

BUSINESS AND POLITICS IN THE MUSLIM WORLD

TURKEY

Weekly Report on Turkey's Political, Geo-Strategic, Economic and Social Issues,

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Submitted By: Aasia Khatoon khattak

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## **SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **POLITICAL NEWS**

President Abdullah Gül approved the government's constitutional amendment package on 12 May. The Government will be submitting the package for public referendum on July 18 of this year.

A Diyarbakır special prosecutor has launched an investigation into an attack on soldiers in Lice on May 1 that resulted in the death of Lt. Ahmet Altunoğlu. After the attack, which was attributed to the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), the PKK made a statement saying it had not been involved in the assault.

### **GEO-STRATEGIC NEWS**

A Turkish citizen Izzet Sahin who is the member of the Humanitarian Aid Foundation was detained by Israeli security forces on charges of providing aid to Palestinians organizations banned by Israel. The interrogation of this incident is undergoing. The non-Governmental organization on the other hand protested against the detention of Izzet Sahin by Israeli security forces.

Parliament speakers and senior lawmakers from fourteen Muslim countries gathered in İstanbul on 11 May to discuss Israeli plans to build new houses for Jews in East Jerusalem. All the states condemned the Israel's irresponsible policies and her illegal construction in Jerusalem.

The European Union's Reflection Group, which was created in December 2007 upon the initiative of French President Nicolas Sarkozy to present recommendations for the year 2030, has concluded that Brussels should keep its promises to Turkey, meaning that negotiations should continue with the aim of full membership. The report, official name is Project Europe 2030: Challenges and Opportunities.

Russian President Dmitry Medvedev paid two days an official visit to Turkey on 12 May. Turkey and Russia agreed to create an intergovernmental council to deepen bilateral economic relations and signed a series of agreements -- including one on mutually lifting visa requirements. Among other highlights of the visit is an agreement that will allow Russian companies to build Turkey's first nuclear power plant in the southern province of Mersin. A Turkish court canceled a previous tender won by a Russian consortium. The construction of the nuclear power plant is expected to take seven years. Russia signed a \$20 billion deal to build a nuclear power plant with four reactors in Turkey.

Iran expressed its willingness for holding talks with the European union's foreign minister policy chief in Turkey over its disputed nuclear issue after newly proposed promises for the nuclear fuel deal by Turkey and Brazil. Iran did not elaborate these new proposed promises but now she is much hopeful for a diplomatic solution of her nuclear issue.

Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan paid two days visit to Athens. According to Turkish diplomats this visit will mark a new era in the relations of the Turkey and Greece.

The European Union has announced its backing of the constitutional amendments package passed in Parliament and has pledged to open talks on more negotiating chapters with Ankara in the next two months.

With two weeks left until a convoy of international aid ships departs for Gaza, the Humanitarian Aid Foundation (İHH) is completing its preparations and hopes to break a years-long Israeli embargo on the Gaza Strip.

A top Afghan official Rashid Mubariz, Afghanistan's deputy minister of culture and information has praised Turkey's efforts to boost education and help in restructuring Afghanistan, saying Turkish assistance to the country was unparalleled. There are six Afghan-Turkish schools --

including one girls' high school -- operating in Afghanistan, the first of which was opened in 1995. Mubariz also called for more cooperation between Turkish and Afghan media institutions and training programs in Turkey for Afghan journalists.

An Azerbaijani official has said The Baku-Tbilisi-Kars (BTK) railway connecting Azerbaijan's capital city of Baku to the eastern Turkish city of Kars, which is currently under construction, will be joined by another new railroad to be built between Azerbaijan and Turkey to lift the autonomous Nakhchivan region out of isolation.

On the occasion of an official visit to Kiev by Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu, Ukraine and Turkey have signed two landmark deals promising intense and strategic bilateral relations between the two countries in various fields.

Kyrgyzstan's interim government approved on Friday a 2009 deal signed with Turkey to get military aid from Turkish Armed Forces. Kyrgyz Defense Minister Ismail Isakov said that Kyrgyz government unanimously approved the agreement signed in December 2009. Turkey's military aid is worth 800,000 U.S. dollars. Turkey's military aid will go to Kyrgyz national guards and border units.

Turkey and Bosnia-Herzegovina signed Tuesday an agreement on health cooperation.

Turkish Health Minister Recep Akdag and Bosnian Civil Affairs Minister Sredoje Novic signed the agreement in Ankara.

Speaking at the signing ceremony, Akdag said that healthcare was one of the priorities to enhance relations between the two countries. He said that Turkey would be pleased to share its experiences to reform Bosnia's healthcare system.

### **Economic News**

Turkey and Botswana on Thursday signed a commercial, economic and technical cooperation agreement in Ankara. Problems related to an unprecedented rise in prices in the Turkish red meat market over the past few weeks remain unsolved following the cancellation of two recent tenders for the procurement of livestock.

Civil Aviation General Directorate (SHGM) head Ali Arıduru has said Despite the recent economic recession, the number of private jets grew significantly in Turkey in the last several years and now stands at 75.

Tobacco and Alcohol Market Regulatory Agency (TAPDK) head Mehmet Küçük said yesterday that a ban on smoking in indoor public areas as well as the recent price hikes in tobacco have led to the most dramatic fall ever in tobacco consumption throughout the nation.

State Minister Cevdet Yılmaz said on Monday in Antalya that the Turkish government is ready to contribute to the healthy economic integration of the Organization of the Islamic Conference's (OIC) member countries, underlining that this has become particularly important since the 2009 global financial crisis that shook global market balances.

### **SOCIAL NEWS**

A downpour that lasted from Tuesday night to early Wednesday morning has disrupted life in eastern Turkey, particularly the province of Ağrı, where a bridge collapsed and thousands of houses were flooded.

neighborhood was cut off from the Ağrı city center after a bridge over Taşlıçay creek collapsed in the city, while about 3,000 houses and workplaces were flooded.

## POLITICAL NEWS

Gül approves reforms, package goes to referendum

President Abdullah Gül approved on Wednesday the government's constitutional amendment package. The government is now focused on a public referendum on the package.

The Republican People's Party (CHP), on the other hand, plans to appeal the package at the Constitutional Court.

The two pillars of the reforms call for overhauling the Constitutional Court and the restructuring of the Supreme Board of Judges and Prosecutors, responsible for managing the judiciary. If everything goes according to the ruling Justice and Development Party's (AK Party) plans and no further surprises occur, the package will be submitted to referendum on July 18.

With Article 17, the Constitutional Court will have a total of 17 regular members. Three of these will be appointed by Parliament. The president will choose three members from among the Supreme Court of Appeals' nominees, two from among judges nominated by the Council of State, one by the Military Supreme Court of Appeals, one from among three nominees by the Military Higher Administrative Court and three from judges nominated by the Higher Education Board (YÖK). Four other members will be appointed, again by the president, from among independently employed lawyers, first-class judges and prosecutors and from among Constitutional Court rapporteurs who have served the high court for at least five years.

13 May 2010, Thursday

## TODAY'S ZAMAN İSTANBUL

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More officers testify in Sledgehammer probe

A group of active duty and retired military officers testified on Wednesday to prosecutors conducting an investigation into the Sledgehammer plan, a coup plot allegedly devised by the military.

The officers, who answered questions yesterday at İstanbul's Beşiktaş Courthouse, were released after being interrogated by prosecutors. They left via a back door and drove off in a vehicle with civilian license plates. The names of those who testified were not made public, but they reportedly included three active duty colonels.

The officers, who answered questions yesterday at İstanbul's Beşiktaş Courthouse, were released after being interrogated by prosecutors. They left via a back door and drove off in a vehicle with civilian license plates. The names of those who testified were not made public, but they reportedly included three active duty colonels.

According to the Sledgehammer plot, the Turkish Armed Forces (TSK) had a systematic plan to create chaos in society by bombing mosques and attacking popular museums. The attacks' desired result was to increase pressure on the Justice and Development Party (AK Party) government over a perceived failure to provide security to its citizens. The attacks were to eventually lead to a military coup. More than 25 military officers, including four generals, have been released without appearing before a judge in the past two weeks after being questioned by prosecutors Ali Haydar, Mehmet Ergül and Süleyman Pehlivan. In early April, İstanbul Chief Public Prosecutor Aykut Cengiz Engin, in a controversial move, suspended the Sledgehammer probe when he removed two prosecutors from the case.

13 May 2010, Thursday

## TODAY'S ZAMAN İSTANBUL

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Gülen, CHP say sympathy message distorted

Prominent Turkish scholar Fethullah Gülen and the Republican People's Party (CHP), whose erstwhile leader Deniz Baykal has been at the center of an alleged sex tape scandal, both denied reports that Gülen had advised the party to seek out the individuals behind the release of the tape in the government.

Gülen released a written statement yesterday to deny the reports. "I have heard about the video scandal about esteemed CHP leader Baykal from news bulletins. I was deeply overcome [by the incident] with humanitarian feelings. I shared my sincere feelings with my friends close to me. One of my friends who came to visit me conveyed these feelings to esteemed Baykal. Other than this, the statements reported in the media -- which quoted me as saying: 'I asked our guys. It has nothing to do with us. They should look at the government' -- are certainly slander and lies. I would like to respectfully present this to the public," Gülen said in the statement.

Baykal announced his immediate resignation from party leadership on Monday amid fallout from a video clip posted online that allegedly shows him in an intimate situation with a party deputy. The outgoing CHP leader underlined while announcing his resignation that he believes in the sincerity of a message of sympathy he received from "Pennsylvania," in an indication that he had been contacted by Gülen, a preacher, prolific writer and advocate of interfaith and intercultural dialogue, after the release of the videotape. Gülen lives in self-imposed exile in a small town in Pennsylvania.

CHP administration also released a statement on Tuesday, saying some news reports had distorted Gülen's message. "The fact is that messages from Pennsylvania condemning the conspiracy against esteemed former CHP leader Baykal and conveying sympathy and positive opinions about Baykal were distorted by some media outlets," the CHP's statement said.

13 May 2010, Thursday

TODAY'S ZAMAN İSTANBUL

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Investigation launched into Lice attack

A Diyarbakır special prosecutor has launched an investigation into an attack on soldiers in Lice on May 1 that resulted in the death of Lt. Ahmet Altunoğlu, following reports that despite having intelligence on the possibility of an assault, the military failed to take the necessary precautions to fend off the attack.

After the attack, which was attributed to the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), the PKK made a statement saying it had not been involved in the assault. In response to the special prosecutor's request, one noncommissioned officer and 10 soldiers were questioned last Thursday. Reports said that during the eight-hour interrogation, the soldiers said they were returning from a field search and were attacked in a woody area 1.5 kilometers from the Abalı outpost and 50 meters from the Bingöl-Diyarbakır outpost. They also said there were four rifle barrels directed at them.

The Sabah daily gave details of the soldiers' accounts: "It was about 8:30 p.m. It was dark. We saw that we were being fired upon from four rifle barrels. Our lieutenant was killed in the first round of fire and one soldier next to him avoided a bullet to his head as he was wearing a helmet. We responded with our machine guns, rockets and rifles. They were targeting us one by one, but we were sweeping the area. The terrorists escaped into the forest area, and it was dark, so we were not involved in a hot pursuit. But we saw that there were four people. The clash lasted about 15 minutes."

Investigators who searched the area found 213 shells belonging to the 20-soldier team. They were unable to find the gun that had fired the shell that killed Lt. Altunoğlu. The prosecutor's office sent a sample of the shell to a crime lab.

The Taraf daily has accused the military of inaction despite prior warnings about the attack. It recalled that columnists in the Star and Bugün dailies had written in columns published on April 26 stating that a subversive plan was being staged to overshadow talks on the government's constitutional amendment package amid a contentious vote in Parliament.

11 May 2010, Tuesday

TODAY'S ZAMAN İSTANBUL

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Links found between Ergenekon and Dink suspects

The latest hearing on the assassination of the Turkish-Armenian journalist Hrant Dink, who was fatally shot by an ultranationalist teenager outside the Agos weekly in 2007, revealed that some defendants in the Ergenekon case were in contact with defendants in the Dink case.

A report sent from the İstanbul Police Department to the court hearing the Dink case said six Ergenekon defendants had telephone conversations with the defendants in the Dink case prior to Dink's murder. According to the report, these Ergenekon suspects were Veli Küçük, Kemal Kerişsiz, Mustafa Levent Göktaş, Muzaffer Tekin and Erbay Çolakoğlu.

The report was the result of the request by the Dink family's lawyers, who had demanded the 14th İstanbul High Criminal Court write to the İstanbul Police Department to inquire about any links, such as possible telephone conversations, between suspects in the Ergenekon case and the Dink case.

The court asked the police department to look for any links between the two cases, such as whether or not suspects had their telephone numbers in each others' phone books and if they had called one another.

At a hearing of the Dink trial last October, co-plaintiff lawyer Fethiye Çetin stated that Dink's murder, along with that of an Italian priest in 2006 and the 2007 slaying of three Christians in Malatya, was part of an operation carried out by Ergenekon, a neo-nationalist gang believed to be the extension of a clandestine network of groups with members in the armed forces.

Also yesterday, during the 13th hearing of the Dink trial, a secret witness -- "Secret Witness 1" -- identified suspects Osman Hayal, Yasin Hayal and Ogün Samast.

Answering questions from another room during the hearing, the secret witness, whose voice was distorted, said he/she saw the murder while he/she was walking outside Akbank toward the Agos building. The witness said that one person

a seconds-long talk with Dink and then two other people approached Dink, one of them tall and thin and wearing jeans and a jacket. The witness also said that he/she did not notice if the suspect was wearing a white cap. Regarding the other person who approached Dink, the witness said the person was wearing a striped sweater and a heavy jacket and he was plump and had curly hair.

"I saw four or five people related to the incident. They were talking to each other. They were standing on the sidewalk where Dink was killed. Following the incident, one person who escaped from the scene was the brother of Yasin Hayal," the witness said, adding that one of the suspects ran toward Şişli and the other in another direction.

Asked by Yasin Hayal's lawyer, Eda Salman, why he/she waited for two weeks to testify about the incident, the witness said: "I was so afraid. I told my family about the incident and they encouraged me to talk about it."

In answer to Salman's question regarding how Dink's lawyers found him/her as the witness wanted to testify to one of their lawyers, Arzu Becerik, the witness said that the police asked him/her to testify.

At the hearing, there was a brief dispute between the lawyers of the two sides. The witness further said that after he/she told to his/her family about what he/she saw, they made contact with the Dink family through some acquaintances and Dink's brother located the secret witness. Osman Hayal said he does not accept what the secret witness said and added that he and his brother could not be accomplices. Yasin Hayal said police records showed he was in Trabzon at the time of the murder. Samast said he committed the murder alone and Osman and Yasin Hayal were nowhere near him.

The secret witness was also asked to identify the suspects. The court officials brought the defendants to the front and placed them among the other defendants in the case. The secret witness identified Osman Hayal, Yasin Hayal and Samast from among the others when their pictures were projected into the room where he/she was located.

Another witness who also said he/she also wants to give testimony as a secret witness was present at the court today. The hearing was continuing with his/her testimony as Today's Zaman went to print.

Several groups such as Reporters Without Borders and the Social Memory Platform and family members of other victims of political murders have supported the Dink family during the trial. At the last hearing in February, families whose relatives were victims of political murders signed a statement in support of the Dink family, including relatives of journalists Uğur Mumcu, Çetin Emeç, Metin Göktepe and Abdi İpekçi.

11 May 2010, Tuesday

TODAY'S ZAMAN İSTANBUL

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Mother's Day grief for the mothers of slain soldiers

"I am waiting for your funeral ceremony instead of waiting for you to kiss my hand for Mother's Day," yelled Seçil Can, the mother of Special Sgt. Metin Can who was killed as the result of a clash with members of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) in Hakkari's Yüksekova district on Friday.

While many mothers are waiting for their children to kiss their hands for Mother's Day, which is annually celebrated on the second Sunday in May, some mothers whose soldier sons were slain in various clashes with members of the outlawed PKK visited cemeteries where their sons were buried across the country on the occasion of Mother's Day.

When she received the news that her son had been killed, Seçil Can broke down. "My son was 23 years old. He kissed my hand every Mother's Day. If he didn't have the chance to see me, he always called me on the telephone to celebrate Mother's Day. I am waiting for his funeral now instead of waiting for him to kiss my hand. I won't have a chance to see the time when he will marry, have children. This Mother's Day is the worst day for me," said Can, expressing her grief. In addition, Lütfiye Can, the slain soldier's grandmother, damned the terrorists and the PKK, which is classified as terrorist organization. A funeral ceremony was held in Adana's Kozan district, the location of Metin Can's hometown.

Sakine Tanrikolu, whose son Special Corp. Abidin Tanrikolu was slain in the same clash as Metin Can in Hakkari, took medication to try to get through her son's funeral on Sunday in Adiyaman. Sakine Tanrikolu said Mother's Day should be the happiest day for all mothers and that she had experienced the worst day of her life as her son Abidin was buried on Mother's Day.



“I will see the funeral of my son on Mother’s Day. Mothers of the slain soldiers will continue to cry until terrorism finishes,” said Tanrikolu.

Hanım Temel, who is the mother of Pvt. Emrah Temel killed in Siirt’s Eruh district on Sept. 8 due to a clash with members of the outlawed PKK, visited her son’s grave in Sakarya and tearfully prayed for him. “I am keeping the gift safe which my son gave me last year for Mother’s Day. This is the first time I have been separated from my son on Mother’s Day. When I see the news on television or in the newspapers that a soldier has been killed, I become very saddened. Our greatest desire is to stop terrorism,” Temel said.

In addition, the families of three children who have been missing in Kayseri’s Talas district since the second day of Eid al-Adha (the Feast of the Sacrifice) in late September when they toured their neighborhood to collect candy, also experienced their worst Mother’s Day as they have no idea where their children are.

Leyla Tekin, whose 8-year-old son Ahmet Tuna and 6-year-old daughter Dilruba are still missing, and Özlem Ay, the mother of missing Tülay Ay, said that they are suffering great pain. Speaking to the Anatolian news agency, Tekin said her children had given her a bouquet of flowers for Mother’s Day last year. She misses her children terribly but says she hasn’t given up hope of the missing children being found.

10 May 2010, Monday

TODAY’S ZAMAN İSTANBUL

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Eroğlu asks new UBP leader to form KKTC government

Turkish Cypriot President Derviş Eroğlu yesterday asked the new chairman of the National Unity Party (UBP) to form a new government. Eroğlu was elected president last month.

UBP members elected İrsen Küçük as the new chairman of the UBP during a party meeting on Sunday, where Küçük was the sole candidate put forward. Eroğlu was the former chairman of the ruling UBP and the prime minister of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (KKTC) before his election as president on April 18.

The UBP, which won the parliamentary elections last year and had enough of a parliamentary majority to form the government alone, now seeks a coalition because two of its members, Eroğlu and another senior political figure who also resigned from the party to run in the presidential election, left. It now controls 24 seats in the 50-seat parliament. On Monday, Eroğlu had talks with Küçük and leaders of other parties represented in the parliament to discuss the new government. Eroğlu first met with Freedom and Reform Party (ÖRP) officials, under the leadership of Chairman Turgay Avci. ÖRP has two deputies in the parliament.

Speaking to reporters before meeting with the ÖRP officials, Eroğlu said he wants to get the views of all parties and thus would meet with all party officials. Noting that the most important thing now is to form the government, Eroğlu said the prime minister designate has several options. He said after he assesses the alternatives, he would draft a list of cabinet members. Eroğlu also met with the Communal Democracy Party (TDP), which has two seats in parliament. The president then met separately with the Democracy Party (DP), Republican Turks Party (CTP) and the UBP later in the afternoon.

Küçük now has 15 days to present Eroğlu with a cabinet list. Speaking to reporters after meeting with Eroğlu, Küçük said he would first hold talks with his party officials, following which he will meet with representatives of other parties.

The UBP calls for equal sovereign rights for the Turkish Cypriots in any settlement in Cyprus, a demand firmly rejected by the Greek Cypriots. Eroğlu has said he is ready to resume reunification talks with Greek Cypriot leader Dimitris Christofias later this month. Eroğlu's predecessor, Mehmet Ali Talat, held more than 70 rounds of talks with Christofias. Talat's former party, the CTP, is the second biggest party in the KKTC parliament with 15 seats.  
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11 May 2010, Tuesday

TODAY'S ZAMAN İSTANBUL

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Turkey's Main Opposition Party Leader, Deniz Baykal, Resigns  
Monday, 10 May 2010

Turkey's main opposition party, Republican People's Party (CHP), leader Deniz Baykal stepped aside Monday afternoon after a secret sex tape distributed via the Internet allegedly showed him naked with his former private secretary and the current Parliamentarian, Nesrin Baytok.

Baykal, declared his resignation in a press conference after he discussed his friends and main party officials over the weekend. In his speech it was observed that Baykal was quite sad and angry. In a highly dramatic tone, Baykal said that;

"This violates human rights that are respected by all political regimes and all religions. It is not organized for economic benefit, but for political reasons. The plot targets not an individual, but the CHP's struggle for democracy."

He also added, "If necessary, I am ready to bear responsibility."

He challenged the claims and regarded them as part of a "conspiracy," implying the ruling Party, Justice and Development Part (AK Party). He said;

"It is not a coincidence that the tape was released amid constitutional reform. It is impossible to organize such a plot within such a short period of time without the knowledge of the ruling party. One who gives credit to unlawful and unethical plots cannot defend law and ethics."

By Caner Doruk (JTW)

Monday, 10 May 2010

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Baykal: My Resignation Does Not Mean Running Away

Monday, 10 May 2010

USAK PUBLICATION

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Main opposition party leader Deniz Baykal said that his resignation did not mean running away or giving in.

Republican People's Party (CHP) chairman Baykal resigned of his post on Monday after a video tape allegedly featuring Baykal having an affair with a female deputy of CHP was released on a video-sharing web-site last week.

Baykal told reporters that he would not surrender to this dark campaign, and he would not allow anybody investigate him due to this illegal and immoral conspiracy.

He also said that such a rude illegality and immortality could not be made without the knowledge and approval of the ruling in the current milieu.

Baykal said that his resignation did not mean running away or giving in, on the contrary, it was a challenge.

He said that the target of this conspiracy was not only himself but also CHP.

The Chief Prosecutor's Office in Ankara has launched a criminal investigation. Members of the

CHP claimed that it was a conspiracy against their political party. President Abdullah Gul also condemned it and said that it was extremely obnoxious.

-DENİZ BAYKAL-

Deniz Baykal, born on July 20, 1938 in Antalya, Turkey, is a Turkish politician who has been the long-time leader of Turkey's main opposition Republican People's Party (CHP) until his resignation today.

Baykal graduated from Ankara University's Law School and later studied at the University of California, Berkeley and Columbia University, New York in USA as a research fellow, finishing his PhD by 1963 in Ankara. He became an Associate Professor at Ankara University's Faculty of Science, where he lectured extensively.

He quit his career as an academic in 1973, when he was elected a member of the Turkish parliament from CHP. He was elected deputy from the Mediterranean province of Antalya for the parliamentary terms of 15(IV), 16 (V), 18, 19, 20 and 22. He served as co-chair of the Turkish-European Union Joint Parliament Commission and was elected to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE).

Baykal served as the Minister of Finance in the 37th government, Minister of Energy & Natural Resources in the 42nd government and Minister of Foreign Affairs as well as Deputy Prime Minister in the 52nd government.

He became CHP's Secretary General in 1988, and in 1992, he was elected as the leader of the party, a post he has held until today. CHP is currently the second biggest political party in Turkey and the major opposition party in the parliament.

Baykal also acted as the vice-president of the Socialist International between 2003-2008.

The former leader of CHP speaks English and is married with two children.

Monday, 10 May 2010

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## **GEO-STRATEGIC NEWS**

NGOs protest Israeli detention of Turkish aid worker

Members of several nongovernmental organizations on Saturday protested the detention of Humanitarian Aid Foundation (İHH) founder and West Bank representative İzzet Şahin. The Freedom Association (Özgür-Der), the Association of Human Rights and Solidarity for Oppressed Peoples (MAZLUM-DER) and other civil society organizations protested the detention of Şahin at a demonstration in İstanbul's Fatih district.

Şahin was detained on April 27 while passing through a checkpoint in Bethlehem. He was transferred to Ashkelon Prison following his stay in an Israel Security Agency (ISA) detention center. Nobody has heard from him since his arrest.

Protestors condemned Israeli policies with posters and speeches and demanded the immediate release of Şahin. The protestors also criticized the Turkish Foreign Ministry's apparent aloofness regarding the detention of Şahin almost two weeks ago.

Israeli officials have given no reason for the detention of Şahin, who has been studying Hebrew at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. The Turkish Embassy in Tel Aviv confirmed his arrest. He was expected to make a court appearance on May 4; however, the prosecution extended his time in custody to 15 days on the basis that the file of evidence had not yet been prepared.

Following an objection by Şahin's lawyers, the extension was reduced to three days.

Speaking during the rally, Özgür-Der Chairman Rıdvan Kaya said the detention is an insult to Turkey. In a statement read out by the protestors, demonstrators asked the Foreign Ministry to publicly demand Şahin's release.

Both Turkish Foreign Ministry officials and parliamentary Foreign Affairs Commission head Murat Mercan stated previously that they have been following the matter closely. The İHH is responsible for organizing a group of Turkish NGO's efforts to break the years-long Israeli embargo on Palestinians by sending aid ships to Gaza this month. The İHH, however, believes that they will not be able to enter Gaza without problems, and İHH Chairman Bülent Yıldırım said Şahin's detention might be aimed at deterring them.

10 May 2010, Monday

TODAY'S ZAMAN İSTANBUL

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Israeli security forces hold Turk over Palestinian ties

A Turkish citizen has been in Israeli custody for two weeks, undergoing interrogation on suspicion of aiding Palestinian organizations banned by Israel, the Shin Bet domestic security service said on Monday.

It said İzzet Şahin, a member of the Humanitarian Aid Foundation (İHH), entered the country in November and was arrested on April 27 while travelling from Bethlehem in the Israeli-occupied West Bank to Jerusalem. Israel had previously withheld details of the case under a court-issued gag order. There was no immediate comment from the Turkish authorities. "He is suspected of activity on behalf of İHH in the West Bank. This is a group that Israel banned in 2008," a Shin Bet spokeswoman told Reuters. "In the context of these activities, he [Şahin] helped various outlawed organizations in Judea and Samaria, and he was arrested on suspicion of endangering public security."

Şahin's remand was extended until May 13 so he could undergo interrogation, a Shin Bet spokeswoman said. Asked if he had been granted access to lawyers or to the Turkish Embassy in Tel Aviv, she said she did not know.

The Shin Bet official said Şahin's arrest was not connected to İHH's efforts to break the blockade on Gaza.

12 May 2010, Wednesday

TODAY'S ZAMAN WITH REUTERS İSTANBUL

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TurMuslim countries denounce Israel for settlement expansion

Parliament speakers and senior lawmakers from Muslim countries gathered in İstanbul yesterday to discuss Israeli plans to build new houses for Jews in East Jerusalem.

"The biggest obstacle for the Middle East peace process is Israel's irresponsible policies towards the Palestinians," Turkish Parliament Speaker Mehmet Ali Şahin told an extraordinary meeting of the Parliamentary Union of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) member states. "Unilateral steps that would change the status and demographic structure of Jerusalem must be abandoned immediately."

The meeting in İstanbul brought together parliament speakers from 14 countries, deputy parliament speakers from six countries and parliamentarians from eight countries. Iranian Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani and Syrian Parliament Speaker Mahmoud al-Abrash were among the participants.

Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and the secretary-general of the OIC, Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu, also attended the gathering. İhsanoğlu accused Israel of attempting to alter the historical, cultural and religious character of Jerusalem and complained of Israeli efforts to decrease the Palestinian population of the holy city by such practices as seizing the Palestinian homes and giving them over to Jewish settlers. İhsanoğlu called for joint efforts to protect

Jerusalem and the rights of Palestinians, saying this is a shared responsibility for the Muslim world.

On Monday, Israel announced that it will press on with the construction of new housing for Jews in East Jerusalem, casting a shadow over the newly relaunched peace talks with the Palestinians. The Israeli government wants construction in East Jerusalem, the section of the holy city claimed by the Palestinians, to continue. But American mediators and the Palestinians want the building halted.

Sovereignty over Jerusalem is the most emotionally charged issue dividing Israel and the Palestinians. The eastern sector is home to a disputed hilltop compound in Jerusalem's Old City, known as Temple Mount to Jews and Noble Sanctuary to Muslims. It is Judaism's holiest site and Islam's third-most sacred shrine.

The Palestinians want East Jerusalem as the capital of a future state and see continued Israeli construction there as undermining their claim. The Obama administration's vocal opposition to Jewish construction in East Jerusalem -- unprecedented in US politics -- has forced Israel to recognize that the world equates Jewish building there with settlement construction in the West Bank.

Turkey has severely criticized Israeli treatment of the Palestinians, straining once robust bilateral ties. "Turkey has always felt a historical responsibility regarding the Jerusalem issue," Şahin said.

11 May 2010, Tuesday

TODAY'S ZAMAN İSTANBUL

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Turkey, Syria, Qatar condemn Israel, want diplomacy on Iran

Syria, Qatar and Turkey this weekend condemned Israel for its plans to build new settlements in East Jerusalem, called for a peaceful solution to an international dispute on Iran's nuclear program and argued that results of the parliamentary elections should be respected in Iraq.

The three countries condemned recent rhetoric and actions that have raised tensions in the region. They emphasized their support for all efforts aimed at regional peace and stability,"

Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu said after a meeting between Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and Qatari Emir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani late on Sunday. A chief advisor to Iraqi President Jalal Talabani was also present during the talks, Davutoğlu told reporters.

The three leaders reiterated their support for peace between Israelis and the Palestinians and for the creation of an independent Palestinian state with its capital being East Jerusalem, but added that Israel's plans to build new homes for Jewish settlers in East Jerusalem seriously harmed peace efforts. They said the settlement plan is "unacceptable" and urged Israel to abandon it. According to Davutoğlu, Syria and Qatar also backed Turkey's efforts to find a negotiated solution to the row over Iran's nuclear program despite growing calls from the West for sanctions on the Islamic republic.

Davutoğlu, speaking after talks with his Iranian counterpart Manouchehr Mottaki on Friday, said he had proposed to host talks between top Iranian nuclear negotiator Saeed Jalili and EU foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton, as a representative of world powers in the group of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council and Germany, to break the standoff over Iran's nuclear program. Iran has welcomed the idea and they are awaiting a reply from Ashton, he said. Davutoğlu flew to Brussels on Monday for talks with Ashton and other EU officials.

On Iraq's troubled post-election process, Davutoğlu said the three countries called for respect for the results of the election, which former Prime Minister Ayad Allawi's cross-sectarian al-Iraqiyya coalition won with a small margin. "They reiterated their desire for the formation of a government that will represent all Iraqi groups and have high legitimacy," Davutoğlu said.

11 May 2010, Tuesday

TODAY'S ZAMAN İSTANBUL

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Betraying Sarkozy, 'wise men' back Turkish EU bid

The European Union's Reflection Group, which was created in December 2007 upon the initiative of French President Nicolas Sarkozy to present recommendations for the year 2030, has concluded that Brussels should keep its promises to Turkey, meaning that negotiations should continue with the aim of full membership.

The 12-person group, headed by former Spanish Prime Minister Felipe Gonzalez, which held its first meeting during the French presidency of the EU in December 2008, announced their findings on Saturday, hugely disappointing Sarkozy. When Sarkozy floated the idea back in 2007, one of the aims was to find legitimate reasons to reject Turkey's bid for EU membership. However, the findings of the European wise men concluded just the opposite, warning the EU to keep its promises or lose credibility.

Answering reporters' questions in Brussels, Gonzalez clearly warned the EU to continue accession talks with Turkey and bluntly declared that the EU would lose its credibility if it did otherwise. The report, officially named "Project Europe 2030: Challenges and Opportunities," says, "In line with this policy of engagement and inclusiveness, the Union must honor its commitments with regard to the current official candidates, including Turkey, and carry on with the negotiation process."

Gonzalez argued that if the conditions of the engagement with Turkey were to change, this could only be achieved by the consent of the two parties, not by one party deciding unilaterally. Asked if the French president would be disappointed, Gonzalez said they did not have any mandate to please any European leader or any European country.

In another setback for Sarkozy, the report clearly argues that EU does not have geographic borders, which the French president has energetically tried to impose. The wise men argued that the borders of the EU are based on "values" and nothing else. "The EU must stay open to potential new members from Europe, assessing every candidacy on its own merits and compliance with the membership criteria. These are in fact the true limits of Europe," the report says.

The 46-page report, prepared after one and a half years of intensive debates, refutes the policy of Sarkozy and right and extreme right-wing politicians on a very sensitive issue: immigration. The Reflection Group concluded that immigration is one of the basic instruments of counterbalancing the problems that will be created by declining birth rates. "But with European demographic patterns becoming entrenched, the impact of these measures will not be sufficient. In the end, the European Union's demographic challenge will only be addressed through two sets of complementary actions: boosting labor market participation rates and implementing a balanced, fair and proactive immigration policy," says the report, stressing that the EU will need 100 million immigrants by the year 2050. Sarkozy and right-wing politicians have declared immigration one of the root causes of problems Europe faces today. Immigration together with Islam and integration were called the "three vote catchers" in the regional elections in France held in March.

11 May 2010, Tuesday

## SELÇUK GÜLTAŞLI BRUSSELS

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Polish expert: Religion major factor impeding Turkey's EU bid

Turkey has spent longer knocking on the door of the European Union than other candidates in part because it is a predominantly Muslim country, EU enlargement expert Adam Balcer said on Monday.

Speaking to a group of Turkish journalists in Warsaw on Monday, Balcer, a senior fellow at the demoscEUROPA-Center for European Strategy, singled out religion as a decisive factor when comparing the candidacy of Turkey with that of his country, Poland.

"Given the fact that Poland is also a large country with a poor economy and a high rate of unemployment, I think it was mainly religion that explains why Turkey is still not a member of the EU," he said when Today's Zaman asked why it took so much longer for Turkey to be recognized as a candidate by the union and why the accession negotiations thereafter have progressed at a snail's pace.

Balcer, who also teaches at the Center for East European Studies at the University of Warsaw, elaborated on his assessment of the prospects of Turkey's bid to join the 27-member bloc. He said there are certain groups in the EU who would never accept Turkey's accession even if it fulfills all the requirements for membership. "However, if Turkey were Japan, it would have already been aboard," he noted, drawing attention to the influence of economic development as a key to a candidate's attractiveness for the EU despite the sensitivity of religious differences for some of its member states.

Poland signed an association agreement with the EU in 1994 and became a full member 10 years later. Turkey, on the other hand, signed its association agreement, the Ankara agreement, with the then-European Economic Community, which later evolved into today's EU, in 1963. After almost half a century, the country has still a lot to do before joining the EU. Out of 35 negotiation chapters, Turkey has so far managed to open 12 and could technically open four more in the near future. However, the remaining 19 chapters are blocked either by the Greek Cypriots or the French.

Discussing the Turkey-skeptic public in certain member states whose leaders earlier stated that they would hold a referendum when the time comes to decide on Turkish accession, Balcer gave Poland as an example of a country whose accession to the bloc was not favored in the very states opposed to the idea of having Turkey as a member, too. "The elites in Germany and France were in favor of Polish accession, but if there had been a referendum in these countries, Poland would have not succeeded in becoming a member," he said, implying that Turkey should first aim to convince the higher echelons of German and French societies.

12 May 2010, Wednesday

## MUSTAFA EDİB

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President Gül receives Russian counterpart Medvedev

Turkish President Abdullah Gül welcomed Russian President Dmitry Medvedev with an official ceremony in Ankara on Wednesday.

The ceremony was attended by Turkey's Parliament Speaker Mehmet Ali Şahin, State Minister and Deputy Prime Minister Ali Babacan, Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu, Interior Minister Beşir Atalay, Transportation Minister Binali Yıldırım, Agriculture and Rural Affairs Minister Mehdi Eker, Ministry of Foreign Affairs Undersecretary Feridun Sinirlioğlu, Ankara Governor

Kemal Onal and other dignitaries.  
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Following a tête-à-tête meeting, Gül and Medvedev will proceed to a meeting between the Turkish and Russian delegations.

President Medvedev arrived in Ankara on Tuesday evening. He is in Turkey on a two-day formal visit aimed at improving trade and tourism between the two nations.

Medvedev and Gül are expected to oversee the signing of several agreements Wednesday, including the lifting of entry visas and possibly a deal on Russian help for the construction of Turkey's first nuclear power plant.

Russia's gas exports have made it the second largest trading partner of Turkey, a US ally that served as NATO's foremost base during the Cold War.

Turkey hopes to secure Russian oil shipments to the Mediterranean via a proposed Turkish pipeline, while Russia is asking Ankara to allow the construction of a gas pipeline under its section of the Black Sea that will run to Europe.

12 May 2010, Wednesday

THE ANATOLIA NEWS AGENCY/REUTERS ANKARA

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Turkey, Russia find common ground on Iran, Hamas role

Turkey and Russia yesterday concurred on opposing nuclear weapons in the Middle East and calling for a peaceful solution to an international row over Iran's nuclear program.

The leaders of the two countries, having talks during a visit by Russian President Dmitry Medvedev to Ankara, also insisted that Palestinian group Hamas should not be excluded from the Middle East peace process after this week's launch of indirect talks between the Palestinians and Israel.

Medvedev, speaking at a news conference with President Abdullah Gül, said Iran must "adopt a constructive approach in some way," as the US and its allies rally for new UN sanctions against Tehran regarding its nuclear program. Iran has denied charges that it is secretly building nuclear weapons. "The Mideast must be a region cleared from nuclear weapons," Medvedev said. "The use of nuclear weapons in the region would be a disaster."

"We never accept nuclear weapons in our region and have been telling this to Iran repeatedly," Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, who also had talks with Medvedev, told a joint news conference later in the day.

The United States and Western countries are pushing for sanctions on Iran for its contentious nuclear program, which Iran says is for peaceful purposes. Turkey opposes sanctions, advocating a formula for a negotiated settlement instead. It also criticizes the Western stance towards Israel, which is widely known to possess nuclear weapons. Israel's officially unacknowledged arsenal of perhaps 80 nuclear weapons is the only such stockpile in the Middle East.

Medvedev said Russia would hold talks with Iran and Israel on the issue. On Tuesday, Russia urged Israel to join the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) and open up its long-established but unannounced nuclear arsenal to the UN monitoring agency.

On Iran, Medvedev said Russia wanted a diplomatic solution and expressed veiled support for a formula proposed by non-permanent Security Council members Turkey and Brazil for a negotiated solution, saying efforts aiming at peaceful settlement would succeed if they receive necessary support.

Humanitarian tragedy in Gaza



Medvedev also urged the United States to actively work to achieve peace in the Middle East with the support of other nations, saying there is a human tragedy in Gaza.

His comment appeared to indicate Moscow's willingness to become an active Middle East mediator. On Tuesday, during a visit to Syria, Medvedev said Israeli-Arab tensions threaten to draw the Middle East into a new catastrophe, adding Moscow's weight to a diplomatic push to ease antagonism between Israel and Syria. "The United States must be active and other nations must contribute," Medvedev told the joint news conference with Gül.

Washington recently launched US-mediated peace talks between Israel and the Palestinians, but signs of trouble have already emerged. On Monday, Israel said it does not intend to halt construction of Jewish settlements in East Jerusalem. The Palestinians accused Israel of undermining trust and urged President Barack Obama to intervene.

Medvedev said no one should be excluded from the Mideast peace process, a clear reference to Khaled Mashaal, the exiled leader of the Palestinian militant group Hamas, which is shunned as a terrorist organization by the US and European Union nations.

Medvedev met with Mashaal in Damascus on Tuesday. Hamas rules in the Gaza Strip, one of the territories that would one day be part of a Palestinian state. "We have to include all conflicting parties and not exclude anyone from this process," Medvedev said.

Gül said for his part that peace could not be achieved if Hamas was not involved. "No one should be excluded when these talks are held. Unfortunately the Palestinians are divided in two. They must be united and to unite them there must be talks with both sides. The Hamas side won elections in Gaza and so cannot be ignored," he said.

Hamas's victory in Gaza left the Palestinians' mainstream Fatah movement in control only in the West Bank. Fatah is the dominant party in the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), which entered into the 1990s interim peace accords.

"When Turkey talked [with Hamas], it faced threats but it emerged that Turkey was right. You cannot achieve peace by excluding people," Gül also said.

13 May 2010, Thursday

TODAY'S ZAMAN WITH WIRES ANKARA

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Turkish-Russian ties evolve into strategic partnership

Turkey and Russia agreed to create an intergovernmental council and signed a series of agreements -- including one on mutually lifting visa requirements -- to bolster cooperation between the former Cold War rivals yesterday, prompting visiting Russian President Dmitry Medvedev to brand the relations between the two countries a "strategic partnership."

"Russia and Turkey are strategic partners, not only in words but genuinely," Medvedev said during a joint press conference with Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan during his first official visit to Ankara. His remarks were simultaneously translated into Turkish. Earlier in the day, during a press conference with President Abdullah Gül, he said relations have progressed to a "new phase" and were "multidimensional" and had a strategic dimension.

Cooperation between Turkey and Russia has significantly expanded under Erdoğan's government, but economic ties have constituted the engine of the deepening ties, with political aspect trying, unsuccessfully, to catch up. But in a sign of significant momentum in the political field, the two countries agreed yesterday to launch a high-level cooperation council, an intergovernmental body that is to be led by Medvedev and Erdoğan and will meet annually to review ties.

“Our cooperation has grown to such an extent that it became a necessity for political leaders to oversee them,” Medvedev said during the press conference with Erdoğan. “Our political contacts and consultations will increase in the future,” he added.

Turkey, which has been seeking an active role in its region, has established similar mechanisms with Syria, Iraq and Greece. The two sides also agreed to lift the visa requirement for their nationals for trips not exceeding 30 days, a measure that is expected to please Russians who flock to Turkey’s southern holiday resorts every year. Some 3 million Russian visitors come to Turkey, mostly to Antalya, annually, and the visa exemption is expected to further increase the number. The visa liberalization, however, will only become effective following the signing of an agreement that authorities say is designed to prevent the abuse of visa-free travel.

The agreement to lift the visa requirement clearly attests to the expanding cooperation between Turkey and Russia and is expected to be welcomed by the Turkish tourism sector. However, initial assessments show the Turkish national budget will be an immediate loser. It is expected to lose revenue from the visa fees collected from Russian nationals, which stands at about TL 80 million annually.

Medvedev said the agreement to abolish the visa requirements was a “historic” one, saying it will make life easier for millions of people. “Lifting the visa requirement is pleasing for the peoples of both Russia and Turkey, and it will affect the tourists positively in the first place,” Gül said. “Drivers and people in the transportation business will also benefit, but it is a great advantage for tourists,” he added.

Nuclear deal and energy cooperation

Among other highlights of the visit is an agreement that will allow Russian companies to build Turkey’s first nuclear power plant in the southern province of Mersin. A previous tender won by a Russian consortium was cancelled by a Turkish court. The construction of the nuclear power plant is expected to take seven years, Prime Minister Erdoğan said.

State-controlled Russian builder Atomstroyexport will lead the construction of the plant in the coastal town of Akkuyu, Russian nuclear agency chief Sergei Kiriyenko said. “It’s an extremely important contract for us,” the Rosatom chief told reporters.

Russia has built nuclear power plants in nations such as Iran and China and is aggressively seeking deals to build new stations. Kiriyenko said that for the first time, Russia would not just build the plant but would have a controlling stake in a company to be created to own it. “It is much more interesting for us to be a co-investor in such projects,” he said, adding that a long-term contract would be reached to supply power to a Turkish utility.

Medvedev and Turkish leaders also voiced readiness to boost the bilateral trade volume, currently standing at about \$40 billion, to \$100 billion in the next five years. Medvedev said the goal is attainable. “It is hard even to imagine, but this figure is an attainable one,” he said. “Once we will achieve this goal, we will be a model for Europe.”

Most of the trade volume stems from Turkish energy imports from Russia. Turkey, dependent on Russia for 70 percent of its energy imports, is trying to balance the imports with cooperation in a number of energy projects. Medvedev said they also agreed to work on the proposed Samsun-Ceyhan pipeline that would pump Russian oil from Turkey’s Black Sea coast to the Mediterranean. It will run from the Black Sea port of Samsun to the Ceyhan oil terminal in the Mediterranean, where an oil refinery will be set up. The significance of the project is that it is to bypass the Bosphorus to alleviate the congested oil tanker traffic through the narrow waterway that bisects İstanbul, where accidents are a concern, as well as the Dardanelles Strait, further

south. The Turkish straits are the sole naval outlet from the Black Sea. Ankara also hopes the pipeline will boost its status as a global hub for energy transportation.

Discussions are also under way on cooperation regarding the Moscow-backed, Europe-bound South Stream gas pipeline.

The two countries signed a total of 17 agreements yesterday. They cover, in addition to the visa regime and energy, a number of areas ranging from transportation to education and combating drug trafficking.

13 May 2010, Thursday

#### TODAY'S ZAMAN ANKARA

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##### Russia, Turkey sign \$20 billion nuclear power plant deal

Russia signed a \$20 billion deal on Wednesday to build a nuclear power plant with four reactors in Turkey.

State-controlled Russian builder Atomstroieksport will lead construction of the plant on Turkey's southern coast, Russian nuclear agency chief Sergei Kiriyyenko said.

"It's an extremely important contract for us," the Rosatom chief told reporters of the deal, signed during Russian President Dmitry Medvedev's visit to Turkey.

Russia has built nuclear power plants in nations from Iran to China and is aggressively seeking deals to build new stations.

Kiriyyenko said that for the first time, Russia would not just build the plant but would have a controlling stake in a company to be created to own it.

"It is much more interesting for us to be a co-investor in such projects," he said, adding that a long-term contract would be reached to supply power to a Turkish utility.

12 May 2010, Wednesday

#### REUTERS ANKARA

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##### Iran: Brazil and Turkey make promising proposal on nuke row

Iran said on Tuesday Brazil and Turkey have offered a promising new proposal for a nuclear fuel deal and announced it was willing to hold talks in Istanbul with the European Union's foreign policy chief over its disputed nuclear activities.

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Ramin Mehmanparast said during a weekly news briefing that the latest talks with Turkey and Brazil have produced "a new formula that could pave the ground for understanding." He didn't elaborate but said Iran has not yet accepted any proposal for sending its low-enriched uranium abroad.

Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu had talks with his Iranian counterpart, Manouchehr Mottaki, in Istanbul on Friday. On Monday, he had talks with EU foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton in Brussels, discussing the latest efforts to avoid sanctions. "There is still a significant chance for diplomacy. I'm still optimistic about steps that could be taken, and I'm glad to see that Ashton has the same perspective," Davutoğlu said, following talks with Ashton late on Monday.

Davutoğlu spoke to Mottaki on the phone following his meeting with Ashton.

Ashton stated on Monday that extra sanctions could be adopted quickly but that the EU was open to more talks with Iran if it showed it really wanted them. In Tehran, Mehmanparast said Iran was ready for talks with Ashton. "[Iran's top nuclear negotiator Saeed] Jalili and Ashton could meet in Turkey," Mehmanparast said. "We do not see a problem with that."

Western diplomats have said mid-June is a target deadline for getting a fourth round of UN sanctions on Iran because of its nuclear program, which Iran says is to generate electricity and not build bombs as the West fears.

Tehran has made a series of counteroffers after rejecting a UN-backed plan that offered nuclear fuel rods for a reactor in exchange for Iran's stock of lower-level enriched uranium. But they appear to fall short of Western demands aimed at ensuring Tehran is unable to produce nuclear weapons. Top Iranian officials are now courting Brazil, Turkey and other non-permanent Security Council members to pre-empt possible sanctions. Only permanent council members could veto proposed sanctions, but strong opposition by non-permanent members could strengthen Iran's case.

Mehmanparast said Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva would travel to Iran next week following recent visits by their foreign ministers. "They will discuss the nuclear issue and the nuclear fuel deal with Iranian authorities," he said. Iran will also host a summit of developing countries known as the Group of 15 next week, with at least eight presidents in attendance, added Mehmanparast.

Brazil and Turkey had no immediate comment on Iran's announcement, but both countries have urged further diplomatic efforts to resolve the issue.

Brazil has urged Western nations to negotiate a fair solution with Iran over its nuclear program and called on Tehran to provide guarantees that its nuclear program has no military ambitions. The Brazilian president has said he would travel to Iran later this month to "ensure peace in the world, to ensure that there is a policy of nuclear disarmament in the world."

The call for sanctions stepped up after Iran last year rejected a UN-backed plan that offered nuclear fuel rods to a Tehran reactor in exchange for Iran's stock of lower-level enriched uranium. The swap would have curbed Iran's capacity to make a nuclear bomb.

Under the UN proposal, Iran was to send 1,100 kilograms of low-enriched uranium abroad, where it would be further enriched to 20 percent and converted into fuel rods. The rods, which are needed to power a research reactor, would then be returned to Iran. Sending its low-enriched uranium abroad would leave Iran with insufficient stocks to enrich further to weapons-grade level.

Iran, which denies any plan for making nuclear arms, has made several alternate proposals to the West, including one to swap smaller batches of Iran's low-enriched uranium. But the US and its allies say the proposals obviate the goal of rendering Iran unable to build a nuclear-powered warhead.

Iranian Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani, who had talks with top Turkish leaders in Istanbul on Monday and Tuesday, on Tuesday dismissed claims that his country was seeking nuclear weapons, saying Iran's nuclear program had peaceful objectives.

Larijani, speaking at a press conference, said Western countries wanted to bar Iran from acquiring nuclear technology. "They do not want other countries to have this technology. They want to keep the modern technology to themselves only," he told reporters.

The top Iranian official said the US position regarding Iran's nuclear program was "adventurist," insisting that his country's intentions were peaceful. He also warned Israel against possible attacks on Iran, saying "they will avoid certain moves if they are smart. Their actions can really change their fate."

12 May 2010, Wednesday

İSTANBUL TODAY'S

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Iran welcomes Turkish, Brazilian nuclear fuel ideas

Iran has voiced optimism about Turkish and Brazilian mediation efforts in its nuclear dispute with the West, saying it welcomed in principle ideas aimed at reviving a stalled nuclear fuel deal with major powers.

Turkey and Brazil, both non-permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, have been trying to resuscitate the fuel plan in a bid to stave off further sanctions on Iran.

The Obama administration earlier this week accused Tehran of trying to buy time by accepting Brazil's offer to mediate and said the United States would be undeterred in its push for new punitive UN measures against the Islamic Republic.

Asked about Turkish and Brazilian proposals, Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman Ramin Mehmanparast said "new formulas have been raised about the exchange of fuel." His statement was carried by the daily Iran newspaper on Saturday. "I think we can arrive at practical agreements on these formulas," he said. "That is why we welcomed the proposals in principle ... and left the details for more examination."

He did not elaborate on the content of the proposals or say when they were presented. Last year's UN-drafted plan revolved around Iran sending uranium abroad for further processing to help ease concerns about Iran's atomic ambitions.

His comments appeared to be part of an Iranian attempt to avert a new round of UN sanctions on Tehran over a nuclear programme the West fears is designed to develop bombs. Iran, a major oil producer, says it only seeks to generate electricity. Catherine Ashton, the EU's high representative for foreign affairs, has had talks with Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu in recent weeks and has indicated that she would be willing to meet the Iranians, possibly in Turkey, "this side of the summer."

Report: Erdoğan to visit Tehran

Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva will travel to Tehran at the end of next week to work on a negotiated solution with Iran, his foreign minister told Reuters on Friday, adding he saw a window of opportunity.

The fuel plan is seen as a way to remove much of Iran's low-enriched uranium (LEU) stockpile to minimise the risk of this being used for atomic bombs, while Iran would get specially processed fuel to keep its nuclear medicine programme running. But the proposal broke down over Iran's insistence on doing the swap only on its territory, rather than shipping its LEU abroad in advance, and in smaller, phased amounts, meaning no meaningful cut in a stockpile which grows day by day. Western officials have dismissed an Iranian counterproposal.

Iran's semi-official Mehr News Agency said Turkish Prime Minister Tayyip Erdoğan would also be in Tehran on May 16, but his office said there were currently no such plans.

The United States is lobbying UN Security Council members to back sanctions including proposed measures targeting Iranian banks, shipping and the country's all-important energy sector.

European diplomatic sources have said a new round of UN sanctions against Iran is set to be ready by mid-June and that a draft proposal could go before the Security Council within the next week.

Efforts were now being made to convince as many as possible of the 10 non-permanent members in the 15-member Security Council to back the measures in the draft. "The Turks have to be convinced a bit more," said a source. "It will be proposed next week and then they will start really vigorously getting them on side."

10 May 2010, Monday

## REUTERS TEHRAN

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Erdoğan's visit to Athens to herald new era in ties

Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's two days visit to Athens which will begin on Friday will also mark a new era in the relations of the Turkey and Greece, according to Turkish diplomats.

Erdoğan will travel to Athens with 10 Cabinet ministers and the two countries will have their first meeting of the newly introduced High-Level Strategic Cooperation Council. During the visit there several cooperation agreements in many fields will be signed. In order to prepare the final wording of the agreements many Turkish high level bureaucrats will have meetings with their Greek counterparts on Thursday.

Erdoğan will be accompanied by Deputy Prime Minister Ali Babacan, State Minister Zafer Çağlayan, the chief EU negotiator Egemen Bağış, Minister of Interior Beşir Atalay, Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu, National Education Minister Nimet Çubukçu, Transportation Minister Binali Yıldırım, Energy Minister Taner Yıldız, Culture Minister Ertuğrul Günay and Minister of Environment Veysel Eroğlu. There will be also Turkish-Greek Business Council meeting during the two-day visit and both prime ministers will address the gathering.

Turkish diplomatic sources said yesterday that the visit with such a large and high-level delegation will mark a new beginning in the relations.

Erdoğan will have talks with his Greek counterpart, George Papandreou, as well as President Karolos Papoulias, the speaker of the Parliament Philippos Petsalnikos and the opposition leader Andonis Samaras. Erdoğan will not have enough time to visit Western Thrace to meet the Turkish minority there, but he will meet with the representatives of them in Athens.

Although the Defense Minister Vecdi Gönül will not accompany Erdoğan, it is expected that the cut downs from the military expenditures reciprocity will be on the agenda of the meetings.

Erdoğan's visit comes as Greece is striving

Although the Defense Minister Vecdi Gönül will not accompany Erdoğan, it is expected that the cut downs from the military expenditures reciprocity will be on the agenda of the meetings.

Erdoğan's visit comes as Greece is striving to cope with impacts of a severe financial crisis.

Territorial disputes with Turkey in the Aegean are no doubt a catalyst for an arms race between Greece and Turkey, and heavy military spending has to a large extent put the Greek economy in dire straits. The two countries are expected to discuss ways to embrace the goal of easing mutual distrust and the arms race. As a result of the fierce competition with Turkey, Greece is now the biggest arms buyer in the EU.

During Erdoğan's visit, the two delegations are also expected to address the situation of the Turkish minority in Greece, Turkey's EU process, Cyprus and Aegean problems.

12 May 2010, Wednesday

## AYŞE KARABAT ANKARA

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EU lauds constitutional reform, vows progress in talks

The European Union has announced its backing of the constitutional amendments package passed in Parliament and has pledged to open talks on more negotiating chapters with Ankara in the next two months.

The 27-nation bloc fully supports the reform package, Spain's Foreign Minister Miguel Angel Moratinos said at a joint news conference with Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu and Turkey's

chief EU negotiator Egemen Bağış in Brussels late on Monday after a regular meeting to assess Turkey's readiness to join the EU. Spain currently holds the rotating presidency of the EU. The 27-nation bloc fully supports the reform package, Spain's Foreign Minister Miguel Angel Moratinos said at a joint news conference with Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu and Turkey's chief EU negotiator Egemen Bağış in Brussels late on Monday after a regular meeting to assess Turkey's readiness to join the EU. Spain currently holds the rotating presidency of the EU. Opposition parties are firmly opposed to the package. They claim the package is aimed at undermining the secular structure of the state by bringing the staunchly secularist judiciary under government control. The government denies the charges, saying the reforms will meet EU requirements by reforming the judiciary and expanding individual freedoms. An 18-page document reflecting the common position of EU countries that was presented to the Turkish side during Monday's meeting welcomed the constitutional amendments and called on both the opposition and the government to engage in a constructive discussion. Moratinos also urged the EU to intensify its cooperation with Ankara and said more chapters will be opened before his country's term at the helm of the EU ends on June 30. "Chapters will be opened during the Spanish presidency," he said. The EU should "further accelerate and consolidate bilateral commitments" with Ankara, he added. EU officials say the next negotiation policy area likely to be opened deals with Turkish adherence to food safety standards in the EU. But some say progress could be hampered by a slow legislative process.

The EU's enlargement commissioner, Stefan Füle, who also spoke at the press conference, said it was possible that some negotiation chapters would be opened this year but that more reforms were key in Turkey. These include a need for better rule of law, a more effective fight against corruption, protection of human rights and more separation between civil and military authorities.

Visa liberalization and *pacta sunt servanda*

Davutoğlu, for his part, reiterated that the Turkish government was committed to the reform process but urged the EU to keep its promises to Turkey -- that it will be granted membership once it fulfills the objective criteria for entry -- and to avoid linking the accession process to political issues, an apparent reference to the Cyprus dispute.

The EU has suspended accession negotiations on eight of 35 chapters due to Turkey's refusal to open its ports and airports to traffic from Greek Cyprus. Greek Cyprus, a full member of the EU since 2004, is blocking progress in Turkey's accession talks, forcing Ankara to make concessions in the Cyprus dispute.

"Our country's determination is still valid," said Bağış at the same press conference. "Trying to get into the EU is like riding a bicycle; you have to keep pedaling. And that's what we are doing."

Davutoğlu also called on the EU to grant visa liberalization to Turkey once it fulfills the technical criteria, on the basis of which three Balkan nations were already granted visa liberalization.

12 May 2010, Wednesday

TODAY'S ZAMAN

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Building on Greek-Turkish detente

Greece's high defense spending has contributed to its economic woes. Indeed, the country has Europe's highest military expenditures relative to gross domestic product (GDP).

Improvement in relations with Turkey could enable Greek Prime Minister George Papandreou -- who hosts Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan this week -- to cut defense spending and make it easier to rescue an economy on the brink of bankruptcy.

Improved Greek-Turkish ties would be welcomed not only by foreign investors and European Union officials, but also by Greece's NATO allies -- above all the United States. Clashes between Greek and Turkish military aircraft in the Aegean remain frequent. In 2006, a Greek fighter pilot was killed in a mock dogfight with a Turkish fighter aircraft.

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These incidents could lead to inadvertent military conflict between the two NATO allies. This nearly happened in February 1996 during the crisis over the islet of Imia/Kardak, which was claimed by both countries. At a time when NATO faces growing challenges in Afghanistan, the last thing it needs is a conflict in the Aegean.

Several other political factors also favor a new push to improve Greek-Turkish relations.

On the Greek side, Papandreou has made better ties with Turkey a top foreign-policy priority. Papandreou enjoys a clear parliamentary majority, and he is highly respected in Turkey, owing to the pivotal role he played as Greece's foreign minister in initiating the rapprochement with Turkey in 1999.

On the Turkish side, Erdoğan also has an incentive to improve bilateral relations. A reduction of tensions with Greece would improve Turkey's image in the West and could give new momentum to its stalled bid for EU membership. Turkey would also demonstrate that it was applying the doctrine of "no problems" with its neighbors not only to those in the East.

Erdoğan's domestic position, like Papandreou's, is strong. He won an overwhelming victory in the July 2007 elections and faces little serious opposition, particularly as the Turkish military's influence has been weakened by charges that some high-ranking officers were involved in plots to destabilize the government. While some of the charges appear to be based on flimsy evidence, they have made the General Staff more hesitant to challenge the prime minister.

The effort to repair relations could begin with small steps on relatively non-controversial issues, such as an agreement by Turkey to reopen the Halki seminary -- a long-standing Greek request. Greece, in turn, could agree to do more to improve the situation of the Turkish minority in Thrace, an issue of concern to Ankara.

These small steps also could include economic measures, such as a loan/swap agreement between the Greek and Turkish central banks in support of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) program to help Greece restore financial stability. The two sides could also cooperate to repatriate illegal immigrants, an issue that has taken on greater urgency as Turkey has become a growing transit route for illegal immigrants from Iraq, Afghanistan and the Middle East.

Finally, on sensitive Aegean sovereignty issues, the leaders could seek agreement on a series of new confidence-building measures or even agree to submit some of their disputes to external arbitration.

Such steps would not solve all the problems dividing Greece and Turkey. But they could re-energize the security dialogue between the two countries and lay the foundation for future accords on other, more controversial issues.



Businessman Mevs encourages Turkish investment in Haiti

Haitian businessman Fritz Mevs, who is currently visiting Turkey to inform the public about the current situation in Haiti, has invited Turkish businessmen to invest in the island nation, which was struck by a catastrophic earthquake nearly four months ago.

The 7.0 magnitude earthquake hit Haiti and devastated the capital city, Port-au-Prince, killing more than 350,000 people, injuring many more, burying thousands under rubble and leaving millions out in the streets.

During a visit to the Zaman daily's headquarters on Tuesday, Mevs thanked all Turkish people, especially the Turkish charitable organizations Kimse Yok Mu (Is Anyone There) and the Turkish Red Crescent (Kızılay), for their relief efforts in Haiti. He noted that Kimse Yok Mu had sent doctors and medicine to Haiti immediately after the devastating earthquake and distributed 1,500 meals to Haitians per day.

Mevs, one of Haiti's most successful businessmen, had approximately 12,000 employees working in his facilities before the earthquake struck. However, in the aftermath of the quake, employee numbers decreased to 4,500 because of the lives lost and damage to buildings. Mevs stated that Haiti needs construction and reconstruction in its hospitals, schools, universities and vocational schools and noted that Turkish businessmen could benefit from investing in Haiti.

"Turkey extended a helping hand to us through its charity organizations while we were suffering the effects of the earthquake. However, Turkey should not be satisfied with its relief efforts, but continue to help Haiti through investing in various fields such as education, textiles, tourism, industry, logistics and commerce. I believe that we can put many important projects into effect in Haiti with Turkish businessmen and their expertise as soon as we combine our efforts," noted Mevs, underlining that Turkey's economy is dynamic, as shown by the past 10 years, and there are many Turkish businessmen who have the capacity to invest abroad. Mevs also stated that it is a crucial time in the lives of Haitians; the earthquake has to be taken as a challenge, and the nightmare is turning into an opportunity to build and modernize the country, but in order to do so, friends with the proper expertise are needed. He called for long-term cooperation between the two countries, indicating that the best way for this to happen was for Turkish businessmen to invest in Haiti. Mevs also noted that Turkey's education system is well known for its quality. As many schools and universities were destroyed during the earthquake, Haiti could benefit from cooperation between the two countries in this arena, he said. Mevs' wife, Sibylle Theard Mevs, is a pre-eminent attorney and also a member of the executive board of Kimse Yok Mu's branch in Haiti. She lost her home in the terrible earthquake, which destroyed 60 percent of the capital and left people in a state of shock. "Now that we have cried and buried our dead, it is time to think of rebuilding in a more appropriate way and prepare for the future with partners of excellence," she said.

10 May 2010, Monday

ELİF AKDENİZ İSTANBUL

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İstanbul becomes hub of Mideast diplomacy

President Abdullah Gül and Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan had talks this weekend with a number of top leaders from Turkey's Middle Eastern neighbors, including Syrian President Bashar al-Assad.

President Gül and his spouse, Hayrunnisa Gül, hosted the Syrian president and his spouse, Esmâ al-Assad, at a breakfast at the Tarabya presidential palace. Prime Minister Erdoğan also attended the breakfast. In addition, Gül also separately met with Iranian Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani, Iraqi government spokesperson Ali al-Dabbagh and Qatari Emir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani at Tarabya Palace later in the afternoon.

In addition, the prime minister met with Assad at Çırağan Palace and al-Thani at Dolmabahçe Palace. Erdoğan also hosted a working lunch for Assad, al-Thani and Qatari Prime Minister Sheikh Hamad Bin Jassim Bin Jabr al-Thani. Later in the day, Erdoğan met with al-Dabbagh at his office in Dolmabahçe Palace.

Assad, on a two-day visit to İstanbul, and Gül held a joint press conference on Saturday during which Gül said Syria had indicated it is ready to resume talks where they had left off; however, they had not yet heard from the Israeli side. “It is up to them,” he added. Gül said Turkey would like to help contribute to the peace process for the stability and welfare of the region. Israel and Syria held four indirect rounds of talks with Turkish mediation in 2008.

Those were suspended after the Israeli incursion into Gaza in December 2008 and January 2009. Gül later hosted a dinner for the Syrian president and his spouse on a boat in the Bosphorus, which was closed to the press.

Noting that the basis of Turkish-Syrian relations was very healthy, Gül said the reciprocal elimination of visa requirements and easier customs operations was a sign of the fast-improving relations between the two countries. “Turkey and Syria have developed their relations not only in the political sphere, but also in the spheres of education, culture, tourism and communication,” Gül said. He also added that the visit of his “valuable friend” Assad had carried relations one step further.

Speaking alongside Gül, Assad said he was ready for talks but he accused Israel of avoiding negotiations, saying it did not want a resolution in the fight over the Golan Heights, territory Israel captured in 1967. “Israel is not ready for mediation because it knows that successful mediation will bring peace, and the Israeli side does not want peace. We emphasize mediation and Turkey’s role, but we also say Israel is not an honest partner,” he said.

Assad also said Turkey could play a part in negotiations between Iran and Western powers over its nuclear program. “I want Turkey to continue its important role because a trust has formed between the Iranian and Turkish governments and Turkey has good relations with the rest of the region,” he said.

10 May 2010, Monday

TODAY’S ZAMAN İSTANBUL

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Countdown begins for Gaza aid ships in spite of Israel

With two weeks left until a convoy of international aid ships departs for Gaza, the Humanitarian Aid Foundation (İHH) is completing its preparations and hopes to break a years-long Israeli embargo on the Gaza Strip.

The foundation is organizing a flotilla of eight ships, known as the Freedom Flotilla Coalition, which are set to depart for Gaza on May 23, its chairman, Bülent Yıldırım, noted. The İHH ships will be joined by 12 others that will set sail from a large number of countries including Venezuela, Malaysia, Germany, Italy, France, Greece and the United States.

The İHH’s role in the aid ship project was first announced last month with the motto, “Palestine is our destination, humanitarian aid is our load.” “We want this embargo to end. We broke it with

an aid convoy [to Palestine] in December of last year. The aid ship project has carried the embargo back to the world's attention," Yıldırım remarked.

The foundation recently purchased a passenger ship from İstanbul Seabuses and Fast Ferries Inc. (İDO) to take a delegation of around 500 people to Gaza. .

"Palestine is faced with an inhumane embargo that lacks any legal basis. Civil society organizations should take the initiative to break this unjust embargo," Yıldırım added.

The Turkish ships will be filled with medical equipment, medicine and construction materials to be used to repair schools and hospitals in Palestine. Such repair has symbolic meaning for the country because Israel does not allow any construction materials to be brought in to Gaza, fearing they could be misused.

The İHH's aid ship project is also backed by the Free Gaza Movement (FG), a human rights group that in August 2008 sent the first international boats to land in the Port of Gaza in 41 years. The movement called on the international community to support peaceful efforts for humanitarian relief activities for Gaza in a message on its website that reads: "We want to raise international awareness about the prison-like closure of the Gaza Strip and pressure the international community to review its sanctions policy and end its support for continued Israeli occupation."

The Freedom Flotilla Coalition comprises the FG, the İHH, the European Campaign to End the Siege of Gaza (ECESG), Ship to Gaza Greece, Ship to Gaza Sweden and the International Committee to Lift the Siege on Gaza.

The coalition plans to carry 5,000 tons of construction materials, school supplies and medical equipment, as well as hundreds of passengers from over 40 countries.

İHH worried about West Bank representative detained in Israel

The İHH's West Bank representative, İzzet Şahin, was detained by Israeli security forces on April 27 as he was passing through a checkpoint in Bethlehem. Şahin has been in custody since then without any charges filed against him, and Israeli officials have announced that the representative will remain in custody for another week.

Şahin's detention sparked concern among İHH officials, who are worried about his health.

According to the foundation, the detention may be retaliation against the İHH project to send aid ships to Gaza.

Şahin was transferred to Ashkelon Prison following his stay in an Israel Security Agency (ISA) detention center. Nobody has heard from him since the day he was arrested. Israeli officials have given no reason for the detention of Şahin, who has been studying Hebrew at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

"Şahin arrived in the West Bank on Nov. 28 for a number of foundation-related activities in the region, such as the monitoring of aid projects there. However, he was detained on April 27 by Israeli forces as he was passing through a checkpoint. He appeared before a court on May 6. The court decided to extend his detention period for another week. The İHH is engaged in all efforts to bring an end to his detention and bad treatment," an İHH official said.

The foundation is worried that Israel will try to prevent the aid ships from delivering humanitarian aid to Gazans. It is, however, committed to breaking the embargo on Palestinians despite any preventive attempt from Israel or Egypt.

The İHH was part of a convoy of around 250 trucks carrying European, Turkish and Arab aid that hoped to enter the Gaza Strip on Dec. 27, 2009 -- the first anniversary of the start of a 22-day Israeli siege that left nearly 1,500 Palestinians dead and another 5,000 injured. However, the convoy faced bureaucratic obstacles from Egyptian authorities, which refused to allow the

convoy to deliver the aid, both food and medical supplies, to Gaza via Egypt. The convoy was finally allowed to enter the Gaza Strip in early January.

09 May 2010, Sunday

## BETÜL AKKAYA DEMİRBAŞ İSTANBUL

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### Mottaki calls for open dialogue on nuclear issue

Iran's foreign minister on Friday urged Western nations to adopt a "constructive" approach to achieve a breakthrough over a UN-backed nuclear swap deal.

Manouchehr Mottaki, on a brief stopover in Istanbul, also said Iran was ready to engage in an "open dialogue" over its nuclear program, saying his country was willing to hold talks in Turkey with EU foreign affairs chief Catherine Ashton and other nations involved in negotiations over the nuclear issue.

Manouchehr Mottaki, on a brief stopover in Istanbul, also said Iran was ready to engage in an "open dialogue" over its nuclear program, saying his country was willing to hold talks in Turkey with EU foreign affairs chief Catherine Ashton and other nations involved in negotiations over the nuclear issue.

"We need constructive thoughts, and I believe that we can all arrive at a mutually beneficial solution," Mottaki told reporters, speaking through an interpreter. "We have approved talks that Turkey is proposing with Iran and the European Union. We have approved them, and hopefully they can take place soon," he said at a joint news conference with his Turkish counterpart. "It is a good proposition for us."

Mottaki arrived in Turkey from New York where he attended a conference reviewing the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty and held talks with members of the UN Security Council in an attempt to avert more economic sanctions over its nuclear program. The US and some of its allies have argued that another round of sanctions is necessary to stop Iran's nuclear program, which they contend is aimed at producing a bomb. Iran says its program is for peaceful purposes. Turkey, a non-permanent member of the Security Council, opposes sanctions against one of its important neighbors, and Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu said Friday diplomacy must be exhausted.

"As long as there is an opportunity for diplomacy we need to take full advantage of it," he said. "We don't want other alternatives which could cause distress in the region. Iran is our neighbor; such decisions will affect us."

Under the UN plan first put forward in 2009, Western powers would send nuclear fuel rods to a Tehran reactor in exchange for Iran's stock of lower-level enriched uranium.

Iran, which insists its nuclear program only aims to generate electricity, rejected the original exchange proposal. At the same time, the country's leaders have worked to keep the offer on the table, proposing variations, though without accepting the terms set in the UN proposal.

09 May 2010, Sunday

## AP ANKARA

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### Russia, Turkey initial deal to lift visa requirements

Turkey and Russia have initialed a preliminary agreement to mutually eliminate visa requirements, an agreement planned to be signed during the Russian president's historic visit to Turkey next week.

Speaking to the Anatolia news agency, Turkey's ambassador to Russia, Halil Akıncı, said the agreement to eliminate the need to secure visas has already been initialed between the two

countries' embassies and that the approval process has started on both sides. The agreement is expected to be concluded during Russian President Dmitry Medvedev's visit to Turkey on May 11-12.

Akıncı said the sides have agreed on the wording of the agreement and that Medvedev and Turkish President Abdullah Gül may sign the deal without waiting for the approval process to end.

Last month, Russian Ambassador to Turkey Vladimir Ivanovskiy said he did not believe a visa deal between the two countries would be ready in time for the Russian president's visit.

However, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan said in early April that an agreement would be signed with Russia during the visit.

The elimination of visa requirements was first brought up during Erdoğan's Moscow visit in January of this year. The move is largely designed to boost Russian tourism to Turkey. Only tourist visits of up to one month will be exempted from visa requirements.

08 May 2010, Saturday

TODAY'S ZAMAN İSTANBUL

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Afghan official lauds Turkey's education drive

A top Afghan official has praised Turkey's efforts to boost education and help in restructuring Afghanistan, saying Turkish assistance to the country was unparalleled.

Turkey has a very special place in Afghanistan. It is the only Muslim country in NATO, and the Afghan people trust Turkey. The source of this trust is the assistance provided by the Turkish Cooperation and Development Agency [TIKA] and Turkish schools in Afghanistan," Rashid Mubariz, Afghanistan's deputy minister of culture and information, said on Thursday.

Mubariz was speaking during a meeting of Turkish and Afghan journalists hosted by the Medialog Platform, a body affiliated with the independent Journalists and Writers Foundation (GYV) promoting dialogue among media institutions. "There are 48 countries [contributing to NATO's peacekeeping force] in Afghanistan. But no country can do what Turkey is doing," Mubariz, who visited Turkey with a group of 10 journalists, also said.

The Afghan official called on Turkish schools operating in Afghanistan to increase their efforts to provide education to the Afghan people, saying the Afghans are very pleased with their current work.

There are six Afghan-Turkish schools -- including one girls' high school -- operating in Afghanistan, the first of which was opened in 1995. The high schools -- in Shibrgan, Mazar-e-Sharif, Kandahar and Herat for boys, and one all-girls high school in Kabul -- operate under the designation "Afghan-Turkish Schools." This year, Turkey is to build and furnish 15 schools and seven health clinics through TIKA. There are over 6 million students in Afghanistan, with over 4,000 schools operating without proper school buildings.

Victims of the Taliban

Afghan journalists attending the meeting appeared to be united in blaming the Taliban for the current instability and insecurity in Afghanistan and in stating that the NATO presence in the country was a necessity. "There was not a single Afghan national involved in the Sept. 11 attacks. Yet we became victims of the Taliban," said Sanjari Suhayl, editor-in-chief of the Hasht-e-Subh daily, told the meeting. Another journalist, Fahim Dashti of Haftanamey-i Kabul, said almost all Afghans wanted NATO troops to stay because Afghanistan was currently unable to fight the vast number of problems it faced.

Dashti also warned that Afghanistan's security problems were a threat to the entire world and that, if efforts to contain them in Afghanistan fail, the whole world would be affected. "We don't have much to lose. But if we lose, our allies will also lose. The Taliban has objectives outside of Afghanistan. If they seize control in Pakistan, they will seize control of Pakistan's nuclear weapons. Then the war that we lost will continue in Istanbul, Berlin and other places," he said. Commenting on the presence of international troops in Afghanistan, Mubariz said no country would want to see foreign troops in its streets but added that NATO was providing security in Afghanistan and that NATO's withdrawal depended on Afghanistan's ability to create its own army.

Mubariz also called for more cooperation between Turkish and Afghan media institutions and training programs in Turkey for Afghan journalists.

08 May 2010, Saturday

#### ŞEYMA AKKOYUNLU İSTANBUL

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New railway to better connect Turkey and Nakhchivan

The Baku-Tbilisi-Kars (BTK) railway connecting Azerbaijan's capital city of Baku to the eastern Turkish city of Kars, which is currently under construction, will be joined by another new railroad to be built between Azerbaijan and Turkey to lift the autonomous Nakhchivan region out of isolation, an Azerbaijani official has said.

Speaking to the local ANS TV station, Sadraddin Mammadov, head of the Azerbaijani Ministry of Transportation's department of transport policy and economy, noted that the railway is set to pass through Iğdır and will connect Kars and Nakhchivan. Preparations for the construction of the necessary infrastructure have already begun, he added.

According to Mammadov, the tender to select the company that will conduct the geological survey of the area the railroad will pass through has already been announced. The new railroad is planned to be the continuation of the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway and will be the only land connection between mainland Azerbaijan and landlocked Nakhchivan.

Territories linking Nakhchivan and Azerbaijan became part of Armenia under Soviet leadership in the early 1920s, thus separating the autonomous region from mainland Azerbaijan. The only railroad and highway that connect these two regions were shut down after Azerbaijan and Armenia fought over the disputed Nagorno-Karabakh territory. Since then, air travel has been the only transportation link between Azerbaijan and Nakhchivan.

The ministry official also said the expected railroad link between Azerbaijan and Turkey will turn Nakhchivan into a huge transport hub. "Following the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, this railroad will significantly increase the connection between Baku and Nakhchivan," Mammadov said.

He also spoke about the ongoing work on the BTK line, noting that construction is under way in both Georgia and Turkey.

A total of 105 kilometers were planned to be built as part of the BTK project. Of these, 76 kilometers will be within Turkey while the remaining 29 kilometers will lie between the Turkish border and the city of Akhalkalaki in Georgia. Georgia also plans to retrofit the rail link between Akhalkalaki and Tbilisi.

Ankara hosted Parliamentary Chairman of Nakhchivan Vasif Talibov last week to discuss a range of bilateral issues. Observers claim discussions also included the recently announced railroad.

The BTK railway is expected to transport 1.5 million passengers and 3 million tons of freight per year in its initial operation. Forecasts predict that by 2034, it will transport 3 million people and more than 16 million tons of goods per year. The total cost of the project is estimated at \$500 million. Georgia will contribute \$200 million, which it will receive from Azerbaijan in the form of a loan. The remaining cost will be covered by Turkey.

The ministry official said the BTK will be ready by mid-2011 and the Nakhchivan-Iğdır-Kars railway soon after that. Turkey is connected to Nakhchivan by a short 11-kilometer-long border, a lifeline sustaining trade that keeps Nakhchivan's economy alive. Turkey's eastern provinces also greatly benefit from trade with Nakhchivan.

08 May 2010, Saturday

LAMIYA ADILGIZI BAKU

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Turkey, Ukraine sign action plan for fostering ties

On the occasion of an official visit to Kiev by Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu, Ukraine and Turkey have signed two landmark deals promising intense and strategic bilateral relations between the two countries in various fields.

Davutoğlu and his Ukrainian counterpart, Kostiantyn Hryshchenko, signed the "2010-2011 Action Plan" aimed at developing bilateral relations and initialed the "High-Level Strategic Cooperation Council Joint Declaration" on Wednesday, the Anatolia news agency reported.

In recent past, Turkey has established high-level strategic cooperation councils with neighboring Iraq and Syria. It is preparing to establish similar mechanisms with Bulgaria, Greece and Russia as well.

Speaking at a joint press conference following talks with Hryshchenko, Davutoğlu described Ukraine as "a very close neighbor" and "a strategic partner" regarding international relations. Noting that the relations are currently perfect, Davutoğlu added they have also decided to hold closer consultations between the foreign ministries of the two countries.

Turkey and Ukraine have a joint vision concerning regional issues, particularly regarding the Black Sea, he said, voicing Turkey's readiness to engage in economic integration and maximum cooperation with Ukraine.

For his part, Hryshchenko said they have decided to raise the current relations to a higher level. Referring to the initialed joint declaration, he said the council would help determine the direction of the strategic relations, while also providing coordination for major projects in the fields of politics and the economy.

Also on Wednesday, Davutoğlu met with both Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich and Prime Minister Mykola Azarov. During his meeting with Davutoğlu, Yanukovich voiced his willingness to host Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan as an official guest in Kiev, Anatolia said. Yanukovich also lent support to the preparations to establish a high-level strategic cooperation council between Ankara and Kiev.

Azarov, during talks with Davutoğlu, meanwhile, underlined that both countries have great potential for cooperation in investment, the transportation sphere, space and the construction and energy sectors, among others.

"Ukraine and Turkey are promising partners in the energy sphere. We are ready to start a dialog in this direction," Azarov was quoted as saying by English-language online daily Kyiv Post.

Wrapping up his talks in Kiev after a meeting with Vladimir Litvin, the speaker of the Supreme Rada (parliament) of Ukraine, on Thursday, Davutoğlu proceeded to the Autonomous Republic of Crimea before departing for Turkey.

Meanwhile in Brussels, Turkish Chief of General Staff Gen. İlker Başbuğ, Ukrainian Chief of Defense Gen. Ivan Svyda and NATO's Supreme Allied Commander Europe Adm. James Stavridis signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) on "Air Situation Data Exchange" (ASDE).

The agreement, which aims to reduce airspace conflicts in two ways -- by minimizing potential cross-border incidents and optimizing responses to renegade situations with civil airplanes -- was signed on the sidelines of the spring meeting of the NATO Military Committee.

07 May 2010, Friday

TODAY'S ZAMAN KIEV

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Privileged partnership attempt receives fatal blow

Cooperation among Greens, Liberals and Socialists has dealt a fatal blow to a plan proposed in a European Parliament document by the Christian Democrats, currently the biggest political party in European politics, to include the phrase "privileged partnership" vis-a-vis Turkey's European Union accession process, the final goal of which is full membership.

During a plenary session held on Wednesday in Brussels, members of the European Parliament approved the 2008 budgetary management of most of the EU's institutions and agencies.

Via an amendment proposal, Christian Democrats had attempted to insert "privileged partnership" into the document during the drafting process. But with joint efforts by the Greens, Liberals and Socialists, the proposal that included privileged partnership failed to pass.

Also annoyed by the Christian Democrats' attempt, the European Commission, the executive body of the 27-nation bloc, had already conveyed its uneasiness over the issue to political groups in the European Parliament, the Anatolia news agency reported.

The amendments introduced by German Christian Democrat Markus Pieper called for both "special forms of membership" and to keep financial assistance at 2006 levels. This would mean a 75 percent decrease in financial assistance between 2007 and 2013.

Delivering a speech at the plenary session, Algirdas Semeta, the EU's commissioner for taxation, customs, audit and anti-fraud, stated that EU-funded projects have been implemented in an increasingly effective manner in Turkey.

Back in January, the European Court of Auditors (ECA), an official institution of the EU, released a report highlighting the structural deficiencies of the European Commission's handling of the EU's instrument for pre-accession assistance (IPA) to Turkey whilst praising the efforts of the candidate country.

In presenting the findings of the study, Maarten Engwirda, a member of the ECA, at the time stressed that "the auditee of the ECA is the European Commission, not the Republic of Turkey. The focus of the audit was indeed the Commission's management of EU funds provided to Turkey."

The investigation revealed weaknesses in the 2000-2006 period under the TPA (Turkey Pre-Accession Assistance) and showed that these have persisted in the first three years of the 2007-2013 period.

07 May 2010, Friday

TODAY'S ZAMAN ANKARA

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Kyrgyz Interim Government Approves Turkey's Military Aid  
USAK PUBLICATION



Kyrgyzstan's interim government approved on Friday a 2009 deal signed with Turkey to get military aid from Turkish Armed Forces.

Kyrgyz Defense Minister Ismail Isakov said that Kyrgyz government unanimously approved the agreement signed in December 2009. Turkey's military aid is worth 800,000 U.S. dollars.

Turkey's military aid will go to Kyrgyz national guards and border units.

After an uprising in Bishkek last month, Kyrgyzstan's president Kurmanbek Bakiyev was ousted. The interim government has the right to ratify intergovernmental agreements until the parliamentary elections in the country.

Friday, 7 May 2010

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Turkey, Bosnia-Herzegovina Sign Health Agreement

Usak publication

Turkey and Bosnia-Herzegovina signed Tuesday an agreement on health cooperation.

Turkish Health Minister Recep Akdag and Bosnian Civil Affairs Minister Sredoje Novic signed the agreement in Ankara.

Speaking at the signing ceremony, Akdag said that healthcare was one of the priorities to enhance relations between the two countries. He said that Turkey would be pleased to share its experiences to reform Bosnia's healthcare system.

Akdag also said that the two ministers agreed to form a study group with participation of officials from two countries.

On his part, Novic said that the agreement would pave the way for exchange of information between Turkey and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Novic said his country would derive benefit from the deal. He said that Bosnia was carrying out a healthcare reform and that Turkey's experiences were very important for these reforms.

Tuesday, 11 May 2010

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## **ECONOMIC NEWS**

World Bank Approves Additional Financing To Turkey

Usak publication

The World Bank Board of Executive Directors approved additional financing to Turkey's Iller Bankasi in the amount of 178.2 million euros (240 million U.S. dollars) for the ongoing Municipal Services Project.

A statement by World Bank said Friday that the Municipal Services Project, in an amount of 212.9 million euros (275 million U.S. dollars) was approved on June 23, 2005 and became effective on May 18, 2006 and the project supports sustainable environmental services in selected municipalities.

"The additional financing provides resources for expanding the scope of the project from the original eleven municipalities and utilities to fifteen with new investments in Beypazari, Istanbul, Kayseri and Kirsehir. In addition, three of the original eleven municipalities, Antalya, Denizli and Mersin will scale up already ongoing activities," it said.

The statement said the additional resources would help finance the development of municipal infrastructure to expand and improve the water, wastewater and solid waste management services in the participating municipalities, adding that they would also provide support to municipalities and to Iller Bankasi in the management of municipal investments.

Friday, 7 May 2010

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Turkey, Botswana sign economic cooperation deal

Turkey and Botswana on Thursday signed a commercial, economic and technical cooperation agreement in Ankara.

Turkish State Minister Zafer Çağlayan and Botswanan Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Minister Phandu Skelemani signed the agreement following a meeting.

Africa's share in Turkey's foreign trade has risen to 10 percent thanks largely to the African Strategy, which has been in effect since 2003," Çağlayan said during the signing ceremony. He added that Botswana was the strongest and most stable country in Africa, had the highest credit rating on the continent and that it is the largest diamond producer in the world. Diamonds constituted 70 percent of Botswana's exports, though this fell to 60 percent during last year's global economic crisis, the minister said. Çağlayan also noted that the two countries could under the new agreement cooperate in agriculture, agricultural irrigation, food, transportation and energy. "Our two countries can launch negotiations on a free trade agreement, an agreement to prevent double taxation and an agreement on investment and incentives from now on," the minister said. Also speaking at the ceremony, Skelemani said he believes Botswana can learn a lot from Turkey and that his country wants to be a strategic partner of Turkey. The Botswanan minister added that his country is seeking to diversify its trade and did not want to limit itself to only one product.

07 May 2010, Friday

TODAY'S ZAMAN ANKARA

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Crisis persists in red meat as livestock tenders cancelled

Problems related to an unprecedented rise in prices in the Turkish red meat market over the past few weeks remain unsolved following the cancellation of two recent tenders for the procurement of livestock.

The government recently decided to resume livestock and red meat imports through the state-owned Meat and Fish Institution (EBK) in a bid to ease skyrocketing prices caused by a growing shortage in the domestic market. Following this decision the EBK recently held two separate tenders to restart livestock imports to Turkey. In the first tender for the procurement of 4,025 tons -- 8,500 head -- of cattle held on Tuesday, the lowest bid in the tender held came from Hacılar Türkiş Helal Gıda, a Turkish-owned German firm. The Jordanian-owned Khaled Hijazi submitted the lowest offer for the next day's tender for the procurement of 5,000 tons of livestock -- or 10,000 head of cattle.

Although the tenders were technically over, the EBK officials expressed reservations and said, "A final decision will be given following a comprehensive assessment in the next few days."

The EBK announced in a written statement late on Thursday that the two tenders were cancelled since the contract conditions "failed to benefit free competition in the market." Following the EBK release, the Ministry of Agriculture said they were "considering holding new auctions in line with developments in the markets." Speaking Thursday in Ankara, Agriculture Minister Mehdi Eker cited a lack of healthy competition for the cancellation of the tenders. The minister said the government expected to open new tenders as soon as possible. It could be tomorrow [Friday], he said.

Meanwhile, red meat consumption in Turkey has increased by around 25 percent in the past few days due to a sudden 25 percent decrease in market prices. Underlining that some parties made unfair use of the red meat shortage in the domestic market, Eker said the EBK will, one way or another, maintain balance and order in the market. Asked whether the government planned to

make the purchase directly without the need for a tender, the minister said this option was on the table as well.

Speaking to the Cihan news agency in Berlin on Thursday, Hacılar Türkîş Helal Gıda CEO Rıfat Kazancıođlu said they could do nothing but “respect the decision.” Evaluating the Agriculture Ministry’s decision to hold new tenders, Kazancıođlu said they would consider participating in these tenders. “What we know is that everything ran smoothly and that offers were submitted transparently in Tuesday’s tender,” he stated.

08 May 2010, Saturday

TODAY’S ZAMAN ANKARA

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TUSKON offers unemployment solution package to gov’t

10 MAY 2010 MONDAY

TODAYS ZAMAN

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The Turkish Confederation of Businessmen and Industrialists (TUSKON) has submitted a package addressing Turkey’s unemployment problem to Economy Minister Ali Babacan, who visited the confederation’s newly elected board in İstanbul over the weekend.

The TUSKON package submitted to the minister on Saturday seeks to find a solution to Turkey’s unemployment problem with 22 different articles. Among the measures that TUSKON is proposing is increased loan support for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

TUSKON has offered to make effective contributions to the government through organizations such as the Export Promotion Center (İGEME), the Foreign Trade Undersecretariat (DTM) and the Small and Medium Industry Development Organization (KOSGEB) in addition to some civil society organizations to tackle unemployment. Improvements in vocational training and encouraging the opening of new businesses are also suggestions included in TUSKON’s package. According to TUSKON, leading sectors that are the driving force behind economy such as construction must be given extra support to ensure a faster recovery.

Having examined the TUSKON package, Babacan said the government planned to bring representatives from different sectors together at an “Unemployment Workshop” in the near future. The government had earlier announced a rescue package to support Turkish artisans and craftsmen, a preliminary step to ease the growing unemployment burden on the markets. Speaking at the TUSKON assembly, the economy minister said it was impossible for the government to combat unemployment on its own and called on private industry to shoulder some responsibility to this end. The minister said the government placed great importance on sharing ideas with the private sector while seeking ways to overcome unemployment.

Having examined the TUSKON package, Babacan said the government planned to bring representatives from different sectors together at an “Unemployment Workshop” in the near future. The government had earlier announced a rescue package to support Turkish artisans and craftsmen, a preliminary step to ease the growing unemployment burden on the markets. Speaking at the TUSKON assembly, the economy minister said it was impossible for the government to combat unemployment on its own and called on private industry to shoulder some responsibility to this end. The minister said the government placed great importance on sharing ideas with the private sector while seeking ways to overcome unemployment.

Making mention of the government's plans to recruit tens of thousands of civil servants this year, the minister underlined that such measures alone could not cure the problem. "We should concentrate on creating new job opportunities in different sectors." Noting that the major goal is to boost economic growth in the country, Babacan said minor measures would play a prominent role in this regard and employment measures are among these.

Asserting that there is no need to fear regarding the possible negative impacts of the Greek debt crisis on the Turkish economy, he said the eurozone could face serious troubles in the long run unless countries such as Portugal and Spain -- along with Greece -- address their debt problems as soon as possible. "The main problem with Greece is growing public debt. We earlier announced our plan to keep Turkey's public debt under control. We do not expect any unprecedented problems to occur in the months to come. Turkey is different to these countries regarding its maintenance of a healthy public debt balance. It is to our advantage that we are not in the eurozone. ... Hence such position offers us a sanctuary," he said.

TUSKON attention on M. East, S. Arabia

TUSKON, which caused the start of a new era in the commercial relations with the African countries thanks to the trade bridge summits, has now turned its attention to the Middle East region, especially the Saudi Arabia. The confederation organized its first official visit as part of its new strategy to Jeddah city and held meetings with the officials of the Jeddah Chamber of Commerce and Industry (JCCI) on Saturday to discuss the cooperation possibilities on construction, tourism, port building, machinery and food. Asserting that Turkey and Saudi Arabia are prominent actors of the global trade, the Business Life Cooperation Association (İŞHAD) President Recep Ekşi, who is also a board member at TUSKON, said the Arabian businessmen offered them to conduct a business forum together.

During his visit to JCCI, TUSKON members also found a chance to meet with their Arab counterparts and discussed the possibilities of conducting business together and jointly invest in the third countries, Ekşi noted.

Speaking to Today's Zaman to evaluate the results of the Saudi Arabia visit, Ekşi acknowledged that Saudi Arabia was potentially a huge market for Turkey and the businessmen of both countries will be better off if the existing opportunities deservedly evaluated. İŞHAD President informed that a Turkish company has already agreed on the conditions with the Arabian officials for the establishment of a food processing company in this country.

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Number of private jets on the rise in Turkey despite recession

Despite the recent economic recession, the number of private jets grew significantly in Turkey in the last several years and now stands at 75, Civil Aviation General Directorate (SHGM) head Ali Arıduru has said.

Speaking to the Anatolia news agency yesterday, Arıduru said the Turkish aviation sector has been steadily expanding over the past five years, witnessing both its transportation figures and its fleet grow. The number of commercial wide-body aircraft is expected to reach 350, up from the current 312, by the end of the year, Arıduru noted, adding that number of business jets is also on the rise. "The number of private jets has been increasing significantly over the past several years. Currently there are 75 private jets in Turkey. Many Turkish businessmen are racing to purchase a jet," said Arıduru. Private jet flights are subject to strict inspection, thanks to which, he said, Turkey is currently ranked third among the 44 countries that are members of the European Civil Aviation Conference (ECAC), an intergovernmental organization seeking to promote a safe, efficient and sustainable European air transport system.

Currently, only 20 percent of private Turkish jets flying to international destinations are inspected by these countries' officials, he said, compared to around 80 percent in the past, Arıduru said, arguing that this is a sign of decreasing bias against the Turkish aviation sector around the world.

12 May 2010, Wednesday

TODAY'S ZAMAN ANKARA

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Tobacco consumption sees most dramatic fall in Turkey's history

Tobacco and Alcohol Market Regulatory Agency (TAPDK) head Mehmet Küçük said yesterday that a ban on smoking in indoor public areas as well as the recent price hikes in tobacco have led to the most dramatic fall ever in tobacco consumption throughout the nation.

The law, which went into full effect on July 19, 2009, has already made an impact on cigarette consumption in Turkey -- one of the 10 countries in which two-thirds of all tobacco is consumed globally. The ban was implemented in two stages. The first, entering into force on May 19, 2008, prohibited smoking tobacco products in state buildings (including hallways and corridors), all indoor educational, health, production, commercial, social, cultural and sports facilities and public transportation vehicles. As of July 19, 2009, restaurants, coffeehouses, cafeterias and bars were also included. Tobacco consumption fell by 0.67 percent after the first ban during the second half of 2008 when compared to the same period of the previous year, Küçük said.

With the expansion of the smoking ban after the implementation of the second stage last year, Küçük said the ban's effect on tobacco sales was more clearly felt. Sales fell by 2.29 percent during the second half of 2009 when compared to the same period of 2008. "The fall in tobacco sales was 5 percent in the July-December period while it was 6 percent during the August-December period. So, the indoor smoking ban had an immediate effect on tobacco sales," he explained.

Küçük also pointed to a price hike in tobacco as another reason behind the fall in sales. "There has been a very dramatic fall in tobacco sales in the first quarter of 2010," he said.

13 May 2010, Thursday

TODAY'S ZAMAN İSTANBUL

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Turkey backs economic integration between OIC members'

TODAYS ZAMAN

State Minister Cevdet Yılmaz said on Monday in Antalya that the Turkish government is ready to contribute to the healthy economic integration of the Organization of the Islamic Conference's (OIC) member countries, underlining that this has become particularly important since the 2009 global financial crisis that shook global market balances.

Yılmaz was speaking at the Organization of the Islamic Conference's (OIC) Economic and Commercial Cooperation Permanent Committee (ISEDAK) meeting in the southern tourism hub of Antalya. "We believe Muslim nations should develop a global understanding of fostering trade ties among all OIC-member entrepreneurs around the world," he said. Underlining that economic integration has become more important than ever for OIC members, particularly on the heels of the 2009 global financial crisis, the minister said the countries should first concentrate on strengthening trade ties, adding, "We should establish a strong trade infrastructure that will be able to provide necessary help when any of the members is in need." Yılmaz said Turkey is committed to providing support for the healthy economic integration of OIC members, encouraging trade partnerships and combating poverty in solidarity.

Mentioning the ratification of a preferential trade agreement, the Protocol on the Preferential Tariff Scheme for TPS-OIC [PRETAS], the minister said they expect the deal will further foster trade among OIC members. PRETAS mainly aims to boost trade among Islamic countries and increase their interdependence.

“The share of OIC-member countries in world exports increased to 11.2 percent from 8.1 percent between 2003 and 2008. When we look at exports among OIC-member countries, oil and oil products accounted for 29 percent, industrial products for 27 percent and agricultural products 17 percent. We need to further improve our economic and commercial relations to increase our competitive power,” the minister explained. Turkey’s trade with OIC countries has increased fivefold over the last eight years.

More than 100 delegates from Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Palestine, Senegal, Kuwait, Iran, Cameroon, Pakistan, Qatar, Indonesia and Sierra Leone are attending the three-day meeting. Meanwhile, President Abdullah Gül said on Monday he believed that rapidly implementing PRETAS among OIC member states would pave the way for the enhancement of intra-OIC trade. Gül sent a message to the 26th meeting of ISEDAK in Antalya.

“Implementing PRETAS among the member states of the OIC as soon as possible will carry us much further towards the enhancement of intra-OIC trade. In this regard, implementation of the system is of paramount importance,” he said. Gül highlighted the OIC members’ mutual goals of enhancing cooperation such as strengthening ISEDAK’s institutional structure, exploring sources of financing and developing viable projects.

11 May 2010, Tuesday

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Markets buoyed by 21.1 pct jump in industrial production

Markets were buoyed on Monday following news of an impressive 21.1 percent jump in Turkey’s industrial production in March over the same month of a year before.

The Turkish Statistics Institute (TurkStat) announced on Monday that industrial production was up 21.1 percent in March when compared to the same month of 2009, encouraging news for a swift exit from the global financial credit crunch of last year. The monthly increase in industrial production, the TurkStat report read, was 16.3 percent. These latest results herald a strong recuperation in Turkey’s manufacturing performance while raising hopes that the upward trend in the economy will continue in the months to come.

Turkey’s industrial index increased by a record 25.2 percent in December of last year over the same month of 2008, before rising by 12.1 percent in January on a year-on-year basis. February saw an even better recovery in an 18.1 percent rise in industrial production over the same month of 2009.

The subgroup that enjoyed the greatest year-on-year increase was the manufacturing sector at 23.9 percent, while the second largest growth in this segment was seen in the mining sector with 9.1 percent. The utilities index soared by 6.7 percent in March over the same month of the previous year.

The calendar-adjusted industrial production index in March rose by 17.8 percent over the same month of 2009. The rise was 0.9 percent from February to March when calendar and seasonally adjusted.

Among the main industrial subgroups, the biggest rise was seen in the manufacture of capital goods, with a 35.3 percent increase in a year-on-year basis. The production of intermediary goods also rose by 28.5 percent during the same period and the production of durable goods by 27.7 percent.

Evaluating the TurkStat figures on a television program, Industry and Trade Minister Nihat Ergün said on Monday the government is pleased with the results and expects to maintain this upward trend through the end of the year. “We are encouraged to see that a recovery from the crisis is reflecting on all subgroups of the Turkish manufacturing industry. When we examined the electricity consumption and export figures, we could see that the swift recuperation will continue in April as well.” The minister asserted that under these circumstances two-digit growth for the first quarter of 2010 was a strong possibility.

11 May 2010, Tuesday

TODAY’S ZAMAN ANKARA

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Turkey remains on US Trade Representative ‘watch list’

Turkey will once again remain on the US Trade Representative’s (USTR) watch list for intellectual property rights (IPR) violations.

Turkey, the annual Special 301 Report noted, “is becoming a major exporter, as well as a transshipment point for counterfeit and pirated products.” The report cited “undue delays in the judicial process” and “deficiencies in the overall IPR protection and enforcement regime,” as well as the 2008 dismissal of several trademark-related cases for creating an environment where “uncertainty about the status of protection for trademarks” prevails. The report said these issues are a cause of “serious problems” and found fault with authorities for failing to complete many of the legislative reforms required to guarantee effective IPR protection and enforcement.

Turkey featuring high on the list of violators in the 54-page annual report, which serves as a barometer on the degree of protection countries around the world afford to IPR, is being interpreted by some as evidence of the government not doing enough to foster an environment conducive to international high-tech business.

“The report reflects serious concerns of the US government and business community that Turkey is not protecting the intellectual property rights of innovative companies and entrepreneurs,” said Jeff Kemprecos, who served until recently for three years as chairman of the International Investors Association (YASED) Intellectual Property Rights Committee and currently works as the executive director, Public Policy & Corporate Responsibility, for MSD (Merck Sharp & Dohme) Eastern Europe, Middle East & Africa. “In this annual report, the United States is signaling unequivocally to other trading partners that it expects full reciprocity.”

Recent developments have led him to speculate that Turkey may even degenerate further.

“Despite our ongoing efforts to improve the investment climate, the pessimistic view is that Turkey may be heading for an even worse ‘Special 301’ rating in 2011, as the government has implemented a number of protectionist measures that affect trade and investment.”

“We had hoped for much more progress in 2009, but there were some significant setbacks in the area of data protection and copyright,” said Raşan Cebe, chairwoman of the American Business Forum in Turkey (ABFT). She noted that a survey of ABFT members revealed significant concern for the state of IPR protection in Turkey.

Interpreting the findings of the report, Cebe said, “The results underscore that the IPR level is one of the key determinants for investment decisions by US companies in Turkey and highlight the concerns that investors have about enforcement and pending legislation.”

Many have been critical of the government bringing in new barriers in the pharmaceutical sector preventing the licensing and importation of medicines, which, they claim, are in contravention of Turkey’s obligations. They claim that there are some 250 medicines for cancer, diabetes,

HIV/AIDS and other diseases which companies are unable to introduce in Turkey as a result of this new regulation.

In 2004, Turkey joined the World Trade Organization (WTO) and undertook the enforcement of intellectual property rights including patents, copyrights, trademarks and industrial design.

Observers generally agree that much progress has been achieved during the past decade, including copyright enforcement. While large-scale seizures have occurred, Turkish authorities have been wavering on the approval of implementing some measures that would stem the flow of at least some counterfeit products. Protecting commercially sensitive data in the area of pharmaceuticals is another example. According to Turkey's obligations under the WTO and also the European customs union, failing to do so represents a violation of its obligations under the applicable treaties.

Alongside Turkey on the watch list are 38 other countries as diverse as Norway and Vietnam. Ten of these countries (including Canada) are on the Priority Watch List.

"The fact that Canada, Spain and Norway are on the list with Turkey confirms that the US does not favor one trading partner over others. Where the US government is convinced that countries are not respecting intellectual property rights or are creating unfair barriers to trade, it does not hesitate to name names and make its complaints public," said Kemprecos.

YASED has been at the forefront of efforts to promote stronger IPR protection, authoring a number of reports that have found clear correlations between the strength of a country's IPR regime and the amount and quality of foreign direct investment (FDI) that flows to countries as well as the quality of jobs that are created through this investment. YASED asserts in its reports that the effective enforcement of patents, copyrights, trademarks and industrial design is the bedrock for the transfer of technology, investment and innovation.

11 May 2010, Tuesday

DAVID NEYLAN MADRID  
TODAYS ZAMAN

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Seasonal workers' families face poor living conditions

A tent city in Konya offers just the barest of shelter for nearly 100 families who have traveled from Gaziantep and Kahramanmaraş to Konya as seasonal agricultural workers and who are living in dire conditions.

The workers' families face stressful living conditions and must spend much of their day fetching clean water from distant sources and looking after the tents. The children are not in school as they are far from home and must help their families with the backbreaking daily tasks necessary for survival. Speaking to Anatolia news agency, one seasonal laborer, Ali Yılmaz, noted that the tent city set up near the entrance of Aşağırenköy village in Konya's Seydişehir district is currently home to roughly 600 people, all of whom are there for the chickpea, white bean and red bean harvests. Yılmaz said his family will remain in their tent, which has no electricity, running water or bathroom facilities, until the end of summer..

Yılmaz said he is most upset by having to remove his children from school. "Our financial situation is not good. My biggest desire is for my children to have an education and find good jobs. We don't want our children to be forced into these harsh living conditions. I am a Turkish citizen -- why can't my government help us, help our children?" Yılmaz asked. He said he labors in the fields from sunup to sundown for a daily wage of TL 15.



Hasan Kuruçay, the Aşağierenköy muhtar (village head), noted that the children living in the tent city often become ill due to the living conditions in the tents. Kuruçay called on officials in the district to solve seasonal workers' problems.

10 May 2010, Monday

TODAY'S ZAMAN İSTANBUL

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1.745 Million Tourists Visit Istanbul between January-April

Friday, 7 May 2010

USAK PUBLICATION

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The number of tourists visiting Istanbul reached 1.745 million in the first four months of 2010. Data by Culture and Tourism Department of Istanbul revealed that 294,352 tourists visited Istanbul in January, 372,713 tourists in February, 489,884 tourists in March and 588,601 tourists in April.

These figures marked a 6.4% decline in tourist numbers in the January-April period of 2010 . German tourists ranked highest in this list with 12.4%, followed by Russian tourists with 6.9% and British tourists with 4.9%.

Friday, 7 May 2010

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### **SOCIAL NEWS**

Heavy rain paralyzes life in eastern Turkey

13 MAY 2010M THURSDAY

TODAYS ZAMAN

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A downpour that lasted from Tuesday night to early Wednesday morning has disrupted life in eastern Turkey, particularly the province of Ağrı, where a bridge collapsed and thousands of houses were flooded.

neighborhood was cut off from the Ağrı city center after a bridge over Taşlıçay creek collapsed in the city, while about 3,000 houses and workplaces were flooded. The residents of the flooded homes were removed with the aid of vehicles belonging to the municipality, the special provincial administration and several other public and private institutions.

All schools in the province have been suspended until Monday due to the heavy rain. The rain was reported to have affected districts and villages in Ağrı worst.

Entries and exits to and from the province were closed due to the floods yesterday. Buses were made wait since the Ağrı-Van and Ağrı-Erzurum highways were closed to traffic. A highway between the Ağrı city center and the Tutak district in the province was closed to traffic because of the heavy rain. According to reports, about 30 cars stuck on the highway managed to drive to safety on the hills near the road, but 10 cars were submerged. Fifty people who were stuck on a highway between the provinces of Ağrı and Van were rescued, but a bus, a truck and five private cars remained underwater. Rescue workers were trying to reopen the road, which was submerged under one meter of water.

Military officials and the Turkish Red Crescent (Kızılay) established three mobile kitchens in various places in the province. Dormitories were opened to the city's residents.

The Ağrı Governor's Office has established a crisis management center. Ağrı Deputy Governor Murat Güven and Justice and Development Party (AK Party) Ağrı deputy Fatma Salman Kotan carried out inspections in the province.

The Prime Ministry's Disaster and Emergency Management Directorate announced that they had provided a total of TL 1 million to the Ağrı Governor's Office and municipality to meet urgent needs. State Minister and Deputy Prime Minister Cemil Çiçek and Health Minister Recep Akdağ arrived in the province yesterday to assess the situation.

Ağrı Mayor Hasan Arslan said they were facing a large disaster that had caused serious damage to many houses and parts of the city's infrastructure.

A group of 50 people gathered in front of the governor's office claiming that officials had not provided help in their neighborhood. Riot police tried to disperse the angry crowd. Six representatives were later selected from the group and were invited to talk with the deputy governor. The group dispersed after talking to Güven.

Houses, barns collapse due to rain in Kars

Two houses and dozens of animal barns collapsed due to the rain in the eastern province of Kars' Sarıkamış district. Speaking to the Anatolia news agency, Sarıkamış Governor Yusuf Güni said the continuous rain had led structures with clay roofs to collapse in a number of villages. Güni said the worst affected village was Beşyol, which is 40 kilometers away from the center of the district; dozens of other clay roofed houses and barns were damaged. "Two houses collapsed completely and 25 houses were damaged. The incidents occurring during the morning and therefore prevented any deaths," he added. A total of 40 cattle were killed as a result of the buildings collapsing. Officials began work to help the residents of the villages which were affected by the rain.

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## **COMMENTARY**

METİN GÖKTEKİN AĞRI

HÜSEYİN GÜLERCE

Who pressed the button on Baykal?

The resignation of Republican People's Party (CHP) leader Deniz Baykal was a sudden and unexpected decision, something that no one thought even a week ago would occur. In 10 days the CHP will hold its party congress without Baykal.

What has happened all of a sudden? There's a good saying for this: The outcome explains the action. Let us try to understand what the action is by looking at the outcome.

What has happened all of a sudden? There's a good saying for this: The outcome explains the action. Let us try to understand what the action is by looking at the outcome.

The outcome is that Baykal is no longer the CHP chairman. Now we can talk about a chain reaction. The party's congress has not been postponed. The CHP will soon elect a new administration. But let me take this moment to note that I do not find claims that Baykal is just making a move and that he will come back saying the "delegates want me to return" to be very convincing. The reason for this is that Baykal did not deny the video footage that prompted him to resign as chairman. He repeatedly said that a conspiracy had been devised against him by sneaking into his home and attaching hi-tech secret cameras on his walls and clothes. In the video, there's talk about a "second part." In other words, new images could be posted on the Internet at any moment, turning this into a Chinese torture experience. Neither the CHP's constituency nor the public could tolerate that.

In other words, the CHP is going to have to proceed without Baykal. The then question is: Who or what powers may have wanted Baykal to leave the CHP? There are two possibilities.

The first is that forces that approve of Turkey's increasing role in the region and the international community in line with its increasing power may have pressed the button. They may have

decided that in a Turkey heading towards democracy, the CHP's pro-establishment and pro-status quo obstacles needed to be terminated. We already know that these circles, which attach importance to the Ergenekon case in eliminating the dark and corrupt structures within the state, want a real social democrat main opposition party.

However, this is a weak possibility. Party congress delegates are fixed in the mentality of protecting the status quo. It's impossible to create a European-type social democratic party from this delegation structure.

The second possibility is this: The military tutelage regime in Turkey, in other words the status quo, for one reason or another cannot tolerate the ruling Justice and Development Party (AK Party). The threat of closing it down has not worked, either. The national will's courage and determination have encouraged those inside the state who believe "the time has come for democratization." The Ergenekon case is continuing with formerly untouchable people being called to testify. Assassination plans against intellectuals, journalists and authors and bloody murders carried out so as to cause polarization in society are under the spotlight of the justice system. After the 2006 Council of State attack was merged with the Ergenekon case, certain patterns and habits began changing in society, especially in the secular segment. Attempts to divide the AK Party from within failed.

The status quo is openly working on finding new alternatives to the ruling party. The first goal is to set up a coalition between the CHP and the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP). According to them, Baykal prevented the CHP from winning more votes. The CHP keeps running around the same track, garnering no more than around 20 percent. The CHP has become too cumbersome, unable to attract new segments of society. The status quo may be seeing a new beginning as their last hope. Meanwhile, they may be thinking that the MHP should move more towards the center. A CHP without Baykal is no minor issue. It may enable the status quo to redesign politics according to its own interests.

But the problem is that the CHP is a party that splits faster than an atom. There are already several candidates for the position. It's not very easy to keep the CHP together. It takes a lot of talent. Baykal was able to achieve that with his charisma. Will the new leader, even if he or she has the support of certain media outlets, be able to keep the CHP from fragmenting and drifting away into new adventures?

This much seems difficult. So let's return to the first possibility. Those who attach importance to Turkey's endeavor of becoming a member of the international family by democratizing may be choosing to wait on the sidelines until the status quo rises to take the bait, taking into consideration the delegation's structure.

Perhaps they want the first move to come from the status quo and want a new party to form on the left in the aftermath of a crumbling CHP.

The leader to be appointed by the media that wanted Baykal to resign immediately and that supports the operation within the CHP will help us understand what is going on. We just have to wait a little.

13 May 2010, Thursday

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YAVUZ BAYDAR

'Conspiracy' might not be what we think it is

Deniz Baykal, one of the "foxes" of old-style Turkish politics, is gone. Whether or not the absence is temporary remains to be seen. No matter what the outcome of the unexpected crisis

that hit the Republican People's Party (CHP) will be, for politics it will mean a very sharp curve with serious consequences.

The "secret tape" involving Baykal and CHP deputy (and his former secretary) Nesrin Baytok crashed onto the nation's agenda between the conclusion of the constitutional reform process in Parliament and the CHP congress, expected on May 22. While the faction of the press closer to the government -- or unsympathetic in general to the main opposition -- remained cautious in its comments, the staunchest supporters of the CHP within the Doğan media outlets and Habertürk filled their columns with open calls for Baykal's resignation. The differences in attitudes and positions were striking.

Baykal has not commented directly on the content of the tape; he attempted to shift the focus to what he calls a "conspiracy" targeting him and the party. He is right in his point that whoever is behind the taping and posting of the material has aims transcending a simple case of money and blackmail. This was one of the most powerful acts in Turkey -- illegal and immoral as it is -- perpetrated to discredit a leader and shatter a political force.

But the shift by Baykal and the CHP on who to blame is interesting. Initially, it was Mustafa Sarıgül, the mayor of Şişli, a long-time rival of Baykal for the leadership of the secular center left, who was accused of an assassination attempt. Then, Milliyet reported that Baykal believed "the state" to be behind it. And finally, as he announced his resignation, Baykal delivered missives almost exclusively holding the Justice and Development Party (AK Party) government responsible. (Although, in between the lines, he implied that even figures inside the party might be to blame.)

What will happen now? Baykal's strategy became instantly clear: He will not go quietly and he will do his utmost to work the scandal to his personal favor by pushing his discourse into the realm of politics, as he has done before. His goal is to pull Recep Tayyip Erdoğan into the ring and turn the issue into a confrontation between the two parties. The more he does this successfully, he seems to be reasoning, the more easily the scandal will be forgotten. He wants to return victorious as the leader of the CHP.

He may have good reason to think that way. For years, he has successfully reshaped the party, changing its bylaws in his favor, appointing leading cadres and deputies who would be compliant to him and forcing his adversaries into silence or oblivion. The overwhelming calls for a "comeback" encourage him to seek ways to survive. Although he declared that he would not stand as a candidate in the party congress, the delegates might collect enough signatures (254 is the minimum figure, out of some 1,200) to be nominated again.

But, as the authorities struggle to find out who is behind the tape scandal, one question that remains to be answered is whether Baykal fears a follow-up tape with similarly damaging content. This fear, if true, might discourage him from an immediate comeback. In that case, he might choose to cool his heels until he finds fertile ground on which to move.

As the CHP snowballs into turmoil, Turkey rolls into a hot summer. If the CHP is able to collect enough signatures (110) in Parliament to take the reform package to the Constitutional Court, politics will have additional excitement. Moreover, the referendum planned for July (a major decisive moment) will be followed by a hugely critical Supreme Military Council (YAŞ) meeting in August, the outcome of which -- with possible dismissals and early retirements of officials under suspicion for coup plotting -- might turn out to be dramatic.

The question is whether it is better for the CHP to be able to conduct efficient opposition in such a defining period under a re-elected Baykal or an interim leadership. Both cases involve very high risks. Because of Baykal's selfish policies, the CHP not only has moved away from its

ideology and grass roots but also has no proper, credible alternative as leader. Most of the names mentioned are meek, and no other “outsider” has a chance because a possible candidate must have the tacit approval of Baykal himself.

This makes what Baykal calls “the conspiracy” more interesting. So far, he has been unable to prove it. But let us believe him for a moment and speculate: The AK Party, successful with the constitutional reform and confident that the majority of the people will say “yes” to it, would have no interest in doing away with him. It is well known that Erdoğan has enjoyed sparring with such a leader, since, according to party officials, “he made the fight so easy.”

This view is also shared not only by segments that traditionally vote for the party but also inside the İstanbul-based business community and factions of the media conglomerates. Certainly, a change in leadership might come as a relief for many of the actors within those influential sectors. The next 10 days will present us most of the answers.

12 May 2010, Wednesday

TODAYS ZAMAN

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Relatives fight over Islamization and conservatism

ORHAN KEMAL CENGİZ

I have had an experience; first I thought it was unique to me, and it was painful, then I realized it had happened to some friends of mine, too. I cannot talk to some of my relatives any more without ending up having an intense quarrel. This is a peculiar social phenomenon right now happening in Turkey which really needs to be understood and analyzed.

Since the beginning of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) coming to power in 2002, this tension has been building amongst different social actors in Turkey; the tension reached a critical level after the initiation of the Ergenekon case in 2007, and it is still rising.

I come from quite a secular family. Most of my relatives are quite secular people who could be labeled White Turks. In terms of their lifestyle, they are quite liberal, but when it comes to politics, some of them are really antidemocratic. They are extremely suspicious about anything this government is doing. According to them, this government sells Turkey to the outside world, it definitely has a secret agenda and the whole Ergenekon case is just a fabrication. Their aversion to devout Muslims and their emergence in social life is so strong that it makes them blind.

There is a social segment in Turkey that sees itself as the owner of this country. The republic, which was set up in 1923, belongs to them. Devout Muslims, who are the backward segments of Turkish society according to their understanding, should be subjected to them. These backward segments of society cannot have equal status with those who are secular, modern people. The tragicomic thing is that these so-called “secular elites” are not the advanced part of society any more. They are xenophobic, they are against minority rights, they do not like the idea of Turkey becoming part of the European Union and they support the military's guardianship and so on. However, as secular people, whatever these devout Muslims do, they have this unshakable and unquestionable feeling of superiority over them. They are the aristocrats who own the manor house, and the Muslims are the children of the gardener who has to live in the small cottage in the garden. After 2002, the gardener's children dared to attempt to enter the manor house, and this is the essence of the social tension prevailing in Turkey right now.

I have some devout Muslim friends who are very well educated and who have quite good taste in many aspects of life. They, however, live in poorly designed houses in the remote parts of the city, not because they are financially weak but because their wives are covered. Recently, I

wanted to invite one of my friends whom I really love to my apartment. I was about to urge him to rent a house on my block which had just been vacated. Then suddenly I realized something. I tried to visualize whether there were any people in my apartment block who look like pious Muslims, any women with headscarves. No, there were none. I could not imagine my friend and his covered wife moving to the apartment block I live in. After this thought and remembering my “secular relatives” way of seeing devout Muslims, I realized that living there would not be a peaceful experience for my friend. Then I started to look at the cafes, the restaurants and other premises I often go to from this perspective, to visualize and remember if there were any people who look religious in them. There were none.

But for some, it is enough to see these people in politics, in the media and in some public institutions to assert that Turkey is becoming more Islamist and more conservative. And these discussions and tensions are even raised amongst relatives who might fight each other quite fiercely. Watch Turkey very closely, you will always find something amazing.

12 May 2010, Wednesday

TODAYS ZAMAN

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### ŞAHİN ALPAY

Is EU accession compatible with regional integration?

I attended a conference titled “Turkey’s foreign policy in a changing world: Old alignments and new neighbourhoods” organized by the South East European Studies of St Antony’s College, the University of Oxford, in collaboration with Sabancı University held between April 30 and May 2.

In a panel discussion dealing with the growing role of civil society in foreign policy, I did a presentation on the “Faith-based Fethullah Gülen social movement and its impact on Turkey’s international relations.” I hope this presentation will soon lead to a paper on the role played by the non-political Gülen movement not only in Turkey’s international relations but also in domestic politics.

The various panels at the Oxford conference provided a good opportunity for the assessment of Turkey’s foreign policy under the Justice and Development Party (AK Party) government. What made the conference particularly interesting was the participation of Professor Ahmet Davutoğlu, the architect of Turkey’s new foreign policy paradigm since the turn of the 21st century.

Davutoğlu gave a keynote lecture titled “The Turkish vision of regional and global order: Theoretical background and practical implementation” on May 1, which coincided with the first anniversary of his appointment as minister of foreign affairs.

The number of official visits Davutoğlu has paid and the distance he has travelled worldwide, first as chief foreign policy advisor and later as foreign minister, amount to incredible statistics. During the last year alone he has travelled to at least 85 countries, having talks with at least a hundred leaders. I suspect even those who followed him only during his two days at Oxford were greatly impressed by his energy and especially his capacity as an academic and intellectual.

I found Davutoğlu’s responses to two of the many relevant questions he addressed in his talk and conversations particularly significant. One of those questions was about whether Turkey’s efforts towards increasing economic interdependence with neighboring countries did not conflict with negotiations toward EU accession. His response was that Turkey’s main interest without any doubt is in EU accession both in terms of economic prosperity and democratic consolidation, and that Turkey is determined to continue to implement reforms towards fulfilling the membership criteria. While, however, EU accession remains an open-ended process, with no assured

membership even if it fulfills all the criteria, Turkey has to independently pursue policies that will help ensure its prosperity, democracy and security. If, however, Turkey is assured of accession when it fulfills the criteria and makes progress towards that goal, it will pursue policies fully in line with the EU. In this context Davutoğlu said that Ankara remains determined to pursue a comprehensive solution on Cyprus and that if the EU fulfills its promise of 2004 to end the economic isolation of the Turkish Cypriots, Turkey would immediately respond by opening its ports to Greek Cypriot vessels. He also emphasized that normalization with Armenia remains on track and that we are likely to see the process move on in the coming months.

The other question Davutoğlu was posed was the much discussed issue of how Turkey could aspire to contribute to regional and even global peace and stability when it has not yet been able to achieve full peace and stability at home. Davutoğlu's response was that in order for Turkey to achieve peace and stability at home, it is imperative that it eliminate threats arising from the region and that the domestic security and democratic consolidation of Turkey is thus highly dependent on achieving zero problems and economic integration with neighbors. In this context he underlined that Turkey and Greece share a common fate and that Ankara will do everything in its power to help Athens overcome the difficulties it is currently facing. He stated Ankara's determination to work for full economic integration between the two sides and to turn the Aegean into a sea of peace and cooperation.

It looks like the point where Turkey and the EU will have to make decisions concerning the future of the relationship is approaching. Accession negotiations are drawing towards a deadlock, with 18 chapters being blocked by the European Council, France or Greek Cyprus, and only four chapters remaining that can be opened. What is worse, the term president Spain, one of the EU members most supportive of Turkish accession, declared last week that due to various hindrances it may not be able to open even a single new chapter before the end of its term. It is most welcome, in this context, that the Reflection Group on the Future of Europe in 2020-2030 Time Horizon, headed by Felipe González, in its report presented to the president of the European Council on Saturday emphasizes that the EU has to fulfill its commitments towards Turkey and continue with the negotiations if it is to preserve its credibility.

Academic and business circles in Turkey have started asking the question as to how the future of Turkish-EU relations can be saved. Professors Beril Dedeoğlu and Seyfettin Gürsel have recently published the results of their research sponsored by the Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey (TÜBİTAK) on the question, the suggestions of which I hope to take up and discuss in a coming column.

10 May 2010, Monday

TODAYS ZAMAN

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ETYEN MAHÇUPYAN

Ergenekon: one gang, one name, one network

Gaps in between different activities and plans in the Ergenekon case are closing. In retrospect, we can reckon that prosecutors prepared the indictments so as to fill in these gaps because in the beginning, all they had were documents and groups of tight relations.

The prosecutor's office began the investigation with weapons that had been discovered and people who aimed to form an organized gang and linked all of them to a general "aim." Then coup plans revealing the aim and manipulation of society were exposed. But there was still no direct link between the organized mechanism that had links to murder and to the quest for a coup. We can say the gap between the two has started to close. What we have before us is a

broad network that aims to use an organization that calls itself Ergenekon as a triggering force to set the stage for a coup.

On the other hand, it's not easy to say that the word "Ergenekon" encompasses the entirety of this network because using this name is preferred by a narrow group of people who aspire to fill the void between the army and the civil society with provocative actions. This group of people is made up of mainly retired military officers and is inherently linked to the Gladio-like Mobilization Inspection Board, which is an informal extension of the state. There is merit in recalling that the Ergenekon organization is a kind of new formation and that it was uncovered at a time when the Gendarmerie Intelligence and Counterterrorism Service (JITEM), which planned and implemented similar activities, was exposed and abolished.

In other words, there is a gang that is responsible for preparing the social foundation for a coup. But using this name to refer to the entirety of the coup plan is problematic and confuses, especially Western observers. A more accurate approach would be to describe the coup attempt as a "superior design" and Ergenekon as one of the legs that supports this design. However, the "language" of the case has digressed toward a more convenient path.

Journalists covering the case and media organs are partially responsible for this slip towards convenience. "Ergenekon" was a very handy word for them because not only did it make a reference to the ideological backdrop of Turkish nationalism, but it also symbolized the entire pro-coup network in the eyes of the readers. As a result "Ergenekon" became an increasingly generic name. It started to represent not just the armed manipulative gang but all groups seeking a coup.

But the main reason this word exceeded its natural limits stems from the stance prosecutors adopted. Indictments on political cases in Turkey are so complex that it leaves Western observers shocked. They look like a pile of unorganized data. However, this is not due to the lack of prosecutorial ability, but rather is a consciously chosen outcome. That is because prosecutors in Turkey encounter a reality that is strange but not difficult to understand. Usually if evidence doesn't make it into a dossier, it disappears after a while. As a result, prosecutors got into the habit of putting all documents they had, regardless of their relevance, into the indictments, and everything became a part of Ergenekon.

But prosecutors had another concern about this case, which serves as the basis for observations that the case has become "politicized." That is that prosecutors had understood the scope of the situation and that it implied a network of relations from the beginning. But all they had was pieces of evidence that seemed unrelated to each other, and they had to stick to this evidence in order to protect the legal legitimacy of the case. On the other hand, a portion of the evidence was meeting notes, transcripts of telephone conversations and support plans for unscheduled coups. However, with the Ergenekon gang, there were weapons, assassination charts and murders. Therefore, prosecutors made the activities of Ergenekon a focal point of the indictment, linked everything else to Ergenekon and collected evidence accordingly.

It's understandable that this kind of approach would create doubts about the prosecutors' "political" interests. But one should not forget that the case concerns "coup preparations"; in other words it is a political case. What we see is that in a country where the upper echelons of the judiciary politically encourage the coup, the reactions from the lower ranks are to a certain extent political as well. In contrast, when the political motivation is kept within the boundaries of legal legitimacy, it enables the society to accept and support prosecutors and the case as a whole.

Turkey is at the brink of a regime transformation. Democracy is a goal that can only be achieved with the support of society, and prosecutors appear to adequately understand this reality.



07 May 2010, Friday  
TODAYS ZAMAN

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