani Opposition Party Planning Protest In Baku

BAKU -- An Azerbaijani opposition party has requested permission from Baku city authorities to stage a picket in the city on April 25, RFE/RL's Azerbaijani Service reports. The Azerbaijan Popular Front Party (AHChP) plans to demand amendments to the election code, official observance of the right to free assembly, and transparency in ongoing talks on resolving the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. AHChP Deputy Chairman Hasan Karimov told RFE/RL the party proposed six locations in the city, including central Freedom Square. He said the party is determined to hold the protest regardless of the response by authorities. A second AHChP official, Abulfaz Qurbanli, says preparations for the demonstration are already under way. Several members of the opposition Musavat Party were detained during a similar picket on April 13. There have been no sanctioned public protests in Baku in recent years.

The municipal authorities have designated several locations on the city outskirts for such protests, but opposition parties reject them as too inaccessible.

- Another Azerbaijani Opposition Party Plans Protest In Wake Of Detentions

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- Azerbaijani official: Country will prevent use of state funds for interest of certain political forces in elections

The Azerbaijani government will not allow the use of public resources designed for election in the interests of certain political forces, Azerbaijani Presidential Administration Socio-Political Department head Ali Hasanov said at the International conference on "2010 parliamentary elections in Azerbaijan: more democratic and more transparent".

"The country has created all necessary conditions for holding democratic elections. Everyone has the right to elect and be elected," Hasanov said. "One of the achievements is that over the intervening period, the Electoral Code was brought into line with the European standards. Azerbaijan has a judicial system that meets European standards."

Opposition parties want to improve the legislation as a means of ensuring transparent and democratic elections.

Azerbaijan will hold the parliamentary elections in the fall. The previous elections were held in November 2005. The elections use the majority system in Azerbaijan's 125 constituencies.

Geo strategic Front

- Azerbaijan Cancels Military Exercises With United States

Azerbaijani and U.S. soldiers participate in a joint NATO military exercise outside Baku last year. BAKU -- The Azerbaijani Defense Ministry says it has canceled military computer exercises with U.S. forces that were scheduled for May, RFE/RL's Azerbaijani Service reports. Azerbaijani Defense Ministry spokesman Eldar Sabiroglu said he did not know the reasons for the cancellation.

"The provisions of the Azerbaijani-U.S. agreement have always been implemented," he said. "This is the first time any such measures have been canceled." The first exercises within the bilateral agreement "Regional Response 2009" were conducted last year by U.S. and Azerbaijani forces on training grounds in Azerbaijan. This year's exercises, known as "Computer Supported Headquarter Trainings," were to be held at the Azerbaijani Defense Ministry's training-education center. A U.S. Embassy official in Baku told RFE/RL that all questions related to the cancellation should be addressed to Azerbaijan officials. Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev was not invited by U.S. President Barack Obama to the April 12-13 Nuclear Security Summit in Washington that was attended by the leaders of 47 countries. Ali Hasanov, an official in Azerbaijan's presidential administration, said over the weekend that Azerbaijan would revise its policy toward the United States, Reuters reported.

- Azerbaijani official: We seek alternative ways to Nagorno-Karabakh conflict resolution

Azerbaijan seeks alternative ways to solve the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, Azerbaijani Presidential Administration Socio-Political Department head Ali Hasanov said. "Azerbaijan takes adequate steps in search for effective solution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Currently, anti-American propaganda primarily directed against the Congress and the U.S. authorities supporting Armenian's aggressive policy," Hasanov said. Hasanov said Azerbaijan has supported the U.S. in its peacekeeping mission. The country was almost spoiled the relations with Muslim countries and took the U.S. interests in energy issues into the account. "We have repeatedly told the U.S. that they are one of the three countries addressing the Armenian-Azerbaijani Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. We called on Armenia to be attentive to the issue on overcoming the hard situation it is in. In recent times, the Azerbaijani public, media and parliamentarians have just frustration in this sense," Hasanov said.

- Azerbaijan, Russia reach an agreement over disputed territories

Azerbaijan-Russia working group on delimitation of the state borders have reached an agreement during the talks held in Khachmaz region. Despite long-term negotiations the

two countries couldn't solve the problem of disputed territories. The working group headed by the Deputy Foreign Minister of Azerbaijan Khalaf Khalafov and Special Representative of Russian President on Delimitation of Borders Alexander Golovin reached a concrete agreement on the state borders. Khalafov said that they reached an agreement on joint use of bridge over Samur River passed through the frontier line and delimitation of disputed territories as well. According to the agreement, both countries will equally use the waters of Samur River. Special commission of environmental experts of both countries will be established for the protection of the river's environment and a hydro-gauge will be installed there. Azerbaijani and Russian officials signed the agreement on Friday. Official results of the agreement will be submitted to the heads of states.

- Pakistan revealed its position on Azerbaijan's territorial integrity. Pakistan supports Azerbaijan's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and does not recognize Armenia, said Pakistan's Defense Secretary Syed Athar Ali during his meeting with Deputy Foreign Minister of Azerbaijan Khalaf Khalafov. Touching upon the political relationship between Azerbaijan and Pakistan, Syed Athar Ali praised it, and also stressed the necessity of developing economic and cultural cooperation. Khalaf Khalafov, in turn, said the two countries had great potential to expand cooperation in economic, cultural and other spheres. On the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, Khalafov highly valued the fact that Pakistan backs Azerbaijan's "just position."

Economic/Energy Front

- Data On Azerbaijan's Oil Revenues Incomplete, Inconsistent

In recent years, Azerbaijan's State Oil Company (SOCAR) has reduced the volume of information in successive annual reports about its revenues, according to participants in a roundtable discussion in Baku earlier this week.

The proceedings were summarized by the Baku daily "Zerkalo" on April 15 in an article titled "Where Is Our Money Going?" Speaking at the discussion, Zohrab Ismail of the NGO Public Union To Promote A Free Economy noted that in its annual report for 2008, SOCAR declined to list important financial indicators that figured in earlier reports, including on SOCAR's revenues from the sale and export of oil and petroleum products, and from the transportation of oil extracted by joint ventures and individual companies. It also failed to include any data on exports of gas to international markets that began in 2007. A second participant, Gadir Ibragimli, noted discrepancies between SOCAR's statistical data and that of the Azerbaijani government and the State Oil Fund (ARDNS). He pointed out that while SOCAR gave its revenues in 2006 from oil extracted within the framework of production-sharing agreements as 924.4 million manats (\$1.156 billion), the State Oil Fund put the figure at 929.9 million and the Council of Ministers at 933.7 million. In 2007, according to Ibragimli, the discrepancy between the figures provided by those three agencies was even greater: 1.851 billion manats (SOCAR), 1.799 billion manats (State Oil Fund), and 1.860 billion manats (Council of Ministers).

Ibragimli suggested that it was in order to conceal such discrepancies that SOCAR simply omitted any data on revenues in its report for 2008. In December 1999, then-President Heydar Aliyev decreed the creation of the Azerbaijan's State Oil Fund with the objective of ensuring that both present and future generations should benefit equally from the country's oil wealth by "improving the economic well-being of the population today, and safeguarding economic security for future generations." Since the fund signed up to the Extractive Industries Transparency Index in 2003, it has received high praise for its

commitment to transparency; the fund is the only such agency in any CIS or Eastern European state to have received (in June 2007) a UN Public Service Award. During the first eight years of its existence, the fund spent 8.43 billion manats on infrastructure projects, including 297.9 million for the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil-export pipeline and 26.6 million for the planned Kars-Tbilisi-Baku rail link, "Zerkalo" reported on May 13, 2009. It has also spent 592.6 million manats (\$711.6 million) on housing for Azerbaijanis forced to flee from the Nagorno-Karabakh region and seven adjacent districts during the fighting of 1991-94. It will allocate a further 80 million manats for that purpose this year.

- Azerbaijan to build new complex on oil and gas processing by 2019

The process of preparing a study of a new petrochemical complex, which will be located in Garadagh district of Baku will be completed by late September, SOCAR vice president for refining David Mammadov said at a meeting with members of the Caspian-European Integration Business Club (CEIBC) today. "We are preparing a feasibility study. It will be completed by late September", Mammadov said.

He said that a new petrochemical complex requires deep processing of hydrocarbon resources of Azerbaijan, in particular, of natural and associated gas, oil refining to obtain oil products, automotive fuels and lubricants, as well as the development of a new petrochemical-based products of petroleum and gas processing.

The complex also includes the construction of its own electric power station. According to preliminary data (resulting from the calculation of the population by 2050, the number of vehicles, consumption of fuel and lubricants), the volume of gas processing in the complex will amount to 40 billion cubic meters a year, and processing capacity of crude oil (with the prospect for the next 40 years), approximately 15 million tons.

It is assumed that the entire complex will work at full capacity in 2018-2019. Construction of gas processing and petrochemical enterprises will be launched. Thermal power center will be built to meet the internal needs of the complex.

- Israeli Energy Minister to arrive in Baku

Unlike other countries of the former Soviet Union, with which Israel decreased trade turnover, this figure was twice increased with Azerbaijan, Israeli ambassador to Azerbaijan Michael Lavon-Lotem said in Baku at the briefing on the 62nd anniversary of Israel's Independence Day. According to him, Israeli businessmen and tourists continuously pay visits to Azerbaijan. "In June, Israeli energy minister will arrive in Azerbaijan to participate in the annual Oil & Gas Exhibition," Lavon-Lotem said. Main areas of interest of Israeli businessmen in Azerbaijan, are agriculture, medicine, high technology, however, more attention should be given to agriculture, the ambassador said.

Social Front

- European Court Rules Azerbaijan Should Release Jailed Journalist

The European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) today ruled that the Azerbaijani authorities should release journalist Eynulla Fatullayev from prison and pay him 25,000 euros (\$33,512) in moral damages, RFE/RL's Azerbaijani Service reports.

The Strasbourg-based court said Azerbaijan had violated Fatullayev's rights to freedom of expression and a fair trial. Fatullayev, editor of the independent newspaper "Realny Azerbaijan," was first jailed in 2007 for allegedly insulting Azerbaijanis killed in the February 1992 Khojali massacre, and subsequently on charges of instigating terrorism and tax evasion. The consecutive prison terms add up to 8 1/2 years. Fatullayev's father,

Emin, told RFE/RL the court ruling is "fair" and he is satisfied with it. But Chingiz Asgarov, Azerbaijan's representative at the ECHR, said Azerbaijani officials will appeal the ruling to the ECHR's Grand Chamber. He said the ECHR is not empowered to issue orders to the courts of other countries.

Eynulla Fatullayev went on trial again on April 9 on charges of illegal possession of drugs. He claims the drugs were planted in his cell in December to create a pretext for keeping him in prison after the ECHR issued its ruling on his appeal against his earlier convictions. Fatullayev told the judge at the start of the trial that although he is innocent he is certain he will be found guilty and sentenced to a fourth prison term.

Kazakhstan Political Front

Geo strategic Front

- **Kazakh Torture Case Being Brought Before UN**

WASHINGTON -- In March 2007, Aleksandr Gerasimov went to a local police station in Kostanay, a city in northern Kazakhstan, to ask about his stepson, who had been arrested. But instead of responding to his inquiry, police took Gerasimov into custody, accusing him of murder and beating him brutally in an attempt to force Gerasimov to confess. Those are the claims made in a complaint filed today by a New York-based group before the United Nations Committee Against Torture. James Goldston, executive director of the Open Society Justice Initiative (OSJI), says in addition to head and kidney injuries sustained during the 24 hours he was held in custody, Gerasimov was subjected to a vicious torture technique called the "dry submarino." "His hands were tied, he was held down on the floor, and one officer was repeatedly jamming his knee into Mr. Gerasimov's back," Goldston says. "All the while, his head was covered with a plastic bag so he was suffocating. And they would repeatedly make him go to the point where he couldn't breathe anymore, then remove the bag, and then reapply the technique with the bag on." Gerasimov was eventually released without charge. But his injuries were so severe he was hospitalized for 13 days and has suffered from profound psychological distress ever since.

An initial police inquiry was quickly dropped, and Gerasimov's repeated appeals for a proper investigation were all rejected. His case has now been filed before the United Nations Committee Against Torture. The OSJI, working together with the Kazakhstan International Bureau for Human Rights and the Rule of Law, filed the complaint in New York.

- **Kazakhstan's Air Astana Resumes Flights To Bishkek**

ALMATY -- Kazakhstan's main airline, Air Astana, has resumed flights from Almaty to Bishkek flights, RFE/RL's Kazakh Service reports. The flights were suspended on April 8, one day after deadly clashes between antigovernment protesters and security forces erupted in the Kyrgyz capital, Bishkek. The clashes led to the ouster of President Kurmanbek Bakiev and the creation of an interim government. Many thousands of Kyrgyz citizens work in Kazakhstan's largest city, Almaty, and travel to their native country on a regular basis.

- **Kazakhstan Tightens Regulations For CIS Visitors**

ASTANA -- The Kazakh Interior Ministry has announced that all citizens from countries in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) must register with immigration

authorities within five days of their arrival, RFE/RL's Kazakh Service reports. The new measure went into effect on April 13. All exemptions previously in force have been abolished. Citizens of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan were previously allowed to stay in Kazakhstan without registering for 90 and 30 days, respectively. Those privileges no longer exist. The ministry did not explain why the registration regulations are being tightened.

Economic/Energy Front

- Korea keen on Kazakh uranium, grain

SEOUL, April 22 (Reuters) - Uranium and grain from Kazakhstan are attractive prospects for South Korean buyers, the presidents of the two nations said at a meeting on Thursday.

Kazakhstan, the world's No.1 uranium producer, said its uranium exports will rise to 40 percent of South Korea's demand from a current 26 percent. Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev also told a news briefing held with President Lee Myung-bak that South Korea will import two million tonnes of grains from the Central Asia. "Both presidents via summit exchanged in-depth opinions over energy, resources, construction, infrastructure, agriculture and IT sectors to improve the bilateral cooperation," a statement from the South Korean presidential office said. The statement added the two will cooperate in developing uranium and studying Korean-type small- and medium-sized nuclear power reactors, under a bilateral agreement between national companies. A statement from state-run Korea Electric Power Corp (KEPCO) (015760.KS) said it had signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with state-run KazAtomProm to enhance the cooperation in the nuclear power sector by developing and producing uranium from KazAtomProm mines. "KazAtomProm should suggest a uranium mine under development or at production stage within one month after signing the MOU, and the Korean party will conduct feasibility study," the KEPCO statement said. South Korea is the world's sixth biggest uranium consumer, consuming 4,000 tonnes in 2009 and is expected to use 6,000 tonnes by 2016 for an additional 8 nuclear reactors.

SAMSUNG C&T CONSIDERS GRAIN IMPORTS

South Korea's Samsung C&T (000830.KS), which has no grain trading business, said earlier on Thursday it was considering importing grain from Kazakhstan. The South Korean trading house and Kazakhstan's state-run company Kazagro signed an MOU on the grain business, one of 18 MOUs between the two countries' private and public firms.

Asked if Samsung C&T would import grain from Kazakhstan, Chi Sung-ha, the firm's president and CEO, told Reuters: "We are considering it."

Samsung C&T and state-run Korea Electric Power Corp (KEPCO) (015760.KS) in March last year won a \$2.5-billion power plant order from Kazakhstan, with the deal signed last May when South Korean President Lee Myung-bak visited the former Soviet republic. Industry sources said earlier this month South Korean milling wheat buyers, major customers of U.S., Australian and Canadian producers, were considering wheat imports from Kazakhstan for the first time but imports might be capped due to poor quality and additional processing costs.

Social Front

- Italy To Erect Monument To World War II Soldiers From Kazakhstan

ASTANA -- A monument to Soviet soldiers from Kazakhstan who died in Italy during World War II will be erected in the Italian city of Trieste, RFE/RL's Kazakh Service

reports. Kazakh Foreign Ministry spokesman Askar Abdrakhmanov told journalists today that the unveiling ceremony for the monument will be held on April 25 when Italy marks the 65th anniversary of its liberation from the Nazis. The Kazakh Embassy in Italy identified 104 Soviet soldiers who died during World War II in northern Italy. It said 38 of them were ethnic Kazakhs. The effort to identify the fallen Soviet troops was initiated by renowned Kazakh writer and World War II veteran Kalmukan Isabai.

- Kazakhstan's population exceeds 16 million people - statistics

In February 2010 the population of Kazakhstan increased by 17,800 people in number and, according to preliminary information, was 16.036 million people as at March 1, the National Statistics Agency told Interfax-Kazakhstan.

According to the Agency, the natural population growth in February 2010 was 16,470 people, in January-February this year 34,794 people (cf. 36,596 people in January-February 2009). The number of babies born was 28,239 in February 2010 and 59,467 in January-February 2010 vs. 60,797 in January-February 2009; the number of deaths - 11,769 and 24,673 vs. 25,356 respectively. As many as 8,906 marriages were registered in February 2010 and 18,201 in January-February 2009 (cf. 18,028 marriages in January-February last year). 3,204 divorces were registered in February 2010 and 6,263 in January-February 2010 (cf. 5,968 marriages in January-February last year). The Statistics Agency says that in January-February this year 2,956 people emigrated from Kazakhstan (5,005) and 5,581 came to live in the republic (5,253).

Kyrgyzstan

Political Front

- Newly Appointed Chairwoman Of Kyrgyz Election Commission Resigns

BISHKEK -- The newly appointed chairwoman of Kyrgyzstan's Central Election Commission has stepped down -- after just one day on the job, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports. Tolekan Ismailova, a prominent human rights activist and the chairwoman of the nongovernmental organization Citizens Against Corruption, told journalists today that her decision to resign was based on the fact that "many of the Kyrgyz interim government's decrees were adopted without taking Kyrgyz laws into account." Ismailova was appointed as commission chairwoman on April 22.

She called on the interim government to allow international and domestic experts to evaluate all of the documents that the government has adopted since April 7, when it came to power after antigovernment protesters ousted President Kurmanbek Bakiev. The interim government has announced plans for a commission whose members would be selected by NGOs, the interim government, and the United Nations. It has announced plans for a referendum on a new constitution to take place in June and for parliamentary elections to be held in October. Ismailova's NGO was awarded the prestigious Liberty, Equality, and Brotherhood Award in 2009 by the French government.

- Kyrgyz Mufti Hospitalized After Escaping Kidnappers

BISHKEK -- Kyrgyz police say the country's mufti is in the hospital after managing to free himself from a group of kidnappers, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports.

Turatbek Madylbekov, Bishkek's acting police chief, told RFE/RL that mufti Murataaly Hajji Juman-uulu was abducted in Bishkek by four masked men who demanded a \$1 million ransom from his relatives for his release. Madylbekov said the kidnappers took Juman-uulu, 37, to the village of Baytik, near Bishkek, and held him there until April 22. It is unclear when he was abducted. Madylbekov said the mufti managed to negotiate his

release and is currently in hospital. He did not explain how or on what terms Juman-uulu was freed. Police have launched an investigation and are searching for the alleged abductors.

- **Bakiev Says He Doesn't Intend To Return To Kyrgyzstan As President**

Former Kyrgyz President Kurmanbek Bakiev said the resignation he signed had not come into force because the interim authorities reneged on a promise to protect his relatives.

Kyrgyzstan's ousted president, Kurmanbek Bakiev, has said he does not "intend to return to Kyrgyzstan as president." "I am not clinging to the presidency," Bakiev said, adding that he was ready to help stabilize Kyrgyzstan.

Speaking at a press conference at the National Press Center in the Belarusian capital, Minsk, Bakiev said that he did not acknowledge his resignation. "Bakiev is still the legitimate president," he said, although he acknowledged writing and signing his resignation statement last week. Bakiev arrived in Minsk on April 19 on the invitation of Belarusian President Alyaksandr Lukashenka. He initially left Kyrgyzstan for Kazakhstan last week, following bloody unrest in Bishkek earlier this month that left at least 85 people dead. The interim government in Bishkek, formed after ousting Bakiev, maintained that he resigned when an agreement on his departure was brokered with international mediation. Regional media in Central Asia published a copy of what appeared to be Bakiev's handwritten resignation letter. But Bakiev said today the resignation he signed had not come into force because the interim authorities reneged on a promise to protect his relatives. "But it doesn't mean I don't recognize my resignation and want to return to Kyrgyzstan as president tomorrow," Bakiev said. "No. I want to make it clear once and for all. I do not intend to return to Kyrgyzstan as president."

'No Revolutionary Situation'

The former president told reporters today he had not expected demonstrations in Kyrgyzstan would lead to his ouster from power. "There was nothing to indicate a revolutionary situation" in the events leading up to the bloody political unrest of April 7, he said. "In Kyrgyzstan we are used to opposition demonstrations," Bakiev said. But he added that his government during its five years in power had achieved a lot in terms of raising living standards and improving the economy. Various demonstrations had taken place in different regions in Kyrgyzstan in the months leading up to the April 7 uprising.

There were protests against new utility prices, which increased substantially as of January 1. Others demanded Bakiev's son, Maksim, who was in charge of an investment and innovation agency, leave the country. During today's press conference, Bakiev blamed some price hikes in Kyrgyzstan on Russia's introduction of custom duties on fuel-lubricant materials. He said Russia's decision had "shocked" him. Bakiev said Russian President Dmitry Medvedev and Prime Minister Vladimir Putin had also been unhappy with his decision to extend the lease of the U.S. air base at Manas airport, outside Bishkek. "I told them: 'Why does this base worry you so much? There are no armaments that would pose strategic threats to Russia and so on,'" Bakiev said. "It must be said frankly that Russia's leaders were unhappy and irritated with the presence of a [U.S.] military base in Kyrgyzstan. And that factor also played a certain role."

Bakiev's Family

Bakiev also said those who are close to him are now being harassed in their native Jalal-Abad, despite promises that there would be no repressions against his relatives and colleagues. Back in the southern Kyrgyz province of Jalal-Abad, the ex-president's family

says his brother Akmat has been missing since April 21. According to Kyrgyz media reports, many people have dismissed the claim as an effort to discredit the interim officials. At the same time, interim officials have said they don't rule out the possibility of asking for Bakiev's extradition to face charges in connection to the April 7 deaths.

There were also public calls for Bakiev to stand trial for polygamy. Bakiev left Kyrgyzstan along with his second wife and their two children -- a son and a daughter -- previously unknown to public. Bakiev is officially married to Tatyana Bakieva, who sometimes appeared alongside him in public as the country's first lady. Together they have two grown-up sons, Marat and Maksim.

The whereabouts of Tatyana Bakieva and her sons are not known.

Bakiev today gave no indication about his immediate plans. In an interview earlier this week he said he would prefer to live in a Commonwealth of Independent States country. The former president also told the "Russian Reporter" magazine that he might try his hand at toy making.

- Witness In Kyrgyz Opposition Leader's Death Found Dead

Burned-out vehicles at the site of the disputed accident where the bodies of Medet Sadyrkulov and two other men were found.

BISHKEK -- A man jailed for his role in a controversial car accident that killed a Kyrgyz opposition leader last year has been found dead, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports.

Anarkul Akmatov, the lawyer of Omurbek Osmonov, said his client was found dead on April 17 in the village of Besh-Kungey. He said his body had 11 stab wounds.

Osmonov, 25, was serving a prison term as the driver of a car that is alleged to have hit a vehicle in March 2009 carrying Medet Sadyrkulov, the former chief of staff of ousted President Kurmanbek Bakiev who had left the government two months earlier to join the opposition.

Opposition leaders, Osmonov's lawyers, and relatives of the victims have challenged police investigators' conclusion that the three men died in a collision with a vehicle that Osmonov was driving. The car they were in was charred and their bodies were burnt beyond recognition. The victims' lawyers said the bodies of the victims were in positions indicating that they were already dead when the car was set on fire.

Kyrgyzstan's interim government has pledged to reinvestigate Sadyrkulov's death. On June 5, 2009, Osmonov was found guilty of manslaughter and sentenced to 12 years in a minimum security labor camp.

- Interim Kyrgyz Authorities Say Millions Seized From 'Bakiev Bank Accounts,' Allege Embezzlement Plans

BISHKEK -- Kyrgyzstan's interim government claims that more than \$20 million in cash and gold belonging to ousted President Kurmanbek Bakiev and members of his family has been uncovered so far in Kyrgyz banks, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports.

Bakiev fled after deadly protest violence to Kazakhstan and then to Belarus, where he has withdrawn a resignation that he says he was forced to issue. Temir Sariiev, the interim government's deputy prime minister and finance minister, told RFE/RL that officials are continuing the search and that more cash and other valuables belonging to Bakiev and his family might be found. Sariiev said investigators have recovered several computers and memory sticks that reveal financial schemes used by Bakiev and other members of his family to "embezzle money." The Prosecutor-General's Office has opened several

criminal cases against Bakiev's grown sons, Marat and Maksim, who last week were charged in absentia with abuse of power and embezzlement.

Marat was the deputy chairman of Kyrgyzstan's National Security Service, and Maksim headed the state Agency for Investment and Economic Development. They lost their posts after their father was ousted on April 7 after massive antigovernment protests.

- **Kyrgyz Interim Government Arrests Bakiev Supporters In South**

Kyrgyzstan's interim government says it has arrested a number of allies of exiled President Kurmanbek Bakiev in the south of the country. Faizulla Rakhmanov, the self-proclaimed governor of Jalal-Abad, was among those reported by the Reuters news agency to have been detained. The interim government now says it is in control of Jalal-Abad, a stronghold of Bakiev support. In exile in Belarus, Bakiev said he still considers himself president and called on international leaders not to recognize the interim government. Bakiev fled the country after a government crackdown left at least 85 protesters dead at the start of the month. The leader of the interim government, Roza Otunbaeva, said the statement was the "bravado of a man agonizing over his own helplessness." The interim government has announced a referendum on the country's constitution will be held in June and parliamentary elections in October.

- **Kyrgyz Official: Bakiev Should Be Extradited For 'Crimes'**

The chief of staff of Kyrgyzstan's interim government says former President Kurmanbek Bakiev should be held accountable for "crimes against the Kyrgyz nation," RFE/RL's Belarus Service reports. Edil Baisalov told RFE/RL's Belarus Service that Kyrgyzstan's interim government respects the decision of the "brotherly Belarusian nation to provide...Bakiev with asylum." But he said that it was very likely that Belarusian President Alyaksandr Lukashenka did not have sufficient information about what happened in Kyrgyzstan during Bakiev's presidency and during clashes between antigovernment protesters and security forces in Bishkek on April 7. "There is not a single family in Kyrgyzstan that was not affected by the bloody events of April 7 and Kurmanbek Bakiev has to face justice for that," Baisalov said. He added that Kyrgyzstan's neighbors and Russia refused to offer Bakiev any kind of support or asylum because "our neighbors know very well what happened in Kyrgyzstan and they simply tried to stay away from Bakiev." "We are very happy that Bakiev is in a civilized European country now and there is no need for us to search for him in African forests or Asian caves," Baisalov continued. "So we will just come to the center of Europe and Belarus -- as a member of the United Nations, the [Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe], and the [Commonwealth of Independent States] -- will fulfill its obligations in the framework of the Minsk convention on the extradition of criminal suspects." Lukashenka announced on April 20 that Bakiev and members of his family are in Belarus. Bakiev, who fled the Kyrgyz capital after the violent clashes on April 7, left Kyrgyzstan for neighboring Kazakhstan last week. Kyrgyzstan's interim government has opened criminal cases against Bakiev, his sons, and several of his brothers for their roles in the shooting of protesters in Bishkek that contributed to 85 people being killed and hundreds of others injured.

- **Bakiev Insists He's Still Kyrgyzstan's President**

In his first public comments from exile, Kyrgyzstan's ousted leader said he remains the legitimate president of the country and called on the international community not to recognize the interim government in Bishkek. Speaking in the Belarusian capital, Minsk,

Bakiev said he was retracting a handwritten letter of resignation brandished by the authorities who forced him from power. "I do not recognize my resignation," Bakiev said, pledging to "explain later" before going on to say: "Nine months ago, the people of Kyrgyzstan elected me their president and I swore to serve them. There is no power that can stop me from fulfilling my oath. Only death can stop me." Bakiev described the interim authorities as a "gang" that "loots and kills."

Bakiev also said he was "ready to bear legal responsibility," but it was unclear if he meant he would answer for the violence in Bishkek, as the interim leaders are urging.

A Wanted Man

Bakiev was deposed in an April 7 uprising that left 85 people dead in Kyrgyzstan's capital, Bishkek, and brought a new interim government to power. Bakiev later fled to neighboring Kazakhstan and arrived in Belarus earlier this week under what Belarusian President Alyaksandr Lukashenka called the protection "of our state, and personally of the president." Lukashenka said Belarus had acted according to its responsibilities under the Collective Security Treaty Organization, a regional grouping that includes Belarus and Kyrgyzstan, and called on other members to meet to discuss the situation. But the head of the interim government, Roza Otunbaeva, late on April 20 condemned Belarus's decision to provide refuge to Bakiev, saying: "This criminal must be handed over back to our country. If that does not happen, there is Interpol."

In an interview with RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service today, Otunbaeva encouraged Bakiev to return to Kyrgyzstan. "If he is so strong, let him come to Kyrgyzstan. Let him fly back. And here, parents, brothers, and relatives of those who were killed [in the clashes], and all the Kyrgyz people will be waiting for him. Then we cannot take any responsibility for what kind of a trial and what kind of a punishment would be expected for him," Otunbaeva said. The Kyrgyz interim government's chief of staff said Bakiev, who is accused along with relatives over their roles in the shooting of demonstrators on April 7, could return to Kyrgyzstan only to face trial. Edil Baisalov called on the people of Belarus today not to let Bakiev use their country to "destabilize the situation in Kyrgyzstan." During a visit to Bishkek on April 20, Kazakh Foreign Minister Kanat Saudabaev, who currently chairs the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, said Bakiev's departure from Kyrgyzstan would help ease tension in the country. "Mr. Bakiev's departure from the country has now been secured, which has allowed to end a certain state of diarchy in the country, decreased tension, and provided the provisional government with conditions to begin the implementation its declared program," Saudabaev said.

More Scuffles

Continuing unrest in southern Kyrgyzstan is meanwhile highlighting the challenges facing interim authorities.

At the southern city of Jalal-Abad's central square today, scuffles broke out between hundreds of supporters of the ousted president and people backing the interim government. The authorities said they had arrested a number of Bakiev allies. RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports that the crowds dispersed and tension appeared to have eased after security forces shot into the air and the regional governor addressed the gatherings. Bektur Asanov, who has been appointed by the provisional government, called on all citizens of Kyrgyzstan to keep order and cooperate. He also said his administration had allowed pro-Bakiev activists to hold gatherings until today to "show its respect to what

Bakiev did for the country before April 7." But after today, he warned, no rally in Bakiev's support will be allowed.

'Deadly Force'

The warning came two days after Bakiev supporters forcibly entered the building of the regional administration in Jalal-Abad and appointed a rival governor, Paizullabek Rakhmanov.

However, Asanov told RFE/RL today that most of the government agencies in the city have started to function "normally." "Right now we are taking adequate measures. More than 500 voluntary policemen will be located here [at the main square], they will be provided with shelter and food here," Asanov said.

"On the other hand, today, all policemen in the Jalal-Abad region and the town are operating at full force. All government structures, especially law enforcement forces, started working normally. I would say there is no danger in the region."

Late on April 20, interim leader Otunbaeva warned looters and armed assailants that police would use "deadly force" against them. She urged the people of Kyrgyzstan to "keep calm, suppress provocations, fight back against ringleaders and the forces who seek to destroy public peace and interethnic harmony."

That message followed unrest on the edges of Bishkek on April 20 that left five people dead and prompted Russia -- which has a small military base in northern Kyrgyzstan -- to order the Russian military to protect ethnic Russians in the country.

At a press conference on April 20, Russian President Dmitry Medvedev said Kyrgyzstan faced anarchy and warned of regional consequences. Russian agencies quoted an unnamed Foreign Ministry official as saying Moscow no longer considers Bakiev president. Both the United States and Russia are talking with the interim government and have offered assistance. Other Developments In other developments, Kyrgyz media reported today that the interim government has introduced new, lower utility prices, effective from April 1. An increase in utility prices introduced by former Prime Minister Daniyar Usenov in January had sparked protest demonstrations in the country.

The press office of Kyrgyzstan's prosecutor-general announced today that some \$7 million was confiscated from business associates of Maksim Bakiev, the former president's son. It said the money was confiscated from deposit boxes in a Bishkek bank at the order of the city prosecutor's office. A criminal case against Maksim Bakiev was opened earlier by interim officials. The country's interim government also announced today the date of a nationwide referendum on the constitution, as well as for parliamentary elections.

Omurbek Tekebaev, the deputy chief of the interim government, said on state television that the referendum is scheduled for June 27. The parliamentary polls are to be held October 10. Tekebaev also announced that human rights activist Toleikan Ismailova has been appointed to chair the Central Election Commission. He said a new commission will be selected by Kyrgyz nongovernmental organizations, interim government authorities, and United Nations officials.

- **Kyrgyzstan Sets Referendum, Election Dates**

(RFE/RL) -- Kyrgyzstan's interim government has announced that the country will hold elections in October, after a referendum aimed at reducing the powers of the president.

Omurbek Tekebaev, the deputy leader of the interim government, said that parliamentary elections would take place on October 10 after a referendum on constitutional change to be

held on June 27. He said the government plans to reduce the power of the president to prevent authoritarianism and create a parliamentary republic. He said the parliamentary election could be held jointly with a presidential ballot. The interim government was set up after a popular uprising earlier this month ousted President Kurmanbek Bakiev.

In exile in Belarus, Bakiev says he is still president. The interim government, which accuses him of ordering the violent crackdown on protesters on April 7 and also of corruption, says he has resigned. The government says it has arrested a number of Bakiev allies in the south of the country.

- **New Kyrgyz Authorities Claim Legitimacy After Departure Of Bakiev**

Interim authorities in Kyrgyzstan have declared legitimacy and hopes for the end of conflict following the resignation and departure from the country of former President Kurmanbek Bakiev. Bakiev flew out of Kyrgyzstan and arrived in neighboring Kazakhstan on April 15, and interim officials said he had signed a letter of resignation.

The ousted leader "wrote his official resignation paper, signed it, and left," the chief of staff of the self-proclaimed interim government, Edil Baisalov, told RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service. He added that the resignation was "one of the key conditions of the international community." Kazakhstan, the current chair of the Organization For Security And Cooperation In Europe (OSCE), said it had negotiated Bakiev's departure from Kyrgyzstan along with the United States and Russia. The U.S. State Department said the U.S., Russian and Kazakh presidents -- Barack Obama, Dmitry Medvedev, and Nursultan Nazarbaev -- had discussed the departure of Bakiev during the nuclear security summit earlier this week in Washington.

United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has called Bakiev's departure "an important step toward the peaceful, stable, prosperous, and democratic development" of Kyrgyzstan. Bakiev's departure followed days of turmoil in which opposition figures declared an interim government following an April 7 revolt that left more than 80 people dead. The interim authorities have pledged to run Kyrgyzstan for the next six months in order to draft a new constitution and organize elections.

They have also vowed to pursue a trial of Bakiev for crimes he allegedly committed. Meanwhile, Baisalov said, authorities are searching for brother Janysh Bakiev and have arrested Bakyt Kalyev, a former defense minister accused of wrongdoing. Speaking during a summit in the Brazilian capital, Russian President Medvedev has said he hopes the "negative scenario" has been avoided in Kyrgyzstan now that Bakiev has left. Medvedev said he hoped Kyrgyzstan's new authorities will avoid what he called the "faults" of the Bakiev government, including nepotism and manipulation of business.

- **Kyrgyz Interim Leaders Try To Impose Order After Unrest**

(RFE/RL) -- Kyrgyzstan's interim rulers are trying to restore order following unrest on the outskirts of the capital, Bishkek, that left at least three people dead. The April 19 clashes over land, as well as continued unrest in the south, highlight the challenges facing interim authorities who took control after ousting President Kurmanbek Bakiev two weeks ago. Meanwhile, Bakiev reportedly has arrived in Belarus, where he and his family are undergoing medical tests, according to Belarusian President Alyaksandr Lukashenka. Bakiev initially fled Kyrgyzstan for neighboring Kazakhstan, but unconfirmed reports on April 19 said he had left for a third country. Lukashenka told lawmakers in his annual address to the Belarusian parliament that Bakiev arrived in Minsk one day earlier.

"On Monday, I ordered the relevant services to bring [Kurmanbek] Bakiev to Minsk -- at his own request, he asked for it himself more than once," Lukashenka said. "And although the airport was closed here, I said, 'That's your problem, you are the military; I want you to bring Bakiev to Minsk.' So Monday night he was in Minsk." Bakiev was warned earlier today by a Kyrgyz interim government member, Edil Baisalov, that the deposed president would be arrested if he returned to his homeland. In the southern town of Jalal-Abad, where sporadic gunfire was heard on April 19, supporters of the country's ousted president continue to resist the new interim authorities.

Geo strategic Front

- Uzbek, Russian Presidents Call For Political Stability In Kyrgyzstan

(RFE/RL) -- Russian President Dmitry Medvedev has met with his Uzbek counterpart, Islam Karimov, in Moscow for talks seen as an attempt to boost bilateral ties. But recent developments in Kyrgyzstan appear to have taken a great part in the discussions.

Karimov, who has ruled Uzbekistan since the Soviet era, is the first Central Asian leader to visit Moscow since an uprising in Kyrgyzstan ousted President Kurmanbek Bakiev earlier this month. Speaking today at a joint news conference at the Kremlin, Medvedev called for "political stability" in Kyrgyzstan and expressed hope that the country's interim leadership will take all the necessary measures to restore governance. "Anarchy in this case will deal a heavy blow to the interests of the people of Kyrgyzstan and the interests of their neighbors," Medvedev said. Medvedev called for elections in Kyrgyzstan in order to "replace the de facto rule" and allow the development of "full-fledged economic cooperation" with Russia. Bakiev rose to power in the aftermath of nationwide demonstrations in 2005 that forced his predecessor Askar Akaev into exile. He was forced out in the wake of deadly antigovernment protests in Bishkek.

Karimov, who has ruled Uzbekistan since Soviet times, condemned the deposition of any legitimate leadership. "Everything that is taking place in Kyrgyzstan today -- there is a real danger that these processes may become permanent," Karimov said "In 2005, when it all happened, that created a precedent, which is in fact contagious, and there is an illusion that it is very easy to depose any leadership or government that is perfectly legitimate."

Both Russia and the United States have offered support to the new Kyrgyz leadership, while the Uzbek state-controlled media were largely silent as the revolt unfolded in Kyrgyzstan. Karimov's Moscow trip was scheduled before Bakiev's ouster.

Sanobar Shermatova, a Moscow-based expert on Central Asia, tells RFE/RL's Uzbek Service that Karimov came to Moscow to improve the level of bilateral relations following cracks in this relationship. "Over the past one or two years, the balance of the relationship was disrupted. As proof of that, the relations worsened and in some instances were even frozen," Shermatova says. "For instance, there has been a great number of publications in the Russian press criticizing Uzbekistan and the Uzbek leadership. I think the time has come to increase the level of relations and settle issues and problems that have arisen between the two countries."

Balancing East, West

Following a storm of Western criticism that erupted after a deadly government crackdown on protesters in the eastern Uzbek city of Andijon in 2005, Uzbekistan turned toward Russia for international partnership. An air base at Karshi-Khanabad in southeastern Uzbekistan, which had been leased to the U.S. military to ensure supplies for its operations in Afghanistan, was closed. And Tashkent began entering Russian-led

regional groups that it had previously shunned, including the Eurasian Economic Community (Eurasec) and the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO).

But Tashkent has since suspended its membership in Eurasec and scaled back its participation in the CSTO, voicing objections to putting its troops under CSTO command. Meanwhile, ties with Washington have improved, with U.S. military dignitaries regularly visiting the Uzbek capital, Tashkent. The latest to do so was the head of U.S. Central Command, General David Petraeus, who met with Karimov earlier this month. Artyom Ulunyan, a professor at the Universal History Institute of the Russian Academy of Science, says the uprising in Kyrgyzstan created an opportunity for Russia to warn Tashkent against a worsening of ties.

Ulunyan says that the Russian and Uzbek leaders were expected to discuss military cooperation, adding that Russia wants to make sure Tashkent does not increase cooperation with the West. "The problems of energy and water supplies are of course very important. But right now, all the attention is on Kyrgyzstan and on the policies that its new leadership will follow, including on issues of military-technical cooperation with the United States and Russia and on the presence of the U.S. military base [near Bishkek]," Ulunyan says.

"It's not a secret that this is one of the biggest concerns that Moscow regularly brings up. This concerns Uzbekistan too. Will Uzbekistan agree to more cooperation with the Euro-Atlantic community or not?"

Finding Common Ground

Meanwhile, Andrei Grozin, the head of the Central Asia department at the Institute of CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States) Countries in Moscow, says that Karimov will try to gain Russian support in its disputes with its Tajik and Kyrgyz neighbors.

Moscow has angered Tashkent by promising financial aid to help Kyrgyzstan complete the Kambarata hydropower plant. Uzbekistan and Tajikistan also are at odds over the construction of the massive Roghun hydroelectric power plant.

Tashkent complains that the additional hydropower plants will reduce the amount of water Uzbekistan receives from its neighbors for agricultural irrigation. On April 19, about 20 protesters gathered at Moscow's Novokuznyetskaya subway station and held signs reading slogan such as: "Bakiev today, Karimov tomorrow." According to Shermatova, the Russian authorities wanted to send a message by allowing the rally.

"It is not common for Russia to allow a protest during a visit by a leader of a friendly country. But it's very symbolic; it shows that there are problems between the two countries," Shermatova says. "And Russia wants to show that problems exist, [and that] it is waiting for concessions from Islam Karimov."

- **Russia Rejects Bakiev's Claim To Kyrgyz Presidency**

Russia says it does not recognize a claim by deposed Kyrgyz leader Kurmanbek Bakiev that he is still president of Kyrgyzstan. Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov told a news conference today that Bakiev's handwritten resignation letter could not be reversed.

"All I know, and it has been announced officially, is that Kurmanbek Bakiev faxed a resignation letter to Bishkek," Lavrov said. "That was a document and it can hardly be rejected by verbal statements." Bakiev fled Kyrgyzstan following a violent uprising earlier this month and is currently in Belarus.

Kyrgyzstan's interim government announced on April 21 that the country will hold parliamentary elections on October 10 following a referendum aimed at curbing

presidential powers. Omurbek Tekebaev, the deputy leader of the interim government, said the parliamentary election may be held jointly with a presidential ballot.

- **Kyrgyz Government To Delay Decision On U.S. Military Base**

The interim Kyrgyz government says it will likely delay any decision on the fate of a U.S. military base that is key for shipping supplies to international troops in Afghanistan. Omurbek Tekebaev, a deputy prime minister, told Reuters that any decision on the Manas facility, where fewer flights have reportedly been made since the ouster of President Kurmanbek Bakiev earlier this month, would likely come after elections in October.

Tekebaev, in charge of constitutional reform, said some officials in the interim government want the Americans out, while others are uncertain. Meanwhile, U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said Washington had been reassured by the Kyrgyz interim administration that it can keep using the base. Speaking at a NATO meeting in Estonia, Clinton said Russia had no objections to the United States using Manas since Moscow is allowing the Pentagon to transport troops and materials across Russian airspace. The head of the interim Kyrgyz government, Roza Otunbaeva, has said her government would extend the lease on the air base for another year after the current deal expires in June.

- **The EU's Silence In Kyrgyzstan**

When Catherine Ashton took office late last year as the European Union's high representative for foreign policy, she promised quiet diplomacy. As far as Kyrgyzstan goes, EU diplomacy has gone one better. The EU has been virtually invisible. EU diplomats say the bloc's focus is on gathering information and stabilizing the situation. The information gathering was done by Pierre Morel, the EU's veteran envoy to Central Asia, who was dispatched to Bishkek on April 9. Morel was back in Brussels on April 14 to report to EU ambassadors.

Ashton told the European Parliament today that the orderly resignation of President Kurmanbek Bakiev had reduced tensions in Kyrgyzstan. But, she added, "we still have important work to do." By "we," Ashton appears to mostly mean the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, chaired this year by regional heavyweight Kazakhstan. The only evidence of direct contact with events on the ground Ashton gave today (apart from Morel's information gathering) was a phone call she had made to Kazakh Foreign Minister Saudabaev on Monday. The EU's deference to Kazakhstan is understandable, given the complexity of Kyrgyzstan's clan relations, the north-south divide, the threat of Islamic fundamentalism, and fears of a regional spillover effect.

But the bloc is also hampered by the fact that Kyrgyzstan happens to be a focal point for big power politics. It is host to the U.S. Manas air base, whose lease was extended by Bakiev last year, to the annoyance of Russia. The base is a vital staging post for NATO's resupply effort in Afghanistan, where most EU member states have troops on the ground. All of this puts meaningful action in Kyrgyzstan well out of the EU's collective reach. Foreign policy remains a jealously guarded member-state prerogative within the EU -- and it is in the nature of national interests to diverge. "What we cannot speak about we must speak over in silence," Wittgenstein once said. Applied to the letter, this advice would be tantamount to an admission of irrelevance on the part of the EU. This is something its top officials feel they can ill afford.

So Ashton went on at length today in the European Parliament about scope for EU action, promising the interim government "the necessary political, financial, and technical support," provided "it genuinely wants to join the democratic family." Experience suggests, however, that it is highly unlikely that any assistance the EU could offer would be sufficient to guarantee democracy, human rights, or the rule of law in Kyrgyzstan.

It is also questionable the bloc could do anything to ensure the more immediate priority identified by Ashton: that Kyrgyz citizens and businesses "be able to go about their daily life without fear for their lives or their physical integrity."

Economic/Energy Front

- **Kyrgyz Capital's Largest Market Closed Due To Disorder**

BISHKEK -- The largest outdoor market in the Kyrgyz capital, Bishkek, has closed due to disorder in the city's outskirts, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports. Traders at the hundreds of small shops and stands at the Dordoi market removed their goods today.

Several hundred young people with metal and wooden sticks attacked several homes on April 19 in the village of Maevka, just outside of Bishkek, demanding they be given plots of land on which to build houses. At least three people were killed and 40 injured during the clashes. Several homes and cars were also set on fire and more than 100 protesters were arrested. The Kyrgyz Interior Ministry said the situation was now under control.

Social Front

- **Kyrgyz Youth Movement Wants Apology From Belarusian President**

An injured protester is carried away during clashes in Bishkek. The interim government wants Bakiev to face trial for ordering security forces to open fire.

BISHKEK -- A Kyrgyz youth movement today demanded an apology from Belarusian President Alyaksandr Lukashenka for granting asylum to ousted Kyrgyz President Kurmanbek Bakiev, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports. Pure Intention (Ak-Niyet) leader Chyngyz Makeshov told journalists that his movement deplores Lukashenka's decision regarding Bakiev. He said members of the movement will begin demonstrating in front of the Belarusian Embassy in Bishkek if Lukashenka does not apologize.

Another Kyrgyz movement, April 7, held a protest at the Belarusian Embassy today to demand Bakiev's extradition to Kyrgyzstan. Bakiev fled the capital after massive antigovernment protests in Bishkek on April 7. He flew last week to Kazakhstan after writing a resignation letter, and later went with three members of his family to Belarus. He has since rescinded his resignation and said he is still president of Kyrgyzstan. At least 85 people were killed and hundreds wounded in violent clashes between protesters and security forces in Bishkek and other cities. Kyrgyzstan's interim government said it wants Bakiev to return to the country to face trial for his role in ordering security forces to open fire on demonstrators.

- **HRW Calls On Kyrgyzstan To Probe Violence**

Human Rights Watch has urged the interim authorities in Kyrgyzstan to open a probe into this month's violence that led to the ouster of President Kurmanbek Bakiev. The human rights group said its research found both security forces and demonstrators both to blame for escalating the conflict. Andrea Berg, Central Asia researcher at Human Rights Watch, called the April 6-8 unrest the "most serious incident of political violence in Kyrgyzstan since its independence."

A government crackdown on opposition protests left at least 85 people dead. Bakiev is now in exile in Belarus. The interim Kyrgyz government is facing lawlessness around the

capital, Bishkek, and resistance from Bakiev loyalists in the south. Russian President Dmitry Medvedev has ordered the Defense Ministry to protect ethnic Russians in Kyrgyzstan. Medvedev said Kyrgyzstan faced anarchy. He issued the order after ethnic Kyrgyz looters attacked ethnic Russian and Meskhetian Turkish villagers on the outskirts of Bishkek on April 19, killing at least five. It is unclear what measures the Russian military might take, but the country does have a small base in northern Kyrgyzstan with some 500 soldiers. Earlier, the head of the interim government, Roza Otunbaeva, spoke by phone with the leader of the Collective Security Treaty Organization, a military alliance of former Soviet republics.

Tajikistan

Political Front

- Tajik Parliament's Upper Chamber Reelects Speaker

DUSHANBE -- Dushanbe Mayor Mahmadsaid Ubaidulloev has been reelected as speaker of the Majlisi Milli, the upper chamber of the Tajik parliament, RFE/RL's Tajik Service reports. Ubaidulloev, the second-most powerful politician in Tajikistan after President Emomali Rahmon, has served as speaker of the upper chamber since 2000, when the bicameral legislature was created. The Majlisi Milli has 34 deputies, of whom 25 are elected by the regional parliaments of the country's five regions. Eight members are appointed by the president and Qakhor Mahqamov -- the former first secretary of the Communist Party who served as Tajik president from 1990-91 -- is guaranteed a seat for life in the Majlisi Milli under the post-civil-war constitution adopted in 1998.

The Majlisi Milli speaker assumes the presidential duties in the absence of the president or in the event he is incapacitated. Born in 1952, Ubaidulloev has been mayor of the Tajik capital for 13 years. Today's session was the first for the parliament since parliamentary elections were held on February 28. International monitors said the elections did not meet international standards.

- Tajik Prosecutor General Sacks Public Prosecutors

DUSHANBE -- Tajikistan's new prosecutor-general has fired 13 public prosecutors in what he says is an effort to reform the prosecutor's office, RFE/RL's Tajik Service reports. Sherkhon Salimzoda, who was chairman of Tajikistan's Anticorruption Agency before being named prosecutor-general in mid-February, said at a press conference in Dushanbe on April 12 that the sackings were necessary because "there were many deficiencies in the prosecutors' activities." Salimzoda, 53, said three of those fired were accused of not preventing corruption in their offices. He said eight were found not to be applying property laws in their work and the other two were suspected of covering up crimes.

No criminal cases have yet been opened against the fired procurators.

President Emomali Rahmon named Salimzoda to replace Bobojon Bobokhonov, who had been a rival of Salimzoda when he headed the Anticorruption Agency. Salimzoda added that human rights activist Nematullo Botakoziev, a Kyrgyz citizen, is not being detained in Tajikistan. Kyrgyzstan has asked that Botakoziev be extradited, but Salimzoda said Tajik authorities are asking for Kyrgyz officials to clarify their request and the charges against him. Rights groups said Botakoziev was being held in detention in Tajikistan.

Salimzoda said if there is evidence that the Kyrgyz case against Botakoziev is political, Tajikistan will have to consider his request for asylum based on Tajik law. Human Rights

Watch and other international rights groups have urged Tajikistan not to send Botakoziyev to Kyrgyzstan. He is wanted by Kyrgyz officials for organizing mass protests in 2008. Tajikistan's ombudsman, Zarif Alizoda, said in March that the Norouz holiday had resulted in a delay in the investigation into Botakoziyev's case.

- President to make annual address to parliament on April 24

DUSHANBE, April 21, 2010, Asia-Plus /Payrav Chorshanbiyev/ -- The first joint meeting of the Majlisi Milli (Tajikistan's upper chamber of parliament) and the Majlisi Namoyandagon (Tajikistan's lower chamber of parliament) of the fourth convocation will take place on April 24, according to the Majlisi Namoyandagon press service.

President Emomali Rahmon will make an annual address to parliament. In his annual address to parliament, the president usually touches upon issues related to domestic and foreign policy of the government as well as socioeconomic development of the country.

Geo strategic Front

- Tajik Official Urges Demarcation Of Kyrgyz Border

KHUYAND, Tajikistan -- A regional Tajik official says the Kyrgyz-Tajik border urgently needs to be demarcated in order to prevent violent cross-border incidents from occurring, RFE/RL's Tajik Service reports. Qohir Rasulzoda, the governor of the northern Tajik province of Sughd, said that the lack of a defined border is the main reason for violent incidents between Kyrgyz and Tajiks along their border.

Rasulzoda noted that earlier this month a group of Kyrgyz border guards in Batken Province reportedly destroyed several homes in Vorukh, a village in a Tajik exclave inside Kyrgyzstan. The exclave is officially part of Sughd's Isfara district.

After the alleged destruction of the homes, Tajik police and border guards temporarily detained eight Kyrgyz border guards.

Rasulzoda said a special joint commission on border issues -- led on the Tajik side by Amirqul Azimov, the secretary of Tajikistan's Security Council -- will try to find a long-term solution to the border problems.

Nematullo Mirsaidov, an expert on Tajik affairs, told RFE/RL that only open borders and cooperation from both sides can prevent further violent incidents along the Tajik-Kyrgyz border. In recent years, Tajik and Kyrgyz border posts in the Ferghana Valley have also been attacked by unknown assailants. Local authorities accuse Islamic militants of the attacks and the killings of some border guards.

- Seminar to discuss stability and security in CA opens in Ashgabat

DUSHANBE, April 21, 2010, Asia-Plus -- A two-day international seminar on "Stability and Security in Central Asia: Interaction with International and Regional Organizations", organized by the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia (UNRCCA) has opened in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan today, press release issued by UNRCCA said.

The seminar participants include representatives from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Afghanistan, Belgium, Germany, France, Iran, Norway, Pakistan, Russia, Turkey, the UK and the USA. International and regional organizations present include CIS, CSTO, EU, ICRC, NATO, OSCE, SCO and the UN (UNODC, UNDP and UNHCR). The aim of the seminar is to advance dialogue and facilitate active exchanges of information, views and networking on issues related to, and likely to affect, stability and sustainable development in Central Asia.

Representatives and experts from state structures, regional institutes of strategic studies, international and regional organizations, academic circles and think tanks are reviewing the role and influence of multilateral organizations in regional processes. They are also discussing and analyzing threats to security in Central Asia, including current dynamics in Afghanistan, their impact on Central Asia, and other political, social and economic factors of instability in the region.

Economic/Energy Front

- Tajik-Uzbek economic commission to consider freight hold-up problem soon

DUSHANBE, April 19, 2001, Asia-Plus -- The Tajik-Uzbek intergovernmental commission for economic and trade cooperation, co-chaired by Tajik Vice-Premier Murodali Alimardon and his Uzbek counterpart Rustam Azimov, will meet in Tashkent, Uzbekistan within the next few days and the freight hold-up problem will be one of major topics of the meeting, the First Deputy Tajik Foreign Minister, Abdullo Yuldoshev, told reporters in Dushanbe today.

Mr. Yuldoshev stressed that more than 2,000 Tajikistan-bound freight cars containing fuel, building materials and other essential goods have been stranded on Uzbek territory since February 10, 2010.

“Delays in delivery of cargos for Khatlon province and Gorno Badakhshan via the railroad Termez-Amuzang evoke a special concern,” said Tajik official, “The passage of freight trains via this railroad has been suspended since mid-March that inflicted a huge damage on Tajikistan’s economy, especial the agrarian sector.”

We will recall that the hold-up has caused a dispute between the neighboring countries, with Tajikistan accusing Uzbekistan of intentionally blocking the freight transiting through its territory. Uzbekistan has blamed technical problems, along with bad weather and an increase in freight traffic.

Chill hit Tajik-Uzbek relations in recent months over Tajikistan's plans to complete the construction of the Roghun hydropower plant despite Tashkent's objections. Uzbekistan says the Roghun plant will leave it facing water shortages.

Social Front

- Kazakhstan changes registration rules for Tajik and Kyrgyz nationals

DUSHANBE, April 16, 2010, Asia-Plus -- Kazakhstan has changed registration rules for nationals of Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan.

Mr. Kanat Zhumakahnov, the head of the consular service of the Kazakh Embassy in Dushanbe told Asia-Plus Thursday afternoon that Kazakhstan has changed stay procedures for citizens of Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan.

According to him, by a joint order of Kazakhstan’s Committee for National Security, Interior Ministry and MFA of April 13 changes were made to the rules of registration of foreign citizens.

The new registration rules came into effect on April 13 and under the new registration rules, citizens of Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan must register within five days of their arrival in Kazakhstan, while before that, Tajik nationals might stay in Kazakhstan up to 30 days without registration and Kyrgyz nationals might stay in Kazakhstan up to 90 days without registration. In the meantime, Russia’s news agency RIA Novosti reports the Kazakh MFA spokesman Askar Abdrakhmanov said that making changes to the registration rules was not connected with events in Kyrgyzstan. Kazakh official noted that changes to the

registration rules had been made in connection with the formation of the Customs Union between Kazakhstan, Russia and Belarus, RIA Novosti reported.

- Over one third of rural Tajiks food insecure

DUSHANBE, April 21, 2010, Asia-Plus -- The Food Security Monitoring System of the World Food Programme (WFP) reports that overall food insecurity has slightly worsened in the first quarter of 2010, leaving over one-third of the rural population in Tajikistan food-insecure, the REACT (Rapid Emergency Assessment and Coordination Team) News Bulletin # 18 reports.

One quarter of the rural dwellers is classified as moderately food insecure, up from 20% in the last monitoring round, and another 10% remains severely food insecure. Almost half of the households say they had difficulties in satisfying their food needs in the past three months. 81% of households report not having sufficient stocks for early spring.

Households that achieved food secure did so through the availability of wheat stocks from the last harvest, free food provided by relatives, borrowing and begging for food among other coping strategies, which will negatively impact on living conditions in the long run. Adversely affecting food security are the decrease of job opportunities in winter, the slump in remittances, continued food price increases and ad hoc expenditures for the purchase of shares in the Roghun hydropower project. The Disaster Management Partnership in Tajikistan – Rapid Emergency Assessment and Coordination Team (REACT) was established in 2001 to promote the sharing of information, logistics and other resources between partners active in the disaster management sector, including the Committee for Emergency Situations and the Government of Tajikistan. The group that involves over 50 state, local and international organizations and entities meets regularly to coordinate and share experiences on issues related to various areas of disaster management, including preparedness, response, mitigation and capacity building activities with national bodies. During emergency situations the partnership works closely together, coordinating response and assistance.

- EU launches a new call for proposals to support human rights and democracy in Tajikistan

DUSHANBE, April 20, 2010, Asia-Plus -- The Delegation of the European Union to Tajikistan is seeking proposals for supporting actions in the Republic of Tajikistan with financial assistance from the Program, European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights.

The general objectives of the new financing instrument are to contribute to the development and consolidation of democracy and the rule of law, and respect for all human rights and fundamental freedoms, within the framework of the Community's policy on development cooperation, and economic, financial and technical cooperation with third countries, and consistent with the EU's foreign policy as a whole.

The deadline for submission of proposals is July 16, 2010, 17:30 Dushanbe time. Launched in 2006, the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) replaces and builds upon the European Initiatives (2000-2006). The EIDHR is designed to help civil society to become an effective force for political reform and defense of human rights. It also supports regional and international organizations in this field, such as the Council of Europe, the OSCE and the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Turkmenistan

Political Front

- Head of Migration Service of Turkmenistan severely reprimanded

President of Turkmenistan Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov severely reprimanded the head of the Migration Service of Turkmenistan, Seyitnyyaz Balliyev by signing the appropriate order. As the Turkmenistan.ru correspondent reports quoting the press service of the Turkmen leader, the reprimand was issued "for poor organization and weakening of control over the work of recruitment for the migration service agencies." "Balliyev has been warned that if he fails to promptly correct the drawbacks he will be relieved of his duties," the press-service said.

Geo strategic Front

- Turkmenistan to hold military-tactical exercise "Galkan-2010"

Preparations are under way in Turkmenistan for the military tactical exercise "Galkan-2010" scheduled for end of April. The exercise is set to become a peculiar show of the operational readiness and technical equipment of the national army.

The annual demonstration will be attended by representatives of foreign diplomatic missions and heads of ministries and branch departments of Turkmenistan. As the Turkmenistan.ru correspondent report from Ashgabat, during the meeting on April 22 with the heads of military and law enforcement agencies, the President of Turkmenistan, Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces issued instructions to ensure high level of preparation for the exercise and look into the issue of awarding the most outstanding participants.

- Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov to pay state visit to China

On April 30, President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov will start a state visit to the People's Republic of China at the head of a governmental delegation. As the Turkmenistan.ru correspondent reports from Ashgabat, preparations and the program of the visit were discussed yesterday at a meeting of the Cabinet of Ministers of Turkmenistan. It was noted that during the visit the governmental delegation of Turkmenistan will take part in the opening ceremony of the largest international exhibition "EXPO 2010" in Shanghai, where Turkmenistan will present its exposition for the first time.

- UK intends to expand constructive dialogue with Turkmenistan

On April 16, Turkmen President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov received Special Representative of the UK on international trade and investment, Prince Andrew, Duke of York.

Noting that he was very pleased to once again visit Ashgabat, the guest emphasized the UK's intention to expand the constructive dialogue with Turkmenistan on the whole range of interstate cooperation. The enormous potential of Turkmenistan and its rapid economic growth gave rise to a strong interest of British business in establishing close and full-scale cooperation with the Turkmen partners, Prince Andrew said. He said trade and economic cooperation and energy sector were one of the priorities of partnership.

Talking about many opportunities to deepen economic ties, the President of Turkmenistan spoke in favor of diversification of partnership in this area. In the context of exchanging views on important aspects of cooperation, the Turkmen leader and the British special envoy paid special attention to cooperation in humanitarian sphere, including in education and science.

- Presidents of Turkmenistan and Iran talk over phone

President of Turkmenistan Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov and President of the Islamic Republic of Iran Mahmoud Ahmadinejad held a telephone conversation on April 16.

As the State News Agency of Turkmenistan (TDH) said, the Turkmen leader congratulated his Iranian counterpart on the opening of the two-day international conference on disarmament in Tehran and wished successes to the forum, which is designed to develop common approaches to solving one of the important issues of our time. He said that a high-level delegation of the government of Turkmenistan headed by a deputy prime minister would be sent to the Iranian capital to participate in a regular meeting of the Turkmen-Iranian commission for economic cooperation, as well as in the international conference on disarmament. During the telephone conversation they also discussed topical issues of international and regional politics, as well as prospects for interstate cooperation, which is successfully developing in the best traditions of good neighborliness, the TDH said.

Economic/Energy Front

- Chevron to make every effort to cooperate with Turkmenistan

Chevron, one of the sponsors of the 1st International Gas Congress in Ashgabat, will make every effort to continue the successful cooperation with Turkmenistan. As Turkmen President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov said on April 15 during a meeting with Vice-President of the US Corporation Jay Pryor, "there are all prerequisites for that, and above all the mutual desire to create a favorable environment for foreign partners."

According to him, Chevron is ready to offer Turkmenistan its services and expertise for exploration and production of oil and gas, processing and transportation, petrochemical industry, offshore operations.

As the Turkmenistan.ru correspondent reports quoting the press service of the head of state, during negotiations "the sides discussed the possibility of implementing joint projects taking into account the priorities of the national fuel and energy complex and maximum consideration of mutual interests."

- 1st International Gas Congress of Turkmenistan concludes in Ashgabat

The 1st International Gas Congress and exhibition of the oil and gas industry concluded in the Turkmen capital. It was organized by the Turkmengaz state concern, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Turkmenistan and British company "Summit Trade Events Ltd." Over 400 delegates from 32 countries, including Germany, France, Italy, Austria, Belgium, USA, Canada, Russia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Japan, UAE, Indonesia, Iran, Turkey participated in the gas forum.

The list of dignitaries at the congress included representatives from the U.S. State Department, the European Commission, the International Energy Agency, the Energy Charter Secretariat, the International Gas Union, the Ministries of Energy of the United Arab Emirates, Bulgaria, Iraq and Afghanistan, Envoys for Energy Efficiency and Security of the Republic Korea and the Czech Republic, the US Agency for International Development. The Forum heard presentations from international organizations, oil companies such as Chevron, Shell, RWE, BP, "LUKOIL, Itera", ENI, and others.

During the meetings they discussed issues of access to world markets, diversification of routes of natural gas exports, development of regional gas transportation infrastructure. There were also considered priority areas for attracting investments in the gas processing, legal and financial aspects of implementation of projects, including the development of natural gas fields in Turkmenistan. Numerous business meetings of foreign businessmen

and heads of oil and gas departments and corporations Turkmenistan were held as part of the gas congress and exhibition.

Social Front

- Turkmenistan to set up e-government

The Ministry of Economy and Development and the Ministry of Communications of Turkmenistan have been instructed to create a unified system to introduce information and communication technologies into public administration, as well as create a fiber-optic communication system of the Cabinet of Ministers of Turkmenistan with the ministries and line agencies.

Turkmen President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov signed a decree to this effect "to improve the efficiency of public administration on the basis of modern organization of interdepartmental information exchange, ensuring effective application of information and communication technologies, and enhancing safety and security of information."

The document approves the program of activities for 2010 on introduction of information and communication technologies into public administration, as well as composition of the coordination committee.

- Bishop Feofilakt on Easter pastoral visits to Turkmenistan

Bishop Feofilakt of Smolensk and Vyazemsk made an Easter pastoral visit to the Orthodox parishes in Turkmenistan. According to the official website of Smolensk and Vyazemsk Diocese, on April 13 Bishop Feofilakt performed a Divine Liturgy at the Church of Saint Nicholas in Ashgabat. All parishioners were blessed with icons of the Mother of God "The Virgin Hodegetria" sanctified in Smolensk. Children were also given small Easter gifts.

In the course of his pastoral trip to Turkmenistan Bishop Feofilakt visited the Turkmen-Russian school named after Pushkin in Ashgabat, where schoolchildren were briefed on the history of the Russian Orthodox Church, the church's more than two-hundred years of serving in Turkmenistan as well as history and traditions of the Easter celebrations.

On April 14, Bishop Feofilakt of Smolensk and Vyazemsk served a Divine Liturgy at the Church of Holy Apostle Thomas in Tejen, which was attended by all the orthodox clergy of Turkmenistan, as well as the imam of the city. At the end of the service students of the church's Sunday School made an Easter performance, and all who came to pray were given a small icon of the Smolensk Mother of God.

On 15-17 April, Feofilakt visited Balkan province of Turkmenistan, where he led a Divine Liturgy at the Church of the Nativity of the Virgin of the city of Balkanabad and the temple of Archangel Michael of the city of Turkmenbashi.

On the last day of his Easter visit, April 18, the administrator of the Patriarchal parishes in Turkmenistan served a Divine Liturgy in the Church of Alexander Nevsky in Ashgabat followed by the children's Easter celebrations. The distinctive feature of the service was the performance of the Paschal Troparion "Christ is Risen" in the Turkmen language.

On the same day, Bishop Feofilakt received in Ashgabat clergy and laity on religious and personal matters.

- President of Turkmenistan named Statesman of the Year in Turkey

The Association of Turkish Industrialists and Businessmen (TUSIAD) has awarded the title of "Statesman of the Year" to President of Turkmenistan Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov "for paternal care and assistance enabling Turkish businessmen to successfully overcome the effects of the global crisis."

As the Turkmenistan.ru correspondent reports from Ashgabat, this was announced by the Turkish State Minister for Trade and Engineering, Mehmet Zafer Caglayan and Chairman of the Association of Turkish Industrialists and Businessmen (TUSIAD) Veli Saritoprak at a meeting with Turkmen President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov.

According to the Turkish guests "Turkmenistan created all conditions for foreign businessmen, above all the continuing socio-political stability, improved legislation and favorable investment climate."

The State Minister of Turkey voiced a number of new proposals for cooperation and expressed readiness of Turkish companies to organize joint projects for production of goods in Turkmenistan and their subsequent sale in the world market, as well as intensify the relations in industry, tourism, shipbuilding and other promising spheres.

Uzbekistan Political Front

Geo strategic Front

- Uzbekistan Tightens Security In Andijon

Authorities in the eastern Uzbek city of Andijon are imposing stringent security measures on residents in the aftermath of last week's uprising that ousted Kyrgyz President Kurmanbek Bakiev, RFE/RL's Uzbek Service reports.

Security officers have been visiting Andijon citizens who have relatives in Kyrgyzstan's Osh and Jalal-Abad regions and asking them about their most recent visit to Kyrgyzstan. Andijon is about 20 kilometers from the Uzbek-Kyrgyz border and 40 kilometers from the Kyrgyz city of Osh. Both lie in the Fergana Valley, which is regarded as a hotbed of social and ethnic tension by the region's governments.

Andijon-based human rights activist Saidjahon Zainabiddinov told RFE/RL on April 16 that the city's streets were full of police officers wearing bulletproof vests. He said he was summoned by police and questioned about where he was and what he did in the last several days.

Shortly after the 2005 Tulip Revolution in Kyrgyzstan that toppled President Askar Akaev, thousands of people in Andijon held a mass protest that was brutally suppressed by Uzbek security forces. Witnesses said hundreds of peaceful demonstrators were killed, while Uzbek officials say less than 200 were killed, many of them security officers.

Hundreds of Uzbeks fled and trials were held to convict alleged agitators whom the government in Tashkent accused of helping foreign elements foment insurrection

- President meets Member of China's State Council

President of Uzbekistan Islam Karimov met with Meng Jianzhu, Member of State Council, Minister of Public Security of the People's Republic of China, in Oqsaroy on 23 April.

According to the President's press service, the head of our state noted that priority aspects of Uzbek-Chinese cooperation include deepening the political dialogue, further reinvigoration of joint efforts in bolstering the regional security, including within frameworks of Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), boosting the trade and investment cooperation for mutual benefit.

As the guest stated, efforts by Uzbekistan's leadership to revitalize the SCO activity in many areas of regional cooperation, especially during our nation's presidency in the Organization, have enjoyed broad international support.

President of Uzbekistan stressed that this country, located like China in close proximity to hotbeds of armed conflict, attaches a strategic importance to maintaining regional stability and security. In efforts to improve the effectiveness of partnership within SCO, prospects for raising the effectiveness of decision-making mechanisms to shore up the standing of the Organization and its structural units, have been discussed.

Member of PRC State Council Meng Jianzhu expressed sincere gratitude to head of our republic for the warm welcome, as well as confidence in the fact that activities planned within SCO frameworks under the chairmanship of Uzbekistan, including the state visit of PRC President Hu Jintao to the republic, will be at the highest level.

- Uzbek, Russian Presidents Call For Political Stability In Kyrgyzstan

Russian President Dmitry Medvedev (right) exchanges documents with Uzbek counterpart Islam Karimov in Moscow.

(RFE/RL) -- Russian President Dmitry Medvedev has met with his Uzbek counterpart, Islam Karimov, in Moscow for talks seen as an attempt to boost bilateral ties.

But recent developments in Kyrgyzstan appear to have taken a great part in the discussions. Karimov, who has ruled Uzbekistan since the Soviet era, is the first Central Asian leader to visit Moscow since an uprising in Kyrgyzstan ousted President Kurmanbek Bakiev earlier this month.

Speaking today at a joint news conference at the Kremlin, Medvedev called for "political stability" in Kyrgyzstan and expressed hope that the country's interim leadership will take all the necessary measures to restore governance. "Anarchy in this case will deal a heavy blow to the interests of the people of Kyrgyzstan and the interests of their neighbors," Medvedev said. Medvedev called for elections in Kyrgyzstan in order to "replace the de facto rule" and allow the development of "full-fledged economic cooperation" with Russia. Bakiev rose to power in the aftermath of nationwide demonstrations in 2005 that forced his predecessor Askar Akaev into exile. He was forced out in the wake of deadly antigovernment protests in Bishkek. Karimov, who has ruled Uzbekistan since Soviet times, condemned the deposition of any legitimate leadership. "Everything that is taking place in Kyrgyzstan today -- there is a real danger that these processes may become permanent," Karimov said "In 2005, when it all happened, that created a precedent, which is in fact contagious, and there is an illusion that it is very easy to depose any leadership or government that is perfectly legitimate."

Both Russia and the United States have offered support to the new Kyrgyz leadership, while the Uzbek state-controlled media were largely silent as the revolt unfolded in Kyrgyzstan. Karimov's Moscow trip was scheduled before Bakiev's ouster.

Sanobar Shermatova, a Moscow-based expert on Central Asia, tells RFE/RL's Uzbek Service that Karimov came to Moscow to improve the level of bilateral relations following cracks in this relationship.

"Over the past one or two years, the balance of the relationship was disrupted. As proof of that, the relations worsened and in some instances were even frozen," Shermatova says.

"For instance, there has been a great number of publications in the Russian press criticizing Uzbekistan and the Uzbek leadership. I think the time has come to increase the

level of relations and settle issues and problems that have arisen between the two countries."

Balancing East, West

Following a storm of Western criticism that erupted after a deadly government crackdown on protesters in the eastern Uzbek city of Andijon in 2005, Uzbekistan turned toward Russia for international partnership. An air base at Karshi-Khanabad in southeastern Uzbekistan, which had been leased to the U.S. military to ensure supplies for its operations in Afghanistan, was closed.

And Tashkent began entering Russian-led regional groups that it had previously shunned, including the Eurasian Economic Community (Eurasec) and the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). But Tashkent has since suspended its membership in Eurasec and scaled back its participation in the CSTO, voicing objections to putting its troops under CSTO command.

Meanwhile, ties with Washington have improved, with U.S. military dignitaries regularly visiting the Uzbek capital, Tashkent. The latest to do so was the head of U.S. Central Command, General David Petraeus, who met with Karimov earlier this month.

Artyom Ulunyan, a professor at the Universal History Institute of the Russian Academy of Science, says the uprising in Kyrgyzstan created an opportunity for Russia to warn Tashkent against a worsening of ties. Ulunyan says that the Russian and Uzbek leaders were expected to discuss military cooperation, adding that Russia wants to make sure Tashkent does not increase cooperation with the West. "The problems of energy and water supplies are of course very important. But right now, all the attention is on Kyrgyzstan and on the policies that its new leadership will follow, including on issues of military-technical cooperation with the United States and Russia and on the presence of the U.S. military base [near Bishkek]," Ulunyan says. "It's not a secret that this is one of the biggest concerns that Moscow regularly brings up. This concerns Uzbekistan too. Will Uzbekistan agree to more cooperation with the Euro-Atlantic community or not?"

Finding Common Ground

Meanwhile, Andrei Grozin, the head of the Central Asia department at the Institute of CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States) Countries in Moscow, says that Karimov will try to gain Russian support in its disputes with its Tajik and Kyrgyz neighbors. Moscow has angered Tashkent by promising financial aid to help Kyrgyzstan complete the Kambarata hydropower plant. Uzbekistan and Tajikistan also are at odds over the construction of the massive Roghun hydroelectric power plant. Tashkent complains that the additional hydropower plants will reduce the amount of water Uzbekistan receives from its neighbors for agricultural irrigation. On April 19, about 20 protesters gathered at Moscow's Novokuznetskaya subway station and held signs reading slogan such as: "Bakiev today, Karimov tomorrow." According to Shermatova, the Russian authorities wanted to send a message by allowing the rally.

"It is not common for Russia to allow a protest during a visit by a leader of a friendly country. But it's very symbolic; it shows that there are problems between the two countries," Shermatova says. "And Russia wants to show that problems exist, [and that] it is waiting for concessions from Islam Karimov."

- SCO emergency bodies meet in Tashkent

The fifth session of the heads of bodies dealing with prevention and liquidation of emergency situations of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization was held in Tashkent on

21 April. Representatives of the respective bodies of China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan participated in the meeting. The participants considered information on the largest emergency situations in SCO member states over the past year and measures to prevent similar situations. They exchanged views on the perspectives of cooperation in preventing and liquidating emergency situations. The meeting concluded with signing of a protocol of the fifth session.

- Islam Karimov arrives in Moscow

President of Uzbekistan Islam Karimov on the invitation of President of Russia Dmitriy Medvedev arrived with an official visit in Moscow on 19 April.

The main events of the visit are planned for 20 April. Presidents Islam Karimov and Dmitriy Medvedev will consider perspectives of development of Uzbek-Russian relations, as well as regional and international problems of mutual interest. Signing of a number of bilateral documents, aimed at expansion of cooperation between the two countries in various areas, is expected during the visit.

Economic/Energy Front

- Uzbek-Malaysian business forum held

The forum of business circles of Uzbekistan and Malaysia opened in Tashkent in Wednesday. The event has been organized by the Commerce and Industry Chamber of Uzbekistan in cooperation with Malaysian People's Trust Fund (Majlis Amanah Rakyat, MARA) and International Business Women Association. The representatives of sectors like trade, investments, healthcare, applied art, food industry, transport and transport communications, chemicals, furniture, tourism and others are participating in the forum.

The trade and economic cooperation between Uzbekistan and Malaysia has been developing consistently. The state visit of President Islam Karimov to Malaysia in October 2005 helped raise bilateral relations on a higher level.

The business forum participants will get acquainted with the reforms in Uzbekistan, the privatization process, priority sectors for investments and other issues. "Malaysia highly values cooperation with Uzbekistan," Dato Otman bin Haji Ahmad, head of entrepreneurship support department of MARA, said. "This forum should help expand and strengthen economic cooperation between the two countries." In the framework of the business forum, a cooperation exchange was held between the companies of Uzbekistan and Malaysia.

- Uzbekistan's GDP grows 7.6% in 1Q 2010

The Cabinet of Ministers of Uzbekistan held a session on 16 April to consider the results of the country's socioeconomic development in the first quarter of 2010 and implementation of the tasks outlined by the President at the government's meeting on 29 January.

The members of the government considered the efficiency of the measures to ensure macroeconomic balance and stable growth of the economy, as well as speeding up the implementation of the most important investment projects to modernize the production.

The Cabinet said consistent implementation of the programs of structural reforms and diversification of the economy, as well as the Anti-Crisis Program for 2009-2012, the country had managed to neutralize the influence of the global crisis and ensure macroeconomic stability and high economic growth. The GDP of Uzbekistan in January-March increased by 7.6%, industrial production by 7%, agricultural production by 6.1%, services by 12.2% and construction works by 20.1%. The state budget surplus made up

0.2% to GDP and the inflation level was within the forecast parameters. The volume of export grew by 22.1% in January-March, while the foreign direct investments increased 2.6 times against the same period of 2009. 118 new industrial objects were commissioned in the first quarter, and 29 projects of technical modernization were completed. This year, a total of 418 industrial modernization and re-equipment projects will be implemented in the country.

From the beginning of the year, 215,400 new workplaces were created in Uzbekistan, including more than 150,100 or about 70% in rural areas. UZS 1.4 trillion and USD 25.4 million were spent for implementation of the State Program “Year of Harmoniously Developed Generation”. The government said measures were being taken to improve the protection of health of mothers and children, as well as conditions at educational establishments and children’s sports objects.

Information and communication technologies are being widely introduced in the educational process. This year, 1,551 schools will be provided with computers and 316 rural schools will receive educational and laboratory equipment. In January-March, 106,800 new workplaces were opened for young people. The banks issued preferential mortgage credits worth UZS 23.8 billion to young families.

Social Front

- Charges Dropped Against Uzbek Police In Alleged Gang Rape

TASHKENT -- Criminal charges against 12 Uzbek policemen suspected of the gang rape of Raykhon Soatova and her two sisters in jail have been dropped, RFE/RL's Uzbek Service reports.

The alleged victims' brother, Abdusamat Soatov, told RFE/RL on April 21 that according to a Tashkent prosecutor, a DNA test revealed no connection between any of the suspects and Soatova's child, who she said was conceived in the assault. Soatova, 28, gave birth prematurely in the prison hospital in December.

Soatov added that he has not received any official notification from the internal affairs investigations department, and the father of Soatova's child remains unidentified.

Soatov was told that during the investigation, Raykhon could not positively identify any of the 12 men she said had abused her. Soatov said his formal complaint to the Tashkent Prosecutor's Office was rejected, reportedly due to a lack of evidence. Soatov added that he will continue seeking justice. Soatova and her sisters -- Khosiyat and Nargiza -- were arrested on May 9, 2009, during a physical altercation with the alleged mistress of Nargiza's husband. They were sentenced to between six and seven years in prison on hooliganism and robbery charges.

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