

## **Business & Politics in the Muslim World**

### **News Monitoring**

**September 11 to 17, 2010**

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### **Azerbaijan**

#### **Political Front**

- Azerbaijani opposition APFP-Musavat election bloc appeals to CEC for registration

Azerbaijani opposition APFP-Musavat election bloc has submitted documents to Central Election Commission (CEC) for registration, head of Musavat party's election department said. Chairmen of Azerbaijan Popular Front Party and Musavat Party signed an agreement on establishing an APFP-Musavat election bloc to jointly participate in the parliamentary elections.

#### **Geo strategic Front**

- Azerbaijani leader: Nagorno-Karabakh is a historical land of Azerbaijan -

The historic agreement signed today will ensure the future development of Turkish-Azerbaijani relations, Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev said, while delivering a speech after signing an agreement on the establishment of the Supreme Council for Strategic Cooperation in Istanbul on Sept. 15, TRT1 television reported.

- Azerbaijan Withdraws Draft Karabakh Resolution From UN

YEREVAN -- Azerbaijan has withdrawn a controversial draft resolution on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict from the United Nations General Assembly, RFE/RL's Armenian Service reports.

- German-Azerbaijani military cooperation to be discussed in Baku

Baku will held bilateral talks on expanding the Azerbaijan- Germany military cooperation. The talks will be held during the German delegation's visit to the country on Sept. 13 -15 within the framework of cooperation, the Azerbaijani Defense Ministry said.

- United States confirms interest in Azerbaijan's Gabala radar station

U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates has confirmed America's interest in cooperating with Russia on a missile defense system using the Gabala radar station in Azerbaijan, Deutsche Welle reported.

- WB ready to discuss new areas of cooperation with Azerbaijan to ensure sustainable economic growth

World Bank (WB) Vice President for Europe and Central Asia Mr. Philippe Le Houérou, will travel to Azerbaijan from Sept. 13 to 15, the WB Baku office reported. The aim of his visit is to familiarize with recent economic and social developments in Azerbaijan and to discuss with the country's leadership, senior government officials, development partners, business community, and civil society the possible ways in which the World Bank can support sustainable economic growth and diversification, and human capital development in the country, the office's statement says.

- President Ilham Aliyev: Azerbaijan–Georgia–Romania Interconnector project marks a new page in energy cooperation - UPDATE

Presidents Ilham Aliyev of Azerbaijan, Traian Basescu of Romania, Mikheil Saakashvili of Georgia and Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban met in Baku on Sept. 14.

- Waving The Banner Of Azerbaijan's New Oil Boom

Winston Churchill once said that "If oil is a queen, then Baku is her throne." Azerbaijan's oil wealth has a long and storied history. But its oil industry was born in the late 19th century. Initially dominated by British, Dutch, Swedish, and Russian companies, it later became a center of Soviet might.

- President Ilham Aliyev receives World Bank's vice president

President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev received Monday World Bank's Vice President Philippe Le Houerou. During the meeting, the level of cooperation between the World Bank and Azerbaijan`s relevant bodies was praised.

- Joint market to be launched on Azerbaijan-Iran border

Joint market will be launched in Iran's Germei city located along the Azerbaijan-Iran border, MP from Germei city Vali Ismaili said. According to the MP, the joint market will be launched in 70 ha area.

- Baku to host conference on peaceful use of nuclear energy

Azerbaijan's capital will host an international conference on peaceful use of nuclear energy in November. According to director of the Radiation Problems Institute, Adil Garibov, the event will hear nearly 100 reports.

- Azerbaijan, Georgia, Romania and Hungary sign Baku Declaration on AGRI project

Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev hosted a meeting with Romanian President Traian Basescu, Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili and Hungary's Prime Minister Viktor Orban in Baku on Tuesday, AzerTAc state news agency reported. Opening the meeting to discuss the Azerbaijan-Georgia-Romania Interconnector (AGRI) project, Aliyev greeted the guests.

### **Social Front**

- Anti Quran-burning rally held in Azerbaijan

A rally was held in Nardaran settlement of Baku today to protest against abuses of the Quran in the United States. Intellectuals and inhabitants of nearby settlement attended the meeting, Meshadi settlement resident Natig Kerimov told Trend. He said the protesters held copies of the Muslim holy book. Abusing the Quran was condemned at the rally.

- ADB: Water level in Caspian Sea may rise 1.5 meters

Seminar on climate change was held with the frame work of Asian Development Bank Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC) program in Baku.

- Leaders Of Turkic-Speaking Countries To Launch New Regional Grouping

Leaders of Turkic-speaking countries are meeting in Turkey to formally launch a new regional cooperation organization that will strengthen ties between Turkey and Central Asian nations.

### **Kazakhstan**

#### **Political Front**

- Kazakhstan President Said To Seek Reelection

An adviser to Kazakhstan's president, Nursultan Nazarbaev, says that country's only leader in its post-Soviet history will seek a fresh term in office in 2012, RFE/RL's Kazakh Service reports.

- President Times Infinity

It probably will not come as a surprise to most that Kazakhstan's President Nursultan Nazarbaev is planning to run for another term as president.

- Kazakh President's Close Aide Dies

One of Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbaev's closest associates has died in a Swiss medical clinic at the age of 77, RFE/RL's Kazakh Service reports.

Nazarbaev reportedly expressed his condolences to the family of Vladimir Ni, an ethnic Korean, who died after a long illness on September 9.

## **Geo strategic Front**

- **Kazakhstan Extradites Kyrgyz Citizen To Uzbekistan**

ALMATY -- Kazakh officials have extradited a Kyrgyz citizen of Uzbek origin to Uzbekistan, RFE/RL's Kazakh Service reports.

Tashkenbai Aubakirov, a senior aide to the Almaty city prosecutor, told RFE/RL that Khurshid Kamilov was wanted in Uzbekistan for alleged involvement in the murder of two Uzbek police and participation in extremist and terrorist activities.

- **SCO exercises in Kazakhstan to train new counter terrorism techniques**

ALMATY, September 10 (Itar-Tass) -- New counter terrorism techniques will be trained at the Peace Mission 2010 exercises of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in Kazakhstan.

## **Economic/Energy Front**

- **Kazakhstan to start introducing EU construction standards in 2011**

In 2011 the construction industry of Kazakhstan will start introducing adapted EU standards in structural engineering (Eurocodes), said the head of the Kazakh State Agency for Construction and Housing Serik Nokin.

- **Kazakhstan falls five places in Global Competitiveness Report**

The Global Competitiveness Report 2010-2011 released by the World Economic Forum positioned Kazakhstan 72nd on the list of 139 countries. Kazakhstan fell 5 places from 67th position occupied last year.

## **Social Front**

- **Trial Starts For Kazakh Inmates Accused Of Fake Beating Video**

SHAKHTINSK, Kazakhstan -- Four convicts have gone on trial in central Kazakhstan for allegedly faking a video of an inmate being beaten, RFE/RL's Kazakh Service reports.

In May, a video clip circulated on YouTube showing a man in a Kazakh prison guard uniform beating an inmate at the AK-159/6 prison in the town of Dolinka.

- **Watchdog slams lack of Kazakhstan's media freedom**

(AP) - Kazakhstan's failure to improve media freedom has damaged its international standing and the situation is getting worse, not better, a media advocacy group said in a report Tuesday.

## **Kyrgyzstan**

### **Political Front**

- **Detention Sparks Protest Rally In Southern Kyrgyz City**

UZGEN, Kyrgyzstan -- Officials in the southern Kyrgyz city of Uzgen say a crowd of several hundred people rallied today to demand the release of a local man detained on suspicion of illegal arms possession, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports.

- **Kyrgyz Interior Ministry personnel to be put on alert on October 5**

In Kyrgyzstan, the Kyrgyz Interior Ministry personnel will be out on alert on October 5, Deputy Minister Baktybek Alymbekov stated Friday at a session of the staff office for preparation for parliamentary elections.

- **Thirty thousand Kyrgyzstanis debarred from voting**

In Kyrgyzstan, thirty thousand citizens are debarred from voting, head of the state registration service Almambet Shykmamatov said at a session of the staff office for preparation for elections.

- **Kyrgyz President Reshuffles Top Law Enforcement Officials**

BISHKEK -- Kyrgyz President Roza Otunbaeva has reshuffled several top judicial and law enforcement officials, saying the move was aimed at strengthening the justice system ahead of next month's elections, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports.

- Families Get Land After Leaving Disputed Uzbek-Kyrgyz Village

NOOKEN, Kyrgyzstan -- Families from a disputed area along the Kyrgyz-Uzbek border have received land to build houses in a nearby village in Kyrgyzstan, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports.

- Creation of Islamic party in Kyrgyzstan is a matter of time - Kadyr Malikov  
“Creation of Islamic party in Kyrgyzstan is a matter of time,” director of research center “Religion, Law and Politics” Kadyr Malikov stated at the press-conference today. According to him there is no party presenting representing interests of Muslims in Kyrgyzstan.

- Experts warn religious leaders of Kyrgyzstan not to participate in political struggle

Experts warn religious leaders of Kyrgyzstan not to participate in the political struggle in the secular parties. This was stated at the press conference by representatives of research centers “Religion, Law and Politics” and “Reasonable Solutions”.

### **Geo strategic Front**

- Defence Minister: Talks on creation of US military training center in Osh city maybe will be renewed after the parliamentary elections

“Talks on creation of US military training center in Osh city maybe will be renewed after the parliamentary elections,” Defence Minister Abibilla Kudayberdiev stated at the press-conference today.

- Minister Says Kyrgyzstan Wants More Cash For Russian Base

Kyrgyz Defense Minister Abibilla Kudayberdiev says his country wants a substantial increase in rent from Moscow if it is to continue hosting a Russian military base on its territory.

- Moscow Offers Arms To Pay For Military Installations In Kyrgyzstan

BISHKEK -- Russian officials have offered to supply Kyrgyzstan with arms as payment for Moscow's use of Kyrgyz territory for various military installations, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports.

- Manas Transit Center lease agreement extended for one year

The lease agreement of the Transit Center at Manas, located in the territory of the airport of Bishkek, has been extended for one more year, the representatives of the US Department of State inform.

### **Economic/Energy Front**

- None of the parties have a validated economic program – economic expert

In Kyrgyzstan, none of the political parties, participating in the pre-election race, has a validated economic program,” economic expert Zhumakadyr Akeneev stated to 24.kg news agency.

### **Social Front**

- Rights Defender Sentenced To Life In Prison In Kyrgyzstan

NOOKEN, Kyrgyzstan -- A well-known ethnic Uzbek human rights activist has been sentenced to life in prison for involvement in the killing of a Kyrgyz policeman, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports.

- Criticism For Harsh Sentencing Of Ethnic Uzbek Activist

Right groups have condemned a life sentence handed down in Kyrgyzstan to an ethnic Uzbek rights activist found guilty of involvement in the killing of a Kyrgyz policeman.

## **Tajikistan**

### **Political Front**

- Tajiks Recapture Seventh Jail-Break Fugitive

DUSHANBE -- Tajik authorities say they have captured another member of a group of high-profile inmates who broke out of jail in Dushanbe last month, RFE/RL's Tajik Service reports.

- Tajik Ministers Assure Ex-Opposition Commanders Of Safety

GAHARM, Tajikistan -- A delegation from Tajikistan's power ministries has told former opposition commanders that a military operation in the eastern part of the country is not aimed at them but at a rebel commander and his supporters, RFE/RL's Tajik Service reports.

- Islamic Party Urges Clarification Over 'Detention' Of Activist

DUSHANBE -- The opposition Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan (IRP) has asked officials from the country's State Committee for National Security (SCNS) for clarification after the apparent detention of one of its members in the capital, Dushanbe, RFE/RL's Tajik Service reports.

- Tajikistan Announces Reforms To Islamic Council

DUSHANBE -- Tajikistan's Religious Affairs Committee has announced that the country's highest Islamic institution, the Islamic Council of Ulema, will be reformed in accordance with new legislation, RFE/RL's Tajik Service reports.

### **Geo strategic Front**

- United States strengthens Tajikistan's border security and law enforcement sectors

DUSHANBE, September 17, 2010, Asia-Plus -- Tajik Foreign Minister Hamrokhon Zarifi and U.S. Ambassador to Tajikistan Ken Gross yesterday officially signed Amendment #10 to the Letter of Agreement on Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement between the two governments.

- 20 militants killed on Tajik-Afghan border - official

(AFP) - At least 20 Islamist militants and one border guard were killed earlier this week in a firefight along the volatile border between Afghanistan and Tajikistan, Tajik officials said Saturday.

### **Economic/Energy Front**

- ADB awards US\$122 mln grant to Tajikistan for regional power transmission project

DUSHANBE, September 17, 2010, Asia-Plus -- On Thursday September 16, the Government of Tajikistan, represented by Mr. Safarali Najmiddinov, Minister of Finance, and Mr. Abdullo Yorov, Chairman of Barqi Tojik (Tajik electricity supplier), and the Asian Development Bank, represented by Mr. Joji Tokeshi, acting Country Director for ADB's Resident Mission in Tajikistan, signed a grant agreement for 122 million U.S. dollars in Dushanbe.

### **Social Front**

- UNDP, UNEP jointly with MEDT launches new poverty and environment protection project



DUSHANBE, September 16, 2010, Asia-Plus -- The UNDP and UNEP jointly with the Ministry of Economy and Trade (MEDT) have launched a new poverty and environment protection project in Tajikistan.

- Tajiks stopped from traveling to Iran, Pakistan for religious courses

DUSHANBE, September 11, 2010, Asia-Plus – Dozens of Tajik students, professors, and scholars were taken off a Tehran-bound plane at Dushanbe's airport as they were traveling to Iran on various religious education programs, officials in Dushanbe have said. Officials removed the group from the plane on September 4, but did not publicly comment on the issue until September 8, Radio Liberty reported.

## **Turkmenistan**

### **Political Front**

### **Geo strategic Front**

### **Economic/Energy Front**

- TAPI: An Idea Whose Time Hasn't Quite Yet Come

It's been a dream on a map for more than a decade, a project that could provide thousands of badly needed jobs and a reliable source of energy that could benefit millions in instable areas of southern Asia. TAPI -- the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India natural gas pipeline -- has proven as elusive a quest as any in the long history of the region.

- Turkmenistan's explored gas reserves sufficient for many decades

The explored reserves of Turkmen gas will be sufficient for many decades ahead, especially since the country has a lot of promising oil and gas fields that are still awaiting their hour.

- Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov answered questions on "Nabucco"

Turkmenistan has no doubts about the real prospect of cooperation with Azerbaijan in various projects to export natural gas in any direction, including Europe through "Nabucco".

- Turkey sends request to Ashgabat for purchase of Turkmen gas

Turkey, Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan are going to "develop a set of formulas for the long-term supplies of Turkmen gas across the Caspian Sea to Azerbaijan and further abroad" to foreign markets

- Turkmenistan: More Charitable Than I Knew

Turkmen President Gurbanguly Berdymukhammedov: "Would you like to share this melon with me?" Turkmenistan is a unique place. I knew that when I was able to travel around there many years ago, and the news I've seen coming out of the country since my last visit (October 1993) always confirms there is no other place like it.

- Leaders Of Turkic-Speaking Countries To Launch New Regional Grouping

Leaders of Turkic-speaking countries are meeting in Turkey to formally launch a new regional cooperation organization that will strengthen ties between Turkey and Central Asian nations.

## **Uzbekistan**

### **Political Front**

### **Geo strategic Front**

- Kazakhstan Extradites Kyrgyz Citizen To Uzbekistan

ALMATY -- Kazakh officials have extradited a Kyrgyz citizen of Uzbek origin to Uzbekistan, RFE/RL's Kazakh Service reports.

### **Economic/Energy Front**

### **Social Front**

- Uzbekistan: Another journalist is expecting the trial

The government of Uzbekistan is going to judge Abdumalik Boboev, another independent journalist and correspondent of Voice of America. He is incriminated the following charges under Uzbek Criminal Code: slander, insult, illegal leaving abroad and illegal entrance to the Republic of Uzbekistan as well as Preparation and dissemination of information, threatening the public safety and order.

### **Detailed Report**

#### **Azerbaijan**

### **Political Front**

- Azerbaijani opposition APFP-Musavat election bloc appeals to CEC for registration

Azerbaijani opposition APFP-Musavat election bloc has submitted documents to Central Election Commission (CEC) for registration, head of Musavat party's election department said. Chairmen of Azerbaijan Popular Front Party and Musavat Party signed an agreement on establishing an APFP-Musavat election bloc to jointly participate in the parliamentary elections.

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

### **Geo strategic Front**

- Azerbaijani leader: Nagorno-Karabakh is a historical land of Azerbaijan -

The historic agreement signed today will ensure the future development of Turkish-Azerbaijani relations, Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev said, while delivering a speech after signing an agreement on the establishment of the Supreme Council for Strategic Cooperation in Istanbul on Sept. 15, TRT1 television reported.

"Our peoples have maintained fraternal and friendly relations for centuries. These relations are developing day by day and have ascended to a new level. We are building our relationship upon this strong basis. After Azerbaijan regained its independence, the Turkish-Azerbaijani relations only strengthened and developed, and today they have reached the level of allies. We remember that Turkey was the first country to recognize our independence and Turkey has always been with us since the first day of our independence. Today we successfully cooperate in various spheres," said Aliyev.

President Aliyev said the agreement on the establishment of the Supreme Council for Strategic Cooperation will strengthen and deepen cooperation between the two countries.

"Our relations are built upon this strong basis and I am sure that future generations will carry forward this friendship and brotherhood. Today's event assumes special importance. The agreement signed today is indeed a result of previous work and determines the strategic cooperation between countries," said Aliyev.

The President said the agreement covers all spheres. "This agreement opens an opportunity to expand relations between our peoples. On this historic day, I firstly want to express gratitude to my friend, Prime Minister Erdogan. This document was created as a result of his initiatives and efforts. I also thank all those who participated in creating the document. This is not only an international document, but also the result of good intentions between our nations," said Aliyev.

Aliyev noted that the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict has always been the main topic of discussions between Ankara and Baku. "And today, an extensive exchange of views was conducted on this topic. Turkey has always supported the fair position of Azerbaijan, has made efforts in various forms for the restoration of Azerbaijan's territorial integrity. The talks must yield a result and the result is that the internationally recognized territorial integrity of Azerbaijan must be restored. Nagorno-Karabakh is a historical land of Azerbaijan. Our people have lived and created there. Today, Azerbaijanis have been expelled from Nagorno-Karabakh and surrounding territories. No Azerbaijani has been left in these areas. All of them have incurred ethnic cleansing. All our historical and religious monuments have been destroyed. This is a great injustice and a step violating international legal norms. Of course, this issue will always be on the agenda in the relations between Azerbaijan and Turkey," said Aliyev. Aliyev said strengthening of Turkey as a result of Erdogan's efforts means strengthening of Azerbaijan. "Today's Turkey is not what it was ten years ago. Turkey is a great and strong country, there is consent between the people and government. We are brothers, this brotherhood exists in our blood and passes from generation to generation. Therefore, strengthening of Turkey is a positive factor in resolving the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. The Turkish government pursues an active policy in resolving the conflict. I am sure this will yield positive results and Azerbaijan's territorial integrity will be restored," said Aliyev.

Aliyev also emphasized that consultations are conducted to lift the visa requirements between Azerbaijan and Turkey. "I am confident that this will give positive results. I expressed my attitude on this issue. This issue in Azerbaijan must pass internal procedures, the relevant agencies and ministries of Azerbaijan must address this issue between themselves. Upon completion, these issues will be included in the bilateral agenda. I am sure this question will find a positive solution," said President Aliyev.

President Ilham Aliyev of Azerbaijan and Prime Minister of Turkey Recep Tayyip Erdogan signed at the Ciragan Palace in Istanbul a Joint Declaration "On establishment of the Council for high level strategic cooperation between the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Republic of Turkey" on September 15. Then, the heads of state made statement and answered questions of media representatives.

"Today, we are conquering the summit in the Turkey-Azerbaijan cooperation, which President of Azerbaijan, late Heydar Aliyev described as "one nation, two states"," said Turkish Premier Erdogan.

He described the Council of Strategic Partnership a fundamental tool in strengthening and handing this friendship down to the next generations.

"For a short period, we have seen notable benefit this mechanism, which we created earlier with such countries as Syria, Jordan, Libya, Iraq, Russia and Greece, brought to the expansion of both bilateral and regional cooperation. No doubt this mechanism would contribute to Turkey-Azerbaijan cooperation as well," he said.

He noted sub-committees established within the Council would allow the two countries to consider bilateral ties in all spheres. The Turkish Premier thanked President Ilham Aliyev for the cooperation in establishment of the Council.

Erdogan pointed out Turkey and Azerbaijan were friendly countries which had unprecedented ties in the world. He added the Council would contribute to strengthening the existing brotherhood.

President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev said, "I am very glad to be in fraternal Turkey. I am confident the historic document signed today will ensure further development of Turkey-Azerbaijan ties".

The Head of State pointed out relationship between both countries has developed and strengthened since Azerbaijan regained its independence.

"Turkey has been beside us since the first days of our independence, from the very beginning. Today we successfully cooperate and interact in a variety of fields. This cooperation is rapidly developing. The document signed today is of great importance for deepening and expanding this cooperation." The Head of State noted bilateral relations are well developed. He expressed assurance that next generations would strengthen this friendship and fraternity. The Head of State noted the Strategic Partnership Council would allow coordinating activities of the two countries in all spheres and achieve more results in all areas. According to the President, the agreement incorporates all spheres including high-level political ties, mutual investment, cooperation in trade, energy, cultural and humanitarian spheres, transport and railway projects.

"This will allow us to achieve successful, dynamic and more organized progress of Azerbaijan-Turkey ties," he said.

The President thanked Turkish Premier for his efforts and initiative to sign the document. President Ilham Aliyev and Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan answered journalists' questions.

When asked about assistance of the Council in resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict President Ilham Aliyev said: Turkey supports Azerbaijan's right cause and always made great efforts to ensure the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan in various forms. The Turkish government purses very active policy towards this conflict and I am sure that this policy will have positive results, and Azerbaijan's territorial integrity will be ensured.

Asked about what the union of Turkish-speaking states plans to do to establish ties with Turks living in other countries, Erdogan said this summit of Turkish-speaking states has been held for years and "we have gathered this year again, and we will try to lead this to the future."

Answering the question concerning elimination of visa requirements between Azerbaijan and Turkey, President Ilham Aliyev said consultations on this issue were underway. The President expressed assurance that the consultations will yield good results.

- Azerbaijan Withdraws Draft Karabakh Resolution From UN

YEREVAN -- Azerbaijan has withdrawn a controversial draft resolution on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict from the United Nations General Assembly, RFE/RL's Armenian Service reports.

Azerbaijani officials attribute the move to an upcoming international fact-finding mission to Armenian-controlled territories in Azerbaijan that surround its breakaway region of Karabakh.

Azerbaijan envoy Agshin Mehdiyev

The proposed resolution, which was strongly opposed by Armenia, was expected to be approved by the General Assembly on September 9. It upheld the right of Azerbaijanis "expelled" from the disputed enclave and its surrounding territories to return to their homes. It also urged the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) to investigate the conflicting parties' compliance with "international humanitarian law" on the ground.

Armenia has warned that the document would cause "serious damage" to international efforts to end the Karabakh dispute. It insists that no international bodies except the OSCE Minsk Group -- co-chaired by the United States, Russia, and France -- should get involved in the conflict's resolution.

Azerbaijani UN Ambassador Agshin Mehdiyev asked the General Assembly on September 9 to reschedule the issue for the assembly's next session, which begins next week. Mehdiyev told RFE/RL that the reason for the postponement is a "field assessment mission" to the occupied Azerbaijani territories planned by the Minsk Group co-chairs, which he said would support Azerbaijan's position on the Karabakh conflict. "As far as I know, the Armenian side continues to bring people from abroad and to settle them in the occupied territories to change the demographic situation, to destroy the cultural heritage of Azerbaijan in the occupied territories," Mehdiyev said.

The Armenian Foreign Ministry insisted today that the fact-finding visit, which the mediators would like to start by mid-October, is "in no way connected" to the Azerbaijani resolution. It pointed to the mediators' September 6 statement, which said the mission had been agreed with all conflicting parties, in principle, weeks before the draft resolution was submitted to the General Assembly.

In a written statement, the ministry claimed that Baku withdrew it under pressure from the three mediating powers. "We are thankful to all those UN member states and in particular to the OSCE Minsk Group co-chair countries, which through their stance prevented Azerbaijan from deviating and damaging the negotiation process of the settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh problem," read the statement.

The U.S., Russia, and France had opposed a similar resolution which Baku managed to push through the UN assembly in March 2008. It was backed by 39 countries, most of them Islamic.

Davit Babayan, the spokesman for Karabakh's self-styled president, Bako Sahakian, told RFE/RL on September 9 that the Karabakh leadership had not yet approved of the visit by the Minsk Group co-chairs. He said "there are still some technical issues and our final position will probably be clarified soon." He made it clear the mission would not go ahead without the Karabakh Armenians' consent. In a joint statement, the OSCE mediators said earlier this week they will tour those areas along with representatives of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and other international bodies.

The Minsk Group co-chairs met with Sahakian during their visit to Stepanakert on September 8. They said in their September 6 statement that their planned trip to the occupied and mostly deserted territories was agreed to in principle with all conflicting parties before the summer. An OSCE team led by a German diplomat inspected the territories in January-February 2005 to investigate Azerbaijani claims the areas have been illegally populated by Armenians. The mission said it found "no evidence of direct

involvement by the authorities of Armenia in the territories." Their report concluded that "there is no clear organized resettlement, no nonvoluntary resettlement, no recruitment." The 2005 inspection was organized as a result of a compromise agreement between the conflicting parties and the mediators. The deal prevented a vote in the UN General Assembly on an Azerbaijani draft resolution condemning Armenia's occupation of the region.

- German-Azerbaijani military cooperation to be discussed in Baku

Baku will hold bilateral talks on expanding the Azerbaijan-Germany military cooperation. The talks will be held during the German delegation's visit to the country on Sept. 13-15 within the framework of cooperation, the Azerbaijani Defense Ministry said. Azerbaijan has signed bilateral agreements on military cooperation with more than 30 countries. The country cooperates with about 53 countries in the military field.

- United States confirms interest in Azerbaijan's Gabala radar station

U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates has confirmed America's interest in cooperating with Russia on a missile defense system using the Gabala radar station in Azerbaijan, Deutsche Welle reported.

Gates said in an interview with Russia's Interfax news agency that the U.S. does not consider Russia to be a threat to American national security. He said that Russia's plans to create new ballistic missiles are seen in the context of the normal modernization of weapons, which the United States also carries out.

"We are partners in some areas and competitors in others," Gates said on the eve of talks with his Russian counterpart Anatoly Serdyukov. "But we cooperate in important issues." Such cooperation may result in a center for the exchange of data on missile launches to be based in Moscow. Gates said that neither Russia's plans to develop new ballistic missiles, nor the U.S. missile defense system in Europe are contrary to partnership agreements between the two countries.

"As we have repeatedly pointed out, the Missile Defense System in Europe is designed to protect [us] from Iran," Gates said, stressing that neither in terms of physical characteristics, nor in terms of geography, it can be regarded as a threat to Russia.

### **Economic/Energy Front**

- WB ready to discuss new areas of cooperation with Azerbaijan to ensure sustainable economic growth

World Bank (WB) Vice President for Europe and Central Asia Mr. Philippe Le Houérou, will travel to Azerbaijan from Sept. 13 to 15, the WB Baku office reported. The aim of his visit is to familiarize with recent economic and social developments in Azerbaijan and to discuss with the country's leadership, senior government officials, development partners, business community, and civil society the possible ways in which the World Bank can support sustainable economic growth and diversification, and human capital development in the country, the office's statement says.

"I am pleased to note that Azerbaijan has experienced unprecedented growth over the past few years which have led to a significant drop in poverty", said Le Houérou.

"The challenge now is to diversify the economy and promote non-oil exports so that Azerbaijan can progress to becoming a strong, upper middle-income country in the medium term." While in Azerbaijan, Mr. Le Houérou will meet with Ilham Aliyev and senior Government officials and visit two projects supported by the World Bank - the Pension and Social Protection Project and the Judicial Modernization Project.

The World Bank presently finances 20 projects with commitments valued at around \$ 2 billion covering investments in transport, water and sanitation, agriculture and irrigation, health and education among others. "The World Bank's proposed new Country Partnership Strategy for Azerbaijan for 2011-2014 is expected to provide significant additional resources and advisory services to build a competitive non-oil economy and provide more effective social and municipal services," said Mr. Joseph Owen, the recently appointed World Bank Country Manager for Azerbaijan.

- President Ilham Aliyev: Azerbaijan–Georgia–Romania Interconnector project marks a new page in energy cooperation - UPDATE

Presidents Ilham Aliyev of Azerbaijan, Traian Basescu of Romania, Mikheil Saakashvili of Georgia and Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban met in Baku on Sept. 14.

The Azerbaijani leader opened the meeting, which was dedicated to the Azerbaijan–Georgia–Romania Interconnector (AGRI) project. The President highlighted the history of oil and gas production in Azerbaijan, saying his country was one of the first oil producers in the world. He said that after regaining its independence Azerbaijan embarked on cooperation with foreign companies to explore its oil and gas fields. President Ilham Aliyev said diversifying transportation routes was a key priority in Azerbaijan's energy policy, adding the country had "good infrastructure, new pipelines to export its oil and gas in different directions". The President said his country attached a particular emphasis to regional and international cooperation in energy sphere. Ilham Aliyev said the Azerbaijan–Georgia–Romania Interconnector project "marks a new page in energy cooperation", adding "the project has big potential".

Georgian leader Mikheil Saakashvili praised Azerbaijan's contribution to strengthening the regional energy cooperation. He highlighted Georgia's role as a transit country in transportation of energy resources.

Romanian President Traian Basescu highlighted the importance of the AGRI project. The Romanian leader praised Azerbaijan's contribution to ensuring Europe's energy security. Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban said joining the project was of great importance for his country. He expressed Hungary's readiness to be "an active participant" of the AGRI project.

President Ilham Aliyev once again emphasized the meeting's importance in terms of implementation of the project.

Following the remarks by the heads of state and government Azerbaijan's industry and energy minister Natig Aliyev made a presentation on the Azerbaijan–Georgia–Romania Interconnector project. The meeting then featured discussions on the project.

The Azerbaijani, Romanian, Georgian presidents and the Hungarian Premier signed the Baku declaration on the AGRI project. The signing ceremony was followed by a joint press conference of the heads of state and government. President Ilham Aliyev said "we are on the threshold of big development, and we have a strong will. Today, we are writing history," he added. The President said Azerbaijan had big experience in the energy sector. He noted balancing interests of the parties is one of the crucial conditions for the realization of the AGRI project.

President Ilham Aliyev said there were 7 pipelines in Azerbaijan which transport the country's oil and gas in different directions.

The Azerbaijani leader said his country had fully ensured its energy security, which, he added, was part of national security. Aliyev said this year's gas production forecast was

28 billion cubic meters, noting the country's domestic demand was 10 or 11 billion cubic meters. "We export the remaining volume of gas, with part of it being stored." "And our export levels do not limit our participation in other projects. Europe's energy security is important to Azerbaijan as well, and it will open up wide opportunities for our country." President Ilham Aliyev noted the importance of carrying out the project's feasibility study, emphasizing the necessity of involving international financial institutions in the process. Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili thanked Azerbaijan for "the high-level organization" of the meeting. He praised Azerbaijan's development, saying "it first and foremost serves to improving the people's well-being".

The Georgian leader highlighted the importance of the AGRI project. Mikheil Saakashvili stressed the importance of the fact that EU member states participate in the project along with regional countries. He said Hungary's joining the project will breath fresh air into European Energy security. Romanian President Traian Basescu said the realization of the AGRI project would create wide opportunities for successful implementation of the European Union Eastern Partnership program. He expressed confidence the project would also contribute to developing cooperation among countries in the Caspian region and European states.

Traian Basescu said there was necessary infrastructure for the implementation of the AGRI project, adding a major issue was building two gas terminals in Constanta terminal in Romania and Kulevi terminal in Georgia.

"And it means that the AGRI projects is one of the most economical projects," he noted.

Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban reiterated his country's commitment to the AGRI project. He expressed confidence the project would mark fruitful cooperation among the participating states.

Viktor Orban said that together with Romania Hungary would make every effort so that the Azerbaijan-Georgia-Romania Interconnector project justifies itself in Europe. "I believe the project will contribute to the European Union," the Hungarian Premier added.

The press conference ended with a question-and-answer session.

Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev hosted an official reception in honor of Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili and Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban on Sept. 14.

Presidents Ilham Aliyev of Azerbaijan, Traian Basescu of Romania and Mikheil Saakashvili of Georgia had a joint dinner on the same day.

On Tuesday, Presidents Ilham Aliyev of Azerbaijan, Traian Basescu of Romania and Mikheil Saakashvili of Georgia toured the Seaside National Park in Baku.

They were informed of the large-scale reconstruction of parks and gardens across the capital city. The heads of state then visited the Icharishahar, historic core of Azerbaijan's capital, which was included in UNESCO's World Heritage List in 2000.

The Presidents visited Caravanserai here, where they viewed a national art exhibition. They also visited the Fountains Square, one of the favourite places of leisure in Baku.

- **Waving The Banner Of Azerbaijan's New Oil Boom**

Winston Churchill once said that "If oil is a queen, then Baku is her throne." Azerbaijan's oil wealth has a long and storied history. But its oil industry was born in the late 19th century. Initially dominated by British, Dutch, Swedish, and Russian companies, it later became a center of Soviet might. Azerbaijani oil fuelled Soviet tanks and aircraft during World War II and sated the domestic needs of the Soviet Union for decades.



Today, however, 20 years after Azerbaijan gained its independence, the country is experiencing a second oil boom. Only this time, Azerbaijan is in charge of its natural resources, and Azerbaijani citizens are reaping the benefits.

#### Oil To Education

The foundation of this boom was laid in 1994 when, despite resistance from many quarters Azerbaijan, managed to sign the "contract of the century" with leading oil companies. This document enabled the start of construction of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) oil pipeline in 2000.

This second oil boom has changed the geopolitical and geoeconomic situation in the South Caucasus. After the (BTC) oil pipeline, the Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum gas pipeline was laid. Now the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway, which will link China and Paris, is under construction. In terms of geopolitics, these projects open new opportunities for Euro-Atlantic integration. In terms of geoeconomics, they strengthen globalization, bringing continents closer and improving Europe's energy security.

The South Caucasus region has been engulfed in the flames of ethno-political confrontation and interstate conflict for the past 20 years. Foreign-policy clashes can easily sink economic stability. Development policies in such a complex geopolitical situation, even with the help of petrodollars, do not always yield positive results.

It is important for Azerbaijan to transform its "black gold" into intellectual potential. Therefore, 5,000 young Azerbaijanis will be sent to study abroad between now and 2015 under a decree by President Ilham Aliyev. Public democratization and economic transformation begin with public awareness, and this understanding shapes the agenda of Azerbaijan's government.

Building democracy is a gradual process, and it must be considered in parallel with political and economic reforms. Former U.S. President Franklin Roosevelt's statement that "misery and freedom are incompatible" sums up the challenge that Azerbaijan faced a decade ago. Over recent years, a great deal of effort and energy has gone into making the Azerbaijani citizen financially independent.

#### 'Neo-Azerbaijanism'

The country has been strengthened economically. In the past six to seven years, the poverty rate has been brought down from 49 percent to 11 percent. More than 900,000 new jobs have been created, 600,000 of them permanent. And some 5,000 new enterprises have started up.

Azerbaijan does not spend its petrodollars on increasing wages or social benefits that could lead to serious inflationary consequences. In the nearest future, Azerbaijan will become an international aid donor.

This is just a short list of the prospects that have been opened up by the second oil boom. These are not just words, but a record of real action.

Recently, the world's biggest flag (70 by 35 meters) was raised on the world's tallest unsupported flagpole (162 meters) in Baku. This is not only a sign of our economic strength, which allows us to implement such projects. This is neo-Azerbaijanism, which is present in the country's new politics, economy, and socio-cultural life. The world's tallest flagpole symbolizes a new understanding of the inner spirit and power of our national identity and a reassessment of Azerbaijan's place in the global context. Today it is clear that we are no longer just a bridge. From now on, we are a center of regional

politics -- and this will form the basis of Azerbaijan's foreign policy for the coming decades.

- President Ilham Aliyev receives World Bank's vice president

President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev received Monday World Bank's Vice President Philippe Le Houerou. During the meeting, the level of cooperation between the World Bank and Azerbaijan`s relevant bodies was praised. The sides exchanged views on the accomplishments achieved recently in Azerbaijan and the works to be done in the future. It was also noted the sides were interested in the implementation of some international

- Joint market to be launched on Azerbaijan-Iran border

Joint market will be launched in Iran's Germe city located along the Azerbaijan-Iran border, MP from Germe city Vali Ismaili said. According to the MP, the joint market will be launched in 70 ha area.

“We have reached an agreement about construction of a joint market during our visit to Azerbaijan. We intend to launch customs checkpoint for development of relations between Azerbaijan and Iran and ensuring comfort of people.”

Germe`s Muran settlement shares the same border with Azerbaijan's Jalilabad region.

- Baku to host conference on peaceful use of nuclear energy

Azerbaijan's capital will host an international conference on peaceful use of nuclear energy in November. According to director of the Radiation Problems Institute, Adil Garibov, the event will hear nearly 100 reports. He said Azeri nuclear scientists living abroad would also be invited to the conference together with foreign experts, including from Turkey, Russia and Austria.

- Azerbaijan, Georgia, Romania and Hungary sign Baku Declaration on AGRI project

Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev hosted a meeting with Romanian President Traian Basescu, Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili and Hungary's Prime Minister Viktor Orban in Baku on Tuesday, AzerTAc state news agency reported. Opening the meeting to discuss the Azerbaijan-Georgia-Romania Interconnector (AGRI) project, Aliyev greeted the guests.

Speaking about the history of oil and gas production in Azerbaijan, Aliyev said that the republic was one of the first oil producing countries in the world. After the restoration of independence, Azerbaijan began working with foreign companies to develop oil and gas fields.

Noting that Azerbaijan favors multi-directional policy in energy exports, Aliyev said the country has established a good infrastructure and laid new pipelines for the transportation of oil and gas in different directions. Aliyev said that Azerbaijan attaches great importance to regional and international cooperation in the energy sector.

Stressing that the AGRI project opens a new stage of cooperation in the energy sector, Aliyev said this project has great potential. Saakashvili emphasized Azerbaijan's role in regional energy cooperation. He also spoke about Georgia's transit role in energy transportation.

Basescu spoke about the significance of the AGRI project for Romania. He highlighted Azerbaijan's contribution in the energy security of Europe. Orban noted the importance of Hungary joining the AGRI project. He said Hungary is ready to actively participate in the AGRI project. Aliyev thanked the heads of states and governments visiting Baku, and

noted the importance of this meeting for the project. The leaders then signed the Baku Declaration on the AGRI project.

### **Social Front**

- Anti Quran-burning rally held in Azerbaijan

A rally was held in Nardaran settlement of Baku today to protest against abuses of the Quran in the United States. Intellectuals and inhabitants of nearby settlement attended the meeting, Meshadi settlement resident Natig Kerimov told Trend. He said the protesters held copies of the Muslim holy book. Abusing the Quran was condemned at the rally.

According to international media, pages from a Holy Quran were torn on Sept. 11 in front of the White House during a protest against Islam by a small group of people including a leader of the Tea Party movement. Pages were not burned because the protestor explained that the burning of any object in front of the White House is a serious crime.

Meanwhile, Pastor Bob Old, together with his assistant, did burn the Holy Quran in Tennessee. Besides the Holy Quran, these men burned another book which mentioned the name of the prophet of Islam.

- ADB: Water level in Caspian Sea may rise 1.5 meters

Seminar on climate change was held with the frame work of Asian Development Bank Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC) program in Baku. According to Peter Hayes, Senior Climate Change Specialist the temperature of the weather is forecasted to rise 3-7° over the world, 3.5° in the Central Asia and Azerbaijan at the end of XXI centuries. At the same time the water level in Caspian Sea is expected to rise 150 cm and 88 000 ha are to remain under the water.

During the last 10 years, temperature of the weather rose 0.4-0.9° in Azerbaijan. Note that the purpose of the seminar is to increase the knowledges of specialists in this sphere. Besides, presentations on Science and Influence and Economic Influence were held at the event.

- Leaders Of Turkic-Speaking Countries To Launch New Regional Grouping

Leaders of Turkic-speaking countries are meeting in Turkey to formally launch a new regional cooperation organization that will strengthen ties between Turkey and Central Asian nations.

Leaders of Turkic-speaking countries have been meeting regularly since the early 1990s to discuss cooperation, but a decision to set up the Turkic-speaking Countries Cooperation Council (TCCC) was taken only last year.

The presidents of Turkey, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Turkmenistan are expected to attend the meeting in Istanbul.

The president of Uzbekistan is not taking part. A Turkish career diplomat, Halil Akinci, is expected to be named secretary-general of the new Cooperation Council, which will be based in Istanbul.

### **Kazakhstan**

#### **Political Front**

- Kazakhstan President Said To Seek Reelection

An adviser to Kazakhstan's president, Nursultan Nazarbaev, says that country's only leader in its post-Soviet history will seek a fresh term in office in 2012, RFE/RL's Kazakh Service reports.

Nazarbaev's current term expires in 2012, but in 2007 parliament ruled that he should be able to stand for president as many times as he likes, as the country's first head of state.

Parliament has also given Nazarbaev the status of "leader of the nation" and immunity from prosecution.

His adviser, Yermukhamet Yertisbaev, in an interview published today, told local newspaper "Svoboda Slova" that Nazarbaev, 70, announced his intention to run earlier this month.

Yertisbaev also denied reports that in 2012, Kazakh authorities plan to hold a referendum, instead of presidential elections. Nazarbaev has ruled Kazakhstan since the breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991, before which he was the country's top communist official.

- President Times Infinity

It probably will not come as a surprise to most that Kazakhstan's President Nursultan Nazarbaev is planning to run for another term as president.

One of his most-trusted advisers, Yermukhamet Yertysbaev, all but confirmed the Kazakh leader's intention when he said in an interview on September 16 that "in the 2012 elections, [Nazarbaev] sees no rivals to himself or internal threats to the system."

Nazarbaev has the right to run for what would be his fourth term in office since 1991 independence due to changes in the constitution in 2007 that removed term limits for the "first" president of the country. At the time, everyone assumed that meant Nazarbaev, who turned 70 in July, would remain in office until his death.

But new legislation passed earlier this year that bestowed upon Nazarbaev the title of "Leader of the Nation" ("El Bashi") raised the possibility that Nazarbaev might be planning to step down as president.

Being "El Bashi" means Nazarbaev could effectively continue to run the country without necessarily being president, since he would have basically the same powers as he enjoys now as president. As "El Bashi," even if he's not president, Nazarbaev is to be consulted on all policy matters, domestic and foreign, has the right to address parliament, to appear on state television and radio to address the nation, and enjoys immunity from investigation or prosecution.

Another privilege Nazarbaev enjoys as "first" president is that if he wins the 2012 elections, his term will be seven years. If anyone else were to win, the term would be five years, and no one but the first president can serve more than two terms.

There was speculation that the new title would pave the way for Nazarbaev to hand pick his successor, someone who would preserve the system Nazarbaev built and guarantee the "first" president's legacy for at least another generation. And as "El Bashi," Nazarbaev has the power to watch over such a successor.

Pundits have floated the names of several people that might fit the successor mold. But if Nazarbaev does intend to run for president, it would be a strong sign that he has not yet found anyone to his liking.

It also means that, if he were to win, Nazarbaev's next term in office would expire in December 2019. He would be 79 years old.

- Kazakh President's Close Aide Dies

One of Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbaev's closest associates has died in a Swiss medical clinic at the age of 77, RFE/RL's Kazakh Service reports.

Nazarbaev reportedly expressed his condolences to the family of Vladimir Ni, an ethnic Korean, who died after a long illness on September 9. No other details were given. The

general director of the KHOZU corporation, Ni began working as Nazarbaev's aide in 1985 when Nazarbaev was prime minister of the Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic. After the Soviet Union collapsed in December 1991, Ni became deputy chief of Nazarbaev's Presidential Office and in 1996 was appointed chief of Nazarbaev's presidential apparatus.

Ni was considered one of the most influential figures in Kazakhstan's political and economic elite and the man with the closest personal ties to Nazarbaev. In 2007, tapes of recorded conversations between two men whose voices sounded like those of Ni and Nazarbaev were circulated on the Internet. The two men discussed how much government money should be given to support the pro-presidential Nur-Otan party. Ni neither confirmed nor denied that the tapes were authentic.

### **Geo strategic Front**

- Kazakhstan Extradites Kyrgyz Citizen To Uzbekistan

ALMATY -- Kazakh officials have extradited a Kyrgyz citizen of Uzbek origin to Uzbekistan, RFE/RL's Kazakh Service reports. Tashkenbai Aubakirov, a senior aide to the Almaty city prosecutor, told RFE/RL that Khurshid Kamilov was wanted in Uzbekistan for alleged involvement in the murder of two Uzbek police and participation in extremist and terrorist activities.

Kamilov was detained during Almaty police's "Migrant" operation in June to locate illegal immigrants. His extradition took place last week.

No comment was immediately available from Kyrgyz officials. Meanwhile, 29 Uzbek citizens detained by Kazakh authorities as illegal immigrants have been held in Kazakhstan's National Security Committee jail since mid-June. Many of their wives came on September 13 to the Almaty City Prosecutor's Office to demand their husbands' immediate release. According to Kazakh law, they say their husbands can be held in pretrial detention for only three months. One of the Uzbek women, Rano Jalalkhonova, told RFE/RL that her husband and his comrades have been on a hunger strike in jail since September 9.

Another Uzbek woman, Mutavar Suleimanova, told RFE/RL that if her husband is extradited to Uzbekistan he might be sentenced to death or life in prison for being a devoted Muslim. "We have nothing to do with religious extremism. We are ordinary Muslims, praying five times a day," she said. "If Kazakhstan does not want to have us as refugees, we will seek asylum in another country." Aubakirov, who met with the women in front of the Almaty City Prosecutor's Office, told them that on August 31 the United Nations' High Commissioner's Office in Almaty annulled its decision to provide the detained Uzbek nationals with refugee status and therefore the Kazakh Prosecutor-General's Office has decided to extradite all of them to Uzbekistan.

Denis Dzhivaga, an official at the Almaty-based Kazakh Bureau for Human Rights, told RFE/RL that the lawyers of the 29 detained Uzbek citizens have not been able to visit their clients during the three months. Kazakhstan currently holds the chairmanship of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

- SCO exercises in Kazakhstan to train new counter terrorism techniques

ALMATY, September 10 (Itar-Tass) -- New counter terrorism techniques will be trained at the Peace Mission 2010 exercises of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in Kazakhstan.

“This is a unique opportunity to develop common methods of the suppression of terrorism and to practice counter terrorism coordination,” Russian General Staff Chief Gen. Nikolai Makarov said. SCO servicemen must rapidly respond to any change in the performance of terrorist units, he said.

More than 1,000 Russian servicemen with about 130 tanks, self-propelled artillery launchers, armored personnel carriers, engineering and communication systems will take part in the practice together with over ten aircraft stationed at the Russian airbase in Kant, Kyrgyzstan.

The servicemen will converge for the opening ceremony on Monday, September 13, and the training will begin. The active phase of the exercises is due on September 24. SCO defense ministers will be watching the joint counter terrorism practice.

### **Economic/Energy Front**

- Kazakhstan to start introducing EU construction standards in 2011

In 2001 the construction industry of Kazakhstan will start introducing adapted EU standards in structural engineering (Eurocodes), said the head of the Kazakh State Agency for Construction and Housing Serik Nokin.

"We scrutinized the best regulation practices used in the construction industries of seven countries and, as the Customs Union came into existence, have decided to switch to the Eurocodes," Mr Nokin said Thursday in Astana at a meeting of the Pricing Commission of the CIS Intergovernmental Council for Cooperation in Construction.

According to him, by the end of this year the agency "will get translated and amended 10 Eurocodes, which will come into force in early 2011 to coexist with the current constructions standards.

Mr Nokin reminded that on September 7 at the Kazakh Russian Cooperation Forum in Ust-Kamenogorsk Russian President Dmitry Medvedev suggested that Kazakhstan should follow the Russian practices in construction regulation where the Eurocodes are now being introduced.

"We will be adjusting and adopting the European construction standards to our realities and plan to complete the process by 2015," he added.

- Kazakhstan falls five places in Global Competitiveness Report

The Global Competitiveness Report 2010-2011 released by the World Economic Forum positioned Kazakhstan 72nd on the list of 139 countries. Kazakhstan fell 5 places from 67th position occupied last year.

Switzerland tops the overall rankings in The Global Competitiveness Report 2010-2011, outrunning Sweden (2nd) and Singapore (3rd) and also the United States descended two places to fourth position due to the macroeconomic imbalances and weakening of public and private institutions, as well as lingering concerns about the state of its financial markets. Until 2009 the United States had ranked first.

Germany (5th), Japan (6th), Finland (7th), Netherlands (8th) and Denmark (9th) are among the top ten. The United Kingdom, after falling in the rankings over recent years, moves back up by one place to 12th position. The People's Republic of China improved to 27th place, Brazil (58th), India (51st) and Russia (63rd) remained stable.

The report contains an extensive data section with a detailed profile for each of the 139 economies featured in the study, providing a comprehensive summary of the overall position in the rankings, as well as data tables with global rankings for over 110 indicators.

## Social Front

- Trial Starts For Kazakh Inmates Accused Of Fake Beating Video

SHAKHTINSK, Kazakhstan -- Four convicts have gone on trial in central Kazakhstan for allegedly faking a video of an inmate being beaten, RFE/RL's Kazakh Service reports.

In May, a video clip circulated on YouTube showing a man in a Kazakh prison guard uniform beating an inmate at the AK-159/6 prison in the town of Dolinka. The man being beaten in the clip was identified as inmate Yevgeny Karaush, one of the four on trial.

It's unclear what the specific charges against the four are.

Karaush and several other inmates involved in the incident were later placed in solitary confinement. Some of the inmates were hospitalized in June after slitting open their abdomens to protest the pressure being put on them by prison authorities, some of their relatives told RFE/RL.

Also in June, prisoner Maksim Kozhanov was found hanged in his cell. He was the inmate who filmed the alleged beating. Prison officials said Kozhanov committed suicide "fearing that his prison term might be prolonged."

One prison guard has also been charged with helping the inmates to "fake" the beating. He is accused of providing the inmates with a guard's uniform.

There have been several instances this year of inmates in Kazakh prisons maiming themselves to protest what they say are poor conditions and abuse by prison guards.

- Watchdog slams lack of Kazakhstan's media freedom

(AP) - Kazakhstan's failure to improve media freedom has damaged its international standing and the situation is getting worse, not better, a media advocacy group said in a report Tuesday.

Kazakhstan's failure to improve media freedom has damaged its international standing and the situation is getting worse, not better, a media advocacy group said in a report Tuesday.

The New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists said that restrictions on the press have tightened even though Kazakhstan assumed the chairmanship of a prominent trans-Atlantic security and rights organization earlier this year. Kazakhstan won the right to chair the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe amid pledges that it would grant more freedom to the media.

"Not only did the government renege on promises to decriminalize libel, President Nursultan Nazarbayev signed into law a restrictive new measure governing the Internet," CPJ said. Criticism of the government and the president in oil-rich Kazakhstan remains largely off-limits, while most major media outlets are controlled by the state or the pro-government Nur Otan party.

Kazakh Foreign Ministry spokesman Askar Abdrakhmanov said the report was unjustified and that Kazakhstan was open to discussion on freedom of the press. "We don't believe that repeated criticism is constructive," he said. CPJ said at least one journalist, Ramazan Yesergepov, as well as a human rights activist, Yevgeny Zhovtis, have been jailed in retaliation for their work over the past two years. Muckraking weekly newspaper Respublika has been subjected to a barrage of legal assaults, most notably when it was ordered to pay a crippling \$400,000 in damages to state-controlled BTA Bank for allegedly provoking a run on its deposits. Authorities also raided the newspaper's printing house and a confiscated an entire weekly run.

CPJ also criticized Kazakh authorities for their attempt to muzzle Internet content, blocking access to several critical Web sites and popular blogging platform Livejournal. Although Internet penetration still remains fairly low in Kazakhstan at an estimated 15 percent of the population, authorities clearly intend to restrict access to material critical of the government, CPJ said.

"In addition to censoring domestic content, the new and vaguely worded Internet law also allows for the blocking of international Web sites if those are found in violation of Kazakh law," the report said.

CPJ said politicized libel suits have also become a favored method of silencing independent media outlets. A court in January last year ordered Kazakh-language weekly Taszhargan and one of its reporters to pay \$20,000 to a member of parliament for slandering him in an article about rising food prices. The court later increased the damages tenfold.

Taszhargan publisher Yermurat Bapi was subsequently jailed for five days for failing to pay the damages.

Despite widespread concerns over Kazakhstan's reluctance to implement democratic reforms, OSCE members have agreed for the former Soviet nation to host a summit later this year bringing together the organization's heads of state.

"Independent journalists, human rights defenders, and political dissidents see the summit as a public relations tool for the Nazarbayev administration, one that would lend legitimacy to his government and obscure its many human rights failures," CPJ said.

Abdrakhmanov said although the agenda for the summit has not yet been finalized, the Kazakh government believes all issues covered by the OSCE, which include media freedom, would be discussed at the event.

## **Kyrgyzstan**

### **Political Front**

- Detention Sparks Protest Rally In Southern Kyrgyz City

UZGEN, Kyrgyzstan -- Officials in the southern Kyrgyz city of Uzgen say a crowd of several hundred people rallied today to demand the release of a local man detained on suspicion of illegal arms possession, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports.

Local police chief Bakyt Matmusaev told RFE/RL that security forces had detained the man after acting on information he had weapons in his home.

District head Alisher Bakyshev told RFE/RL that around 300 people had gathered, though Matmusaev put the number closer to 2,000.

Bakyshev said a crowd initially gathered during the raid in a mainly Uzbek neighborhood, with some shouting that security forces had come to attack them. He said police fired shots in the air to disperse them.

Bakyshev said people then gathered at the local police building to demand the man's release. He said the crowd was mainly made up of ethnic Uzbeks, and that the demonstrators later dispersed.

It's not clear if the man is still in custody or if any weapons were found in the raid.

Uzgen is near Osh, site of much of the interethnic violence that left nearly 400 people dead in June. Uzgen was quiet during the June violence, but was the site of deadly clashes between ethnic Uzbeks and Kyrgyz in 1990.

- Kyrgyz Interior Ministry personnel to be put on alert on October 5



In Kyrgyzstan, the Kyrgyz Interior Ministry personnel will be out on alert on October 5, Deputy Minister Baktybek Alymbekov stated Friday at a session of the staff office for preparation for parliamentary elections.

According to him, during the elections, which will be held on October 10, more than 7,000 officers of law enforcement bodies and over 12,000 people's guards will maintain legal order in the republic.

"We will also involve veterans of internal affairs and conduct preventive work among population, especially in the south of the republic, where various rumors about alleged disorders are continuing to be massaged," Baktybek Alymbekov said.

He emphasized the acutest problem was withdrawal of arms from population. "I am pressed to acknowledge that ordinary people have many arms, acquired both legally and illegally. I must note people are handing over arms to us unwillingly," Baktybek Alymbekov stated.

- Thirty thousand Kyrgyzstanis debarred from voting

In Kyrgyzstan, thirty thousand citizens are debarred from voting, head of the state registration service Almambet Shykmamatov said at a session of the staff office for preparation for elections.

According to him, 3.6 thousand people in the south have remained without passports after the June events. In 47 residential communities of Bishkek, there live 37 thousand Kyrgyzstanis without registration, which means that, according to the Code on Elections, they cannot participate in October 10 voting.

"As for the issuing of identity cards for the southern residents, we need a special resolution of the government for that. We have sent all necessary documents and are waiting for reply," Almambet Shykmamatov emphasized.

Amangeldi Muraliev, the head of the staff office for preparation for elections, the first Vice-Prime-Minister, assured that the required permission from the cabinet was ready and would be published soon.

- Kyrgyz President Reshuffles Top Law Enforcement Officials

BISHKEK -- Kyrgyz President Roza Otunbaeva has reshuffled several top judicial and law enforcement officials, saying the move was aimed at strengthening the justice system ahead of next month's elections, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports.

Among the changes mandated by presidential decree today, Interior Minister General Kubatbek Baibolov was appointed prosecutor-general, replacing Baitemir Ibraev.

Presidential office chief Emil Kaptagaev officially introduced Baibolov to Prosecutor-General's Office employees today.

Interior Ministry officials told RFE/RL that Zarylbek Rysaliev, chief of the Bishkek city police department, was appointed interior minister. The acting chairman of Kyrgyzstan's Supreme Court, Kubanych Mombekov, was replaced by Feruza Jamasheva. Otunbaeva also removed Damir Oskombaev from his post as deputy financial-police chairman and appointed Kanybek Nurmatov to the position. Deputy Prime Minister Azimbek Beknazarov, in comments to RFE/RL, described today's reshuffle as "undercover games connected with the parliamentary elections." He added that he was not aware of any of today's changes until they were carried out. According to Beknazarov, the president's decisions look like an attack against him and his team. Beknazarov's duties include supervision of the country's law enforcement and judicial structures. Otunbaeva is in the southern city of Osh meeting with local officials and relatives of the victims of deadly

clashes between local Uzbeks and Kyrgyz in mid-June. Controversial Osh Mayor Melis Myrzakmatov is out of the city for vacation. Parliamentary elections are scheduled for October 10. The election campaign kicked off on September 10.

- Families Get Land After Leaving Disputed Uzbek-Kyrgyz Village

NOOKEN, Kyrgyzstan -- Families from a disputed area along the Kyrgyz-Uzbek border have received land to build houses in a nearby village in Kyrgyzstan, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports.

The mostly ethnic Uzbek families left the village of Chek earlier this summer after Uzbekistan announced it was coming under its jurisdiction, electing to live in Kyrgyzstan.

Abdrakhman Osmonov, the head of neighboring Sakaldy village where the 24 families from Chek have moved to, told RFE/RL that the families receiving land would also each be given a loan of some \$4,300 to build a house.

Twenty of the families moving to Sakaldy are ethnic Uzbeks and the other four are Kyrgyz. Sakaldy is located in the Nookan district.

The loans the families will receive are provided under a program to reconstruct the southern Kyrgyz regions of Osh and Jalal-Abad after deadly clashes there between ethnic Uzbeks and Kyrgyz in mid-June.

- Creation of Islamic party in Kyrgyzstan is a matter of time - Kadyr Malikov

“Creation of Islamic party in Kyrgyzstan is a matter of time,” director of research center “Religion, Law and Politics” Kadyr Malikov stated at the press-conference today.

According to him there is no party presenting representing interests of Muslims in Kyrgyzstan. That is why believers, including spiritual leaders, have to join to secular parties delivering promises to citizens practicing Islam. Mr. Malikov believes that such organizations don't have ethical rights to play upon heartstrings of believers pursuing political aims.

The legitimate Islamic party, as he says, may be called an organization whose programme is based on moral code and ideology of Islam. But there are no such parties in Kyrgyzstan though such organization can appear in foreseeable future. Kadyr Malikov supposes that such party has to guarantee refusal from actions against change of the constitutional order and should exercise conservative Islam.

“Muslims want creation of legal political party,” he said adding that its absence allows extremists to take advantage of some part of electorate.

- Experts warn religious leaders of Kyrgyzstan not to participate in political struggle

Experts warn religious leaders of Kyrgyzstan not to participate in the political struggle in the secular parties. This was stated at the press conference by representatives of research centers “Religion, Law and Politics” and “Reasonable Solutions”.

According to the head of “Religion, Law and Politics” Kadyr Malikov, some parties are trying to use Islam, religious rhetoric and feelings of believers to achieve their goals. Some organizations have already included well known religious leaders in their lists.

“We believe that Muslims and religious leaders should refrain from working in the secular party, he says. We warn them because they can be a tool, puppets in their hands. Religious leaders, involved in these organizations, may lose the trust of followers.”

**Geo strategic Front**

- Defence Minister: Talks on creation of US military training center in Osh city maybe will be renewed after the parliamentary elections

“Talks on creation of US military training center in Osh city maybe will be renewed after the parliamentary elections,” Defence Minister Abibilla Kudayberdiev stated at the press-conference today.

He said that currently the question of US project construction is frozen. “Americans don’t have plans to built military base in the south of the republic. They were intending to build training center for Kyrgyz militaries,” Minister noted.

“The exact date of negotiations resumptions is unknown yet. It is better to ask Americans because they initiated suspension of talks and for undefined reasons,” Defence Advisor Murat Beyshenov added.

- Minister Says Kyrgyzstan Wants More Cash For Russian Base

Kyrgyz Defense Minister Abibilla Kudayberdiev says his country wants a substantial increase in rent from Moscow if it is to continue hosting a Russian military base on its territory.

Russia has four military installations in Kyrgyzstan, including the airbase at Kant outside Bishkek, which operates under the auspices of the Russian-led Collective Security Treaty Organization. Kudayberdiev, speaking at a press conference in Bishkek, said Kyrgyzstan was planning to increase the rent -- currently at some \$4.5 million -- "two to three times." Kudayberdiev, who made the comments after returning from discussions with his Russian counterpart Anatoly Serdyukov in Moscow, also said that Russia could pay off its debt for the lease by giving Kyrgyzstan weapons. He said Russia owes some \$6 million. Kudayberdiev stressed that discussions were ongoing and that no agreement had been reached on either the base or the debt.

- Moscow Offers Arms To Pay For Military Installations In Kyrgyzstan

BISHKEK -- Russian officials have offered to supply Kyrgyzstan with arms as payment for Moscow's use of Kyrgyz territory for various military installations, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports.

The Kyrgyz Defense Ministry's press service told RFE/RL that the issue was discussed by Kyrgyz Defense Minister Abibilla Kudaiberdiev and his Russian counterpart, Anatoly Serdyukov, in Moscow on September 13. Kudaiberdiev reportedly suggested that Russia unite its five military installations in Kyrgyzstan into one large military base. Serdyukov, in turn, proposed that Russia would send arms to Kyrgyzstan as payment for its lease on its major military base in Kant, which is near Bishkek. No agreements were reportedly reached and talks on these issues are expected to continue. Kyrgyz and Russian media reported before that a possible opening of a Russian military training center in southern Kyrgyzstan would also be discussed during the meeting. In addition to the base at Kant, there are four smaller Russian military installations in Kyrgyzstan. The United States also has a Military Transit Center at Manas Airport near Bishkek, which is used for transporting nonlethal materiel to NATO troops in Afghanistan. The United States pays some \$60 million per year to rent the facilities at Manas.

Kyrgyzstan is the only country in the world that hosts both Russian and U.S. military bases.

- Manas Transit Center lease agreement extended for one year

The lease agreement of the Transit Center at Manas, located in the territory of the airport of Bishkek, has been extended for one more year, the representatives of the US Department of State inform.

According to them, the relevant document was signed in July 2010, however neither Washington, nor Bishkek have disclosed this information, ITAR-TASS informs.

The Department of State reminded that the lease agreement, signed by Kyrgyzstan and the US in 2009 for 5 years, must be extended each year. Washington agreed on the price of \$60 million per year of lease.

Note of 24.kg news agency: The Manas airbase, functioning since 2001, is located in the territory of Bishkek international airport and is a transfer point for American troops at conducting operations in Afghanistan.

### **Economic/Energy Front**

- None of the parties have a validated economic program – economic expert

In Kyrgyzstan, none of the political parties, participating in the pre-election race, has a validated economic program,” economic expert Zhumakadyr Akeneev stated to 24.kg news agency.

According to him, none of the parties has presented to the public concrete measures they intend to take for revival of the economy of the republic.

“I had a look at pre-election programs of parties and ascertained that they were worked out in haste. Working out economic programs requires time. Expanded consultations with specialists and experts should be conducted. However the parties did not do so. As a result, we have what we have,” Zhumakadyr Akeneev underlines.

“In the pre-election program of one of the parties there is a promise that electric power will be sold at cost. It is impossible. Since distributing companies should derive income from something and conduct repair works. One more example: a party promises to issue credits for population at 9 percent interest per annum. It is doubtful that they will find the banks that will go to that,” he says.

“The programs should have not empty promises, but specific measures on restoration of the economy of the country. For example, lists of documents that should be adopted for that, or indications of concrete investors, and where they will invest their funds. Unfortunately, I did not see it in all the pre-election programs,” Zhumakadyr Akeneev concluded

### **Social Front**

- Rights Defender Sentenced To Life In Prison In Kyrgyzstan

NOOKEN, Kyrgyzstan -- A well-known ethnic Uzbek human rights activist has been sentenced to life in prison for involvement in the killing of a Kyrgyz policeman, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports.

Azimjan Askarov and seven other ethnic Uzbeks were found guilty of murdering Myktybek Sulaimanov in June during violent clashes between ethnic Uzbeks and Kyrgyz in the village of Bazar-Korgon.

The defendants were given the chance to give their final testimonies before the verdict today. All pleaded not guilty, some of them reversing earlier guilty pleas. Four of Askarov's co-defendants were also sentenced to life in prison with confiscation of their property, two were sentenced to 20 years in jail, and one person was sentenced to nine years in prison. Kyrgyz Ombudsman Tursunbek Akun told RFE/RL that the verdict was

politically motivated, adding that his office had held an alternative investigation into Sulaimanov's killing and came to the conclusion that Askarov is not guilty.

- Criticism For Harsh Sentencing Of Ethnic Uzbek Activist

Right groups have condemned a life sentence handed down in Kyrgyzstan to an ethnic Uzbek rights activist found guilty of involvement in the killing of a Kyrgyz policeman.

Critics say the trial of Azimjon Askarov and seven other defendants, all of them ethnic Uzbeks, was unfair and marred by violence. All eight were found guilty on September 15 of killing a policeman during ethnically charged clashes in the southern Kyrgyz village of Bazar-Korgon in June. Askarov was also found guilty of other charges, including inciting ethnic hatred, organizing mass disturbances, and the attempted abduction of hostages. All defendants, including one woman, pleaded not guilty, some reversing their initial guilty pleas. Four of Askarov's co-defendants were also sentenced to life imprisonment with confiscation of their property, two others were sentenced to 20 years in jail, and one person was sentenced to nine years in prison.

Human rights observers, including Kyrgyzstan's rights ombudsman Tursunbek Akun, say the court case against Askarov was unfair and "fabricated." Akun said his office had held an alternative investigation into the killing of the policeman and concluded that Askarov is not guilty. Akun said his colleagues were present at all the court sessions and that they found the trial to be unfair and the charges politically motivated. Askarov is the head of the local human rights group Vozdukh (Air), and his work over many years has focused on prison conditions and police treatment of detainees. He had reportedly been documenting the killings and arson attacks that mostly targeted ethnic Uzbeks during the violence that struck southern Kyrgyzstan in June.

#### Difficulty Of Defense

Andrea Huber of the London-based rights watchdog Amnesty International said the charges were fabricated to target Askarov for his "legitimate work as a human rights defender and he must be released immediately." "There was an unfair trial, he was subjected to beatings, his lawyers and relatives have been harassed and attacked," Huber said. "The sentence is really [outrageous]. In all of those contexts, the confiscation of property is unheard of. There is no legal basis for that whatsoever."

Human Rights Watch (HRW) called on Kyrgyzstan to revoke the verdict against Askarov.

HRW cited authorities' failure to guarantee the safety of the defendants' lawyers and relatives against harassment and attacks by the victim's family. "The trial should have been about justice but instead it played out like vengeance," HRW Central Asia researcher Andrea Berg said. "There were a lot of violations of rights in this case," Askarov's lawyer, Nurbek Toktakunov, said. "First of all, Askarov was not allowed to meet with his lawyers to discuss his point of view. During the trial there were no witnesses from the defense side, there were only witnesses for the prosecution. I have four-to-five witnesses, too, and [rights activist] Aziza Abdyrasulova was one of them. But when I said I wanted to call her to the trial, [the victim's relatives] told me openly, 'If your Aziza comes here, she won't leave this place alive.'"

Adding her voice to the criticism today, Abdyrasulova -- of the Kyrgyz nongovernmental group Kylym Shamy (Torch of the Century) -- told journalists that Askarov had actually tried to prevent the deadly ethnic clashes. She said she was present at one meeting

between Askarov and interim government official Ismail Isakov in May where Askarov warned him about possible provocations that might spark violence. She said, "Now, the person who risked his safety and life to prevent the ethnic clashes is found guilty of organizing the ethnic clashes. That is ridiculous." There have also been fears that Askarov might have been beaten up in custody, prompted by a photo his lawyers took which shows his back badly bruised. However, speaking in front of the victims' angry relatives in court, the 60-year-old frail-looking defendant rejected allegations of mistreatment by police. The New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists said it was "particularly disturbed by the reported incidents of torture of Askarov in detention and pressure on his defense lawyer." The group called for new, open, and fair trials for all suspects.

#### Ethnic Issue

Askarov and his fellow defendants' trial was a part of Kyrgyzstan's ongoing probe into the ethnic violence in southern Jalal-Abad and Osh provinces, which killed some 400 people and forced some 400,000 from their homes.

Kyrgyz authorities have rejected criticism that they have been singling out ethnic Uzbeks in the investigation. Authorities say some 240 cases in connection with serious crimes committed during the violence will be sent to court.

They have declined to comment about the ethnic background of the suspects, saying all are citizens of Kyrgyzstan.

Three cases have gone to trial so far and in each case all the defendants have been ethnic Uzbeks.

Toktakunov said he will appeal the verdict and that he will demand the appeal court hearing take place in Bishkek -- because, he said, trials in the south have taken place amid an atmosphere of pressure and threats.

#### **Tajikistan**

##### **Political Front**

- Tajiks Recapture Seventh Jail-Break Fugitive

DUSHANBE -- Tajik authorities say they have captured another member of a group of high-profile inmates who broke out of jail in Dushanbe last month, RFE/RL's Tajik Service reports.

Interior Ministry spokesman Mahmadullo Asadulloev told RFE/RL that the fugitive was detained this morning during a special search operation in Vahdat district to the east of the capital, Dushanbe. He is the seventh escapee out of a group of 25 fugitives to be recaptured since the August 23 jail-break.

"One more inmate who escaped from the detention center of Tajikistan's State Committee for National Security was detained. He is Aliev Ali Magomedovich. He was born 1983 in the city of Radun in the Tumen oblast of the Russian Federation. He is an ethnic Avar," Asadulloev said. On September 2, former Guantanamo inmate Ibrahim Nasridinov, one of three people thought to have orchestrated the escape, was also captured by security forces in Vahdat. On September 6 security forces captured Abdurasul Mirzoev near the town of Faizobod, also in Vahdat district. The 52-year-old Abdurasul Mirzoev -- the brother of General Ghaffor Mirzoev -- was sentenced to 30 years in prison after being apprehended and extradited from the United Arab Emirates earlier this year. He was convicted of illegal possession of weapons, robbery, and plotting to overthrow the government.

The State Committee for National Security, the successor agency to the KGB, said September 13 that two men armed with automatic rifles and handguns clashed with security forces before being detained over the weekend. Another two fugitives were captured in a separate raid on September 10. The 18 other escapees, among them three Russian citizens, four Afghans and two Uzbeks, are still at large. Many of the fugitives were suspected members of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan militant group.

- Tajik Ministers Assure Ex-Opposition Commanders Of Safety

GAHARM, Tajikistan -- A delegation from Tajikistan's power ministries has told former opposition commanders that a military operation in the eastern part of the country is not aimed at them but at a rebel commander and his supporters, RFE/RL's Tajik Service reports.

Interior Minister Abdurahim Qahhorov, Defense Minister Sherali Khayrulloev, and State Committee for National Security deputy head Mansurjon Umarov met today in the eastern Rasht district with former opposition commanders Mirzokhuja Ahmadov and Shoh Iskandarov. After the five-hour meeting, participants said they assured Ahmadov and Iskandarov of their safety and told them that the government had sent forces to the district only to detain commander Mullo Abdullo (Abdullo Rahimov) and his supporters, RFE/RL reports. A source told RFE/RL that the government delegation asked Ahmadov and Iskandarov to help them in detain Mullo Abdullo, who is their former colleague.

Ahmadov, Iskandarov, and Mullo Abdullo were commanders in the United Tajik Opposition (UTO) that fought in the 1992-97 Tajik civil war against the administration of President Emomali Rahmon. After signing a peace agreement with the Tajik government, Ahmadov and Iskandarov were promoted to high-level positions in the Interior and Defense ministries, but Mullo Abdullo was not given a government post and began fighting against government forces. A Tajik court found Mullo Abdullo and his fighters responsible for the murder of six UN military monitors in eastern Tajikistan in 1998. He was also reported to have gone to Afghanistan and was linked to the Taliban before being detained there before returning to Tajikistan. The government sent forces to eastern Tajikistan at the end of August when 25 prisoners escaped from a State Committee for National Security detention center.

Ahmadov and Iskandarov, who have since lost their posts in the government, told RFE/RL after the jailbreak that none of the escapees had come to the Rasht Valley but the government was using the opportunity to detain former UTO fighters.

Their concerns about the government operations increased last week when Husnuddin Davlatov, a member of a local council in Rasht, and the brother of former UTO commander Alovuddin Davlatov, were detained in Dushanbe.

- Islamic Party Urges Clarification Over 'Detention' Of Activist

DUSHANBE -- The opposition Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan (IRP) has asked officials from the country's State Committee for National Security (SCNS) for clarification after the apparent detention of one of its members in the capital, Dushanbe, RFE/RL's Tajik Service reports.

Muhammadali Hait, the deputy head of the IRP, said he met on September 14 with officials from the Dushanbe branch of the SCNS and asked them the reasons for the detention of party activist Husnuddin Davlatov.

According to the IRP, the arrest of Davlatov would be illegal because he is a member of the local council in the country's eastern Rasht district and has immunity.

But Muhammad Melikov, the deputy head of Dushanbe branch of the SCNS, the successor agency to the KGB, in an interview with RFE/RL, denied that Davlatov had been arrested.

Davlatov, who is one of two IPR members on Rasht's local council, went missing in Dushanbe on September 10. His relatives said that authorities on September 13 let him call them and in his short conversation he said that he was being accused of having contacts with the banned Salafiya group. His relatives reject this accusation.

Olim Odilov, a former opposition commander in Rasht district, told RFE/RL that Davlatov's brother, Alovuddin, is also a former opposition commander and authorities want to provoke him into an open confrontation that would give them reason to act against all former opposition fighters in Rasht. Dushanbe lawyer Junaidullo Fozilov told RFE/RL that according to the law, a member of a council can only be put under arrest if he is detained at the scene of the crime and there are witnesses to the alleged crime.

If his detention is confirmed, Davlatov would be the third IRP member to be detained this year. In April, the head of the party in Vose district was accused of human trafficking but a court cleared him of the charge.

In Khatlon Province, a party activist who was a member of the local electoral commission, was charged with voting manipulation.

- Tajikistan Announces Reforms To Islamic Council

DUSHANBE -- Tajikistan's Religious Affairs Committee has announced that the country's highest Islamic institution, the Islamic Council of Ulema, will be reformed in accordance with new legislation, RFE/RL's Tajik Service reports.

Abdurahim Kholiqov, the head of the Religious Affairs Committee, said on September 10 after Eid al-Fitr prayers at the state Islamic Center of Tajikistan Mosque that the Islamic Council of Ulema will choose new leaders and then implement reforms "for the freedom of religion and benefit of the religious institutions."

The announcement comes after the death of council head Sheikh Amonulloh Nematzoda, who died of cancer on September 6. Sheikh Nematzoda, 75, was the head of the council that replaced Tajikistan's muftiat (religious administration) when it was dissolved in the late 1990s. In the Soviet Union, the Central Asian republics were overseen by a Central Asian Directorate of Islamic Affairs. Tajikistan created its own muftiat in 1993, two years after the country gained independence.

Nematzoda did not have as much influence as previous muftis and his death has increased government concern that influential religious leaders who are not part of the council will exert more influence over the population and encourage religious extremism.

Some experts believe reforming the Islamic Council will allow for more government involvement in mosques and the lives of citizens via the council.

Earlier this year, Tajik President Emomali Rahmon reinstated the Religious Affairs Committee that had been relegated to a branch of the country's Culture Ministry in 2006. The committee has since implemented regulations and restrictions on religious practices in the country. But Marufullo Rahimov, the former deputy head of the Islamic Center of Tajikistan, who will temporarily lead the Islamic Council until a new head is chosen, told RFE/RL that changes to the Islamic Council are timely. He added that the reforms will



improve the cooperation of the religious institutions under the Islamic Council's supervision. Saidahmad Kalandar, a religious affairs expert, told RFE/RL that since independence the Islamic Council has changed its name and purpose three times. He noted that the council members were educated in the Soviet Union when there were no religious schools and that they are loyal to the government.

Abdullo Habibov, a security expert, disagreed, saying, "This idea that the Islamic Council is under the command of the government has no basis. [The government] does not influence [the council]. The state and religion are separate."

Habibov said there are currently some 30 mosques in Tajikistan that are partly run by the Islamic Center of Tajikistan.

### **Geo strategic Front**

- United States strengthens Tajikistan's border security and law enforcement sectors

DUSHANBE, September 17, 2010, Asia-Plus -- Tajik Foreign Minister Hamrokhon Zarifi and U.S. Ambassador to Tajikistan Ken Gross yesterday officially signed Amendment #10 to the Letter of Agreement on Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement between the two governments.

According to the U.S. Embassy in Dushanbe, the document will provide approximately \$7 million in additional assistance to the Government of Tajikistan to counter and interdict the flow of narcotics into Tajikistan, improve Tajikistan's borders, assist policing reforms, and improve Tajikistan's justice system.

This funding will provide equipment to the Border Guards, the State Committee on National Security, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Drug Control Agency, the Ministry of Justice, and the Prosecutor General's Office, and several other agencies. Funds will improve infrastructure and build capacity for law enforcement agencies. Training will include techniques for combating terrorism, crime, trafficking in persons and narcotics, English language, curricula development and teaching methodology. The funds will also pay for advanced forensics equipment -- and training.

The U.S. Embassy recently renovated Khirmanjo border outpost facility, which opened in July 2010, and conducted extensive building renovations at the MVD Academy and Border Guard Academy. The Embassy has also provided training courses for Government of Tajikistan lawyers, given by renowned international law experts, and funded and organized an operational trip of Tajik law enforcement officers to Dubai, which resulted in the repatriation of 27 victims of human trafficking.

The United States Government is committed to continue its support to the Tajik law enforcement agencies and looks forward to continued close cooperation in future joint projects. With this assistance, the U.S. Embassy's International Narcotics and Law Enforcement program has provided more than \$44 million in assistance to support Tajikistan's security, rule of law and counter narcotics efforts since 1992.

- 20 militants killed on Tajik-Afghan border - official

(AFP) - At least 20 Islamist militants and one border guard were killed earlier this week in a firefight along the volatile border between Afghanistan and Tajikistan, Tajik officials said Saturday.

At least 20 Islamist militants and one border guard were killed earlier this week in a firefight along the volatile border between Afghanistan and Tajikistan, Tajik officials said Saturday.

The clash was the latest unrest amid increasing violence in Tajikistan in recent weeks, following a prison break in August which freed 25 Al Qaeda-linked militants and a suicide car bombing which killed two police. Tajik officials said that the slain fighters, who included members of the Taliban, were trying to slip over the border from Afghanistan into Tajikistan when they were discovered by the Tajik border guards.

"These Afghan anti-government fighters were hiding on an island in the river Pyandzh," which forms the border between the two states, border guard spokesman Colonel Khushnud Rakhmatullayev told AFP. "There was a clash with small arms fire which lasted nearly 24 hours. As a result, 20 militants, most of the militant group, were killed.... One border ensign was also killed," he added. He said that the clash started on Wednesday and lasted until the early hours of Thursday morning. The spokesman's statement was the first report to have emerged about the firefight.

Seven corpses were recovered by the Tajik border guards while the others were taken by the stream of the river, Rakhmatullayev said. Weapons and copies of Islamist literature were also seized, he added.

The militants, who included Taliban fighters battling the NATO-led coalition in Afghanistan and the Al Qaeda-linked Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), were fleeing a coalition operation in northern Afghanistan, he said.

Northern Afghanistan -- once considered relatively secure by the standards of the war-racked country -- has seen its security situation decline rapidly in the last two years.

"We do not rule out that the anti-terrorist coalition drove the militants from northern Afghanistan and... (that they) had intended to break from Afghanistan into Tajikistan," Rakhmatullayev said.

He said the clash involved only Tajik border guards and neither Afghan nor coalition forces took part. Last week, a previously unknown group calling itself Jamaat Ansarullah claimed responsibility for the car bombing in the northern city of Khujand, raising fears that militants were turning their attention to the ex-Soviet state. Tajikistan, where a civil war between Islamist forces and backers of President Emomali Rakhmon's government killed tens of thousands following the collapse of the Soviet Union, shares a porous 1,300-kilometre (800-mile) border with Afghanistan. The country has been on high alert since the embarrassing jail break, setting up checkpoints on key roads and strengthening border positions with neighbours Afghanistan, China, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan.

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

- ADB awards US\$122 mln grant to Tajikistan for regional power transmission project

DUSHANBE, September 17, 2010, Asia-Plus – On Thursday September 16, the Government of Tajikistan, represented by Mr. Safarali Najmiddinov, Minister of Finance, and Mr. Abdullo Yorov, Chairman of Barqi Tojik (Tajik electricity supplier), and the Asian Development Bank, represented by Mr. Joji Tokeshi, acting Country Director for ADB's Resident Mission in Tajikistan, signed a grant agreement for 122 million U.S. dollars in Dushanbe.

The grant is allocated for financing the Regional Power Transmission Project. The project is critical for energy security in Tajikistan. It targets the expansion and modernization of the electricity transmission network and paves the way for much needed

reforms. Transmission network modernization is a precondition to cutting system losses, improving energy efficiency, and facilitating energy trade with neighboring countries.

Najmiddinov noted that the project would build two new 220 kV single-circuit transmission lines totaling 140 kilometers and rehabilitate transmission substations.

One of the power transmission lines will be constructed between Qairoqqum and Asht (some 70 kilometers) in Sughd province. The facility will increase energy security in Sughd province. The other power transmission (approximately 70 kilometers) will be constructed between Geran and Rumi in Khatlon province. The line will improve energy security in southern Tajikistan and support electricity exports to Afghanistan. The Barqi Tojik top manager Abdullo Yorov noted that the Qairoqqum-Asht power transmission would also supply electricity to one of the strategic facilities of the country – the Koni Mansuri Kalon silver deposit in Asht.

The project will also rehabilitate in whole or part six transmission substations and install a SCADA (supervisory control and data acquisition) system linked to a National Dispatch Centre in Dushanbe, and 32 priority substations across the country.

The project will also implement a sector operational performance improvement program targeting Barqi Tojik. Contribution of Tajikistan to the project amounts to 19 million U.S. dollars.

#### **Social Front**

- UNDP, UNEP jointly with MEDT launches new poverty and environment protection project

DUSHANBE, September 16, 2010, Asia-Plus -- The UNDP and UNEP jointly with the Ministry of Economy and Trade (MEDT) have launched a new poverty and environment protection project in Tajikistan.

According to press release issued by UNDP CO in Tajikistan, this was pronounced today during the Inception Project Workshop that took place in the Ministry office involving representatives of the ministries, international organizations, various NGOs and other business organizations and hukumats.

Prime criteria upon which Tajikistan was selected to implement the Country Poverty and Environment Program are poverty level, environmental conditions, interest and commitment both of the state and the UNDP Country Office regarding environmental issues that are directly connected with the poverty and population's well-being.

The UNDP-UNEP Poverty and Environment Initiative in Tajikistan aims to enhance opportunities for the environment to contribute to human well-being, pro-poor economic growth and reach the Millennium Development Goals. This will result in enhanced government and other stakeholders' capacity for integrating environmental considerations into national and sub national planning and budgeting processes.

As it was noted by UNDP experts, the 12 month preparatory phase resulted in a comprehensive analysis of the existing national and sub national planning and budgeting system and key interconnected poverty and environment considerations, and in the development of this project document.

"Under this project UNDP and UNEP experts jointly with actively involved Ministry's staff members will engage in integrating environment protection considerations in national and rayon planning process, -Zulfira Pulatova, UNDP Project Manager, noted. -

We are also planning to implement pilot projects that demonstrate linkages between poverty and resource management".

Poverty and Environment Initiative is a joint initiative of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) working in Africa, Asia-Pacific, Latin America, Europe and Central Asia. The Poverty and Environment Program aims to improve the livelihood of poor people dependent on natural resources by supporting governments to integrate pro-poor environmental considerations into national and sub-national planning and budgeting processes. In Europe and the CIS region, the poverty and environment programs are implemented in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan and provide targeted technical assistance to Armenia.

- Tajiks stopped from traveling to Iran, Pakistan for religious courses

DUSHANBE, September 11, 2010, Asia-Plus – Dozens of Tajik students, professors, and scholars were taken off a Tehran-bound plane at Dushanbe's airport as they were traveling to Iran on various religious education programs, officials in Dushanbe have said. Officials removed the group from the plane on September 4, but did not publicly comment on the issue until September 8, Radio Liberty reported.

Education Ministry officials said the authorities had acted because they did not have enough information about the aim of the trip to Iran. Rajabali Sangov, head of the ministry's department of international relations, told RFE/RL's Tajik Service that the ministry received a vague letter from the Iranian Embassy in Dushanbe informing them that 71 Tajik students and professors, among others, were traveling to Iran to undergo short-term educational courses.

He said the letter came only the day before the group was planning to get on a flight to Tehran. Sangov said the ministry found out that none of the group had official permission from the relevant authorities to leave their studies or jobs to go abroad.

"If they were indeed going with educational programs, why didn't they inform the Education Ministry about their plans?" Sangov asked.

"After all, the ministry is in charge of educational matters and projects in Tajikistan. Besides, most of them are students and teachers and they were going away at the beginning of the academic year," he added.

"They should have informed education officials that they were going to be absent for some time. They were to spend one month in Iran, and we don't know what exactly they would study there." It's not the first time Tajik officials have stopped students from traveling abroad to study at foreign religious schools.

Late last month, the ministry canceled its earlier decision to send 10 Tajik students to Pakistani madrasahs, citing "technical" reasons and a "lack of clarity" in their learning programs. The moves came days after President Emomali Rahmon urged parents to remove their children from foreign madrasahs. People in Tajikistan have attained considerable religious freedom since the collapse of communism nearly two decades ago. Tens of thousands of mosques have been built, thousands of Muslims have been given an opportunity to perform the hajj pilgrimage each year, and major celebrations in the Islamic calendar have been approved by the government as public holidays.

At least 20 official Islamic madrasahs and an Islamic university operate in the country. In addition, hundreds more students attend religious schools in countries like Iran, Pakistan, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia.

This week, Tajikistan's Council of Islamic Ulema, a pro-government independent religious body, urged imams not to call children and students for prayers in mosques. The council insists its only aim is not to harm school attendance, as some prayers take place during school hours. Yet the call has outraged some imams, who say the authorities are unhappy with the steadily increasing number of children turning up for mosque prayers.

Authorities say officially 2,000 Tajiks are studying at foreign madrasahs through educational grants and quotas, and intergovernmental agreements.

But regional media estimate that several thousand more students have been sent privately to foreign religious schools. An estimated 4,000 Tajiks reportedly study in Pakistani madrasahs alone. Tajikistan's embassy in Islamabad has repeatedly expressed its concern that some of the students have ended up in underground schools run by extremist groups.

Tajikistan has banned a number of religious groups, including the Salafi movement, which the government claims is being run by foreign madrasah graduates with radical ideas. Many such graduates, however, insist the authorities' fears are baseless.

Many others in Tajikistan, however, share the government's concerns. Abdullo Rahnamo, a Dushanbe-based analyst of religious and social issues, says that unfortunately, there have been real security threats posed by graduates of foreign schools, particularly those who attend underground schools, and promote the ideas of different religious sects upon their return.

### **Turkmenistan Political Front**

### **Geo strategic Front**

### **Economic/Energy Front**

- TAPI: An Idea Whose Time Hasn't Quite Yet Come

It's been a dream on a map for more than a decade, a project that could provide thousands of badly needed jobs and a reliable source of energy that could benefit millions in instable areas of southern Asia. TAPI -- the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India natural gas pipeline -- has proven as elusive a quest as any in the long history of the region.

Recently there have been renewed efforts from all parties, starting with the source of the gas: Turkmenistan, home of the fourth-largest gas reserves in the world. Of late, Turkmen President Gurbanguly Berdymukhammedov has spoken often of TAPI. He has contacted the leaders of Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India since the start of September to arrange meetings in New York and Ashgabat.

Berdymukhammedov is calling for a summit of TAPI leaders in Ashgabat in December. He has already instructed officials at home to "take all necessary measures" to see that there are purchase agreements ready to be signed by that time. Before that, he is due to meet with Afghan President Hamid Karzai on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly, specifically to discuss TAPI, and there are reports the two may be joined by Pakistani President Asif Ali Zardari and Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. Also, the latest session of the steering committee for TAPI is due to meet in Ashgabat on September 20, the first meeting of the committee since 2008.

The media in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India have also been more active in reporting on TAPI in the last few weeks.

It's not only TAPI countries who believe the pipeline can be built. The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has already said it stands ready to help with construction of the 1,700-kilometer pipeline, which would carry some 31 billion cubic meters of gas out of Turkmenistan supplying Afghanistan and Pakistan -- plus provide them with transit fees -- on the way to Fazilka, India. The ADB's help is particularly welcome since the price tag for the project is upward of \$8 billion.

But desire and financing have never been the major obstacles to seeing TAPI built. The main problem is bringing a major pipeline through the Afghan-Pakistani border area. Twice this past summer there were explosions along the oil pipeline from Iraq to Turkey that temporarily shut down the route. It's a lesson TAPI countries and would-be investors are surely pondering now.

Concerning the last, if the situation permitted there would likely be no lack of companies willing to participate with their governments' blessings. TAPI has a competitor: IPI. IPI is the proposed Iran-Pakistan-India gas pipeline, currently stalled due to a near-total lack of international support. But it's a project that Pakistanis continue to discuss with Iranian officials every now and again.

- Turkmenistan's explored gas reserves sufficient for many decades

The explored reserves of Turkmen gas will be sufficient for many decades ahead, especially since the country has a lot of promising oil and gas fields that are still awaiting their hour. This statement was made by President of Turkmenistan Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov at a press conference held following the 10th Summit of Turkic-speaking countries, answering a question concerning the country's capacity to supply natural gas to Europe.

According to the President of Turkmenistan, the wealth of mineral resources of Turkmenistan was proved by an independent audit of Southern Eloten-Osman and Yashlar fields. Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov noted that contracts with companies from China, South Korea and the UAE worth about US \$ 10 billion provide for design and construction of surface and underground facilities for the extraction and processing of tens of billions of cubic meters of marketable gas from Southern Eloten field, whose resources, according to the latest estimate, amount to over 18 trillion cubic meters of gas. "The vast prospects are associated with deposits of Garabil-Gurrukbi, Central Karakum group, and other rich underground deposits. Foreign companies also take interest in development of hydrocarbon reserves in the Turkmen sector of the Caspian Sea," he said. According to data cited at the press conference, the energy potential of Turkmenistan is currently estimated at 45.44 billion tonnes of oil equivalent. According to experts, gas reserves in Turkmenistan account for 24.6 trillion cubic meters, and prospecting works are under way. By 2030, Turkmenistan plans to reach the level of 230 bcm of natural gas per year. Some of these volumes will be processed within Turkmenistan, while a significant proportion will be exported. By that time, exports of natural gas alone will increase to 180 billion cubic meters a year.

- Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov answered questions on "Nabucco"

Turkmenistan has no doubts about the real prospect of cooperation with Azerbaijan in various projects to export natural gas in any direction, including Europe through "Nabucco". This was stated by Turkmen President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov at a

press conference on September 16 following the 10th Summit of Heads of Turkic-speaking countries, answering questions of journalists about feasibility of the project of Trans-Caspian gas pipeline.

"All Caspian states are interested in revitalization of joint work in this area. It is Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan who now demonstrate the most constructive attitude to intensification of friendly and mutually beneficial relations. Our countries do not have any open issues. The leadership of both countries has the political will and desire to solve any problem on mutually agreeable terms," he said.

- Turkey sends request to Ashgabat for purchase of Turkmen gas

Turkey, Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan are going to "develop a set of formulas for the long-term supplies of Turkmen gas across the Caspian Sea to Azerbaijan and further abroad" to foreign markets. According to ITAR-TASS, this was reported by Minister of Energy and Natural Resources of Turkey Taner Yildyz after the meeting with his counterparts Natig Aliyev from Azerbaijan and Bayramgeldy Nedirov from Turkmenistan. The talks took place within the framework of the Tenth Summit of Heads of Turkic-speaking states in Istanbul.

According to Yildyz Taner, Turkey is going to purchase natural gas extracted by Malaysian oil company Petronas from Turkmenistan's shelf of the Caspian Sea. A request to this effect has already been sent to the appropriate ministry of Turkmenistan, he said.

"For various reasons, the project of the Trans-Caspian gas pipeline has not been implemented yet. For this reason, the project on energy supplies from east to west has not been launched in full. On the other hand, we are confident that in the coming months we will sign an agreement to support new regional projects such as "Nabucco", the agency quotes the Turkish minister. The minister said that the work is under way to prepare a number of projects for those areas of the Caspian region "where there is no territorial dispute between states."

### **Social Front**

- Turkmenistan: More Charitable Than I Knew

Turkmen President Gurbanguly Berdymukhammedov: "Would you like to share this melon with me?"

Turkmenistan is a unique place. I knew that when I was able to travel around there many years ago, and the news I've seen coming out of the country since my last visit (October 1993) always confirms there is no other place like it.

But there's one thing I did not know about Turkmenistan.

According to a report by the British-based Charities Aid Foundation, more than 60 percent of Turkmenistan's population does volunteer work. It was reportedly the first time the foundation had released the World Giving Index, which, besides dealing purely with financial contributions, took into consideration "two other types of charitable behavior alongside giving money -- volunteering time and helping a stranger."

The methodology was explained like this: "The survey asked people whether they had given money to charity in the last month and to rank how happy they are with life on a scale of 1 to 10."

This survey of 153 countries showed "the people of Turkmenistan are the most generous with their time, with 61 percent having given time to charity."

I will freely admit that getting reliable information out of Turkmenistan is tough. I've been writing about Turkmenistan from outside the country for more than 15 years, and it can be frustrating.

I've read about the record grain harvests that the country -- nearly 90 percent of which is desert -- reported, even when all of Turkmenistan's neighbors were all suffering from drought. I've seen the economic figures the government has released showing GDP growth in double digits -- even some 20 percent growth -- and often wondered why the CIS Statistics Agency does not report economic figures for Turkmenistan.

The closest I've seen to reports on volunteering were the allegations that during the time of President Saparmurat "Turkmenbashi" Niyazov, drivers who were pulled over by traffic police and were unable to recite some lines from Niyazov's book "Rukhnama" were forced to pick cotton as a fine. They weren't paid, so maybe that counts.

New construction in the capital, Ashgabat, has forced many people to relocate to the outskirts to make room for new buildings for the ministries and five-star hotels (that still boast only about 20 to 30 percent occupancy). I guess those relocated may have "volunteered" to make way for progress downtown

And there are those stories of children picking cotton.

I like the idea of the World Giving Index, maybe because it concluded that "the link between happiness and giving is stronger than the link between wealth and giving." I also like that it reported 62 percent of Turkmenistan's people have helped a stranger. I remember that was true. The Turkmen people are very generous and helpful.

But I never imagined that Turkmenistan would appear on any list that would put it just a few places behind Austria, alongside Iceland, and ahead of Germany and Denmark.

Guess I've been out of the country for too long.

- **Leaders Of Turkic-Speaking Countries To Launch New Regional Grouping**

Leaders of Turkic-speaking countries are meeting in Turkey to formally launch a new regional cooperation organization that will strengthen ties between Turkey and Central Asian nations.

Leaders of Turkic-speaking countries have been meeting regularly since the early 1990s to discuss cooperation, but a decision to set up the Turkic-speaking Countries Cooperation Council (TCCC) was taken only last year.

The presidents of Turkey, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Turkmenistan are expected to attend the meeting in Istanbul.

The president of Uzbekistan is not taking part. A Turkish career diplomat, Halil Akinci, is expected to be named secretary-general of the new Cooperation Council, which will be based in Istanbul.

## **Uzbekistan**

### **Political Front**

### **Geo strategic Front**

- **Kazakhstan Extradites Kyrgyz Citizen To Uzbekistan**

ALMATY -- Kazakh officials have extradited a Kyrgyz citizen of Uzbek origin to Uzbekistan, RFE/RL's Kazakh Service reports.

Tashkenbai Aubakirov, a senior aide to the Almaty city prosecutor, told RFE/RL that Khurshid Kamilov was wanted in Uzbekistan for alleged involvement in the murder of two Uzbek police and participation in extremist and terrorist activities.



Kamilov was detained during Almaty police's "Migrant" operation in June to locate illegal immigrants. His extradition took place last week.

No comment was immediately available from Kyrgyz officials.

Meanwhile, 29 Uzbek citizens detained by Kazakh authorities as illegal immigrants have been held in Kazakhstan's National Security Committee jail since mid-June.

Many of their wives came on September 13 to the Almaty City Prosecutor's Office to demand their husbands' immediate release.

According to Kazakh law, they say their husbands can be held in pretrial detention for only three months. One of the Uzbek women, Rano Jalalkhonova, told RFE/RL that her husband and his comrades have been on a hunger strike in jail since September 9.

Another Uzbek woman, Mutavar Suleimanova, told RFE/RL that if her husband is extradited to Uzbekistan he might be sentenced to death or life in prison for being a devoted Muslim.

"We have nothing to do with religious extremism. We are ordinary Muslims, praying five times a day," she said. "If Kazakhstan does not want to have us as refugees, we will seek asylum in another country." Aubakirov, who met with the women in front of the Almaty City Prosecutor's Office, told them that on August 31 the United Nations' High Commissioner's Office in Almaty annulled its decision to provide the detained Uzbek nationals with refugee status and therefore the Kazakh Prosecutor-General's Office has decided to extradite all of them to Uzbekistan. Denis Dzhivaga, an official at the Almaty-based Kazakh Bureau for Human Rights, told RFE/RL that the lawyers of the 29 detained Uzbek citizens have not been able to visit their clients during the three months.

Kazakhstan currently holds the chairmanship of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

### **Economic/Energy Front**

### **Social Front**

- Uzbekistan: Another journalist is expecting the trial

The government of Uzbekistan is going to judge Abdumalik Boboev, another independent journalist and correspondent of Voice of America. He is incriminated the following charges under Uzbek Criminal Code: slander, insult, illegal leaving abroad and illegal entrance to the Republic of Uzbekistan as well as Preparation and dissemination of information, threatening the public safety and order.

The charges assume that the crime was committed "with the use of financial or other material assistance, received from religious organizations as well as from foreign states, organizations and citizens". Obviously, this implies the Voice of America radio station, financed by the government of USA. The journalist may be sentenced to 5-8 years of jail. 41 year old Abdumalik Boboev has been working for Voice of America since 2006. He does not have official accreditation because he never got a response from Uzbek Foreign Ministry on his several applications.

It has to be mentioned that cooperation with foreign media, not having official accreditation in Uzbekistan, is considered by local authorities as serious violation of law in spite of current legislation of the republic and all international agreements, signed by Uzbekistan in this area.

In January of 2010 Abdumalik Boboev and five other independent journalists were invited to Tashkent prosecutor's office for explanation of their professional occupation

that disturbs the government. (The details are available at Uzbek special services collect the records about independent journalists).

The following story took place before the journalists was accused of committing the number of crimes. In January of 2010 Abdumalik Boboev visited Kazakhstan. Upon his return back home for some reason the Uzbek border guards did not put the stamp in his passport, verifying his return. Boboev learned about this only in May, when he left for Kazakhstan again. In Mayskiy village (near the check point) when decided to take picture of the group of Uzbek migrants the journalist was detained by Uzbek border guards. During the interrogation the authorities found out Abdumalik Boboev did not have the right stamp in his passport. After writing explanatory statement the journalist was taken to interior affairs office of Kibray district, the Tashkent Oblast, where he was penalized for 40 thousand sum (\$18) for taking the picture in the border area without authorization (it has to be mentioned that the journalists, not working for official mass media, do not need such authorization at all).

Malik Boboev

Later on the journalist was called to Tashkent city prosecutor's office where the investigator took the copy of his passport. At the same month, Abdumalik Boboev took his passport to the Passport Office for exchange because he was going to attend the conference abroad. Some time later the Passport Office representative informed Boboev that his passport was delivered to the prosecutor's office upon request.

The investigators filed the criminal case against the independent journalist due to "illegal crossing of the border" where the penalty may vary from 200-400 minimum salaries fine to 3-5 years of imprisonment. Obviously, the authorities decided to put an end to this case and exhibited three other charges against Abdumalik Boboev, not related to crossing of Uzbek-Kazakh border, but directly linked to his professional occupation.

The charges on slander, insult as well as dissemination of information, threatening public safety and order – i.e. the articles – are "traditionally" based on "the expert conclusion" of so-called Center for mass communications monitoring under the Uzbek Agency for communication and infromatization.

It is worth reminding that the same mechanism was employed in order to bring Umida Akhmedova (photographer and film maker) and Vladimir Berezovskiy (Russian journalist and the editor of Vesti.uz website) to trial. Therefore, we are talking about successfully operating universal technology for rapid elimination of independent figures.

The investigation of criminal case is already completed. On September 13 the Tashkent city proeseccutor's office brought in an indictment and Boboev signed the recognizance not to leave. On September 14 he was allowed to read the indictment text and "the expert conclusion" of Center for mass communications monitoring. Investigator Khusan Asanov refused to provide the copies of these documents, referring to "secrecy". The date of the proceedings will be announced soon.

Alexey Volosevich

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