

**Report # 131**  
**Business & Politics in the Muslim World**  
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**July 31 to August 06, 2010**  
**Weekly Report**  
**Central Asia**  
**Uzma Siraj**

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- Azerbaijanis Demand Armenians Return Soldier's Body

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- Jailed Azerbaijani Activists Begin Hunger Strike

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- Kyrgyz Communist Party Leader Resigns Due To Criminal Charge
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- Tajik Opposition Politician Cleared Of Human-Trafficking Charge

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- Tajik capital's authorities to control prices at local bazaars during Ramadan

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- Tajik Madrasah Leader, Students Detained
- Tajik Officials Keep Sharp Eye On Islamic Teaching
- 'Technical Problems' Halt Publication Of Independent Tajik Weeklies
- Tajikistan's Sole Private University Files Lawsuit Against Education Minister

#### **Turkmenistan**

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- Foreign Ministry of Turkmenistan hosts Turkmen-Afghan political consultations
- Technical issues of construction of Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India gas pipeline discussed in Ashgabat
- President of Turkmenistan sends condolences to Pakistan

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- Turkmenistan and UN to prepare international legal instrument on transit of energy
- Russian investments in Turkmenistan protected for at least 10 years
- Turkmenistan's GDP rose by 4 per cent in January - July
- GDP per capita to reach 21.7 thousand U.S. dollars by 2015 in Turkmenistan
- Turkmenistan, Iran discuss cooperation in energy and water
- U.S. companies eye Turkmen energy projects - envoy

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- Internet festival starts in Uzbekistan

**Summery**  
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- Azerbaijan, Turkey discuss Nagorno-Karabakh conflict

Azerbaijani Minister of Foreign Affairs Elmar Mammadyarov has met Turkish counterpart on the sidelines of a meeting of foreign ministers of Turkic-speaking countries in Bodrum, Turkey.

- Foreign ministers of Russia and Azerbaijan talk over the phone

Foreign ministers of Azerbaijan and Russia Elmar Mammadyarov and Sergei Lavrov had a phone talk. APA reports that the talk was initiated by the Russian side. The ministers discussed a number of issues on bilateral relations and regional situation.

- Senate Panel Delays Vote On Controversial Nominee For U.S. Ambassador To Azerbaijan

Matthew Bryza is U.S. President Barack Obama's pick to fill the vacant post of ambassador to Azerbaijan. The U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee has postponed a vote on President Barack Obama's controversial pick for U.S. ambassador to Azerbaijan.

- Azerbaijanis Demand Armenians Return Soldier's Body

BAKU -- Dozens of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and veterans of the Nagorno-Karabakh war held a rally on August 4 in central Azerbaijan to demand that Armenian authorities return the body of an Azerbaijani soldier, RFE/RL's Azerbaijani Service reports.

**Economic/Energy Front**

- Azerbaijani, Georgian and Romanian presidents to hold meeting on joint gas project

On September 14, Baku will host the Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev, the Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili and the Romanian President Traian Basescu's meeting to support the project of gas supplies on the route Azerbaijan-Georgia-Romania Interconnection, the Ministry of Industry and Energy said.

**Social Front**

- Opposition Azerbaijani Journalists Barred From Office Due To Debt

BAKU -- Journalists from the opposition newspaper "Azadliq" were not allowed to enter the paper's premises today due to unpaid debts to a state-owned publishing house, RFE/RL's Azerbaijani Service reports.

- Jailed Azerbaijani Activists Begin Hunger Strike

Ten opposition activists jailed for participating in an unsanctioned rally in central Baku on July 31 have declared a hunger strike, RFE/RL's Azerbaijani Service reports.

Azerbaijan Popular Front Party Deputy Chairman Fuad Qahramanli told RFE/RL that a group of men wearing civilian clothes entered the activists' cell on August 2 and used abusive and insulting language.

**Kazakhstan**  
**Political Front**

**Geo strategic Front**

## **Economic/Energy Front**

### **Social Front**

- **Kazakh Journalist Jailed For Throwing Manure At Courthouse**

ALMATY -- A Kazakh journalist was sentenced today to 10 days in jail for throwing dung at the Almaty city court building, RFE/RL's Kazakh Service reports.

Zhanna Baytelova's action on August 2 was found by the Almaty administrative court to be an act of hooliganism. She pleaded not guilty to the charge because she said what she did was a "protest action."

- **Kazakh Inmates Maim Themselves In Prison Protest**

Kazakh prison officials have said that six inmates in the Almaty detention center cut open their abdomens on July 30 to protest prison conditions, RFE/RL's Kazakh Service reports.

### **Kyrgyzstan**

#### **Political Front**

- **Kyrgyz Ombudsman Critical Of Demonstration Crackdown**

BISHKEK -- Kyrgyz Ombudsman Tursunbek Akun has criticized police actions against antigovernment demonstrators in and around the capital, Bishkek, on August 5, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports.

- **Kyrgyz President Admits Abuses Committed By Security Forces**

Kyrgyz President Roza Otunbaeva has acknowledged that Kyrgyz security forces abused the rights of minority Uzbeks in the wake of deadly ethnic riots in June.

- **Kyrgyz Ombudsman's Office Investigating Deadly Ethnic Clashes**

BISHKEK -- The Kyrgyz Ombudsman's Office has set up its own commission to investigate the deadly clashes last month between ethnic Kyrgyz and minority Uzbeks in the southern part of the country, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports.

- **Kyrgyz Communist Party Leader Resigns Due To Criminal Charge**

BISHKEK -- The chairman of the Kyrgyz Communist Party says he is resigning because of a pending criminal case against him, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports. Iskhak Masaliev told journalists in Bishkek that the charge of "organizing mass disorder" was preventing him from leaving Bishkek and campaigning for the upcoming parliamentary elections.

- **OSCE Aims For Police In Kyrgyzstan Next Month**

The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) says it expects to have an advisory police force in southern Kyrgyzstan by early September, RFE/RL reports. Frane Maroevic, deputy spokesman of the OSCE Secretariat in Vienna, told RFE/RL on August 4 that no concrete date has been set for the planned deployment of 52 unarmed police officers. But he said the technical details of the force have been finalized.

- **Osh Officials Prevent Protest Against OSCE Police In Kyrgyzstan**

There have been a number of demonstrations against the OSCE police mission in Osh, including this one last week.

- **Kyrgyz Envoy To U.S. Says Interethnic Reconciliation Could Take Decades**

Arslan Anarbaev: "Of course, the interim government does its best to control [the situation in the south], but I should say that this control is very fragile."

Arslan Anarbaev has been the interim head of the Kyrgyz Embassy in Washington as charge d'affaires since ex-President Kurmanbek Bakiev was ousted in April.

### **Geo strategic Front**

#### **Economic/Energy Front**

- Kyrgyz Vendors Demand Osh Market Be Reopened

OSH, Kyrgyzstan -- Some 100 protesters gathered in front of the mayor's office in the southern Kyrgyz city of Osh to demand the immediate reopening of the city's central market, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports.

#### **Social Front**

- Is Kyrgyz Media Providing The Whole Picture?

Stark differences have emerged in how the Kyrgyz media have covered the origins and aftermath of the interethnic violence that erupted the Central Asian country in mid-June. In some cases, ethnic Uzbeks are vilified and accused of sole responsibility for the unrest that left more than 350 people dead and 400,000 displaced in the southern provinces of Jalal-Abad and Osh. Other coverage is notable for its failure to address the Uzbek side of the story, or to downplay the scope of the violence against ethnic Uzbeks.

- A Cri De Coeur For Kyrgyzstan

Two French academics -- Bayram Balci and Pierre Chuvin, both directors of the French Institute for Central-Asian Studies -- issue an impassioned call in today's "Le Monde" for the European Union to get involved in Kyrgyzstan "before further murderous rampages" take place there.

### **Tajikistan**

#### **Political Front**

- Tajik High Court Rejects Appeal By Jailed Members Of Islamic Group

QURGHON-TEPPA, Tajikistan -- Tajikistan's Supreme Court has rejected an appeal by 18 members of the banned Islamic group Jamaat ut-Tabligh seeking to have their prison terms reduced, RFE/RL's Tajik Service reports.

- Tajik Opposition Politician Cleared Of Human-Trafficking Charge

KULOB, Tajikistan -- A court in southern Tajikistan has ruled that a regional leader of the opposition Islamic Renaissance Party and another man are not guilty of human trafficking, RFE/RL's Tajik Service reports.

#### **Geo strategic Front**

- Tajikistan Sends Afghan Prisoners Home

KABUL -- Dozens of jailed Afghan prisoners have been transferred from Tajikistan to Afghanistan as a result of an agreement between the two countries, RFE/RL's Radio Free Afghanistan reports.

- Iran Sees Regional Alliance To Counter NATO

Iran's president told the leaders of Afghanistan and Tajikistan today that the three neighbors could provide a counterweight to NATO in Asia once foreign troops exit the region.

- Tajik FM accepts copy of credentials of new Chinese envoy to Tajikistan

DUSHANBE, August 5, 2010, Asia-Plus -- Tajik Foreign Minister Hamrokhon Zarifi today morning accepted copy of credentials of new Chinese Ambassador to Tajikistan Fan Xianrong, according to the Tajik MFA information department.

- Rahmon departs for Tehran to attend trilateral summit of Persian-speaking countries

DUSHANBE, August 5, 2010, Asia-Plus -- President Emomali Rahmon heading high-ranking delegation has departed for Tehran to attend a summit meeting of the presidents of the Persian-speaking countries of Tajikistan, Iran, and Afghanistan that will convene in the Iranian capital today.

### **Economic/Energy Front**

- Uzbekistan halts freight cars bound for Khatlon

DUSHANBE, August 6, 2010, Asia-Plus - Uzbekistan has suspended rail cargo traffic to Tajikistan's southern Khatlon province.

- Tajik capital's authorities to control prices at local bazaars during Ramadan

DUSHANBE, August 6, 2010, Asia-Plus -- Tajik capital's authorities intend to strictly control prices at Dushanbe's bazaars during the Islamic holy month of Ramadan.

Shavkat Saidov, a spokesman for the Dushanbe mayor's office, told Asia-Plus that Dushanbe Mayor Mahmadsaid Ubdaidulloyev yesterday held a meeting on this subject. The meeting participants included senior representatives from the Dushanbe mayor's office and local entrepreneurs trading in essential goods.

### **Social Front**

- Tajik Madrasah Leader, Students Detained

DUSHANBE -- The leader of a madrasah and dozens of his students at his religious school in southern Tajikistan have been detained, RFE/RL's Tajik Service reports.

Tajik officials said Mavlavi Abduqahor, who is also a religious leader, was detained over the weekend along with the students at the school in the Rudaki district south of the capital, Dushanbe.

- Tajik Officials Keep Sharp Eye On Islamic Teaching

Abu-Umar Ahmadov says most of the eight- to 16-year-old students in his evening and weekend classes on Islamic principles and ethics are sent to him by well-intentioned parents.

- 'Technical Problems' Halt Publication Of Independent Tajik Weeklies

DUSHANBE -- The privately owned Mushfiqi printing house in Dushanbe says that "technical problems" will prevent it from printing several independent weekly publications, RFE/RL's Tajik Service reports.

- Tajikistan's Sole Private University Files Lawsuit Against Education Minister

DUSHANBE -- Tajikistan's only private university is suing the country's education minister for defamation, RFE/RL's Tajik Service reports.

### **Turkmenistan**

#### **Political Front**

#### **Geo strategic Front**

- Foreign Ministry of Turkmenistan hosts Turkmen-Afghan political consultations

The Turkmen-Afghan political consultations were held at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan on August 4. A high level delegation from Afghanistan arrived in Ashgabat to participate in the consultations.

- Technical issues of construction of Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India gas pipeline discussed in Ashgabat

A regular meeting of the technical working group on the project for construction of Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) gas pipeline was held in Ashgabat on 4 August. The meeting was attended by representatives of all four member countries participating in the project.

- President of Turkmenistan sends condolences to Pakistan

Turkmen President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov has sent condolences to President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan Asif Ali Zardari in connection with the natural disaster - massive flooding, which resulted in numerous human casualties and destruction.

### **Economic/Energy Front**

- U.S. State Department special envoy for Eurasian Energy holds talks in Turkmenistan

The Special Envoy of the State Department the United States on the Eurasian Energy, Richard Morningstar, is discussing issues of cooperation with the government of Turkmenistan. As the Turkmenistan.ru correspondent reports, he was received by President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov on 2 August.

- Turkmenistan and UN to prepare international legal instrument on transit of energy

A governmental delegation of Turkmenistan will hold talks with UN officials to create an expert group to prepare an international legal instrument on the transit of energy resources.

- Russian investments in Turkmenistan protected for at least 10 years

Russian investments in Turkmenistan and Turkmen investments in Russia are fully protected for at least ten years. This is provided in the Intergovernmental Agreement on Promotion and Reciprocal Protection of Investments. Russian President Dmitry Medvedev signed yesterday the law ratifying this agreement. Upon expiration, the agreement is automatically extended for the successive five-year period if neither party notifies the other in writing of its intention to terminate the document twelve months prior to the expiration of the agreement.

- Turkmenistan's GDP rose by 4 per cent in January - July

All planned activities and plans provided in the state programs to further improve the welfare of the population of Turkmenistan are being successfully implemented in a timely manner.

- GDP per capita to reach 21.7 thousand U.S. dollars by 2015 in Turkmenistan

Turkmenistan expects GDP per capita to increase to about 21,7 thousand U.S. dollars by 2015 in terms of purchasing power parity. This data was released today by the Institute of Strategic Planning and Economic Development of Turkmenistan.

- Turkmenistan, Iran discuss cooperation in energy and water

A delegation of the Islamic Republic of Iran headed by the chief of the Department of Engineering Technology of the Ministry of Water Resources, Mohammad Haj Rasuliha visited the Turkmen capital.

- U.S. companies eye Turkmen energy projects - envoy

ASHGABAT, Aug 3 (Reuters) -U.S. energy majors, overlooked in a near-\$10 billion contract bonanza to develop Turkmenistan's largest natural gas deposit, are making inroads to participating in other projects in the Central Asian state, an official said.

### **Social Front**



## **Uzbekistan Political Front**

### **Geo strategic Front**

#### **Economic/Energy Front**

- Gas distribution system to be modernized

Uztransgas joint-stock company and Alcatel-Lucent Shanghai Bell Co. (China) will modernize the gas distribution system in Uzbekistan in 2010-2011.

The work is being conducted in accordance with the President's resolution of 12 March 2009 on the Program of measures to implement the most important projects of modernization, and technical and technological renewal of production for 2009-2014.

- Uzbekistan halts freight cars bound for Khatlon

DUSHANBE, August 6, 2010, Asia-Plus - Uzbekistan has suspended rail cargo traffic to Tajikistan's southern Khatlon province.

Andrey Tropin, the head of the shipment department at Tajik Railways, told Asia-Plus today that 241 freight cars bound for Khatlon province have been stranded on Uzbek territory.

- Uzbek-Korean ICT cooperation considered

The Uzbek Agency of Communication and Information (UzACI) hosted the Uzbek-Korean seminar on studying the advanced experience and prospects of bilateral cooperation in introducing information technologies in public administration.

#### **Social Front**

- Internet festival starts in Uzbekistan

Internet festival of national domain UZ 2010 started in Uzbekistan on 5 August. The organizers of the event are the Fund "Forum of Culture and Arts of Uzbekistan", "Kelajak ovozi" youth initiatives centre, UZINFOCOM center and Mirada Software company.

## **Detailed report**

### **Azerbaijan Political Front**

#### **Geo strategic Front**

- Azerbaijan, Turkey discuss Nagorno-Karabakh conflict

Azerbaijani Minister of Foreign Affairs Elmar Mammadyarov has met Turkish counterpart on the sidelines of a meeting of foreign ministers of Turkic-speaking countries in Bodrum, Turkey.

The ministers discussed the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh.

"Azerbaijan's confrontation with Armenia is underway. We have discussed the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict with Ahmet Davutoglu. Turkey is one of the leading powers of the world community and we hope that it will continue efforts towards resolving this problem," Mammadyarov said.

- Foreign ministers of Russia and Azerbaijan talk over the phone

Foreign ministers of Azerbaijan and Russia Elmar Mammadyarov and Sergei Lavrov had a phone talk. APA reports that the talk was initiated by the Russian side. The ministers discussed a number of issues on bilateral relations and regional situation.

- Senate Panel Delays Vote On Controversial Nominee For U.S. Ambassador To Azerbaijan

Matthew Bryza is U.S. President Barack Obama's pick to fill the vacant post of ambassador to Azerbaijan. The U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee has postponed a vote on President Barack Obama's controversial pick for U.S. ambassador to Azerbaijan.

At an August 3 hearing, committee Chairman John Kerry (Democrat, Massachusetts) announced that, at the request of fellow committee member Barbara Boxer (Democrat, California), a vote on the nomination of Matthew Bryza would be postponed until after Congress's summer recess, which begins August 9.

Bryza was appointed deputy assistant secretary of state for European and Eurasian Affairs by former President George W. Bush and is a former U.S. co-chair of the Minsk Group, which seeks to broker a settlement to the dispute between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the breakaway Azerbaijani region of Nagorno-Karabakh.

#### Record Questioned

The postponement of the vote on his nomination as ambassador to Azerbaijan followed a July 22 confirmation hearing by the same Senate committee, in which Bryza faced tough questions on his diplomatic record -- including concerns that in the past, he has not held Azerbaijan adequately responsible for its role in the continuing tensions with Armenia.

At the hearing, Senator Boxer, who represents California -- the U.S. state with the largest Armenian-American constituency -- said she hoped to "clear the air" on Bryza's record. She questioned Bryza on why he had not explicitly condemned Azerbaijan for its role in a June firefight near Nagorno-Karabakh that left one Azerbaijani and four Armenian soldiers dead.

At the time, Armenian and Karabakh officials described as an act of Azerbaijani aggression, while Azerbaijan said the incident was consequence of Armenia's failure to withdraw from its territory.

At the hearing, Bryza referred to an OSCE statement condemning the violence and said, "There is no military solution to the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh."

"I agree with you, but that's why I was looking for a more forceful answer in terms of the condemnation of Azerbaijan," Boxer replied.

An Armenian soldier stands at a frontline position east of Karabakh.Boxer, along with Senators Robert Menendez (Democrat, New Jersey) and Jeanne Shaheen (Democrat, New Hampshire) also pressed Bryza on several other matters from his State Department diplomatic record.

They included a quote attributed to him saying, "Armenia must agree that Nagorno-Karabakh is legally part of Azerbaijan;" a delay of three months before he condemned Azerbaijani desecration of Armenian gravesites; and the use of only a quarter of the \$8 million Congress provided in 2009 for assistance to Nagorno-Karabakh.

In response, Bryza said his words had been incorrectly translated from Russian and said he needed to verify the circumstances surrounding the destruction of the Armenian graves before commenting.

At Boxer's request, Bryza also consented to provide a "detailed accounting" of all U.S. assistance to Nagorno-Karabakh before his confirmation moved forward.

Concerns also emerged at the hearing regarding potential conflicts of interest, as the senators questioned Bryza's personal ties to members of the government in Baku. The issue of Bryza's wife also came up; Turkish-born Zeyno Baran works at a conservative Washington think tank that receives funding from energy giant ExxonMobil. As ambassador to Azerbaijan, Bryza would play a key role in the region's delicate energy politics.

"Being criticized or being thought of as being closer to one side or the other is part of the game, and I have to just remain always objective and deliver the tough messages when necessary," Bryza said.

#### The Next Step

When Bryza's nomination for the post of U.S. ambassador to Baku was announced in late May, it was praised by Azerbaijani groups, but provoked an angry response from the Armenian diaspora in the United States. Ahead of the Foreign Relation Committee's August 3 meeting, the Armenian National Committee of America issued the latest in a series of letters to senators urging scrutiny of the "flawed nomination."

Aram Hamparian, the group's executive director, welcomed the decision to postpone the vote. "The postponement allows not only senators, but also concerned citizens, a chance to look into this matter more deeply -- to review the nominee's responses, but also to follow up on those responses and make sure that the nominee that gets sent to Baku is the best representative of American interests and values in the world," he said.

In an e-mailed comment, a spokesman for the Senate Foreign Relations Committee said it was "not unusual" for a senator to put a hold on a nominee. He added that "most holds are eventually overcome."

Nevertheless, the postponement of the vote leaves the door open for a possible rejection of Bryza's candidacy. Lincoln Mitchell, an expert on the South Caucasus at Columbia University said it was notable that Democratic senators -- members of Obama's own party -- are leading the resistance.

"It's not a high-enough-profile position -- it's not like you're rejecting a secretary of state or something -- so, it doesn't become a major political story. It becomes a minor political story," he said. "I have no reason to think that this is something for which the Obama administration is really going to go to the mat. If it becomes clear that this is a fight within their own party, [then] they're not going to have it."

- Azerbaijanis Demand Armenians Return Soldier's Body

BAKU -- Dozens of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and veterans of the Nagorno-Karabakh war held a rally on August 4 in central Azerbaijan to demand that Armenian authorities return the body of an Azerbaijani soldier, RFE/RL's Azerbaijani Service reports.

Mubariz Ibrahimov was killed during a firefight between Azerbaijani and Armenian forces near the breakaway Azerbaijani region of Nagorno-Karabakh on June 18-19.

Most of the people at the protest, which was held in the Bilusavar district, are from the Agdam district that borders Karabakh. Mahammad Aslanov, head of the Agdam

Regional Youth Office, told RFE/RL that protesters carried national flags, pictures of Ibrahimov, and signs saying "We are all Mubariz!"

An Azerbaijani Defense Ministry press release said "Mubariz Ibrahimov died while fighting back against Armenian soldiers in the Chayli village of the Terter region. The Armenian side took Mubariz Ibrahimov's body and has not returned it. Azerbaijan continues its efforts to have the body of national hero Mubariz Ibrahimov returned by the Armenian side."

But Armenia claims Ibrahimov was shot dead in Armenian-controlled territory. Both Armenian and Karabakh officials say that proves that the fighting -- which also left four Armenian soldiers dead -- was provoked by Azerbaijani forces.

The Azerbaijani authorities have asked the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to mediate in getting Ibrahimov's body returned.

Ilaha Huseynova from the ICRC office in Baku told RFE/RL they have relayed to Yerevan the Azerbaijani request to hand over Ibrahimov's body and it is up to the two sides to reach an agreement.

Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev has bestowed the title of "national hero" on Ibrahimov. He has also ordered that a school and a street be named after Ibrahimov in Bilasuvar, his native district.

### **Economic/Energy Front**

- Azerbaijani, Georgian and Romanian presidents to hold meeting on joint gas project

On September 14, Baku will host the Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev, the Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili and the Romanian President Traian Basescu's meeting to support the project of gas supplies on the route Azerbaijan-Georgia-Romania Interconnection, the Ministry of Industry and Energy said. The sides will sign a Baku declaration on the results of the upcoming summit. Baku will host a meeting of working groups to coordinate all necessary documents Sept.6.

Also a meeting at the level of energy ministers of the three countries will be held Sept. 13 in Baku . The Baku summit will be attended European Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso and EU Energy Commissioner Günther Oettinger.

Earlier, a trilateral working group, which will be engaged in establishment of the JV, was created within the Azerbaijan-Georgia-Romania Interconnection.

It's expected that the process of establishment of the JV in Romania will end in autumn, which will consist of representatives of all three participating states of this project. At the initial stage the JV will prepare a feasibility study, and, then, the company will search investment and construct terminals in Georgia and Romania, as well as construct the infrastructure in all three participating countries. Since September, the JV will be able to announce a tender for the preparation of feasibility study.

### **Social Front**

- Opposition Azerbaijani Journalists Barred From Office Due To Debt

BAKU -- Journalists from the opposition newspaper "Azadliq" were not allowed to enter the paper's premises today due to unpaid debts to a state-owned publishing house, RFE/RL's Azerbaijani Service reports.

"Azadliq" chief editor Qanimat Zahid, the only member of the staff allowed to enter the building, said the paper may not be published on August 3 because of the restriction.

Basti Ismayilova, the deputy director of the publishing house, told RFE/RL that 15 publications owe the publishing house money. She did not say how much is owed in total.

Zahid said "Azadliq" owes 16,000 manats (\$19,893) to the publishing house. He said the paper is trying to repay the debt gradually by paying an additional 400-500 manats with each printing bill it receives.

On National Press Day on July 22, Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev allotted 20,000 manats to 32 newspapers. Zahid says demanding the payment of debts means the government is taking back the financial aid. The staff of a second debt-plagued newspaper, "Baki khabar," began a two-week vacation today due to the hot weather.

The chief editor, Aydin Quliyev, says the vacation is not connected to the debt problem.

"The paper owes 17,000 manats to the publishing house and is ready to pay half of the debt," he told RFE/RL.

Aliyev signed a decree in 2006 writing off various newspapers' combined accumulated debts of some 400,000 manats to the state publishing house.

- **Jailed Azerbaijani Activists Begin Hunger Strike**

Ten opposition activists jailed for participating in an unsanctioned rally in central Baku on July 31 have declared a hunger strike, RFE/RL's Azerbaijani Service reports.

Azerbaijan Popular Front Party Deputy Chairman Fuad Qahramanli told RFE/RL that a group of men wearing civilian clothes entered the activists' cell on August 2 and used abusive and insulting language. "The detainees have launched the hunger strike in protest," he added.

Qahramanli said he did not understand how the men managed to enter the jail cell, where the activists are serving between seven and 10 days of "administrative detention" for their roles in the protest on July 31.

Qahramanli said the incident "shows that the Azerbaijani authorities do not follow the simplest legal norms."

Interior Ministry official Ehsan Zahidov refuted the report about the incident. He told RFE/RL that only interrogators are allowed access to cells.

Some of the detained activists are members of the Popular Front or the Musavat Party. Ten other rally participants were released shortly after being detained. The July 31 rally - which was in support of the right to freedom of assembly -- was dispersed by police because it was unauthorized. The Baku municipal council has designated locations on the city outskirts where demonstrations may be held, but the opposition insists it has a right to hold protests in the city center.

## **Kazakhstan Political Front**

### **Geo strategic Front**

### **Economic/Energy Front**

### **Social Front**

- **Kazakh Journalist Jailed For Throwing Manure At Courthouse**

ALMATY -- A Kazakh journalist was sentenced today to 10 days in jail for throwing dung at the Almaty city court building, RFE/RL's Kazakh Service reports.

Zhanna Baytelova's action on August 2 was found by the Almaty administrative court to be an act of hooliganism. She pleaded not guilty to the charge because she said what she did was a "protest action."

Baytelova repeatedly threw handfuls of manure at an entrance to the Almaty city court building to protest the court's rejection of her lawsuit against Prime Minister Karim Masimov and two other politicians.

Baytelova had filed a case against Masimov, Senate speaker Qasymzhomart Toqayev, and lower house speaker Oral Mukhamedzhanov in the Zhetysay district court for what she termed their "illegal decision to sign the law on the 'leader of the nation,'" which became official in mid-June.

The district court decided not to accept Baytelova's case, so she took it to the Almaty city court, which refused her case on July 27. The law on the "leader of the nation" widened the rights and powers of Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbaev and his relatives.

Baytelova, who works for the opposition newspaper "Golos Respubliki" (Voice of the Republic), told journalists after her verdict was pronounced today that she considers her sentence "a sign of solidarity between courts, as my action...was a protest against the Kazakh courts' 'illegal decisions.'"

- **Kazakh Inmates Maim Themselves In Prison Protest**

Kazakh prison officials have said that six inmates in the Almaty detention center cut open their abdomens on July 30 to protest prison conditions, RFE/RL's Kazakh Service reports.

Irina Yakubova, the deputy chairwoman of the Department for Control of the Penal System in the Almaty region, told journalists that the six inmates had been given medical assistance and their current condition was satisfactory.

She said the group of inmates managed to organize mass phone calls to their relatives and media outlets from their jail cells informing them about alleged mass beatings and torture of the inmates by prison guards.

"All the allegations about mass beatings and cruelty are absolutely groundless," Yakubova said.

Yakubova said that the inmates were also protesting the appointment of the detention center's new chief, Dimash Asqaruly.

On July 30, dozens of the inmates' worried relatives gathered in front of the detention center in Almaty demanding a meeting with their loved ones.

But officials did not allow them to meet with the inmates, saying that two of the convicts had cut themselves open.

On July 31, human rights activists Roza Akylbekova and Ardaq Zhanabilova were allowed to visit the prison. They told journalists later that four inmates had maimed themselves. They did not give any further details.

Meanwhile, human rights activist Vadim Kuramshin told RFE/RL that the conflict was caused by a decision by Asqaruly, the new prison chief, to ban mobile phones in the penitentiary.

Kuramshin said the inmates protested and the guards beat them, causing the situation to get out of control.

## **Kyrgyzstan Political Front**

- Kyrgyz Ombudsman Critical Of Demonstration Crackdown

BISHKEK -- Kyrgyz Ombudsman Tursunbek Akun has criticized police actions against antigovernment demonstrators in and around the capital, Bishkek, on August 5, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports.

Akun told RFE/RL the use of tear gas and stun grenades to disperse the demonstration in Bishkek was unnecessary.

He said the majority of the protesters were unarmed and therefore police had no right to use violence when dispersing them, adding that the police should not have detained unarmed demonstrators.

Akun also sent an open letter to the government today, in which he wrote that "the government should not forget the price common Kyrgyz citizens paid to bring the current leadership of the nation to power. The police have no right to violate ordinary citizens' rights guaranteed by the Kyrgyz Constitution."

Some 2,000 supporters of the leader of Meken Tuu (Flag of the Homeland) party, Urmat Barktabasov, organized the August 5 demonstration in Bishkek's central square to demand that President Roza Otunbaeva appoint him prime minister.

Kyrgyz security forces arrested Barktabasov and four of his associates in the Issyk-Kul region as they and hundreds of other supporters traveled to join the rally in Bishkek. Officials said the four men were armed.

Kyrgyz National Security Service (UKK) head Keneshbek Duishebaev told journalists today that Barktabasov was officially charged with attempting to overthrow the government by force, organization of mass unrest, and illegal weapons possession.

Duishebaev told journalists on August 5 that Barktabasov had been given a large amount of money from Bakiev's relatives.

He said the UKK has discovered how the money was channeled to Kyrgyzstan and has evidence to prove it. No further details were provided.

Janysh Bakiev. Duishebaev also said at the press conference that a brother of Bakiev, Janysh Bakiev, is thought to be living in Minsk with his brother.

Janysh Bakiev was the commander of the presidential security guard when his brother was president. Following his resignation in April, Kurmanbek Bakiev fled to Belarus at the invitation of President Alyaksandr Lukashenka.

Kurmanbek and Janysh Bakiev and several of their relatives are wanted in Kyrgyzstan for corruption, embezzlement, and mass murder for issuing an order for police to fire on demonstrators during the protests on April 7 that led to Bakiev fleeing Bishkek.

A total of 86 people died in the clashes between security forces and demonstrators.

- Kyrgyz President Admits Abuses Committed By Security Forces

Kyrgyz President Roza Otunbaeva has acknowledged that Kyrgyz security forces abused the rights of minority Uzbeks in the wake of deadly ethnic riots in June.

Otunbaeva made the admission in an interview with the French AFP news agency. The admission comes following allegations from rights groups and the United Nations that Kyrgyz security forces targeted Uzbeks after the riots.

Otunbaeva confirmed the allegations and cited specific cases. In one example, Otunbaeva confirmed that a widely reported incident in which two ethnic Uzbeks were killed by officers conducting a sweep in the southern village of Nariman in June were targeted killings.

According to official figures, more than 350 people were killed and tens of thousands were made homeless during the ethnic riots in June between majority Kyrgyz and minority Uzbeks in the southern cities of Osh and Jalal-Abad.

Around 1,000 people protested in the Kyrgyz capital, Bishkek, today against the interim government.

- Kyrgyz Ombudsman's Office Investigating Deadly Ethnic Clashes

BISHKEK -- The Kyrgyz Ombudsman's Office has set up its own commission to investigate the deadly clashes last month between ethnic Kyrgyz and minority Uzbeks in the southern part of the country, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports.

Ombudsman Tursunbek Akun told RFE/RL that the commission is made up of 13 people from different ethnic groups, including Uzbeks.

He said the commission is working in Osh and Jalal-Abad in tandem with a national commission established by the government to look into the tragedy.

President Roza Otunbaeva also pledged to allow for an independent international investigation into the bloodshed, which included allegations of police and security forces' involvement.

Local and international rights groups have said an impartial probe is necessary to establish the causes and help avert further violence.

Akun, who was a longtime human rights activist before becoming ombudsman in 2008, said the results of his commission's work will be made public on September 30.

At least 356 people died and hundreds of thousands fled their homes during the violent clashes in the Osh and Jalal-Abad regions from June 10-15.

The outbreak followed by just two months political protests and a security crackdown that eventually forced then-President Kurmanbek Bakiev to flee the country and ushered in an interim government led by Otunbaeva.

- Kyrgyz Communist Party Leader Resigns Due To Criminal Charge

BISHKEK -- The chairman of the Kyrgyz Communist Party says he is resigning because of a pending criminal case against him, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports.

Iskhak Masaliev told journalists in Bishkek that the charge of "organizing mass disorder" was preventing him from leaving Bishkek and campaigning for the upcoming parliamentary elections.

The charge was made against Masaliev in May after a recording of an alleged phone conversation he had with Usen Sydykov -- the head of former President Kurmanbek Bakiev's administration -- was made public. During the conversation, it appears Masaliev and Sydykov were discussing how to organize unrest in southern Kyrgyzstan. Two people died in ethnic clashes in the Jalal-Abad region on May 12-13.

Masaliev spent about two weeks in jail before being released and put under house arrest. He said the charge against him was "absolutely groundless."

Masaliev told RFE/RL that Bumairam Mamaseitova will take over as leader of the Communists.

Masaliev, 50, is the son of Absamat Masaliev, the Kyrgyz Communist Party's first secretary and leader of the Soviet republic until the USSR collapsed in 1991.

Absamat Masaliev continued to lead the party until his death in July 2004, when his son took over. Kyrgyzstan has a second Communist Party that is headed by Klara Ajybekova. The parliamentary elections are scheduled for October 10.



- OSCE Aims For Police In Kyrgyzstan Next Month

The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) says it expects to have an advisory police force in southern Kyrgyzstan by early September, RFE/RL reports.

Frane Maroevic, deputy spokesman of the OSCE Secretariat in Vienna, told RFE/RL on August 4 that no concrete date has been set for the planned deployment of 52 unarmed police officers. But he said the technical details of the force have been finalized.

Maroevic said the OSCE is still taking offers from member states willing to send police officers to Kyrgyzstan. He said the deadline for such offers is August 8, and added that the OSCE is still looking for pledges from member states to fund the deployment.

Maroevic said the OSCE Permanent Council, which is needed to approve decisions regarding the OSCE police force, will not meet in August.

Kyrgyz Foreign Minister Ruslan Kazakbaev told RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service on August 4 that the government has been coordinating the deployment with the OSCE.

"Now [the OSCE] is deciding when to send the police advisory group to Kyrgyzstan. It could come very soon. Now the...[OSCE] is selecting candidates. We sent them our own suggestions such as [the OSCE police advisers] should speak Russian, be experienced, and should understand our culture and mentality," Kazakbaev said.

Kyrgyz President Roza Otunbaeva gave her approval to the international police force last month. It is scheduled to be placed in the southern regions of Jalal-Abad and Osh, where clashes in June between ethnic Uzbeks and Kyrgyz led to at least 366 deaths.

There have been several protests in recent weeks in Kyrgyzstan against the OSCE police force. Several politicians, including Osh Mayor Melis Myrzakmatov, have also voiced their opposition to the proposed deployment.

- Osh Officials Prevent Protest Against OSCE Police In Kyrgyzstan

There have been a number of demonstrations against the OSCE police mission in Osh, including this one last week.

OSH, Kyrgyzstan -- The authorities in Kyrgyzstan's southern city of Osh have prevented a mass protest against the deployment of an international police force in the Osh and Jalal-Abad regions, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports.

Sonunbek Junusbaev, one of the activists who planned the protest, told RFE/RL that the Osh commandant ordered the removal of a yurt -- the traditional Kyrgyz nomadic dwelling -- from in front of a local theater on August 4.

The protest organizers had set up the yurt earlier this week as a symbol of their protest.

Several protests against the planned deployment of an advisory police force under the auspices of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in southern Kyrgyzstan were held in Bishkek and other cities last week.

The 52 unarmed international police are expected to arrive in Osh and Jalal-Abad in early September to accompany police on patrols, engage in training and advising local police, and to monitor the human rights situation.

The OSCE and the Kyrgyz government decided to send the police mission in an effort to restore order after clashes between ethnic Uzbeks and Kyrgyz killed at least 356 people and uprooted hundreds of thousands more in June.

International human rights groups have reported that Kyrgyz police and other security forces are arbitrarily detaining ethnic Uzbeks and also beating them.

The OSCE police are to stay in the southern regions for four months

- Kyrgyz Envoy To U.S. Says Interethnic Reconciliation Could Take Decades

Arslan Anarbaev: "Of course, the interim government does its best to control [the situation in the south], but I should say that this control is very fragile."

Arslan Anarbaev has been the interim head of the Kyrgyz Embassy in Washington as charge d'affaires since ex-President Kurmanbek Bakiev was ousted in April. In Kyrgyzstan, he served in the governments of both Bakiev and his predecessor, Askar Akaev.

Anarbaev sat down with RFE/RL correspondent Richard Solash recently to talk about a range of issues in his country – from the presence of U.S. and Russian bases to lingering ethnic tensions in the south and the critical time Kyrgyzstan is facing, both now and in the coming months.

RFE/RL: How would you characterize current relations between Washington and Bishkek? And have they changed since President Bakiev was overthrown in April?

Arslan Anarbaev: To answer your question, I should note that cooperation with the United States is one of the main priorities in Kyrgyzstan's external political agenda, regardless of the government change. After the well-known April events that led to the government change, the U.S.- Kyrgyz partnership didn't change much. Kyrgyzstan is committed to observing its obligations in the framework of U.S.-Kyrgyz agreements and doesn't intend to break them. I think the United States right now considers Kyrgyzstan to be its partner and ally on matters of providing regional security, including stabilizing the situation in Afghanistan.

A U.S. cargo plane lands on the runway of the Manas air base. (file photo)RFE/RL: Will both the United States' transit center at Manas -- which is so crucial to the its military operations in Afghanistan -- and the Russian air force base at Kant continue to operate? Do they represent competing presences in the country?

Anarbaev: I am sure that when all is said and done, the presence of Russian military infrastructure and the simultaneous presence of a [U.S.] transit center [in Kyrgyzstan] don't really interfere with each other. Each one of them executes their own mandate and their own functions, determined by their tasks. We have a bilateral agreement with the United States regarding the Manas base, which definitively states that one of the sides can terminate the agreement with six months' notification.

On the other hand, as you know, the Kyrgyz side has stated a number of times that as soon as the situation is normalized in Afghanistan, the U.S. base won't be needed. The same thing is the case regarding the Russian base presence. It will depend on the region's progress in the distant future. If the situation should worsen, the presence of the Russian base will still be vital.

RFE/RL: Have U.S. officials expressed concern to you about Russian interests in Kyrgyzstan?

Anarbaev: To answer your question, I'll repeat that this topic was never brought up during my meetings with either the U.S. side or the Russian side.

RFE/RL: There has recently been some criticism in Kyrgyz media about U.S. financing of the Manas transit center, particularly in regard to allegations that much of the money supplied to the base was actually going into the pockets of the Bakiev family. Is the government of President Roza Otunbaeva trying to make the financial transactions surrounding Manas more transparent?

Anarbaev: I've told you that the Manas base played and plays not only an important role in creating regional and national security, but I should tell you openly that the presence of the Manas base plays a positive role in economic development. As you know, the budget receives money from renting the base and from supplying gasoline and fuels. The money that we receive is significant, if you take into account that Kyrgyzstan's budgetary situation is always tense.

You know, the whole situation in the south of my country reminds me of live coals: If you blow, you might just see, God forbid, another flame. So always when you are considering the presence of Manas in Kyrgyzstan, you are also considering the question of money. I think that during ex-President Bakiev's rule, corruption was present, [but] I can only guess if there were actual cases of corruption or not. This issue is still open at the moment and it's in the hands of the judiciary and law enforcement organizations, who are working on it now.

This issue was also brought up here in congressional hearings on Kyrgyzstan, if you remember. Back then, the U.S. Congress, the State Department, and also the Pentagon demanded an answer to the question of transparency of fuel contracts. This question is still open, but I know that at this time, discussions on the Kyrgyz side are going well, and from now on, gas supplies will be done in an open and transparent form.

RFE/RL: In the wake of the interethnic violence in June and the ensuing refugee crisis, does President Otunbaeva's government have full control over the south of Kyrgyzstan?

Anarbaev: That's a good question. I cannot answer this question for sure – [whether] we control the territory in the south of my country 100 percent. That's because of such objective factors as the lingering tension between these two ethnic groups [and] because of the mistrust and lack of confidence of the ethnic Uzbeks and Kyrgyz communities toward local law enforcement bodies.

You know, the whole situation in the south of my country reminds me of live coals: If you blow, you might just see, God forbid, another flame. Of course, the interim government does its best to control [the situation], but I should say that this control is very fragile.

An injured ethnic Uzbek refugee in the city of Osh on June 20  
RFE/RL: How long do you think it will take to heal the interethnic rift in Kyrgyzstan? And will the government make an attempt to help smooth relations?

Anarbaev: It will take quite some time -- maybe decades. But we do know that we should start to reconcile [the Kyrgyz and ethnic communities] right now, by such activities as providing timely assistance to those who suffered heavily from the terrible events [of June]; supplying them with food, medical assistance, and construction materials, so that people can have their homes before the winter season comes. This is the first step.

RFE/RL: What about longer-term plans for dealing with this issue?

Anarbaev: In the second stage, I think that there will be special programs developed to help bring peace to the ethnic communities. This is a long and painful process and we'll need more international help. I already stated that it would be good to invite a specialized mission from the OSCE, from the office of ethnic minorities, to determine the severity of the situation on the spot.

Based on this we can develop short and middle-term programs and projects for reconciliation between the ethnic communities -- programs in culture and education, increasing understanding of human rights. All of them must be inserted into grade school

and higher education to promote civic peace in the country as the most important step in the country's stable socioeconomic evolution and growth.

RFE/RL: There are growing allegations that many media outlets in Kyrgyzstan, through inflammatory or biased reporting, are fueling ethnic tensions in the country. As you see it, is that the case?

I should say that we cannot exclude the possibility of some forces with destructive aims getting into our country from neighboring countries...Anarbaev: That's a good question. The thing is -- and it's true not only in Kyrgyzstan -- that sometimes a careless word, spoken or printed in a newspaper, can do much more harm than a terrorist bombing on the street, for example. That's why journalists have a very big responsibility. You, being one yourself, probably understand it. That's the reason we are working with journalists in many ways, encouraging them to be cautious and correct, before making bold statements, especially in this tense environment.

At the same time, we pay a lot of attention to media freedom and freedom of speech. You know that during Bakiev's rule, freedom of speech was severely degraded. You know how many journalists were assaulted and persecuted. And you know about the assassinations. That's why we created a new program in Kyrgyzstan, called "Back to Democracy," that aims to develop and strengthen democratic values in the country [and] to strengthen fundamental human values and freedom of speech.

RFE/RL: Robert Blake, the assistant U.S. secretary of state for South and Central Asian affairs, said at a July 27 hearing of the U.S. Helsinki Commission that there was a threat of Islamic extremists from Afghanistan entering the south of Kyrgyzstan through the Tajik border. Do you take that threat seriously and is the government trying to counter it?

Anarbaev: I should say that we cannot exclude the possibility of some forces with destructive aims getting into our country from neighboring countries -- members of radical Islamic organizations, for example. Unfortunately, we are not excluding this possibility because our country has enemies and those who wish us ill, and we have a lot of proof that people close to Bakiev and his family members had a part to play in the region's destabilization.

The interests of these internal destructive forces match the interests of external ones, located in neighboring countries -- radical Islamism and drug trafficking. Matching interests unite those groups and may, God forbid, create a new burst of tension in our country. That's why our government pays a lot of attention to border security. The help of the United States, Russia, Kazakhstan, our neighbors, assists us with this. The danger can come from other countries, as well, not only from Tajikistan.

Kyrgyz President Roza OtunbaevaRFE/RL: Observers say that the parliamentary elections scheduled for the fall will set a critical precedent for post-Bakiev Kyrgyzstan. What is the government doing to ensure that they will be conducted fairly and openly?

Anarbaev: We all understand that the conduct of the essential upcoming election plays a huge political role for us and the fate of our country depends on how well the election will be organized. That's why my president and members of the provisional government are doing everything possible for the election to be open, clear, and honest -- complying with all international standards that are, as you know, universal for all democratic countries.

And in these efforts we are trying to make sure that these elections proceed with maximum transparency and in a fair manner, in the presence of independent international observers. As you know, parliamentary elections in our country are always, unfortunately, accompanied by excessive emotionality on the part of the voters and the political parties, which often leads to destabilization of the internal political situation. This is why we are trying to provide public safety -- personal safety -- for all participants of the parliamentary elections themselves and for those who are organizing them.

RFE/RL: The new Kyrgyz government has issued several criminal charges against Bakiev, his family members, and his associates. Some of those accused may have assets in the United States. Is your office investigating this or taking action on this issue?

Anarbaev: As far as I remember, we did ask the United States for help in investigating whether money-laundering and illegal financial transactions [by the Bakiev family and others] indeed took place. It appears that the U.S. side then agreed to help. I don't have the information at this moment, but I think that this issue will return after the parliament in our country is formed.

When parliament forms -- after that important moment -- the legitimization process will begin for all structures, all democratic institutions. After that, it will be easier for us to cooperate with the U.S. side to investigate this issue more thoroughly and give a definite answer as to whether or not any wheeling and dealing took place. Now it's too early to tell.

### **Geo strategic Front**

#### **Economic/Energy Front**

- Kyrgyz Vendors Demand Osh Market Be Reopened

OSH, Kyrgyzstan -- Some 100 protesters gathered in front of the mayor's office in the southern Kyrgyz city of Osh to demand the immediate reopening of the city's central market, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports.

The outdoor market -- which is one of the oldest and busiest in Central Asia -- suffered severe damage during deadly clashes between ethnic Uzbeks and Kyrgyz on June 10-15 and was closed.

Protesters say that at least 10,000 people used to work at the market, which has been closed for almost two months. They say vendors are now unable to repay their debts. The protesters warned that if their demand is not met they will consider other forms of protest. Deputy Mayor Taalay Sabirov met with protesters and explained to them that the condition of the market no longer meets basic safety and sanitary requirements, as many buildings were destroyed in the unrest.

He recommended that the vendors move to a smaller market in the western part of the city until the central market's facilities are repaired.

#### **Social Front**

- Is Kyrgyz Media Providing The Whole Picture?

Stark differences have emerged in how the Kyrgyz media have covered the origins and aftermath of the interethnic violence that erupted in the Central Asian country in mid-June.

In some cases, ethnic Uzbeks are vilified and accused of sole responsibility for the unrest that left more than 350 people dead and 400,000 displaced in the southern provinces of Jalal-Abad and Osh. Other coverage is notable for its failure to address the Uzbek side of the story, or to downplay the scope of the violence against ethnic Uzbeks.

Nationalistic rhetoric and open calls for violence have threatened to heighten interethnic animosity at a time when international organizations, foreign donors, and human rights groups are working with the interim government to calm the situation and prevent another outbreak of violence.

Sultan Jumagulov, a Bishkek-based independent media consultant, says several independent newspapers, including the independent Kyrgyz-language newspapers "Alibi" and "Apta," took a decidedly pro-Kyrgyz stance from the beginning.

"When interethnic clashes in the south began, these papers started publishing materials under such slogans like 'Kyrgyzstan For Kyrgyz people,' 'Our Fatherland Is In Trouble,'" Jumagulov says. "And these publications had this mood of instigation against some minorities."

Dangerous 'Alibi'

Just days before interethnic clashes broke out in Osh on June 10-11, "Alibi" published an editorial on June 8, which contained inflammatory passages and was illustrated with a picture of a clenched fist:

Without any doubt, under the current circumstances Uzbeks will become even more impudent if we don't attack them seriously...

We say so, because we heard several groups of Kyrgyz in Talas region say: 'If Uzbeks in Jalal-Abad do not stop bothering the Kyrgyz, we will go there and put [Uzbeks] in their place...

Therefore, if [Uzbeks] don't appreciate our hospitality, then the government along with people would have to properly attack Uzbeks.

Jumagulov says that "Alibi" and "Apta" have for some time been publishing material of an ultra-nationalistic nature. They would rhetorically ask why the Kyrgyz were "poor in their own country," while "other nationalities were rich." Alternatively, he says, they would ask why other nationalities were not "respecting" the Kyrgyz.

"Alibi," a weekly based in Bishkek but distributed nationwide with a circulation of about 10,000, provides recent examples of content that could be read as a provocation to violence.

The July 13 editorial titled "'Alibi' Withdraws The Line Under This Argument" appears to pin blame for the violence on ethnic Uzbeks, the country's largest minority, even if it they are not mentioned by name: These other nationalities who started this war and murdered Kyrgyz people, then -- being unable to defend themselves -- ran away, would be put in their place by our very united efforts.

The coverage of mainstream Kyrgyz news agencies, such as "24kg" and "AkiPress," both of which are privately owned and are published online in Kyrgyz, Russian, and English, have tended to downplay the extent of violence in the south.

While international media were quick to identify the interethnic nature of the violence, "24kg" and "AkiPress" adopted the terms "mass unrest" or "June events" and took care to avoid mention of the ethnicity of the two battling sides.

In recent weeks, international media have focused much of their coverage on how ethnic Uzbeks have been disproportionately targeted by police raids, arbitrary arrests, and even torture while in detention.

Reporting from Osh and Jalal-Abad by "24kg" and "AkiPress," meanwhile, has generally focused on investigations into the origins of the unrest, the official number of casualties, local government appointments, and reconstruction efforts.

"Local people's" anxiety about the possibility of future unrest is mentioned almost as an aside in a July 28 article published by "24kg" and titled, "The City Of Osh Remains The Most Painful Place In Osh Province."

The day before, on July 27, the news agency did concede that there were "different explanations" for the unrest. The solitary comment of Human Rights Ombudsman Tursunbek Akun explained the situation by saying "most international organizations accuse Kyrgyzstan, including the Kyrgyz, of genocide of Uzbeks."

#### No Coverage, No Problem

State-run broadcast media have been remarkable mainly for what has been lacking in their coverage. In the early days of the June violence, there was a scarcity of reporting of fighting in the south, and very limited coverage of the plight of ethnic Uzbeks during and after the violence, according to media observers and ethnic Uzbeks questioned by RFE/RL.

In one Uzbek neighborhood right off the main Masaliev street in Osh, a woman gave a dour assessment of the television coverage. "On television they're saying everything is fine," she said on condition that her name not be used, out of fear for her safety. "We never see a single Uzbek being interviewed."

In the southern village of Mazhnun-tol, a man named Mampirjan said that "TV broadcasts only one way. Uzbeks are always being blamed." He alleged that state broadcasters were "showing Uzbek homes and saying they're Kyrgyz."

Media consultant Jumagulov says one of the country's major television channels, EITR, has not broadcast a single report over the past two months on the thousands of ethnic Uzbeks who were forced to leave their homes.

He adds that his monitoring of national-television programming has revealed that the state channels' coverage of the situation in the south has largely been limited to reports on officials' visits and statements and on the delivery of humanitarian aid. Most interviewees, he says, call for peace or praise reconciliation efforts.

The violence left more than 350 people dead and hundreds injured

Correspondents from the two channels have offered explanations for the dearth of coverage. Gulbara Kenjeeva, a regional correspondent of NTRK, told a media-monitoring group from the NGO "Journalists" that the threat of violence played a large part. Kenjeeva recalled that on June 11 a young man with a knife attacked her and Ibragim Ashurov, NTRK's cameraman. Only because they were able to drive away quickly, she said, were they able to survive. After that incident, they didn't go out to cover events because all journalists were under threat, she said.

EITR correspondents were also attacked, according to "Journalists." The NGO reports that Rasul Nasirdinov, an EITR cameraman, was beaten badly and his car damaged when he attempted to cover events.

#### Image Crisis

Kuban Abdymen, director of the Zamandash press agency in Bishkek, suggests that bias in some Kyrgyz media could be attributed to an effort to instill balance to the overall coverage, often seen to disproportionately portray ethnic Uzbeks as the main victims of the unrest.

"Since in the international media there were lots of one-sided articles about the events and the tragedy in Osh, these materials [in the Kyrgyz press] may be considered a natural response to them," Abdymen says. "If the foreign media would try to be objective about the events in Kyrgyzstan, then there would be no reason to publish such articles."

The international media focused much of their reporting on attacks on businesses and properties of ethnic Uzbeks, broadcasting images of the burning and looting of homes in Uzbek neighborhoods into living rooms around the world.

In some cases, ethnic Kyrgyz have come under fierce criticism in the Kyrgyz media for contribute to this portrayal of events.

Rights activist Tolekan Ismailova, who was oft-quoted by international media in the early days of the violence, has been called a "traitor" in Kyrgyz online forums for describing atrocities being committed. She announced in early July that she left the country after hearing that her life was under threat.

Bermet Malikova, a journalist with a Russian-language daily, says she was described by several Kyrgyz newspapers as having been "unpatriotic" for her coverage of the events. Malikova works for "Vecherny Bishkek," which media observers widely mention as the most outspoken publication in Kyrgyzstan during the crisis. She says several Kyrgyz newspapers warned her not to become an "enemy of the Kyrgyz people."

"Alibi," for example, wrote in July that journalists such as Malikova have "no respect for their native language," and called on her to make amends for her actions: "At this moment, when Kyrgyz people are swallowing blood, suffering, and expecting condolences and support, why don't you offer your sincere condolences?" the paper asked.

#### One Story, Two Sides

The reporting by "Vecherny Bishkek" does not stand out as having been pro-Uzbek. A review of its coverage over past weeks reveals few interviews with ethnic Uzbeks. It had no reports from camps along the Kyrgyz-Uzbek border where tens of thousands of displaced ethnic Uzbeks sought shelter in the aftermath of the violence. Slide shows depicting burned-down Uzbek neighborhoods or displaced ethnic Uzbeks do not feature prominently on the paper's website, as they have on many international news sites.

However, "Vecherny Bishkek" was one of very few Kyrgyz publications that openly -- albeit sparsely -- mentioned the Uzbek side of the story. "The Uzbek community claims the deaths of some 700 people," the paper wrote on June 15 in a chronicle of events in Osh. "In Uzbek neighborhoods, residents are too afraid to call the ambulance," the chronicle's author, Andrei Oreshkin wrote.

"Vecherny Bishkek" also published some photos of dead bodies gathered on a street corner, tanks moving down streets, and burning homes and cars -- although there is no mention of location or names that would indicate the ethnicity of the victims.

Overall, explains Akmat Alagushev, a Bishkek-based observer for the Media Policy Institute, coverage of the unrest has revealed that Kyrgyz journalists "have split into two groups."

"They keep accusing each other, with one side saying that the other papers are unpatriotic, and that group of papers calling the others too nationalistic," Alagushev says.

- A Cri De Coeur For Kyrgyzstan



Two French academics -- Bayram Balci and Pierre Chuvin, both directors of the French Institute for Central-Asian Studies -- issue an impassioned call in today's "Le Monde" for the European Union to get involved in Kyrgyzstan "before further murderous rampages" take place there.

What the authors describe as "pogroms" against ethnic Uzbeks in the south of the country, carried out between June 10-14 with the connivance of local Kyrgyz authorities, claimed at least 356 lives and drove 400,000 from their homes.

The authors observe that with Russia and the United States both content to remain on the sidelines and Roza Otunbayeva's interim government a "prisoner of the Kyrgyz nationalist discourse," the EU must "find an operational consensus within its external policy toward Central Asia" and step in to support the democratization of the country.

Balci and Chuvin -- who are nothing if not rigorous and sober in their analysis -- neglect to add, however, that this would require nothing less than a wholesale about-face in EU foreign-policy making in the region.

Having briefly flirted with sanctions against Uzbekistan after the 2005 Andijon massacre, the bloc has opted for a trickle-down, authority-vetted approach to reforms in the region - - designed to keep channels of communication open but also to not antagonize potential suppliers of gas and oil.

Kyrgyzstan is the least consequential of the five Central Asian countries from a pragmatic point of view. It is, therefore, also one in which the EU takes a very abstract interest (although, as Balci and Chuvin note, Bishkek has been the bloc's "only good pupil in the region") and is all the more reluctant to get in the way of other partners' less abstract interests and thus risk jeopardizing its own regional policy calculus.

Since the flare-up of the crisis in Kyrgyzstan in April, the EU has deferred to the OSCE (conveniently chaired by Kazakhstan this year) to supply political mediation and police advisers. The donors' conference which took place in Bishkek last month, netting \$1.2 billion, was choreographed by the World Bank.

Similarly, loath to step on anyone's military toes, the EU always picks its "security and defence policy" missions with extreme care. Unlike the Great Lakes region or Chad, for example, Kyrgyzstan is home to both Russian and U.S. bases -- meaning the chances of an EU intervention force ever landing in Kyrgyzstan are remoter than, say, those of a manned mission to Mars before 2050.

Kyrgyzstan's proximity to both Russia and Afghanistan means "consensus" among member states -- who conduct their own fully sovereign separate foreign policies -- will be all the harder to reach.

Which is to say that not even in her wildest dream does the EU's high representative for foreign policy, Catherine Ashton -- soon to preside over a single EU diplomatic corps -- countenance undertaking anything more radical with regard to Kyrgyzstan than condemning violence as and when it takes place, releasing successive tranches of humanitarian aid, and helping Bishkek with the drafting of better laws.

### **Tajikistan**

#### **Political Front**

- Tajik High Court Rejects Appeal By Jailed Members Of Islamic Group

QURGHON-TEPPA, Tajikistan -- Tajikistan's Supreme Court has rejected an appeal by 18 members of the banned Islamic group Jamaat ut-Tabligh seeking to have their prison terms reduced, RFE/RL's Tajik Service reports.

In May, a Khatlon provincial court sentenced 36 suspected members of the group to prison terms ranging from three to 6 1/2 years.

Nurullo Ashurov, the lawyer of Nosir Rahimov, who was named as the leader of the group, told RFE/RL on August 5 that the 18 people who appealed their sentences had never been arrested before and he hoped the court would reduce their prison terms to fines.

Khatlon provincial court head Muhabbat Aziziova told RFE/RL on August 5 that the investigation found that all those arrested had studied abroad where they discussed and planned to overthrow the Tajik government.

But Qalandar Sadridinov, the leader of the Islamic Renaissance Party in Khatlon, said that Jamaat ut-Tabligh has not done anything to violate the constitution.

The sentencing in May was the second collective trial of Jamaat ut-Tabligh members in Tajikistan. Last year, 56 alleged members of the banned group were either sentenced to prison terms or given administrative punishments.

- **Tajik Opposition Politician Cleared Of Human-Trafficking Charge**

KULOB, Tajikistan -- A court in southern Tajikistan has ruled that a regional leader of the opposition Islamic Renaissance Party and another man are not guilty of human trafficking, RFE/RL's Tajik Service reports.

Judge Ilhom Komilov told RFE/RL the court in the town of Kulob did not find anything illegal in the activities of the two accused men.

Abdufattoh Abdukholiqov, who heads the opposition Islamic Renaissance Party branch in the Vose district of Khatlon province, told RFE/RL he was satisfied with the court ruling.

Davlat Najmiddinov, who heads the anti-organized-crime department in Kulob district, told RFE/RL in April when the criminal case was opened that Abdukholiqov and Nematullo Sharifov paid \$500 to the mother of a 16-year-old girl whom they allegedly planned to sell to someone in Russia.

At the same time, Abdukholiqov told RFE/RL that the girl was his relative and that he was trying to help her by arranging a marriage for her in Russia. Abdukholiqov added that the \$500 was the dowry that should be paid to any Muslim girl by her future husband.

The alleged trafficking victim's sister, Parvina Sabzaeva, who police claimed had been trafficked to Russia earlier, told RFE/RL that Abdukholiqov had helped her to find a husband and a job and begin a life abroad. She said the family asked Abdukholiqov to do the same for her sister. The prosecutor's office has 10 days to appeal the court verdict.

### **Geo strategic Front**

- **Tajikistan Sends Afghan Prisoners Home**

KABUL -- Dozens of jailed Afghan prisoners have been transferred from Tajikistan to Afghanistan as a result of an agreement between the two countries, RFE/RL's Radio Free Afghanistan reports.

Abdullah Azizi, the head of the Jozjan provincial prison in Afghanistan, told RFE/RL that 54 people from the northern Afghan provinces who were arrested by Tajik police for drug smuggling were taken to Afghanistan on August 5.

Most of the convicts were incarcerated in Jozjan prison upon their return to their homeland.

Azizi said 10 of the 54 were released per a special decree issued from President Hamid Karzai's office.

The identities of the men who were released are not known and no explanation was given about their release.

"The process of transferring Afghans detained on different charges from different countries of the world, including Tajikistan, has been started," Azizi said, referring to an agreement signed between Afghan and Tajik authorities on the exchange of prisoners convicted on drug charges.

- **Iran Sees Regional Alliance To Counter NATO**

Iran's president told the leaders of Afghanistan and Tajikistan today that the three neighbors could provide a counterweight to NATO in Asia once foreign troops exit the region.

Mahmud Ahmadinejad said the three countries should strengthen economic and security ties. At a summit in Tehran of the three Persian-speaking countries -- the fourth in two years -- Ahmadinejad said Tajikistan and Afghanistan had emerged from Soviet rule and occupation just as Iran had shaken off U.S. influence after the 1979 Islamic Revolution.

Ahmadinejad said they should join forces and become an "obstacle" to what he said was Western expansion through NATO.

"Those who came in from Europe representing NATO, they want to put pressure on China, Russia, and India, and if they are confronted by three independent, empowered countries here, then that is an obstacle," he said. Ahmadinejad called on foreign troops to leave the region.

Ahmadinejad, Afghan President Hamid Karzai, and Tajik President Emomali Rahmon agreed to work for greater cooperation in economic, trade, and transport matters.

- **Tajik FM accepts copy of credentials of new Chinese envoy to Tajikistan**

DUSHANBE, August 5, 2010, Asia-Plus -- Tajik Foreign Minister Hamrokhon Zarifi today morning accepted copy of credentials of new Chinese Ambassador to Tajikistan Fan Xianrong, according to the Tajik MFA information department.

During the meeting, Zarifi and Fan exchanged views on state and prospects of further expansion of bilateral mutually beneficial cooperation between Tajikistan and China in different fields.

- **Rahmon departs for Tehran to attend trilateral summit of Persian-speaking countries**

DUSHANBE, August 5, 2010, Asia-Plus -- President Emomali Rahmon heading high-ranking delegation has departed for Tehran to attend a summit meeting of the presidents of the Persian-speaking countries of Tajikistan, Iran, and Afghanistan that will convene in the Iranian capital today.

According to the Tajik MFA information department, Foreign Minister Hamrokhon Zarifi, State Adviser to the President for International Affairs Erkin Rahmatulloyev, Minister of Energy and Industries Gul Sherali, Minister of Transport and Communications Olimjon Boboyev and other high-ranking officials are accompanying Rahmon on his visit to Iran.

The leaders of Tajikistan, Afghanistan, and Iran are expected to discuss issues related to economic cooperation, establishment of peace and stability in Afghanistan, as well as regional problems.

It is the fourth summit of the three presidents and they are also scheduled to endorse a number of cooperation agreements on the expansion of economic ties and cooperation among the three neighboring nations, Iran's Fars News Agency quoted Iranian Ambassador to Tajikistan Ali Asghar Sherdoust as saying.

We will recall that the last trilateral meeting of Emomali Rahmon, Hamid Karzai, and Mahmoud Ahmadinejat took place in Tehran on March 11, 2009. The three leaders agreed to speed up the implementation of projects on transportation, water/energy, the construction of communication and electricity lines, and cultural exchanges.

### **Economic/Energy Front**

- Uzbekistan halts freight cars bound for Khatlon

DUSHANBE, August 6, 2010, Asia-Plus - Uzbekistan has suspended rail cargo traffic to Tajikistan's southern Khatlon province.

Andrey Tropin, the head of the shipment department at Tajik Railways, told Asia-Plus today that 241 freight cars bound for Khatlon province have been stranded on Uzbek territory.

"We have repeatedly applied to our Uzbek colleagues, asking to clarify the reason for holdup of freight cars bound for Khatlon; however, we have not yet received reply," said the official with Tajik state rail company, "To find out the solution to the problem, we have also applied the embassies of Uzbekistan, Iran, China, and Russia."

In all, 1,097 Tajikistan-bound freight cars are still being held up in Uzbekistan, Tropin added.

We will recall that the Uzbek state railroad company sent a letter to Tajik authorities in June this year, notifying them that it wants to close a 44-kilometer stretch of railroad, which runs from the Uzbek city of Termez to the Tajik southern Khatlon province.

Uzbek officials said the route was not economically viable and their country could no longer afford to maintain it. However, Tajik authorities prefer to keep this stretch open and even agreed to assume responsibility for its maintenance.

- Tajik capital's authorities to control prices at local bazaars during Ramadan

DUSHANBE, August 6, 2010, Asia-Plus -- Tajik capital's authorities intend to strictly control prices at Dushanbe's bazaars during the Islamic holy month of Ramadan.

Shavkat Saidov, a spokesman for the Dushanbe mayor's office, told Asia-Plus that Dushanbe Mayor Mahmadsaid Ubdaidulloyev yesterday held a meeting on this subject. The meeting participants included senior representatives from the Dushanbe mayor's office and local entrepreneurs trading in essential goods.

The meeting decided that essential goods and basic food products would be sold at lower prices during the holy month of Ramadan, from August 11 to September 10.

Thus, the price of one kilogram of beef should not be higher than 18 somoni, the price of one kilogram of mutton – 19 somoni, the price for a 50-kilogram sack of grade 1 wheat flour should be sold for not more than 90 somoni. Prices of vegetable oil, milk, eggs, rice, sugar, potatoes, tomatoes, onions, carrots, cabbages, grapes, and melon crops should be brought down by 15-20 percent during Ramadan.

The mayor ordered to exempt farmers selling their products at Dushanbe's bazaars without resellers as well as entrepreneur trading in essential goods from all fees or to cut them by 50 percent during the holy month of Ramadan.

The Dushanbe mayor's office also asks relevant bodies not to conduct inspections at Dushanbe's bazaars during the month of Ramadan.

The mayor also ordered relevant municipal bodies to organize farm produce fairs at local bazaars, control scales and inspect all shops for compliance with sanitary and epidemiological requirements, the spokesman said.

### **Social Front**

- **Tajik Madrasah Leader, Students Detained**

DUSHANBE -- The leader of a madrasah and dozens of his students at his religious school in southern Tajikistan have been detained, RFE/RL's Tajik Service reports.

Tajik officials said Mavlavi Abduqahor, who is also a religious leader, was detained over the weekend along with the students at the school in the Rudaki district south of the capital, Dushanbe.

Interior Ministry spokesman Mahmaddullah Asadulloev told RFE/RL that Abduqahor was arrested for teaching without a license, charging tuition to his students, failing to adhere to school health and hygiene regulations, and for teaching children under 7 years of age -- which Asadulloev said is the worst offense.

Abduqahor's relatives told RFE/RL that his madrasah takes on additional students during the summer break.

They said Abduqahor and several students were arrested once before, a few weeks ago, but were later released.

The Interior Ministry said the detentions were carried out under the auspices of Operation Madrasah, which aims to ban all illegal religious schools in the country.

Some Tajik-based analysts say officials are trying to control all religious schools in an attempt to prevent the rise of radical Islam.

- **Tajik Officials Keep Sharp Eye On Islamic Teaching**

Abu-Umar Ahmadov says most of the eight- to 16-year-old students in his evening and weekend classes on Islamic principles and ethics are sent to him by well-intentioned parents.

They merely want to keep their kids out of trouble. "The majority of parents who bring their children to learn religious values here don't want their children to become overly religious," Ahmadov says. "All they want is that their children get some idea about the religion and most importantly, that they stay clear of bad behavior such as drugs [and] alcoholism. They only want to use religion to teach moral and ethical values for their children." A graduate of a local religious school, or madrasah, himself, Ahmadov has an official license to teach in such Islamic schools and to conduct private courses. His classes, which take place inside the grand mosque in the village of Ponghoz, in Tajikistan's northern Sughd Province, are registered by local authorities.

It's how the Tajik authorities -- who maintain tight control over all things religious in this predominantly Muslim country -- insist things be run when it comes to Islamic education.

They take a tough line, and conduct regular raids on private homes and mosques where they suspect unsanctioned classes or underground madrasahs have been set up.

In early July, seven unregistered religious schools were uncovered during a single series of "madrasah" raids by law-enforcement agencies in Isfara, Istaravshan, Panjakent, and

Ghafurov districts. Local authorities say almost all were being run inside private houses, where mullahs or madrasah-graduates had been teaching school-age children basic principles of Islam. The raids resulted in detentions and, in at least some cases, arrests that came weeks later.

#### Official Distrust

Tajik authorities continue their efforts to maintain control of how religion is spread, but the frequent raids suggest that official Islam is not meeting the growing demand for religious education and teachings.

According to a Gallup poll conducted two years ago, some 76 percent of Tajik respondents said religion played an important role in their daily lives, a stark difference from the secularism that dominated under Soviet rule.

Police officers are among those headed to mosque in Dushanbe. (file photo) While Tajik officials insist they are merely taking measures to eliminate the threat of religious extremism, their actions have come under widespread criticism for violating religious freedom and putting pressure on religious institutions.

Muhammad-jon Ortiqov, an imam of the grand mosque in Ghafurov district, says he is concerned about the authorities' apparent fear and suspicion of religious classes. He says such an approach is bound to alienate moderate Muslims. Ortiqov's son, Muhammadi, is being fined by authorities for running unsanctioned religious classes. Ortiqov, however, insists his son had merely been teaching the Koran to neighboring children upon their parents' request. "Officials use all kinds of pretexts to attack us. For example, they say children are being turned into Hizb-ut Tahrir followers, or they are being taught some other teachings and so on," Ortiqov says in a reference to the banned group that seeks an Islamic caliphate in Central Asia. "We are not teaching the children anything but the Koran, but [authorities] questioned the students about what was being taught to them."

#### State-Sponsored Alternatives

Tajik authorities have taken steps to meet the demand for religious tutelage themselves. The Education Ministry recently introduced a new subject -- "The Knowledge of Islam" - - to the state school curriculum.

Saidbek Mahmadulloev, an expert on religion and laws at the state committee on religion, notes that Tajik laws do not ban the attendance of religious classes or the establishment of religious schools or classes.

"The only requirement is that they need to get an official permission from education officials to start such classes," Mahmadulloev says.

But religious leaders say the curriculum approved by the state does not go far enough, lamenting that the once-a-week lessons are taught by history teachers without formal training on religious subjects.

While there are some 20 officially registered madrasahs and an Islamic University in the country, and although every grand mosque has the right to run classes on religion, those institutions tend to favor urban areas. Grand mosques, for instance, may only be built in neighborhoods with at least 15,000 inhabitants.

#### 'Good Discipline'

Village mullahs say there are simply not enough official madrasahs to go around. They say classes that have come under scrutiny usually entail children spending a few hours with a neighborhood mullah to learn the basic teachings of the religion and moral values.

Davlatphocho Azizova, a housewife in the village of Kamarob in the eastern Rasht district, sends her 14-year-old son to a local mullah's house to study the Koran and the basics of Islam. Neither Azizova nor the mullah suspects they could be doing something illegal.

A man teaches Islam to a boy near the central mosque in Tajikistan's capital, Dushanbe. "My son gets two hours of private English classes and one hour of math every week, and depending on his time, once or twice a week he goes to the mullah's house to learn about religion," says Azizova.

Azizova says it never occurred to her that the mullah and the other teachers are required by law to obtain official permission to teach. She says the reason many parents send their children to unofficial religious classes is that they don't have grand mosques or registered religious schools nearby.

"My son wants to become a pilot. But for us parents, the most important thing is that our son has good discipline," Azizova says. "That's why we send him to mullah to study the religious books, prayers."

Convenience plays a large part. Religious classes run in mosques and private homes are usually free of charge. They don't have full-time students and offer classes after hours or during weekends or school holidays.

The country's 20 official madrasahs, however, charge tuition fees. They offer full-time, three- or four-year courses with a curriculum that includes the English language and computer skills in addition to religious studies.

Ahmadov says he understands authorities' concerns about some unregistered religious schools.

"The majority of religious classes have no hidden agenda, I'm sure of that," Ahmadov says. "However, you can never be sure about every single person's intention. I wouldn't rule out that there are some people with radical ideas that should not be imposed on students."

- 'Technical Problems' Halt Publication Of Independent Tajik Weeklies

DUSHANBE -- The privately owned Mushfiqi printing house in Dushanbe says that "technical problems" will prevent it from printing several independent weekly publications, RFE/RL's Tajik Service reports.

The move has raised suspicions in light of past instances when political pressure from authorities is thought to have disrupted the print runs of other independent publications.

"Sukhan" weekly Mushfiqi manager Umed Sattarov said the weeklies in question are "Paikon," "Ozodagon," "SSSR," "Millat," and "Borgohi Sukhan."

Sattarov told RFE/RL that Mushfiqi has asked those publications' editors to find alternative printing houses.

"Our printing equipment is broken. We request that they temporarily print elsewhere. We have a very small press that we can only print our own publications with," Sattarov said.

Editor Jumaboy Tolibov vowed that he would find an alternative means of circulating his "Paikon" publication.

Union of Journalists of Tajikistan head Akbar Sattor, who also owns a printing house, said that he is prepared to publish "Paikon" but only for a price that suits him.

Tajik lawyer Shuhrat Qudratov said that the Mushfiqi printing house has an agreement with these weeklies and must fulfill its obligations.

But Mukhtor Boqizoda, a former editor and the head of a local NGO that works to protect journalists' interests, described Mushfiqi's refusal as a message from the authorities that those weekly papers have overstepped government-imposed limits.

Boqizoda said that often when authorities or printing houses cite "technical problems," the problems are in fact political. He recalled that in the past, non-government-sponsored newspapers like "Ruzi Nav" and his own "Nerui Sukhan" found themselves in similar situations and were unable to continue publishing.

- **Tajikistan's Sole Private University Files Lawsuit Against Education Minister**

DUSHANBE -- Tajikistan's only private university is suing the country's education minister for defamation, RFE/RL's Tajik Service reports.

Sadridin Akramov, the head of the Institute of Technical Innovations and Communications (ITIC), told RFE/RL today that it filed a lawsuit against Education Minister Abdujabor Rahmonov on July 31 in a Dushanbe district court.

Akramov said Rahmonov described the ITIC in a letter to Tajik President Emomali Rahmon as a hotbed of antigovernment propaganda and political opposition.

The ITIC is known as the "American" university because it was founded by a Tajik-born U.S. citizen and is funded by grants from the United States and other Western countries. It has been under pressure from the Education Ministry to change its name since 2003, something it has done a few times.

In September 2009, the Education Ministry demanded its closure for three months for "technical reasons" to enable the ministry to check its documents and activities. But Akramov appealed to the district court last year and chose to keep the university open pending a court ruling.

Rahmonov said at a press conference last month that the Economic Court had upheld all the ministry's complaints. He said the court ruled that the ITIC should be closed and its students continue their studies at other universities.

Akramov has demanded the Education Ministry compensate the ITIC for moral and material damage incurred as a result of the Economic Court ruling.

Akramov told RFE/RL he is convinced that the real reason the Education Ministry revoked the ITIC's license is because its teaching staff includes some prominent opposition leaders and outspoken critics of the government.

A U.S. diplomat who has followed the case told RFE/RL on condition of anonymity on August 2 that he, too, thinks that is the reason the ministry has moved to close down the ITIC. He noted that the ministry has not yet provided any other convincing arguments for doing so. Despite the ongoing dispute, 300 would-be students submitted applications to the ITIC this year. One prospective student told RFE/RL that she appreciates the "high standard" of internationally focused education that is guaranteed at the institute and that she is sure it will not be permanently closed down.

## **Turkmenistan Political Front**

### **Geo strategic Front**

- Foreign Ministry of Turkmenistan hosts Turkmen-Afghan political consultations

The Turkmen-Afghan political consultations were held at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan on August 4. A high level delegation from Afghanistan arrived in Ashgabat to participate in the consultations. The delegation is headed by the Deputy



Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan for Political Affairs, Eklilom Hakimi. The Turkmen delegation to the talks was headed by Vice-Premier, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan Rashid Meredov.

As the Turkmenistan.ru correspondent reports from Ashgabat quoting the press service of the Foreign Ministry of Turkmenistan, the guests appreciated the timeliness and constructiveness of the foreign policy initiatives put forward by the Turkmen side to establish a peace process in Afghanistan.

The sides elaborated on the issues of increased supplies of Turkmen electricity to Afghanistan, the construction of Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India gas pipeline and a railway from Turkmenistan to Afghanistan.

- Technical issues of construction of Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India gas pipeline discussed in Ashgabat

A regular meeting of the technical working group on the project for construction of Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) gas pipeline was held in Ashgabat on 4 August. The meeting was attended by representatives of all four member countries participating in the project.

According to the official report, the working group supported the idea of the early implementation of the TAPI project and discussed a number of technical issues on implementation of agreements reached earlier to enhance joint work.

According to the meeting participants, the meeting was "another important positive step towards cooperation in the world energy market, which soon get a new grandiose energy bridge of international significance."

- President of Turkmenistan sends condolences to Pakistan

Turkmen President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov has sent condolences to President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan Asif Ali Zardari in connection with the natural disaster - massive flooding, which resulted in numerous human casualties and destruction.

As the Turkmenistan.ru correspondent reports from Ashgabat quoting the press service of the head of state, he also conveyed words of sincere sympathy and support for families and friends of the victims and survivors.

### **Economic/Energy Front**

- U.S. State Department special envoy for Eurasian Energy holds talks in Turkmenistan

The Special Envoy of the State Department the United States on the Eurasian Energy, Richard Morningstar, is discussing issues of cooperation with the government of Turkmenistan. As the Turkmenistan.ru correspondent reports, he was received by President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov on 2 August.

According to the State Department, the U.S. supports the ongoing progressive reform in Turkmenistan, and is interested in further strengthening the traditional ties, primarily in the oil and gas sector. The Turkmen leader, in turn, expressed the interest of Turkmenistan in creating an expanded, multivariate network of alternative routes for exports of Turkmen energy resources to world markets as well as willingness to consider constructive suggestions coming to this effect.

During his visit, Richard Morningstar will hold talks at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan, the Ministry of Oil and Gas and Mineral Resources of Turkmenistan, the State Agency for Management and Use of Hydrocarbon Resources under the President of Turkmenistan, the state concern "Turkmengaz".

- Turkmenistan and UN to prepare international legal instrument on transit of energy

A governmental delegation of Turkmenistan will hold talks with UN officials to create an expert group to prepare an international legal instrument on the transit of energy resources.

As the Turkmenistan.ru correspondent reports from Ashgabat quoting the press service of the head of state, in accordance with the instruction of President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov the Director of the State Agency for the Management and Use of Hydrocarbon Resources Yagshigeldy Kakayev and Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan Toili Komekov will visit New York on 3-9 August 2010 to discuss this issue.

- Russian investments in Turkmenistan protected for at least 10 years

Russian investments in Turkmenistan and Turkmen investments in Russia are fully protected for at least ten years. This is provided in the Intergovernmental Agreement on Promotion and Reciprocal Protection of Investments. Russian President Dmitry Medvedev signed yesterday the law ratifying this agreement. Upon expiration, the agreement is automatically extended for the successive five-year period if neither party notifies the other in writing of its intention to terminate the document twelve months prior to the expiration of the agreement.

According to the Kremlin press service, the agreement provides for mutual permission of investments, guarantees to protect them, ensuring the smooth transfer of funds abroad for their further investment by investors of the contracting parties. The agreement also determines the procedure for resolution of investment disputes. In addition, the agreement applies to all investments made by investors of one contracting party in the territory of another contracting party with effect from 1 January 1992.

It should be recalled that the Agreement between the Government of Russia and the Government of Turkmenistan for the Promotion and Reciprocal Protection of Investments was signed last year in the Grand Kremlin Palace on the results of talks between presidents of Turkmenistan and the Russian Federation.

- Turkmenistan's GDP rose by 4 per cent in January - July

All planned activities and plans provided in the state programs to further improve the welfare of the population of Turkmenistan are being successfully implemented in a timely manner. This was announced by President of Turkmenistan Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov, summarizing the results of the government's work over seven months. The President said that during this period, GDP grew by almost 4 percent. He emphasized the reduction of dominance of the oil and gas industry in the growth of the national economy.

According to the data, the volume of investments from all sources of funding grew by 40 percent, compared with the same period of last year. "Today, revenues of the state budget greatly exceed the expenditures," the president said.

- GDP per capita to reach 21.7 thousand U.S. dollars by 2015 in Turkmenistan

Turkmenistan expects GDP per capita to increase to about 21,7 thousand U.S. dollars by 2015 in terms of purchasing power parity. This data was released today by the Institute of Strategic Planning and Economic Development of Turkmenistan.

According to this data, a set of growth factors provides an opportunity to assess the medium-term forecasting in the framework of the national program of socio-economic development for 2011-2015 based on the real annual GDP growth in the range of 109-110 per cent.

On the whole, according to the data released by the Institute of Strategic Planning and Economic Development, the task for 2011-2015 is to gradually develop Turkmenistan's mixed-type market system, to ensure conditions for free competition, to develop an effective government institutions, to improve the social sphere, to develop modern infrastructure, and ultimately, to achieve the advanced social standards of living.

- Turkmenistan, Iran discuss cooperation in energy and water

A delegation of the Islamic Republic of Iran headed by the chief of the Department of Engineering Technology of the Ministry of Water Resources, Mohammad Haj Rasuliha visited the Turkmen capital.

As the Turkmenistan.ru correspondent reports from Ashgabat with reference to the official report, during the meetings at the Ministry of Energy and Industry and the Ministry of Water Resources of Turkmenistan the sides exchanged views on the further development of bilateral cooperation in the energy sphere and water sector.

- U.S. companies eye Turkmen energy projects - envoy

ASHGABAT, Aug 3 (Reuters) -U.S. energy majors, overlooked in a near-\$10 billion contract bonanza to develop Turkmenistan's largest natural gas deposit, are making inroads to participating in other projects in the Central Asian state, an official said.

Richard Morningstar, Washington's energy envoy for the Eurasian region, said on Tuesday that U.S. companies had made progress on offshore projects in Turkmenistan and that he hoped Ashgabat would supply gas to a major pipeline route to Europe.

"American companies would like very much to participate in Turkmenistan with respect to all sorts of projects, both onshore and offshore," Morningstar told reporters after meeting Turkmen President Kurbanguly Berdymukhamedov and other senior officials. Turkmenistan is offering natural gas to be drawn from the world's fourth-largest reserves to consumers in China, Iran and the West as it seeks to diversify supplies from its traditional market, Russia. "American companies understand that, if they are going to participate onshore, it has to be consistent with Turkmen law," Morningstar said.

"We are hopeful that the government of Turkmenistan and the companies will come up with creative ways in which companies can participate. In the meantime, a lot of progress is being made with offshore projects. We expect that to continue."

He declined to name the companies or projects involved.

Chevron Corp (CVX.N) had held talks about its possible participation in developing the South Iolotan gas field, the largest in Turkmenistan, a company official said in November. But when \$9.7 billion worth of contracts were awarded in December to drill and build plants at the deposit, which ranks among the world's fifth-largest, firms from China, South Korea and the United Arab Emirates shared the spoils.

#### CLEANER ENERGY

Chinese President Hu Jintao opened a pipeline in December that will bring gas from another Chinese-developed field in the Turkmen desert to help fuel economic growth at home.

Ashgabat has also agreed to increase gas supplies to China beyond the pipeline's 40 billion cubic metres of annual capacity, a level it expects to reach by 2012. Morningstar

said the United States viewed China's role in the Turkmen energy market as positive. "Gas is a much cleaner form of energy than coal, for example. The more gas that China consumes, the better for the environment," he said.

"Gas (from Central Asia) that goes to China helps to open up supplies of gas from other sources that otherwise might go to China. At the same time, it's important that host countries work with China to make sure that companies are using best practice."

The U.S. envoy also welcomed the deal signed by Turkey and Azerbaijan on June 7 that opens the way for Azeri gas exports to Europe and put the European Union-backed Nabucco pipeline a step closer to securing supplies.

But he did not say which pipeline project the United States favoured to transport gas to western Europe via the so-called "southern corridor". Russian natural gas export monopoly Gazprom (GAZP.MM) favours a rival project, South Stream.

"It's up to the commercial interests to determine which specific project makes the most sense," Morningstar said.

He said he hoped that Turkmenistan would supply gas to any route via the "southern corridor" to European markets, and that Kazakhstan -- Central Asia's largest oil producer -- would also become a significant gas supplier as its oil production rises.

"I hope that, over the years, as more gas becomes available from Kazakhstan as its oil production increases, some of the gas may go West as well as Turkmen gas." (Writing by Robin Paxton; editing by Keiron Henderson)

## **Social Front**

### **Uzbekistan**

#### **Political Front**

#### **Geo strategic Front**

#### **Economic/Energy Front**

- Gas distribution system to be modernized

Uztransgas joint-stock company and Alcatel-Lucent Shanghai Bell Co. (China) will modernize the gas distribution system in Uzbekistan in 2010-2011.

The work is being conducted in accordance with the President's resolution of 12 March 2009 on the Program of measures to implement the most important projects of modernization, and technical and technological renewal of production for 2009-2014.

Alcatel-Lucent Shanghai Bell and Uztransgas signed the contract on design and supply of the objects of gas distribution system worth USD 77.5 million in 2008. currently, the sides are developing the feasibility study of the project jointly with interested sides. The project foresees reconstruction of the electrical and chemical protection of the gas pipeline, mounting of the radio link along the gas pipeline, 2,000-km long signal transmission system and the automatic system of technological processes management (SCADA).

The project will be financed with use of the Chinese Eximbank credit worth USD 73.6 million, as well as own funds of Uztransgas equal to USD 7.4 million. The credit is being issued for 20 years.

Uztransgas is part of Uzbekneftegaz, national oil and gas holding company, and controls transporting and supply of gas in Uzbekistan.

- Uzbekistan halts freight cars bound for Khatlon

DUSHANBE, August 6, 2010, Asia-Plus - Uzbekistan has suspended rail cargo traffic to Tajikistan's southern Khatlon province.

Andrey Tropin, the head of the shipment department at Tajik Railways, told Asia-Plus today that 241 freight cars bound for Khatlon province have been stranded on Uzbek territory.

"We have repeatedly applied to our Uzbek colleagues, asking to clarify the reason for holdup of freight cars bound for Khatlon; however, we have not yet received reply," said the official with Tajik state rail company, "To find out the solution to the problem, we have also applied the embassies of Uzbekistan, Iran, China, and Russia."

In all, 1,097 Tajikistan-bound freight cars are still being held up in Uzbekistan, Tropin added.

We will recall that the Uzbek state railroad company sent a letter to Tajik authorities in June this year, notifying them that it wants to close a 44-kilometer stretch of railroad, which runs from the Uzbek city of Termez to the Tajik southern Khatlon province.

Uzbek officials said the route was not economically viable and their country could no longer afford to maintain it. However, Tajik authorities prefer to keep this stretch open and even agreed to assume responsibility for its maintenance.

- Uzbek-Korean ICT cooperation considered

The Uzbek Agency of Communication and Information (UzACI) hosted the Uzbek-Korean seminar on studying the advanced experience and prospects of bilateral cooperation in introducing information technologies in public administration.

The forum was organized by UzACI together with the Ministry of Knowledge and Economy of South Korea, National Information Technologies Promotion Agency of South Korea (NIPA) and the World Bank.

The seminar was attended by deputies of the Legislative Chamber of Oliy Majlis, representatives of ministries and state bodies, as well as local authorities.

The main purpose of the events was expansion of cooperation between Uzbekistan and South Korea in development of information and communication technologies, in particular, in formation and introduction of various services with the use of ICT in public administration.

General director of UzACI Hakim Muhitdinov noted that the main principles of state policy in the field of ICT, as defined by President Islam Karimov, imply their widespread introduction into all fields of life.

Today, information technologies are being actively implemented in state management in Uzbekistan. The new governmental portal Gov.uz with additional modules was recently developed.

The state bodies are introducing electronic forms of statistic reports and electronic document circulation with use of digital signature.

Executive director of NIPA Joon Yon Kim made a presentation on "Electronic government and the program of the international cooperation of the Republic of Korea".

The participants familiarized themselves with the South Korean experience in implementing information technologies in various sectors of economy and social sphere, including banking, healthcare, management of social infrastructure, electronic mail services and others.

## **Social Front**

- Internet festival starts in Uzbekistan

Internet festival of national domain UZ 2010 started in Uzbekistan on 5 August. The organizers of the event are the Fund “Forum of Culture and Arts of Uzbekistan”, “Kelajak ovozi” youth initiatives centre, UZINFOCOM center and Mirada Software company.

Uzbek Agency for Communication and Information (UzACI) and the Women’s Committee of Uzbekistan provided official support to the festival.

Internet festivals have been spent in the country since 2001, it was noted at the press conference devoted to the festival opening. Since 2007, festivals are held only for sites in the national domain UZ. The goal is to develop resources in the domestic domain.

Previously, internet festivals were held every two years. From 2010, the festivals will be held on an annual basis.

In Uzbekistan, the estimated number of internet users is currently about 3 million. The second-level domain UZ was created on 29 April 1995. The number of active UZ domains is more than 10,500. There are also thousands of third-level domains in the UZ zone.

Since the beginning of this year, more than 1,000 UZ domains were registered. Given this, it was decided to make internet festivals annual. The main initiators of the festival are UzACI and UZINFOCOM, which is the administrator of the UZ domain zone.

This year’s festival will be held from 5 August to 20 September. Its results will be announced on the first day of the Information Technologies Week, InfoCOM 2010.

The main goals of the festival are popularization of the internet among the general population, providing assistance to development of national content as a medium for creativity, professional activities, recreation, a source of reliable and timely information.

A jury of experts in internet technologies, art, culture, governance and other fields will be created to evaluate the websites. The contest program includes 14 thematic and 2 special nominations.

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