

Report # 132
Business & Politics in the Muslim World
News Monitoring
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Weekly Report
Central Asia
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Azerbaijan

Political Front

- Aliyev's Azerbaijani Empire Grows, As Daughter Joins The Game

The daughters of Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev: Arzu (left) and Leyla in Baku last month

Geo strategic Front

- Netherlands wants to have all-around" cooperation with Azerbaijan"

"The Netherlands wants to have all-round cooperation with Azerbaijan," said visiting Dutch Minister of Justice Ernst Hirsch Ballin.

- Azerbaijani official meets with U.S. diplomat

Ruling New Azerbaijan Party (NAP) Deputy Chairman, MP Ali Ahmadov met today with newly appointed Political Officer to the U.S. Embassy in Baku Brigitte Buchet. At the meeting, Buchet and Ahmadov discussed the existing cooperation between Azerbaijan and the United States, and also exchanged their views on prospects of development.

- Karabakh problem "to be discussed at NATO PA's Autumn session"

The Nagorno-Karabakh problem will be discussed at the autumn session of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, said deputy executive secretary of the New Azerbaijan Party, member of the country's delegation to NATO PA, Siyavush Novruzov.

- Azerbaijani Scientist Released From Iranian Prison

BAKU -- An Azerbaijani scientist has arrived in Baku after being released from an Iranian jail after serving a two-year sentence for espionage, RFE/RL's Azerbaijani Service reports. Rashid Aliyev travelled to Iran in 2006 to work for the Sazan Electronics Industry Company in the city of Semnan, east of Tehran.

- Azerbaijan - U.S. discuss military cooperation

Azerbaijan Minister of Defense, colonel-general Safar Abiyev has met today Adjutant General of Oklahoma, Major General Myles Deering.

- OSCE observation groups to visit Azerbaijan in September

The OSCE's small observation group will visit Azerbaijan early September, head of the OSCE Office in Baku Ali Bilge Cankorel told journalists, APA reports.

Economic/Energy Front

- U.S. expert: "Azerbaijan's role as gas supplier and transit country for Europe and Balkans grows"

Borut Grgic, a senior fellow at the Washington DC based Atlantic Council and the founder of the TransCaspian Initiatives believes that, Azerbaijan's role as gas supplier and transit country for Europe and Balkans grows.

Social Front

- Azerbaijani Plane Crew Criticized Over Evacuation Delay

BAKU -- The head of the Istanbul airport says the crew of an Azerbaijani plane that went off a runway failed to comply with emergency procedures for evacuating passengers, RFE/RL's Azerbaijani Service reports.

- Baku to host International Botanic Conference

International Botanic Conference will take place in Baku, from September 24-27, Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences said. The event will feature a wide range of

issues, including use of plant resources, problems of greenery in cities' ecosystem, plant ecology.

- Azerbaijan to give \$1 million financial assistance to Pakistan

Azerbaijan will give financial assistance to Pakistan, Foreign Ministry's press service told APA. In connection with the natural disaster in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan,

Kazakhstan Political Front

Geo strategic Front

- OSCE to hold next summit in Astana, Kazakhstan, on Dec 1-2

Astana. August 6. Interfax-Kazakhstan - The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe on Tuesday decided to hold its next summit in Astana on December 1-2, Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev said on Thursday.

Economic/Energy Front

- KazMunayGas to invest \$8 billion in Kashagan development project in 2010-2014

"KazMunayGas's investments in 2010-2014 will come to \$20 billion, including \$8 billion in Kashagan, \$4 in the refinery upgrading project", Kaigeldy Kabyldin, the president of KazMunayGas, told Samruk-Kazyna Board of Directors in Astana on Thursday.

Social Front

- Kazakh Subway Workers To Start Hunger Strike Over Unpaid Wages

ALMATY, Kazakhstan -- Dozens of construction workers building a subway in Almaty, Kazakhstan's largest city, have vowed to begin a hunger strike on August 11 to demand three months of unpaid wages, RFE/RL's Kazakh Service reports.

- Two dead in Kazakh prison riot

At least two inmates have been killed and more than 80 injured during a prison riot in Kazakhstan, close to the Russian border. Troops stormed the facility using batons and stun-grenades, but no firearms, the interior ministry said.

Kyrgyzstan Political Front

- Former Kyrgyz Prime Minister Released From Detention

Igor Chudinov has been released from custody in Kyrgyzstan, after guaranteeing he will not try to leave the country. Chudinov, who was prime minister from 2007 to 2009 under former President Kurmanbek Bakiev, voluntarily turned himself in earlier this week when he discovered there was a warrant for his arrest.

- Kyrgyz Activists Protest OSCE Police Deployment

TALAS, Kyrgyzstan -- Dozens of activists have protested in Kyrgyz cities about the planned international police deployment in the south of the country, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports.

- Kyrgyz Official Criticizes Foreign Partners

The deputy head of Kyrgyzstan's government, Azimbek Beknazarov, has used a press conference to lash out at regional and international organizations of which Kyrgyzstan is a member. Referring to the carnage that broke out in southern Kyrgyzstan when fighting started between ethnic Kyrgyz and Uzbeks in June, Beknazarov said the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and the CIS Collective Security Treaty Organization

(CSTO) "ignored us" when "the tragic events started....and we appealed through official channels for help from the SCO and CSTO."

- Kyrgyzstan Arrests 'Bakiev Supporter' Over June Clashes

BISHKEK -- Kyrgyzstan's National Security Service (UKK) has arrested an alleged supporter of ousted President Kurmanbek Bakiev who it says was involved in starting ethnic clashes in southern Kyrgyzstan in June, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports.

- Kyrgyz Elections Due In October

Kyrgyzstan's President Roza Otunbaeva has announced that parliamentary elections will take place on October 10.

Officials waited to announce the election date until the situation in southern Kyrgyzstan, the scene of violence between ethnic Kyrgyz and Uzbeks in June improved enough to allow for conducting a poll.

- Kyrgyzstan Lifts State Of Emergency In South

OSH, Kyrgyzstan -- Authorities in Kyrgyzstan have lifted the state of emergency in southern regions, which were hit by a wave of ethnic violence earlier this year, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports. Sooronbay Jeenbekov, the acting governor of Osh Oblast, told RFE/RL the situation in the region has stabilized and it is necessary to begin preparing for parliamentary elections scheduled for October 10.

- Primer On Kyrgyz Parliamentary Elections

Kyrgyzstan's President Roza Otunbaeva has announced that the government will hold parliamentary elections on October 10. The government waited to announce the election date until the situation in southern Kyrgyzstan had improved. The area was the site of violence between ethnic Kyrgyz and Uzbeks in June, but the state of emergency has now been lifted.

Geo strategic Front

- Swiss Diplomat Will Head OSCE Police Advisers In Kyrgyzstan

Swiss diplomat Markus Mueller has been selected to head a team of 52 police advisers whom the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) plans to send to Kyrgyzstan.

Economic/Energy Front

Social Front

- Turkmenistan Preventing Students From Returning To Kyrgyzstan

LEBAP, Turkmenistan -- Turkmen officials are attempting to stop university students from returning to Kyrgyzstan to continue their studies in the wake of ethnic violence there, RFE/RL's Turkmen Service has learned.

- Kyrgyz University Students Asked To Fill Teacher Shortage

OSH -- The Kyrgyz government is asking university students to teach at secondary schools in the southern city of Osh due to a shortage of teachers, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports.

Tajikistan

Political Front

- Arrest Of Former Tajik Prosecutor-General's Son Confirmed

Faizullo Bobokhonov, the son of Tajikistan's former prosecutor-general, has been arrested and charged with accepting bribes.

Geo strategic Front

- President Rahmon receives new ambassador of China

DUSHANBE, August 13, 2010, Asia-Plus - Friendship of leaders of Tajikistan Emomali Rahmon and China Hu Tzin Tao is guarantor of relations development between two countries in spheres of policy, economy, safety and international relations. New ambassador extraordinary and plenipotentiary of China Fanak Syanzhun in RT declared about it to journalists on Friday after presentation of credentials to head of state.

- 'Tajik Terrorist Suspects' Detained In Northern Afghanistan

DUSHANBE -- The Tajik Foreign Ministry says it is investigating whether three men detained three days ago in Afghanistan on suspicion of terrorism are Tajik citizens, RFE/RL's Tajik Service reports.

- Uzbekistan does not rescind restrictions for Tajik nationals on proceeding via crossing in Tursunzoda

DUSHANBE, August 9, 2010, Asia-Plus -- Uzbekistan has not yet rescinded restrictions for Tajik nationals on proceeding via crossings on the Tursunzoda stretch of the Tajik-Uzbek border that was imposed almost three months ago.

Economic/Energy Front

- Gazprom Zarubezhneftegaz prepares for drilling of the first prospecting hole

DUSHANBE, August 12, 2010, Asia-Plus - Closed Joint-Stock Company Gazprom Zarubezhneftegaz (the company-operator of the investment project of JSC "Gasprom" on search and investigation of hydrocarbons in the Republic of Tajikistan) conducts preparation for the next stage of the project - search drilling on the site Sarikamysh, Shahrinav district.

Social Front

- Female Suicides In Tajikistan Linked To Domestic Violence

QURGHONTEPPA, Tajikistan -- A Tajik official says the high rate of self-immolation among women in southern Tajikistan is related in most cases to domestic violence perpetrated by men, RFE/RL's Tajik Service reports.

- Prayers Banned At Tajik Opposition Party Mosque

DUSHANBE -- Prayer has been banned in the mosque at the headquarters in Dushanbe of the Islamic Renaissance Party (IRP), in a move that could pave the way for its closure, RFE/RL's Tajik Service reports.

- Muslim Call To Prayer 'Banned' In Tajik City Ahead Of Ramadan

Local reports say the call to prayer through loudspeakers has been banned in northern Tajikistan as Muslims worldwide ready for the holy month of Ramadan, which starts on August 11 and 12.

- USAID will allocate to Tajikistan within the next three years more than \$1.1 million for struggle against the human traffic

DUSHANBE, August 10, 2010, Asia-Plus - Agency of the USA on the international development (USAID) will allocate to Tajikistan within the next three years more than \$1,1 million for struggle against the human traffic.

Turkmenistan

Political Front

- Turkmenistan prepares for elections of local people's councils

The Central Commission for Elections and Referenda of Turkmenistan held a meeting in Ashgabat on 7 August to discuss preparations for elections of regional, district and city

peoples councils. According to TDH news agency, this important social-political action is scheduled for 5 December 2010.

Geo strategic Front

- U.S. and Turkmenistan to continue cooperation on drug control

Turkmenistan and the U.S. have formally extended the ongoing cooperation on drug control and law enforcement by signing the fourth annex to the existing Intergovernmental Agreement of September 2001.

The signing ceremony was held yesterday at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan. On behalf of the Government of Turkmenistan the document was signed by the Deputy Prime Minister, Foreign Minister Rashid Meredov, and on behalf of the U.S. government " by Charge d'Affaires in Turkmenistan, Lynn Tracy.

Economic/Energy Front

- Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India preparing framework agreement on gas pipeline

The technical working group on the gas pipeline project Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) fleshed out a number of economic and technical components of the future gas pipeline at a regular meeting that finished in Ashgabat on 6 August. The working group also identified further steps related to construction of the gas pipeline.

- Turkmenistan plans to increase electricity exports

Turkmenistan plans to increase exports of electricity, including via a new route to Pakistan through Afghanistan. To this end, the country plans to implement a number of major energy projects, President of Turkmenistan Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov said on 9 August at a meeting on the development of construction and energy industries of Turkmenistan.

- Turkmen President Wants Chinese Loan To Open Huge Gas Field

Facilities at the Samantepe gas field. Foreign investors are vying for access to Turkmenistan's gas resources.

August 13, 2010

- Turkmen Oil Starts Flowing Through BTC Pipeline

Leaders of Turkey, Georgia, and Azerbaijan pose with BP CEO John Browne at the opening of the BTC pipeline in 2006.

August 12, 2010

- Turkmenistan stands ready to sign agreement on TAPI gas pipeline before end of 2010

The Government of Turkmenistan will do all the necessary work to ensure that a contract for the sale of natural gas as part of the gas pipeline project Turkmenistan - Afghanistan - Pakistan " India (TAPI) is signed this year. As the Turkmenistan.ru correspondent reports from Ashgabat, President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov issued relevant instructions at a meeting yesterday.

- China to provide major loan for development of Southern Yoloten field

Turkmen President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov instructed the leadership of the oil and gas industry to hold "fruitful negotiations with the State Development Bank of China to obtain a soft loan worth US \$ 4,100 billion.

- Foreign oil companies to intensify work in Turkmen sector of Caspian Sea

On August 12, Turkmen President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov instructed the Director of State Agency for Management and Use of Oil and Gas Resources under the President

of Turkmenistan, Yagshigeldy Kakaev, to "accelerate the pace of work on environmental assessment of projects implemented on PSA terms in the Turkmen sector of the Caspian Sea.

Social Front

- Turkmenistan Preventing Students From Returning To Kyrgyzstan

LEBAP, Turkmenistan -- Turkmen officials are attempting to stop university students from returning to Kyrgyzstan to continue their studies in the wake of ethnic violence there, RFE/RL's Turkmen Service has learned.

Uzbekistan

Political Front

- Legislative Chamber holds session

The Legislative Chamber of the Oliy Majlis of Uzbekistan held its regular session on 12 August. Chairman of the Committee for Democratic Institutions, NGOs and Citizen's Self-Government Bodies Akmal Saidov presented the draft law on prevention of child neglect and juvenile delinquency in the third reading.

- Senate to convene for third plenary session

The Kengash (Council) of the Senate of the Oliy Majlis of Uzbekistan adopted a resolution on 10 August on convening the third plenary session of the parliament's upper house on 28 August.

Geo strategic Front

- Uzbekistan does not rescind restrictions for Tajik nationals on proceeding via crossing in Tursunzoda

DUSHANBE, August 9, 2010, Asia-Plus -- Uzbekistan has not yet rescinded restrictions for Tajik nationals on proceeding via crossings on the Tursunzoda stretch of the Tajik-Uzbek border that was imposed almost three months ago.

- President meets with Japan's Foreign Minister

President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Islam Karimov met with Katsuya Okada, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Japan, at Oqsaroy August 8.

Welcoming the guest, the head of our nation expressed satisfaction with the current state and the level of Uzbek-Japanese relations in various spheres.

Economic/Energy Front

- New cargo terminal opens at Navoi airport

Opening of the cargo terminal, which is part of the intermodal logistics center, took place on 12 August at Navoi international airport. The commissioning of the terminal is an important stage of the investment project "Creation of intermodal logistics center at Navoi international airport", implemented with participation of Korean Air.

Social Front

- Uzbekistan: The correspondent of Russian Parlamentskaya gazeta is brought to trial in Tashkent

On August 10 the first court session, dedicated to the case of Vladimir Berezovskiy, the correspondent of Russian Parlamentskaya gazeta in the region and editor of Vesti.Uz, took place in Tashkent.

- What Net Neutrality Means In Uzbekistan

The U.S. debate about net neutrality -- whether Internet service providers (ISPs) can discriminate against certain types of content -- has been anything but sensible, with no shortage of hyperbole from both sides. What is a complex, legitimate, and healthy debate

about regulation and the opaque and sometimes byzantine deals between ISPs and content providers has been reduced to a standoff between proponents of a "public" Internet and evil corporations bent on controlling your favorite blog.

Detailed Report

Azerbaijan

Political Front

- Aliyev's Azerbaijani Empire Grows, As Daughter Joins The Game

The daughters of Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev: Arzu (left) and Leyla in Baku last month

BAKU -- On the drive between Baku's international airport and the capital center, travelers are met by a brigade of sleek roadside signs advertising a company called SW Holding. But as innocuous as the posters may appear, they represent a company that enjoys a near-complete monopoly over every aspect of airline service.

Mid-flight meals? Served by Sky Catering, which is owned by SW Holding. Taxi service? Run by Airport Gate, also owned by SW Holding.

Technical upkeep of the national carrier's planes and helicopters? Silkway Technics. It -- and multiple other companies controlling everything from traveler assistance to ticket sales to duty-free stores -- are all owned by SW Holding.

The holding company is so expansive it even includes its own Silk Way Bank. According to an investigation by RFE/RL's Azerbaijani Service using documents obtained by the State Committee on Financial Securities, the bank's owners include two women with close ties to the country's leadership. One is Zarifa Hamzayeva, the wife of the president of Azerbaijan's AZAL state airline company. And the other is Arzu Aliyeva, the 21-year-old daughter of the country's president, Ilham Aliyev. (The remaining owner and current majority stakeholder is Silkway Airlines LLC, which is registered abroad.)

Azerbaijani President Ilham AliyevThe rise of SW Holding, which has seamlessly absorbed many of AZAL's former businesses, has raised questions about dubious privatization practices in Aliyev's Azerbaijan. It also serves to underscore how the political elite continues to use close friends and family members to preserve its hold on the country's most valuable assets -- despite Azerbaijani laws that list nepotism by state officials as an offense punishable by up to 12 years in jail.

The Kids Are Alright

Ilham Aliyev likes to keep things in the family. It's a trend started by his father, Heydar, who ruled the country for 30 years before effectively handing the reins to his son before dying of a heart condition in 2003. Aliyev's wife, Mehriban Aliyeva, is a parliament deputy and a prominent political figure in her own right.

According to a report in "The Washington Post," the couple's preteen son, Heydar, last year became the legal owner of nine luxury mansions in Dubai purchased for some \$44 million. Their daughters, Arzu and Leyla, also have Dubai property registered under the names. In total, the children's property holdings are estimated at \$75 million.

As president, Aliyev earns an official salary of close to \$230,000 a year. But Aliyev, who prior to office served as vice president of SOCAR, Azerbaijan's state oil company, has kept a tight grip on the resources of his oil-rich country, and his holdings are believed to

be in the tens of millions of dollars. Neither he nor his wife have declared their net worth, in defiance of Azerbaijani law.

The law also prohibits public officials from owning businesses. Family members, however, face no such restriction. It is unclear where Arzu Aliyeva -- who until now was best known for her role in an Azerbaijani tourism ad aired on CNN -- may have acquired the estimated 6.4 million manats (\$7.8 million) she used to acquire her initial stake of 29.08 percent -- or how she would pull together the additional 4.5 million manats that she and Hamzayeva would both need to achieve matching blocking stakes. Hamzayeva is the owner of Gazelly, a successful cosmetics business, but experts say it is unlikely her profits are large enough to allow multimillion-dollar bank investments.

In an interview with RFE/RL, presidential press secretary Azer Gasimov confirmed that Arzu Aliyeva was one of the owners of the Silk Way Bank. As an Azerbaijani citizen who had reached the age of majority, Aliyeva was fully within her rights to establish her own business, he said.

Dodgy Privatization

The rise of SW Holding and Silk Way Bank have raised questions about the privatization of AZAL, the state airline company, including its holdings, like AZAL Bank. The privatization process was launched in 2003 under a plan drafted by Azerbaijan's Ministry of Economic Development.

According to state law, the entire process was meant to be conducted by the State Committee on Privatization of State Property. But Gulu Khalilov, the committee's spokesman, told RFE/RL he had no information on who privatized AZAL Bank.

Anar Khanbeyli, a financial expert with Azerbaijan's Turan news agency, says the process was dodgy from the start.

"Normally, the state's share should be privatized through the State Committee on Privatizing State Property. And the privatization of the state's share in the bank was supposed to be conducted by the same committee," Khanbeyli says. "They're supposed to make an announcement, accept bids, announce conditions for participating in the tender, and then announce a winner. None of these procedures was followed. They bypassed them completely when they privatized the state's share."

Million-Dollar Contracts

In the meantime, SW Holding has slowly but steadily acquired nearly all of AZAL's former companies, including the insurance firm AZAL Sigorta, which is now co-owned by SW Holding and the two daughters of Jahangir Asgarov, the president of AZAL and the husband of Zarifa Hamzayeva, the current co-owner of Silk Way Bank.

The logo for Azerbaijan's AZAL state airline SW Holdings has also been the sole contractor on a number of high-profile AZAL projects, including airport-construction deals in Lankaran, Ganja, and Zagatala worth a total of \$150 million.

Neither side is eager to clarify the connection between the two entities. SW Holding referred an RFE/RL request for information to the AZAL press services, which responded that SW Holding was a private company and should be able to answer questions on its own.

Khanbeyli says all the parties supervising the AZAL privatization were negligent, from the privatization committee to the Central Bank, the Tax Ministry, and AZAL itself.

"AZAL was supposed to cry foul when it was deprived of its bank," he says. "I guess they didn't because the shareholders are the AZAL president's wife and the daughter of the president of the country."

This is not the first case where the head of state-run agencies have used close relatives to privatize the most profitable parts of their businesses. RFE/RL has previously reported on ZGAN Holding -- a private company run by Anar Mammadov, the son of Transport Minister Ziya Mammadov -- which was awarded several multimillion-dollar construction contracts with the ministry after a murky bidding process.

Questions have also been raised about Tale and Nijat Heydarov, the sons of Kemaladdin Heydarov, the current minister for emergency situations and the former head of the state customs committee. The Heydarov brothers are the owners of United Enterprises International, a group of companies engaging in everything from caviar sales to the ownership of the Gabala soccer club, which is peppered with foreign players recruited from abroad.

But their father, like Ilham Aliyev, has repeatedly refused to report his net worth, and the source of the Heydarovs' wealth has never been clarified.

Geo strategic Front

- Netherlands wants to have all-around" cooperation with Azerbaijan"

"The Netherlands wants to have all-round cooperation with Azerbaijan," said visiting Dutch Minister of Justice Ernst Hirsch Ballin. He underlined Azerbaijan is very important country for the Netherlands. The Dutch minister said he would meet a number of Azeri officials, and also sign a memorandum at the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

- Azerbaijani official meets with U.S. diplomat

Ruling New Azerbaijan Party (NAP) Deputy Chairman, MP Ali Ahmadov met today with newly appointed Political Officer to the U.S. Embassy in Baku Brigitte Buchet.

At the meeting, Buchet and Ahmadov discussed the existing cooperation between Azerbaijan and the United States, and also exchanged their views on prospects of development. They also addressed the preparations for the upcoming parliamentary elections in Azerbaijan in November.

The elections are scheduled for Nov. 7, 2010. Previous parliamentary elections were held in November 2005. The elections are held by the majority system in 125 constituencies.

- Karabakh problem "to be discussed at NATO PA's Autumn session"

The Nagorno-Karabakh problem will be discussed at the autumn session of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, said deputy executive secretary of the New Azerbaijan Party, member of the country's delegation to NATO PA, Siyavush Novruzov. He said Azerbaijan's delegation had a meeting with the Assembly's leadership during the spring session in Riga.

"We informed the Assembly officials that the Nagorno-Karabakh issue is being discussed at a number of leading international organizations. We told them that it is advisable to include the issue in the agenda of one of the sessions of the NATO PA."

"The leadership of the Assembly responded positively and gave relevant instructions to include the issue in the agenda of the autumn session. They have already appointed rapporteurs and the preparatory work is underway at a relevant committee."

Novruzov said NATO PA has always supported Azerbaijan's territorial integrity. "A book marking the organization's 50th anniversary features a map which shows the Nagorno-Karabakh as part of Azerbaijan, with the center in Khankandi."

Novruzov also commented on Armenia's protesting the NATO PA's decision to include the Nagorno-Karabakh issue in the agenda. "The aggressor's efforts will give no fruits as the Parliamentary Assembly has already declined their appeal." He said Azerbaijan and NATO enjoy "close cooperation", expressing confidence the organization would prevent "all attempts by Armenia to achieve the cancellation of the discussion on the Nagorno-Karabakh problem".

- **Azerbaijani Scientist Released From Iranian Prison**

BAKU -- An Azerbaijani scientist has arrived in Baku after being released from an Iranian jail after serving a two-year sentence for espionage, RFE/RL's Azerbaijani Service reports. Rashid Aliyev travelled to Iran in 2006 to work for the Sazan Electronics Industry Company in the city of Semnan, east of Tehran. Two years later he was accused of sending information on laser technology and electronic schemes to Azerbaijan and sentenced to three years in prison. Aliyev was taken directly to the Justice Ministry after arriving in Baku. He was not allowed to speak to journalists but later spoke by telephone to RFE/RL. Aliyev said there were no grounds for his arrest. He said he protested the espionage charges and demanded to be shown evidence to substantiate them.

Aliyev also praised his former employer for defending him and making efforts to get him released on bail of \$100,000. He said he was kept in a prison in Tehran run by the secret police where politicians and agents were also jailed. "Because I fought in the Nagorno-Karabakh war and served a prison term in Azerbaijan, I was able to resist psychological pressures [in the Iranian prison]," he said. "Therefore I came back safe and sound." Aliyev was imprisoned in the late 1980s for his membership in the opposition Musavat Party.

- **Azerbaijan - U.S. discuss military cooperation**

Azerbaijan Minister of Defense, colonel-general Safar Abiyev has met today Adjutant General of Oklahoma, Major General Myles Deering. According to press service of the Ministry, they discussed military cooperation between Azerbaijan and the United States, current situation in the region and Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh. Abiyev praised the current state of the US-Azerbaijan relations.

- **OSCE observation groups to visit Azerbaijan in September**

The OSCE's small observation group will visit Azerbaijan early September, head of the OSCE Office in Baku Ali Bilge Cankorel told journalists, APA reports.

He said another 15-16-member group was planning to visit the country mid-September. The OSCE will send nearly 300 observers to Azerbaijan a week before the elections day. Azerbaijan will hold the parliamentary elections on November 7.

Economic/Energy Front

- **U.S. expert: "Azerbaijan's role as gas supplier and transit country for Europe and Balkans grows"**

Borut Grgic, a senior fellow at the Washington DC based Atlantic Council and the founder of the TransCaspian Initiatives believes that, Azerbaijan's role as gas supplier and transit country for Europe and Balkans grows.

"The good news for the Balkans comes from the Caspian in the form of the recently signed Azerbaijan-Turkey transit deal that sets the transit price for Azerbaijani gas passing through Turkey", he said. The analyst reminded that, Azerbaijan, the western state on the Caspian shores is a major producer of natural gas and of oil: "It has been the darling of the big western oil companies for over a decade now, because its energy

markets are open to direct foreign involvement. An international consortium is developing and operates the Shah Deniz natural gas field where the local oil and gas company SOCAR has only a minor share. This structure helps ensure that market principles rather than politics drive the deals forward and that the price of natural gas is transparent”.

Grgic said that the Balkan peninsular states should find Azerbaijan’s Caspian alternative to the Russian gas interesting. “First, it is a market driven set-up, and second, Azerbaijan has no hang-ups about spheres of influence, and like the Balkan countries, is pursuing a future within the Euro-Atlantic structures”, - he added.

The political analyst points out that the situation changed in the root: “For a long time the main roadblock to accessing Azerbaijan’s gas was Turkey. Ankara has an ambition to become an international energy hub, and this has stood in the way of agreeing a transit formula with Baku. No more. This agreement was finally signed last month between the two heads of state. A provisional plan on how to get the Azeri gas to the Balkan consumers is already in the making. Gas will be piped via the existing infrastructure from Azerbaijan to Georgia to Turkey and on to Bulgaria”.

“Second, the connection to Azerbaijan can yield a future connection to Turkmenistan. Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan are already working on a way to link their gas lines under the Caspian Sea. Turkmenistan is considered to have one of the world’s largest deposits of natural gas” – he said.

Now is the time for big strategic vision in the Balkans, the expert believes. “Natural gas from the Shah Deniz field will be available as early as 2014. The field is already in the development phase, and the consortium is talking to interested buyers. The volumes of natural gas from this field are limited, so there’s not much room for deliberation. Energy security is a good pretext then, and a good reason for the Balkan leaders to pay an official visit to Baku still this year”, - he added.

Borut Grgic also reminds about Nabucco – “the project that never seems to stop being planed”. He asks if the Balkan states count on it to ensure their own energy security. “The answer is no, for two reasons. First, the Nabucco pipeline is about shipping gas from the Caspian to the Baumgarten, Austria trading platform and from there to third markets in Western Europe. As the energy price in Western Europe is higher, buying gas in Baumgarten is likely to be much more expensive for the Balkan countries than buying it directly from the Caspian suppliers. Second, the pipeline is still a paper tiger, in other words, it continues to lack financing and real political support to make itself operational” – Grgic added.

Social Front

- Azerbaijani Plane Crew Criticized Over Evacuation Delay

BAKU -- The head of the Istanbul airport says the crew of an Azerbaijani plane that went off a runway failed to comply with emergency procedures for evacuating passengers, RFE/RL's Azerbaijani Service reports.

An Azerbaijani Airlines (AZAL) Airbus-319 with 121 passengers and seven crew skidded off the runway at the Istanbul airport today while landing. There were no serious injuries reported.

Istanbul airport director Jalal Ozugur told RFE/RL that the crew requested a staircase be brought to the plane instead of activating evacuation slides to enable passengers to leave

the aircraft. He said that resulted in a five-minute delay in getting people off the plane while there was a risk the aircraft could catch fire.

AZAL spokesman Maharram Safarli said he had no information about any problems during the evacuation. He said a joint commission was investigating the reasons for the bad landing, which he said was perhaps caused by the pilot failing to reduce speed upon landing.

The aircraft's engine was reportedly damaged.

- Baku to host International Botanic Conference

International Botanic Conference will take place in Baku, from September 24-27, Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences said. The event will feature a wide range of issues, including use of plant resources, problems of greenery in cities' ecosystem, plant ecology. The conference will bring together scientists from Turkey, Iran, Russia and Ukraine. The participants will tour Mardakan Arboretum's Botanical Garden.

- Azerbaijan to give \$1 million financial assistance to Pakistan

Azerbaijan will give financial assistance to Pakistan, Foreign Ministry's press service told APA. In connection with the natural disaster in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Azerbaijan will give \$1 million financial assistance for helping the sufferers and eliminating the consequences of the floods.

Kazakhstan Political Front

Geo strategic Front

- OSCE to hold next summit in Astana, Kazakhstan, on Dec 1-2

Astana. August 6. Interfax-Kazakhstan - The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe on Tuesday decided to hold its next summit in Astana on December 1-2, Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev said on Thursday.

"This decision is a sign of great respect by the international community for the successes that the people of Kazakhstan have achieved during the years of independence," Nazarbayev said in a statement.

"I want to point out that the decision to hold an OSCE summit in Astana is a great achievement for the organization itself, which is experiencing quite difficult times," he said. The summit is to agree ways of tackling current and new threats in the Euro-Atlantic space and in Asia, to set strategic guidelines and a 'road map' for the OSCE's development, the president said. "I think that it is highly symbolic that the decision to hold an OSCE summit in Astana coincides with a historic date. The Helsinki Final Act was signed thirty years ago, on August 1, 1975. I am convinced that the summit will make it possible to adjust our organization to modern realities. It will demonstrate to the world community the successful evolution of the OSCE 'from Helsinki to Astana,'" he said. The planned summit will be the first international forum on such a scale to have ever been held anywhere on former Soviet territory, Nazarbayev said.

This is a great honor and carries a lot of responsibility as well, he said. "It is essential now to ensure that the forum arrangements meet the highest of standards. We have a unique chance to demonstrate the main values of our society - tolerance, respect for traditions, trust, and mutual understanding," he said.

Economic/Energy Front

- KazMunayGas to invest \$8 billion in Kashagan development project in 2010-2014

“KazMunayGas’s investments in 2010-2014 will come to \$20 billion, including \$8 billion in Kashagan, \$4 in the refinery upgrading project”, Kaingeldy Kabyldin, the president of KazMunayGas, told Samruk-Kazyna Board of Directors in Astana on Thursday.

In January 2009 the partners of the project agreed to create a new company to become the operator of the Kashagan project and the same month North Caspian Operating Company (NCOC) took over the Kashagan project from Agip KCO, all the shareholders still having the same stakes in the new operating company as follows: Shell, KazMunayGas, Eni, ExxonMobil, Total with a 16.81% stake each, ConocoPhillips 8.4% and Inpex 7.56%. NCOC overviews all activities and manages planning, coordination, reservoir simulation, conceptual studies and early development plans, government interfaces for the whole venture. Under PSA the licensed area will also include the three oil-bearing structures Kalamkas, Aktoty, Kairan in addition to Kashagan. These 4 structures consist of 11 marine blocks, which occupy an area of about 5,600 square kilometers.

NCOC estimates the recoverable oil reserves of the Kashagan field at 11 billion barrels and the total oil in-place at 35 billion barrels.

Social Front

- Kazakh Subway Workers To Start Hunger Strike Over Unpaid Wages

ALMATY, Kazakhstan -- Dozens of construction workers building a subway in Almaty, Kazakhstan's largest city, have vowed to begin a hunger strike on August 11 to demand three months of unpaid wages, RFE/RL's Kazakh Service reports.

The workers -- who have been on a general strike for three days -- gathered at a metro station construction site on August 10 and forced their way past security guards to meet with Kwon Ken Gyn, the local director of their employer, the Uranus CNI construction company.

Kwon said his company has not been able to pay workers' wages because the company did not make its construction deadlines.

"After we were not able to accomplish the planned work, our partner company, AlmatyMetroQurylys, refused to pay us, and therefore we are not able to pay the wages," he said. But AlmatyMetroQurylys Director Takhir Kalendarev told journalists that Uranus CNI owes his company money, not the other way around. Striking worker Daniyar Beisenbekov told RFE/RL that dozens of workers will begin the hunger strike in the workers' locker room. "Tomorrow Ramadan starts, we do not have money for food anyway, since we have not received our wages since June," he said. "Therefore we decided to start the hunger strike on the first day of...the Muslim holy month of fasting."

Construction of the metro in Almaty first began in 1988. Official sources said some \$8 billion has been spent on the project and a further \$200 million is needed to complete it.

President Nursultan Nazarbaev inspected the work on the metro in April and assured Almaty residents the subway system will start functioning by the 20th anniversary of Kazakhstan's independence on December 16, 2011.

- Two dead in Kazakh prison riot

At least two inmates have been killed and more than 80 injured during a prison riot in Kazakhstan, close to the Russian border. Troops stormed the facility using batons and stun-grenades, but no firearms, the interior ministry said.

One of those killed was a man who jumped from a balcony after setting himself on fire, officials said. The riot began as a protest against poor conditions and torture at the prison, activists said. Officials at the prison in Akmola region say the men had illegally demanded an easing of the regime.

Self-harm campaign

About 300 people took part in the riot which lasted three days. More than 80 inmates had cut themselves in an effort to throw a spotlight on conditions at the jail.

Getting little response, the inmates built barricades and started fighting and throwing stones at prison officers, reports said. Negotiations failed and special forces were sent in on Wednesday night to take control. The government soldiers did not carry firearms, and the majority of the injuries were caused by prisoners stabbing and beating one another during the chaos, prison officials said.

Overcrowding claims

The BBC's Rayhan Demytrie, in Almaty, says in the past few months dozens of prisoners across Kazakhstan have injured themselves in protest against inhumane conditions and alleged abuse by guards. Last month, 38 people cut themselves in a prison in the north of the country.

One of the main problems with Kazakh prison colonies is overcrowding, our correspondent says. According to a report by the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture, Manfred Nowak, the prison population in Kazakhstan is three times the average in Europe and well above the number in other post-Soviet countries. At the beginning of 2010 there were nearly 64,000 prisoners in Kazakh jails. Officials say that number has now been reduced to just over 60,000. Many of the prisons date from the Soviet era, when they were used as forced labour camps, or gulags.

Kyrgyzstan

Political Front

- Former Kyrgyz Prime Minister Released From Detention

Igor Chudinov has been released from custody in Kyrgyzstan, after guaranteeing he will not try to leave the country. Chudinov, who was prime minister from 2007 to 2009 under former President Kurmanbek Bakiev, voluntarily turned himself in earlier this week when he discovered there was a warrant for his arrest.

The charges against him are unclear but reports say accusations against Chudinov stem from his time as head of Kyrgyzstan's development fund from 2009 to 2010. Chudinov will remain under house arrest.

- Kyrgyz Activists Protest OSCE Police Deployment

TALAS, Kyrgyzstan -- Dozens of activists have protested in Kyrgyz cities about the planned international police deployment in the south of the country, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports.

In the northern city of Talas, representatives of the Ak-Shumkar (White Falcon) party, the Kyrgyz Social Democratic Party, the Committee to Protect Revolution, the Civil Society movement, and various youth organizations gathered at the Ak-Shumkar's offices on August 11 and signed a petition to the government protesting a decision by the Kyrgyz government and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) to send international police to southern Kyrgyzstan.

The protesters wrote in their petition that previous examples in former Yugoslavia and Georgia "clearly show what happens to countries where international police and military

forces are sent [to foreign countries]." The petitioners said the deployment of international police in any country leads to the secession of one of that country's regions. The petitioners asked the local government to allow a mass gathering in the city to challenge the OSCE's plans.

In Osh, former Foreign Minister Alikbek Jekshenkulov spoke at a rally against the police deployment. He said the sending of OSCE police would "provoke more interethnic clashes and worsen the situation in the region." A small rally against the police deployment was also held in Bishkek. The OSCE plans to send 52 policemen to the southern regions of Osh and Jalal-Abad to monitor the aftermath of deadly ethnic clashes that took place there in mid-June. The international police are due to hold consultations and training for the local police and to monitor them while making patrols. Kyrgyz President Roza Otunbaeva said that the international police would be unarmed and would serve for a period of four months. OSCE officials said last week that they are hoping to send the police force to Kyrgyzstan in September.

- **Kyrgyz Official Criticizes Foreign Partners**

The deputy head of Kyrgyzstan's government, Azimbek Beknazarov, has used a press conference to lash out at regional and international organizations of which Kyrgyzstan is a member. Referring to the carnage that broke out in southern Kyrgyzstan when fighting started between ethnic Kyrgyz and Uzbeks in June, Beknazarov said the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and the CIS Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) "ignored us" when "the tragic events started....and we appealed through official channels for help from the SCO and CSTO."

Beknazarov also criticized plans to send 52 OSCE police officers to the south to ease tensions there, saying many people in Kyrgyzstan are against the introduction of foreign police. "We, Uzbeks and Kyrgyz, have to resolve this problem between ourselves on the basis of historic relations and diplomatically," he said. "These forces that are to be implemented could disturb the already fragile relations between the two nations. This is my personal point of view." Beknazarov questioned the OSCE police's impartiality, saying that all the lawyers representing those affected by the conflict, as well as the employees of international missions working under the auspices of the OSCE and other international organizations, are of Uzbek ethnicity.

Not To Run In Elections

A leader of the protests that toppled President Kurmanbek Bakiev in April, Beknazarov also said today he would not run for a seat in parliament but rather stay in the government. Beknazarov said he had been appointed deputy prime minister. He said his duties will be to help President Roza Otunbaeva work with the country's law enforcement system. Beknazarov, 54, was the leader of the antigovernment protest in the northwestern city of Talas on April 6. The demonstration turned violent as police tried to force protesters from the provincial government building they had occupied. Similar protests in Bishkek the next day caused Bakiev to flee the capital.

Beknazarov was part of the interim government that took power in Kyrgyzstan in the wake of the president's ouster. He has been serving as one of Otunbaeva's deputies and as the Prosecutor-General's Office's coordinator of activities and courts. "I decided not to take part in parliamentary elections as there are many goals and issues the interim government has to deal with," Beknazarov said. He added that his decision was also

motivated by his willingness to make sure that the October parliamentary elections are "fair and clean."

Presidential Immunity

Beknazarov also talked about removing former President Askar Akaev's immunity. He said some members of the government were against stripping Akaev of the immunity he enjoys as a former president. President Bakiev's immunity was stripped by the interim government shortly after he was ousted in April. Akaev was toppled by mass protests in 2005. He and members of his family are accused of large-scale corruption and embezzlement during his rule from 1990-2005. He is currently living in Moscow.

- Kyrgyzstan Arrests 'Bakiev Supporter' Over June Clashes

BISHKEK -- Kyrgyzstan's National Security Service (UKK) has arrested an alleged supporter of ousted President Kurmanbek Bakiev who it says was involved in starting ethnic clashes in southern Kyrgyzstan in June, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports.

The UKK announced on August 10 that the unnamed man was detained overnight on August 7-8 at the Ak-Jol checkpoint on the Kyrgyz-Kazakh border. The suspect was reportedly heading to Kazakhstan en route for Moscow when he was arrested.

The UKK said the man in question was born in 1981 and was a resident of the Uzgen district of the Osh region. No further details about his identity were made public.

UKK officials say that in April the suspect received an AK-47 assault rifle from Sanjar Bakiev -- a nephew of ex-President Bakiev who has also been detained -- and went to Jalal-Abad where he served as a guard for the ousted president. The UKK said he had confessed to helping instigate the violent clashes between ethnic Uzbeks and Kyrgyz in Osh and Jalal-Abad from June 10-15 that left at least 356 people dead and caused hundreds of thousands to flee their homes. Former President Bakiev and some of his relatives are wanted by the Kyrgyz authorities for alleged corruption, embezzlement, and giving orders to open fire on antigovernment demonstrators in Bishkek on April 7.

A total of 86 people were killed and hundreds wounded during those clashes which led to Bakiev's ouster.

- Kyrgyz Elections Due In October

Kyrgyzstan's President Roza Otunbaeva has announced that parliamentary elections will take place on October 10.

Officials waited to announce the election date until the situation in southern Kyrgyzstan, the scene of violence between ethnic Kyrgyz and Uzbeks in June improved enough to allow for conducting a poll.

The government announced the state of emergency in the south that had been in effect since the June violence was to be lifted.

- Kyrgyzstan Lifts State Of Emergency In South

OSH, Kyrgyzstan -- Authorities in Kyrgyzstan have lifted the state of emergency in southern regions, which were hit by a wave of ethnic violence earlier this year, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports. Sooronbay Jeenbekov, the acting governor of Osh Oblast, told RFE/RL the situation in the region has stabilized and it is necessary to begin preparing for parliamentary elections scheduled for October 10.

Jeenbekov added that additional police patrols will be deployed after the curfew is lifted. But Izatilla Rakhmatullaev, a leader of ethnic Uzbeks in Osh, told RFE/RL that the Uzbek community has mixed feelings about ending the curfew.

"Since the [parliamentary] elections have been scheduled, the curfew should be lifted," he said. "However, [many people] here think that in order to preserve safety, the curfew should be prolonged. [We] asked the nation's leader to prolong the curfew for 20 more days, namely [to make] it from [midnight] to 5 a.m. We think that would be very good." The curfew -- which lasts from 10 p.m. until 5 a.m. -- was introduced in the Jalal-Abad, Osh, and Uzgen regions, as well as in the Aravan and Kara-Suu districts of Osh Oblast on June 11.

Clashes between ethnic Uzbeks and Kyrgyz from June 10-15 left at least 356 people dead and forced hundreds of thousands of people to flee their homes.

Several international human rights organizations have reported that Kyrgyz police were arbitrarily detaining and often beating Uzbeks in the Osh region. Such attacks have left many Uzbeks afraid to leave their homes.

- Primer On Kyrgyz Parliamentary Elections

Kyrgyzstan's President Roza Otunbaeva has announced that the government will hold parliamentary elections on October 10. The government waited to announce the election date until the situation in southern Kyrgyzstan had improved. The area was the site of violence between ethnic Kyrgyz and Uzbeks in June, but the state of emergency has now been lifted.

RFE/RL correspondent Bruce Pannier, who has reported from Kyrgyzstan several times in recent months, compiled this primer on the upcoming elections.

Q: Kyrgyzstan is having parliamentary elections on October 10. Why now? Didn't they have elections in December 2007?

A: Kyrgyzstan did have parliamentary elections in 2007. For the first time in the country's short history a ruling party -- Ak-Jol (Bright Path) -- that backed then-President Kurmanbek Bakiev came to power. With Ak-Jol's help, Bakiev managed to push through amendments to the constitution that transferred more power into the hands of the president.

Bakiev was ousted in a popular revolt in April this year and the new, interim government dissolved parliament. In June the interim government held a national referendum on a new constitution that transferred power to the legislative branch, effectively creating the first parliamentary system of government in Central Asia. The passage of the new constitution, plus the dissolution of the old parliament, necessitates a new round of parliamentary elections.

Q: Is the structure of the parliament changed?

A: Yes. The previous parliament was a unicameral 90-seat body. The new parliament will have 120 seats but no single party can win more than 65 seats. The idea is that no single party will be able to hold power without forming some sort of coalition with another party.

Equally important is the fact that parliament will select a prime minister who, for the first time in Kyrgyzstan's history, will be running the country. The president will become a figurehead along the lines of the political systems in Germany and the Czech Republic.

Q: How many political parties and movements are eligible to participate in the upcoming election?

A: There are 148 registered political parties and movements in Kyrgyzstan, a country with a population of about 5.4 million. Obviously not all these parties and movements

will be participating. In fact, far less than half will probably be represented on election day. Most analysts predict no more than five or six parties will actually win seats in parliament.

Q: How big are these parties/movements? Do their platforms differ greatly?

A: Only a few of Kyrgyzstan's political parties or movements could claim to have even 10,000 registered members. As for party platforms, Kyrgyzstan's political culture is personality driven, meaning people tend to identify more with the individual or individuals who head the party more than with the party platform. When people vote for Ar-Namys (Dignity) they are probably really voting for party leader Feliks Kulov, for example. The same is true of other notable politicians in Kyrgyzstan -- Omurbek Tekebaev of Ata-Meken, and Almaz Atambaev of the Social Democratic Party, are other examples. The platforms are therefore somewhat obscured and one needs to rely on what the party leaders are saying to get an insight into party policy.

That said, usually parties and/or movements form blocs ahead of elections as a way of improving their chances of getting seats. Therefore I would look for some of the bigger parties to merge ahead of elections.

Q: What are the chances there will be social upheaval during the campaigning or after the election?

A: The unrest in southern Kyrgyzstan -- the clashes between ethnic Kyrgyz and Uzbeks -- should keep the south tense during campaigning and possibly after the elections. The Uzbek community will be looking to see that some of the people elected, or subsequently appointed to government posts, are ethnic Uzbek. Ethnic Kyrgyz in the south may be looking for exactly the opposite -- that no or very few Uzbeks win seats or are given posts in the new government.

Besides this aspect there is also the problem with registration. In past elections popular political figures have been denied registration or later had their registrations annulled. Current President Roza Otunbaeva's registration was annulled at the start of the 2005 campaign for parliament, which helped the opposition boost its appeal among the people. Also, there have been instances when figures with alleged criminal ties have attempted to run for office (some succeeded) and that caused protests against their candidacies and rallies from their supporters who wanted these candidates to remain on the ballot or, if they won, in office. The case of Ryspek Akmatbaev in 2006 is a good example.

Most of the problems surrounding elections have broken out after the elections are over. There have been accusations of vote rigging and bias on the part of election officials. Otunbaeva's government is new and may be able to keep out of such controversies. But not everyone who wants a seat in parliament can win and often those who lose claim the elections were unfair and urge their supporters to take to the streets to protest.

At the very least, many of those who fail to win seats in this election can be expected to form an opposition to the new government quickly.

Geo strategic Front

- Swiss Diplomat Will Head OSCE Police Advisers In Kyrgyzstan

Swiss diplomat Markus Mueller has been selected to head a team of 52 police advisers whom the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) plans to send to Kyrgyzstan.

Mueller headed the OSCE Center in the Kyrgyz capital, Bishkek, from 2003 to 2008.

The situation in southern Kyrgyzstan remains fragile after ethnic Kyrgyz and Uzbeks clashed there in June, leaving nearly 400 people dead, thousands displaced, and causing widespread destruction.

A statement from the OSCE said "the group will comprise unarmed international police officers and local community mediators who will monitor and advise the police of Kyrgyzstan in six police stations in the Osh and Jalal-Abad provinces."

There have been protests in Osh and Bishkek against sending the OSCE policemen.

Kyrgyz President Roza Otunbaeva said earlier this week she expects the OSCE policemen to be deployed sometime in mid-September.

Economic/Energy Front

Social Front

- Turkmenistan Preventing Students From Returning To Kyrgyzstan

LEBAP, Turkmenistan -- Turkmen officials are attempting to stop university students from returning to Kyrgyzstan to continue their studies in the wake of ethnic violence there, RFE/RL's Turkmen Service has learned.

Some 650 Turkmen students left Kyrgyzstan's southern city of Osh in the wake of deadly clashes between ethnic Uzbeks and Kyrgyz in June. Most of them are from Turkmenistan's eastern province of Lebap.

The students in Lebap are being summoned by local officials who demand they sign written statements vowing not to go back to Kyrgyzstan to continue their studies, some of those involved say. The students' parents have asked the Education Ministry for an explanation for the actions but have received no reply.

One parent told RFE/RL on condition of anonymity that the ministry officials told him they would not give any explanation because the students were not studying in Kyrgyzstan under a government-supported program.

Many of the parents have sent a letter to President Gurbanguly Berdimukhammedov asking him to intervene on their behalf.

Last year, authorities in Turkmenistan barred hundreds of Turkmen students from returning to the Bishkek-based American University of Central Asia to continue their studies under the Turkmen-American Scholarship program. Many of them were eventually allowed to go to a university in Bulgaria.

- Kyrgyz University Students Asked To Fill Teacher Shortage

OSH -- The Kyrgyz government is asking university students to teach at secondary schools in the southern city of Osh due to a shortage of teachers, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports.

Presidential adviser Viktor Chernomorets told journalists on August 11 that Osh lacks at least 350 secondary-school teachers for the upcoming school year. He said students at local higher education establishments who agree to teach at secondary schools will receive state salaries and the corresponding social benefits.

There are 57 secondary schools in Osh. Fourteen of them hold classes in Kyrgyz, 22 in Uzbek, nine in Russian, and 12 of the schools use two or more languages for instruction.

Tens of thousands of Osh residents left the city during deadly clashes between ethnic Uzbeks and Kyrgyz in June. Many have not yet returned.

Chernomorets said that student groups from local universities will voluntarily monitor order in secondary schools in the Osh and Jalal-Abad regions.

Tajikistan

Political Front

- Arrest Of Former Tajik Prosecutor-General's Son Confirmed

Faizullo Bobokhonov, the son of Tajikistan's former prosecutor-general, has been arrested and charged with accepting bribes.

Bobokhonov was detained several weeks ago, but the news was only made public this week along with reports that Bobokhonov's property, including houses and vehicles, had been confiscated.

Officers from Tajikistan's anticorruption agency say they arrested Bobokhonov as he was accepting a \$2,000 bribe. Bobokhonov's father Bobojon was dismissed as prosecutor-general in late January this year after serving in that post for nearly a decade.

Geo strategic Front

- President Rahmon receives new ambassador of China

DUSHANBE, August 13, 2010, Asia-Plus - Friendship of leaders of Tajikistan Emomali Rahmon and China Hu Tzin Tao is guarantor of relations development between two countries in spheres of policy, economy, safety and international relations. New ambassador extraordinary and plenipotentiary of China Fanak Syanzhun in RT declared about it to journalists on Friday after presentation of credentials to head of state.

New ambassador of PRC has noticed that in relations of Tajikistan and China there are large perspectives and he as the diplomat, intends to make a maximum efforts for their realization.

- 'Tajik Terrorist Suspects' Detained In Northern Afghanistan

DUSHANBE -- The Tajik Foreign Ministry says it is investigating whether three men detained three days ago in Afghanistan on suspicion of terrorism are Tajik citizens, RFE/RL's Tajik Service reports.

Abdurahmon Haqtosh, the top security official in Afghanistan's northern Kunduz Province, which borders Tajikistan, said at a press conference on August 7 that four people were detained in Kunduz the previous day.

Three of the detainees claim to be Tajik citizens, while the fourth, their driver, is an Afghan.

Tajik Foreign Ministry spokesman Davlat Nazriev told RFE/RL today the Tajik consulate in Kunduz is trying to clarify the identity of the three men.

Haqtosh said that the detainees are members of the banned Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), which is led by Tohir Yuldash. He added that a laptop computer and false passports for various countries were confiscated from the men. He said the computer contained files detailing IMU activities in northern Afghanistan.

Haqtosh also told journalists that even though Yuldash's former driver said last summer that Yuldash had been killed in a missile strike, the detainees said he is living in the northern Pakistani region of Waziristan.

One detainee, who called himself Muhammadtohir, the son of a man in Dushanbe named Muhammadzohir, said at the press conference that the four had seen Yuldash in Pakistan speak about "the jihad against foreigners."

He said: "Seven or eight years ago I was in Pakistan. In Pakistan I studied at a madrasah. There they trained us and told us what we were meant to do -- wage jihad. [They told us]: 'You came here for the sake of jihad. Jihad against foreigners.'"

Haqtosh said two of the three detainees who claim to be citizens of Tajikistan had Afghan documents. The third reputed Tajik citizen, who called himself Muhammadnaim, said he is a cameraman sent by Yuldash to northern Afghanistan to teach others how to photograph.

Haqtosh said the small group was responsible for an attack on a security post in the Sanduqsoy district of Kunduz in which two security officials were killed.

The IMU was founded in the early 1990s in the Andijon and Namangon regions of Uzbekistan, but soon extended its activities to other countries. Its members fought against what would become the current Tajik government on the side of the mostly Islamist opposition in the Tajik civil war.

The IMU members sought refuge in Afghanistan following the 1997 Tajik peace agreement. Many of them were killed or captured during the anti-Taliban surge in late 2001, while others fled to northern Pakistan.

Intelligence officials said the detainees were trained in the Haqqani madrasah in Peshawar. They said that a person called Haqqani from the Afghan province of Baghlan was their leader. They suggested that Yuldash's supporters in Baghlan could include as many as 30 to 40 Tajik citizens.

Haqtosh said a detailed interrogation of the three detained Tajiks could yield a clearer understanding of the numbers and activities of extremists from Tajikistan and Uzbekistan who are fighting against the Kabul government in northern Afghanistan.

- Uzbekistan does not rescind restrictions for Tajik nationals on proceeding via crossing in Tursunzoda

DUSHANBE, August 9, 2010, Asia-Plus -- Uzbekistan has not yet rescinded restrictions for Tajik nationals on proceeding via crossings on the Tursunzoda stretch of the Tajik-Uzbek border that was imposed almost three months ago.

According to the Main Border Troops Directorate within the State Committee for National Security of Tajikistan, the Uzbek side has not commented on this decision. "Our repeated applications on this subject have remained unreplied," the source at the border troops directorate said.

In the meantime, people proceed via border-crossing checkpoints on the Tajik-Uzbek border in Sughd and Khatlon provinces without any problems.

We will recall that Uzbek authorities imposed the restrictions on proceeding via the crossings on the Tursunzoda stretch of the Tajik-Uzbek border on May 14 this year in response to an outbreak of polio in Tajikistan.

Tajikistan has conducted four rounds of national immunization days (NIDs), and no cases of polio have been reported in the country since June.

Economic/Energy Front

- Gazprom Zarubezhneftegaz prepares for drilling of the first prospecting hole

DUSHANBE, August 12, 2010, Asia-Plus - Closed Joint-Stock Company Gazprom Zarubezhneftegaz (the company-operator of the investment project of JSC "Gasprom" on search and investigation of hydrocarbons in the Republic of Tajikistan) conducts preparation for the next stage of the project - search drilling on the site Sarikamysh, Shahrinav district.

As Ekaterina Kozhevnikova, press secretary of representative office of Joint-Stock Company Gazprom Zarubezhneftegaz in RT has informed «AP», that in June of this year

in JSC "Gasprom" (investor) the point of drilling of the first prospecting hole has been confirmed by «Shahrinav 1-п», which is located in 15 km. to the south-east from Shahrinav.

«Now the company conducts arrangement and reconstruction of access road to a drilling site on a road are of locality «Bolshevik»- locality «Kyzylbulok» - a drilling site in the extent of 15 km. In difficult mountain-geological conditions of Tajikistan this road will provide journey to a hole of special heavy machinery with the drilling equipment. At this moment readiness of road is over 50 %», - has noted Kozhevnikova. Technical works is planned to finish till September 15, 2010, right after that installation of the drilling machine will begin. Equipment and cars-houses for the camp of workers have been already delivered.

The company plans to start hole drilling of «Shahrinav 1-п» in November - December of current year.

Social Front

- Female Suicides In Tajikistan Linked To Domestic Violence

QURGHONTEPPA, Tajikistan -- A Tajik official says the high rate of self-immolation among women in southern Tajikistan is related in most cases to domestic violence perpetrated by men, RFE/RL's Tajik Service reports.

Suhrob Salomov, an Interior Ministry official in Khatlon Province, told RFE/RL that 108 cases of suicide and attempted suicide by women have been recorded in the province in 2010. He said 52 people have died as a result and tens of others have been injured.

Salomov added that at least 50 percent of the known cases of attempted suicide were related to domestic violence and violence against women.

In the latest incident, a woman in Khatlon Province, Hikoyet Faqirova, set herself and her children on fire on August 5. The three children died and Faqirova is in serious condition in a hospital with severe burns on 25 percent of her body.

Faqirova reportedly poured gasoline over herself and the children -- aged three, five, and eight years old -- after suspecting her husband of having an affair.

Rukhshona Shoimova, a psychologist working for the nongovernmental organization Ghamkhori (Taking Care), told RFE/RL that single mothers or women who have separated from their husbands are a high-risk group for suicide. She said Ghamkhori intentionally targets this group to attempt to prevent suicide attempts.

Salomov said that along with cases of domestic violence, other women attempt suicide after quarrels with neighbors or sometimes even after harsh criticism from parents or other relatives.

He added that 29 suicide attempts were related to psychological illness, six cases were related to difficult living conditions, and 52 cases were thought to be related to domestic violence.

Manzura Sharifova, director of a women's crisis center in Qurghonteppa, told RFE/RL that in many cases, domestic violence is suspected but that women do not want to admit they have been abused by their husbands or relatives because of Tajik society's taboo on domestic violence.

Salomov said that in response to these cases, provincial police recently created a department to deal specifically with domestic violence.

But Khatlon has just one police officer per 10,000 people, which drastically limits police officers' ability to have a substantial impact on the situation.

Salomov points out that this year, no criminal case of domestic violence or violence against a woman has been taken to court.

- Prayers Banned At Tajik Opposition Party Mosque

DUSHANBE -- Prayer has been banned in the mosque at the headquarters in Dushanbe of the Islamic Renaissance Party (IRP), in a move that could pave the way for its closure, RFE/RL's Tajik Service reports.

Mavlon Mukhtorov, deputy head of the Tajik government's Committee for Religious Affairs, told RFE/RL on August 10 that the mosque was not registered, and political parties should not have mosques. The IRP, however, denies this and says the ban is intended to prevent any future growth of support for the party.

The Masjidi Nahzatiho Mosque at IRP headquarters has functioned unimpeded for 10 years as a cultural center. It can hold 2,000 worshippers.

Party deputy head Saidumar Husseini, who is a member of the lower house of parliament, said that he met with members of the Committee for Religious Affairs and representatives of the Law Enforcement Directorate to discuss the issue, but failed to reach any agreement. He said the IRPT will not accept the committee's decision to ban prayers in the mosque.

Zubaidulloh Roziq, who is imam of the mosque and heads the party's Majma Ulema (Council of Islamic Scholars), said that on most days only employees at the party headquarters and guests of the center pray at the mosque.

But he added that on Fridays, more than 2,000 people come to the mosque. He said most of them are supporters of the party or simply live in the neighborhood. Party officials also said that when the party holds gatherings, or particularly on important religious holidays, many people attend prayers.

A representative of IRP said that at present this is the only mosque in Tajikistan that permits women to pray along with men.

Every Friday around 100 women and girls come to the mosque to attend the Friday prayers along with the men. The majority of the women say that they come to the mosque with their husbands or friends, some of whom are IRP members.

Political analyst and journalist Saimuddin Dustov says that while the decision of the Committee for Religious Affairs is entirely lawful, it could have unanticipated negative consequences by antagonizing practicing Muslims and encouraging them to express support for the IRP.

Tajik government officials began a general registration of mosques last year in line with controversial new legislation.

The new law transformed the former Directorate of Religious Affairs, which was part of the Ministry of Culture, into the Committee for Religious Affairs, which reports directly to the president. To date, the committee has registered 3,300 small mosques for daily use, 324 bigger Friday mosques, and 27 large regional mosques.

The decision on whether to close the mosque at the IRP headquarters will be reached in discussions between the head of the party and representatives of the Committee for Religious Affairs.

- Muslim Call To Prayer 'Banned' In Tajik City Ahead Of Ramadan

Local reports say the call to prayer through loudspeakers has been banned in northern Tajikistan as Muslims worldwide ready for the holy month of Ramadan, which starts on August 11 and 12.

Reports say authorities in Tajikistan's northern city of Panjakent in Sughd province have prohibited the "adhan" via loudspeakers because they said it could cause confusion and disturbs the peace. Tajikistan is a predominately Muslim country.

Muslims observe the holy month by refraining from food, drink, smoking, and sex during daylight hours. Also today, in Saudi Arabia, a new clock meant to serve as a reference point for the world's central time zone is set to start ticking in Islam's holiest city of Mecca for a trial period in mid-August.

- USAID will allocate to Tajikistan within the next three years more than \$1.1 million for struggle against the human traffic

DUSHANBE, August 10, 2010, Asia-Plus - Agency of the USA on the international development (USAID) will allocate to Tajikistan within the next three years more than \$1,1 million for struggle against the human traffic.

The traffic of people remains an actual problem for RT. For last five years in Tajikistan there were assistance in repatriation, rehabilitation and reintegration to more than 250 victims of the traffic. The head of the interdepartmental commission of struggle against human traffic at government RT Abdusattor Rajabov has informed about it at press conference on August 10.

With support of Embassy of the USA in Tajikistan and International Organization For Migration the national center of training for preparation of the qualified experts in sphere of struggle against trade with people is under construction.

At press conference also it has been noticed that with support of mission MOM in Tajikistan two specialized orphanages for victims of human traffic are opened: one in Dushanbe - for adults and in Khujand - for children.

According to the deputy minister of Internal Affairs of the Republic Sharif Nazarov, at this moment 10 men have been searching, suspected of participation in the human traffic, and in the first half-year of this year in investigation were five criminal cases of the given category. Deputy chief of the Ministry of Internal Affairs has underlined that the crimes connected with human traffic, are made by the organized criminal groups, having transnational communications.

Nazarov also has informed that in the first half-year of this year from the United Arab Emirates there were returned home four citizens of Tajikistan who in accordance with the circumstances have appeared victims of human traffic.

As he said, the basic countries where dealers of people send the victims till now are the United Arab Emirates, Turkey and Iran. As transit zones of sending Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Russia.

Turkmenistan

Political Front

- Turkmenistan prepares for elections of local people's councils

The Central Commission for Elections and Referenda of Turkmenistan held a meeting in Ashgabat on 7 August to discuss preparations for elections of regional, district and city peoples councils. According to TDH news agency, this important social-political action is scheduled for 5 December 2010.

The meeting agenda included issues relating to various aspects of the early elections. The meeting heard the reports of heads of regional election commissions about the pace of preparation work, including the formation of election districts and polling stations, preparation of relevant documents, information support for the whole period of the election campaign. According to the official report, the meeting participants agreed that ensuring transparency and greater number of contestants were among priority tasks.

Geo strategic Front

- U.S. and Turkmenistan to continue cooperation on drug control

Turkmenistan and the U.S. have formally extended the ongoing cooperation on drug control and law enforcement by signing the fourth annex to the existing Intergovernmental Agreement of September 2001.

The signing ceremony was held yesterday at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan. On behalf of the Government of Turkmenistan the document was signed by the Deputy Prime Minister, Foreign Minister Rashid Meredov, and on behalf of the U.S. government " by Charge d'Affaires in Turkmenistan, Lynn Tracy.

According to the U.S. Embassy in Ashgabat, this annex extends projects English language for staff of law enforcement agencies of Turkmenistan and Improving capacity of the State Service of Turkmenistan to combat drugs.

The English language project aims at expanding the relations of Turkmenistan with the international community in the field of security. The second project is designed to improve skills of personnel of anti-drug agencies to counter illicit drug trafficking and investigation of crimes.

Economic/Energy Front

- Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India preparing framework agreement on gas pipeline

The technical working group on the gas pipeline project Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) fleshed out a number of economic and technical components of the future gas pipeline at a regular meeting that finished in Ashgabat on 6 August. The working group also identified further steps related to construction of the gas pipeline. According to TDH news agency, other than experts of four countries participating in the project, representatives of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) also attended the meeting.

One of the main issues on the agenda was preparation of a framework agreement on the construction of the gas pipeline that will be subsequently submitted to the governments of countries participating in the TAPI project for consideration. In addition, the working group discussed issues relating to preparation of an agreement for sale and purchase of Turkmen natural gas and other technical issues, the agency said.

- Turkmenistan plans to increase electricity exports

Turkmenistan plans to increase exports of electricity, including via a new route to Pakistan through Afghanistan. To this end, the country plans to implement a number of major energy projects, President of Turkmenistan Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov said on 9 August at a meeting on the development of construction and energy industries of Turkmenistan.

As the Turkmenistan.ru correspondent reports from Ashgabat, the head of state instructed Minister of Energy and Industry Yarmuhammet Orazgulyev to study the issue of attracting foreign investment for the construction of a gas turbine power station in the

village of Zerger in Lebap province, reconstruction of power units at the Mary power station, construction and reconstruction of existing small transformer substations.

In addition, it is planned to build new power lines at the site of Ashgabat-Turkmenbashi-Balkanabat, from the Mary power station to Turkmenistan's border with Afghanistan, from Mary and from the Balkanabat power station to the border of Turkmenistan-Iran.

- Turkmen President Wants Chinese Loan To Open Huge Gas Field

Facilities at the Samantepe gas field. Foreign investors are vying for access to Turkmenistan's gas resources.

August 13, 2010

Turkmen President Gurbanguly Berdymukhammedov has ordered oil and gas industry officials to work out the final details for receiving a \$4.1 billion loan from China's state development bank and put that money toward developing the massive South Yolotan natural gas field.

The Turkmen government's state website reported today on Berdymukhammedov's August 12 meeting with state energy officials. Berdymukhammedov ordered officials to get the money from China and quickly build a "state-of-the-art complex for cleaning gas so its quality meets the highest international standards."

South Yolotan is one the world's major gas fields, with estimates of its reserves reaching as high as 16 trillion cubic meters.

Many foreign companies are negotiating with Turkmenistan to participate in developing this relatively untouched deposit.

- Turkmen Oil Starts Flowing Through BTC Pipeline

Leaders of Turkey, Georgia, and Azerbaijan pose with BP CEO John Browne at the opening of the BTC pipeline in 2006.

August 12, 2010

BP Azerbaijan has announced that Turkmen oil is now flowing through the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) pipeline. The company only said that the pipeline is capable of handling some 800,000 barrels per day and that Turkmen oil will account for 4-5 percent of this volume. Baku-based energy expert Ilham Shaban tells RFE/RL's Azerbaijani Service that every two days Turkmenistan is unloading some 5,000 tons of oil at Baku. Plans call for doubling that amount by the end of August or early September.

The oil is being brought to Baku aboard tankers from Turkmenistan. Turkmenistan purchased two tankers (7,000 tons) from Russia's Krasnoye Sormovo shipyard last year and is expecting a third tanker before the end of September. Turkmenistan has been seeking to diversify its hydrocarbon export routes. Use of the BTC pipeline allows Turkmenistan to export oil to Europe via a route that does not pass through Russia.

- Turkmenistan stands ready to sign agreement on TAPI gas pipeline before end of 2010

The Government of Turkmenistan will do all the necessary work to ensure that a contract for the sale of natural gas as part of the gas pipeline project Turkmenistan - Afghanistan - Pakistan " India (TAPI) is signed this year. As the Turkmenistan.ru correspondent reports from Ashgabat, President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov issued relevant instructions at a meeting yesterday.

The head of state noted the progress in exploring the basic technical and commercial parameters and preparation of a framework agreement on TAPI gas pipeline project, and

stressed the need to keep in focus issued relating to the preservation of ecology during the implementation of the project.

- China to provide major loan for development of Southern Yoloten field

Turkmen President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov instructed the leadership of the oil and gas industry to hold "fruitful negotiations with the State Development Bank of China to obtain a soft loan worth US \$ 4,100 billion.

As the Turkmenistan.ru correspondent reports, these funds will be used for additional funding and further development of the first phase of Southern Yoloten field with the capacity of 30 billion cubic meters of natural gas per year.

The Turkmen leader also issued instructions to build new state-of-the-art gas treatment units at the gas fields in the soonest manner so that it fully meets the highest international standards. It should be recalled that Southern Yoloten gas field was rated among the five largest deposits in the world according the international audit conducted by UK-based Gaffney Cline & Associates in 2008. Its gas reserves were estimated at 14 trillion. cu.m.. Last year, following the field development, Turkmenistan announced an increase in the field reserves to 16 trillion. cu.m.

- Foreign oil companies to intensify work in Turkmen sector of Caspian Sea

On August 12, Turkmen President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov instructed the Director of State Agency for Management and Use of Oil and Gas Resources under the President of Turkmenistan, Yagshigeldy Kakaev, to "accelerate the pace of work on environmental assessment of projects implemented on PSA terms in the Turkmen sector of the Caspian Sea. As the Turkmenistan.ru correspondent reports from Ashgabat, among other companies there were mentioned Itera (Russia) company working at block number 21 as well as RWE dea AG (Germany) company developing block number 23.

The head of state also issued instructions to expedite the work carried out jointly with the Italian company ENI for the preparation of a supplementary agreement to the Production Sharing Agreement on the contract area Nebitdag and select the most appropriate proposals for the development of Turkmenistan's offshore blocks - 9, - 20 submitted by foreign companies such as Chevron, TICS Oil, Mubadala and ConocoPhillips.

Social Front

- Turkmenistan Preventing Students From Returning To Kyrgyzstan

LEBAP, Turkmenistan -- Turkmen officials are attempting to stop university students from returning to Kyrgyzstan to continue their studies in the wake of ethnic violence there, RFE/RL's Turkmen Service has learned.

Some 650 Turkmen students left Kyrgyzstan's southern city of Osh in the wake of deadly clashes between ethnic Uzbeks and Kyrgyz in June. Most of them are from Turkmenistan's eastern province of Lebap.

The students in Lebap are being summoned by local officials who demand they sign written statements vowing not to go back to Kyrgyzstan to continue their studies, some of those involved say. The students' parents have asked the Education Ministry for an explanation for the actions but have received no reply.

One parent told RFE/RL on condition of anonymity that the ministry officials told him they would not give any explanation because the students were not studying in Kyrgyzstan under a government-supported program.

Many of the parents have sent a letter to President Gurbanguly Berdimukammedov asking him to intervene on their behalf.

Last year, authorities in Turkmenistan barred hundreds of Turkmen students from returning to the Bishkek-based American University of Central Asia to continue their studies under the Turkmen-American Scholarship program. Many of them were eventually allowed to go to a university in Bulgaria.

Uzbekistan

Political Front

- Legislative Chamber holds session

The Legislative Chamber of the Oliy Majlis of Uzbekistan held its regular session on 12 August. Chairman of the Committee for Democratic Institutions, NGOs and Citizen's Self-Government Bodies Akmal Saidov presented the draft law on prevention of child neglect and juvenile delinquency in the third reading.

The document established bodies and agencies of the system of prevention of child neglect and juvenile delinquency, organization of individual preventive work with juveniles and families at social risk, legal status of minors, and the order of their socio-legal and educational rehabilitation. The Legislative Chamber passed the law, which will now be sent to the Senate for approval. Then the deputies approved the law on amending various legislative acts in connection with the improvement of the bodies and institutions of justice.

The document proposes amendments to the laws "On Notary", "On Local Self-Government Bodies", as well as the Civil, Civil Procedure, Family, Tax and Administrative Responsibility Codes.

The law is aimed at strengthening the notary institute, which ensure the safety and protection of the rights and lawful interests of individuals and legal entities, and provide competent legal assistance to the people. The lower chamber of the parliament also passed a resolution to merge Zangiata and Tashkent districts of Tashkent region and partial amendment of the territories of Zangiata and Kibray districts of Tashkent region and Hamza district of Tashkent city.

- Senate to convene for third plenary session

The Kengash (Council) of the Senate of the Oliy Majlis of Uzbekistan adopted a resolution on 10 August on convening the third plenary session of the parliament's upper house on 28 August.

According to the Senate's press service, the upcoming session will consider laws and issues related to modernization and democratization of the socio-political life and formation of the strong civil society.

In particular, the senators will consider a number of laws aimed at improvement of the state construction and management.

Among them are laws on amending the law on protection of the population and territories from emergency situation of natural and anthropogenic character, the law on advertising and the article 178-1 of the Administrative Responsibility Code.

Other laws envisage introducing changes in legal acts in connection with modernization of the state tax service system, and improving the pension system.

The upper house of the parliament is expected to introduce changes in the structure of the Supreme Court and the Central Election Commission.

Geo strategic Front

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In the meantime, people proceed via border-crossing checkpoints on the Tajik-Uzbek border in Sughd and Khatlon provinces without any problems. We will recall that Uzbek authorities imposed the restrictions on proceeding via the crossings on the Tursunzoda stretch of the Tajik-Uzbek border on May 14 this year in response to an outbreak of polio in Tajikistan. Tajikistan has conducted four rounds of national immunization days (NIDs), and no cases of polio have been reported in the country since June.

- President meets with Japan's Foreign Minister

President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Islam Karimov met with Katsuya Okada, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Japan, at Oqsaroy August 8.

Welcoming the guest, the head of our nation expressed satisfaction with the current state and the level of Uzbek-Japanese relations in various spheres.

"The extent and nature of our present-day interaction has been advancing in the spirit of the 2002 Joint Statement on Friendship, Strategic Partnership and Cooperation, and conforms to the role played today by Japan in the economic and political development of the contemporary world", Islam Karimov stressed.

Japan has been one of Uzbekistan's oldest and time-tested partners. The volume of investments in our republic's economy has exceeded 2.3 billion US dollars. The 2009 Intergovernmental Agreement on Liberalization, Mutual Protection and Promotion of Investments, has proved a new impetus for boosting Japanese big capital's business dynamism in the Uzbek market. For instance, Mitsubishi Corporation participates in the renovation of a range of enterprises in our chemical industry, while specialists of Uzavtosanoat automotive association have been introducing new models of cars at SamAuto plant in partnership with Itochu, a Japanese automotive group. Mitsui Corp. has been active in the development of Navoi Free Industrial Economic Zone and multimodal center of logistics. In addition, joint projects in high-tech area have been under way with Sumitomo company.

While attending the 43rd annual meeting of the Asian Development Bank, the leadership of Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) signed a new deal with the government of Uzbekistan worth 300 million US dollars to modernize Talimarjon heat power plant in Kashkadarya region. It has been a testament to the robustness of mutual relations built between Japan and Uzbekistan.

The Dialogue "Central Asia + Japan" is set up as an effect of multilateral efforts aimed at facilitating the endurance of peace and stability in the region. The latest round of consultations among foreign ministers of participating nations in the Dialogue has been held in Tashkent these days, where cooperation issues in political, economic, cultural and humanitarian areas have been discussed.

During the meeting at Oqsaroy, Katsuya Okada expressed his sincere gratitude to the head of our state for the warm welcome, and highly appraised Uzbekistan's thoroughly balanced and constructive foreign policy pursued consistently by the leadership of Uzbekistan and directed at ensuring regional security.

Prospects of bolstering the bilateral cooperation and other topics of common interest have been conferred at the event.

Economic/Energy Front

- New cargo terminal opens at Navoi airport

Opening of the cargo terminal, which is part of the intermodal logistics center, took place on 12 August at Navoi international airport. The commissioning of the terminal is an important stage of the investment project "Creation of intermodal logistics center at Navoi international airport", implemented with participation of Korean Air.

Uzbekistan Airways and Korean Air signed a memorandum of understanding in February 2008. The document identified issues of cooperation between the two airlines, as well as building of the international logistics center in Navoi.

The logistics center is designed to combine air, road and rail transport services for the needs of the population and economy of the region in exports, import and transfer of cargo and passengers.

In August 2008, after the completion of the first stage of modernization of Navoi airport, Boeing 747 planes of Korean Air started flying from Incheon to Milan via Navoi.

Currently, Navoi airport serves 12 flights of Korean Air per week on routes Incheon-Navoi-Milan, Incheon-Navoi-Brussels and Shanghai-Navoi-Milan. The regional air transport network includes 11 flights of Uzbekistan Airways every week on A300 cargo planes from Navoi to Delhi, Mumbai, Bangkok and Frankfurt. Opening of flights to Istanbul, Almaty, Dubai, Moscow and Tel Aviv is planned in near future.

Today, Navoi airport operates round the clock and can accommodate 10 heavy aircrafts like Boeing-747 every day. It is equipped with a 4-km runway, capable to accept all types of planes, and advanced air traffic control that meets ICAO requirements. This allows the airport to accept all types of planes regardless of weather conditions.

Now the airport has a new cargo terminal, which will play a key role in the development of the intermodal logistics center. Its construction was started in December 2008.

The terminal is capable of processing 300 tons of cargo per day. It was equipped by Kyung Sang Machinery Co., Ltd of the Republic of Korea, with has an experience of similar works at Incheon airport.

The new terminal has six work stations for loading and unloading operations, scale for 20 tons and 5 tons, refrigeration, freezing and heating chambers, zone for storage of dangerous goods, foodstuffs and animals. All essential services like customs, health inspection, cargo agents, etc will be housed in the administrative building.

Social Front

- Uzbekistan: The correspondent of Russian Parlamentskaya gazeta is brought to trial in Tashkent

On August 10 the first court session, dedicated to the case of Vladimir Berezovskiy, the correspondent of Russian Parlamentskaya gazeta in the region and editor of Vesti.Uz, took place in Tashkent.

According to independent Tashkent-based Uzmanon, Berezovskiy is accused of slander and insult. The charges are based on results of Vesti.Uz information monitoring report, prepared by Uzbek agency for communication and information, says Rossiyskaya gazeta with the reference to the message of Mikhail Fedotov, the Director of Extreme Journalism center, the Secretary of Russian Union of journalists and Russian Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, addressed to Akmal Saidov, the Director of Uzbekistan's national center for human rights. In the opinion of Fedotov, the site information presents news, covering socio-political life in CIS. At the same time, Berezovskiy is not the author of all these articles; they were reproduced from other media sources.

This website is not representing mass media of Uzbekistan. It was established by Berezovskiy in 2005 under the support of Russian embassy with the purpose to increase awareness of fellow countrymen, living in Central Asian republics, about domestic and foreign policy of Russia. The session was held in the apartment of accused person – unprecedented case in the history of judicial practice in Uzbekistan. In the morning of August 10, the lawyer of Berezovskiy informed the judge that his client got sick and needed hospital treatment; however, the judge did not trust the offered documents and decided to run the session in the apartment of Berezovskiy.

The negative opinion about this case was already produced by Foreign Ministry and Public Chamber of Russia and the Center of Extreme Journalism. All these structures view this case as illegal filing of criminal case as there were no elements of crime, says Uzmanon.

- What Net Neutrality Means In Uzbekistan

The U.S. debate about net neutrality -- whether Internet service providers (ISPs) can discriminate against certain types of content -- has been anything but sensible, with no shortage of hyperbole from both sides. What is a complex, legitimate, and healthy debate about regulation and the opaque and sometimes byzantine deals between ISPs and content providers has been reduced to a standoff between proponents of a "public" Internet and evil corporations bent on controlling your favorite blog.

If the Google-Verizon deal is anything to go by, rather than be the apocalyptic endgame where the "public" Internet is ravaged by criminal capitalism, the issue will rumble along through various administrations and FCC and Supreme Court rulings for many years. Net neutrality, in its absolute purest form, is a little like communism. A nice idea, but not really feasible. All bytes are created equal, but some are more equal than others.

Advocates in the United States argued that net neutrality isn't just a domestic U.S. issue but potentially a global life-and-death struggle -- The End Of The Internet As We Know It. In an April press release, the media watchdog Reporters Without Borders called on the U.S. Congress to act in favor of net neutrality:

"The neutrality principle has made the Internet an open, creative, and free space. It is already being put under threat by the world's authoritarian states, led by China and Iran. It would be disastrous if the United States were to give it up as well."

The idea here is that if net neutrality isn't enshrined in U.S. law, then repressive governments will use the lack of legislation to further restrict their citizens' Internet freedoms.

Possible, but unlikely. Why? Well, they don't really need to.

For much of the world, especially people unfortunate enough to live in repressive societies, net neutrality is an oxymoron. Those 1960s American libertarian ideals enshrined in the early Internet and held so dear by net-neutrality advocates didn't always make it to Uzbekistan or Myanmar.

In repressive or semi-repressive societies, the Internet has always been at the mercy of meddling governments or unscrupulous ISPs, which will happily shut down or block opposition websites under government pressure. Ask an Internet activist in Uzbekistan what they think of net neutrality, and they'll tell you there's no such thing. In most places, you'll be lucky if there's even a net.

The worst Internet repressers don't need a side door, under commercial pretenses, to control content, as they can do that already with impunity by more traditional means: leaning on ISPs to pull content, shutting down ISPs, smashing up servers, imprisoning muckraking bloggers. Where a U.S. example on net neutrality might have more of an impact is in countries with repressive tendencies but who also are aware of the need to project a decent image to the West and the global rights community.

There has been a trend recently for governments to justify their Internet crackdowns with Western precedents. Writing about the Sri Lankan Internet, Sanjana Hattotuwa says that British or French surveillance schemes or Australian antipornography laws are "opportunistically seized by regimes like Sri Lanka to legitimize their own actions to clamp down on dissent."

Shutting down ISPs or denying access to YouTube generates bad headlines, especially in Russia when you're trying to start up your own Silicon Valley and your president has just been schmoozing with the folks at Twitter. The concern here is that without a global enshrined ideal of net neutrality, government-controlled or government-friendly ISPs can under the auspices of the "market" make bargain-basement deals with state-friendly content providers to squeeze out opposition media.

As Jonathan Zittrain says about the U.S. market:

"And that's the real danger: when each ISP can, in effect, speak on behalf of its unwitting subscribers, serving as the troll under the bridge offering up different conditions for access to them, the economics of the net will start to favor the consolidated, the well-connected, the well-heeled."

In countries like Russia or China, replace the "consolidated" or the "well-heeled" with the corrupt or the loyal.

Opposition media in repressive states have long been denied access to printing presses, airwaves, or rights to primetime TV coverage. In the last few years in countries like Russia, the Internet has been something of an oasis of freedom of expression, especially with the rise of blogging. In the coming years, however, there will be continued efforts by governments to reverse those gains.

Unfortunately, that is likely to happen with or without a global ideal of net neutrality. Repressive governments will continue to act with impunity and won't bother going through the side door of net-neutrality legislation. Semi-repressive states will use examples from the West to justify their Internet clampdowns, but they are more likely to be antipornography laws, cyberterrorism campaigns, or liberally applied antiextremist laws than focus on net neutrality.

As Mong Palatino wrote for Global Voices:

"Politically driven Internet regulation often encounters strong opposition from Internet users and it always elicits condemnation around the world, especially from media groups and human rights organizations. Governments can always ignore the noisy critics but they will also lose credibility. Governments with democratic trappings cannot afford to censor the online media for an extended period. But regulating the web to stop pornography and other immoral acts somehow generates only a whisper of protest. It has become the safest ruse to block 'harmful' websites."

There has been much talk in the United States about the danger of parallel Internets: the Internet of the haves and the Internet of the have-nots. Unfortunately, in repressive states those parallel Internets are already in place. Because of the digital divide, there is the Internet of the connected (in every sense of the word) and then the Internet of everyone else, where citizens might only occasionally log on in a government-monitored Internet café. But the starker divide, already in place in repressive societies like Iran, is between those who access the real uncensored Internet through proxies and those who access what amounts to nothing more than a sanitized government-run intranet. For this rising proxy generation, global net neutrality is irrelevant and nothing more than a whimsical ideal.

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