

BUSINESS AND POLITICS IN THE MUSLIM WORLD
TURKEY

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SUMMARY-POLITICAL NEWS

PKK'S ROLE IN PREVENTING fighting against the Turkish state

One of the country's leading pro-Kurdish figures has called on the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, to withdraw its armed members from the Turkish border to avoid irritation. An outlawed Kurdish terrorist group that has been fighting against the Turkish state for decades said Thursday that they would extend its unilateral cease-fire for another month.

A Turkish court has sentenced the co-chairman of the country's main pro-Kurdish

A Turkish court has sentenced the co-chairman of the country's main pro-Kurdish political party Selahattin Demirtaş to 10 months in prison for promoting a terrorist organization, Doğan news agency reported Tuesday.

Gülen movement schools in the eastern province of Hakkari are threatened by the terrorist Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK)

Schools opened by the Gülen movement, inspired by internationally respected Turkish scholar Fethullah Gülen, in the eastern province of Hakkari are often threatened by the terrorist Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), according to an interview by the T24 news portal.

Translators are fighting for recognition of their vocation as an independent industry

Translators are fighting for recognition of their vocation as an independent industry as their sector associations struggle to address payment issues and implement industry standards. Some publishers pay less than promised, delay payments and decide not to publish books in the middle of their translations, according to Literary Translators Society, or ÇEVBİR, head Mehmet Morali.

The Parliament's General Assembly will convene on Friday its agenda

The Parliament's General Assembly, on break since July 23, will convene on Friday with its agenda focused on discussing the upcoming elections, adjustments to the Constitution and European Union laws.

Summary-GEO-STRATEGIC NEWS

The United States wants to work together with Turkey

A former U.S. national security advisor has said The United States wants to work together with Turkey while it continues its military withdrawal from Iraq and pushes for Israeli-Palestinian negotiations in the Middle East.

The United States' rejected the UN report on Israel's May 31 raid on aid ship Mavi Marmara.

The United States' has rejected the UN report on Israel's May 31 raid on the Gaza-bound aid ship Mavi Marmara. This drew a negative reaction Wednesday from Turkey's foreign minister. Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu expressed disappointment by saying that Turkey expects solidarity from her allies.

Turkish and Chinese air forces secretly participated in a military drill

The Turkish and Chinese air forces secretly participated in a military drill in Konya, which drew a negative reaction from USA, daily Taraf reported Thursday.

Italy backed Turkey's full European Union membership

Italy's foreign minister backed Turkey's full European Union membership on Wednesday, criticizing any formulas that would fall short of granting complete accession.

Turkey feels double standards in its aspirations to join the European Union

European Affairs Minister Egemen Bağış said Wednesday Turkey feels a victim of double standards in its aspirations to join the European Union, citing the question of visa-free travel. He said further Turkey doesn't want any special treatment, but we don't want additional burdens either. Turkey is in a much better position than some other countries that have had visa requirements lifted.

The secretary-general of NATO will pay a visit to Turkey, next week

Anders Fogh Rasmussen, the secretary-general of NATO, is set to pay a visit to Turkey on Oct. 7, private channel NTV reported Thursday. Rasmussen will meet with top Turkish civilian and military officials including President Abdullah Gül, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu during his visit.

A Nine-year-old Merve Tekinay , Turkish student has donated one year's worth of her pocket money to Pakistani flood victims

A Nine-year-old Merve Tekinay from Konya Turkish student has donated one year's worth of her pocket money and her favorite toy to Pakistani flood victims. Pakistani President Asif Ali Zardari ordered that an appreciation medal be delivered to Merve.

Turkey hold a conference, together with Kyrgyz administration, to restore stability there

Turkey will hold a conference, together with Kyrgyz administration, to gather all parts in Kyrgyzstan to restore stability following the recent incidents in the country. Hundreds of people were killed and thousands were wounded during ethnic clashes between Uzbek and Kyrgyz population in Kyrgyzstan in April.

Turkey is currently holding presidency of Conference on Interaction & Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA). Turkish Foreign Ministry officials said on Wednesday that CICA term presidency and Kyrgyz administration would jointly hold a conference on inter-ethnic dialogue, consensus and tolerance on October 1 and 2 in Issyk-Kul.

Turkey urged the Palestinian group Hamas to stop rocket attacks on Israel

Turkey has urged the Palestinian group Hamas to stop rocket attacks on Israel and seek dialogue with Europe and the United States, President Abdullah Gül has said.

Turkey, Syria, Lebanon and Jordan have agreed to step up cooperation to creating a free trade zone

The foreign ministers of Turkey, Syria, Lebanon and Jordan have agreed to step up cooperation as they move closer to creating a free trade zone, complete with visa-free travel in a cooperation scheme that many say would establish the Middle East's version of the European Union.

Finland and Turkey are leading a new peace arbitration initiative – aiming to innovate mediation culture -- by establishing a group called “The Friends of Peace Mediation” on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly being held in New York.

SUMMARY-ECONOMIC NEWS

Erdoğan complained at delay in the Nabucco project

Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan on Wednesday complained while speaking at the Black Sea Energy and Economic Forum organized by the Atlantic Council about the delay in the Nabucco project that is designed to carry Caspian natural gas to Europe. The Nabucco project is designed to carry Caspian natural gas through Turkey, Bulgaria, Romania and Hungary, ending in Austria. Intergovernmental

agreements have been signed between the countries and the Nabucco Consortium is working on securing an energy supply as well as financing.

Istanbul as an international financial center

Turkey's rapid recovery from the global downturn is giving a new boost to the government's plan to turn Istanbul into an international financial center, the Wall Street Journal said in its Thursday issue.

Debt caused no problem for Turkish economy

Debt does not seem to have caused the Turkish economy many problems in recent months despite its damaging impact on many European countries, according to the president of a top institute.

TUSIAD'S CHAIRMAN COMMENTS ABOUT TURKISH ECONOMY

Ümit Boyner, the chairwoman of the Turkish Industrialists and Businessmen's Association, or TÜSİAD, said Thursday Turkey's e-Performance is still below the required level despite recent improvements. In several surveys by various bodies such as the United Nations, World Economic Forum and the World Bank shows Turkey's position which still have long way to go in terms of infrastructure, human resources and regulating the media.

Turkey has the capacity to meet its neighbors' food demand

Turkey has the capacity to meet its neighbors' food demand, but it has to utilize technology and science to hike production while using water more efficiently, according to the top executive of the Syngenta Foundation for Sustainable Agriculture, or SFSA.

Turkish-Portuguese trade volume reached 580 million USD

The head of the Turkish-Portuguese Business Council said Thursday that Turkish-Portuguese trade volume reached 580 million USD in the first seven months of 2010, with a 35.3 percent rise over the same period of the previous year.

Montenegro invited Turkish businessmen to invest in Montenegro

Montenegro's parliament speaker visited the Union of Chambers & Commodity Exchanges of Turkey (TOBB) headquarters in Ankara on Thursday. Montenegrin Parliament Speaker Ranko Krivokapic said his country was a country suitable for investments, Turkey had a historical priority in investing in his country, and called on Turkish businessmen to invest in Montenegro.

Azerbaijan wants to implement natural gas projects

Azerbaijan's energy minister said on Thursday that it was time to implement natural gas projects. Industry and Energy Minister Natiq Aliyev said Turkey and Azerbaijan had signed significant agreements regarding energy sale to Turkey and for Shah Deniz II Project.

Unemployment was a major problem for Turkey

The Turkish finance minister said on Thursday that unemployment was the biggest problem both for Turkey and the world nowadays. Delivering a speech at the inauguration of the "Middle East Carpet and Decoration Fair" in south-eastern Gaziantep province, Turkish Finance Minister Mehmet Simsek said the success to be achieved in finding a solution to the unemployment problem would be a major factor that would support growth in the future.

TURKISH OIL COMPANY 70,000 barrels of oil a day

The head of the Turkish oil company said on Thursday that the company was producing 70,000 barrels of oil a day. Director General Mehmet Uysal of the Turkish Petroleum Corporation (TPAO) said the company was investing in Turkey, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Syria.

Georgia wants to establish business relations with Turkey

Prime Minister Nikoloz Gilauri of Georgia said that Turkey was the biggest commercial partner of his country. Speaking at the opening of the "2nd Black Sea Energy & Economy Forum" in Istanbul, Prime Minister Gilauri said that Turkey was also the owner of highest amount of investments in Georgia.

SUMMARY-SOCIAL NEWS

The 8th Turkish Festival will take place in Washington, D.C. on October 3.

The festival will be organized by American-Turkish Association DC and is expected to host 20,000 visitors. A total of 15,000 visitors --most of were U.S. citizens-- visited last year's festival

POLITICAL NEWS

Pro-Kurdish figure calls on PKK to withdraw from Turkey's border region

Thursday, September 30, 2010

ANKARA - Hürriyet Daily News

One of the country's leading pro-Kurdish figures has called on the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, to withdraw its armed members from the Turkish border.

"To avoid provocation, the organization [PKK] should withdraw its arms in order to lay the groundwork for the peace process," Ahmet Türk, the co-chairman of the Democratic Society Congress, or DTK, told reporters in the southeastern province of Mardin on Wednesday.

The chairman's call to head off further clashes between the Turkish military and the PKK comes at a time when speculation is spreading that the outlawed organization will extend its unilateral cease-fire – originally declared in mid-August for a period of approximately one month – until the 2011 general elections, which are expected to be held in June.

Though Türk said he believed peace would some day be achieved between Turkish and Kurdish people, he underscored that provocation could occur at any time without efforts to thwart it.

"Whenever peace comes to the agenda, some people try to block it," he said, also calling on neighboring countries to support the peace process.

"It's important to solve internal dynamics. If a confidence-inspiring environment is achieved, I believe we are at a point where everybody can say, 'Enough,'" Türk said, adding that both sides should create a road map for peace.

"Both parties should make an effort to create an environment of reconciliation and dialogue," he said, expressing his hope that the PKK's period of non-action continues.

The outlawed PKK, which is listed as a terrorist organization by Turkey, the United States and the European Union, took up arms in 1984. The conflict has since claimed 45,000 lives.

Turkish president at odds with AKP over timing of new constitution

Wednesday, September 29, 2010

ANKARA - Hürriyet Daily News

President Abdullah Gül is in disagreement with Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan over the timing of the new constitution, remaining in the same camp with the main opposition leader.

Erdoğan, meanwhile, asked his deputies at the ruling Justice and Development Party, or AKP's, Central Executive Board meeting on Tuesday to establish a commission for a new charter.

Gül, speaking to journalists over the weekend during a flight from the United States to Turkey, supported Republican People's Party, or CHP, leader Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu's call for a new constitution prior to the 2011 elections.

"Kılıçdaroğlu's attitude is extremely remarkable. It is very important to say the current Parliament should do it," Gül said.

"The preparation of a new constitution depends on everyone's will, determination and sincerity. I do not think the prime minister will say no if he sees the will of the other parties, especially the main opposition party," he said. "Why should it not happen if there is a strong will?"

In an interview with daily Radikal published Wednesday, Kılıçdaroğlu reiterated that the work could be finalized in a short time if consensus is achieved. He also pointed to his party's determination to overhaul the legacies inherited from the 1980 military coup period by removing immunity for parliamentary deputies and reducing the 10 percent election threshold.

"As long as the ground for consensus is achieved, a solution can be found. All parties can bring their own priorities and send a representative to a joint commission to be formed," Kılıçdaroğlu said.

Asked to comment on Gül's remarks on his calls for a new constitution prior to the 2011 elections, Kılıçdaroğlu said he welcomed Gül's remarks. "His proposal urging all political parties to work together for the new constitution is similarly positive."

With regard to Erdoğan's preference for a new constitution after the 2011 elections, Kılıçdaroğlu said any work initiated before the elections would contribute to the preparation of a new constitution in the post-election period.

Erdoğan and Kılıçdaroğlu have openly expressed their intention of rewriting the Constitution but they have disagreed about the timing of any charter restructuring. While the CHP's Kılıçdaroğlu has said the process could be completed in months, Erdoğan said the right time for drafting a new constitution was after next year's general elections.

Parliament Speaker Mehmet Ali Şahin recently joined the debate, saying Parliament was ready to work if they receive a message from the party leaders on the formation of a commission for charter reform.

Turkish Justice Ministry completes draft on HSYK

Wednesday, September 29, 2010

ANKARA - Hürriyet Daily News

Laws finalizing the adjustments to the Supreme Board of Judges and Prosecutors, or HSYK, have been completed following legal preparations in the wake of a Sept. 12 referendum that paved the way to a restructuring of the body.

Minister of Justice Sadullah Ergin said Wednesday the draft must be passed soon. "After considering the criticism, we will forward the draft to Parliament."

The draft will be revised for a final time in light of comments and suggestions from a number of crucial institutions, including the Constitutional Court, the Supreme Court of Appeals, the Council of State, the Court of Accounts, the Supreme Election Board, the Turkish Justice Academy, the Higher Education Board, or YÖK, the Turkish Bar Association and the Turkish Union of Notaries.

Although the ministry's draft has eliminated some of the concerns raised by the judiciary over the excessive authority of the minister on the board by cutting some of his former authority, the draft still preserves the crucial authority of the HSYK chief, the justice minister.

Investigations cannot be launched against judges and prosecutors without the approval of the justice minister.

Under the new setup, the board will have 22 members working in three separate departments, each with seven members. The Justice Ministry undersecretary will be the 22nd member, while the justice minister will be the ultimate head of the board despite not being a member.

Among other changes, the draft ends the privilege of the Justice Ministry undersecretary, who held a position that previously did not have a reserve member and had to be in attendance for HSYK meetings to take place.

The departments will now be able to convene in the absence of the justice undersecretary.

Constitution of the board

The HSYK will be made up of the minister of justice, the Justice Ministry undersecretary, four main members selected by the Turkish president, three main and three reserve members selected by the Supreme Court of Appeals, two main and two primary members selected by the Council of State and one primary and one reserve members selected by the Turkish Justice Academy.

The other members will be selected from judges and prosecutors within other administrative and judicial justice institutions throughout Turkey.

The HSYK will be responsible for promoting and appointing judges and prosecutors. The board will also be responsible for dismissals and sending judges and prosecutors to the discipline board.

The board will further be a public corporation, with administrative and budgetary independence.

At the same time, the HSYK will have its own General Secretariat, while the Inspection Committee, which was previously under the auspices of the Justice Ministry, will become part of the HSYK.

The minister of justice, serving as the head of the HSYK, will only be able to attend the General Assembly, instead of all departmental activities.

Meanwhile, the minister will not be able to attend the assembly's discussion of disciplinary cases against judges, prosecutors and members and will only have the authority to appoint the General Secretary, but will not have any further say on other appointments.

The agenda of the General Assembly will be determined by the minister of justice and will convene with at least 15 members. Decisions will be made according to absolute majority vote.

At the same time, the department heads will be selected by the General Assembly from among department members although the Justice Ministry undersecretary cannot be selected as a department head.

General Assembly or departmental decisions that result in the expulsion of judges and prosecutors from their post, meanwhile, can be taken to appeal.

Members will also have the right to take legal action against the HSYK head's actions and unilateral decisions.

Turkish translators seek to be protected by law

Wednesday, September 29, 2010

SERPİL YAVUZ

ISTANBUL – Hürriyet Daily News

Translators are fighting for recognition of their vocation as an independent industry as their sector associations struggle to address payment issues and implement industry standards.

Some publishers pay less than promised, delay payments and decide not to publish books in the middle of their translations, according to Literary Translators Society, or ÇEVBİR, head Mehmet Moralı.

“Once a publishing house closed while I was in the middle of translating a book and I was not paid,” he said.

Translators are unable to seek their rights without trade association membership, Moralı said, adding that legal procedures cost far more than translators earn. A translator can translate a 300-page book in three months, earning 750 to 1,200 Turkish Liras per month. “I know many translators who were not paid royalties for the later editions of the books they translated,” said Hacettepe University translation department lecturer Elif Ersözlü, adding that translators also suffer when publishing houses plagiarize and abridge classics and republish them, exploiting those who originally translated them.

Hüseyin Can Erkin, a book translator and a lecturer at Ankara University Japanese Language and Literature, also criticized some publishing houses for plagiarizing and creating imaginary translators.

“You can see 20 different form of Gogol’s ‘Dead Souls’ and not one translator’s name appears on them. Also one translator’s name can appear on books translated from Russian, Italian, German and English – the translator seems to have translated 30 classics in one year,” Erkin said.

“Translators of classics have either died or are too old to seek their rights. Plagiarism constitutes a crime only when the victim files a complaint,” Moralı said.

“We usually get less money for the later editions than for the first edition of books,” said translator Sinem Sancaktaroğlu Bozkurt. “Sometimes we only get money for the first editions, and there are always delays in payments.”

Noting that they pay translators for every edition and commission translations from original-source languages, İletişim Publishing Literary Editor Belce Öztuna said: “If we find that someone has used our translations, we take legal action. In such cases the books are withdrawn from the market and the publisher is punished.”

Bozkurt said most book translators do their job for pleasure because it was hard to live on the income.

Noting one of the ways publishers cut down on costs, Ersözlü said, “Some publishing houses give new translators test translations of 30 or 40 pages of a book and publish a book of test translations from different rejected translators.”

Translation industry difficult to break into

“We have difficulty due to the competition between translation offices,” said Orhan Bilgin, owner of Banguğlu Translation Office. “A text of 1,000 characters without spaces costs 32 liras in our office. But it might be three or four liras in another office.”

Noting the difficulty in becoming established in the sector, Ersözlü said: “Those who are new in the sector get 20 percent of what I get for text translations. If a translation office gets 15 liras for one page, it may give the translator as little as 2 liras.”

Alper Kumcu, a lecturer at Hacettepe University who has been working as an interpreter for three years, said employers want to work with already-established interpreters.

“Members of the Turkey Conference Interpreters Association [TKTD] have the luxury of turning down a job if it is substandard,” he said. “But I believe that as international relations – especially with the EU – [become more important], standards will be

extensively implemented to include all interpreters and awareness about this profession will grow.”

Criticizing the Culture Ministry’s new draft law which would bring all professional associations in a certain field under the umbrella of a single organization, Moralı said: “They have not been able to reach a compromise on what the translation profession is. They equate translators with writers, academic authors and computer software designers under the field of ‘works of science and literature.’”

If the law is passed, translators would only constitute 10 percent of the new organization with little influence, meaning ÇEVBİR would not exist as an independent professional organization, according to Moralı.

Parliament to start term on Friday

Thursday, September 30, 2010

ANKARA Daily News Parliament Bureau

HURRIYAT

The Parliament’s General Assembly, on break since July 23, will convene on Friday with its agenda focused on discussing the upcoming elections, adjustments to the Constitution and European Union laws.

In the new session importance will also be given to the military’s cross-border operation authority memorandum that expires Oct. 17

The opening speech conducted by Parliament Speaker Mehmet Ali Şahin will be followed by a speech by President Abdullah Gül, who is expected to make important statements regarding the constitutional amendments, the Kurdish issue and democratization.

The first task on the agenda will be the 2011 budget, which will be presented to Parliament in mid-October and approved by November.

Also on the agenda through the end of the year will be the adjustment bills required for the constitutional amendments.

The Justice and Development Party, or AKP, government will also have the European Union on its agenda.

The road map to EU membership will largely be shaped by a summit in December, thus pushing the government to focus on its EU reform laws.

It is said that if the summit produces a negative result, the AKP will develop a counter-stance against the European Union until the elections. The AKP has put the EU process on hold for a long time.

It is expected that the ruling AKP will convene Parliament for five months at most, until March. Leaders and deputies will then hit the road to prepare for the election. It is unlikely that Parliament will get any work done after this date.

The oppositional parties will go on the road sooner than the AKP in preparation for the elections.

It is expected that the Republican People’s Party, or CHP, will head out after the party council meeting this weekend.

CHP leader Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu is expected to visit 80 provinces and as many districts as possible.

Nationalist Movement Party, or MHP, leader Devlet Bahçeli will start his election campaign by going to Kars, instead of the opening of Parliament, to attend Friday prayers at the Ani ruins.

Turkish general's death to be reinvestigated after 17 years

Thursday, September 30, 2010

ISTANBUL - Hürriyet Daily News

The Ankara Chief Public Prosecutor's Office has restarted an investigation into a plane crash that claimed the life of a top general in 1993 following the emergence roughly 10 days ago of a wiretapped conversation.

Retired Col. Arif Doğan, a suspect in the ongoing Ergenekon probe, was brought to an Istanbul courthouse Thursday to testify on allegations that the wiretapping showed he was responsible for the Feb. 17, 1993, crash that killed Gen. Eşref Bitlis, a former top gendarmerie commander.

The wiretapped conversation, which can be found online, allegedly records Doğan's grooming of counter-terrorists to combat the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, as well as a confession to assisting in the murder of Bitlis.

Speaking to the media last week, Doğan said that although the voice was his, the recording was a fabricated montage of different conversations.

Testifying on the plane crash in 1996, Professor Ahmet Yüksel from the Aircraft Engineering Faculty of Istanbul Technical University had ruled out the possibility that Bitlis' plane had been sabotaged. Recently, however, Yüksel changed his stance while participating in a TV show. "I am declaring it for the first time after many years," he said. "Yes, [the plane crash was the result of] sabotage."

The Ankara prosecutor has now reportedly asked for Yüksel's 1996 expert report and the details of the military chief prosecutor's dismissal of the case.

JİTEM allegations

Doğan recently claimed to be the founder of JİTEM, an alleged clandestine network within the gendarmerie that has been accused of being behind dozens of unsolved murders, especially in the 1990s. The military has always denied the group's existence. The retired general said he froze JİTEM's activities in 1990, meaning he could not be responsible for Bitlis' death.

In recent conversations with the media, Doğan said he wanted to be heard in court before he dies. The retired colonel is suffering from various health problems and requires respiratory devices to breathe.

An ongoing case regarding JİTEM in Diyarbakır – in which Doğan is not currently a suspect – is investigating claims into suspicious incidents that took place in the 1990s, during the height of the alleged network's alleged activities.

Conspiracy theories

Bitlis was killed just two months before President Turgut Özal, who died of a heart attack April 17, 1993. In the wake of their deaths, many speculated that the two had actually been assassinated by the "deep state" because of their desire to solve the Kurdish issue outside of the parameters of the Turkish state's official policy on the terror problem in the 1990s.

Others, however, have claimed that Bitlis was murdered by the United States because he stated a few days before his death that American planes taking off from the İncirlik base in the southern province of Adana were transferring munitions to the PKK.

The PKK is listed as a terrorist organization by Turkey, the United States and the European Union.

Though Bitlis was known to have opposed the U.S. presence in the Adana area, neither of the rumors about the true cause of his death has ever been accepted as anything more than a conspiracy theory.

Nonetheless, the families of both Bitlis and Özal have steadfastly maintained that the men were murdered, with Tarık Bitlis and Ahmet Özal, sons of the general and the ex-president, respectively, both recently demanding the deaths be re-investigated.

The Ergenekon case in which Doğan is a suspect deals with an alleged ultranationalist, shadowy gang accused of planning to topple the government by staging a coup, initially by spreading chaos and mayhem.

Minors still victimized by Turkey's Anti-Terror Law, lawyers say

Wednesday, September 29, 2010

ÖZGÜR ÖGRET

ISTANBUL - Hürriyet Daily News

Minors arrested and tried under the Anti-Terror Law now officially have better conditions, but lawyers involved say it's only on paper and their fate is really in the hands of law enforcement officers and the courts.

The “stone-throwing children,” as they’re known by the public, or “the children who have been victimized by the Anti-Terror Law,” as human rights activists call them, were in the news most recently on Sept. 26 when 17-year-old A.B. was blinded in both eyes and lost two fingers in Adana after a homemade bomb exploded in his hand. Identified only by his or her initials, A.B. was arrested in May for throwing rocks at police officers and released in July. Lawyer Gülizar Tuncer from Istanbul said there would always be examples of minors like A.B. committing acts punishable by the Turkish Penal Law, but many of them are being punished unjustly as collateral damage.

Lawyer Gülçin Avşar said the changes made last July to the Anti-Terror Law were positive but insufficient. She told the Hürriyet Daily News & Economic Review that minors are now being tried in juvenile courts, instead of criminal courts with special authority, and the articles of the law that ban alternative sentencing options like suspending the sentence or turning it into a fine are no longer in effect for minors.

“Children will no longer be tried as members of a terrorist organization for attending an illegal gathering or demonstration,” she said, citing the changes dictated on paper.

Tuncer, however, said in practice things may vary. She said one does not need to ask for official permission to gather or demonstrate and said even protests made by legal actors like the Peace and Democracy Party, or BDP, may be recorded as though they were by the outlawed Kurdistan Workers’ Party, or PKK.

“Let us say a child attended one of those and was detained. They do not have to attend, actually, they are also being picked up from their homes and schoolyards, too. The charges brought against them happen to be that they gathered in support of the PKK and are with the group,” Tuncer said. She said some police officers plant Molotov cocktails or

gas cans on minors to fabricate evidence. There are also minors who face trial with no evidence other than the testimony of law enforcement officials or other minors, she said. Avşar said there are children who have not been released by courts who are stalling the process despite just applications by their lawyers.

Emin Aktar, head of the Diyarbakır Bar Association, said he has also received information supporting Tuncer's claims, "Although I do not know how common they are." He said although there are fewer than 10 minors who are still in jail in Diyarbakır for related incidents, the problems continue. "We assigned lawyers for more than 8,000 such incidents last year," he said, adding that the families who could afford lawyers for their children are not counted among that number. When asked how to improve the situation, Aktar said the article of the Anti-Terror Law on "making propaganda of a terrorist organization despite not being a member" should be revoked. "Children should be treated as children," he said. "We should separate the one on the mountain with a rifle from the one in the street chanting a slogan."

Outlawed PKK extends cease-fire in Turkey

Thursday, September 30, 2010

SULAIMANIYAH, Iraq — The Associated Press

HURRIYAT

A leader of an outlawed terrorist group that has been fighting against the Turkish state for decades said Thursday that the group would extend its unilateral cease-fire for another month.

Murat Karayılan, a senior member of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, appealed for Turkish leaders to open talks over their demands for greater rights in Southeast Turkey.

He said the group was willing to indefinitely suspend attacks if Turkey agrees to concessions such as releasing jailed Kurdish politicians.

Karayılan spoke to reporters Thursday from a PKK base in the Kandil Mountains northwest of Sulaimaniyah in Iraq.

The PKK, which is listed as a terrorist organization by Turkey, the United States and the European Union, began the cease-fire in mid-August to mark the Muslim holy month of Ramadan.

Turkish Court Sentences Pro-Kurdish Party Leader to 10 Months

A Turkish court has sentenced the co-chairman of the country's main pro-Kurdish political party to 10 months in prison for promoting a terrorist organization, Doğan news agency reported Tuesday.

Selahattin Demirtaş, co-leader of the pro-Kurdish Peace and Democracy Party, or BDP, was charged with spreading propaganda for the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, in a speech he made on Roj TV in 2006.

The PKK is listed as a terrorist organization by Turkey, the United States and the European Union. Roj TV is a Denmark-based, pro-Kurdish TV channel that has been accused of being a mouthpiece of the PKK.

Demirtaş, then the leader of the Diyarbakır branch of the Human Rights Association, had said that imprisoned PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan's "role should be considered in solving the Kurdish issue."

Charges were brought against Demirtaş in a Diyarbakır court in 2006 for his remarks. He was elected as a parliamentary deputy in July 2007, but was not granted full immunity because the Supreme Court of Appeals overturned a lower court's decision and declared that his case should continue because it was related to terrorism, according to daily Hürriyet.

Tuesday, 28 September 2010

Usak publication

Terrorist PKK targets Gülen movement's schools in Hakkari

Schools opened by the Gülen movement, inspired by internationally respected Turkish scholar Fethullah Gülen, in the eastern province of Hakkari are often threatened by the terrorist Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), according to an interview by the T24 news portal.

The portal interviewed a follower of the movement in the province but declined to give his name due to security concerns. The interviewee said the Gülen movement first opened an educational institution, a dersane (lesson-house) in Hakkari in the 1993-94 school year. Students attending a dersane pay for extra lessons outside of their regular school curriculum.

"Troubles in the province reached their peak during those years. Prominent figures of the [Gülen] movement traveled to the region to see what could be done to improve education there. But they concluded that the required atmosphere for establishing a school in Hakkari did not exist. This is when they decided to take the first step to improve education there and opened a dersane. That's how the Fem and Anafen dersanes, which are still active in Hakkari, were opened," he noted.

He also said the first private school the Gülen movement in Hakkari was opened in 2007. There are currently 300 students at the school, Hatice Avcı College, and the school's dormitory accommodates around 100 students, both boys and girls.

According to the interviewee, 80 percent of students at the school come from families that are originally from Hakkari, but the number of students started to decrease after the PKK recently threatened the lives of families sending their children to this school.

The terrorist PKK planted a percussion bomb in the dormitory of the school on Sept. 14, which damaged the building's walls and windows and frightened students and their families.

Following the recent release of a video clip posted on the website of the pro-Kurdish ANF news agency, some families told the school administration that they no longer want to send their children to the school due to security concerns. In the clip, the PKK said, "Whoever sends his child to this school will become a PKK target."

The interviewee said the recent PKK threats have led to a decline in the Hakkari school's attendance. "The school was growing more and more popular among locals. In 2007, when the school was first opened, there were only 70 students. The following year, this figure rose to 150, and then to 300."

'Followers demand protection, police advise them to carry guns'

The interviewee stated that followers of the Gülen movement asked for protection from police after being threatened by PKK members. "The police, however, advised them to carry guns. Let's be logical. What happens when a Gülen movement follower carries a gun for self-protection and uses it in the event of a real danger? Turkey will be outraged!

Everyone will say a movement follower has killed a man. This will pave the way for claims that the movement is engaged in illegal activities,” he stated.

He also said many officials in Hakkari, whether it be the governor or the police chief, say that it is the Gülen movement and its followers who stand firm against the terrorist organization. “They ask us not to bow to the PKK. Otherwise, they say, the nation will be lost in despair,” he added.

According to the interviewee, the PKK has close relations with locals in Hakkari, and almost every Hakkari resident has a family member or relative who has joined the terrorist group.

“Let me give you a striking example. It had a big impact on me when I heard it. A Hakkari resident who used to work for the Gülen school in the province said he was shepherding in the summer months. While resting on a mountain once, as his sheep grazed, he saw men coming from the top of the mountain. They were PKK members, and they were coming to visit him. He immediately killed one of the sheep and cooked it for the terrorists. They all ate together. Then they left. A few months later, he saw one of the terrorists at a grocery store in the city.”

He added that terrorists often visit the city when they want to eat döner, a fast food made with lamb, beef or chicken.

The interviewee denied claims that Gülen schools offer “exclusive training” to students to attract more followers to the movement. He said many graduates prefer to return to their hometowns to serve their community after having completed their higher education. “For example, a doctor I know in Hakkari attended a Gülen primary school. He then went to Van to attend a high school. He studied medicine at a university in one of the western provinces. And years later he returned to Hakkari to serve his people.”

24 September 2010, Friday

TODAY’S ZAMAN İSTANBUL

Geo-strategic News

US needs Turkey for regional issues, for security advisor says

Thursday, September 30, 2010

FULYA ÖZERKAN

ISTANBUL – Hürriyet Daily News

The United States needs to work together with Turkey while it continues its military withdrawal from Iraq and pushes for Israeli-Palestinian negotiations in the Middle East, a former U.S. national security advisor has said.

“We need Turkey as the withdrawal process [from Iraq] continues,” Brent Scowcroft, the U.S. national security advisor for presidents Gerald Ford and George W. Bush, told the Hürriyet Daily News & Economic Review on the sidelines of the Black Sea Energy and Economic Forum in Istanbul.

“I think we need to stay hopefully until the Iraqis can agree on a government,” he said. Iraq’s political parties have been deadlocked since the parliamentary elections in March over who should form the new government and serve as prime minister and president. The elections were ultimately inconclusive as they gave no party a majority in the 325-member parliament.

Despite the country's political deadlock, the Barack Obama administration has withdrawn most U.S. troops from Iraq.

"We and Turkey need to work together to try to make Iraq an important stable element in a very difficult region," said Scowcroft, who also assisted Obama in choosing his national security team. "We need each other to try to deal with Iraq."

Israeli-Palestinian negotiations

Commenting on the friction between Turkey and Israel after a deadly raid by the latter on a Gaza-bound Turkish flotilla, Scowcroft expressed hope that the two countries could resume a more normal relationship, hinting that Turkey could play a role in Israeli-Palestinians negotiations.

"Turkey plays a unique role in the region," he said. "I think as we move toward a serious negotiation on the Palestinian issue, Turkey can be invaluable in working with Israel, so [I] hope that they can repair that relationship. It is very important."

Ankara insists on two conditions — apology and compensation — for resuming normal relations with Tel Aviv.

Asked if Israel would be able to comply with them, Scowcroft said: "I don't know. And I'd rather not take a public position on that but I hope that the two can work together."

There has been a very emotional difference between Turkey and Israel over Hamas and the Gaza issue, he said. "But I hope that will not have to continue and stand in the way of a relationship which has been good, not only bilaterally, but for the region itself."

Recently, there has been an increase of debates on Turkey in Washington, with some members of congress questioning relations with Ankara due to the latter's dissenting vote on Iran sanctions and its treatment of Israel. Others, meanwhile, have become concerned over an apparent shift in Turkey's foreign policy.

Asked to give a picture of Turkey when looked at from Washington, Scowcroft said there was some unease in the U.S. about where Turkey was going and what its intentions were.

"Are they fundamentally different than the old Turkey that we know and love? Are its [actions] just an expansion of their interests? There is a lot of uncertainty about that. And that brings anxiety because Turkey is a very important ally of the United States," he said.

'Turkey and US not actually far apart on Iran'

Scowcroft said Turkey's "no" vote against the U.N. sanctions resolution had been received very badly in the U.S. but added that he understood the Turkish position.

"I think that the United States and Turkey are not too far apart and really the sanctions are designed to get Iran to be willing to talk," he said.

"That's what Turkey wants and that's what the United States wants. I hope we can mend this difference of opinion right now and we can work together to persuade Iran to have serious talks about the future," Scowcroft said.

US rejects UN report on Gaza flotilla raid, Davutoğlu 'disappointed'

Thursday, September 30, 2010

ANKARA - Hürriyet Daily News

The United States' sole dissenting vote on a draft U.N. resolution critical of Israel's May 31 raid on the Gaza-bound aid ship Mavi Marmara drew a negative reaction Wednesday from Turkey's foreign minister.

"We expect our allies to see the subject as a matter of solidarity," Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu said, expressing his disappointment while in the United States.

The United Nations passed the resolution with 30 votes; only the United States objected, though 15 European Union member countries abstained from voting, something Davutoğlu also criticized.

“It is a matter that contradicts the principles and human rights embraced by the European Union,” the Turkish foreign minister said.

The resolution draft was presented by Pakistan, representing the 57 countries of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, to the U.N. Human Rights Council. Three experts from the European Commission of Human Rights analyzed the draft, which endorses a report that concluded there is enough evidence on the flotilla raid to provide grounds to file a lawsuit for murder, torture and inhumane treatment.

Nine aid activists, including eight Turks and one American of Turkish descent, were killed during the raid of the vessel.

Passengers on the Mavi Marmara are meanwhile preparing to take a case to the International Criminal Court, following a report released by the European Commission of Human Rights on human-rights violations.

World court offers new course for Turkish NGO in flotilla case

Wednesday, September 29, 2010

FULYA ÖZERKAN

ISTANBUL – Hürriyet Daily News

With neither Turkey nor Israel as members of the International Criminal Court, the Turkish Humanitarian Relief Foundation, or İHH, has turned to its third option and hoisted the Comoros flag. The NGO plans to make a run on the court in hopes of obtaining a verdict declaring Israeli officials guilty of human rights violations in the attack on the Mavi Marmara in May.

A Turkish nongovernmental organization that organized an ill-fated attempt to deliver aid to Gaza will apply next month to the International Criminal Court, or ICC, on account of the “human rights violations” of Israeli officials, the group’s lawyer said Wednesday.

“There are 700 victims not only from Turkey, but also from 35 other countries. We, together with their lawyers, will apply to the ICC on Oct. 14,” Ramazan Arıtürk, a lawyer for the Turkish Humanitarian Relief Foundation, or İHH, told the Hürriyet Daily News & Economic Review.

Eight Turks and one U.S. citizen of Turkish descent were killed when Israeli commandos stormed the Mavi Marmara on May 31 while the ship and five others were en route to Gaza to break Israel’s blockade against the territory.

A U.N. probe into the matter has been ongoing, but the İHH has now chosen to pursue the ICC channel because the Mavi Marmara, a former Turkish ferry, was flying the flag of the island nation of Comoros when it was attacked.

Neither Turkey nor Israel is a party to the Rome Statute that established the world’s first permanent war crimes tribunal, the ICC.

Comorian route to the ICC

Desmond de Silva, a member of the U.N. inquiry panel, noted that the ship was flying the flag of ICC member Comoros, thereby giving the ICC jurisdiction over any offenses committed onboard.

The Comoros became a party to the ICC in 2006.

Under terms of international criminal law, legal culpability rests with the country of the so-called “civil ensign,” meaning the country in which the ship is registered and flagged, one legal expert told the Daily News.

“If the Comoros wants to apply to the ICC against the Israeli violation, they can do so through a prosecutor who will decide to open a case if the evidence [in hand] is strong and convincing enough,” the expert said.

Legal experts said parties could apply to the ICC as member states to the Rome Statute, through a resolution of the U.N. Security Council or through a prosecutor appointed by the victims’ lawyers.

The first and second options are not relevant in the Mavi Marmara case because neither Turkey nor Israel are parties to the ICC, and in the second option, a resolution by the U.N. Security Council could be vetoed by the permanent members of the council, including the United States. As such, the İHH is pursuing the third option.

Preparing a draft

“Lawyers from South Africa, Britain and the Netherlands arrived in Turkey. We’ll continue face-to-face meetings with them next week as well with the participation of those coming from Spain and other countries,” said Arıtürk.

“We are working on a draft that we will send to the ICC,” he said. The draft will include the violations allegedly committed by Israeli officials as well as the latest report released by the U.N. Human Rights Council.

Unlike the Strasbourg-based European Court of Human Rights, the ICC prosecutes individuals, not states, for genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and the crime of aggression.

The İHH is also in contact with a professor from the University of Chicago that helped found the ICC, said Arıtürk.

“We, the lawyers, have a final meeting Oct. 13 in The Hague before the application process starts the next day. The victims will also be present,” said Arıtürk.

He said parliamentarians from Britain, France and the U.S. contacted them to join the case, but the İHH has not yet made a decision on whether to involve them in the process as well.

Arıtürk said lawyers from Spain wanted to apply to the ICC individually to claim the rights of the Spanish victims. “But we stopped them and told them that we should do it all together.”

Lawyers from countries whose citizens were involved in the May flotilla met July 15 in Istanbul and their next meeting after Oct. 13 will be in Doha on Oct. 22.

“This will be a long process that will take perhaps two years,” said Arıtürk. “The ICC prosecutor will evaluate our application. We want the ICC to try Israeli officials responsible for the flotilla attack.”

Meanwhile, the probe ordered by the U.N. into the incident said last week that there was clear evidence to back prosecution against Israel for killing and torture when its troops stormed the aid ship.

It also said six of the deceased were “victims of summary executions.” Israel has rejected the inquiry from the outset as biased, while Turkey welcomed it both in a strongly worded statement from the Foreign Ministry and remarks from the foreign minister.

Turkey conducted war games with China, news report says

Thursday, September 30, 2010
ISTANBUL - Daily News with wires
HURRIYAT DAILY

The Turkish and Chinese air forces secretly participated in a military drill in Konya as part of the "Anatolian Eagle" war games, prompting a reaction from Washington, daily Taraf reported Thursday.

Taraf based its report on Turkish and Western military sources, who confirmed that the military drills took place but did not state the exact dates of the games or what kind of aircraft were involved.

Washington has requested information on the matter from Turkey, the report added.

Last year, Ankara excluded Israel from the war games, reportedly because of political tension that arose with Tel Aviv after the Israeli-led war in Gaza in January 2009.

The Turkish government decided to freeze all military exercises with Israel in response to the killing by Israeli commandos of nine people on a Gaza-bound aid flotilla in May. Last year, Ankara excluded Tel Aviv from the same exercise, which prompted fellow NATO members the United States and Italy to withdraw from the drills. Turkey had to conduct the exercise on a national instead of an international level.

Since the early 2000s, Turkey, a NATO member, has conducted war games in the central Anatolian province of Konya with other members of the alliance or non-member friendly nations. But this year was the first time a military drill was conducted with China.

The U.S. administration reportedly contacted the Turkish foreign and defense ministries and asked why the drill was conducted and what kind of maneuvers were practiced.

Joint missile production

Turkey and China took their first step in military cooperation in the late 1990s with joint missile production, manufacturing weapons with a 150-kilometer range.

The multinational NATO "Anatolian Eagle" exercise is hosted by the Turkish Air Forces and is aimed at boosting aerial cooperation and training air forces of other participatory countries. The exercises have been performed since the first Anatolian Eagle, or AE-01, in June 2001.

Italian FM backs Turkey's EU bid, rejects alternatives

Thursday, September 30, 2010
ROME – Anatolia News Agency
HURRIYAT

Italy's foreign minister backed Turkey's full European Union membership on Wednesday, criticizing any formulas that would fall short of granting complete accession.

It was not right for some EU member states to propose a "privileged partnership" to Turkey instead of full membership, Franco Frattini said in an interview with Dossier Lazio, the politics and economy magazine from daily Il Giornale.

Frattini said he did not agree with the privileged partnership proposal, but instead backed Turkey's EU full membership and criticized intermediary formulas.

Turkey's EU membership would have a symbolic power for relations between the Western and Islamic worlds, Frattini said.

The minister said Ankara's accession to Europe could be interpreted not only as a symbol of the harmonization of Islam, democracy and human rights, but also of the EU's capacity to embrace different cultures.

"This is a significant historic target which we cannot give up," he said. Still, Frattini said there was a long path before Turkey could join the EU and added that the current picture of Turkey's EU accession process was not promising. Ankara, furthermore, was causing doubts in some European capitals because of some of its foreign policy preferences, he said. Turkey should feel it has reached the finish line when it has fulfilled its present obligations, the Italian minister said, warning that it would be a grave mistake to alter the finish line. Turkey became an EU candidate country in December 1999. The union launched accession talks with Turkey on Oct. 3, 2005.

Turkey complains of double standards in EU bid

Thursday, September 30, 2010

BRUSSELS – Agence France-Presse

HURRIYAT

Turkey feels a victim of double standards in its aspirations to join the European Union, its European Affairs Minister Egemen Bağış said Wednesday, citing the question of visa-free travel.

"At times we really feel there is a double standard," he said. "We don't want any special treatment, but we don't want additional burdens either." Turkey is in "a much better position" than some other countries that have had visa requirements lifted, Bağış said. Ankara kicked off membership talks with the EU as far back as 2005. But the process has developed at snail's pace, partly due to the standoff over ethnically divided Cyprus but also because France and Germany are wary of allowing the Muslim-majority nation of 75 million into the 27-nation bloc.

The EU, France and Cyprus have blocked 18 of the 35 chapters that Turkey must negotiate for membership, mainly due to Ankara's refusal to recognize the Greek Cypriot majority government in Nicosia. "On the Cyprus issue, now we feel miles" from a solution, Bağış said. "Every proposal we make is rejected and we haven't got any counterproposal," he added.

NATO chief to arrive in Ankara next week

Thursday, September 30, 2010

ANKARA – Hürriyet Daily News

Anders Fogh Rasmussen, the secretary-general of NATO, is set to pay a visit to Turkey on Oct. 7, private channel NTV reported Thursday.

Rasmussen will meet with top Turkish civilian and military officials including President Abdullah Gül, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu during his visit.

During the visit the agenda of NATO's summit in Lisbon in November will be reviewed. The Lisbon summit will feature discussion of the alliance's new strategic vision.

Rasmussen's priority during his Ankara visit will be to hear Turkey's opinions on crucial issues like the anti-ballistic missile shield program and NATO-EU cooperation firsthand. Meanwhile, private channel CNN Türk said Turkey has accepted an extension of its command of NATO forces in Afghanistan's Kabul for another year. Turkey has led NATO's International Security Assistance Force, or ISAF, since Nov. 1, 2009.

Pakistani president sends medal of appreciation to charitable Turkish girl

A young Turkish student has donated one year's worth of her pocket money to Pakistani flood victims -- a gesture acknowledged by Pakistan's president -- as more than 2 million Pakistani children's education has been halted and more than 10,000 schools remain closed.

Nine-year-old Merve Tekinay from Konya Abdullah Aymaz Primary and Secondary School sent a letter to express her support for Pakistanis accompanied by one year's worth of pocket money and her favorite toy.

In her letter, Merve said she saw on the news the difficulties that Pakistanis faced because of the flood and remembered that the Pakistani people supported Turkey during the Battle of Çanakkale and the War of Independence.

"We are your friends. We share your pain. Our prayers are with you," Merve's letter read. She sent TL 150 to the country along with her favorite toy. Touched by Merve's gesture, Pakistani President Asif Ali Zardari told the entire Pakistani nation about the gesture on television. Zardari ordered that an appreciation medal be delivered to Merve. The medal was presented to her during a ceremony at her school. Merve received the shield from the Pakistani Embassy's undersecretary, Muin-ül Hak, and the embassy's media attaché, Abdul Akbar.

"I wish I could help more," Merve said. Konya's provincial education director, Halil Şahin, and the school's principal, Hüseyin Taş, made another gesture to the Pakistani officials and presented TL 10,000 check to them to assist with the relief efforts. The officials said they will not ever forget the charity and brotherhood of the Turkish nation. Meanwhile about 2.5 million Pakistani students are currently unable to attend school, as the school buildings either became unusable or were used for displaced people after the flooding. The academic year started in the country last week, with students continuing their education in temporary classrooms set up in tent cities.

UNESCO representative Ömer Amal said the damage to the education sector will affect the future of Pakistan. While noting that education levels of people in rural areas was already low, Amal said: "Because of the flooding, more than 9,770 state schools were damaged, 2,700 schools were totally destroyed and 7,000 schools are partially damaged. When we add private schools, the number exceeds 10,000."

29 September 2010, Wednesday

TODAYS ZAMAN

Turkey launches initiatives to gather all parts in Kyrgyzstan

Turkey will hold a conference, together with Kyrgyz administration, to gather all parts in Kyrgyzstan to restore stability following the recent incidents in the country.

Turkey is currently holding presidency of Conference on Interaction & Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA).

Hundreds of people were killed and thousands were wounded during ethnic clashes between Uzbek and Kyrgyz population in Kyrgyzstan in April.

Turkish Foreign Ministry officials said on Wednesday that CICA term presidency and Kyrgyz administration would jointly hold a conference on inter-ethnic dialogue, consensus and tolerance on October 1 and 2 in Issyk-Kul.

Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu, Kyrgyz President Roza Otunbaeva, CICA Executive Director Cinar Aldemir as well as nearly 130 opinion leaders and ethnical group leaders from all regions of Kyrgyzstan will participate in the conference.

Officials said that Turkey attached a special importance to Kyrgyzstan. They added that Turkey had been exerting efforts to bring more stability to Kyrgyzstan by preserving dialogue with all segments since the incidents that broke out in April.

Officials noted that Turkey, as CICA president, had been working on short, medium and long-term programs for a solution to problems among ethnical structures in Kyrgyzstan. The conference will gather parties and help finding a solution in short term, added officials.

Stressing that the conference was important on the eve of general elections which would take place on October 10 in Kyrgyzstan and had a key significance for transition to parliamentary democracy, officials said that the country would make a new beginning with the general elections.

A ten-people delegation including deputies and academicians from Turkey will leave for Kyrgyzstan to follow the elections.

Turkey extended nearly 21 million USD of assistance to Kyrgyzstan, and 11 million USD of this amount was spent for repair of buildings which were destroyed during incidents in April.

Turkey undertook CICA presidency in June. It will hold the presidency for 2010-2012 term.

29 September 2010, Wednesday

TODAYS ZAMAN

Gül: Turkey told Hamas to stop firing rockets into Israel

Turkey has urged the Palestinian group Hamas to stop rocket attacks on Israel and seek dialogue with Europe and the United States, President Abdullah Gül has said.

Gül, speaking on a Sunday talk show in the United States, said Hamas leaders had visited Turkey after their 2006 election victory in Gaza and were told in Ankara to “act democratically” and stop the “nonsense” of firing rockets into Israel. Gül, who was the foreign minister when the Hamas visit took place, said Turkey told Hamas leaders that they should tell European and US officials that they were ready to live side by side with Israel when the Palestinians are able to establish their own state.

“Thus we helped Israel a lot,” he said on the CNN show “Fareed Zakaria GPS.”

The show separately hosted Israeli President Shimon Peres, who urged Turkey to talk to Hamas and Iran to end hostile actions against Israel. “Tell Hamas to stop shooting,” Peres said. “Tell Iran to stop sending missiles. Tell [Iranian President Mahmoud] Ahmadinejad not to threaten to destroy Israel or deny the Holocaust,” Peres said.

Relations between Turkey and Israel began to deteriorate after Israeli forces killed about 1,400 Palestinians in a three-week offensive in Gaza in the winter of 2009-2010. Israel says the operation was a response to rockets fired by militants from Gaza. Tension in the ties reached a peak when Israeli commandos killed nine activists -- eight Turks and one Turkish-American -- during a raid on an aid flotilla trying to break the Israeli blockade of

Gaza. Turkey demands an apology for the attack, while Israel refuses, saying its commandos acted in self-defense.

Peres and Gül remained at odds over the May 31 raid, although both said there was no enmity between the two countries. Peres said in the show that Israel “will seek friendship with Turkey,” and Gül, for his part, said Turkey was not an enemy of Israel.

A reported meeting between Gül and Peres in New York fell through amid Peres’ charges that Gül demanded an apology for the raid as a precondition. Gül said the meeting did not take place because of his busy schedule. He said during the show that reports that Turkey demanded an apology from Peres as a condition of their meeting were exaggerated.

He said on Sunday: “They are defending their act and they are criticizing us as if we [did] something wrong. With this understanding, how can I meet? We do not prefer this deterioration in [our] relationship, but, unfortunately, it was a great mistake on the Israeli side because of this blockage, embargo on Gaza.” Gül stated that Turkey is “not against Israel” and that the two countries are not enemies, but added, “We have a right to criticize their policies.”

The president also said it was up to Israel to mend ties. Peres said: “But we didn’t change our attitude to Turkey. We were friends of Turkey, we shall seek friendship with Turkey.”

28 September 2010, Tuesday

TODAY'S ZAMAN WITH WIRES İSTANBUL

Turkey, Arab neighbors gear up for Mideast free trade zone

The foreign ministers of Turkey, Syria, Lebanon and Jordan have agreed to step up cooperation as they move closer to creating a free trade zone, complete with visa-free travel in a cooperation scheme that many say would establish the Middle East's version of the European Union.

Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu, speaking after the meeting with his Arab counterparts on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly meetings in New York, said the free trade zone was likely to be formally announced at a summit of leaders of the four countries, slated to take place in İstanbul in January. “We will declare at that summit that this economic zone is in effect,” Davutoğlu told reporters at a joint press conference on Saturday. “We hope that this is good news not only for these four countries but also for the entire region.” The four countries first agreed to set up a cooperation council “to develop a long-term strategic partnership” and “create a zone of free movement of goods and persons among our countries” during a meeting of foreign ministers on the sidelines of a Turkey-Arab cooperation forum in İstanbul in June. Since then, Turkey and Lebanon have signed a bilateral deal on free trade and abolished visa requirements, thus paving the way for future implementation of the free trade deal. In August, the trade ministers of the four countries met to review preparations for the implementation of the June deal. Davutoğlu said the four-way cooperation will focus on four areas in the coming months: energy, trade, transportation and tourism. According to a scheme of division of labor, each country will be in charge of coordinating efforts in specific areas, with Turkey being tasked with cooperation in trade. In November, ministers of energy, trade, tourism and transportation will meet to review the efforts.

The planned free trade zone comes as Turkey takes steps to expand its ties with Middle Eastern neighbors and amid claims that Ankara's foreign policy priorities are shifting away from Western objectives.

Turkey's bid to join the European Union is facing opposition from countries like France and Germany, which argue it is culturally different than the member states and that it should be offered a privileged partnership instead of full membership.

Turkey opened accession talks with the EU in 2005, but progress has been very slow since then. Ankara complained that preparations on several chapters were finished but the EU refused to open talks on them due to political obstruction raised by certain member countries.

Davutoğlu, speaking after the June deal, had dismissed suggestions that Turkey's expanding links with the Middle Eastern neighbors represented a search for an alternative to its troubled EU membership bid, saying Turkey remains committed to its EU process. Trade between Turkey and Arab countries has doubled over the past five years, but despite that rapid growth, trade with the Arab world still represents a tiny proportion of its trade with Europe.

On Saturday, the foreign minister also reiterated that the agreement to create a free trade zone was not an exclusive one, saying it was open to all friendly countries in the region. "They could be full members or join on a sectoral or project basis," he said.

Jordan's foreign minister, Nasser Judeh, said the four areas presented wide opportunities for cooperation and added that the regional cooperation vision also required participation from other countries in the region.

The June deal says the planned free trade zone will be based on "existing bilateral agreements and practices on free trade and visa exemption" between the parties.

Davutoğlu dismissed immediate plans to create an institutional basis for the four-way cooperation. When asked whether there were plans to establish a secretariat, he said the priority now was the actions to be taken, not the structure. "We will act, not just talk," he said.

The foreign minister also said the cooperation model would be a unique one, reflecting the shared history of the four nations participating in it. Asked whether it would be modeled on the EU, he said: "The EU is of course a good model of cooperation and we can look into it. But this cooperation, after all, is a product of our history."

Syrian Foreign Minister Walid Muallem said cooperation offered huge opportunities for an uninterrupted connection among nations from Saudi Arabia to London. Istanbul and Damascus, the Syrian capital, are already connected via railway, he said, and the same railway reaches Amman, Jordan. Now, when Turkey's planned undersea Marmaray tunnel is completed, that same railway will reach London and maybe one day it will go as far as Mecca, Saudi Arabia, providing an uninterrupted link between the two cities.

27 September 2010, Monday

TODAY'S ZAMAN İSTANBUL

Finland, Turkey present peace mediation initiative

Finland and Turkey are leading a new peace arbitration initiative – aiming to innovate mediation culture -- by establishing a group called “The Friends of Peace Mediation” on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly being held in New York.

On Friday Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu and his Finnish counterpart, Alexander Stubb, hosted a working breakfast at Finland’s permanent representation to the UN.

The event was attended by ministers of active peace mediation countries from various continents, high representatives of regional organizations, including Martti Ahtisaari, a former president of Finland and also the head the Independent Commission on Turkey, which recently paid Turkey a visit.

Davutoğlu, speaking at a joint press conference with Stubb following the meeting, noted that the idea of launching the initiative -- co-chaired by Finland and Turkey -- came from Stubb.

“They will try to establish a network in the institutional sense for creating a new culture of mediation instead of the old type of mediation which solely aims at a certain crisis,”

Davutoğlu was quoted as saying by the Anatolia news agency.

Stubb said that the group of friends formed will have their second meeting within six months, either in İstanbul or in Helsinki. “In my opinion, Turkey is more influential in world policies compared to a lot of EU countries. It has strong mediation roles in the Middle East, Africa, the Persian Gulf and the Balkans. It has a very close and strategic relationship with the US. I believe that it is very important to see such a country next to us,” Stubb was quoted as saying by Anatolia, when asked why his country chose Turkey as partner in such an initiative.

Lynn Pascoe, the UN undersecretary-general for political affairs; Amr Moussa, the secretary-general of the Arab League; Jean Ping, chairman of the Commission of the African Union; and Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu, the secretary-general of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), were among attendees of the meeting, Anatolia reported.

27 September 2010, Monday

TODAY'S ZAMAN WITH WIRES ANKARA

ECONOMIC NEWS

Turkish PM complains about delay in Nabucco project

Wednesday, September 29, 2010

ISTANBUL - Hürriyet Daily News

Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan on Wednesday complained about the delay in the Nabucco project that is designed to carry Caspian natural gas to Europe.

“We say we are ready for everything, but those playing the coordination role have not yet come up with serious action,” said Erdoğan, speaking at the Black Sea Energy and Economic Forum organized by the Atlantic Council.

The Nabucco project is designed to carry Caspian natural gas through Turkey, Bulgaria, Romania and Hungary, ending in Austria. Intergovernmental agreements have been signed between the countries and the Nabucco Consortium is working on securing an energy supply as well as financing.

Talking about the supply, transit and consumption dimension of natural gas, Erdoğan said the supply dimension of the project is still missing.

“Each day that passes is to the disadvantage of the project,” he said.

The Nabucco project will contribute to the diversification of energy resources and routes of Europe, he said. “The European Union is supporting the project, but we are waiting for implementation.”

He also criticized the European Union for still not opening Turkey’s entry talks on the energy chapter. A candidate to the EU, Turkey needs to complete talks in 31 policy areas. Greek Cyprus is blocking talks on the energy chapter. “Some are trying to use opening talks in this chapter as a threat. This is not proper.”

Erdoğan asked the forum participants to approach energy issues based on fairness. “No one is secure unless everyone is secure. This is valid for energy issues as well.” He added that whatever Turkey brings to the agenda, it does for the good of humanity. “When we said that the issue of the Iranian nuclear program should be solved through dialogue and diplomacy, we did it in the name of global peace,” he said. Turkey voted against U.N. sanctions against Iran for Tehran's controversial nuclear program.

Erdoğan said Turkey was unable to obtain necessary support when it raised issues like Palestine, Afghanistan, Iran and Iraq.

Istanbul eyes becoming a finance center

Thursday, September 30, 2010

ISTANBUL – Hürriyet Daily News

Turkey's rapid recovery from the global downturn is giving a new boost to the government's plan to turn Istanbul into an international financial center, the Wall Street Journal said in its Thursday issue.

The city today is a rival to Dubai or eventually could even rival London, the newspaper quoted the Deputy Prime Minister Ali Babacan as saying.

The newspaper recalled that the city was hosting two big financial conferences this week, including the annual Global Economic Symposium, which has brought to town several central bank governors and economists, including Citigroup Chief Economist Willem Buiter and Nobel Laureate Edmund S. Phelps.

Istanbul in April was ranked the world's fastest-improving financial center in a survey released last week.

Still, the country’s plan for Istanbul faces massive challenges, the WSJ said. Turkey's economy is tiny relative to China's, whose sheer size has benefited financial centers such as Shanghai and Hong Kong, according to symposium attendee Edward Lazear, a Stanford Business School professor and former White House adviser in the George W. Bush administration.

Dubai also has had a compelling story as the sole viable option at a time when oil economies in the Middle East suddenly became awash with cash, Lazear said. London and New York, meanwhile, enjoy "inertia" and hundreds of years of agglomeration of talent and resources that is hard to replicate, the WJS said.

"It's possible" for Istanbul, Lazear told the WJS. "But these things are really hard to build."

"We know we have a lot to do," Deputy Prime Minister Babacan, who is also the economy minister, said in an interview Tuesday between conference appearances. But he believes Turkey has on its side geography, a thousand-year-old tradition as a trading

center and a wave of history that is shifting wealth and power from West to East. The international financial downturn has only added to Istanbul's attractiveness, he said. "Especially after the global economic crisis, Turkey increasingly is perceived as an island of stability in a region that stretches from Ireland to India," Babacan said. Turkey has a financial sector that was "tested and proved" during the global crisis, he said, noting that the government made no bailouts. That has helped keep the country's budget deficit down and left room to cut taxes in the future, even as other countries with big financial centers raise taxes in a struggle to plug deficits, he said.

Babacan recognizes that Turkey isn't China. But he told WSJ that the government's assertive foreign policy, a political atmosphere he said is becoming more open and developments such as the dramatic expansion of Turkish Airlines is creating a commercial hinterland for Istanbul that is much wider than Turkey alone. He cited the Balkans, Romania, Ukraine, the Caucasus and Central Asia.

Without naming Dubai, Mr. Babacan said Istanbul was also better placed to win the Middle Eastern market in the long term.

In an annual survey of global financial centers by London-based consultancy Z/Yen Group released last week, Turkey had the most improved scores thanks largely to gains in lifestyle and business confidence. But it still ranked 70th in the world, behind Warsaw, Manila and Glasgow. London ranked first and New York second, though both had slipping scores.

Babacan said he has spoken to a surprising number of bankers who he said were fed up with London's income-tax increases and told him they were considering moving personnel. But there has been no sudden rush of international bankers to take advantage of Istanbul's relatively low office-space and wage costs yet.

"Turkey is a great entry point and a gateway to Europe but will never compete with Dubai's position as a financial hub for the Middle East," Albert Momdjian, head of coverage and investment banking for the Middle East and Africa for Crédit Agricole CIB in Dubai told the WSJ. "Dubai doesn't have any security issues with its neighboring countries, whereas Turkey still has some issues."

Babacan heads a task force set up last year to implement the government's plan to boost Istanbul. The group includes the city's mayor and Turkey's transport minister, a nod to Istanbul's perennial traffic gridlock.

Asked for a concrete example of progress, Babacan said the Justice Ministry is developing new commercial courts that would hear financial-sector disputes, taking them out of Turkey's regular court system, widely seen as slow and unpredictable. He said he couldn't put a date on the rollout of the new courts.

Turkish growth is unsustainable, top economist says

Thursday, September 30, 2010

ISTANBUL – Anatolia News Agency

HURRIYAT

Turkey is currently experiencing an unsustainable period of growth and might face a tough period after the general elections next year, according to the top economist at Citigroup.

"The developing economies are heating up," Professor Willem Buiter said during his speech at the Istanbul Finance Summit on Thursday.

“Most of the stocks here [in Turkey] seem to be spent. The current deficit is growing.” Buitter said a second recession wave for Turkey was possible. “In the United States or somewhere else. A recession can be followed by a second one,” he said. The pessimistic comments on the U.S. economy over the summer were exaggerated, Buitter said, but he admitted the U.S. economy was not in good condition. “China is going in the opposite direction,” he said, noting the rising consumer growth in the country. “This will continue until the Central Committee of the Communist Party changes. Just like a gas tanker passing through the Bosphorus.”

Debt affecting Turkey less than Europe, think tank says

Thursday, September 30, 2010

ISTANBUL – Hürriyet Daily News

Debt does not seem to have caused the Turkish economy many problems in recent months despite its damaging impact on many European countries, according to the president of a top institute.

Dennis J. Snower, president of the Kiel Institute, an economic think tank, made the comments at the closing press conference of the Global Economic Symposium in Istanbul on Wednesday.

“The more than 500 participants in the symposium have worked out a number of solutions to urgent global problems,” said Snower.

The solutions are to be published in a booklet entitled “Global Economic Solutions,” which is to be sent to decision-makers throughout the world.

Two of the top priorities at the meeting were creating a “global identity” and bringing “solutions to world’s major problems” through cooperation, said Snower.

Meanwhile, Snower said people “have been concentrating on the undermining of liberalism by democracy for so long,” adding that “without liberalism, democracy itself could not function and could not lead to success.”

Mehmet Şimşek, Turkish minister of finance, said Turkey, with the sixth largest economy in Europe and 16th largest economy in the world in terms of gross domestic product, has shown the world that a country can be Muslim, secular, democratic and prosperous, all at the same time.

“I could not imagine a better place than Turkey to discuss the current hot topics of the world, such as demography, economic solutions, energy and energy policies,” he said.

Turkish e-State still requires improvement, TÜSİAD report says

Thursday, September 30, 2010

ANKARA - Anatolia News Agency

HURRIYAT

Turkey’s e-Performance is still below the required level despite recent improvements, according to the leader of Turkey’s top business association.

“Turkey’s positioning in several surveys by various bodies such as the United Nations, World Economic Forum and the World Bank, shows that we still have long way to go in terms of infrastructure, human resources and regulating the media,” Ümit Boyner, the chairwoman of the Turkish Industrialists and Businessmen's Association, or TÜSİAD, said Thursday.

The government's recent investments in online technologies are a positive development, the chairwoman said, but added that improvements in e-state applications would still increase productivity and service quality while helping create a more transparent and trustworthy local administration structure.

Boyner made the comments during meeting to introduce "Toward an e-State Administration Model for Turkey: The Situation Assessment and Advices," a TÜSIAD report into the matter.

Turkey's ranking in the UN's e-State preparation index is above the global average, but has decreased from 0.506 in 2003 to 0.478 in 2010, she said. Turkey, which was ranked 49th on the list of 191 countries, is now 69th.

Turkey's e-Transformation action plan had targeted the realization of 111 projects between 2006 and 2010 to build up an "information society," but only 22 of these projects were completed, said Boyner.

According to data collected in March 2010, 62 projects are moving forward, while another 27 are at the beginning stages.

The TÜSIAD report was prepared by the group in cooperation with the e-State Research Center at Ankara's Middle East Technical University.

Turkey can meet region's food demand, says sector expert

Wednesday, September 29, 2010

GÖKHAN KURTARAN

ISTANBUL - Hürriyet Daily News

Turkey has the capacity to meet its neighbors' food demand, but it has to utilize technology and science to hike production while using water more efficiently, according to the top executive of the Syngenta Foundation for Sustainable Agriculture, or SFSA. Marco Ferroni, the executive director of the Switzerland-based SFSA, was speaking on the sidelines of the Global Economic Symposium, which wrapped up on Wednesday in Istanbul. The organization is founded by Syngenta, the world's biggest maker of agricultural chemicals and a leader in genetically modified organisms, or GMO.

Rising global food demand and the necessity of developing new agricultural policies were among the key topics discussed at the event.

"Turkey could well be the main food provider of its neighbors. It has the potential to do so," Ferroni told the Hürriyet Daily News & Economic Review. "If science and sensible policies prevail, if strategic investments are made and the markets function properly, food demand could be met in a sustainable way.

"In Europe, we consume many agricultural products from Turkey, such as apricots and dried products," he said, adding that production levels could be increased with more efficient use of science and a convenient regulatory framework. "Look at the example of Israel," Ferroni said. "Turkey could become a hub for all kinds of products since its climate conditions are suitable for any kind of agricultural activity."

According to estimates, the demand for food in 2050 will be double today's figures.

"Nobody can know the exact figure, but it is clear that significantly more food will be needed," Ferroni said. "Agricultural activities such as food storage and processing are on the top of the list of today's crucial issues."

Soaring prices

International wheat prices have soared 60-80 percent since July, according to the Food and Agriculture Organization, or FAO, while maize rose about 40 percent in the same period.

In order to meet rising demand, Ferroni suggested that the destruction of forests for cropland and pastures should be stopped, the loss of biodiversity should be prevented and dangerous mining activity and overuse of water and soils should be halted.

Talking to the Daily News, he said harvest technology and food processing must evolve to reduce losses, while food safety and supply chains should be improved. He also advocated the idea of increasing food production through genetically modified products, a topic of hot debate in Turkey and the world.

“[GMOs] are certainly not the only way, but they are an option that some countries could apply for the sake of meeting increasing demand to fight hunger,” he said.

Acknowledging that developed countries also have doubts on GMOs, he said: “I can understand Turkey’s concern, but in the end, the technology used for this process has been practiced for nearly a decade now. Brazil today is the biggest soybean and oil producer in the world through GMOs.”

According to a report published last year by FAO, the world agriculture industry may have to produce 70 percent more food for an additional 2.3 billion people by the year 2050.

Turkey, Portugal trade volume up 35.3 pct

Trade volume between Turkey and Portugal was up 35.3 percent in the first seven months of 2010.

Thursday, 30 September 2010 14:16

WORLD BULLETIN

Trade volume between Turkey and Portugal was up 35.3 percent in the first seven months of 2010.

The head of the Turkish-Portuguese Business Council said Thursday that Turkish-Portuguese trade volume reached 580 million USD in the first seven months of 2010, with a 35.3 percent rise over the same period of the previous year.

Council chairman Fahri Gokyayla said exports between the two countries were 284 million USD, and imports were around 296 million USD in the same period.

Products Turkey is exporting to Portugal are paper, chemicals, plastic boxes, knitted clothes, wines and ceramics.

Gokyayla said direct investments of Portuguese companies in Turkey reached 1 billion USD so far, and Grupo Onyria, owning five golf hotels in Portugal and France, purchased Carpe Diem Claros Hotel in the Aegean province of Izmir and started to run the hotel. The Portuguese group aimed at 450 million Euro investment, and planned to construct a golf course, Gokyayla said.

Gokyayla said Portugal's leading motorway operator Brisa was planning to make investments in Turkey.

Portuguese firms were mainly interested in renewable energy, information technologies, construction and contracting, construction materials, pharmaceutical industry, tourism and management industries, Gokyayla said.

Gokyayla also said the investments would be between 500 million and 1 billion USD.

AA

Montenegro urges Turkish businessmen to join banks privatization

Montenegro's parliament speaker visited the Union of Chambers & Commodity Exchanges of Turkey headquarters in Ankara.

Thursday, 30 September 2010 14:08

WORLD BULLETIN

Montenegro's parliament speaker visited the Union of Chambers & Commodity Exchanges of Turkey (TOBB) headquarters in Ankara on Thursday.

Montenegrin Parliament Speaker Ranko Krivokapic said his country was a country suitable for investments, Turkey had a historical priority in investing in his country, and called on Turkish businessmen to invest in Montenegro.

Krivokapic said Montenegro had a good tourism potential and many beaches, and there was need for hotels in his country.

Montenegro put state banks on sale and expected businessmen's interest in the banks, Krivokapic said.

Krivokapic said the Montenegrin government had facilitated bureaucratic procedures for those who wanted to invest in housing industry.

Also speaking in the meeting, TOBB Executive Board member Arif Parmaksiz said the union could train Montenegrin public and private sector representatives on organized industrial zones, and could cooperate with Montenegro on modernization of customs and border gates.

Recently, TOBB's Chairman Rifat Hisarciklioglu attended a meeting on Montenegro's economy in Budva, Montenegro as the deputy president of the Association of European Chambers of Commerce and Industry (EUROCHAMBRES), and was received by Prime Minister Milo Djukanovic.

Djukanovic said Montenegro wanted to cooperate with Turkish businessmen, and called on Turkish businessmen to invest in his country and to cooperate particularly in automotive, durable house goods, electronic devices and agriculture industries.

AA

Azerbaijan says it is time to implements gas projects with Turkey

Azerbaijan's energy minister said that it was time to implement natural gas projects.

Thursday, 30 September 2010 13:34

WORLD BULLETIN

Azerbaijan's energy minister said on Thursday that it was time to implement natural gas projects.

Industry and Energy Minister Natiq Aliyev said Turkey and Azerbaijan had signed significant agreements regarding energy sale to Turkey and for Shah Deniz II Project.

"We have half a trillion cubic meter reserve in Shah Deniz, and more than 300 billion cubic meters of reserve deep in Azeri-Chirag-Guneshli fields," Aliyev said during the Black Sea Energy & Economy Forum 2010 in Istanbul.

Aliyev said they would operate the area in Chirag.

Azeri Chirag Guneshli (ACG) is a large complex of oil fields in the Caspian Sea, about 120 kilometres (75 miles) off the coast of Azerbaijan. An overall estimated area of the field is 432.4 square kilometres (167.0 sq mi).

Aliyev said Azerbaijan would produce more than 52 million tons of oil this year, and export it to Iran, Russia, Georgia and Turkey.

They planned to raise production in ACG to 50-60 million tons from 44 million tons in a few years, Aliyev also said.

The Black Sea Energy and Economic Forum (BSEEF) is a unique annual initiative that brings business and policy leaders together to discuss Eurasia's leading economic and energy challenges.

The Atlantic Council's new Eurasia Center in cooperation with its partners in the Black Sea, Caspian and Central Asian Regions, has launched this important initiative in an effort to promote energy security, economic growth and political stability in one of the world's most crucial places. The Forum aims to develop best policy solutions to help the region be a center for economic cooperation, investment and trade.

The 2010 Forum is taking place in Istanbul between September 29 and October 1.

AA

Finmin sees unemployment biggest problem for Turkey, world

The Turkish finance minister said that unemployment was the biggest problem both for Turkey and the world nowadays.

Thursday, 30 September 2010 17:17

WORLD BULLETIN

The Turkish finance minister said on Thursday that unemployment was the biggest problem both for Turkey and the world nowadays.

Delivering a speech at the inauguration of the "Middle East Carpet and Decoration Fair" in south-eastern Gaziantep province, Turkish Finance Minister Mehmet Simsek said the success to be achieved in finding a solution to the unemployment problem would be a major factor that would support growth in the future.

"Unemployment and failure to create employment opportunities are the biggest problems faced not only by Turkey, but the whole world at the moment. Fortunately, on this matter, Turkey is in a much better position than many countries," Simsek said.

The minister said that Turkey had created more than 1.5 million new job opportunities in the last 12 months.

Simsek also said the government had been implementing active labor force policies for the last couple of years in an effort to create more employment opportunities especially for youngsters and women.

Noting that Turkey's economic figures were praised during international symposiums and conferences nowadays, Simsek said, "Turkey has gained a remarkable momentum lately and the Turkish government will do its best to maintain this performance".

AA

Turkey's exports increase 12.9 pc in 2010

Turkey's export increased 12.9 percent to 72.9 billion USD in January-August, 2010 when compared to the same period of 2009.

Thursday, 30 September 2010 14:02

WORLD BULLETIN

The Turkish finance minister said on Thursday that unemployment was the biggest problem both for Turkey and the world nowadays.

Delivering a speech at the inauguration of the "Middle East Carpet and Decoration Fair" in south-eastern Gaziantep province, Turkish Finance Minister Mehmet Simsek said the success to be achieved in finding a solution to the unemployment problem would be a major factor that would support growth in the future.

Exports coverage imports, which was 73.4 percent in January-August, 2009, dropped to 63.5 percent in January-August, 2010.

Turkey's export was 64.6 billion USD and import was 88.033 billion USD in January-August, 2009. Foreign trade deficit was 23.4 billion USD and exports coverage imports was 73.4 percent in the same period of 2009.

AA

Turkey's TPAO says produces 70,000 barrels of oil day

The head of the Turkish oil company said that the company was producing 70,000 barrels of oil a day.

Thursday, 30 September 2010 13:44

WORLD BULLETIN

The head of the Turkish oil company said on Thursday that the company was producing 70,000 barrels of oil a day.

Director General Mehmet Uysal of the Turkish Petroleum Corporation (TPAO) said the company was investing in Turkey, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Syria.

"We are producing 70,000 barrels of oil a day, and taking part in international projects," Uysal said during the Black Sea Energy & Economy Forum 2010 in Istanbul.

Uysal said the company had invested 4-5 billion USD in oil exploration since 2002 and was planning to invest 3 billion USD more in exploration in the coming three years.

"Our production will rise to 300,000 barrels, and we are the biggest actor in the Black Sea as we are exploring oil in an area of 20,000 square kilometers," Uysal said.

Uysal said TPAO would build a platform around Surmene in the Eastern Black Sea region and explore oil, and it was possible to strike more than 1.5 million cubic meters of natural gas and 5 billion barrels of oil in the Black Sea.

The company would start explorations in the Mediterranean after completing seismic studies in the Black Sea, Uysal said.

Uysal said TPAO's domestic and international production was 25 million barrels p.a., which was equal to 10 percent of Turkey's demand.

TPAO's production would reach 300,000 barrels a day in 2014 or 2015, Uysal also said. The Black Sea Energy and Economic Forum (BSEEF) is a unique annual initiative that brings business and policy leaders together to discuss Eurasia's leading economic and energy challenges.

The Atlantic Council's new Eurasia Center in cooperation with its partners in the Black Sea, Caspian and Central Asian Regions, has launched this important initiative in an

effort to promote energy security, economic growth and political stability in one of the world's most crucial places. The Forum aims to develop best policy solutions to help the region be a center for economic cooperation, investment and trade.

The 2010 Forum is taking place in Istanbul between September 29 and October 1.

AA

Georgian PM describes Turkey as biggest commercial partner

Prime Minister Gilauri of Georgia said that Turkey was the biggest commercial partner of his country.

Thursday, 30 September 2010 11:44

WORLD BULLETIN

Prime Minister Nikoloz Gilauri of Georgia said that Turkey was the biggest commercial partner of his country.

Speaking at the opening of the "2nd Black Sea Energy & Economy Forum" in Istanbul, Prime Minister Gilauri said that Turkey was also the owner of highest amount of investments in Georgia.

He highlighted importance of Baku-Ceyhan oil pipeline project, adding that Turkish and Georgian energy ministers signed an agreement for building of high-voltage-line after the Baku-Ceyhan oil pipeline project led to an increase in demands for use of high voltage. Georgian premier said that while electricity cuts had been one of the biggest problems of his country in the past, Georgia began selling energy to Russia, Turkey, Azerbaijan and Armenia now.

"Georgia has become an important center for energy safety in its region and in Europe. We have energy lines from the north to the south, and from the east to the west. We are aware of importance of energy safety for diversification of energy," Prime Minister Gilauri added.

SOCIAL NEWS

Problems depicted in Turkish film on education in Southeast continue

Wednesday, September 29, 2010

ISTANBUL – Radikal

Hurriyat Daily News

Three years after a movie called "İki Dilde Bir Bavul" (On the Way to School) portrayed the helplessness of a Turkish teacher in a Kurdish town, there is still no progress in a solution to the mother tongue problem in Southeast Turkey.

The movie portrayed the story Emre Aydın, a real-life teacher originally from Denizli province who was assigned to teach in the Demirci village in the Siverek district of Şanlıurfa. Aware that his students were not grasping what he was saying but simply smiling instead, Aydın could not even find answers for the basic questions that he asked in class such as, "What is your name?"

From Aydın's side the circumstances were not very different either. Unable to understand his students, Aydın asked a meaningful question, "What are we going to do?" There is still no answer to this question.

When the movie was shot in 2007, Aydın mentioned the problems he experienced while teaching at a school that was composed of only a classroom and a room for his bed.

“After the first year, 35 students of 48 passed in reading, but then I realized that they didn’t have the skills for comprehension,” said Aydın. For instance, the students could write and read “car,” but didn’t understand what it was. Therefore, Aydın had to explain it visually. The students started to become more successful in their courses when they passed to the third grade and prepared for conversation.

Noting that the first year he had 123 students, the second year 135 and the third year 148, Aydın said teaching in combined classes was hard because they could not fit into the same classroom. “I created morning and afternoon groups and delegated student leaders from the third, fourth and fifth grades,” said Aydın. He was teaching students from the first grade to the fifth.

Emphasizing that the language problem was continuing, Aydın said the student leaders would narrate what he had taught in an hour in just 10 minutes. Student absences created other handicaps. “Some of the students were working as seasonal workers, while others looked after their sisters and brothers at home.” Aydın went to these student’s houses to persuade them to attend class.

Aydın helped about 85 students graduate in three years, and said he worked on his own for those years. He not only painted the school, but also took care of his students’ personal hygiene needs by cutting their hair and nails.

Aydın asked for an appointment to another village due to health problems, but said leaving the village was a hard for him because he had grown to love the people very much. “But nobody is permanent over there. By thinking of this, I’m trying to find solace,” he said.

Asked if teachers that come to the region will always leave again, Aydın said he had pondered the issue for three years but couldn’t find an answer. “The answer cannot be found in us.”

8th Turkish Festival to take place in Washington

The 8th Turkish Festival will take place in Washington, D.C. on October 3.

Thursday, 30 September 2010 09:29

WORLD BULLETIN

The 8th Turkish Festival will take place in Washington, D.C. on October 3.

The festival will be organized by American-Turkish Association DC and is expected to host 20,000 visitors. A total of 15,000 visitors --most of were U.S. citizens-- visited last year's festival.

Turkish culture and cuisine will be introduced during the festival.

Meanwhile, Turks will try to enter Guinness Book of Records with the longest shish kebab of the world. A six-meter-long shish kebab will be cooked during the festival.

American-Turkish Association DC's chairperson Demet Cabbar told reporters that the festival had become a traditional one, adding that 150 people would work as volunteers during the festival.

Cabbar noted that Turkish Culture & Tourism Ministry extended 5,000 USD for the festival which had 80,000 USD of budget.

AA

COMMENTARY

Why the Turkish military bombed mosques in Cyprus

Tuesday, September 28, 2010

MUSTAFA AKYOL

HURRIYAT

We just learned that our officers bombed mosques in Cyprus to 'raise resistance' against 'enemies without.' We now wonder whether they used similar techniques also against 'enemies within'?

Last week, Sabri Yirmibeşoğlu, a retired Turkish general, said something that shocked the nation. During an interview by Habertürk, a popular news channel, he said that the Turkish military had bombed mosques in Cyprus in the past and put the blame on the Greeks. "Such attacks and sabotages on sacred values are done and portrayed as if the enemy did them," he explained. "The purpose is to raise the resistance of the people." The 82-year-old Yirmibeşoğlu was probably not aware of the possible impact of this revelation, which he made just in passing, as if it were a trivial detail. But since then, the media has hotly debated what the bombed mosque story really is, and what it tells us about the amazing adventures of our military.

Manufacturing contempt

As Yıldırım Oğur, a columnist in daily Taraf, wrote, the operation the ex-general refers to is probably the bombings of the Bayraktar and Ömeriye mosques in Nicosia on the night of March 24, 1962. The incident, naturally, inflamed Cypriot Turks, who organized demonstrations against the Greeks of the island, who they thought were responsible. (Their "resistance," in other words, was "raised.")

A few weeks later, though, a local newspaper run by two Cypriot Turks, Ahmet Muzaffer Gürkan, 38, and Ayhan Hikmet, 35, wrote that the bombings had not been done by Greeks at all. And, lo and behold, these two men were both assassinated on that very same night, on April 23, 1962. (Perhaps we need another talkative ex-general to fully shed light on that part of the story.)

Now, all this, of course, is deeply troubling. It shows that the Turkish military intentionally increased tension between the Turks and Greeks of Cyprus, paving the way for more tragic events in the years to come and the partial occupation of the island by Turkey in 1974. Since then, as you would know, Cyprus has been one of the world's unsolved problems.

To be sure, this should not mean that only the Turkish side was responsible for the intra-communal violence in Cyprus. The nationalists on the Greek side, organized under the infamous EOKA, or National Organization of Cypriot Fighters, were fanatic and violent, and they killed many innocent Turks. (Who knows, perhaps they had their little tricks to "raise resistance" on their side as well.)

Today, what matters more to me as a Turk is the bitter fact that our military has seen it legitimate to commit false flag terror operations to manipulate the psychology our people. This raises troubling questions:

- If they have done this in Cyprus, have they also done similar things at home?
- If they have bombed places to "raise resistance" against "enemies without," have they also used similar techniques against "enemies within"?

I don't want be paranoid. That's why I often don't agree with some of my liberal friends who see the fingerprints of the "deep state" in almost every political assassination and

social turmoil in recent history. I rather believe that evil is “banal,” and horrible things can happen spontaneously without the need for a “master evildoer.”

But some episodes in our recent history are indeed too suspicious, and Gen.

Yirmibeşoğlu’s revelation only makes them more so. Take the Ergenekon case. This controversial trial has many details, but two of its allegations are crucial: that the two terrorist acts in 2006, the bombing of ultra-secularist daily Cumhuriyet (which killed nobody) and the shooting of a secularist judge, were false flag operations to put the blame on “the Islamists.”

These two attacks certainly “raised resistance” among the country’s secular-minded masses against the Justice and Development Party, or AKP, government, which the Ergenekon folks clearly wanted to overthrow. So, if these two acts were “operations” of the type that Gen. Yirmibeşoğlu spoke about, than we should grant that they were successful ones. Otherwise, they were just extremely lucky coincidences. I now find the first option even more credible.

Internal affairs

Now, let me briefly touch upon something else: My column neighbor Burak Bekdil, with whom I often disagree, has written about me again. This time, he proposed a “sociological experiment” which he and I would join together to measure whether secular or religious Turks are more liberal-minded people — by going to their neighborhoods and saying things that will offend them.

But that proposal, as fun as it may be, misses my point. I did not say, “Religious Turks are more tolerant to insult than secular ones.” (And even if I did, Mr. Bekdil should have added an “insulting Atatürk” line to his experiment, to make it fair.)

I just argued that the link between secularism and political liberalism, which many Westerners take for granted, doesn’t exist in Turkey. Here, secularism rather goes hand in hand with nationalism, whereas liberal ideas are increasingly popular among religious conservatives. If Mr. Bekdil wants to test that hypothesis with an experiment, he just can try some of his ultra-secularist friends and simply ask, “Why do you loathe both the conservatives and the liberals so much?”

Hakkari: The wound’s mouth

Tuesday, September 28, 2010

METİN MÜNİR

HURRIYAT

Located on the Iran and Iraq borders Hakkari is a province behind the mountains. We enter the city through the Zap River from the direction of Van province. We follow the river bank and reach the city center through steep valleys.

We are unfamiliar with the brand names of the gas sold at gas stations here. We are in one of the poorest cities of Turkey. Per capita income is only one fourth of the country average. Who should have advertisements here and why?

There is less traffic after the Yüksekova-Iran turn. Nature is getting more beautiful and the grandeur of the scenery smoothes us. There are walnut trees on the roadside. The mountains are incredibly beautiful though they look like massive gigantic rocks. I want to get out of the car and stroll at the river side. I want to dip my feet in the water. This is one the most beautiful corners in the world.

But the city I arrived in is not smiling at all. That makes me ask the following question: Why was a city set-up in the middle of a valley surrounded by steep purple mountains? And why do people still live here?

I learn that with the population of 54,000 Hakkari was not always as it is today.

Nothing to lose

“Once this place was Turkey’s center of livestock,” says a man. “It was a place where millions of cattle, sheep and goat were bred in uplands and valleys. Until the [outlawed Kurdistan Workers’ Party, or] PKK, started acts of violence, one-and-a-half million animals were sold here,” adds another man.

With the emergence of the PKK, an upland ban was introduced in the 1980s. Villagers were stuck in villages. Starting from 1992, villages were evacuated for aiding and abetting the organization. People were forced to leave Hakkari sometimes without being able to pack. Borders were not available for mutual passing. Landmines were placed. Stockbreeding died.

The state ended the source of life in the region in trying to settle the PKK problem, yet caused social problems.

“Migration has ruined everything,” someone adds. “The population here was 120,000 in the past. People slept in barns. So, locals are saddened because of the bitter experiences, believing no one cares about them.”

Hakkari lost its hinterland, turning into a dead-end from being a boulevard of the east and is now a city of unhappy, angry people with no future. And it has become the source of volunteers for the PKK.

“There is not a single family here that does not have a son either up in the mountain, or in jail or in the grave,” says a woman.

The highest population of youth under 19 lives in Hakkari. The prison is filled with children who throw stones at policemen.

“These kids are potential terrorists in this country,” laments a mother. “They have no fear because they have nothing to lose.”

Everyone likes the governor

Being one of the most problematic provinces, Hakkari needed special attention. Trained, or expert, civil servants were needed. But to the opposite, ordinary men were sent to the southeast which is considered a penal colony. The issue deepened due to their mistakes. Tension between locals and the state escalated.

The problem still resists. Everyone in the city likes the governor, but it’s been said that he has no authority over the police and the military. There are complaints that security forces pressure the judicial posts.

“We are still living the 1990s here,” said a man, lamenting the pressure exerted by security forces. “People are fed up with them.”

“This place is about to break,” says yet another man.

The government, which made remarkable progress in the provinces of Bitlis, Van and Muş, has failed in Hakkari, however. It looks like the government doesn’t spend money here.

The city resembles a huge neighborhood of shanty houses. Public buildings look very old, reminding one of the 1960s; irregular, neglected and poor... Most roads are loose and dirty. The glass encasing a few billboards is broken. The city square is lightened by

an Atatürk sculpture. The economy suffers seriously. Tribes are gaining strength again. Prostitution and usury are on rise.

And the worst is Hakari continues to be one of the places violence hits very hard. There is no law and order in the city. Long faced, armed policemen are on duty around public buildings.

“People hesitate to go out at night,” says a man.

“Hakkari is the wound’s mouth,” adds businessman Halit Yalçın.

Will this wound heal?

*Metin Münir is a columnist for daily Milliyet, in which this piece first appeared. It was translated into English by the Daily News staff.

American public opinion and special relationship with Israel

There is no question that the United States has a relationship with Israel that has no parallel in modern history.

Thursday, 23 September 2010 14:17

American public opinion and the special relationship with Israel

By John J. Mearsheimer

WORLD BULLETIN

There is no question that the United States has a relationship with Israel that has no parallel in modern history. Washington gives Israel consistent, almost unconditional diplomatic backing and more foreign aid than any other country. In other words, Israel gets this aid even when it does things that the United States opposes, like building settlements. Furthermore, Israel is rarely criticized by American officials and certainly not by anyone who aspires to high office. Recall what happened last year to Charles Freeman, who was forced to withdraw as head of the National Intelligence Council because he had criticized certain Israeli policies and questioned the merits of the special relationship.

Steve Walt and I argue that there is no good strategic or moral rationale for this special relationship, and that it is largely due to the enormous influence of the Israel lobby. Critics of our claim maintain that the extremely tight bond between the two countries is the result of the fact that most Americans feel a special attachment to Israel. The American people, so the argument goes, are so deeply committed to supporting Israel generously and unreservedly that politicians of all persuasions have no choice but to support the special relationship.

The Chicago Council on Global Affairs has just released a major study of how the American public thinks about foreign policy. It is based on a survey of 2500 Americans, who were asked a wide variety of questions, some of which have bearing on Israel. Their answers make clear that most Americans are not deeply committed to Israel in any meaningful way. There is no love affair between the American people and Israel.

This is not to say that they are hostile to Israel, because they are not. But there is no evidence to support the claim that Americans feel a bond with Israel that is so strong that it leaves their leaders with little choice but to forge a special relationship with Israel. If anything the evidence indicates that if the American people had their way, the United States would treat Israel like a normal country, much the way it treats other democracies

like Britain, Germany, India, and Japan.

Consider some of the study's main findings:

"Contrary to the long-standing, official U.S. position, fewer than half of Americans show a readiness to defend Israel even against an unprovoked attack by a neighbor. Asked whether they would favor using U.S. troops in the event that Israel were attacked by a neighbor, only 47 percent say they would favor doing so, while 50 percent say they would oppose it ... This question was also asked with a slightly different wording in surveys from 1990 to 2004 (if Arab forces invaded Israel). In none of these surveys was there majority support for an implicitly unilateral use of U.S. troops."

Americans "also appear to be very wary of being dragged into a conflict prompted by an Israeli strike on Iran's nuclear facilities. In this survey, conducted in June 2010, a clear majority of Americans (56%) say that if Israel were to bomb Iran's nuclear facilities, Iran were to retaliate against Israel, and the two were to go to war, the United States should not bring its military forces into the war on the side of Israel and against Iran"

"While Americans have strongly negative feelings toward the Palestinian Authority... a strong majority of Americans (66%) prefer to 'not take either side' in the conflict."

"There is some tangible worry regarding the direction of relations with Israel. Although 44 per-cent say that relations with Israel are "staying about the same," a very high 38 percent think relations are 'worsening,' and only 12 percent think they are 'improving'."

"Americans are not in favor of Israeli settlements in the West Bank, a major sticking point in the conflict, with 62 percent saying Israel 'should not build' these settlements."

Finally, only 33 percent of those surveyed feel that Israel is "very important" to the United States, while 41 percent said it was "somewhat important." It is also worth noting that on the list of countries that were said to be "very important" to the United States, Israel ranked fifth behind China, Great Britain, Canada, and Japan. Of course, all of those countries have a normal relationship with the United States, not a special relationship like the one Israel has with Washington.

The data in the Chicago Council's study is consistent with the data that Steve and I presented in our book and in countless public talks. The story remains the same. The bottom line is that the lobby is largely responsible for America's special relationship with Israel, which is harmful to both countries. Alan Dershowitz was spot on when he said, "My generation of Jews ... became part of what is perhaps the most effective lobbying and fund-raising effort in the history of democracy."

*John J. Mearsheimer is a professor of political science at the University of Chicago and coauthor of *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy*.*

My English, the Kurds' Turkish and the right to language
ORHAN KEMAL CENGİZ

I learned English on my own. When you learn a language after a certain age, you never become bilingual. The language you learn remains a foreign language to you. And you always remain a student

If you have to use a second language for professional purposes, as I do, it creates a disadvantage, a difficulty that you have to cope with.

This difficulty, however, turned into an advantage for me in ways that I had never imagined before. The first one is with writing. Since 2007 I have been writing columns in English, and I learned to write in very plain language. I started to use stories and metaphors to explain my point rather than playing with words that I could only do in Turkish. I believe this “disadvantage” helped me a lot to become a better writer in my own language, too.

The second advantage of this “disadvantage” was that it helped me to develop empathy for the Kurds in Turkey. While I was in the UK I understood how it was to feel stupid when I failed to understand the complete meaning of jokes. Then I remembered how our Kurdish friends fell silent when we were joking cheerfully with Turkish friends at university. The possibility never occurred to me that they may have not understood our jokes. Their accent and many other things of course became more endearing to me when I had the same “imperfections” in another language.

Turkish is a “foreign language” for many Kurds in Turkey. I even heard from my educated friends that they only started to learn Turkish when they first started school. There is no “preparatory” class or anything like that of course. They learn Turkish while they learn other things.

Up until very recently, Kurdish had been forbidden in all forms of public life in Turkey. Even its very existence was denied. Kurdish, according to official explanation, was just a different dialect of Turkish. Proponents of this “narrative,” of course, also came up with many stupid stories to support this illogical theory. The most famous one is about the “mountain Turks” who walk on snow, and this sound echoed when they walk: “kart-kurt,” which is the source of the name Kurd and the Kurdish language, according to this “mountain Turk” theory.

Turkish and Kurdish may be as close to each other as English and Chinese. They come from completely different language families, and, except for some Persian and Arabic words that penetrated both languages, they have nothing in common.

So, Kurds not only had to learn and speak Turkish, but they also could not speak their own language. Speaking in Kurdish in public was not allowed. It was not possible to publish anything in Kurdish. Kurds were forced to forget their mother tongue. There were no Kurds, nor Kurdish, in Turkey.

Kurdish television and courses

With the coming of the Justice and Development Party (AK Party) to power and as a result of enacting EU harmonization laws, this total denial has been put aside. And some things that we had never imagined before happened in Turkey. Now we have a state-sponsored Kurdish TV channel, TRT 6, private Kurdish courses are allowed, Kurdish publications have been put into circulation and so on.

In today’s Turkey, no one advocates this “mountain Turk” theory anymore. However, bans and limitations on the Kurdish language continue. Private Kurdish courses are allowed but there are no Kurdish lessons in schools. State television broadcasts in Kurdish but private channels are not allowed to do that. Kurdish cannot be used in official communication or services.

Language rights are the key

We are now at a turning point in solving the Kurdish question; official and unofficial talks and communication continue between the government and Kurdish leaders. Obviously the official usage of Kurdish and education in the mother tongue are and will be key issues in these “negotiations” and in a possible reconciliation.

If Turks and Kurds continue to live together, this will happen on the basis of equal citizenship, not on denial and repression anymore. Recognition and respect for identity and the cultural rights of the Kurds is the only way to solve the Kurdish question. Language is a fundamental right. Solving the Kurdish problem lies in the full recognition of this right of the Kurds. I hope the government will take other bold steps to fully recognize this right, which holds the key to a democratic and peaceful Turkey.

29 September 2010, Wednesday

TODAYS ZAMAN

Can liaison offices open bank accounts in Turkey?

BERK CIKTER

Dear sir, we run a consultancy office in the Netherlands and have recently begun to promote in Turkey and attract an increasing amount of Turkish clients who do not get paid by their foreign customers. We now want to open an office in Turkey. We were wondering whether we would be allowed to open a Turkish business bank account.”] Foreign companies can establish liaison offices in Turkey upon receiving permission from the Foreign Investment General Directorate of the Undersecretariat of the Treasury. Please be informed that liaison offices cannot engage in commercial activities in its own name in Turkey and can only engage in establishing contacts to expand the business opportunities of their head office. Liaison offices may engage in the following activities:

- * introducing the head office’s activities and services
- * collecting data to be transmitted to the head office (data regarding the current sales of the head office, sales forecasts, market conditions and other information relevant to marketing and sales strategy and planning)
- * market research
- * investment planning
- * quality control
- * offer support to distribution company
- * track competitors
- * track opportunities (i.e., tenders)

In order to determine whether a liaison office has exceeded its scope of authority, all the facts and circumstances will be examined. As a result, all factors and criteria, from the number of personnel to the authorities of the representative, from the business cards of the employees to the content of e-mail passing through the office, will be examined in order to determine whether or not there had been any commercial activity.

Managers (representatives) of liaison offices may do the following:

- * correspond in the name of the liaison office
- * employ personnel, terminate personnel
- * carry out all obligations related to employment
- * open bank accounts
- * handle daily banking transactions
- * lease

* register office and other legal obligations

If a liaison office is established by a foreign company in Turkey, such an office would only operate in the abovementioned fields. Therefore, it is essential for you to determine whether such limited operations would be sufficient for your company's targets in Turkey.

As for your question regarding bank accounts, please be informed that liaison offices may open bank accounts. However, because liaison offices cannot engage in income-generating activities, there would never be a transfer of profit. The expenditures of the liaison office, such as the payment of salaries, rent, etc. shall be brought in from abroad in foreign currency.

***NOTE:** Berk Çektir is a licensed attorney at law and available to answer questions on the legal aspects of living in Turkey. Send enquiries to b.cektir@todayszaman.com The names of the readers are disclosed only upon written approval of the sender.*

***DISCLAIMER:** The information provided here is intended to give basic legal information. You should get legal assistance from a licensed attorney at law while conducting legal transactions and not just rely on the information in this column.*

29 September 2010, Wednesday

TODAYS ZAMAN

Turkey and Russia: from competition to cooperation

HASAN KANOLAT

TODAYS ZAMAN

There are two countries that have both European and Asian characteristics. It is not only their physical location, but also their cultural, political and economic background that earn them this title. This characteristic also gives the Russian Federation and Turkey a different perspective on the world

During the Cold War of the 20th century, the Soviet Union tended to see Turkey as an outpost of the West and NATO. It was a Middle Eastern country and a US satellite in the Middle East. Turkey, however, as a member of the Euro-Atlantic world, saw the Soviet Union as the great red danger to the north. The fact that the Ottoman Empire had continually shrunk during the last 300 years because of Czarist Russia's expansion from the west and the east of the Black Sea further augmented this perception in the recent history of the newly established Turkish Republic.

It was also reinforced by the collective forced migrations to Anatolia due to Czarist Russia's expansion as well as its clashes with the Ottoman Empire in the 18th and 19th centuries and by the fact that these migrating ethnicities from the Balkans and the Caucasus heavily invested in the establishment of the Turkish Republic. Almost half of about 70 million people which today make up the Turkish Republic are the descendants of people who had been forced to migrate from various parts of the world, but in particular Czarist Russia, the Soviet Union and the Balkans.

The ethnicities that sought refuge in Turkey during the last 150 years include the Adyghe, Ubykh, Karachay, Balkar, Cossack (Russian Kazakh) and Abkhaz peoples from the northern Caucasus; the Chechens, Dagestanis and Ossetians from the northeast Caucasus; the Karabakh, Azerbaijani, Meskhetian (Ahiska), Terekeme, Karapapak, Adjarian and Georgian peoples from the southern Caucasus; the Crimean Tatar, Ukrainian and

Belorussian people from the north of the Black Sea; and the Balkan Turks, Albanians, Bosnians, Pomaks, Vlachs, Torbesh and Macedonians from the Balkans. In the past, Eurasia was always a field of competition and conflict. It is now a field of cooperation between two countries in the 21st century. History has provided two countries with opportunities for greater cooperation. The disintegration of the Soviet Union, the penetration of the US and the EU into the Soviet political and military sphere of influence, and the US occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan have provided the basis for rapprochement between the two countries. Moreover, close contacts between the Kremlin's former allies (Romania and Bulgaria) or its former parts (Ukraine and Georgia) and the EU and the US as well as their efforts to become part of the Euro-Atlantic world have influenced the Russian Federation's Black Sea and Caucasus policies. While its former allies in the Black Sea (Ukraine, Moldova, Bulgaria and Georgia) and in the Caucasus (Georgia) tried to integrate with the Euro-Atlantic world, Turkey maintained a stable domestic and foreign policy, which further paved the way for cooperation between the two countries in these two regions. Thus, it can be suggested that with the abolition of visa requirements between the two countries, not only will economic ties but also human relations between the two be strengthened in the Black Sea and the Caucasus.

28 September 2010, Tuesday

Gül's messages on domestic policy

ERGUN BABAHAN

TODAYS ZAMAN

We concluded the approximately 10-day visit to the US with President Abdullah Gül with a detailed discussion on domestic policy. Let me specify from the onset that Gül is extremely satisfied with the progress Turkey has made over the last eight years. Of course this does not mean that he sees everything through rose-colored glasses. He realizes the deficiencies in the current system and is aware of the areas that need to be improved, always explaining these to the public.

One of the first topics we discussed was the debate on the tenure of the president. Emphasizing that there is nothing he can do regarding his term of office, Gül said he was focusing on his business. He also stressed that as the president, he was not pleased with the public nature of the debate or with the tone in which the debate was sometimes taking place. He recalled that the issue was not a personal matter, but one that concerned Turkey as a whole and said that is why he prefers to not talk about it. He also noted that obsessing over such matters would take up too much time and inhibit work from getting done.

President Gül supports debating all forms of governance, including the presidential system, but he wants these debates to be performed with a sense of purpose.

Underscoring that debates carried out consciously will benefit the public, he indicated that the presidential system was not on Turkey's agenda.

As for objections that the presidential system will lead the way to the hegemony of a single-party, he stressed the importance of the "checks and balance" system in democracies. Furthermore, he believes people should not be disturbed if the same party gets re-elected.

Does the president appoint people who share his worldview to critical positions? President Gül responded to this question by giving the US as an example. Emphasizing that a similar debate erupted in the US after President Barack Obama made his appointment to the Supreme Court, Gül said: “The debate there was this: Of course a Democrat president should appoint someone who has a worldview similar to his. The same goes for a Republican president. That is not the issue. What’s important is whether there will be partisanship. Personally, this is what I would like those people who are appointed to these positions to understand.”

Noting that the new constitutional amendments have authorized him to appoint four members to the Supreme Election Board (YSK) and that he has already started considering his choices, Gül also brought up a point that many people are not aware of: “I could have appointed a member to the Supreme Board of Judges and Prosecutors (HSYK) a month before the amendments were made. But I did not use my right and I left it to the Supreme Court of Appeals,” he said.

Noting that when he makes an appointment he looks at whether the person meets the necessary criteria and does not consider their affiliations or commitment to a political party, Gül, alluding to his predecessor Ahmet Necdet Sezer, said: “Aside from that, I don’t investigate anyone’s daughter. I would never do that.”

In reference to his recent appointment of an alternate member to the Constitutional Court, which sparked criticism, he stated, “I made the appointment to fill the court’s lack of an economic expert.”

The discussion moved on to the perpetual lawsuits against journalists and then touched upon Ergenekon.

Noting that he was closely following the lawsuits against journalists, Gül especially noted that while everyone is equal in the eyes of the law, convictions of people such as writers, journalists and scientists would have a more drastic impact, and said, “These types of things will quickly ruin our image.” He explained that it’s wrong to detain them for a long period of time and criticized the system of Specially Authorized Courts in Turkey, wherein some courts focus only on cases involving crimes against the security of the state and organized crime.

“This change was made during my term. When State Security Courts were abolished and Specially Authorized Courts were being established, my legal advisors had told me that these courts had been given too much authority. But some institutions insisted that ‘these authorities were critical.’ Special courts only changed the personnel of the State Security Courts. The uniforms were taken off, that’s it. We need to look at all of these factors. The concerns of my advisers were correct. What can judges and prosecutors do today? They are examining the current laws,” he said.

Explaining that he could not follow the attack at Tophane closely because of his busy schedule at the UN, he said these types of incidents don’t suit the new Turkey and said they were incidents that should be left in the old Turkey.

At Columbia University, the president explained that he said the “era of media tycoons was over” in order to refute claims that a single group was managing everything in Turkey and noted that he was closely following the tax fines imposed on the Doğan Media Group.

In short, President Gül said Turkey should not slack off because of its current period of stability and asked for more reforms and continued efforts to provide a better Turkey for future generations.

28 September 2010, Tuesday

The Kurdish issue: new challenges

HASAN YILMIZ

It has been known for some time that the terrorism of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) has lost its international support due to several factors -- and its leaders know it very well.

That is why its current leader -- after Abdullah Öcalan -- Murat Karayılan, made a last-minute call to Israel suggesting they unite against their common enemy, Turkey. But if the US does not want that, there are limits to what Israel could achieve -- and at the moment the US desperately needs a stable Turkey as it needs Turkey to sort out the Iraq mess. Anyway. Turkey's rapid process of democratization is also forcing the terrorist organization to give up terrorism - - as the calls for peace of several Kurdish civil society associations show. I am sure the PKK is at the moment also analyzing why so many Kurds in several cities such as Bingol did not obey its wish to boycott the referendum and similarly schools in the first week of the academic calendar.

While many people could see that the PKK will have to cease violence and give politics a chance, it does not mean that life will be easy for the politicians who are ruling the country. Even though many Kurds are not happy with the terrorism of the PKK and are increasing their voices against it -- they opted to vote in the referendum and they preferred to send their children to school despite the boycott -- that does not mean that the Kurdish issue, and identity, is not politicized as far as even these people are concerned. They also would like to have their ethnic identity recognized and respected, that their children get to know their culture and that they get an education in Kurdish if possible. But they see that they can achieve each of these, if not all, in an increasingly democratized Turkey. They also see that several crucial steps have already been taken. So, what is the full picture here? If the PKK terror is hopefully finished in one way or another, Kurds will use every kind of democratic tactic, method and opportunity -- such as civil disobedience -- to get their rights. And, they would do it more effectively without the shadow of the PKK terror. Many people in the western parts of Turkey will also start supporting them. But, that does not mean also that we will reach a consensus and that everyone will be happy. The ultranationalists (ulusalcılar) whose capital is the most western, Westernized and cosmopolitan city of Turkey, İzmir, do not seem to be potentially tolerant of what many Kurds want. We can hope that even despite this, the Republican People's Party (CHP) -- which gets votes from these ultranationalists -- might move a little bit towards the Kurds if we are to believe its leader Kilicdaroğlu's current rhetoric. But what about the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP), which is fast becoming an ultranationalist party? Maybe thinking that it will never get religious and practicing Muslim Turks' votes back from the Justice and Development Party (AK Party), the MHP seems to have decided to win the hearts and minds of the ultranationalists. The party's rhetoric is becoming more and more hostile towards religious leaders and groups as well. The party now fiercely attacks everyone who espouses the view that the Kurds should get more rights. Its leader, Devlet Bahçeli, unbelievably declared in a written statement right

after the referendum that dark days were approaching for Turkey. Reading this together with what he said a few years ago, that they could “go to the mountains” -- just like the PKK, resort to violence and that its youth was engaged in a civil war with the “communists” before the 1980 coup -- it seems that different kind of clashes might take place.

I am sure that the Kurds could also see this and prefer an incrementalist approach -- and thus stay away from maximalist demands. At the end of the day, if the standards in this country approach those of the EU, their conditions will not be worse than the minorities in the EU as far as ethnic, cultural and linguistic rights are concerned. I am hopeful about the Kurds, but Turkey must deal with its ultranationalist problem as soon as possible.

26 September 2010, Sunday

TODAYS ZAMAN

It is Germany that prevents Turks abroad from voting?

ABDULHIMAT BILICI

This is a shame that cannot be solved in Turkey despite already having been settled in Iraq, a relatively new democracy, and even in Bulgaria, a country that is only now adapting itself to democracy.

This problem that could not be solved by so many governments or due to an evolving democratic mindset is about the right of our citizens living abroad to vote.

It's not just Bulgaria or Iraq but every country with a democratic system of government in the Americas and in Europe that regulates the right of its citizens living abroad to vote in the most modern manner and offers them various options. This encourages all citizens to participate in voting, contrary to the practice in our country, where voting for this group of citizens is virtually made impossible.

The preferred method is to place ballot boxes in embassies in countries where such citizens live several weeks before the day on which the vote is held. Electronic methods or voting by mail are also employed by some.

Turkey, too, made some efforts to ensure greater participation by Turkish citizens living abroad. With amendments introduced in 1987, these citizens were given the opportunity to cast their votes at border gates. In 1995, the sentence “The law requires measures to ensure that Turkish citizens living abroad can exercise their right to vote” was inserted into the Constitution, but this changed nothing in practice. With a bill passed in January 2008, Turkish citizens living abroad were given the right to cast their votes at ballot boxes placed in Turkish embassies as well as to vote by mail or electronically. The Supreme Election Board (YSK) was authorized to decide which method to employ in a specific locality. Upon an objection filed by the Republican People's Party (CHP), the Constitutional Court canceled the option to vote by mail in May of that year. But why are other options, including voting at ballot boxes in embassies, not used?

According to a statement made by a YSK official, the source of the problem is Germany, which is home to the largest Turkish population outside of Turkey. “All countries except Germany have permitted us to establish polls at our embassies. Germany gave permission to establish 37 ballot boxes in 13 localities for 1.3 million Turkish citizens living in the country, but it did not give any guarantee that it would ensure security during the elections, which would last for about one month. So, unable to conduct the elections in Germany, we decided not to set up polls in embassies in other countries in order to not breach the principle of equality,” the YSK official said.

What happened in the end? We all saw that our citizens abroad had to go through a number of ordeals in order to cast their votes in the referendum, which was certainly not the image that Turkey deserves. Out of 2,556,000 voters living abroad, only 196,000 were able to cast their ballot. This means only 8 percent of a patient minority was able to circumvent all obstacles placed in front of it by the YSK.

Indeed, the YSK requires Turkish citizens living abroad to register with the Registry of Voters Living Abroad before they can cast their votes. In addition, they had to have their passports with them. Thus, dual citizens cannot cast their votes by just showing their ID cards. Moreover, those who have new passports with electronic chips are not allowed to cast their votes because these passports do not have room for writing down the phrase, "The bearer of this passport has cast his/her vote." Furthermore, not all airports have facilities for casting votes. If all these requirements are fulfilled, there is still one more: The power should be on and the YSK system should be online. A reporter who was covering the voting processes at airports said these requirements prevented six out of 10 people from casting their vote.

Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu attended an editorial meeting at our newspaper before the referendum, and we discussed this issue with him. He said they were trying to solve the problem. He talked about practical difficulties, such as how this can be done at a consulate providing services to about 300,000 citizens in Germany. He touched on Germany's concerns about security.

When I occupied the same table with several ambassadors of European countries, including Germany, at a reception held on Friday at Dolmabahçe Palace in connection with the Reform Monitoring Group, I had the opportunity to inquire about why they are preventing a solution to this matter. Their responses were not negative. Almost all of them said, "Why should Turks in Germany not benefit from the rights our citizens here are already enjoying?" Noting the YSK's position and Davutoğlu's words, I asked German Ambassador Eckart Cuntz about the situation in his country. He said it would be better for Turks in Germany to acquire Germany citizenship and become active in German politics, but that he has no objection to them voting by mail or at a Turkish consulate.

This is the picture. Let us wait and see if the government and the YSK will be able to get rid of this disgrace before next year's general elections.

25 September 2010, Saturday

TODAYS ZAMAN

Urban change

NICOLE POPE

Whether it is viewed as a clash of lifestyles or the expression of frustration against economic exclusion, the assault launched by neighborhood vigilantes against art galleries and their wine-drinking patrons in Tophane has been widely condemned. By all accounts, the attack had been carefully planned.

Several opinion surveys in the recent past have shown that traditional Turks have little tolerance for different lifestyles. Hard-line conservatives may have been disturbed by the fancy crowds and scantily clad tourists who take advantage of the new venues in the

neighborhood, but I suspect that a desire to maintain traditional values was only part of their motivation.

Their frustration is probably due less to a reaction against alcohol consumption, noise pollution and contrasting lifestyles than it is about the growing gap in purchasing power that allows wealthier newcomers to colonize what they consider “their” neighborhood, while they are themselves slowly priced out by market forces.

The ever-growing number of galleries, bars, hotels and other upscale businesses that have appeared in Tophane are not just upsetting social dynamics but in the long term threatening the old inhabitants’ very presence in the area.

Most of the residents, of course, do not resort to lynch tactics to express their unease. Wine-drinking “intels” may have come to symbolize unwelcome change in the eyes of the more narrow-minded among them, but resorting to violence is not an acceptable way of addressing conflicts in an urban setting. They were also venting their anger at the wrong target.

The irony of the recent attack is that while some in Turkey’s traditional elite show little respect for Anatolian migrants, many in the art world are sensitive to the social cost of modernization. Anadolukültür, for instance, which occupies the old tobacco warehouse known as Tütünderosu, is an organization that focuses on making artistic and cultural events available to wider audiences across Anatolia, while many artists’ works critique the economic and social transformation the country, and the city, are undergoing.

There was a time when you could find low-income migrants squatting in fancy neighborhoods, but since the 1990s the development of Istanbul has taken a different, more exclusive, turn. For a while, wealthier Istanbulites retreated to gated compounds to be closer to nature, but this has been followed by a new drive to modernize the city center.

In the name of urban rehabilitation, entire neighborhoods inhabited by low-income residents sitting on valuable land are being cleaned up. The club-wielding mob may have hoped to fend off modernization, but once the gentrification juggernaut makes an appearance, little will stop it – particularly when it is encouraged by municipal policies. Take the case of Sulukule, for instance, where Roma residents were pushed out of a neighborhood they had inhabited for centuries only to be exiled to modern but depressing rabbit hutches in the periphery. Their houses, in an advanced state of disrepair, were demolished to make way for fake Ottoman luxury villas destined to house the new pious, non-drinking elite. A 264-square-meter plot in the neighborhood is currently up for sale for five times the amount per square meter than was offered to the previous owners. The bulldozers of urban development have now reached Tarlabası, where old buildings will soon be replaced by modern complexes deemed more suitable to a contemporary city. Much money will, of course, change hands in the process, while community life will be disrupted, if not entirely destroyed, as local residents are forced to move further out -- where property prices are not at such a premium.

Most large cities face similar problems, and few would disagree that Istanbul today is a lot greener and cleaner than it was 20 years ago, but its transformation carries a cost. The social impact of change can be somewhat mitigated by community projects and balanced municipal policies that promote a more harmonious cohabitation between people of different backgrounds.

One of the aims of Istanbul 2010 European Capital of Culture was to foster urban citizenship and a common sense of ownership, tolerant of differences. As this unfortunate incident demonstrates, the goal has yet to be achieved, but we can at least hope that the Tophane incident will encourage more dialogue.

24 September 2010, Friday

TODAYS ZAMAN
