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Weekly Report
Central Asia
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- The Tashkent-based journalists could not remember a single name of Uzbek senators

Summery

Azerbaijan

Political Front

- Azerbaijani CEC: Some 1,152 MP candidates apply to district electoral commissions

Some 1,152 candidates for parliament have applied to district electoral commissions, 1,092 have received a subscription list from the Central Election Commission, and 200 have already filled them out and submitted them to the CEC, CEC chairman Mazahir Panahov said Monday at a meeting of the committee.

- International observers starting their missions in Azerbaijan

Observation missions of international organizations are starting their mission in Azerbaijan to monitor parliamentary elections in the country, Central Election Commission's department for international relations Rovzat Gasimov said.

- Election Commission to receive final voters' lists by October 3rd

The voters' lists have been finalized for the upcoming parliamentary elections in Azerbaijan. The Sechkiler Information Center is publishing the lists to be sent by October 3 to the precinct election commissions, CEC Secretary Natig Mammadov told a press conference.

Geo strategic Front

- Azerbaijan And The West: Beyond Interest, Toward Commitment

U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton met with the Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev in Baku in July. A friend in need is a friend indeed. I couldn't agree more.

- Two democrats risk U.S. interests by blocking envoy to Azerbaijan

The US-based Washington Post newspaper has published an article entitled "Two democrats risk U.S. interests by blocking envoy".

FOR THE AWARD for Most Craven Election-Year Pandering at the Expense of the National Interest, we nominate -- this week -- Sens. Barbara Boxer (D-Calif.) and Robert Menendez (D-N.J.).

- Azerbaijan supports Pakistan's position in Kashmir problem"

Within the framework of his visit to Pakistan Commander of Azerbaijani Naval Forces, Vice Admiral Shahin Sultanov met with Defense Minister of this country Ahmad Mukhtar, APA reports quoting official website of Pakistani Defense Ministry.

Economic/Energy Front

- ADB officials visit Azerbaijan State Oil Fund

Members of the Asian Development Bank's Board of Directors have visited Azerbaijan's State Oil Fund. The Fund's Executive Director Shahmar Movmusov informed the ADB officials of Azerbaijan's oil strategy.

- Top ten countries investing in Azerbaijan determined

Great Britain leads the list of the foreign investors in Azerbaijan, during January-July, 2010. According to State Statistical Committee, Great Britain invested AZN 505 038.8 thousand capital in Azerbaijan's economy during the same time, up 30.8% compared with a year ago.

Social Front

- Sumgait seaside cleaned from litter as part of International Coastal Cleanup -

Over five tons of litter has been collected from Sumgait coast of the Caspian Sea as part of the International Coastal Cleanup action. About 110 volunteers collected over five tons of litter as a part of an ecological campaign held by Cola-Cola.

- 35% of drugs produced in Afghanistan is smuggled to other countries through Iran-Azerbaijan route"

35 % of drugs illegally produced in Afghanistan is smuggled to other countries through the Iran-Azerbaijan route. This was said by First Deputy General Prosecutor of Azerbaijan Rustam Usubov on Monday at the scientific- practical conference on "Actual problems of the fight against illicit trafficking of narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and precursors' held at the Science and Education Center in the General Prosecutor's Office.

- Azerbaijan attends 54th session of IAEA's conference in Vienna

The 54th session of International Atomic Energy Agency`s (IAEA) Conference was held in the Austrian capital of Vienna on September 20-24.

- Baku to host meeting of CIS council of heads of migration services

On Sept. 29, Baku will host the eighth meeting of the CIS Council of Heads of Migration Services, the press service of the State Migration Service of Azerbaijan reported on Friday.

Kazakhstan

Political Front

- Kazakh Court Refuses To Issue Warrant For Minister's Arrest

ASTANA -- A court in Astana has refused to issue an arrest warrant for Kazakh Health Minister Zhaqsylyq Dosqaliev over unspecified allegations stemming from an ongoing investigation, RFE/RL's Kazakh Service reports.

- Kazakh Police Say Health Minister May Have Simulated Stroke

ASTANA -- Kazakhstan's financial police have said that Health Minister Zhaqsylyq Dosqaliev may have simulated a stroke to escape justice, RFE/RL's Kazakh Service reports.

- Kazakhstan's president confidence rating high

Almaty. September 28. Interfax-Kazakhstan – The poll conducted by the Institute of Political Solutions (IPS) revealed that Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev retains trust of 79.9% respondents.

Geo strategic Front

- Issues of opposing nuclear terror financing discussed in Astana

ASTANA, September 28 (Itar-Tass) -- Issues of opposing financing of nuclear terrorism are discussed at a conference which opened in the capital of Kazakhstan on Tuesday. More than 150 representatives of the countries-participants in the Global Initiative of Combating Acts of Nuclear Terrorism, as well as observers from international organizations take part in the conference which is held behind closed doors.

Economic/Energy Front

- Kazakhstan Renews Push For Global Currency Under UN Auspices

UNITED NATIONS -- Kazakhstan has repeated its idea that the creation of a global currency under UN control would significantly decrease the odds of a future financial crisis.

- Environment agency of Kazakhstan to complete inspections of all oil companies by end of September

Astana. September 27. Interfax-Kazakhstan - The Ministry of Environment of Kazakhstan by the end of this week will complete environmental inspections of oil companies operating in the republic, said the head of state environmental control department Daniyar Aliyev. "At the moment, no inspection reports have been issued yet, as the checks are still going on. At the end of this month or in a few days, we plan to complete all inspections," he told reporters on Monday in Astana.

- Russia, Kazakhstan plan to develop renewable energy industry
MOSCOW, September 28 (RIA Novosti) - Russia's largest hydropower company RusHydro has signed a memorandum of cooperation on building renewable energy enterprises in the Jambyl region in southern Kazakhstan with the regional government.

- Tau Capital invests in Kazakh oil explorer
(SRI) - Tau Capital, a Kazakhstan-focused investment fund, has agreed to take a 6% stake in Kazakh oil company Lucent Petroleum in exchange for equity and debt financing.

- Japan firms to provide nuclear estimates to Kazakhstan
(Reuters) - The Japan Atomic Power Company, Toshiba Corp (6502.T) and a unit of Marubeni Corp (8002.T) have reached an agreement with Kazakhstan to provide data and cost estimates on the possibility of the country building its first nuclear power plant.

Social Front

- Kazakhstan's president reduces civil servants by 15 percent
ASTANA, September 30 (Itar-Tass) -- Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev has signed a decree providing for a 15-percent reduction of the regular staff of organizations financed by the state budget, including the law enforcement and judicial authorities.

- UN Official Hopes Kazakhstan Will Improve Prison System
ASTANA -- UN Special Rapporteur on Torture Manfred Nowak says he hopes Kazakh authorities will stop "window dressing" the situation regarding the country's penitentiary system, RFE/RL's Kazakh Service reports.

Kyrgyzstan

Political Front

- Poll shows six of 29 parties will pass to parliament
In Kyrgyzstan, the poll of Perspektiva Consortium has shown that six of 29 parties, participating in the elections, will pass to parliament.

- Ethnic Uzbeks' Trials In Kyrgyzstan Postponed After Disruptions
KARA-SUU/NOOKEN -- Two separate trials of ethnic Uzbeks in southern Kyrgyzstan have been postponed by the judges after disruptions, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports. The trial of 10 ethnic Uzbeks in the southern Kyrgyz village of Kara-Suu was stopped by the judge after the defendants' lawyer was attacked by relatives of the victims.

- Ethnic Uzbek Journalist Transferred From Kyrgyz Jail To House Arrest
JALAL-ABAD, Kyrgyzstan -- Uzbek journalist Ulukbek Abdusalamov has been transferred due to his poor health from jail to house arrest in the southern Kyrgyz city of Jalal-Abad, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports.

- Former Kyrgyz President's Nephew To Stand Trial
BISHKEK -- Authorities in Kyrgyzstan say the nephew of ousted President Kurmanbek Bakiev is to stand trial in connection with deadly interethnic violence there in June, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports.

Geo strategic Front

- Russian Border Guards To Be Stationed In Southern Kyrgyzstan

BISHKEK -- Russian border guards stationed in Kyrgyzstan's northern Chui region will be transferred to a southern oblast to help with cross-border issues, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports.

- Kyrgyzstan's permanent representative in the UN changes

The permanent representative of Kyrgyzstan in the United Nations Organization has changed. Today President of transition period Roza Otunbayeva signed a decree, according to which Nurbek Jeenbaev was released from the post of permanent representative of the Kyrgyz Republic in the UN in New York City.

Economic/Energy Front

- Kyrgyzstan tries to solve debt problem

Kyrgyzstan tries again to correct its "credit history."

One and a half year ago in Moscow, during the visit of the Kremlin by representatives of delegation from Kyrgyzstan, we heard the conversation of two Russian officials.

Social Front

- Kyrgyz human rights advocates urge Roza Otunbayeva "to take immediate measures against illegal actions of law enforcement officers and judicial agencies"

Kyrgyz human rights advocates urge the interim president Roza Otunbayeva "to take immediate measures against illegal actions of law enforcement officers and judicial agencies the made during investigations and proceedings against citizens charged with participation in the conflict happened in Osh and Jalal-Abad regions."

- Kyrgyz Farmer Shot On Uzbek Border

BATKEN -- A Kyrgyz citizen was wounded in a shooting incident on the Kyrgyz-Uzbek border on September 28, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports.

Tashtemir Eshaliev, who heads Kyrgyzstan's Batken Oblast Defense and Security Department, told RFE/RL the incident took place near the village of Kaitpas in the Kadamjai district when an Uzbek border guard shot at Almaz Joroev, who said he mistakenly crossed the border while searching for missing cattle.

Tajikistan

Political Front

- Second Tajik Prison Escapee Killed By Security Forces

DUSHANBE -- The Tajik Interior Ministry says security forces have killed a second escapee from a prison break last month, RFE/RL's Tajik Service reports.

The ministry said on September 28 that Russian national Gusein Suleimanov, 25, was killed by security forces in the Chanoro village of Faizobod district one day earlier. It is the same district in which Rahmiddin Azizov, another of the 25 prison escapees, was killed the previous day in a shootout.

- Tajik Officials Say Former Rebel Involved In Deadly Attack On Army

DUSHANBE -- Tajikistan's Interior and Defense ministries say they believe former United Tajik Opposition (UTO) fighter Abdullo Hakimov (aka Mullo Abdullo) played a role in the attack on September 19 in which 25 Tajik soldiers were killed and dozens more injured, RFE/RL's Tajik Service reported.

- President urges to strengthen fight against terrorism and extremism

DUSHANBE, September 28, 2010, Asia-Plus – Issues related to recent events in the country, maintenance of public order and prevention of crime were the focus of a

September 27 meeting of the Council of Security of Tajikistan, presided over by President Emomali Rahmon.

Geo strategic Front

- Kremlin's Ruling Party Boosts Ties Across The Former Soviet Union

As Kyrgyzstan gears up for crucial parliamentary elections on October 10, former Prime Minister Felix Kulov's Ar-Namys party has picked up a key endorsement from Russia's ruling United Russia party.

- Some Fear Tajik Opposition Stronghold Could Become Hotbed Of Islamic Insurgency

It was just a few weeks ago that Tajik President Emomali Rahmon was traveling to his country's eastern Rasht region on a mission of goodwill, opening a new college there and discussing economic and social issues with locals.

- Tajik Authorities Apprehend Two More Armed Militants

DUSHANBE -- Tajik authorities say they have arrested two armed supporters of former warlord and special police unit head Mirzokhuja Ahmadov in the mountainous Rasht district, some 200 kilometers east of the capital, Dushanbe, RFE/RL's Tajik Service reports.

Economic/Energy Front

- ECO energy and oil ministers to meet in Dushanbe

DUSHANBE, September 28, 2010, Asia-Plus -- The Ministry of Energy and Industries of Tajikistan (MoEI) will host the 2nd Ministerial Meeting on Energy/Petroleum of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO).

- IMF expects Tajikistan's year-end inflation to stand at 9 percent

DUSHANBE, September 25, 2010, Asia-Plus -- An International Monetary Fund (IMF) team, led by Mr. Todd Schneider, visited Tajikistan from September 13 to September 24 to hold discussions with Tajik authorities on the third review under a three-year extended credit facility arrangement with Tajikistan.

Social Front

- Lenin Statue Removed For 'Renovation' In Southern Tajikistan

KULOB, Tajikistan -- Residents of the southern Tajik town of Khatlon discovered on September 29 that the monument to Soviet leader Vladimir Lenin had been removed from the town's central park, RFE/RL's Tajik Service reports.

Turkmenistan

Political Front

Geo strategic Front

- Ambassador of Czech Republic accredited in Turkmenistan

On September 28, Speaker of the Mejlis of Turkmenistan Akja Nurberdieva received credentials from the Ambassador of the Czech Republic Robert Kopecky.

Economic/Energy Front

- Turkmenistan increases throughput capacity of C Asia-China gas pipeline

ASHGABAT, September 27 (Itar-Tass) -- Turkmenistan commissioned a compressor station Bagtyyarlyk on Monday. This is the starting point of the Turkmenistani stretch of the Turkmenistan-Uzbekistan-Kazakhstan-China gas pipeline. The compressor station is located on the Turkmenistani-Uzbek border in the Khodzhabassky district of the Lebap region.

Social Front

- Paucity Of Turkmen Books At Ashgabat Book Fair

Readers in Turkmenistan have thousands of books to choose from if they wish to know about culture, history, economy, science fiction, or other apolitical themes.

An international book fair opened in Ashgabat earlier this month under the motto "The Book is the Way to Cooperation and Progress."

- Turkmen Dipping Their Toes Into Online Forums

"I read 'Ruhnama' to the end. It is a mixture of soup, rice, pepper, and poison. I would say it shows Turkmenbashi's thought process. The ideas are not in order. It's chaotic. The beginning of the thought is in the middle, the middle is at the end, and the end is at the beginning."

Uzbekistan

Political Front

Geo strategic Front

- The U.S., caught between the Afghan war and human rights in Uzbekistan

The U.S. has been accused of becoming soft on Uzbekistan's human rights record because of its close military cooperation with Tashkent on the Northern Distribution Network, which carries a significant portion of U.S.'s war materiel to Afghanistan via Central Asia. But evidence has been somewhat hard to come by to either prove or disprove that assertion.

Economic/Energy Front

Social Front

- The Tashkent-based journalists could not remember a single name of Uzbek senators

On September 23 US embassy in Uzbekistan organized the meeting of Mimi Tennyson Goss, the expert in the field of public administration and journalism, PhD of Harvard University, with journalists.

Detailed Report

Azerbaijan

Political Front

- Azerbaijani CEC: Some 1,152 MP candidates apply to district electoral commissions

Some 1,152 candidates for parliament have applied to district electoral commissions, 1,092 have received a subscription list from the Central Election Commission, and 200 have already filled them out and submitted them to the CEC, CEC chairman Mazahir Panahov said Monday at a meeting of the committee.

"At present, 54 people in 28 constituencies have been registered as candidate," Panahov said. He said 21 people earlier wishing to become a candidate have already refused to nominate their candidacy.

Parliamentary elections are scheduled for Nov. 7. Previous legislative elections were held in November 2005. Parliamentary elections in Azerbaijan are held by the majority system in 125 electoral constituencies.

The CEC has registered 460 observers for parliamentary elections. Authorized representatives of political parties were registered at the CEC's meeting today and changes were made in the structure of the 75th Lankaran-Masalli Constituency.

- International observers starting their missions in Azerbaijan

Observation missions of international organizations are starting their mission in Azerbaijan to monitor parliamentary elections in the country, Central Election Commission's department for international relations Rovzat Gasimov said.

According to him, OSCE mission will start working shortly. The observation mission of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights is going to be the largest one. This organization will send 30 long-term and 450 short-term observers.

The delegation of the Council of Europe is expected to visit Azerbaijan as well. The CIS 400-member delegation will arrive in Azerbaijan's capital in mid-October.

Gasimov pointed out both local and international observers can apply to the CEC to monitor elections across the country until 10 days before the voting. The applications to watch the process within constituencies must be filed five days before.

- Election Commission to receive final voters' lists by October 3rd

The voters' lists have been finalized for the upcoming parliamentary elections in Azerbaijan. The Sechkiler Information Center is publishing the lists to be sent by October 3 to the precinct election commissions, CEC Secretary Natig Mammadov told a press conference.

There are estimated 4,846,000 voters in the country but this figure is likely to rise. Every citizen can check out its name on CEC's website. If anybody cannot find his name, he can add it by applying to the election commissions.

Geo strategic Front

- Azerbaijan And The West: Beyond Interest, Toward Commitment

U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton met with the Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev in Baku in July. A friend in need is a friend indeed. I couldn't agree more. Yet, it is the times when we are savoring our success or trying ever harder to reach our goals that we appreciate a friend's supportive smile or pat on the back. Whether we get it or not does not affect our success, but it does ease our way and make it more pleasant.

The greatness of success has always depended not just on how it is achieved, but on being able to share it with those who have accompanied you throughout the sweet and bitter journey.

The cooperation Azerbaijan forged with the West, especially with the United States, has over the years been characterized as strategic by many, short-term by some, and untruthful by others. However, even when relations reached an all-time low, Azerbaijan never wavered in its commitment to its partnership with the West. Time and again, when buffeted by strong winds, Azerbaijan has needed understanding and a firm stance from the United States, while the United States has expected the same from us, however strange it might seem given Azerbaijan's size on a global scale.

When Azerbaijan was forced into full-scale war with its neighbor in the early 1990s, it expected no less than a balanced approach from the West. Instead, all it got was Section 907, banning any direct U.S. aid to the Azerbaijani government. History might not repeat itself, but it does rhyme. Ten years later, the United States' government was in need of friends, big and small, to support the war on terror. In the blink of an eye, while most of

the region's countries were still hemming and hawing, Azerbaijan contributed peacekeeping troops to the U.S.-led coalition in Iraq and served shoulder-to-shoulder with a U.S. Marine battalion, providing security for the Haditha Dam, a vital infrastructure in Al Anbar Province that produced one-quarter of Iraq's electricity. With 11 rotations and more than 1,000 troops, Azerbaijan underscored its loyalty to the United States.

The same year, 2002, Azerbaijani troops also joined the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan, becoming the first CIS member to contribute troops. Six years later, in 2008, when many allies were pulling out of Afghanistan in despair, President Ilham Aliyev submitted a bill "on the status of Azerbaijani troops carrying out peacemaking operations abroad" to the Azerbaijani parliament, which envisaged doubling the peacekeeping troops in Afghanistan.

In yet another gesture, the Azerbaijani government demonstrated an unfeigned faithfulness to its friendship. More than NATO 100,000 troops flew through Azerbaijani airspace in 2009 alone. Approximately 25 percent of the coalition's supplies going to Afghanistan pass through Azerbaijan. NATO member states transport 1,500 containers every month to the war-torn country through the territory of Azerbaijan. The growing size of Azerbaijan's military contingent, the open airspace, and Baku's full cooperation on the battlefield says a lot more than mere words can express.

Facing pressure from the Armenian diaspora, the United States Congress fell flat with a biased approach to the Nagorno-Karabakh problem. It used the role of lobby groups as an excuse for a lopsided approach. Azerbaijan, on the contrary, in its commitment to its promise on the war on terror, successfully prevented and dealt with terrorist threats, including those from Iran, despite constant pressure from the latter. Numerous plots were intercepted, criminals detained, potentially tragic scenarios avoided.

Because of its continuous good terms with the United States, Azerbaijan was accused of "cooperating with the Great Satan" on Iran's Sahar-2 television channel -- which is broadcast in the territory of Azerbaijan without authorization -- and threatened by the Iranian authorities. It is not difficult to appreciate that pressure from 71 million Iranians is a much greater problem than pressure from 1.5 million Armenian-Americans.

Favoring Western Companies

Azerbaijan stands for and does many things that, for some reason, go unnoticed around the world. Astonishingly, Azerbaijan is one of the only major Caspian hydrocarbon-producing countries that has exported almost exclusively to the West. The biggest oil-and-gas contracts signed since 1994 -- including Azeri-Chirag-Guneshli (ACG) and Shah Deniz -- favored Western companies over Russian, Chinese, Iranian, and other options.

As for the pipelines, construction of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC), Azerbaijan-Georgia-Romania Interconnector (AGRI), and Azerbaijan's repeatedly positive attitude toward the Nabucco pipeline are clear evidence of Azerbaijan's willingness to forge effective energy cooperation with the West. Despite Russia's evident disapproval of such cooperation, Azerbaijan stays true to Euro-Atlantic projects. Azerbaijan took great steps to secure its oil revenues for future generations by creating the State Oil Fund, the transparency of which is maintained internationally by Western experts.

Azerbaijan has proven itself as the world's fastest-growing trade route and a telecommunications hub in Eurasia. Azerbaijan, almost solely, is financing the construction of the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars-Istanbul railroad, one that will connect Central

Asia with Europe along the shortest route. The country took gigantic steps to contribute to the improvement of the East-West corridor. The question is not whether the source of these projects is in Azerbaijani oil revenues, but whether the outcome is worth the input. For everyone should know that Azerbaijan's vibrant growing economy and regional power are strengths, not weaknesses to be ashamed of.

Taking into account the complexity of U.S. involvement in the region and the juxtaposition of its foes and allies, Azerbaijan automatically becomes a country best suited for cooperation and partnership. Azerbaijan is one of the very few secular Muslim states of the region that has displayed a model of religious tolerance throughout its history. The cultural links that Azerbaijani people share with Americans might have been limited in the early 1990s, but following countless education and cultural-exchange programs, promoted both by the U.S. and Azerbaijani governments (such as FLEX, IREX, Muskie, Fulbright, State Oil Company (SOCAR), Azerbaijan State Scholarship and U.S. Peace Corps programs), understanding between the two states has grown immensely.

When U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton was on an official visit to Baku, aside from all other official meetings, she requested a special gathering with a group of young Azerbaijani leaders. She got to meet 10, five of whom were graduates and alumni of U.S. high schools, universities, and other educational-exchange programs. Nothing could embody the spirit of Azerbaijan's Western stance more than this outcome of cooperation over the years -- Azerbaijan's outstanding young people.

However, as much as the Azerbaijani government can do to maintain its friendship with the United States, it is ultimately the determination of the United States upon which this partnership will rely. The famous business speaker Art Turock once said: "There's a difference between interest and commitment. When you are interested in doing something, you do it only when circumstances permit. When you're committed to something, you accept no excuses, only results."

Circumstances did not permit Azerbaijan to send its troops to Afghanistan, Kosovo, and Iraq when there were young soldiers dying from Armenian bullets every day on the front line. The circumstances were not in our favor when we were resolute in our attempts to thwart Russian pressure against engaging in full-fledged energy cooperation with the West. Nor were they positive when we had to face Iran numerous times to support the United States. Interest is what government officials and decision makers rely on; commitment is what the ordinary people expect.

All in all, it is not promises we need from time to time from our great ally across the ocean, but a little genuine understanding and appreciation of who we are and what we stand for.

- Two democrats risk U.S. interests by blocking envoy to Azerbaijan

The US-based Washington Post newspaper has published an article entitled "Two democrats risk U.S. interests by blocking envoy".

FOR THE AWARD for Most Craven Election-Year Pandering at the Expense of the National Interest, we nominate -- this week -- Sens. Barbara Boxer (D-Calif.) and Robert Menendez (D-N.J.). Ms. Boxer, who is facing a tough reelection fight, and Mr. Menendez, who heads the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee, are blocking the confirmation of a top-notch State Department diplomat, Matthew J. Bryza, as ambassador

to Azerbaijan, an energy-rich and strategically important nation in the volatile Caucasus region.

The two senators are being cheered on by the Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA), a particularly noxious lobby that claims to represent Armenian Americans, many of whom live in California. On Wednesday, ANCA dispatched a jubilant e-mail announcing that Ms. Boxer had placed a hold on Mr. Bryza's confirmation after its approval by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee; that could prevent his approval by the full Senate in the near future. Mr. Menendez joined the hold.

Mr. Bryza is an unlikely target for a political fight. Highly regarded by both Republicans and Democrats, he has spent the past 13 years working to advance U.S. interests in the Caucasus at the National Security Council and the State Department. He served for three years as co-chair of the Minsk group, a coalition of nations seeking to broker peace between Azerbaijan and Armenia. Mr. Bryza won the respect of both sides; both governments are supporting his nomination.

So what is Ms. Boxer's objection? The senator claims that Mr. Bryza has been unwilling "to speak out forcefully in the face of increasing Azerbaijani aggression" against Armenia. This is ludicrous. Mr. Bryza, acting like all nominees under the instructions of his State Department superiors, has simply echoed the Obama administration's statements -- which have opposed violence by both sides and insisted that there is no military solution to the conflict. What stands out here is not Mr. Bryza's public statements, but his record as a peace negotiator -- which makes him the American most likely to prevent more aggression.

Mr. Menendez, echoing ANCA's ugly propaganda, has questioned Mr. Bryza's "very close ties to Turkey"; the diplomat's wife, scholar Zeyno Baran, is Turkish-born. Yet Ms. Baran has been an outspoken critic of the current Turkish government; it is shameful that the ethnic origin of a U.S. diplomat's wife should be used against him. (After first telling us that Mr. Menendez was concerned about Mr. Bryza's wife, his office backpedaled, saying that what worried the senator was "ties to Turkish government officials." Our request for the names of those officials, and an explanation of why "ties to officials" of a major NATO ally would be of concern, went unanswered.)

While claiming to support the interests of Armenia, ANCA has repeatedly undermined them. Its lobbying has made reconciliation between Armenia and Turkey, and between Armenia and Azerbaijan, more difficult -- thus helping to perpetuate Armenia's impoverishment and overdependence on Russia. If ANCA succeeds in blocking the nomination of a competent U.S. ambassador to Azerbaijan, it will only lessen U.S. influence in the Caucasus and make war more likely. In advancing such interests, Ms. Boxer and Mr. Menendez disgrace themselves.

- Azerbaijan supports Pakistan's position in Kashmir problem"

Within the framework of his visit to Pakistan Commander of Azerbaijani Naval Forces, Vice Admiral Shahin Sultanov met with Defense Minister of this country Ahmad Mukhtar, APA reports quoting official website of Pakistani Defense Ministry.

Strengthening of cooperation between the countries in military sphere, elimination of floods' results took pace in Pakistan and other issues were discussed at the meeting held on September 28. Sultanov noted that the visit would help the development of military cooperation between the two countries. He said that Azerbaijani political leaders supported Pakistani position in Kashmir problem.

Economic/Energy Front

- ADB officials visit Azerbaijan State Oil Fund

Members of the Asian Development Bank's Board of Directors have visited Azerbaijan's State Oil Fund. The Fund's Executive Director Shahmar Movmusov informed the ADB officials of Azerbaijan's oil strategy.

He highlighted the priorities of the country's National Oil Strategy. Movsumov also highlighted the Fund's role in application of the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative in Azerbaijan.

- Top ten countries investing in Azerbaijan determined

Great Britain leads the list of the foreign investors in Azerbaijan, during January-July, 2010. According to State Statistical Committee, Great Britain invested AZN 505 038.8 thousand capital in Azerbaijan's economy during the same time, up 30.8% compared with a year ago.

The second place was taken by USA, and U.S. investment in Azerbaijan increased by 71.3% to AZN 223 960.6 thousand.

Japan ranked third. Japanese investors invested AZN 117 157.8 thousand capital, Norwegian investors invested AZN 72 643.6 thousand and Turkish invested AZN 63 801.3 thousand in Azerbaijan's economy, during the same period.

Note that foreign investments in Azerbaijan's economy accounted AZN 1 103.1 mln in January-July, 2010, up 31.5% from year earlier.

Social Front

- Sumgait seaside cleaned from litter as part of International Coastal Cleanup -

Over five tons of litter has been collected from Sumgait coast of the Caspian Sea as part of the International Coastal Cleanup action. About 110 volunteers collected over five tons of litter as a part of an ecological campaign held by Cola-Cola.

The volunteers gathered 1,100 sacks of plastic and glass bottles, cans and other kinds of litter from an area of 1,000 meters.

The campaign was supported by Azerbaijan Alumni Association, Red Communications PR and BTL Agency, Club of Green Cyclists and Green Baku ecological movement.

Coca-Cola maintains the similar campaign throughout the world.

- 35% of drugs produced in Afghanistan is smuggled to other countries through Iran-Azerbaijan route"

35 % of drugs illegally produced in Afghanistan is smuggled to other countries through the Iran-Azerbaijan route. This was said by First Deputy General Prosecutor of Azerbaijan Rustam Usubov on Monday at the scientific- practical conference on "Actual problems of the fight against illicit trafficking of narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and precursors" held at the Science and Education Center in the General Prosecutor's Office. Usubov said Azerbaijan's advantageous geographical position provides an opportunity to use its territory for this purpose.

- Azerbaijan attends 54th session of IAEA's conference in Vienna

The 54th session of International Atomic Energy Agency's (IAEA) Conference was held in the Austrian capital of Vienna on September 20-24.

The conference brought together more than 1400 representatives from 151 countries, including the delegation led by the president of Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences, academician Mahmud Karimov. The annual conference discussed the last

year`s report and the next year`s plan of actions. The discussions revolved around IAEA technical cooperation programs and the safe disposal of radioactive waste.

Addressing the session, academic Mahmud Karimov outlined the close cooperation of Azerbaijan with the IAEA. In his presentation, the academician touched upon the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, saying lack of control in that area smooth the way for illegal trade in radioactive and nuclear materials and terrorism activity. He pointed out Armenia may not develop nuclear energy since the country continues occupation of Azerbaijani lands. New members of the Board of Governors were elected for 2010-2012 term.

- Baku to host meeting of CIS council of heads of migration services

On Sept. 29, Baku will host the eighth meeting of the CIS Council of Heads of Migration Services, the press service of the State Migration Service of Azerbaijan reported on Friday.

The event will cover the situation in the migration of the CIS countries, the results of the implementation of programs to combat illegal migration for 2009-2011 in the CIS countries, as well as proposals will be presented to develop a program on combating illegal migration for 2012-2014 and address other issues.

Kazakhstan

Political Front

- Kazakh Court Refuses To Issue Warrant For Minister's Arrest

ASTANA -- A court in Astana has refused to issue an arrest warrant for Kazakh Health Minister Zhaqsylyq Dosqaliev over unspecified allegations stemming from an ongoing investigation, RFE/RL's Kazakh Service reports.

Astana City Prosecutor's Office spokeswoman Darigha Musina told RFE/RL that the Kazakh Financial Police had formally requested a warrant to arrest Dosqaliev, who is suspected of abuse of power.

Dosqaliev was hospitalized on September 27 with a stroke after being interrogated by police officers.

Members of the Mazhilis, the lower chamber of Kazakhstan's parliament, today asked Prosecutor-General Qairat Mami to clarify the actions of the Financial Police with regard to Dosqaliev. The Financial Police refuse to provide details of Dosqaliev's case on the grounds that the investigation is ongoing.

- Kazakh Police Say Health Minister May Have Simulated Stroke

ASTANA -- Kazakhstan's financial police have said that Health Minister Zhaqsylyq Dosqaliev may have simulated a stroke to escape justice, RFE/RL's Kazakh Service reports.

A court in Astana refused on September 29 to issue an arrest warrant for Dosqaliev due to his medical condition. Dosqaliev, 54, was hospitalized on September 27 with a stroke after being interrogated by police. Financial police spokesperson Murat Zhumanbay told journalists in Astana on September 30 that Dosqaliev is suspected of embezzlement and the illegal sale of real estate. Members of the Mazhilis, the lower chamber of Kazakhstan's parliament, asked Prosecutor-General Qairat Mami on September 29 to clarify the actions of the financial police with regard to Dosqaliev.

- Kazakhstan`s president confidence rating high

Almaty. September 28. Interfax-Kazakhstan – The poll conducted by the Institute of Political Solutions (IPS) revealed that Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev retains trust of 79.9% respondents.

"President's confidence level remains relatively high. Nearly 80% of the respondents expressed confidence in the president. The president's confidence rating increased by 10% from the April study," said the head of IPS expert group Irina Chernykh at a press conference in Almaty on Tuesday.

The president elicits high confidence in the eastern and southern parts of the country (86.9%) and (81.4%), while lower confidence rating (75.9%) and (75.7%) are recorded in the west and north.

9.5% Kazakh residents revealed a loss of confidence in the president, while 10.5% remained hesitant.

Chernykh also added that "40% of the respondents see no rival to the incumbent president, while 23.2% believe otherwise."

She reported the estimated voter turnout at the 2012 election, which may exceed 60%.

"63.8% of respondents confirmed their intent to vote in the upcoming elections," said Chernykh.

According to the survey, 15.4% of respondents refuse to go to the vote, another 20.7% are not certain about their part in the voting at the moment.

Results are based on interviews with a random sample of 2,295 national adults, aged 18 and older, conducted in early September.

Geo strategic Front

- Issues of opposing nuclear terror financing discussed in Astana

ASTANA, September 28 (Itar-Tass) -- Issues of opposing financing of nuclear terrorism are discussed at a conference which opened in the capital of Kazakhstan on Tuesday. More than 150 representatives of the countries-participants in the Global Initiative of Combating Acts of Nuclear Terrorism, as well as observers from international organizations take part in the conference which is held behind closed doors.

"Put forward by the US and Russian presidents at the G-8 summit in 2006, the Global Initiative is very intensively developing today, and what is especially important, - - it didn't turn into another "talk club," advisor of the department on issues of security and disarmament of the Russian Foreign Ministry Oleg Postnikov said in an interview with ITAR-TASS. "Both diplomats and those who encounter the solution of practical tasks in the field of opposing nuclear terrorism take part in discussion of problems in the professional language," he noted.

At the same time, Postnikov stressed that "the issue of opposing nuclear terrorism financing in the context of the Global Initiative is raised for the first time."

According to him, "no concrete documents or solutions are expected to be adopted during the work of the conference." "Our task - - to get deeper into this problem, consider it step by step, and since there are representatives of different services engaged in the financial monitoring, we hope that they will be able to orient us in the necessary direction," Postnikov said in conclusion.

Economic/Energy Front

- Kazakhstan Renews Push For Global Currency Under UN Auspices

UNITED NATIONS -- Kazakhstan has repeated its idea that the creation of a global currency under UN control would significantly decrease the odds of a future financial crisis.

Speaking at the UN General Assembly on September 25, Kazakh Foreign Minister Kanat Saudabaev said it was important to ensure that the post-crisis model of development was not limited to cosmetic measures. He said Kazakhstan believed "all the world's economic problems are rooted in the inefficiency of the existing world monetary system, which no one controls and is not democratic." Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbaev has previously proposed that the United Nations develop a global financial regulatory system of oversight, with the core of that system being a single supranational currency. Besides Kazakhstan, Brazil, China, and Russia have floated similar proposals for a global currency that would eventually replace the U.S. dollar.

- Environment agency of Kazakhstan to complete inspections of all oil companies by end of September

Astana. September 27. Interfax-Kazakhstan - The Ministry of Environment of Kazakhstan by the end of this week will complete environmental inspections of oil companies operating in the republic, said the head of state environmental control department Daniyar Aliyev. "At the moment, no inspection reports have been issued yet, as the checks are still going on. At the end of this month or in a few days, we plan to complete all inspections," he told reporters on Monday in Astana.

Aliyev noted that working groups formed of representatives of regulatory agencies are conducting inspections of all oil companies.

"We receive inspection results study them and submit our suggestions to the Ministry of Oil and Gas regarding the operations of oil companies," he added.

- Russia, Kazakhstan plan to develop renewable energy industry

MOSCOW, September 28 (RIA Novosti) - Russia's largest hydropower company RusHydro has signed a memorandum of cooperation on building renewable energy enterprises in the Jambyl region in southern Kazakhstan with the regional government. RusHydro will take part in designing, building, launch and management of hydro and wind power plants. The company is eager to share its experience and technologies for development of the renewable energy industry in the region.

RusHydro also plans to sign agreements with other regions of Kazakhstan, because the country has considerable potential in the sphere of small hydroelectric engineering, RusHydro said.

"The company could build small hydro power plants in the Almaty region," the firm said.

- Tau Capital invests in Kazakh oil explorer

(SRI) - Tau Capital, a Kazakhstan-focused investment fund, has agreed to take a 6% stake in Kazakh oil company Lucent Petroleum in exchange for equity and debt financing.

Tau has agreed to provide a total of \$15 million to Lucent - an initial \$4.5-million bridge loan, convertible into newly issued shares of Lucent, followed by a \$10.5-million equity investment.

Tau's final interest will be equivalent to 6.18% of the shareholder capital, implying a pre-money valuation of Lucent's equity of \$227.7 million. Lucent, a subsidiary of Visor Investment Services, holds the rights to an exploration block located in the pre-Caspian

basin close to major producing oilfields, including Tengiz. Its resources have been independently estimated at a total of 479 million barrels of oil.

- Japan firms to provide nuclear estimates to Kazakhstan

(Reuters) - The Japan Atomic Power Company, Toshiba Corp (6502.T) and a unit of Marubeni Corp (8002.T) have reached an agreement with Kazakhstan to provide data and cost estimates on the possibility of the country building its first nuclear power plant.

In a joint statement, the three companies said on Wednesday that an agreement with the National Nuclear Center of Kazakhstan would enable them to cooperate in the building, operating and financing of a possible nuclear power plant.

If Kazakhstan decides to hold a feasibility study to build a nuclear facility based on the companies' estimates, that would provide a lucrative, but competitive business chance for nuclear technology exporters, including Japan.

Japan, the world's third biggest nuclear power generator, is stepping up its marketing of nuclear technology by establishing a new atomic technology exporting body next month.

Kazakhstan is looking to build an advanced boiling water reactor with a capacity of 1,000 megawatts or less, said a spokesman at Japan Atomic Power, Japan's oldest nuclear power company. ABWR is a proven technology in Japan although the capacity requested is smaller than usual. (Reporting by Risa Maeda; Editing by Joseph Radford)

Social Front

- Kazakhstan's president reduces civil servants by 15 percent

ASTANA, September 30 (Itar-Tass) -- Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev has signed a decree providing for a 15-percent reduction of the regular staff of organizations financed by the state budget, including the law enforcement and judicial authorities.

According to the results of socio-economic monitoring by the presidential staff, in accordance with the decree the regular strength public sector employees will shrink by 26 thousand, official media said on Thursday.

The decree comes into force on November 1 this year.

- UN Official Hopes Kazakhstan Will Improve Prison System

ASTANA -- UN Special Rapporteur on Torture Manfred Nowak says he hopes Kazakh authorities will stop "window dressing" the situation regarding the country's penitentiary system, RFE/RL's Kazakh Service reports.

Nowak took part in a briefing in Astana on September 29 after a session called "Public Control over Kazakhstan's Penitentiary System."

Prominent Kazakh rights activist Vadim Kuramshin, who has worked on human rights in Kazakh jails, asked Nowak if he was aware of the extent of the preparation that took place in the prisons on the eve of visits by international observers.

"When you, Mr. Nowak, visited jail 166/10 in Astana last year, I was an inmate there," Kuramshin said. "Do you know how the jail's administration prepared for your visit then?"

Nowak said he had some information about the situation in the Kazakh jails and labor camps he visited last year. He said he spoke to some inmates at the time and was told that they were forced to paint the walls, doors, windows, and gates in the prisons ahead of his visit. Nowak added that he was aware of the fact that new beds, mattresses, pillows, and blankets were brought to the prisons and the inmates were not allowed to lie on the beds until the international delegations' visits ended. He told RFE/RL that his mission in

Kazakhstan last year was the hardest of all his missions. Despite attempts by the jails' administrations to conceal the real situation, he said, "I managed to talk to some inmates separately and they told me about beatings and abuse." He added that he hopes Kazakhstan will stop playing games with me when we are working to prevent torture in prisons. Sultan Kusetov, the chief of Kazakhstan's Committee for Control Of Penitentiaries (KUIS) who was present at Nowak's briefing, told journalists he sees nothing wrong with attempts by Kazakh prisons to "look better" for international delegations. "Even when you expecting guests at your home, you clean your house and make it more attractive," Kusetov said. "So what is wrong with getting new furniture and cleaning the premises in jails."

Kyrgyzstan Political Front

- Poll shows six of 29 parties will pass to parliament

In Kyrgyzstan, the poll of Perspektiva Consortium has shown that six of 29 parties, participating in the elections, will pass to parliament.

From September 14 to September 28, 2010, within the framework of its research plan, Perspektiva Analytical Consortium conducted a public opinion poll, concerning the issues of population's treatment of the upcoming elections in the Kyrgyz Republic, of political parties and their leaders.

The survey included 1,500 respondents at the age of 18 and above. The respondents were polled by the method of quota sampling, where each region (all oblasts, as well as Osh and Bishkek cities) is represented in proportion with the share of total population of the country. The points of the poll were determined in each region by the random sampling technique. Besides, the population of the republic was stratified by place of residence, geographic region, sex, age, education, national background, employment and material status. The analysis of the obtained answers from all over the country showed that the majority of voters (81.5 percent) would come to polling stations on the voting day. Only 12.1 percent will not participate in the parliamentary elections.

The answers to the question "If the parliamentary elections were held today, which party would you vote for?" are as follows:

Ata Meken Socialistic Party leads with 14.6 percent of votes in its favor. At the second place is the Social Democratic Party of Kyrgyzstan with 10.5 percent. Next to the SDPK goes Ata-Jurt Idealistic Democratic Party with 9.9 percent. Further goes Respublika party with 8.7 percent, Akshumkar – 6.9 percent, Ar-Namys – 6.9 percent and Butun Kyrgyzstan – 5.7 percent.

Other parties collected less than 2 percent of votes of the respondents.

4.5 percent of the pollees would vote against all, if the parliamentary elections were held today. 23.3 percent found it difficult to answer the question.

- Ethnic Uzbeks' Trials In Kyrgyzstan Postponed After Disruptions

KARA-SUU/NOOKEN -- Two separate trials of ethnic Uzbeks in southern Kyrgyzstan have been postponed by the judges after disruptions, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports.

The trial of 10 ethnic Uzbeks in the southern Kyrgyz village of Kara-Suu was stopped by the judge after the defendants' lawyer was attacked by relatives of the victims.

The defendants are charged with the murder of Kara-Suu district police chief Adylbek Sultanov and his driver, Uran Shamurzaev, in the village of Nariman during the deadly clashes between ethnic Uzbeks and Kyrgyz in June.

Relatives of the two men attacked the defendants' lawyer and forced him out of the court building after he stated that his clients were physically abused while in detention. Judge Bakyt Usupbekov then postponed the trial.

Investigators of the case were expected to testify at the hearings on September 30. Usupbekov told RFE/RL that it is not clear when the trial will resume.

And in the village of Nooken, the trial of several ethnic Uzbeks from the southern district of Suzak was cancelled after relatives of the victims and the defendants fought each other near the court building. Police stopped the fight but the trial was postponed.

The trial was in regard to the so-called "Sanpa event," when on June 13 dozens of ethnic Uzbeks gathered outside of Jalal-Abad near a cotton-processing plant and reportedly opened fire at passing vehicles. Cars were stopped and the ethnic Kyrgyz passengers allegedly beaten and killed. A total of 16 people died and two others are still missing.

Almost 400 people were killed and many hundreds more wounded during the violent ethnic clashes in the southern Kyrgyz regions of Osh and Jalal-Abad from June 10-14.

- Ethnic Uzbek Journalist Transferred From Kyrgyz Jail To House Arrest

JALAL-ABAD, Kyrgyzstan -- Uzbek journalist Ulukbek Abdusalamov has been transferred due to his poor health from jail to house arrest in the southern Kyrgyz city of Jalal-Abad, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports.

Abdusalamov, who is vice president of the Uzbek Culture Center in Jalal-Abad, reportedly suffered a stroke on September 17 after being hospitalized several days earlier. Ulukbek Abdusalamov

He and three other defendants are charged with inciting interethnic hatred, separatist propaganda, and organizing mass unrest.

Abdusalamov's lawyer, Bektursun Kalmanov, told RFE/RL that due to Abdusalamov's health problems, the other three defendants are being tried separately.

Abdusalamov is the editor in chief of the bilingual (Uzbek and Kyrgyz) weekly "Didor" (Image). He was arrested by Kyrgyz security forces while trying to cross the Kyrgyz-Uzbek border days after unrest in Kyrgyzstan's southern Osh and Jalal-Abad Oblasts in June that left nearly 400 people dead and hundreds more wounded.

Uzbek Culture Center President Kadyrjan Batyrov is also wanted by the Kyrgyz authorities on the same charges. Batyrov is the founder of the Peoples' Friendship University in Jalal-Abad, which was seriously damaged during the violence. His whereabouts are unknown. Earlier this month, a video appeared on YouTube in which Batyrov claimed he is innocent of the charges against him. He added that Abdusalamov and well-known Uzbek rights activist Azimjan Askarov had nothing to do with the ethnic violence.

Askarov and seven other Uzbeks were found guilty by a court in Nooken on September 15 of organizing ethnic clashes and of murdering a policeman in the village of Bazar-Korgon. Askarov and four others received life sentences, two were given 20-year jail terms, and one person was sentenced to nine years.

- Former Kyrgyz President's Nephew To Stand Trial

BISHKEK -- Authorities in Kyrgyzstan say the nephew of ousted President Kurmanbek Bakiev is to stand trial in connection with deadly interethnic violence there in June, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports.

Prosecutor-General's Office spokesman Kubanych Sabyrov told RFE/RL the investigation of Sanjar Bakiev -- who is a son of the former president's eldest brother, Jusup Bakiev -- has been completed and he will face trial.

Sanjar Bakiev and five associates were arrested earlier this summer. They were charged with organizing an armed group, illegally seizing state buildings, instigating ethnic clashes between Uzbeks and Kyrgyz in Jalal-Abad in June, and the illegal purchase and possession of weapons and ammunition.

A group formed after the president fled into exile, the Bishkek-based Committee to Protect Kurmanbek Bakiev, has rejected all the charges against Sanjar Bakiev and his associates as groundless.

Kurmanbek Bakiev has been living in Belarus since he was ousted in the wake of deadly clashes between antigovernment demonstrators and security forces on April 7. He, several of his brothers, and two sons are wanted by Kyrgyz officials for abuse of power, financial crimes, and giving the order to open fire on unarmed demonstrators.

Geo strategic Front

- Russian Border Guards To Be Stationed In Southern Kyrgyzstan

BISHKEK -- Russian border guards stationed in Kyrgyzstan's northern Chui region will be transferred to a southern oblast to help with cross-border issues, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports.

Vladimir Pronichev, chief of Russia's Border Guard Service and head of a delegation that arrived in Bishkek on September 28, said that the group of 40 Russian border guards going to the southern region of Osh will assist Kyrgyz authorities in preventing illegal migration, human trafficking, extremism, and terrorism along part of its border with Uzbekistan. Pronichev said that 20 other border guards will remain in the northern region of Chui, not far from Bishkek. "The most urgent task now, in our view, is to exchange information and also to set up an effective team -- and we've already provided advisers for this purpose -- that is going to combat cross-border criminal groups," Pronichev said. Pronichev stressed that border guarding operations will be the Russian specialists' top priority in southern Kyrgyzstan. "We have a common enemy, which is cross-border crime, and all countries should unite against it," Pronichev said. "This is not about [one country] acting against any other country. We should stand together, and if we do, the situation will stabilize sooner." Violent clashes in June between ethnic Uzbeks and Kyrgyz in the Osh and Jalal-Abad regions left nearly 400 people dead and hundreds wounded. The Pronichev-led delegation held talks with top Kyrgyz officials today, including President Roza Otunbaeva.

- Kyrgyzstan's permanent representative in the UN changes

The permanent representative of Kyrgyzstan in the United Nations Organization has changed. Today President of transition period Roza Otunbayeva signed a decree, according to which Nurbek Jeenbaev was released from the post of permanent representative of the Kyrgyz Republic in the UN in New York City.

With another decree Roza Otunbayeva has appointed Taalaibek Kadyrov to this post.

Economic/Energy Front

- Kyrgyzstan tries to solve debt problem

Kyrgyzstan tries again to correct its “credit history.”

One and a half year ago in Moscow, during the visit of the Kremlin by representatives of delegation from Kyrgyzstan, we heard the conversation of two Russian officials.

- I heard we will allocate a credit for Kyrgyzstan.

- For how long?

- For forty years. As a gift. Who is going to return money to us after forty years?

Four years ago Kyrgyzstan considered joining the HIPC program, supposing to write off the country’s commitments to international financial institutions.

The case with the HIPC, perhaps, is the only one in the history of independent Kyrgyzstan, when the government refused from the opportunity of writing off external debts of the country. One of the reasons of non-consent of the Kyrgyz party to join the HIPC program was the special plans of the ruling elite in regard to energy. International financial institutions, expressing readiness to forgive the republic’s obligations, demanded to make the energy sector management transparent. But it did not happen.

The republic has been looking for the way of paying off the debts without prejudice to the treasure since long. Both Askar Akayev’s and Kurmanbek Bakiyev’s governments tried to solve the problem of debts. Most probably, the official Bishkek will do the same during the fourth president too.

Kyrgyzstan could agree with creditors only once. It happened in 2002 within the Paris Club, when a number of countries decided to turn a blind eye to some obligations of poor Kyrgyzstan. However it did not solve the main problem. The republic external debt, accumulated over the first ten years of independence, keeps hanging over it as Damocles’ sword. Moreover, the burden is getting heavier. Kyrgyzstan’s treasury has too big holes that the officials say it is very difficult to close without attraction of borrowings from abroad. Today the country does not have special capabilities to return the borrowings. The budget deficit of 10.5 percent GDP is a mere confirmation for that.

The worsened situation in economy and necessity of increasing expense items force the new authorities to ask for regular borrowings abroad. Creditors meet them halfway, thus increasing the debt burden of the republic. Is there a method of reducing it?

In New-York, Roza Otunbayeva addressed the international community with a request of writing off the debts in exchange to solution of environmental problems. Official Bishkek, by the way, offered approximately the same in the past. But that time nobody heard its requests. Will anybody hear now? Kyrgyzstan has not very good credit history. Is it possible to replace it by democratic reforms and movement to parliamentarianism, the authorities are trying to put emphasis on?

“We will conduct negotiations about Kyrgyzstan’s external debt relief with each creditor separately,” promises Mirlan Baigonchokov, the Deputy Finance Minister of Kyrgyzstan.

“We have one precedent. We are now considering the possibility of writing off of around €2.2 million out of five million, allocated earlier by Germany.”

The authorities intend to direct these funds for the expenses and development of local communities. The German party will make a decision upon completion of examination of the project. However, even if Berlin approves this possibility, Kyrgyzstan will owe Germany around €50 million more. Against the background of the total amount of Bishkek’s commitments to external creditors, which reached \$2.5 billion, it looks like a drop in the ocean. Nevertheless, the process has launched.

Behind all that, though, Kyrgyzstan often forgets about one more package of financial obligations. What is meant here is internal debt. In 2010, according to official sources, it reached its maximum for all the years of independence. The amount has exceeded 8.5 billion soms. The officials will hardly be able to agree on writing off this debt...

Social Front

- Kyrgyz human rights advocates urge Roza Otunbayeva “to take immediate measures against illegal actions of law enforcement officers and judicial agencies”

Kyrgyz human rights advocates urge the interim president Roza Otunbayeva “to take immediate measures against illegal actions of law enforcement officers and judicial agencies the made during investigations and proceedings against citizens charged with participation in the conflict happened in Osh and Jalal-Abad regions.”

Note of 24.kg news agency: Today Citizens against Corruption human right center informs that “trials for the accused of Osh events are conducted with violations of the legislation.”

“Defendants are exposed to bodily blows even between trial’s breaks and in the presence of judges, executors and prosecutors,” read the message. Citizens against Corruption human right center asserts that all trials are conducted not in courtrooms but in pretrial detention centers, investigator’s rooms and military units.

According to the human right center around 20 people beaten up defendants Sadykzhanov and Khaidarov in the presence of militia, judge, and executors in Kara-Suu district court; they also yielded nationalistic slogans. Requests of relatives to stop beating defendants were ignored. Besides, ether militia or prosecutors didn’t take adequate measures, human right defenders noted. They said also that defendants were beaten up cruelly during the trial conducted in the 7703 military unit of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD) on September 29. Human right defenders say it is alarming that human rights are violated under connivance of judges and prosecutors.

Leaders of the civil society calls Roza Otunbayeva’s attention on that “trials are conducted with rude violations of the legislation: defendants are beaten up during trial and breaks before judges, executors and prosecutors while cases are carried in pretrial detention centers, offices of investigators and military units.”

Citizens against Corruption human right center call upon the interim president “as the guarantee of the Constitution to take severs measures to stop trampling human rights and to ensure protection of the participants of the proceedings through influence on the public authorities responsible for the compliance with the law during investigation and proceedings.”

- Kyrgyz Farmer Shot On Uzbek Border

BATKEN -- A Kyrgyz citizen was wounded in a shooting incident on the Kyrgyz-Uzbek border on September 28, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports.

Tashtemir Eshaliev, who heads Kyrgyzstan's Batken Oblast Defense and Security Department, told RFE/RL the incident took place near the village of Kaitpas in the Kadamjai district when an Uzbek border guard shot at Almaz Joroev, who said he mistakenly crossed the border while searching for missing cattle.

Joroev was hospitalized and underwent surgery. His condition is said to be satisfactory. He said the Uzbek border guard did not warn him before opening fire.

Eshaliev told RFE/RL the incident is being investigated.

Tajikistan

Political Front

- **Second Tajik Prison Escapee Killed By Security Forces**

DUSHANBE -- The Tajik Interior Ministry says security forces have killed a second escapee from a prison break last month, RFE/RL's Tajik Service reports.

The ministry said on September 28 that Russian national Gusein Suleimanov, 25, was killed by security forces in the Chanoro village of Faizobod district one day earlier. It is the same district in which Rahmiddin Azizov, another of the 25 prison escapees, was killed the previous day in a shootout.

The Interior Ministry said Suleimanov, who it said was born in the Russian republic of Dagestan, was killed when he resisted government forces seeking to arrest him. He was said to have been armed at the time.

The ministry added that there were three other fugitives from the jailbreak hiding in a house in the same village as Suleimanov at the time. Their whereabouts are unknown.

Nozirjon Buriev, spokesman for Tajikistan's National Security Committee, said on September 27 that Azizov also resisted arrest on September 26 but was killed by security forces. He said Azizov was carrying an automatic weapon and cash. Twenty-five men escaped from a high-security prison in Dushanbe on August 22. Seven have been recaptured. Azizov was the first fugitive to be killed. Former Guantanamo prison inmate Ibrahim Nasridinnov, one of three people thought to have organized the escape, was captured by security forces in the Vahdat district, about 30 kilometers east of Dushanbe, on September 2. And four days later Abdurasul Mirzoev was caught near the Faizobod district.

The 52-year-old Mirzoev -- the brother of General Ghaffor Mirzoev -- was sentenced to 30 years in prison after being detained 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. Two fugitives were captured in a separate raid on September 10 and two more three days later after a shootout. A few days later Russian citizen Ali Aliev was arrested.

The 16 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 Officials Say Former Rebel Involved In Deadly Attack On Army**

DUSHANBE -- Tajikistan's Interior and Defense ministries say they believe former United Tajik Opposition (UTO) fighter Abdullo Hakimov (aka Mullo Abdullo) played a role in the attack on September 19 in which 25 Tajik soldiers were killed and dozens more injured, RFE/RL's Tajik Service reported.

Interior Ministry spokesman Mahmaddullo Asadulloev told RFE/RL that it is also "very likely" that the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), which Mullo Abdullo is believed to be affiliated with, was involved in the attack on the military convoy in the Kamarob Gorge in the Rasht district.

He added that the ministry thinks it was masterminded by Hakimov and Alovuddin Davlatov (aka Ali Bedaki).

Defense Ministry spokesman Faridum Mahmataliev agreed with Asadulloev. He told RFE/RL on September 22 that the terrorists who perpetrated the attack, none of whom have been apprehended, are foreigners who were helped by local militants like Abdullo and Bedaki.

Meanwhile, Mullo Abdullo's wife, Shamsiya Rahimova, told RFE/RL that she has not seen her husband in 10 years though she still lives in the family home in the village of Kamongaron some 20 kilometers east of Dushanbe.

Rahimova, who has seven children with Mullo Abdullo, said her husband was "not an aggressive person." She said he worked as an electrician and was the village mullah before the outbreak of the Tajik Civil War in 1992.

Mullo Abdullo, who turned 60 this year, rejected the provisions of the peace agreement the Tajik government signed with the UTO in 1997 and later joined the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, which fought against the government during the civil war.

Official sources claim Mullo Abdullo left Tajikistan for Afghanistan in 2000. Unofficial reports say he was detained by international forces in Afghanistan in 2002 and spent several years in an Afghan prison.

Rumors that Mullo Abdullo had returned to Tajikistan began circulating in 2009 but have never been confirmed.

- President urges to strengthen fight against terrorism and extremism

DUSHANBE, September 28, 2010, Asia-Plus – Issues related to recent events in the country, maintenance of public order and prevention of crime were the focus of a September 27 meeting of the Council of Security of Tajikistan, presided over by President Emomali Rahmon.

According to presidential press service, the chief prosecutor and heads of law enforcement and power-wielding structures reported on measures taken to maintain public order in the country.

Events that have taken place over the past two months, in particular jailbreak, terrorists acts and other crimes committed in the country, were a major topic of the meeting.

President Rahmon urged the law enforcement and power-wielding structures to intensify their activities to opportunely detect and address modern challenges such as terrorism, extremism, drug trafficking and corruption.

The law enforcement agencies and other relevant bodies were charged to take efforts to stabilize the situation as soon as possible, pay special attention to providing national security and peace and stability in society, improving training of personnel and border control measures, strengthening fight against organized crime and opportunely solving crimes.

Rahmon noted that the law enforcement and military officers must be vigilant and always ready for the fight against any illegal actions, including terrorism and extremism, and use all means to ensure national unity, peace and stability in society. The head of state pointed the necessity of taking all necessary measures to detain and punish criminals.

Geo strategic Front

- Kremlin's Ruling Party Boosts Ties Across The Former Soviet Union

As Kyrgyzstan gears up for crucial parliamentary elections on October 10, former Prime Minister Felix Kulov's Ar-Namys party has picked up a key endorsement from Russia's ruling United Russia party.

Ar-Namys on September 22 signed a cooperation agreement with United Russia, the colossus that controls executive and legislative branches across the Russian Federation and is headed by Russia's most powerful politician, Prime Minister Vladimir Putin.

Following a model that seems to have worked in Ukraine, where a pro-Western president was replaced earlier this year by a pro-Russian one, United Russia is also now working actively with friendly parties in Moldova, Ukraine, and Georgia -- all countries whose political vector is up for grabs in the next 18 months.

According to a United Russia press release, the Kyrgyzstan agreement includes not only political cooperation, but also calls for the development of "equal and mutually beneficial cooperation between Russia and Kyrgyzstan in the economic sphere, the creation of beneficial conditions for the development of entrepreneurial, investment, and scientific activity."

Further blurring the lines between party activity and national policy, the cooperation agreement was signed on United Russia's behalf by the head of the party's Supreme Council, Boris Gryzlov, who is also speaker of the Russian State Duma.

Deepening Ties

The Ar-Namys agreement is just the latest in a series of such pacts United Russia has signed with parties throughout the former Soviet space. Earlier this month, United Russia signed a similar pact with Moldova's Democratic Party, headed by former Communist Marian Lupu.

Lupu told a press conference after returning from Russia that the agreement with United Russia is part of his party's "pragmatic" view of relations with Russia.

"We need relations of cooperation, not confrontation with Russia. This is the message of the political agreement we signed. Second, Moldova cannot ignore and will not ignore the Russian Federation. Third, we have to be pragmatic and constructive if we want the best for the citizens of Moldova," Lupu said.

Moldova is expected to hold parliamentary elections in November, and analysts say Moscow hopes to split Lupu away from the pro-Western, four-party ruling coalition.

United Russia also has a cooperation agreement with the Renewal party in Moldova's breakaway Transdniester region.

In Georgia, United Russia works with the opposition For A Just Georgia movement of former Prime Minister Zurab Noghaideli, which describes itself as "having a classic right opposition orientation."

Sergei Markov, a Russian Duma deputy and United Russia official, told RFE/RL's Georgian Service that the key issue is improving relations between the two countries.

"United Russia's main goal is to support those political forces that are in favor of better relations between Georgia and Russia. Noghaideli is among them," Markov said.

"But he is not the only one coming out for such a position. Some lawmakers even from [Georgian President Mikheil] Saakashvili's party in private conversations acknowledge the insanity of his policies."

United Russia also has cooperation agreements and provides direct financial assistance to the ruling parties in the breakaway Georgian regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia.

In 2005, United Russia signed a cooperation agreement with the Party of Regions in Ukraine. Earlier this year, Party of Regions head Viktor Yanukovich became president of Ukraine, embarking on a noticeably more pro-Russia course than his predecessor.

Konstanin Kosachyov, who is chairman of the Russian State Duma's Foreign Affairs Committee and heads United Russia's Commission on Interparty and International Ties, told RFE/RL's Russian Service that working with Yanukovych is "simple."

"For us any president of Ukraine is absolutely fine who is realistically oriented toward the interests of Ukraine. [Former President Viktor] Yushchenko interpreted those interests in a false way. Yushchenko thought they consisted of getting as far from Russia as possible and quickly moving toward the West," Kosachyov said. "That is precisely why we had such a hard time with him. But with Viktor Yanukovych, it is simple for us. He has a significantly more precise and adequate understanding of Ukraine's interests."

United Russia's overriding concern in all of these alliances is advancing Russia's political and economic interests in the region. That is why the party, which proclaims itself in Russia as right-of-center, is comfortable working with left-leaning parties in Moldova and Ukraine, a right-leaning ally in Georgia, and parties of indeterminate ideology in Kyrgyzstan, South Ossetia, and Transdniestria.

'Pragmatic Line'

The key factor in United Russia's alliances is the willingness of partner parties to adopt what it calls a "pragmatic" line in relations with Moscow.

Petre Mamradze, a spokesman for Noghaideli's For A Just Georgia party, lays out a position typical of United Russia's partners.

"We are doing everything we can to improve relations with Russia. Being realists, we see this is the ruling party of Russia. According to all opinion polls, the overwhelming majority of this enormous country supports Vladimir Putin and the party that he heads. For Georgia, this is a fact; it is reality. And if we ignore it, we will disappear," Mamradze said.

United Russia's aggressive alliance-making seems to fit into the larger pattern of Moscow's evolving foreign policy. A Foreign Ministry working paper that was leaked to the Russian version of "Newsweek" magazine earlier this month emphasizes that Russia no longer views the world in terms of "friends" and "enemies," but exclusively in the framework of "interests." It urges Moscow to create a range of formal and informal tools for advancing Russia's modernization agenda through foreign ties.

In the area of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), the concept paper emphasizes "supporting the activity of Russian economic operators in the CIS space." It sets the goal of "actively attracting Ukraine into the orbit of economic cooperation with Russia" and "facilitating the expansion of the activity of Russian business in Kyrgyzstan."

The paper does not list promoting stable democratic development in the CIS as a national interest for Russia, and Russian President Dmitry Medvedev told a conference in Yaroslavl this month that parliamentary democracy has been "a disaster" for Kyrgyzstan.

United Russia's position at the nexus of politics and business in Russia means that parties allying themselves with United Russia can expect significant material support in their election campaigns. Noghaideli's For A Just Georgia and Lupu's Democratic Party both have slick, multimedia websites, for example.

Alexander Rondeli of the Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies (GFSIS) says Moscow is "acting now often not through state channels, but through the party United Russia, which can also hardly be considered a political party."

"But if you take this as an attempt to influence the political situation inside Georgia and set up some sort of pro-Russian opposition against the current authorities, you can also assume that definitely without financial contributions this won't work," Rondeli said.

- Some Fear Tajik Opposition Stronghold Could Become Hotbed Of Islamic Insurgency

It was just a few weeks ago that Tajik President Emomali Rahmon was traveling to his country's eastern Rasht region on a mission of goodwill, opening a new college there and discussing economic and social issues with locals.

But that's a distant memory today, after a spate of violent events combined to transform the one-time bastion of the Tajikistan's Islamic opposition once again into a battleground between government forces and militants.

The stakes are high and fears are rising both in and outside the country that Rasht Valley could become a hotbed of Islamic insurgency capable of destabilizing Tajikistan and Central Asia as a whole.

The current crisis originated in the capital, where on the night of August 22 a group of 25 prisoners -- including some high-profile government opponents and Islamic insurgents -- fled a high-security prison located a stone's throw from the presidential palace.

A nationwide search operation followed, and seven of the escapees were soon recaptured. But with most of the escapees at large, eyes turned to the Rasht Valley as a potential refuge and troops were dispatched.

The focus on the region narrowed when 25 government troops were killed in Rasht's Kamarob Gorge on September 19 in an ambush government has blamed on local and foreign fighters. As a result, a full-scale military operation was launched in Kamarob to hunt down militants responsible for the ambush.

On September 22, five fighters loyal to a former opposition warlord, Mirzokhuja Ahmadov, were reported killed. Ahmadov is a native of Rasht who served after the Tajik civil war ended in 1997 as the head of a regional department combating organized crime until he was sent to early retirement in 2008. His whereabouts are unknown, but the reemergence of fighters with ties to him have fueled concerns that some who made peace with Rahmon's secular government have returned to their old ways.

The Tajik government and its Islamist-led opposition signed the peace and reconciliation agreement in 1997, officially putting an end to the country's five-year civil war. Thousands of Islamic fighters were reintegrated into society, and many commanders accepted official positions in law-enforcement agencies. The handful of commanders -- notably Abdullo Rahimov, better known in the country as Mullo Abdullo -- who refused to recognize the peace deal left for Afghanistan, where they established ties with the Taliban and Al-Qaeda.

'Wolf Peace'

Government in Dushanbe officially and nominally managed to get Rasht Valley -- a mountainous region of six districts and some 270,000 population -- under its full control. The heads of the local government were all appointed by Dushanbe and, unlike other regions, were chosen from among local candidates. But many would argue that the Tajik government never managed to win over opposition figures, especially those who remained in Rasht.

Rather, the peace in Rasht was a tenuous one described by Tajiks as a "wolf peace," in which two sides agree to coexist but there is no genuine mutual trust.

Rasht is a mountainous area and historical bastion of Islamic opposition. From time to time, the region has seen armed attacks, killings, and military operations. In February 2008, the country's OMON colonel, Oleg Zakharchenko, was killed in an attack in Rasht blamed on former opposition fighters. Tajikistan's independent Asia Plus agency reported that Zakharchenko and his group of subordinates had travelled to Rasht to arrest Mirzokhuja Ahmadov, whose loyalists were targeted by government troops this week. In May 2009, the region was the scene of a secretive military operation codenamed "Opium," even though the Rasht Valley is not generally known for opium production or as a major drug-trafficking route.

"Opium" took place amid widespread speculation that none other than Mullo Abdullo and several of his armed supporters had returned after their long exile in Afghanistan. Days later, Mirzo Ziyoev, the former chief opposition commander was killed in the eastern town of Tavildara in unexplained circumstances. Ziyoev once served as an emergency situations minister, a position he got under the power-sharing agreement.

Rumors of Mullo Abdullo's return never went away, with government officials accusing Ahmadov of sheltering Mullo Abdullo in his home.

New Allegations

In mid-September, the country's defense and interior ministers and the deputy head of the national security committee traveled to Rasht to meet with Ahmadov and his fellow former warlord Shoh Iskandarov. The content of their meeting has never been made public. However, other local former commanders speculated that the high-ranking officials came to seek the former warlords' support in hunting down Mullo Abdullo.

Now Tajik officials claim that Ahmadov and another former commander, Alovaddin Davlatov, have been running terrorist and religious training camps for young boys.

According to Interior Ministry spokesman Mahmaddullo Asadulloev, it was Ahmadov who was behind the recent ambush on government forces.

"Mirzokhuja Ahmadov -- nicknamed 'Belgi' -- has in the past been pardoned by the head of the state and he has promised he would never undermine peace and stability of Tajikistan," Asadulloev said. "But our urgent investigation and search operations indicated Ahmadov himself was in charge of the unlawful group that killed 25 Tajik soldiers and officers."

Ahmadov, an outspoken government critic, has responded by accusing the government of putting pressure on former opposition fighters, which he said could be unintentionally leading them back to Mullo Abdullo and others who never made peace with the government.

Since the Kamarob ambush, opposition politicians in Dushanbe have condemned the attack.

'Us and Them'

Islamic Renaissance Party chief Muhiddin Kabiri has blamed extremist elements from both sides -- the government and former commanders.

"If moderate forces -- both religious and secular -- come together in the name of the nation's and the state's interests, in the name of our common values, we will be able to thwart those minority extremist elements from both camps," Kabiri said. "We [moderates] are the majority."

Some warn that the domestically-bred dispute is not the real worry, suggesting that Rasht is becoming a stronghold for foreign insurgents moving between Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Tajikistan to join local militants. Tajikistan's Interior Ministry, for example, has said that Chechen, Afghan, Pakistani and Uzbek fighters took part in the Kamarob ambush.

Abdughani Mahmadazimov, head of the Society of Tajik Political Scientists, discounts speculation that militants in Rasht are capable of destabilizing the country.

The conflict will not spread beyond a few villages in Rasht, because militants have no support among the local population, Mahmadazimov says. There are only isolated groups who, unlike opposition forces in pre-war times, lack a clear political agenda, foreign financial backing, and significant support among ordinary people, says the expert.

As for the "state of the peace" in Rasht, Mahmadazimov said the current situation will continue for the foreseeable future.

"Still people are divided into 'us' and 'them,'" he said. "The government and the former opposition leaders still see themselves on two sides of the peace agreement."

- **Tajik Authorities Apprehend Two More Armed Militants**

DUSHANBE -- Tajik authorities say they have arrested two armed supporters of former warlord and special police unit head Mirzokhuja Ahmadov in the mountainous Rasht district, some 200 kilometers east of the capital, Dushanbe, RFE/RL's Tajik Service reports.

Interior Ministry spokesman Mahmaddullo Asadulloev told RFE/RL that the two were detained without any resistance on September 28 and that both admitted to being active members of Ahmadov's group.

Asadulloev said that police detained many other suspected members of the group, but might release them for lack of evidence. A source close to the security ministries told RFE/RL that the detained suspected supporters of Ahmadov include one local police officer.

On September 22, the Interior Ministry said that at least five supporters of Akhmadov, who is a former opposition commander, were killed during a counterterrorism operation in the Rasht district. The ministry added that Ahmadov's house was subjected to a rocket attack and his fate is unknown.

Sources in Rasht told RFE/RL that after the attack on Ahmadov's house, another former opposition commander, Shoh Iskandarov, reportedly joined the militants.

Ahmadov told RFE/RL on September 21 that government forces began searching the homes of former United Tajik Opposition (UTO) fighters in the Rasht district after a September 19 ambush on a military convoy that killed at least 25 servicemen.

The Interior and Defense ministries say former UTO fighter Abdullo Hakimov (Mullo Abdullo) played a role in that attack.

The UTO fought in the 1992-97 civil war against the administration of President Emomali Rahmon.

Economic/Energy Front

- ECO energy and oil ministers to meet in Dushanbe

DUSHANBE, September 28, 2010, Asia-Plus -- The Ministry of Energy and Industries of Tajikistan (MoEI) will host the 2nd Ministerial Meeting on Energy/Petroleum of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO).

The source at a MoEI says the meeting that will take place from September 29 to 30 is expected to bring together energy and oil ministers from Tajikistan, Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Turkey, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan to discuss energy and oil cooperation within the ECO area.

The meeting is expected to formally decide on the status of extension of the Plan of Action (2001-2005 extended up to 2010) and the future course of action in the Energy/Petroleum sector.

The 1st Ministerial Meeting on Energy/Petroleum took place in Islamabad, Pakistan ten years ago, the source added.

According to Iran's Fars News Agency, energy experts of the ECO member nations met in Tehran, Iran on September 20-21 to study cooperation among member states in the field of energy. They also discussed topics of the 2nd ECO Ministerial Meeting on Energy and Petroleum.

The Economic Cooperation Organization is an intergovernmental organization involving seven Asian and three Eurasian nations. It provides a platform to discuss ways to improve development and promote trade, and investment opportunities. The ECO is an ad hoc organization under the United Nations Charter. The common objective is to establish a single market for goods and services, much like the European Union.

The Organization was by Iran, Pakistan and Turkey in 1985 for the purpose of promoting economic, technical and cultural cooperation among the member states. It was the successor organization of what was the Regional Cooperation for Development (RCD), founded in 1962, which ended activities in 1979. In the fall of 1992, the ECO expanded to include seven new members, namely Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

- IMF expects Tajikistan's year-end inflation to stand at 9 percent

DUSHANBE, September 25, 2010, Asia-Plus -- An International Monetary Fund (IMF) team, led by Mr. Todd Schneider, visited Tajikistan from September 13 to September 24 to hold discussions with Tajik authorities on the third review under a three-year extended credit facility arrangement with Tajikistan. The IMF mission reached a staff-level agreement with the Tajik authorities on their 2011 economic program.

On September 24, the IMF head Todd Schneider met with reporters in Dushanbe.

Mr. Schneider reminded that extended credit facility arrangement stipulated providing some 165 million U.S. dollars to Tajikistan. "To-date, 82 million U.S. dollars have been provided to the country under this arrangement and if the IMF's Executive Board approves the findings of this survey, the next tranche in an amount of about 20 million will be made available to Tajikistan," said Mr. Schneider, "This would bring the total disbursement under the arrangement to about US\$103 million."

On the agreement with the Tajik authorities on the 2011 program, the IMF mission head noted that the agreement also required approval by the IMF's Executive Board, which is expected to consider Tajikistan's request for the completion of the third review at end-November 2010. Mr. Schneider noted that as with many countries in the region, economic growth in Tajikistan has rebounded and an incipient recovery seems underway.

According to him, despite disruptions in rail traffic, real economic growth through the first eight months of 2010 was in the range of 6 percent while inflation was at 5.6

percent. Reflecting the economic recovery in Russia and other countries, inward remittances have also rebounded, rising 28 percent during January-August 2010.

“For the year as a whole, we project that the economy will expand by at least 5.5 percent in real terms. Year-end inflation may reach as much as 9 percent, however, due in part to higher international prices for wheat and grains,” Mr. Schneider said.

He noted that the outlook for 2011 was optimistic. “Our current projection is for GDP growth of at least 5 percent—based on relatively conservative assumptions. And barring new external shocks, we expect inflation to decline to about 7 percent.”

Risks to the outlook stem from the uncertainty regarding the strength and sustainability of the rebound in remittances, exports, and growth—which depend in large part on economic recovery in the rest of the world. “Uncertainty regarding regional rail traffic also cloud the outlook,” said Mr. Schneider, “Financial sector indicators have also worsened in recent months, potentially making it more difficult for banks to provide credit.”

The program seeks to ensure continued macroeconomic stability, contribute to poverty reduction, and engender high and sustained economic growth. In this context, the government will seek to target a fiscal deficit equivalent to about 1 percent of GDP in 2011, which should allow for a rise in social spending. Monetary policy will continue to target reserve money, with a view to containing inflation. The National bank of Tajikistan will also continue to build foreign exchange reserves while maintaining a flexible exchange rate regime. Structural reforms will focus on enhancing the transparency and accountability of the NBT and state-owned enterprises, bolstering government revenues and public financial management, and addressing weaknesses in the financial system.

Social Front

- Lenin Statue Removed For 'Renovation' In Southern Tajikistan

KULOB, Tajikistan -- Residents of the southern Tajik town of Khatlon discovered on September 29 that the monument to Soviet leader Vladimir Lenin had been removed from the town's central park, RFE/RL's Tajik Service reports.

A park security guard said he has no idea what happened to the statue. The local Communist Party branch convened an emergency meeting and adopted a resolution condemning the "inhuman act" and demanded that the "vandals" responsible for the disappearance of the monument be held responsible.

Park manager Sharaf Azizov announced late on September 29 that the monument was transferred to the park's warehouse for renovations. He explained that the statue was erected more than 70 years ago and has lost its shape and color.

Azizov pledged that it will return to its original place as soon as the restoration process is complete. This is the third Lenin monument to be removed from a central location in Tajikistan this year, RFE/RL reports.

One Lenin statue was removed from the center of Khorugh, the capital of Tajikistan's mountainous Gorno-Badakhshan Province, and a second from the center of Khujand, the capital of the northern Sughd Province. Neither was returned.

Turkmenistan

Political Front

Geo strategic Front

- Ambassador of Czech Republic accredited in Turkmenistan

On September 28, Speaker of the Mejlis of Turkmenistan Akja Nurberdieva received credentials from the Ambassador of the Czech Republic Robert Kopecky.

As the Turkmenistan.ru correspondent reports from Ashgabat, during the meeting the sides spoke in favor of further expansion of effective cooperation between Turkmenistan and the Czech Republic in trade, economic, humanitarian spheres, tourism, as well as fuel and energy sector. Particular emphasis was placed on enhancing cooperation in cultural, educational and scientific spheres.

On the same day, the Czech Ambassador held talks at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Energy and Industry, the Ministry of Oil and Gas Industry and Mineral Resources, the Ministry of Trade and Foreign Economic Relations of Turkmenistan. During his visit, the diplomat will also travel to the city of Turkmenbashi to get familiar with the construction of national tourist zone "Avaza".

Economic/Energy Front

- Turkmenistan increases throughput capacity of C Asia-China gas pipeline

ASHGABAT, September 27 (Itar-Tass) -- Turkmenistan commissioned a compressor station Bagtyyarlyk on Monday. This is the starting point of the Turkmenistani stretch of the Turkmenistan-Uzbekistan-Kazakhstan-China gas pipeline. The compressor station is located on the Turkmenistani-Uzbek border in the Khodzhabassky district of the Lebap region.

The commissioning of the compressor stations with a daily capacity of 60 million cubic metres of gas makes it possible to increase the throughput capacity of the gas pipeline, which will pump natural gas from Central Asian fields to China.

"The station will make it possible to increase significantly gas supplies to the Turkmenistan-China gas transportation network," Turkmenistani President Gurbanguly Berdymukhammedov said at the opening of the Bagtyyarlyk compressor station. "It can pump 60 million cubic metres of natural gas every day."

Social Front

- Paucity Of Turkmen Books At Ashgabat Book Fair

Readers in Turkmenistan have thousands of books to choose from if they wish to know about culture, history, economy, science fiction, or other apolitical themes.

An international book fair opened in Ashgabat earlier this month under the motto "The Book is the Way to Cooperation and Progress." Participants include some 90 publishing houses and authors from 25 countries, including Russia, Ukraine, and other former Soviet states. The book fair was something of a disappointment for those looking for works by Turkmen authors.

RFE/RL Turkmen Service correspondents in Ashgabat say there were only about 20 books by local authors on offer. However, there wasn't any shortage of books authored by Turkmen President Gurbanguly Berdymukhammedov.

Berdymukhammedov's latest work, "Public Regulation of Socioeconomic Development in Turkmenistan" has come out in Turkmen and Russian languages this month -- just in time for the international book fair.

According to Turkmenistan's state-run media, the president's two-volume new book "describes the ideological, theoretical, scientific and practical basis for public regulation of the national economy, a unique model of economic development of modern Turkmenistan." Whatever that means.

Berdymukhamedov has authored two other books and published a collection of his speeches at cabinet meetings.

The dentist-turned-president's first book, "Scientific Fundamentals of the Development of Public Health in Turkmenistan," was published within months of his quick rise to power in late 2006 and 2007.

The second presidential book, "Akhaltekke: Our Pride and Glory," followed in 2009. A keen horseman, Berdymukhammedov dedicated that book to the Akhaltekke breed of horse, a national symbol of Turkmenistan.

Unlike his predecessor, Saparmurat Niyazov, the current Turkmen president has not turned his books into compulsory reading for all Turkmen students and public-sector workers.

But unlike other Turkmen authors, he enjoys the exclusive privilege of having his name appear on the cover of his books. Other authors' names appear only inside their books.

Cyber News

- Turkmen Dipping Their Toes Into Online Forums

"I read 'Ruhnama' to the end. It is a mixture of soup, rice, pepper, and poison. I would say it shows Turkmenbashi's thought process. The ideas are not in order. It's chaotic. The beginning of the thought is in the middle, the middle is at the end, and the end is at the beginning."

Such criticisms, made about the book of poems and spiritual guidelines set out by the late Turkmen leader Saparmurat Niyazov can bring real trouble in Turkmenistan.

The lifting of some restrictions on the Internet, however, is allowing some Turkmen to express themselves in an open forum while providing outsiders a rare look into their everyday problems. If you are pregnant, you have to pay a bribe. If you want to study in a good school, you need to pay a bribe. To get any document, you have to give bribes.

The comment about Niyazov, the country's eccentric and longstanding former president, was posted by "Juneythan" on talyplar.com, a Turkmen-language social-networking site intended for students. Set up in the United States, the site and others like it are still online minnows but they are slowly growing in popularity among Turkmen both inside and outside the country. It is a small window made possible by Turkmenbashi's successor, President Gurbanguly Berdymukhamedov, who since taking power in December 2006 has taken baby steps toward opening the energy-rich Central Asian country to the outside world.

Small Measures Of Freedom

During Niyazov's decades-long rule, the Internet was available only for a select few, mostly government officials and well-connected families in the capital, Ashgabat.

Berdymukhamedov, in his first months of office, freed things up a bit, providing greater access to the Internet that led to the opening of dozens of Internet cafes in the capital and other regions. Now, the economy, corruption, and domestic finances are among popular topics on blogs and forums, and while the Turkmen president might be responsible for the newfound openness compared to his predecessor's rule, it does not spare him from criticism. "Berdymukhamedov promised to invest billions of dollars in Dashoguz Province during his first year as a president. I think it was \$4 billion. I went to Dashoguz in 2009, nothing has changed. This is just one example," writes Sirat on teswirler.com.

In another post, Sirat says government policies are simply "wrong."

"Why there is so much corruption around?! If you are pregnant, you have to pay a bribe.... If you want to study in a good school, you need to pay a bribe. To get any document, you have to give bribes. Bribery is in our blood now. Why? Because salaries are low, prices are high. There is only one employed person in most families. Many families survive on pensions," Sirat writes.

An unnamed subscriber on the same chat thread laments the situation and calls for laws regulating corruption to be strengthened.

"Corruption has reached the maximum degree. And the reason for this is that there are no regulations on this issue and there is no rule of law," the user writes. "During Soviet times, shopkeepers would get jail sentences only for embezzling a penny."

'Worst Enemy Of Internet'

Despite the small changes, Turkmenistan still has a long way to go in its on-line liberalization.

In its 2010 report, the Paris-based Reporters Without Borders (RSF) listed Turkmenistan among the Worst Enemies of the Internet -- along with North Korea, Burma, China, Iran, and Cuba.

According to the RSF report, the government still has the Internet under its strict control, filtering its content and blocking many sites.

For instance, Facebook and other social-networking sites such as the Russian Odnoclassniki (Classmates) are blocked, along with many foreign news sites and YouTube.

Access to the net also comes at a high cost, placing the Internet beyond the reach of ordinary Turkmen citizens. An hour of surfing the net at an Internet cafe costs about \$2.10, while surfing at home costs \$0.42 per hour in addition to a monthly subscription fee of \$4.20. Such prices are prohibitive in a country where, despite vast energy wealth, some 30 percent of the population lives in poverty, and the average monthly salary is about \$200.

Many blame high prices as the main hurdle for the expansion of the Internet in Turkmenistan. According to Pyramid Research, a telecommunications research organization, the number of individual subscriptions in Turkmenistan at the end of 2009 was just 13,200 and the estimated total number of users was about 127,000.

That's out of a population of roughly 5 million.

In Turkmenistan, virtually all domestic publications, broadcast media, and news agencies operate under government control. State media is a mouthpiece of the government, and as Feya describes the situation in a comment posted on talyplar.com in September, they offer little to attract most Turkmen.

"If they broadcast interesting news, if they reported about the situation in our country, no one would watch foreign channels. They have good television programs only on New Year's Eve. But they repeat those programs during the whole year. People are tired of the same things," writes Feya.

"Given the state of the media in Turkmenistan, the Internet is basically the only space, where alternative views -- however limited -- can be expressed," says Lucie Morillon, co-author of the "Enemies of the Internet" report.

Turkmen President Gurbanguly Berdymukhamedov

Morillon says autocratic regimes such as Turkmenistan's are suspicious of social networking sites "because it could be a tool for the mobilization of civil society." But for now, she says there is reason for limited optimism about developments in the country.

"The fact that some bloggers are able to raise some sensitive issues and discuss it with [other] Turkmen based not only in the country but also abroad, may bode well for the future," Morillon says.

"I think we need to see whether they will be free to continue doing that or whether the government will decide to increase its grip on the Internet, because they are afraid it's maybe a space that is not under their control and could destabilize the regime. We'll see. But if they let it go, it could be a way of opening up the country and the society and giving some sound information to the people, which is much needed in Turkmenistan."

Bridge Abroad

Talyplar.com and teswirler.com, set up three years ago, have steadily built up a following, with several hundreds of users visiting the two sites each day, compared to only 10-15 users a day two years ago. The type of personal information commonly offered by users of Facebook and other sites is not to be found on these sites -- the majority of users go by nicknames and hardly ever mention their location or profession. But it is obvious from the content of many posts that they provide a rare communication bridge to the outside world.

Turkmen students studying abroad ask those in Turkmenistan about job opportunities and salaries at home. School graduates in Turkmenistan post questions asking about university entrance exams, education fees, and living costs for students abroad. "Where to study medicine?" asks Begenchmurat, who says he is a school-graduate in Turkmenistan. "It is better to study in your own country than in Kyrgyzstan, Belarus, or Ukraine," replies "Forbidden."

"Feya" advises caution, noting: "there is one problem.... I will have to pay bribes here in addition to the tuition fee. Double expenses. Plus students need to attend many bureaucratic gatherings. They take us to endless ceremonies and meetings."

Of course, like the society it reflects, the discussion is not all serious. There is plenty of room for comments on weather, sport, friendly banter, and searches for long-lost friends or elusive love.

The important thing, advises Vladimir Torin on talyplar.com, is expressing and sharing ideas. "Don't keep your ideas inside your head," he writes. "If an idea comes to your head, implement it. If you have no plans to implement, then share it with the world and put your signature underneath."

Uzbekistan

Political Front

Geo strategic Front

- The U.S., caught between the Afghan war and human rights in Uzbekistan

The U.S. has been accused of becoming soft on Uzbekistan's human rights record because of its close military cooperation with Tashkent on the Northern Distribution Network, which carries a significant portion of U.S.'s war materiel to Afghanistan via Central Asia. But evidence has been somewhat hard to come by to either prove or disprove that assertion.

Now, though, a conflict is brewing that could be a big litmus test for exactly how far the U.S. is willing to push Uzbekistan on human rights, and how much Uzbekistan is willing to push back. An Uzbek journalist for the Voice of America, based in Tashkent, has been arrested and goes on trial next week for various defamation and being a "threat to public order and security." International observers are unanimous on the charges being trumped up and intended to frighten Uzbekistan's already beleaguered press.

The U.S. ambassador to the OSCE released a statement condemning the journalist's treatment:

The United States wishes to express its grave concern about the state of media freedom in Uzbekistan. We find particularly worrying the present charges brought against journalist Abdulmalik Boboyev. A majority of the charges against Mr. Boboyev are related directly to his work as a journalist, including charges of insult, defamation and preparing and disseminating material constituting a threat to public order and security. A fourth charge is for "illegal entry into the country" and apparently stems from a minor incident involving a missing stamp in Mr. Boboyev's passport.

Despite having worked for Voice of America in Uzbekistan since 2005, and despite repeated attempts to register with the government, Mr. Boboyev's applications for registration seem to have been ignored by Uzbek authorities, leaving him without official accreditation and open to governmental criticism for being unregistered. Such tactics are unfair.

But the U.S. Embassy in Tashkent has been quiet about the matter -- so far. If the trial goes ahead, U.S. officials will be watched very closely and will get a lot of criticism if it looks like they aren't doing everything possible to help the reporter. But they'll also surely remember 2005, when they belatedly and mildly criticized Uzbekistan for the Andijan massacre, and still got kicked out of the Karshi-Khanabad airbase as a result.

My thought: the U.S. can probably push a lot harder this time than it did in 2005. For one, Uzbekistan is making a lot of money off the NDN, including the state railroad company and private freight companies that are closely connected to government officials. So there's an economic incentive for Uzbekistan to keep the NDN humming.

Secondly, President Islam Karimov is a lot more confident in his position now than he was in 2005, after five years of hounding NGOs and international organizations out of the country. So his fears of an externally imposed "color revolution" are lessened now, as can be seen from his restrained reaction to the events in Osh. So he may think he can absorb a little more criticism and not be weakened by it.

On the other hand, the NDN has become enormously important to the U.S. effort in Afghanistan. So the U.S. may not want to risk it. We'll see...

Economic/Energy Front

Social Front

- The Tashkent-based journalists could not remember a single name of Uzbek senators

On September 23 US embassy in Uzbekistan organized the meeting of Mimi Tennyson Goss, the expert in the field of public administration and journalism, PhD of Harvard University, with journalists.

Mimi Tennyson Goss. Photo of Ferghana.Ru news agency

Ms Goss talked about the importance of interaction between high ranking officials and journalists, emphasizing high significance of freedom of speech for public and state in general. "The freedom of choice produces benefits for the state. USA respect and adhere to the freedom of speech, but it [the freedom of speech] is not absolute – it does not mean one is allowed to scream "Fire" in the movie theater if there is no real fire", Dr. Goss noted.

She is the instructor at the Harvard University's J. Kennedy School of Government. Dr. Goss is experienced in management, interaction with mass media, cross-cultural communication, interaction between cinema and national specifics as well as public speaking. She conducted communication training for US State Department and Women-Partnership for Peace in Africa program (Rwanda), Kennedy School program for the leaders from developing countries, Harvard University program for Native Americans and other.

Considering current problems with the freedom of speech in Uzbekistan, the journalists were interested to find out how to deal with this in compliance with legislation. Dr. Goss said: "US officials are ready to be criticized; they are even afraid of journalists. However, many political leaders believe it is a good practice to communicate with mass media. This helps them gain trust both from journalists and citizens".

Mimi Tennyson Goss. Photo of Ferghana.Ru news agency

Speaking of slander, Mimi Goss mentioned that "it is extremely difficult to prove it; therefore, the officials rarely try to blame mass media in slander. First, it is necessary to identify the fact of slander. Then it is necessary to prove that information, mentioned by the journalists, is false. The last and most important point – it is necessary to prove that the journalist was motivated by cloven hoof. Most frequently, the legal trials end with the first two points while the legislation protects journalists at the third point", Ms. Goss informed.

In this concern, we remember the cases with photographer Umida Akhmedova, correspondent Abdumalik Boboev and some other journalists, accused of the slander at Uzbek people and law enforcement bodies of Uzbekistan.

One of the independent journalists asked Dr. Goss if, in her opinion, the coverage of event by pro-governmental media and violation of rights of independent press was possible. Dr. Goss avoided the direct answer and recommended local journalists addressing Uzbek senators more often. The journalists could not even remember a single name of Uzbek senator. It is not surprising that civil servants in Uzbekistan communicate with neither citizens nor journalists.

This case reminded the statement of American senator John McCain, produced in Tashkent. During the press-briefing in 2005 the future presidential candidate urged to conduct international investigation of the Andijan massacre. The local journalist Abu Nasyr Niyazmatov asked "It is common knowledge that this investigation will be conducted by the deputies of our parliament. Do you not trust your Uzbek colleagues?" "I would do if they were elected by people!" Mr. McCain responded.

Dr. Goss visited Uzbekistan for the first time. Perhaps, the outlook of the stranger let her share with Uzbek journalists about building the relations between media and government in the West, not producing the evaluation and letting the audience to independently seek for parallels with Uzbekistan and consider significant difference.

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