

BUSINESS AND POLITICS IN THE MUSLIM WORLD
TURKEY

Weekly Report on Turkey's Political, Geo-Strategic, Economic and Social Issues,
Period: 1ST –7th October 2010.

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Presentation: 13th October, 2010

Report no.140

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SUMMARY-POLITICAL NEWS

Male Members wore headscarves to protest government and opposition parties

Some male members of the Turkey Party, or TP, wore headscarves at a press meeting in the central Anatolian province of Sivas to protest government and opposition parties' policies regarding the religious garment, Doğan news agency reported.

Turkey has asked Denmark to shut it down Roj TV

A Danish prosecutor on Thursday asked a court to ban Roj TV, a Copenhagen-based Kurdish TV network, accusing it of supporting the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK. Roj TV started broadcasting via satellite in 2004 in 68 countries. Turkey has asked Denmark to shut it down, as has the United States. The PKK is listed as a terrorist organization by Turkey, the United States and the European Union.

Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan called all opposition to solve headscarf issue

Amid renewed debate about the headscarf issue, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has repeated his call to the country's opposition parties to work together with his ruling party to solve the problem.

SUMMARY- Geo-Strategic News

NATO chief seeks Turkey's consent on EU-NATO cooperation

NATO chief Anders Fogh Rasmussen has sought to persuade Turkey to lift its veto on Greek Cyprus' possible role in European Union-NATO cooperation. Cooperation between NATO and the EU has long been held back due to vetoes by both Greek Cyprus and Turkey, in the EU and NATO respectively. Greek Cyprus' veto has prevented Turkey from signing an arrangement with the European Defense Agency, or EDA, while Turkey has blocked the participation of Greek Cyprus in European Security Defense Policy, or ESDP, missions.

Israel sent zoo animals in Gaza aid flotilla ship to Turkey as friendly Gestures

The shipment – three elephants, zebras, one hippo and a handful of lemurs – from Israel to Turkey is a friendly gesture that is also part of an effort to save Asian pachyderms from extinction, Israeli media reported Monday.

Turkey's struggle for peace in Kyrgyzstan

Turkey initiated a reconciliatory conference over the weekend in the former Soviet republic's Issyk-kul resort to bring different ethnic groups together, where both the Kyrgyz leader and Davutoğlu called on representatives of the groups to coexist peacefully as a catalyst for economic development and welfare in the strategically important country.

Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan visit to Bulgaria to to improve bilateral relations

Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan is visiting Bulgaria today to have talks with officials in a bid to improve bilateral relations with the neighboring country.

Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao visit to Turkey

Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao will hold the talks with Turkey's top leaders on Friday and Saturday in efforts shared by both nations to greatly boost their relationship in several areas.

Japan has proposed to construct a nuclear power plant in Turkey

Japan has proposed to construct a nuclear power plant in Turkey. Turkey's Energy & Natural Resources Minister Taner Yıldız received executives of Japanese "Toshiba" firm in Ankara on Thursday, who brought him a letter from Japanese minister of industry and trade.

TL 600,000 was donated to Pakistani flood victims

Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu urged Foreign Ministry officials and diplomats on Monday to donate to a campaign aimed at addressing the persisting problems of Pakistani flood victims during a fundraising dinner in which more than TL 600,000 was donated. Turkey's prime minister said on Wednesday that the European Union (EU) should openly say that it did not want Turkey if the situation was so.

Premier Recep Tayyip Erdoğan called on the EU not to keep Turkey waiting

Premier Recep Tayyip Erdoğan called on the EU not to keep Turkey waiting at the union's door. "They (EU member states) are making up some formulas to show that 'they are not keeping as waiting'," Erdoğan said during the 14th International Business Forum in İstanbul. Referring to Turkey's economy, Erdoğan said Turkey was among the countries that were affected the least by the global financial crisis thanks to structural reforms it had been implementing since the end of 2002.

Turkey is likely to hold elections in the first week of June

Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan says Turkey is likely to hold elections in the first week of June

Decline take place in Human Smuggling in Turkey

Human smuggling in Turkey has declined substantially since 2007, according to recent data from the Interior Ministry. The reason for the decline is attributed to measures Turkey has taken to better combat human smugglers. According to the ministry's figures, while 56,219 illegal immigrants and 937 smugglers were caught in Turkey in 2003, the figure increased to 61,228 illegal immigrants and 956 smugglers in 2004. The steady increase continued, and a total of 57,428 illegal immigrants and 834 smugglers were caught within Turkish borders in 2005.

SUMMARY-ECONOMIC NEWS

IMF raises Turkish growth forecast

Turkey's economy may expand 7.8 percent this year, more than double the pace of Europe's other emerging markets, the International Monetary Fund said, raising its forecast on stronger-than-expected consumer spending.

Russian, Turkish businesses vow to boost trade ties

The Turkish Confederation of Businessmen and Industrialists (TUSKON) and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of the Russian Federation (RF CCI) have signed a deal to pursue partnership opportunities to boost trade volume between the two nations in accordance with the target of reaching \$100 billion in five years that was set at a high-level meeting between Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and his Russian counterpart, Vladimir Putin, in January.

Foreign direct investment in Turkey falls

Foreign direct investment (FDI) in Turkey decreased by 35 percent from \$3.833 to \$2.49 billion in the first seven months of 2010.

Turkey, US to strengthen 'model partnership'

The main aim of Turkish Foreign Trade Minister Zafer Çağlayan's upcoming visit to the United States is to strengthen bilateral trade within the framework of the "model partnership," which was declared between the two NATO allies by US President Barack Obama during an April 2009 visit to Turkey.

Turkey's auto exports reach \$11.4 billion in first 9 months

Turkey's auto exports rose by 12.4 percent to \$11.4 billion from \$10.2 billion year-on-year in the first nine months of 2010, a set of data released by the Automotive Industry Exporters' Association (OİB) has shown.

Turkey, Syria establish partnership for oil exploration

Energy and Natural Resources Minister Taner Yıldız has stated that a partnership has been established between Turkey and Syria in order to facilitate a search for oil in seven oilfields in Syria.

Turkey says private companies free to end business with Iran

The Turkish government has no intention of following unilateral US sanctions on Iran, but private Turkish companies are free to make their own decisions due to their commercial concerns and interest, officials said on Friday.

SUMMARY- Social news

Temperatures fall around Turkey

A cold front is expected to hit Turkey this week, as winds from the Balkans and falling temperatures confirm that summer is over.

Facebook may be next victim of Turkey's Internet bans

The 22.5 million Turkish members of Facebook may lose access to the popular social-networking site as a result of a court case filed by an opposition leader. Though Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu and his party say they only want offensive content removed, a government minister has hinted Facebook may follow YouTube onto the banned-sites list.

A government minister who has defended Turkey's bans on YouTube and other popular websites hinted Wednesday that the social-networking site Facebook could share the same fate.

Restored Armenian church in Turkey opened to worshippers

A renovated Armenian church in Istanbul has been opened to worshippers.

A ceremony was held on Thursday to mark the re-opening of "The Suro Harutyun Armenian Church" which was renovated by Istanbul's Sisli Municipality.

Cigarette consumption in Turkey drops by 16 percent

Turkey's indoor smoking ban that took full effect as of July 2009 has resulted in cigarette sales in the country dropping by 16.2 percent this year over the same period last year, according to data from the Tobacco and Alcohol Market Regulatory Agency (TAPDK). According to these figures, 3.64 billion packs were sold in the first eight months of last year, compared to 3.1 billion this year. The effect of the smoking ban on cigarette sales was seen starting in the second half of last year, but smokers in Turkey still spend almost as much for tobacco products as the government allocates to investment.

POLITICAL NEWS

Male party members in Turkey wear headscarves to support women

Thursday, October 7, 2010

ISTANBUL – Daily News with wires

HURRIYAT

Some male members of the Turkey Party, or TP, wore headscarves at a press meeting in the central Anatolian province of Sivas to protest government and opposition parties' policies regarding the religious garment, Doğan news agency reported.

“If you are not worried about the votes you will receive, if you are sincere, leave all people in this country to wear whatever they want,” said Ahmet Kuzu, head of the party's Sivas branch.

“If the Prime Minister is sincere, the order of Allah to be covered is not only for university students. This order is the same for all our sisters. The headscarf which was set free for cleaning ladies in hospitals should be set free for nurses, doctors, bankers, teachers and public employees,” Kuzu said.

Kuzu said they wanted the government and opposition parties to support women who wear headscarves. Kuzu then asked both male and female party members to put on the headscarves distributed to them and pose for photographs while wearing the religious garments.

Turkish students allegedly beaten, detained after unfurling banner

Thursday, October 7, 2010

ISTANBUL — Daily News with wires

Hurriyat

Two students at Istanbul's Yıldız Technical University were allegedly beaten and detained Wednesday after unfurling a banner demanding free education during an opening speech by Turkish President Abdullah Gül.

Photographs from the event showed the two students being dragged on the ground and beaten for their protest, which also demanded the release of two other students, Berna Yılmaz and Ferhat Tüzer, who were also detained for demanding free education during a speech by the prime minister six months ago.

Yılmaz and Tüzer were accused of being members of an illegal organization and are facing up to 15 years in prison.

After Gül entered the auditorium to begin his speech Wednesday, the two students allegedly tried to enter the building as well but were prevented from doing so because only invitees were being granted entrance.

In response, the two students allegedly opened their banner which said, “We want free education, we will take it, signed: youth federation,” in front of the building. They also said, “It is not a crime to want free education.”

Security services later took the students to the Beşiktaş Police Department, dailies Milliyet and Radikal reported.

At the same time, a group of 30 students also protested Gül's visit in front of the auditorium building but security guards successfully forced them to move to the other side of the campus, where they continued their actions until Gül left the school.

Students have staged protests demanding Yılmaz and Tüzer's release in the past. On April 20, eight members of a youth organization in the eastern province of Kars were detained for beginning a signature campaign for the pair's freedom.

The same day, Sultan Gizem Duran from Malatya İnönü University was detained after being accused of making banners supporting the students' release.

Academics should focus on their own business

Speaking during the semester's opening, Gül provided advice to academics about how they should share their political opinions about the presidential system, recommending that they merely focus on their own business rather than other business.

Academics should share their opinion in a way that befits their academic or scientific personalities, Gül said.

According to Radikal, the 42nd article of the Turkish Constitution guarantees the free right to education of everyone in the country.

The Higher Education Board, or YÖK, previously listed a number of university decisions that constituted a violation of freedoms at institutes of higher education, Milliyet reported.

The universities had disciplined students for a variety of "offenses," including "holding their stomach suspiciously," "eating bread and ayran which were purchased from off school property" and performing a Turkish folk dance known as the "halay."

Danish prosecutor asks court to ban Kurdish TV network

Thursday, October 7, 2010

COPENHAGEN - Agence France-Presse

huriyat

A Danish prosecutor on Thursday asked a court to ban Roj TV, a Copenhagen-based Kurdish TV network, accusing it of supporting the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK.

Prosecutor Lise-Lotte Nilas told AFP she had asked the Copenhagen district court to withdraw Roj TV's broadcasting license because it violated Danish regulation prohibiting support for terrorist organizations.

In August, she charged that an in-depth investigation into the network's programming that had started in 2005 had found that it supported the PKK.

"We carefully examined a series of programs on Roj TV, and our evaluation is that they have a character of propaganda for the PKK, which is a terrorist organization," she said in a statement at the time.

Roj TV started broadcasting via satellite in 2004 in 68 countries.

Turkey has asked Denmark to shut it down, as has the United States.

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

AK Party's Çelik says Said Nursi is symbol of brotherhood in Turkey

Ruling Justice and Development Party's (AK Party) deputy chairman Hüseyin Çelik has said prolific Muslim scholar Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, who is of Kurdish origin, is a symbol of brotherhood in Turkey as he fight with ethnical nationalism all through his life.

Çelik was speaking at the 9th International Risale-i Nur Symposium which began yesterday in İstanbul. Risale-i Nur is a 14-volume commentary on the Quran, authored by

Nursi. The symposium's opening ceremony was held at the Sinan Erdem Sports Hall yesterday.

Recalling that the pro-status quo circles of the time of Nursi accused him of Kurdism, Çelik said Nursi never favored violence during his life. "Despite this, this mentality sent him to prison and exiles. Those who could not put up with Nursi did not even want to have a grave," he said.

Nursi suffered great hardships during his 83 years of life. Most of his life passed in prison and exile. He wasn't even left in peace when he closed his eyes for the last time. He died on March 23, 1960, in Urfa and was buried there. However, after the May 27 rebellion, his body was dug up and carried to an unknown place. Since that day the location of his grave has been continually debated.

Deputy Prime Minister Bülent Arınç also delivered a speech at the opening ceremony of the symposium. Noting that Nursi is a prolific Islamic scholar, Arınç said he and his followers faced many hardships. "In the past, the demands of religious and innocent people were regarded as actions against the principle of secularism," he said. The 9th International Risale-i Nur Symposium, which is being attended by nearly 5,000 participants, is taking place at the WOW Hotel on Oct. 4 and 5. Among the participants of the symposium are academics and scholars from the US, Palestine, Canada, Holland, Iran and the Philippines.

04 October 2010, Monday

TODAYS ZAMAN

Turkish PM Calls for Cooperation on Headscarf Issue

Amid renewed debate about the headscarf issue, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has repeated his call to the country's opposition parties to work together with his ruling party to solve the problem.

"We expect the opposition party to keep the promises it made to the public," Erdoğan said Tuesday at a meeting of his Justice and Development Party, or AKP's, group, in Parliament, reminding listeners of opposition leader Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu's promise to craft a solution to the headscarf issue.

"If you are sincere, give your instructions; I will also give mine," Erdoğan said, addressing the leader of the Republican People's Party, or CHP, and calling on "colleagues from the MHP [Nationalist Movement Party] and BDP [Peace and Democracy Party]" to join the effort as well.

Despite their shared statements on the issue, the two politicians approach the matter from different angles. Erdoğan has said the Department of Religious Affairs should be included as an adviser on the commission to address the issue, while Kılıçdaroğlu has previously pointed to the decisions of the European Court of Human Rights on the wearing of the Islamic head-covering.

The prime minister also addressed Kılıçdaroğlu's suggestion that Turkish women cover their hair in a more relaxed style seen in parts of other countries. "There is no need to give examples from Iran or Pakistan; no need for exploitation, no need for designers," Erdoğan said. "[Women] can wear whatever they want. Do you ask those who don't wear the headscarf why they wear stretch trousers or baggy trousers, or pinafore dresses? This is the real democracy and freedom."

In his remarks, Erdoğan also criticized the opposition parties for calling for an

immediate, comprehensive change in the Constitution, something the prime minister has said should be tabled until after the 2011 general elections. “They opposed [us] during the talks about constitutional change and now they propose to make an amendment in one week’s time,” he said, adding that the opposition parties could not even change their own party statutes before the elections.

“Is it easier to change the Constitution than a party regulation?” Erdoğan asked, repeating his proposal to make a new constitutional amendment just after the 2011 elections.

“Whatever the [level of] representation of your party is in the Parliament, let’s make the changes in the same proportion, form a reconciliation commission and make a good constitution,” he said. “There is already a prepared internal regulation; let’s revise it.”

The prime minister also criticized the way the opposition carried out its political campaigning in the run-up to the Sept. 12 constitutional referendum. “People reacted on Sept. 12 to sour, angry attitudes and expressions leading to polarization,” he said. “I hope the opposition will not call upon the preventive and slowing-down style of politics while we are making adjustment laws.”

Added Erdoğan: “We don’t abstain from reconciliation and dialogue. Thus, we will talk about every problem under the framework of Parliament.”

In the part of his speech to his party that was closed to the press, Erdoğan warned his deputies about their statements on TV, the Hürriyet Daily News & Economic Review has learned. Stressing that there is a sensitive election period ahead, he said: “I don’t say you shouldn’t talk on TV. However, get permission from the party administration.”

Wednesday, 6 October 2010

Hurriyet Daily News & Economic Review

USAK PUBLICATION

Geo-Strategic News

NATO chief seeks Turkey’s consent on EU-NATO cooperation

Thursday, October 7, 2010

ANKARA - Hürriyet Daily News

NATO chief Anders Fogh Rasmussen has sought to persuade Turkey to lift its veto on Greek Cyprus’ possible role in European Union-NATO cooperation, a long-standing hurdle to Brussels’ ambition of increasing its military capability.

“We are ready to work with him to find a solution that would take into consideration Turkey’s attitude in principle and allay our concerns,” Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu told reporters.

The NATO chief was in Ankara on Thursday as part of a tour of the capitals of several key allies prior to the NATO Lisbon summit to be held on Nov. 19-20, where he will present his strategic concept for the alliance.

He was scheduled to meet Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Davutoğlu as the Hürriyet Daily News & Economic Review went to press late Thursday.

The main topics of discussion in Ankara are expected to be the new strategic concept of NATO, enhancing NATO-EU cooperation, the missile defense system project and NATO’s mission in Afghanistan.

Rasmussen is consulting Turkey prior to the summit as part of an effort to attain greater security integration between the EU and NATO. To do so, Turkey must be persuaded to lift its veto on security issues pertaining to Greek Cyprus.

Cooperation between NATO and the EU has long been held back due to vetoes by both Greek Cyprus and Turkey, in the EU and NATO respectively. Greek Cyprus' veto has prevented Turkey from signing an arrangement with the European Defense Agency, or EDA, while Turkey has blocked the participation of Greek Cyprus in European Security Defense Policy, or ESDP, missions.

At the European Council meeting held in September, the EU commissioned Catherine Ashton, the foreign policy chief of the EU, to prepare proposals to increase cooperation with NATO.

Rasmussen called on the EU to give Turkey a role in the union's security policy and came to Ankara with a proposal.

Under the proposal, the EU would conclude a security agreement with Turkey, give Turkey special status with the EDA and involve Ankara in decision-making processes regarding EU security missions.

"I have recommended that the EU [engage] in security cooperation with Turkey. Moreover, I suggested that the EDA make an agreement with Turkey extending to common cooperation areas on defense," Rasmussen told the private NTV News channel prior to his visit.

Noting that he was visiting Turkey for consultations before the NATO summit, Rasmussen said in his interview that he saw Turkey as a key ally. He reiterated that a draft of the new strategic concept of NATO would be delivered to member bodies and would be discussed Oct. 14.

Regarding NATO's long debated missile-defense system project, in which Turkey is also included, Rasmussen said, "Our goal is to [bring] all states and populations into NATO. The U.S. system can be connected to European systems."

Russia should also be invited to cooperate so NATO could show the system was not anti-Russian but, on the contrary, meant to protect all populations, Rasmussen said.

Rasmussen also said he appreciated Turkey's decision to extend its Kabul Regional command in Afghanistan. Turkey declared its decision to extend the command, which it has held since November 2009, ahead of the NATO chief's visit.

The Turkish commander of the Kabul regional command in Afghanistan, Brig. Gen. Levent Çolak, whose tenure is set to expire Oct. 28, was decorated with the eminent services medal with the approval of Afghan President Hamid Karzai. The medal was presented by Afghan Defense Minister Abdurrahim Vardak during a ceremony this week attended by Turkish Ambassador to Kabul Basat Öztürk and military officials.

Israeli 'Flotilla' Carries Zoo Animals to Turkey

Turkish-Israeli ties hit a new low after a deadly Israeli raid on a Gaza-bound aid flotilla in May, but a flotilla now traveling in the opposite direction aims to improve relations with its large, noisy cargo.

The shipment – three elephants, zebras, one hippo and a handful of lemurs – from Israel to Turkey is a friendly gesture that is also part of an effort to save Asian pachyderms from extinction, Israeli media reported Monday.

The animals come courtesy of the Tisch Family Zoological Gardens in Jerusalem – commonly known as the Biblical Zoo – and the Ramat Gan Safari. Their destination is the Gaziantep Zoo in southeastern Anatolia, Turkey's largest zoo, the Israeli daily Jerusalem Post reported Monday on its website.

Gaby the elephant spent his last day in Jerusalem on Sunday; that night, he was sent to Haifa, where he will board a ship bound for Turkey with the other animals. It will take about a day for the animals to dock in Turkey, where they will travel overland to Gaziantep, not far from the Syrian border.

Gaby was born at the Biblical Zoo in 2005, a bouncing 45-kilogram boy. He was the first elephant to be born in Israel using artificial insemination, which was a huge success for the zoo. Shmulik Yedvad, the zoo's head curator, who raised Gaby from the day he was born, said it was hard to part with the animal he had worked so hard to raise. "He's becoming more mature and we needed to find a different place for him," he said.

Male adult elephants are difficult to keep in captivity because they are very aggressive. "It's hard, but we know he's going to a place where they will take care of him and where he's wanted," Yedvad said.

Gaby's trainers at the Biblical Zoo hope he will be able to start his own family in Turkey, increasing the number of Asian elephants in captivity. The three elephants from Jerusalem and Ramat Gan will be the first elephants at the Turkish zoo.

"There's no connection to politics. At the end of the day, everyone wants them to be in a good place," Yedvad said of the project, which has taken years to come to fruition. "It's very easy to take this in the direction of a new flotilla to Turkey, but we're not working government to government, we're working zoo to zoo. Happily, everyone is working together for the good of the animals, and the politics are just not relevant."

Monday, 4 October 2010

USAK PUBLICATION

[NEWS ANALYSIS] Turkey could close only one chapter in five years

When Turkey was declared a candidate in December of 1999 for full membership in the European Union, then Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit was simply elated. "We will be a full member by 2004," he had said. Following revolutionary reforms and a lot of hard work, Turkey was able to get a date in December of 2004 for starting formal negotiations -- Oct. 3, 2005 -- that came with the heavy baggage of huge difficulties.

On Oct. 3, 2005, the talks to start the talks in Luxembourg plainly showed how bumpy Turkey's journey to Brussels would be. Although accession talks with Turkey were unanimously approved by the European Council and announced at a two day EU summit on Dec. 16-17, 2004, Turkey had to face resistance from Austria on Oct. 3, 2005 that lasted almost 40 hours. Then-EU term president England's Foreign Secretary Jack Straw would later remember this day, saying "some countries" on that day acted as if Vienna was under siege again and had become very defensive. Simply put, it took 40 hours for the EU to make a decision that had already been made 10 months earlier.

Once the Austria "thorn" was done away with, the EU process for Turkey -- which would later be called crisis-prone by most experts -- started in the late hours of the night, on the same day as Croatia. The first crises came about as a result of the efforts of the Greek Cypriot administration, and the second as a result of the "outstanding efforts" of French President Nicolas Sarkozy. Turkey's membership process was effectively paralyzed almost from the very beginning.

A short glimpse at the balance sheet of chapters opened with Turkey on the fifth anniversary of the talks will clearly illustrate what I am trying to say. EU candidates have to complete 35 chapters of talks with the bloc to have a seat in the prestigious club. There

are real negotiations on only 33 of these. In Turkey's case, 18 of these 33 chapters -- that's more than half -- have been suspended. In the five years since the start of talks only one chapter has been completed: the Science and Research chapter, whose acquis communautaire is only one-and-a-half pages. The number of chapters that have been opened with ongoing negotiations is 13.

Despite Turkey's support for the Annan plan and Turkish Cypriots voting in favor of it and Greek Cypriots voting against it, the EU unjustly put the blame for the failure to reach a settlement squarely on Turkey. Brussels, using Turkey's refusal to open its ports and airports to Greek Cypriots as a pretext, made what was the harshest decision in the history of negotiations with any country and suspended eight chapters with Turkey on Dec. 11, 2006, and announced that the fate of the remaining chapters would depend on a settlement of the dispute in Cyprus, i.e., no chapters will be closed unless the Cypriot problem is solved.

Sarkozy vowed to stop Turkey's candidacy process during his election campaign. He was unable to achieve that, but he managed to suspend five other chapters in May of 2007, saying these particular chapters were about "full membership." These chapters include agriculture and rural development, economic and finance policy, regional policy and coordination of structural instruments, and financial and budgetary provisions and instruments.

The Greek administration on Cyprus demanded that the EU suspend more chapters, citing Turkey's refusal to open its ports to this country, but this was not supported even by Sarkozy at a summit in December 2009. Having failed to achieve what they have asked for, the Greek Cypriots unilaterally suspended six more chapters on Dec. 8, 2009.

With the suspension of 18 chapters and only 13 already being opened, the number of chapters that can be opened now stands at three. If Turkey is able to open the competitive policy chapter -- on which work is currently under way -- there will be two more chapters to keep the process alive. Either there will be a solution on Cyprus, or Turkey's membership process will be suspended, at least for a while. As Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu has noted, the EU is rapidly moving toward a point where it must make a strategic decision on its relations with Turkey.

Croatia negotiations

Croatia, which started on the same night as Turkey, is expected to become a full member in 2012. The EU has opened all the chapters available to negotiate with this country, and 22 of these have already been closed. Eleven are currently being negotiated. The Croats hope to sign the accession treaty in June 2011. While Croatia is expected to become a full member seven years after the start of accession talks. Turkey -- who first applied for membership of any kind in 1959 -- cannot even get an estimate of a membership date.

04 October 2010, Monday

SELÇUK GÜLTAŞLI TODAY'S ZAMAN

Turkey seeks reconciliation among Kyrgyzstan's ethnic groups

On Saturday, Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu said Turkey hopes peace and stability will prevail in Kyrgyzstan, pledging more support in aid if deemed necessary for the small Central Asian country.

Turkey initiated a reconciliatory conference over the weekend in the former Soviet republic's Issyk-kul resort to bring different ethnic groups together, where both the

Kyrgyz leader and Davutoğlu called on representatives of the groups to coexist peacefully as a catalyst for economic development and welfare in the strategically important country.

“No country can develop without maintaining national peace. ... We lost sleep during the June incidents in Kyrgyzstan,” Davutoğlu said, adding that Turkey has drafted plans to seek ways to address the issue. He said through state aid agencies, Turkey sent massive humanitarian aid and then announced \$21 million in aid to revamp ravaged southern Kyrgyzstan following the devastating ethnic clashes.

Nearly 400 people were killed in several days of violence, which began on June 10 and were triggered by attacks by unidentified people in balaclavas. Unofficial estimates place the death toll much higher. Many victims were shot and some, including women and children, were burned inside their homes.

The Turkish foreign minister said Turkey’s only wish is to see peace and unity among distinct ethnic groups in Kyrgyzstan. Davutoğlu also called on the leaders of ethnic communities to urge their communities to help establish peace and reconciliation. He also thanked Uzbek President Islam Karimov for acting responsibly and not exaggerating the incidents.

At a UN development summit in New York on Sept. 20, Karimov called for an independent international investigation of the June ethnic violence that sent more than 100,000 refugees into his country. He said such an investigation was the only way to promote reconciliation between ethnic Kyrgyz and Uzbeks who each make up roughly half of the population in the south of Kyrgyzstan.

Kyrgyz President Rosa Otunbayeva said in a speech at the summit that she is not against this investigation and that they also want an international commission to investigate the matter.

Davutoğlu also said this meeting is an important step taken before the crucial Oct. 10 parliamentary elections.

Kyrgyzstan adopted a parliamentary system in a constitutional referendum on June 27 to avoid abuse of power and consolidate nascent democracy. Davutoğlu said Turkey will support any government that is elected.

Deputy Undersecretary Hakkı Akil, Turkish Cooperation and Development Agency (TİKA) head Musa Kulaklıkaya, Foreign Ministry officials, Kyrgyz cabinet members, Kyrgyz foundation leaders, Uzbek and Kyrgyz leaders, elders and civil society representatives were among the participants of the key conference.

Speaking at the opening of the conference, Otunbayeva thanked Turkey for organizing the event and called Davutoğlu’s attendance at the event as “heroic,” considering his tight schedule. She said Davutoğlu’s participation displayed how much importance Turkey attaches to restoring peace among the Kyrgyz and Uzbek communities.

Acknowledging that the central authority fell short in averting June clashes, Otunbayeva refused to define the incidents as “ethnic.” Noting that Kyrgyz and Uzbeks “speak close dialects of the same language” and share a common religion, Otunbayeva said every nation living in Kyrgyzstan has the same rights.

04 October 2010, Monday

TODAYS ZAMAN

Syrian president says Turkey necessary for regional peace

Thursday, October 7, 2010

DAMASCUS – Anatolia News Agency

Turkey should be involved in all aspects of a peace process between Syria and Israel, Syrian President Bashar al-Assad said in an interview with the Turkish state-owned TRT Turkiyya Arabic Channel on Wednesday.

Assessing Turkish-Syrian relations and regional developments – especially in relation to Turkey's mediation of indirect peace talks between Syria and Israel – al-Assad said Turkey had achieved great success and added that the country should be involved in all efforts to secure peace.

Syria and other regional neighbors have full confidence in Turkish officials, the Syrian president said, adding that relations between Turkey and Syria had significantly improved in a surprisingly short period of time.

Western efforts to renew peace talks between Syria and Israel are focusing on finding common ground, but nothing has crystallized yet and the chances of success are unknown, al-Assad said.

The Syrian leader said envoys from the two countries were trying to accommodate Syria's demands for the return of the Golan Heights and Israel's security objectives.

Al-Assad said Turkey's stance on some particular regional matters had contributed to the improvement of Turkish-Syrian ties, meaning the two countries were currently enjoying full confidence in one another.

Asked about an earlier statement in which he noted that tensions between Turkey and Israel would have a negative impact on the peace process, al-Assad said he meant a total breakdown in Turkish-Israeli relations could affect the peace process.

Turkey's good relations with Iran and other neighbors also served the interests of Syria, he said, adding that problems with the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, was a regional issue that was a mutual concern for Syria, Turkey, Iraq and Iran.

Al-Assad also said his country was monitoring developments in Iraq since they also directly affect Syria and added that the neighbor's retention of territorial integrity was of paramount concern for Syria.

Erdoğan in Bulgaria to boost ties

Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan is visiting Bulgaria today to have talks with officials in a bid to improve bilateral relations with the neighboring country.

Erdoğan is scheduled to have talks with his Bulgarian counterpart, Boyko Borisov, today during his day-long visit to discuss issues of mutual interest to further advance ties. A comprehensive exchange of views on regional developments and international affairs with a special emphasis on the Balkans, along with bilateral issues, will take place during the meeting of the prime ministers.

Erdoğan will also meet with Ahmet Doğan, a Bulgarian politician of Turkish ethnicity and the leader of the Movement for Rights and Freedoms (HÖH), and former Bulgarian chief mufti Mustafa Alish Hadzhi.

Bulgaria reappointed a former spy and retired lieutenant colonel as chief mufti instead of the former mufti, Hadzhi, who was elected by the Muslim community, sparking mass protests in Bulgaria and causing a dispute in early September. Erdoğan is also expected to discuss the issue with his counterpart during his visit.

In early January of this year, Bojidar Dimitrov, a minister without portfolio who runs the Agency for Bulgarians Abroad, committed a gaff, saying Turkey should pay tens of billions of dollars in compensation to Bulgarians who left Thrace in a case that dates back to the early 20th century, which caused uneasiness in Ankara. Turkey stridently protested the claim and said it could harm bilateral ties.

04 October 2010, Monday

TODAY'S ZAMAN İSTANBUL

Turkey seeks Austrian support for EU bid

Thursday, October 7, 2010

ANKARA – Hürriyet Daily News

Austria's visiting foreign minister says his country is focusing on Turkey's EU membership process, rather than the outcome. Austria is known to be opposed to Turkey joining the EU, instead proposing 'privileged partnership.' Foreign Minister Spindelegger says Austria is not blocking the opening of chapters in talks with Turkey and in fact has put a stop to stiff opposition from other member states

European Union candidate Turkey sought the Austrian government's help Thursday to enable the 27-nation bloc to keep its promises and also to convince a Turkey-skeptic European public of the worth of Turkey's accession to the bloc.

"We consider Austria a neighbor over the Danube River, not a distant country. We expect friendship from neighboring countries," Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu told a press conference held with his Austrian counterpart, Michael Spindelegger.

"We expect Austria to take the initiative, both at the level of EU member states to enable the EU to keep its promises to Turkey, and also at the level of public opinion by informing Europeans about the contributions of [Turkey's EU] process," he said.

Austria is known to be opposed to Turkey joining the EU. The country was formerly part of the Habsburg and Austro-Hungarian Empires, historical rivals of the Ottoman Empire that preceded the Turkish Republic. Instead, the Austrian proposal for Turkey is one of "privileged partnership," falling short of full membership and strongly rejected by Ankara.

Foreign Minister Spindelegger said his country had initially been suspicious about Turkey's EU accession bid but noted particular progress had been made on Austria's stance today.

"We supported the EU decision to open accession talks with Turkey in 2005," he said. The visiting minister assured that his country was not blocking the opening of more chapters in Turkish-EU entry talks but was even putting a stop to the stiff opposition from some member states.

"We are not focusing on the outcome [of negotiations] but on the process," said Spindelegger. "What's being talked about is the outcome... The process is ongoing. Turkey and the EU will make their own decisions on the outcome once the process is over. Right now it is important to support the process."

'Turks say 'yes' despite discouraging messages'

Davutoğlu said despite the injustice stemming from the Cyprus problem and discouraging messages from Europe, the Turkish public still says "yes" to membership in the EU.

"The number of those who said yes to the EU was over 70 percent in 2004, but now stands at around 55-60 percent," he said. "But this figure declines to 35 percent when the

public is asked if they believe Turkey will be able to join the EU. The Turkish public still has a strong will to join the EU but they want to see the same strong will from the EU as well.”

Assimilation vs integration

Spindelegger said the way Turks generally lived in Austria was affecting the image of Turkey in his country. Davutoğlu said the distinction between assimilation and integration should be clearly made.

“Integration is a social responsibility that helps multi-cultural societies live in respect and in a legal system,” he said. “But assimilation means destroying a culture, something that cannot be accepted.”

Davutoğlu announced his plans to visit Austria next year, where he plans to attend with his Austrian counterpart a conference on integration.

Russian president reassures Greek Cypriots on Turkey ties

Thursday, October 7, 2010

NICOSIA — Agence France-Presse

Hurriyat

Russian President Dmitry Medvedev assured Greek Cypriot leaders on Thursday that his country's growing trade ties with common historic rival Turkey do not mean that Moscow will abandon their interests.

On the first-ever visit to the Mediterranean island by a Russian head of state, Medvedev said that Russia and Greek Cyprus remained bound by a shared Orthodox Christian religion and that Moscow would do all in its power to support Greek Cypriots secure a just resolution of the island's 36-year division.

"I will answer directly — this [closer ties with Turkey] does not threaten [Greek] Cyprus with anything. The position on a Cyprus settlement remains unchanged," Medvedev said. "We will assist in settling this problem in every possible way."

The Greek Cypriot government has long looked to Russia for support in resisting Western-backed peace proposals for reunifying the island that it charges have been weighted toward Turkish interests.

In April 2004, Moscow used its veto as a Security Council permanent member to block adoption of a British- and U.S.-sponsored draft resolution endorsing a U.N. reunification blueprint that was strongly opposed by the Greek Cypriot government.

It was the first time in a decade that Russia had used its veto.

The Greek Cypriot president paid tribute to Moscow's backing.

"The Soviet Union and later the Russian Federation have always supported [Greek] Cyprus, playing an active and decisive role in protecting the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of [Greek Cyprus] at the U.N. Security Council," Christofias said.

In an opinion piece published by the Cyprus daily Phileleftheros, Medvedev renewed Russian support for the Greek Cypriot position that no deadline should be set for U.N.-brokered reunification talks with the Turkish Cypriots and that there should be no outside arbitration.

"We have consistently been in favor of the Cyprus problem being solved without outside pressure, with the agreement of both sides," the Russian president said.

"It is obvious for us that attempts to impose here ready-made 'recipes' or an artificial schedule of inter-community negotiations and especially to establish terms for their completion and introduce outside arbitration are counterproductive."

Greek Cyprus has become a popular destination for Russian capital — official figures show that investment in Russia through Greek Cyprus over the past five years has totaled \$52.18 billion, while Russian investment in Greek Cyprus reached \$15.96 billion.

Russian Deputy Finance Minister Sergei Shatalov signed a new tax agreement to cover Russian investments, one of 15 accords to be inked during Medvedev's visit.

"[Greek] Cyprus is effectively the offshore financial services center for Russia," said Chris Weafer, chief strategist at Russia's UralSib investment bank.

"Moscow is keen to ensure that the island state is not used as a tax evasion center -- or, at least not for much longer."

The Greek Cypriot president hailed the taxation agreement as a milestone in boosting ties.

"We have worked together so that the possibility of casting shadows over whether the money is clean is moved out of the way," Christofias said.

Medvedev acknowledged Greek Cyprus was an attractive destination for Russian money. "This is why we are interested in relations in this sphere being clear, transparent because money can indeed be different," he said.

The tax agreement is aimed at making this sphere "yet more predictable, transparent and comprehensible for control of the authorities."

The Cyprus News Agency reported that Moscow had "persuaded the [Greek] Cypriot authorities of the need to simplify the procedure and without court intervention, to supply information, following a request by Russian tax institutions, regarding companies, their founders and their shareholders."

At the same time, Greek Cyprus is asking Russia to reach similar agreements with other countries that provide offshore services such as Switzerland, Luxembourg, Austria and the Netherlands.

Chinese PM's visit aims to open new era in ties with Turkey

Font Size: Larger|Smaller

Thursday, October 7, 2010

ÜMİT ENGİNSOY

ANKARA - Hürriyet Daily News

Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao will hold the talks with Turkey's top leaders on Friday and Saturday in efforts shared by both nations to greatly boost their relationship in several areas.

Jiabao, the guest of Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, and his delegation are going to sign more than 10 agreements for cooperation on matters ranging from energy to trade. He will also meet President Abdullah Gül. "We expect to open a new era in ties with China," said one Turkish diplomat.

Ankara and Istanbul are the stops on Jiabao's trip to Europe, during which he also visited Athens, Brussels and Rome. The Chinese premier's visit comes weeks after the two countries' air forces for the first time held joint maneuvers in Central Anatolia. "Turkey's U.S.-made F-4E fighter aircraft and China's Russian-made fighters took part in last month's exercises," one Turkish defense official confirmed.

The Israeli newspaper Haaretz said Thursday the United States and Israel were concerned about growing military cooperation between China and Turkey. In addition to financial and energy disputes and China's close ties with Iran, which is accused by the West of seeking to obtain nuclear weapons, the United States is worried about Beijing's efforts to bolster its military, and particularly, naval capabilities.

The bilateral trade volume between Turkey and China was \$12.6 billion in 2008, and this figure slightly decreased to \$10.9 billion in 2009 because of a global economic crisis. The trade volume is greatly in China's favor and Turkey seeks balance by increasing exports. China is also willing to enter the Turkish defense market, seeking to win a multibillion-dollar contract for Turkey's program for buying a national missile defense system to protect strategic areas and installations from potential ground-to-ground ballistic missile strikes.

Competing in the ongoing Turkish contest are the U.S. Lockheed Martin and Raytheon, with their Patriot Advanced Capability-3 systems; Russia's Rosoboronexport, marketing the S300; China's Precision Machinery Export-Import Corp., or CPMIEC, offering its HQ-9; and the Italian-French Eurosam, maker of the Aster 30.

Turkey's ties with China have been complicated at times in recent years because of Beijing's heavy-handed approach to unrest in the country's western area of Xinjiang, home the Muslim Turkic minority of Uighurs.

Exiled activist Rebiya Kadeer, leader of the U.S.-based World Uighur Congress, told the Anatolia news agency she wanted to visit Turkey at the same time as Jiabao.

Turkey's parliament speaker praises firms in Kazakhstan

Turkey's parliament speaker said on Thursday that the Kazakh capital city of Astana had gained a modern look thanks to the activities carried out by Turkish firms.

Thursday, 07 October 2010 11:23

WORLD BULLETIN

Turkey's parliament speaker said on Thursday that the Kazakh capital city of Astana had gained a modern look thanks to the activities carried out by Turkish firms.

Turkish Parliament Speaker Mehmet Ali Sahin attended a breakfast held in his honor by Kazakh-Turkish Businessmen's Association (KATIAD) in Almaty.

Speaking at the gathering, Sahin said that Turkish businessmen had started to invest in Kazakhstan right after the country had declared its independence.

"Turkish firms have a great role in capital Astana's gaining such a modern look," Sahin noted.

During the gathering, Turkish businessmen informed Sahin on the difficulties they faced while doing business in Kazakhstan.

Sahin noted that he would discuss those problems with Kazakh officials during his talks in the country.

Moreover, KATIAD's chairperson Zeki Pilge said that Turkey was among the top 10 countries that invested the most in Kazakhstan.

Pilge also said Turkish firms had invested nearly 11 billion USD in the restructuring process of the Kazakh capital of Astana.

AA

Japan lays down proposal to construct nuclear power plant in Turkey

Japan has proposed to construct a nuclear power plant in Turkey. Turkey's Energy & Natural Resources Minister Taner Yıldız received executives of Japanese "Toshiba" firm in Ankara on Thursday, who brought him a letter from Japanese minister of industry and trade.

Japan has proposed to construct a nuclear power plant through Toshiba," Yıldız told reporters after the meeting.

Yıldız said Japanese minister's letter talked about possible cooperation in energy, and defined the proposal to construct a nuclear power plant in Turkey as significant.

"However, I have told them that we cannot give a clear answer before we complete our talks with South Korea," he said.

Yıldız also said Turkey was not planning to construct a third nuclear power plant at the moment.

Turkey is eager to construct two nuclear power plants, one in the northern province of Sinop and the other in Akkuyu hamlet of the southern province of Mersin.

In March, Turkey signed a cooperation protocol with South Korea on establishment of a nuclear energy power plant in Sinop.

South Korea actually has 20 nuclear power plants, and is constructing eight others in its territories. It aims to raise its nuclear energy to 40 percent till 2020.

The South Korean company wants to exports its nuclear technology to Turkey after it won a 20-billion deal in December 2009 to build four nuclear power plants in the United Arab Emirates by 2020, which made it the sixth largest nuclear technology exporter in the world following United States, France, Russia, Canada and Japan.

Also in May, during Russian President Dmitry Medvedev's visit to Ankara, Turkey inked a \$20 billion deal with Russia for construction of Akkuyu plant.

07 October 2010, Thursday

TODAYS ZAMAN

Foreign Ministry personnel raise TL 600,000 for Pakistan

Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu urged Foreign Ministry officials and diplomats on Monday to donate to a campaign aimed at addressing the persisting problems of Pakistani flood victims during a fundraising dinner in which more than TL 600,000 was donated.

Davutoğlu, while attempting to spur participants to donate, said Pakistan is now facing the gravest tragedy in its history and it is time to display brotherhood through our actions.

The dinner was part of a campaign initiated by Foreign Ministry personnel, who earlier raised more than TL 2 million. Reminding the audience of the visit of Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's spouse, Emine Erdoğan, in early September, Davutoğlu said that the prime minister is also expected to pay a visit to Pakistan soon. The foreign minister said they first plan to establish a health center to help alleviate the infrastructure problems in the flood-stricken country. In an emotional speech, Davutoğlu said nearly 12 percent of Pakistani society was heavily affected, that more than 2,000 people died and more than 6 million people lost their homes as a result of the devastating flood. He also added that the floods are also likely to cause an increase in criminal activities and food shortages, along with its dire economic effects.

Davutoğlu's spouse, Sare Davutoğlu, who is a doctor, donated TL 30,000 and promised to work as a volunteer for 15 days in the health center in Pakistan that they are planning

to launch. He added that more than \$200 million was raised by Turkish people to help Pakistani flood victims.

06 October 2010, Wednesday

TODAY'S ZAMAN İSTANBUL

Turkish premier calls on EU to admit if it does not want Turkey

Turkey's prime minister said on Wednesday that the European Union (EU) should openly say that it did not want Turkey if the situation was so.

Premier Recep Tayyip Erdoğan called on the EU not to keep Turkey waiting at the union's door.

"They (EU member states) are making up some formulas to show that 'they are not keeping as waiting'," Erdoğan said during the 14th International Business Forum in İstanbul.

Referring to Turkey's economy, Erdoğan said Turkey was among the countries that were affected the least by the global financial crisis thanks to structural reforms it had been implementing since the end of 2002.

Erdoğan said Turkey had overcome the global crisis with its own methods and resources, and did not need the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and sign the stand-by arrangement.

"Our debt to IMF was 23.5 billion USD eight years ago, but it is only 6 billion USD right now," Erdoğan said.

Erdoğan said Turkey had grown 11.7 percent in the Q1 of 2010, which made it the fourth most rapidly growing economy in the world.

The premier said Turkey was ranked the third among the countries growing the most in Q2 with a growth rate of 10.3 percent.

Similarly, when unemployment was on the rise in the entire world, unemployment in Turkey was declining 2-2.5 points every month, Erdoğan said.

Erdoğan said international organizations had appreciated Turkey's achievements, and Turkey had started to take its place among a few countries, the rating of which had been raised.

Turkey's exports and tourism revenues were up in 2010, Erdoğan said.

"We are still cautious and maintain financial discipline. Turkey offers unique opportunities to investors and entrepreneurs with its robust economy, policies boosting stability and confidence, and peaceful and active foreign policy," Premier Erdoğan said. Erdoğan also said Turkey was open to investments and defined Turkey as a stable and safe country.

International Business Forum (IBF) is a voluntarily-based, non-governmental platform with the motto of "Global Business Network among Muslim Nations" for gathering of Muslim business people from all over the globe where they try to stimulate trade, investment and co-operation.

The Independent Industrialists' & Businessmen's Association (MÜSİAD) organizes the IBF Congress every year since 1995.

The theme of this year's congress, taking place in İstanbul between October 6 and 9, is "importance of technology for development in Islamic countries"

Over 3,000 overseas delegates from 65 countries including Afghanistan, Algeria, Angola, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Bulgaria, China,

Czech, Denmark, Djibouti, Egypt, Ethiopia, Fiji, France, Gambia, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Ghana, India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Ireland, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kosovo, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Libya, Lithuania, Macedonia, Malaysia, Mali, Mauritius, Morocco, Mozambique, Netherlands, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Pakistan, Palestine, Philippines, Qatar, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Singapore, South Africa, Sudan, Sweden, Syria, Tajikistan, Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, Britain, Uzbekistan and Yemen attend the congress.

The 14th IBF Congress will also provide opportunities for national delegations to introduce their home country's profiles from business project in the fields of industry, trade, finance or agriculture and having a multi-canal dimension.

06 October 2010, Wednesday

TODAYS ZAMAN

Turkey displeased with EU over extraditing terrorists

European countries have extradited less than 10 percent of the terror suspects Turkey has requested from them in the past decade, a scenario Turkish authorities are not happy with. According to Justice Ministry statistics, Turkey received a positive response for only 15 of the 158 extradition requests it has made since 2000. Among those 15 suspects, there is not a single figure from the two main terrorist groups Turkey has battled for so long, the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and the Revolutionary People's Liberation Party/Front (DHKP/C).

The same statistics suggest that only Germany, Romania, the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (KKTC), Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Ukraine were partly receptive to Turkey's requests to extradite terror suspects, whereas France, Belgium and Holland were the least compliant in the same field.

Turkey has been party to the European Convention on Extradition since 1959 and the European Convention on Suppression of Terrorism since 1980. In addition to these international agreements, Turkey has also ratified the Convention on the Transfer of Sentenced Persons, but it has been unable to manage the return of a single suspect from Europe. Most of the inmates repatriated to Turkey are those who themselves would prefer to serve their time in Turkish prisons.

Turkish prisoners serving time in Europe

According to information Today's Zaman obtained from the Justice Ministry's Prisons and Houses of Detention Directorate General, of the 498 requests from prisoners that they be transferred to Turkey from Europe, only 104 have been approved since 2006. When the annual figures are examined, it is clear that inmates have been increasingly deterred from applying to serve their prison sentences in Turkey. The high rate of rejection has been maintained and even saw an increase from 78 percent in 2006 to 91 percent in the first half of 2010. The same directorate also suggested in a recent report that conditions in Turkish prisons are now less comfortable for inmates as European standards have been adopted. The report argues that until 2006 Turkish prisons were more comfortable than European prisons because most inmates were allowed to stay together in large shared wards before European standards were enforced. Currently, according to what is called the 'F type' prison model, a sizeable number of inmates also stay alone in cells and the prisons are administered more stringently.

Though Turkish inmates staying in European prisons are not as enthusiastic as they used to be about serving their time in Turkey, Turkish prisoners held in Central Asian states as

well as in the Middle East and Africa are expending much effort to be transferred to Turkey. It is generally known that the prison conditions in these regions are below the world average. On the other hand, Turkey also has a sizeable number of foreign prisoners. At a special penitentiary in the northwestern province of Bilecik, 1,533 inmates from 85 countries are being held, most of them Iranian nationals charged with drug trafficking.

Turkey, on principle, is facilitating procedures to allow these inmates to serve their sentence in their homelands if they would like to. However, none of Turkey's Iranian inmates have expressed a desire to return to Iran and complete their punishments there. When it comes to terror suspects, Turkey shows much sensitivity to extradition requests, particularly after 9/11, a ministry official who preferred to remain anonymous told Today's Zaman. Turkey extradited 37 criminals last year.

05 October 2010, Tuesday

TODAYS ZAMAN

Turkey aims for elections in June

Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan says Turkey is likely to hold elections in the first week of June.

Parliamentary elections are due to be held in July, but Erdoğan said late Sunday the government is planning ballots a month early. Erdoğan has said his government wants voting to take place before schools close for the summer and people leave on vacation. Erdoğan's Justice and Development Party is vying for a third term in office.

Last month, Turkey held a referendum on a series of constitutional reforms which turned into a massive show of confidence into Erdoğan's government.

04 October 2010, Monday

Today's Zaman

Cyprus, new hub for human trafficking

Human smuggling in Turkey has declined substantially since 2007, according to recent data from the Interior Ministry. The reason for the decline is attributed to measures Turkey has taken to better combat human smugglers.

According to the ministry's figures, while 56,219 illegal immigrants and 937 smugglers were caught in Turkey in 2003, the figure increased to 61,228 illegal immigrants and 956 smugglers in 2004. The steady increase continued, and a total of 57,428 illegal immigrants and 834 smugglers were caught within Turkish borders in 2005.

While 51,983 illegal immigrants and 951 smugglers were caught in 2006, 64,290 illegal immigrants and 1,242 smugglers were caught and sent to court in 2007. In 2008, there was an evident decline in human smuggling. The number of illegal immigrants caught by authorities declined to 50,800 that year. The number of illegal immigrants was reduced by half in 2009.

Figures halve in 2009

According to the ministry, the total number of illegal immigrants, asylum seekers and immigrants caught at land and sea borders with Syria, Iran, Iraq, Georgia, Greece and Bulgaria declined to 28,355 in 2009.

Turkey set a new record in 2010. The measures taken along human smuggling transit routes coupled with better training in human smuggling matters enabled security forces to detain 7,465 illegal immigrants in the first six months of 2010. This figure is expected to increase to at least 15,000 by the end of the year.

The increase in fines to human smugglers in 2005 has had an impact on the decline in human smuggling. Another deterrent was the training of 164 judges and prosecutors on human smuggling affairs.

Immigrant deaths also on the decline

In line with the drop in the number of immigrants trying to get to the West through Turkey, there has been a decline in the number of illegal immigrant deaths. In 2007, 82 immigrants died in accidents on the Aegean Sea and 102 went missing. The number of deaths dropped to 76 in 2008 and to 43 in 2009. The number of deaths in the first half of 2010 was nine.

Despite the decline in human smuggling in Turkey, there are still 18,890 documented refugees and refugees waiting for asylum. Iraqis top the list of those seeking asylum with 7,000 people. This is followed by Iranians, Afghans and Africans.

Tighter security measures taken by Turkey have turned Cyprus into one of the most popular routes for immigrant smugglers. The KKTC is facing the biggest migration move ever in its history. While there used to be a very limited number of human smuggling cases in the past, the island now hosts thousands of illegal immigrants from African, Asian and Middle Eastern countries.

Thousands of illegal immigrants from Syria, Iraq, Iran, Pakistan, Egypt and other African countries are trying to find a way to reach the island. In response to the migration wave, the KKTC and Syria have signed a joint protocol on fighting against human smuggling. That is because more than 50 percent of the total immigrants arriving on the island are Syrian-born. Once illegal immigrants reach the KKTC, they try to enter Greek Cyprus. According to KKTC police reports, the number of immigrants reaching the KKTC from illegal ports was 99 in 2003, 163 in 2004, 111 in 2005, 293 in 2006 and 362 in 2007, making a total of 1028.

In 2008, the number doubled and increased to 568. It continued to increase in 2009. According to estimates, 750 migrants entered the island in 2009. Those immigrants work in all kind of jobs. Illegal immigrants are brought by ships to Cyprus during the night and left in places that are far from settlement areas in Dipkarpaz and the İskele region. In addition to the KKTC, a similar number of immigrants are brought to Greek Cyprus. It is believed that illegal immigrants pay between \$2,000-\$3,000 on average to human smugglers to enter the KKTC. In the latest smuggling cases in Turkey, they pay \$5,000-\$10,000.

Trafficking in people also declines

Turkey has also improved in a relevant sphere that involves illegal transfer of people across borders. According to a report from the US State Department that includes 2010 figures on human trafficking, although Turkey remains a transit and destination country for this crime, there has been a noticeable decline in the frequency of this activity in recent years.

According to the US State Department report, Cyprus has also become a popular destination for human trafficking. Women who are forced into prostitution or to work are taken to Cyprus from Turkey. There are numerous cases in which women, the majority of

them from the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, are forced to work in hotels and casinos in Cyprus.

03 October 2010, Sunday

TODAYS ZAMAN

ECONOMIC NEWS

IMF raises Turkish growth forecast

Wednesday, October 6, 2010

ANKARA – Bloomberg

Hurriyat

Turkey's economy may expand 7.8 percent this year, more than double the pace of Europe's other emerging markets, the International Monetary Fund said, raising its forecast on stronger-than-expected consumer spending.

The IMF's previous growth forecast for Turkey, published a month ago, was 6.1 percent. Its prediction for overall expansion in emerging Europe, which includes Turkey and excludes Russia, was 3.7 percent, according to the IMF's World Economic Outlook published Wednesday. The Washington-based lender expects Turkish growth to slow to 3.6 percent in 2011.

Turkey is rebounding from the global financial crisis faster than many peers in emerging Europe because of "relatively strong household and bank balance sheets" and the normalization of global trade and capital flows, the IMF said.

Gross domestic product grew an annual 10.3 percent in the second quarter, after expanding 11.7 percent in the first three months. The economy won't sustain that pace in the second half of the year, Finance Minister Mehmet Şimşek said on Sept. 15, forecasting full-year growth of between 6 percent and 7 percent.

Turkey broke off loan talks with the IMF in March. Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who faces elections next year, says the economy doesn't need IMF money and has dropped plans for legislation to limit the budget deficit.

Inflation will average 8.7 percent this year and slow to an average of 5.7 percent next year, the IMF said.

The central bank has held the benchmark interest rate unchanged at a record low of 7 percent for 10 months. In recent months it has begun to withdraw the additional liquidity it provided the banking system during the 2009 economic crisis.

Inflation was 9.2 percent in September and will "gradually slow" in the rest of the year, the central bank said Tuesday. Its year-end target is 6.5 percent.

The current-account deficit will widen to 5.2 percent of GDP this year and to 5.4 percent of GDP in 2011, the IMF said.

President tells OIC members to invest Turkey

Turkish President Gul said, "we invite the whole world, not only the Islam world, to invest in Turkey since there are great opportunities in our country."

Thursday, 07 October 2010 15:31

WORLD BULLETIN

Turkish President Abdullah Gul said, "we invite the whole world, not only the Islam world, to invest in Turkey since there are great opportunities in our country."

Speaking at a dinner marking the 26th session of the Standing Committee for Economic and Commercial Cooperation (COMCEC) of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) and the 14th International Business Forum of the Independent Industrialists' and Businessmen's Association (MUSIAD) in Istanbul, President Gul said, "today, we host ministers from the Islam countries here in Istanbul. The 26th session of the COMCEC will begin on Thursday."

"Prior to the meeting, a series of talks were held among businessmen and investors. During tomorrow's meeting, ministers from the member countries will discuss measures to be taken to boost economic and commercial relations among the countries," he said. "The private sector which makes exports, creates employment and carries out production in Turkey. We, as the state, support them to let them to produce and export more," he said. Addressing to the participants, Gul said, "you should form partnerships, make trade and know each other well with fairs. Every country, even the poorest, has an important economic potential. That potential should be introduced to businessmen so that they can come to your country to make investment. Form partnerships with them, employ people and sell the products to other countries."

"You should know to attract the capital of other countries to your country. Turkey does this. We are not only addressing the Islamic world but to the whole world; we say there are very big opportunities in Turkey, come and make investment in Turkey. We bring savings and capital of other countries to Turkey and they make investment in our country. You should do the same. However, the countries investing in your country should feel themselves secure there. There should be an equal treatment and the laws should be clear. This is the first condition of development," he noted.

Gul said whatever resources a country has, tradesmen of other countries would refrain from making investment if the laws, rights, rules and justice were not in order in that country, adding that, "this is what the Islamic countries should do primarily. All of us have deficiencies. However, Turkey acted in a determined way in the recent years and carried out rooted changes."

President Gul said Turkey would be pleased to share its achievements with the other countries, adding that both the public institutions and the private sector were ready make every kind of assistance.

"Turkish economy has made a great progress in recent years. Although we faced the biggest financial crisis in the history of the world, Turkey succeeded in recovering from the crisis quickly. We are in a better situation while some European countries have still been dealing with difficulties. Turkey became the country with the highest rate of growth among the member countries to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). Our economic reforms played a important part to this end," President Gul added.

AA

Turkey signs deal with OIC standards institute

Turkey signed an agreement with the standards institute of Islamic countries in Istanbul on Thursday.

Thursday, 07 October 2010 14:41
WORLD BULLETIN

Turkey signed an agreement with the standards institute of Islamic countries in Istanbul on Thursday.

Turkey's Industry & Trade Minister Nihat Ergun and Lutfi Oksuz, the secretary general of the Standards and Meteorology Institute for Islamic Countries (SMIIC), put their signatures in a ceremony also attended by Secretary General Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC).

Under the agreement, SMIIC can open a center in Turkey.

AA

Russian, Turkish businesses vow to boost trade ties

The Turkish Confederation of Businessmen and Industrialists (TUSKON) and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of the Russian Federation (RF CCI) have signed a deal to pursue partnership opportunities to boost trade volume between the two nations in accordance with the target of reaching \$100 billion in five years that was set at a high-level meeting between Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and his Russian counterpart, Vladimir Putin, in January.

The signing ceremony was held on Monday at the chamber's headquarters in Moscow between RF CCI President Yevgeny Primakov and TUSKON President Rıza Nur Meral. The main goal of the deal is to increase cooperation in commercial relations by facilitating business meetings, mutual visits and special gatherings to explore business opportunities between businessmen from both countries.

Speaking at the ceremony, Primakov praised recent trends in Russian-Turkish trade relations, saying: "We had been worried following a decline in trade volume in 2009 due to the global financial crisis, but the 2010 figures have been promising. There has also been a rapid increase in the number of tourists from Russia to Turkey. In addition, total investments by Turkish companies in Russia have already surpassed \$6 billion. Increasing numbers of Turkish industrialists are setting up investments across Russia, and they are paying high amounts of value-added tax [VAT]. We have a favorable opinion of all this."

Primakov said that the \$100 billion target in trade volume is no longer a distant dream and now looks easier to reach given that the worst part of the crisis has largely been left behind.

Explaining their reasons for joining forces with TUSKON, Primakov said they believe the confederation is dynamic and is doing a good job in representing Turkish industry and commerce. "We already had well-established relations with TUSKON, so this deal that we signed today doesn't mean we are starting afresh. But it will contribute seriously to advancing relations to better levels," he said.

Meral in his speech shared his intentions and enthusiasm for the deal, which he feels will offer great gains for both the Russian Federation and Turkey while also improving the mutual ties.

"We are putting a lot of effort into energizing relations and we have already started seeing positive results. Total trade volume has increased in the first seven months of this year by 43.7 percent over the same period a year ago," he said. Emphasizing the significance of deep-rooted economic cooperation in the Black Sea basin, Meral said the Black Sea is the second fastest growing region after Asia-Pacific. He also asked for support from the RF CCI in the organization of the commerce section of the Black Sea

Economic Cooperation Council (BSECC) meeting, which is scheduled for early November under the auspices of TUSKON.

06 October 2010, Wednesday

TODAYS ZAMAN

Foreign direct investment in Turkey falls

Foreign direct investment (FDI) in Turkey decreased by 35 percent from \$3.833 to \$2.49 billion in the first seven months of 2010.

According to balance of payments data from the Central Bank of Turkey, FDI declined from January through July of this year. The easing down started in 2009 when there were no other public institutions to privatize in that specific period and the effect of the financial crisis caused a decrease of 59 percent to \$6 billion in FDI in 2009. Foreign investments decreased by 35 percent from \$3.833 billion to \$2.49 billion for January through July 2010.

The biggest fall in FDI in Turkey occurred in the industrial sector with 61.2 percent, decreasing from \$2.614 billion in the first seven months of 2009 to \$1.014 in the same period of 2010. When analyzing sub-industry sectors like mining and quarrying, FDI increased by 84.4 percent to \$83 million for the former and decreased by 58.4 percent to \$455 million for the latter. Investments of foreign interests in utilities declined by 67.7 percent to \$476 million. On the other hand, FDI for the metal products sector in Turkey increased by 211 percent; it was \$63 million for the first seven months of 2009 and \$196 million in the same period this year.

Foreign investment in the service sector increased by 22.3 percent to \$1.462 billion (January through July 2010). The most attractive sub-service sector was brokerage houses with an increase of 152 percent in FDI to \$715 million. The construction sector was also able to attract foreign investment, rising by 159.9 percent to \$293 million in the first seven months this year, while FDI for the agriculture sector decreased by 42 percent to \$14 million.

FDI from European countries decreased from \$3.387 billion for the period January-July 2009 by 43 percent to \$1.934 billion for the same period this year. Asian countries provided Turkey with FDI of \$302 million, while the Americas provided \$254 million.

04 October 2010, Monday

TODAY'S ZAMAN ANKARA

Turkey, France look for cooperation in technoparks

Jean Noel Durvy, CEO of Sophia Antipolis, the world's second largest technopark, said on Sunday that they would like to cooperate with technoparks in Turkey.

Hosting the Turkish industry and trade minister Nihat Ergün yesterday in Nice, Durvy added that he plans to visit Turkey in the last week of October and will be meeting with technopark executives to discuss cooperation opportunities between the two countries. Ergün, who is currently on a visit to Nice, examined the world's second and Europe's biggest technopark Sophia Antipolis on Sunday. While in the city, he visited various technology companies to be briefed about their business activities. Ergün also visited the firm Ask which exports security cards, bank cards and chips for different types of cards to many countries including Turkey.

Following the reception at Sophia Antipolis, Ergün said that he was pleased to receive information about the technopark. “Silicon Valley is world’s biggest techno park while Sophia Antipolis is a technology region with 40 years of experience.

Most of Turkey’s technoparks are small and located in university campuses whereas Sophia Antipolis is a large technology region with a university in it. We have been able to consider the advantages and disadvantages of technoparks in Turkey by examining Sophia Antipolis” said Ergün.

Ergün also noted that his ministry is working on projects to unite small and medium-sized technology firms (SME) with entrepreneurs. “With this project we will support SMEs who are looking for new projects with entrepreneurs who do not have enough capital for funding their projects. For instance, we can bring together entrepreneurs with SMEs by organizing ‘techno-cafe days’ on Sundays where entrepreneurs can present their projects to these firms and the SMEs could share their experiences,” Ergün said.

04 October 2010, Monday

TODAY’S ZAMAN İSTANBUL

Turkey, US to strengthen ‘model partnership’

The main aim of Turkish Foreign Trade Minister Zafer Çağlayan’s upcoming visit to the United States is to strengthen bilateral trade within the framework of the “model partnership,” which was declared between the two NATO allies by US President Barack Obama during an April 2009 visit to Turkey.

Çağlayan is scheduled to depart for the US on Oct. 17 where he will have talks in Washington and New York. Later, he will travel to Canada.

“A new business council will be established within the framework of the model partnership. This is not an alternative to TAIK [the Turkish-American Business Council],” Çağlayan recently told reporters.

During a December 2009 visit to Washington by Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, the two allies launched an initiative to boost trade and investment ties to which Çağlayan was referring. At the time, the US-Turkey Strategic Economic and Commercial Cooperation dialogue was inaugurated by US Trade Representative Ron Kirk and Secretary of Commerce Gary Locke with their Turkish co-chairs, Deputy Prime Minister Ali Babacan and Çağlayan.

“We asked for names from TÜSİAD [the Turkish Industrialists and Businessmen’ Association], MÜSİAD [the Independent Industrialists and Businessmen’s Association], and TOBB [the Turkish Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges] regarding 12 fields of products. The US has already picked eight names, and we will also choose eight names. There will be a 16-member council,” Çağlayan said.

Turkey, which has been holding accession negotiations to become a member of the European Union, has been interested in a free trade pact with the US. Two-way trade (exports plus imports) between the United States and Turkey was valued at \$10.8 billion during 2009, representing the US’s 38th largest trading partner. Turkey’s top exports to the US include steel, clothing and jewelry. Its top imports from the US are agricultural goods, military equipment and aircraft.

06 October 2010, Wednesday

TODAY’S ZAMAN ANKARA

Turkey's auto exports reach \$11.4 billion in first 9 months

Turkey's auto exports rose by 12.4 percent to \$11.4 billion from \$10.2 billion year-on-year in the first nine months of 2010, a set of data released by the Automotive Industry Exporters' Association (OİB) has shown.

Exports were made to 160 countries and autonomous regions and 12 free zones. Despite a retreat of 15.4 percent, France ranked first among countries to which most autos were exported, with \$1.8 billion. It was followed by Italy (\$1.6 billion) and Germany (\$1.53 billion). Automobiles were the item that earned the highest revenue from sales abroad with \$4.63 billion. The automotive supply industry came in second with \$3.88 billion and was followed by transport vehicles at \$2.35 billion.

Export sales amounted to \$1.3 billion in the ninth month, falling 7 percent over September 2009. Auto exports had increased by 44.1 percent in January, 39.6 percent in February, 38.1 percent in March, 20.6 percent in April and 4.4 percent in May. Since then, the sector has suffered a decline in sales abroad.

05 October 2010, Tuesday

TODAY'S ZAMAN İSTANBUL

Inflation fever up in September with rising food prices

The consumer price index (CPI) rose 1.23 percent in September on the previous month, while the producer price index (PPI) edged up by 0.51 percent, the result of increases in the price of agricultural products as the season comes to a close.

The Turkish Statistics Institute's (TurkStat) data has revealed that the rise in inflation rates during August continued in September, but for experts this does not indicate an upwards trend, since the numbers are expected to drop over the remainder of the year. Still, the figure was beyond expectations. A central bank survey for September forecast the CPI increase as 0.76 percent for the month, with a total increase of 7.46 percent for the year. As of September, the annual CPI was sitting at 9.24 percent, whereas the PPI was set at 8.91 percent. Of the 446 goods included in TurkStat's CPI calculation basket, the prices of 267 goods increased during the ninth month, whereas 82 goods' prices shrank and the remaining 97 products saw no change.

As for the PPI, of the 779 products included in the PPI's calculations, the average prices of 191 goods registered no change, whereas the average price of 326 goods increased and 262 decreased. The highest rise was seen in the alcoholic beverages group, with a 25.32 percent increase compared to August. The prices of food and non-alcoholic beverages increased 15.33 percent while the average restaurant and hotel prices increased by 9.78 percent.

Tomato topped the list with the highest consumer price increase, rising by 57.16 percent. It was followed by beans (40.59 percent), eggplant (39.97 percent) and green pepper (33.66 percent). Lemon prices deflated by 7.62 percent over September, the largest drop among products.

Tomato also topped the PPI list, with a rise of 36.87 percent. Other products which rose were beans by 18.52 percent, tomato dressing by 17.26 percent and green pepper by 12.52 percent in September.

In September, the unexpected hikes in the commodity market also contributed to inflation rates. Fuel prices caused inflation rates to increase. For instance, a liter of gas edged up 0.58 percent, while diesel and liquid petroleum gas (LPG) climbed by 0.29 and 2.76 percent respectively.

According to Nurhan Toğuş, Ata Investment's chief economist, inflation rates will fall from the current levels. The economist also said, however, that September's figures exceeded market expectations. Bizim Securities (BMD) also issued a report after the publication of the data pointing to an uncertainty over commodity prices in the international markets as a major factor forcing inflation rates up. Speaking to Today's Zaman, Professor Osman Demir -- the Justice and Development Party's (AK Party) Tokat deputy -- said, on the other hand, that the recent rise was a trifling development and stressed that Turkey left the high inflation rate era behind a long time ago. A notable economist, Demir asserted that the major economic indicators were moving positively and there were no major problems to worry about. For him, the deferred demand by Turkish consumers during the ambiguous period of the global economic crisis is happening now and this is driving inflation rates up.

"What requires more attention now is the absence of a serious hike in the inflation rates, rather than the fact that they simply increased. This is because the supply always starts moving after the demand and this always affects the prices. A one-point, and belated, rise in the inflation rate is quite positive, while Turkey, which recovered from the crisis environment, enjoys high growth rates on the rapid increase in domestic demand."

He said the inflation rate would no longer pose a serious threat to Turkey for four reasons. The first is the dynamic structure of the supply and demand balance. Second, the open economy is paving the way to meet demand in a healthy manner, which prevents abnormal rises in overall price. The third factor is the government's strict commitment to fiscal discipline, and finally, the strengthening of expectations in favor of Turkey after the political clarity provided by the results of the Sept. 12 referendum.

05 October 2010, Tuesday
TODAYS ZAMAN

Turkey, Syria establish partnership for oil exploration

Energy and Natural Resources Minister Taner Yıldız has stated that a partnership has been established between Turkey and Syria in order to facilitate a search for oil in seven oilfields in Syria.

Yıldız said the partnership between the Turkish Petroleum Corporation (TPAO) and the Syria National Petroleum Corporation has been official since it was published in the Official Gazette on Oct. 2. "Syria has given Turkey access to seven oilfields in order to search for oil, without a tender," announced Yıldız. The minister also noted that the companies would start their search when regulations concerning the new partnership's capital rules, executive board members and required equipment are settled. Minister Yıldız also stated that a section in Turkey of the 1,200-kilometer Arab Gas Pipeline is almost complete, while construction on the Syrian side is still continuing. The Arab Gas Pipeline aims to transport Egyptian natural gas through Syria, Jordan and Turkey to Europe.

05 October 2010, Tuesday
TODAY'S ZAMAN İSTANBUL

Turkey says private companies free to end business with Iran

The Turkish government has no intention of following unilateral US sanctions on Iran, but private Turkish companies are free to make their own decisions due to their commercial concerns and interest, officials said on Friday.

The statements by governmental officials came following an announcement released by the US State Department on Thursday. The State Department released a list of companies reducing energy-related business with Iran and the Turkish Petroleum Refineries Corporation (TÜPRAŞ), Turkey's sole refiner and gasoline exporter, was one of the companies on the list.

“As part of our efforts to increase pressure on the government of Iran to comply with its international obligations, the US government has been aggressively urging foreign governments and companies to avoid commercial activity in Iran's energy sector until Iran complies with its international obligations. The results of the State Department's efforts are clear: Companies are recognizing the increased risks of doing business in Iran and terminating their operations there or committing not to engage in any new activities in Iran,” the State Department said.

“Turkish refiner TÜPRAŞ told the State Department in August that it had cancelled contracts to supply gasoline to Iran,” it also said.

The issue was raised on Friday by journalists at a press conference held by Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu upon his return from the United States where he attended the UN General Assembly.

Davutoğlu firstly recalled his country's stance on the issue as Turkey says it is bound to honor only the UN Security Council resolution on Iran and does not have to comply with individual sanctions adopted by individual states. Unilateral sanctions have been imposed by the European Union and the US in addition to those named by the UN blacklist of a large number of Iranian banks.

Iran is an important neighbor to us and we have significant commercial and energy ties. Unilateral decisions are not legally binding either. However, individual companies, which make the final assessment of their own investments, look at the issue from the perspective of their own commercial interests,” Davutoğlu said, noting that he had no information about TÜPRAŞ's decision.

“We will do our best to protect the interests of our companies. However, our companies do also have their own will to make independent decisions,” he added. When the same issue was raised by journalists on another occasion in Ankara, Energy Minister Taner Yıldız reiterated that what is binding for Turkey is the UN Security Council sanctions on Iran.

“It is TÜPRAŞ's own decision,” Yıldız emphasized, adding that following its privatization, TÜPRAŞ was making its decisions through its administrative board.

“TÜPRAŞ is on that list within the framework of the US decision, not because of the decision by the UN Security Council. Because that issue is not on the list of [UN] sanctions,” he added.

The roots of TÜPRAŞ date back to the İstanbul Petroleum Refineries Corporation (İPRAŞ) founded by the US Caltex Company. In 1983, İPRAŞ and three other publicly owned refineries were brought under the TÜPRAŞ umbrella by arrangements made for a more effective operation of State Economic Enterprises.

In July 1990, TÜPRAŞ, after serving for many years as a state economic enterprise, was handed over to the Privatization Administration.

02 October 2010, Saturday

TODAY'S ZAMAN ANKARA

Social news

Temperatures fall around Turkey

A cold front is expected to hit Turkey this week, as winds from the Balkans and falling temperatures confirm that summer is over. Temperatures across the country are expected to drop by five degrees Celsius on Thursday. The Marmara region will have temperatures of around 15 degrees Celsius, while showers are forecast for **İstanbul towards the end of the week**. The Central Anatolia region is expected to reach 20 degrees Celsius most days, with temperatures forecast to plummet to 5 degrees during the night. The Aegean and Mediterranean regions are expected to be sunny throughout the week. In southeastern Turkey, temperatures have dropped to 25 degrees Celsius after several months of excessive heat.

Showers are expected to continue and temperatures to drop in the Eastern Anatolia region, while the Black Sea region will receive intermittent showers.

05 October 2010, Tuesday

TODAY'S ZAMAN İSTANBUL

Facebook may be next victim of Turkey's Internet bans

Thursday, October 7, 2010

ÖZGÜR ÖĞRET

ISTANBUL - Hürriyet Daily News

The 22.5 million Turkish members of Facebook may lose access to the popular social-networking site as a result of a court case filed by an opposition leader. Though Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu and his party say they only want offensive content removed, a government minister has hinted Facebook may follow YouTube onto the banned-sites list

A government minister who has defended Turkey's bans on YouTube and other popular websites hinted Wednesday that the social-networking site Facebook could share the same fate.

The latest Internet controversy was sparked when lawyers for Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, the leader of the Republican People's Party, or CHP, filed a criminal complaint over a Facebook group claiming that the opposition leader was a member of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK.

Addressing rumors that Facebook might be shut down as a result, Transportation Minister Binali Yıldırım told attendees at an informatics fair that 30 judicial decisions had been issued to ban the site in Turkey.

"No action was taken against those decisions; applications to a higher court [were] not filed," Yıldırım said, speaking at the opening ceremony of the Cebit Bilişim Eurasia 2010 fair. "[Facebook] did not come and meet with the administration and did not apply to the higher court either. Foreign companies are subject to the same laws as domestic ones."

The minister said Turkey is a state of law and that the government cannot intervene in the decisions made by the judiciary.

Yıldırım has previously made similar comments about the banning of video-sharing portal YouTube, arguing that its parent company, Google, should open an office in Turkey, pay taxes and answer the legal demands regarding its content. YouTube has been banned in the country by several court orders acting on complaints about content insulting the memory of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of modern Turkey. CHP officials told the Hürriyet Daily News & Economic Review that the party is not asking for Facebook to be banned altogether, but only for the offensive content to be removed.

“Mr. Kılıçdaroğlu’s lawyer included the demand to shut down the site in the application by mistake,” CHP Adana deputy Tacidar Seylan, who is also a programmer and informatics expert, told the Daily News on Thursday. He said neither he, nor Kılıçdaroğlu want to see Facebook banned and that the case was filed to remove the offensive content, which was created when the now-party leader was running for the Istanbul mayor’s office in the 2009 local elections, with a ban only requested if such action was not possible. The head of the country’s Telecommunication Transmission Directorate, or TİB, is currently facing one to three years in prison for not applying a court order to halt access to the page of a Facebook group titled, “Kılıçdaroğlu is a PKK member.” Seylan said the CHP is aware that shutting down Internet sites is not a solution and that the party wants to see a nongovernmental ethics commission of journalists established to deal with insulting or immoral content.

“Attempting to shut down a website is against both freedom of communication and human rights,” Ahmet Ersin, a CHP deputy for İzmir and a member of the Parliamentary Human Rights Commission, told the Daily News. He added that unethical content may be removed but shutting down a site entirely is a practice the party opposes.

Kılıçdaroğlu himself made a declaration Thursday that he does not want Facebook, which has more than 22.5 million members in Turkey, to be banned.

The latest controversy shows that politicians in Turkey do not understand what social networks are all about, according to lawyer Mehmet Ali Köksal, the legal secretary for the Informatics Association of Turkey. He told the Daily News on Thursday that any site with Web 2.0 applications, in which a site’s visitors create the content, risks being shut down in Turkey.

“[If someone wants] to have Facebook shut down, all they need to do is to open an account and write a [insulting] reader comment or create a group,” he said.

Other commentators see the Internet bans as part of a large political strategy.

Serdar Kuzuloğlu, a columnist for daily Radikal who frequently criticizes the Internet laws in Turkey, wrote in a blog post on mserdark.com that a deputy who was a part of the commission that prepared the current law employed to ban websites told him on a TV debate show that they are also aware of the illogical and impractical nature of the law.

“Let me write what I have written a thousand times once more. YouTube is just a cover. The actual goal is silencing the opposition and founding a media that practices self-censorship out of fear,” Kuzuloğlu wrote in a July 27 column for Radikal. “[They] have succeeded at both.”

Kuzuloğlu said YouTube has representatives in Turkey and the tax loss from Google’s income originates from the Turkish companies receiving the service not paying the added-value tax. “Google makes the illegal [YouTube] contents inaccessible from [any]

country where complaints are made. It did this for Turkey too,” Kuzuloğlu said. “The problem of our guys [the government] is something else.”

Who is behind most of the bans is also a subject of debate. People sympathetic to the ruling Justice and Development Party, or AKP, generally blame the CHP and nongovernmental organizations such as the Kemalist Thought Association or ADD, since most complaints come from them or their supporters. The opposition, on the other hand, puts the blame with the AKP since Law No. 5651 on Internet bans was enacted during its time in power and because the ruling party is the one with the numbers in Parliament to potentially change it.

When it comes to internet bans, the CHP and AKP do not differ much from each other, Köksal said. “The founder of the censorship law is the AKP and the one that supports [censorship] is the CHP. It’s the pot calling the kettle black.”

Restored Armenian church in Turkey opened to worshippers

A renovated Armenian church in Istanbul has been opened to worshippers.

Thursday, 07 October 2010 14:05

WORLD BULLETIN

A renovated Armenian church in Istanbul has been opened to worshippers.

A ceremony was held on Thursday to mark the re-opening of "The Suro Harutyun Armenian Church" which was renovated by Istanbul's Sisli Municipality.

Speaking at the ceremony, Sisli Mayor Mustafa Sarigul said that his municipality's goal was to secure the freedom of faith of all citizens regardless of their origin, religion or culture.

The mayor also noted that renovation of Suro Harutyun Armenian Church had cost nearly 225,000 TL. (1 USD equals 1.42 TL)

Archbishop Aram Atesyan of the Armenian Patriarchate of Turkey also attended the opening ceremony of the church.

AA

Cigarette consumption in Turkey drops by 16 percent

Turkey’s indoor smoking ban that took full effect as of July 2009 has resulted in cigarette sales in the country dropping by 16.2 percent this year over the same period last year, according to data from the Tobacco and Alcohol Market Regulatory Agency (TAPDK).

According to these figures, 3.64 billion packs were sold in the first eight months of last year, compared to 3.1 billion this year. The effect of the smoking ban on cigarette sales was seen starting in the second half of last year, but smokers in Turkey still spend almost as much for tobacco products as the government allocates to investment. The ban on smoking in public places first went into effect in May 2008 but was implemented gradually. The provisions of the law that introduce the smoking ban in restaurants, cafeterias and coffeehouses took full effect starting July 19, 2009. There was a significant fall in cigarette sales in 2009, during which a total of 5.4 billion packs were sold.

However, the most serious drop was experienced this year. Last year in February, a total of 389 million packs were sold compared to 298 million packs this year. Even the tourism season and a higher number of foreign visitors to Turkey this year could not slow the fall. In July of this year 79 million fewer packs were sold than in July of 2008, while in August 44 million fewer packs were sold in comparison with the previous year.

During the more than four-and-a-half years from the start of 2006 up to August 2010, 25 billion packs were consumed in Turkey. In terms of single cigarettes smoked, this figure amounts to 492 billion. In monetary terms, this amounts to TL 86 billion. On average, smokers spend a total of TL 18 million on cigarettes, which nears the TL 22 billion in this year's budget allocated by the state for hospital, school, road, utilities and other investments. According to a recent survey by the Turkish Statistics Institute (TurkStat), 31.3 percent of individuals age 15 and higher use tobacco on a daily or regular basis; 47.9 of the smoking population are men, while 15.2 percent are women; and 8.4 percent of the 13-18 age group are smokers. The percentage of boys in this age group is 9.4 percent, while 5.3 percent are girls. These figures actually show an increase in the smoking rate for this group, which stood at 6.0 percent in 2003. TurkStat figures also show that tobacco addiction has become more common among women in comparison with the past.

07 October 2010, Thursday
TODAY'S ZAMAN İSTANBUL

COMMENTARY

Democratic politics

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Wednesday, October 6, 2010

YUSUF KANLI

HURRIYT

Is it possible to have an omelet if there are no eggs or if all the eggs available are spoiled? Is it possible to have a parliamentary or presidential democracy if the law on political parties is a crooked and anti-democratic one condemning all parties to tyranny of the leader or the party headquarters? If the election law of a country empowers the party leader and a handful of top executives at the headquarters to decide single-handedly and in any fashion they like who should be on and who should be off the candidate lists, are the deputies elected representatives of the nation or pawns of the leader to whom they owe their political fortune?

If in a nation of more than 40 million eligible voters, for the sake of stability in governance there is a 10-percent national electoral threshold and almost all minority political views are left outside of Parliament, is it possible to talk about justice in representation? If transparency in governance is a requirement of democratic administration but not only the president, prime minister but entire members of Parliament enjoy almost blanket judicial immunity and Parliament turns into some sort of a safe haven for people implicated in various crimes – including petty ones as well as serious tax evasion and such offenses – is it possible to talk about the supremacy of law or equality of all in front of law or consider that country an “enhanced” democracy? Is it possible to have a democracy in the absence of democratic politics and parties with inner democracy? Is it possible for that country to “enhance” its democracy without getting rid of the chuckles on the conscience and free will of the people involved in active politics, enhance sphere of free speech, respect the right to criticism, accept the right to object? The headscarf problem of young girls at university doors is of course a very important human rights issue which unfortunately was created with some political ambitions and exploited immensely by politicians who indeed never ever had intention at all of resolving it. The Kurdish problem no doubt might be considered as one of the most

daunting problems this country has ever faced. Separatist terrorism has claimed lives of tens of thousands of sons of this nation and inflicted a very serious trauma on all of Turkish society. There are several other serious problems of the country as well. Rather than palliative remedies or going around the problems despite the laws tradition, all these problems needed to be addressed with courage, determination and, of course, a democratic mindset.

Must nourish a democratic mindset

But, how can Turkey develop a democratic mindset without transforming and reforming its political spectrum and make it a truly democratic one? Indeed, in the constitutional amendment package voted on by the nation in the Sept. 12 referendum there ought to be clauses changing and democratizing the election system, liberating parliamentarians from leadership tyranny and allow them to be elected by the nation rather than the party leaders and, of course, if not totally lifting, at least seriously limiting – for example with the immunity of the rostrum – the blanket judicial immunity.

At a time when though there is dispute on when it should be done there is almost full consensus in the country on a new, civilian and democratic constitution, with a provisional article added to the Constitution the electoral threshold might be lifted or reduced to 3-5 percent and allow as wide as possible representation of national will in the next Parliament, which will probably write the new constitution. In the remaining eight months before the scheduled elections perhaps Turkey should undertake a set of legal and constitutional amendments democratizing the conduct of politics in this country. When and if the conduct of politics is democratized and transparency not only means governance and clean politics but also a more justified representation of the nation in Parliament by deputies elected by the nation rather than party leaders, then it will become easier for politics offering remedies to some acute problems which so far appear to be intractable.

Though they are very important and a resolution of them would help greatly in bringing an end to dangerous polarization and to an improved social atmosphere, the Islamist threat to the secular republic, the Higher Education Council, the turban or headscarf issue or the Kurdish problem and the separatist terrorism – and other many important issues – are indeed trivial compared to the overall democratization problem in this country because when this country and the way politics is conducted in this country become more democratic, the resolution of all such problems will become far more easier.

That is why main opposition Republican People's Party, or CHP, leader Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu's suggestion to the premier that all problems pertaining to rights should be handled in a package is a meaningful one, yet deficient because he has not yet included elections and parties laws at the top of that package.

The community is still behind its shadow

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Wednesday, October 6, 2010

MEHMET ALİ BİRAND

HURRIYAT

I shared with you yesterday country legends regarding the Gülen community.

The most important factor distinguishing this community from any other group is the mechanism they have succeeded to establish their discipline, their trust in each other and loyalty to their master Fethullah Gülen.

Since the Turkish society is undisciplined from the ground up and does not know what coordination means, it elevates, exaggerates and makes a legend out of the community's actions.

As far as I can see, to out-standers the community gives the impression of being extremely organized. Each member knows his job and does not interfere in someone else's job.

The education mechanism inside and outside the foundation works well. The financial mechanism to provide for the wheel to turn works well too. Some of the contributors don't even want their names to be mentioned. Others are not expecting anything in return. A wheel that turns based on religion and love without falling apart.

And this is provided by Gülen.

The whole purpose is to create a young generation based on philosophy and conservative and religious values.

There is no hidden conspiracy.

One could say that the community is on its way to become a victim of its own success.

The community protects itself by living behind its shade

One reason the Gülen community was successful is that it was organized well and the other was that it was oppressed by the military for years. They were constantly monitored, sued and punished. All foundations several times underwent inspections down to the penny (especially during the Feb. 28 period).

They have established a self-protection mechanism which allowed them to bunch up, provide solidarity and expand the community. They learned not to lay themselves open or speak aloud. They've lived behind their shades for years. Because they knew they'd be inspected any time, they managed to handle and hide their accounts well. This way they were able to survive and activate their protection mechanism.

They have received a reward for getting a raw deal.

But old habits still continue to some extent, despite changing eras. As they keep going they change into a legend. And those who think of the community as dangerous start exaggerating propaganda regarding their power, and the color of the matter changes.

The curtain needs to be lifted a bit more

To tell the truth, I've been trying to draw attention to present danger which the community is also aware of. But as I understand they don't know how to manage the situation.

Since 1999 the Gülen community has been trying to get out of its shadow.

Compared to former times they are much more lucent. They have appointed people who speak on behalf of the community.

But that's not enough.

As far as I can tell, old habits don't go away easily. Old habits like not being in the spotlight, not talking about the Gülen movement too much, not talking about financial resources too much seem to persist.

It is difficult.

For, times have changed. Now people would want rewards for their generosity; some to be in better places, some to win a tender and others to receive support in politics. People

will have difficulties continuing with their beliefs. And it will even be worse after Gülen's death.

The only way to get around this danger is stepping into the light, lifting the curtains further and becoming fully lucent. I can almost hear those of you saying, "Easy to say but hard to do."

But there is no other way out.

Let me repeat one option I underlined yesterday:

Don't be surprised if those who carry you on their shoulders today start a Gülen hunt tomorrow. We'll only get rid of this trap if the organization dissolves the perception of a secret organization.

Constitutional debacle

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Tuesday, October 5, 2010

YUSUF KANLI

HURRIYAT

The prime minister let the cat out of the bag on the eve of the Sept. 12 referendum when he suggested that Turkey should perhaps move on from the current parliamentary democracy to a presidential system of governance. In his Sept. 12 post-referendum speech, the prime minister talked about his intention and indeed ordered the start of work on a new constitution. He then sat back to enjoy the ensuing heated debate in society, saying that by the next parliamentary elections his Justice and Development Party, or AKP, would complete works on writing a new constitution draft and present it to the Parliament elected in nine months' time.

Obviously the prime minister wants to become the first-ever popularly elected president in 2012 – or if current President Abdullah Gül's term is seven years, in 2014 – but does not want to give up prime ministerial power. Even though the present presidential powers are rather excessive and consecutive presidents have complained in the past that in parliamentary democracies presidents should not have that much power, for a future President Erdoğan those powers would be insufficient and would have to be expanded to make the president the chief executive. The Prime Ministry is no longer sufficient for him, he wants to be the CEO, board chairman and indeed owner of Turkey who would have absolute say on all issues and who would not be asked to account to anyone.

The prime minister just wanted to feel the pulse of the nation on the presidential system. He spelled the idea out. Let the people discuss. In the mean time Burhan Kuzu and other constitutional experts in the ruling AKP started working on the project. Revealing details of the project would create unnecessary debates and perhaps the nation would realize the autocratic and dictatorial ambitions of Erdoğan and there might be a decrease in the AKP vote in the next elections, and thus in the number of deputies it may have in the next Parliament.

There is an almost full consensus in the country on the need for a new constitution. Yet every group expects to see different things in that new constitution. Some want to see enhanced individual liberties; some want to see less emphasis on secularism and a wider margin for religious freedoms; some want to see a new description of citizenship, some sort of autonomy for the Kurdish population; some want to see a civilian, democratic new social charter cleansed of the residue of the Sept. 12, 1980 coup and embracing all people

of Turkey, catering to the conditions of the day and which would carry the country into membership of the European club of democracies. A presidential governance system, of course, does not necessarily require Turkey to become a federation but at least in the Kurdish nationalist groups and in the separatist Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, and its political extensions, there is hope of acquiring "democratic autonomy" – whatever it might mean – education in Kurdish language and other such demands.

That is why Erdoğan and his AKP do not want to discuss in detail what kind of a new constitution they want to write, most probably with a unilateralist approach, after the next elections. That is most probably why the main opposition Republican People's Party, CHP, and the Nationalist Movement Party, or MHP, who have been so much against current Parliament writing a new constitution and demanding the issue be referred to the next parliament, have changed their opinion and are now demanding the new social charter at least be drafted and debated at a parliamentary reconciliation commission before the scheduled 2011 elections. After the Sept. 12 referendum experience, the CHP and MHP have realized the strong urge for change in the Turkish people, the difficulty in explaining sufficiently enough the potential dangers entailed in a very long text to the largely polarized society and are just trying to prevent the AKP from writing a constitution on its own after the elections. The CHP's call for writing and legislating the new constitution through parliamentary consensus now and MHP's demand that the new charter be drafted by a reconciliation commission and voted on by the next parliament are more or less products of a fear that with a new constitution written by AKP majority with a unilateralist mentality after the elections might derail Turkey into a dictatorship, perhaps a federal one. Indeed almost all presidential rule practices, excluding the United States where there is strong federal governance, ended up in dictatorships because of the deficiency of an effective checks and balances system.

Can Turkey be an exception? Turkey's own history and the track record of Erdoğan testify to the fact the danger is not only serious but indeed immense.

Two sides of the coin in tourism

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Tuesday, October 5, 2010

ELİF CONWAY

HURRIYAT

We all know that Turkey's tourism is rising and the Mediterranean continues to be the world's principal focus in tourism, but is this enough?

A long-term plan at both the regional and national levels should be prepared for Turkish tourism. Turkey should be able to offer new forms of tourism, something different from traditional sun and beach destinations.

Recently, an artist in London told me she was planning to go to Kaş for a painting trip. Another English lady said she was going to Turkey for a yoga tour. An English group between the ages of 30 and 50 recently went on a walking trip on the Aegean Coast. Adventure tourism is good, but, congress, health and education tourism should advance further. New forms of tourism are not only important for revenues, but also for how Turkey represents itself.

Turkey should develop ideas to work with local tradesmen in order to contribute to the local economy and to improve the benefits to local communities. A local man who offered water sport activities at a hotel complained recently: "Half of the water sports activities are part of the all-inclusive package. We don't earn as much as we used to." When tourists don't spend, this may trigger resentment in the local population against tourists. We should respect the local culture and the local population's values in order to keep the community's identity.

Of course, this doesn't mean more and more shops that sell fake brand clothes! Turkey produces quality clothing you can find in any UK high street, but tourists only remember cheap imitations because of the perceived bargain value, giving the wrong impression overall. I was recently in Antalya staying at a beautiful hotel but when I went out I saw a huge shopping market which made me feel that I was in another country. The contrast was undeniable: On the one side, there was a beautiful breathtaking view of the sea, forest, mountain and five-star luxury hotels, while on the other a rapidly built massive shopping area.

Another problem is pricing. One shop owner said: "There are no jobs during the winter. Basically we work five months and don't do anything for seven months." Therefore, an item sold for 5 liras becomes 5 euros for tourists.

Headlines in English newspapers calling Turkey a "low-cost destination" also do no good. The cost-benefit ratio, which is linked to the average spending per tourist, should be planned carefully. Good, positive, high levels of service, reputation and managing this reputation for the long term will make tourism a more effective revenue bringer.

Those in the tourism industry know how things went wrong for Spain: At the end of the 1980s, the Spanish market became saturated and no longer offered new attractions. Building more hotels wasn't the answer. The quality of services had diminished with the rise of competition and the income was falling. This is an unsustainable process which will lead to economic, environmental and social problems.

Another important issue is the education system, which must prepare people for employment in the tourism sector. I managed to find one or two training companies, which offer programs for hotels, and I know that very few hotels have training managers. Either it's a budget problem or they prefer to train employees as they work because it costs less. Training companies, hotels and agencies must understand the importance of tourism training. They should train hospitality industry employees and make them realize the importance of their valuable contribution to the economy.

Tourism is a fragile business. Its foundation has to be solid; long-term planning, improvement of facilities, good customer relations, awareness of the benefits of different tourism types, conservation of cultural values, respecting the environment and protecting natural spaces are necessary.

Turkey can always do better, not for today but also for tomorrow.

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Turkey-Japan at crossroads

Yet Japan and Turkey have never been just ordinary nations.

Thursday

07 October 2010

Turkey and Japan at the Crossroads

By Michael Auslin

In the 1960s, American political scientists became fascinated with political modernization in Turkey and Japan. They wanted in particular to discover the precedents that allowed two very different societies — one a centuries-old multiethnic empire, the other a feudal, isolated group of islands — to shake off the fetters of tradition and radically remake their political, economic, and social systems in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. This month, as citizens in both Turkey and Japan cast votes that will help determine the future of their countries, political analysts should look once again at the antipodes of Asia to see where democracy is heading in two of the world's most important societies.

In Turkey, voters strongly approved constitutional referenda proposed by Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan that would ostensibly increase civil-rights protections, but would also allow the Islamist party's leader to increase the number of judges on Turkey's most important courts and control the military. This has led secularist opponents of the AK party to claim that Mr. Erdogan is using constitutional means to ultimately undermine the bases of Turkey's Kemalist revolution of the 1920s and move the country closer to Islamic mores. Those watching Turkish society have raised the alarm about Mr. Erdogan's attempts over the past eight years to intimidate the military, bring supposed coup plotters to trial, and strong-arm media opponents of the regime.

Mr. Erdogan's policies worry more than just domestic observers. Tensions between Ankara and Washington remain strained due to Turkey's opposition to U.N. sanctions against Iran's nuclear program, its attempt to broker a settlement on nuclear reprocessing with Iran, and its freeze on relations with Israel after the Israeli interdiction of a Turkish-sponsored boat attempting to run a blockade of Hamas, all of which happened earlier this year. Turkish diplomats have been on the defensive, rejecting suggestions that NATO's second-largest military is tilting further and further towards anti-liberal, anti-Western regimes.

At the other end of Asia, in Japan, the ruling Democratic party faced an internal battle between party founders Ozawa Ichiro and Kan Naoto, the latter of whom is the current premier. Although Mr. Kan won out over his rival to remain premier, party unity has been damaged, and it remains unclear if the DPJ can now successfully formulate a clear policy agenda. At stake is the next half-decade of economic reform in Japan, as well as the near-term state of Japan's alliance with the United States. Since taking power last year, the DPJ has seen its reform agenda stall out and relations with Washington suffer due to former prime minister Yukio Hatoyama's failed attempt to scuttle an agreement over moving U.S. Marines out of a controversial base in southern Okinawa. Japan continues to flirt with both recession and deflation, while tensions with China have reached near-crisis levels in recent days over yet another maritime incident. Much like observers of Turkey, Japan watchers fear the future of both domestic and foreign policy.

But the domestic similarities between Turkey and Japan end there. In one, a vibrant leader is rapidly redefining his country's social structure and foreign policy, while claiming that he is simply bringing his nation more into line with international norms. In the other, a listless group of lifetime politicians are struggling to reform their country's economy and relations with their main ally, all the while stating that they are searching for a new path away from unbridled capitalism. For some voters in Turkey, Mr. Erdogan is moving too fast, and it is unclear just how far he will go in transforming the country. For those who gave Mr. Kan another chance, the fear is that no politician can move Japan far enough or fast enough to save it from another lost decade, the second in 20 years.

The democratic dramas playing out in Turkey and Japan are important for those watching the tide of liberalism around the world. Should one bookend of Asia turn away from liberal norms while the other fails to reform its stagnant economy, the democratic model will suffer. This is all the more worrisome as the world watches the resurgence of authoritarian regimes in China, Iran, and Russia. The insulting dismissal of Turkey's EU application by France and Great Britain has shown how capricious the club of "advanced" nations can be. At the same time, the Eurozone crisis and China's economic eclipse of Japan has called into question the ability of representative regimes to maintain economic growth. The result is a general skepticism of democracy and liberalism just at the moment when democratic nations must join together to repulse the challenges to their systems and the world order that has guided international development since the 1940s.

It is troubling, and perhaps even unfair, that the global reputation of liberalism should be tied to events in just a few nations. Yet Japan and Turkey have never been just ordinary nations. As those American political scientists understood nearly a half-century ago, both countries had outsized influence regionally and globally. They pointed the way forward for other countries around them, particularly so in the case of Japan, and both served as crucial anchors in America's postwar system of global alliances. Thus, the paths they choose to take today and in the future will continue to have significance beyond the suburbs of Ankara and Tokyo. Their choices will also matter a great deal to America, which will have great problems maintaining its influence in the Middle and Far East without a close working relationship with both countries, while democrats around the world will watch closely to see which way the winds blow across the Bosphorus and the Sea of Japan.

In many ways, Japan and Turkey are in a waiting game: Turks have given Mr. Erdogan power to radically shift the legal bases of their society, and trust that he will not move the country down an Islamist path or further into the arms of authoritarian partners. The Japanese must yet again wait to see if Mr. Kan, having been given another chance by his own party, can pull together a set of plans to revive economic growth and find a meaningful role in the world. Skepticism runs high in both countries, but for now, voters have given both men the democratic legitimacy to soldier on. And as they wait, so does the rest of the world. Japan and Turkey helped shape the 20th century; they may shape the 21st, as well.

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nationalreview.com*

Turkey can learn from Japan's rise and fall

IBRAHIM OZTURK

As noted in my last column, in the post-crisis era Turkey's big potential is fueling new waves of optimism and therefore triggering big expectations. In this age of "market fundamentalism" that is shadowed by illusions of corporate feudalism for short-term profiteering, every victory in the realm of economics could easily turn into a vicious cycle of self-destruction. Therefore, rising waves of optimism as well as crisis must be managed with care.

By looking at other countries that passed through the same stages of development in the recent past such as Japan, we can derive some fundamental lessons for Turkey in the period ahead. At the turn of the 1980s, Japan finished the process of catching up and closed the gap of development with other major industrialized countries. With the passage of time, many experts were discussing the next stage of Japan's drive after this significant convergence. At this juncture, many scholarly oriented articles and best-seller books poured into the academic market, discussing the "secrets" of Japan's inevitable rise. The titles of many publications were quite provocative and/or romantic. For instance, the title of Shintaro Ishihara's book "The Japan That Can Say No/Why Japan Will Be First Among Equals" (1989) was the symbol of this self-delusion.

Western academics, however, pioneered this process. Ezra Vogel's book "Japan as Number One: Lessons for America" came out at least one decade earlier than Ishihara's book.

Exaggeration and real motivation were mixed up in Japan. Realism was lost. Wishful thinking or desires were perceived to be reality. In the meantime, asset prices skyrocketed throughout the 1980s. This became more evident particularly after the Plaza Accord of 1985. It was an agreement between the governments of France, West Germany, Japan, the United States and the United Kingdom to depreciate the US dollar in relation to the Japanese yen and German deutsche mark by intervening in currency markets. The exchange rate value of the dollar versus the yen declined by 51 percent from 1985 to 1987. The recessionary effects of the strengthened yen in Japan's export-dependent economy created an incentive for the expansionary monetary policies that led to the Japanese asset price bubble of the late 1980s. Japan's land prices skyrocketed in the late 1980s, fueled by low interest rates and easy credit. The peak came in 1991, when some Japanese boasted that the land under the Imperial Palace in Tokyo, home of the Japanese emperor, was worth more than the gross domestic product (GDP) of all of Canada. Excessive dominance of finance capital resulted in the separation of the real economy from the fundamentals of global competition. The process triggered a serious deindustrialization process and, therefore, emigration of Japanese industry to the surrounding countries. For instance, in recent years, the volume of export that Japanese companies make in foreign countries exceeds the volume of Japan's total export from the mainland.

Moreover, as labor-intensive sectors moved elsewhere, the rate of unemployment rose above 4-5 percent, a rate that had never been seen since the end of World War II. In this middle class society, this resulted in several social traumas. For instance, according to

recent studies, there is a strong correlation between the rate of unemployment and the rate of the rise in suicides.

With the cost of doing business so dramatic, the rationale of conducting business was lost at the turn of the 1990s, leading to serious disputes over whether to move the capital city of Tokyo to some other region. However, with the burst of the Nikkei bubble in the early 1990s, asset prices decreased dramatically, and such intentions and discussions were postponed. However, in such a mature and big economy with an old demographic structure, every crisis leaves deep and persisting malaise behind.

Major lessons from the Japanese experience to Turkey are that Turks should not exaggerate its potential and positive expectations, as might be fueled by foreign investors or rating agencies in the near future. Second, Turkey should ignore market fundamentalism and take the required correct regulatory measures in advance to prevent an irrational rise in asset prices, mainly around İstanbul, the major center of business. Third, as Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan argues, I also agree that a strong national currency should be our “pride.” However, it should not be separated from economic fundamentals, so that the competitive strength of the economy can be preserved against severe global competition. Under normal conditions, the value of a national currency would rise under three conditions: if there is a surplus in the current account balance, if there is a surplus in the national saving-investment balance, and if there is a rapid surge in the productivity of the entire economy, so that the general well-being of the country rises.

Under the current situation, however, Turkey is a deficit-giving country in its current account. Also, the saving-investment gap is serious, and Turkey is one of the weakest countries in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) group of countries in terms of the general level of productivity. Turkey ranks as the 16th largest economy in the world in term of the size of its GDP, whereas it ranks in 60th place on the global competitiveness index. Therefore, this means, on the one hand, that Turkey’s problem in the realm of competitiveness lies somewhere other than in the real exchange rate, but on the other hand, an overvaluation of the Turkish lira means that something is wrong with respect to the three abovementioned fundamentals. As viewed from this perspective, along with other problems, the currency problem must also be fixed as soon as possible.

07 October 2010, Thursday

İBRAHİM ÖZTÜRK

TODAYS ZAMAN

Untapped potential in Turkey-Korea relations

ABDULLAH BOZKURT

TODAYS ZAMAN

SEOUL -- Korea is a common household name in Turkey because of the 1950-1953 Korean War. Indeed, many veterans still remain from that period.

But no additional noteworthy links have been established between the two countries in the 60 years following the war in either the sphere of business, culture or politics. This only started to change in the last decade as Turkey began to acknowledge South Korea’s economic accomplishments by taking an interest in benefiting from the best practices in this country.

South Korea also recently realized that there is much potential in Turkey's booming consumer market as well as that the country offer a gateway to the European market through its customs union agreement. A total of 166 Korean companies, including LG and Hyundai, currently operate in Turkey. Hyundai is one of the best success stories of the Turkish market and has joined the ranks of best selling car manufacturers. As of July 2010, Hyundai came in third, after Renault and Ford, in terms of the distribution of registered cars on Turkish roads.

Albeit a bit late, both countries have begun to talk about a free trade agreement, with a view to conclude talks by the end of the year. The trade volume between Turkey and South Korea was almost \$1 billion in 2000, favoring the latter immensely. According to the Turkish Statistics Institute (TurkStat), last year's annual trade volume stood at \$3.4 billion, which was down due to the global financial crisis. It peaked in 2008, when the trade volume was recorded as \$4.4 billion.

Trade volume showed signs of recovery in 2010. In the first eight months of 2010, Turkey's imports from South Korea jumped 46 percent year-on-year from \$2 billion to \$2.8 billion. Turkey's exports rose 52 percent in the same period, from \$125 million to \$188 million.

Though both countries targeted \$10 billion in trade volume in the short term, the huge imbalance favoring this East Asian country became a real concern for Turkish officials. Zafer Çağlayan, Turkey's foreign trade minister, said at one point that "we need to map out how these figures can be balanced and in which sectors."

The two countries also signed a deal worth as much as \$20 billion to construct up to four light water reactors in a nuclear power plant in the Black Sea province of Sinop as part of the government's energy diversification policy. Turkey's Enka Construction and the Korea Electric Power Corp (Kepeco) will submit a joint bid to build the 5,600-megawatt plant. Kepeco signed a \$40 billion nuclear technology export deal last year with the United Arab Emirates. South Korea is the world's No. 6 nuclear power holder in terms of current generating capacity.

Cooperation between the two countries is no longer limited to them only. Now that both Turkey and South Korea are members of the prestigious G-20, the world's largest economies by gross domestic product (GDP), they are working closely on shaping the economic order the world needs after the economic crisis disturbed the balance of the financial and economic structure.

How to reform the governance of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) will dominate discussions at the next G-20 meeting, which will be hosted by Seoul next month. Both countries deserve a seat on the IMF board. After all, their economies have surpassed those of the Netherlands and Belgium, both of which have IMF board members. Even Dominique Strauss-Kahn, IMF managing director, acknowledged the need for change and said in Washington, "I think it's fair enough to make more room for emerging countries at the board."

On the diplomatic front, we also see some activity going on as part of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-building Measures in Asia (CICA). With Turkey currently holding the CICA chair, there may be areas in which both countries could interact more closely.

When Turkish President Abdullah Gül visited South Korea in June, he expressed his support for Seoul in its push for United Nations action against Pyongyang after a North

Korean torpedo sank a South Korean naval ship, killing 46 sailors on board. He said the action was deplorable, and offered his condolences. Turkey is a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council and also chairs the council's committee on sanctions against North Korea.

We were in Seoul last week to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the recapture of Seoul from the Northern. Turkish veterans were the main attraction here, receiving strong applause from Koreans for their bravery and sacrifice. This special relationship should be strengthened with much better cooperation and coordination in business, politics and culture. Better late than never.

05 October 2010, Tuesday

The meaning of Turkey's joint maneuvers with China

LALE KEMAL

China and Turkey secretly held joint aerial exercises at Turkey's training range in the Central Anatolian town of Konya during the second half of last month, where Anatolian Eagle exercises are taking place between NATO allies and friendly countries. The exercises may be perceived as an indication that NATO member Turkey and China are beginning to see each other as friendly, to the extent that realpolitik dictates

In fact, Turkish-Chinese military cooperation in the form of defense was sealed back in 1996 when Beijing agreed to transfer guided missile technology to Ankara. As a result, the "Yıldırım" guided missile was produced and displayed during Turkey's Aug. 30, 2007, Victory Day celebrations. In 1999, Turkey also signed a military training and cooperation protocol with China under which soldiers from both countries were intended to be trained at each others' military academies.

Turkish-Chinese maneuvers can be seen against the background of Ankara's "zero problems" policy, which has been underway for several years, through which it has advanced ties considerably in every sphere with former adversaries such as Iran, Syria, Bulgaria and Greece as well as with Russia and many other nations around the world. Turkey's "zero problems" policy has, however, continued to raise some questions over whether a NATO member and an EU candidate country has been moving to the East and distancing itself from the West. My analysis of current Turkish foreign policy is that it is engaged in an ongoing effort to restore ties with former long-time adversaries, while trying to emerge as a regional and international actor. Turkey has made advances in achieving this policy but needs to strengthen its human and intellectual resources to assert its influence in global politics.

Most importantly, Ankara has to improve democratic standards within the country to turn it into a respected international actor.

Efforts to broaden relations with China in all spheres fall in line with the policy of influencing world politics as a Muslim democracy, while underlining Turkish determination to advance its national interests, when necessary, independent of its close ally Washington.

Turkey has also recently modified its security policy and removed neighbors from a list of countries considered threats to national security.

The idea of holding bilateral aerial exercises with China was not a last minute decision, but matured over the past few years in line with changing Turkish perceptions of its

security policies. The maneuvers also come just before Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao's visit to Ankara on Oct. 8.

But the White House was irritated by the Turkish-Chinese aerial maneuvers. In addition, Washington has reportedly prevented Turkey from flying the US, Lockheed Martin made, advanced F-16s in its inventory during the training exercises with China, stemming from concerns that Beijing would have an access to US technology and collect intelligence to a certain extent. That explains why the Turkish Air Forces flew older US made F-4 fighters during the maneuvers and why the Chinese Air Force has reportedly used Russian made Su 27 as well as either Mig 29s or the older version of Mig 20s. The US is also understood to have been annoyed at Turkey's exclusion of Israel from the Anatolian Eagle exercises while holding similar maneuvers with China.

Turkish-Israeli ties further deteriorated after the Israeli raid on the Mavi Marmara in May, during which eight Turks and one Turkish-American were killed. The vessel intended to break the Gaza blockade and supply goods on the vessel to the people of Gaza.

Turkey and Israel used to be close military partners -- with broad ties, including in the economic field. Military ties have sustained a serious blow following the raid on the Mavi Marmara.

Forging military cooperation with China is part of a Turkish policy of deepening its relations with many countries in the world. But in the midst of deteriorated ties with Israel and the Turkish exclusion of Israel from military maneuvers, Chinese-Turkish aerial exercises will likely send the wrong signals to Europe and the US.

The strong Jewish lobby in the US will inevitably use the Turco-Chinese military cooperation as a way of causing friction between Ankara and Washington. However, independent of such pressure, healing Turkish-Israeli ties would benefit both countries, in particular, and the Middle East more generally.

05 October 2010, Tuesday

LALE KEMAL

TODAYS ZAMAN

Is there a judiciary in Turkey?

Bulent Kenes

I know this question may seem a bit out of place as it is posed about a state that is supposed to be democratic and governed by the rule of law. But if the answer to this odd question is an open and clear, "No, there is no judiciary in Turkey," then the answer can be expected to draw as much interest as the question.

I must note that the proposition that there is no judiciary in Turkey is not mine alone. Like any citizen of the Turkish Republic, I know that the Turkish judicial system is rife with problems, ideological biases and an inability to administer justice. But to be able to assert that there is no judiciary in Turkey, we need to describe what the thing we call "judiciary" in Turkey actually is, and also what it should be. Already, this assertion has been put forth by one of the experts in the field.

It belongs to Osman Can, a professor of constitutional law, the rapporteur of the Constitutional Court and the co-chairman of the Democratic Judiciary Association and who is proficient on civil law, the current state of the problematic Turkish judiciary and what can be done to give Turkey a judiciary that is capable of administering justice like

the sophisticated judicial systems of advanced democracies. Yes, you remembered correctly. It was uttered by Osman Can, who revealed to the world that Sabit Kanadoğlu - - the honorary president of the Supreme Court of Appeals who originally manufactured the quorum of 367 during the presidential election of 2007 and who dedicated his time and energy to spawning illegitimate tools from the castrated law for use by the anti-democratic Kemalist/neo-nationalist politics -- lacked even the most fundamental qualifications that should be expected of a jurist and, therefore, is a more than legitimate reference in legal discussions.

This month's "Covering Turkey" program organized by the Medialog Platform, affiliated with the Journalists and Writers Foundation (GYV) for foreign journalists living in İstanbul, had Can as its guest on Tuesday. Can talked about the historical process in which he was urged to assert that "there is no judiciary in Turkey, but one will be built after the current process we are experiencing," and portrayed a very bleak picture of what we call the judiciary. I would like to share with you only a brief summary of Can's long presentation.

For Can, the Constitution of 1924 saw the judiciary as a structure that would serve the sovereigns of the state, who were planning to introduce revolutionary changes in many fields and who needed a mechanism to control any social opposition that might emerge in reaction to these changes. For this reason, a judicial structure that proved to be at odds with the pledges made in the Lausanne Treaty was introduced. This judiciary would not create any obstacle for the ruling elites, but rather act as an ideological apparatus that would facilitate their projects. In order to establish this new system, Mahmut Esat Bozkurt, who studied law in Switzerland, was commissioned. Bozkurt was racist and chauvinist and simply sought to promote the Turkish race. He became the Justice Minister in 1924. Under the Constitution of 1924, the Justice Minister was authorized to appoint and promote judges. He was also entitled to decide who should be appointed members of higher judicial bodies such as the Council of State and the Supreme Court of Appeals.

Bozkurt appointed to these positions people whom he trained at the Ankara University's School of Law and who were characterized by the same ideological biases as he was. Fearing that an extremely racist discourse would develop that might cause hurt the Republican People's Party's (CHP) chances of success in elections, in which it would compete with the Free Party (SF), he was forced to resign from his position as the Justice Minister. However, the judiciary that he created continued to exhibit full allegiance to the CHP until 1950, when the first free election was held with multi-party participation. In the CHP's single-party era, judges heartily believed in the principle that the judiciary is supposed to facilitate the executive branch's actions.

However, after 1950, the judiciary and judges abruptly changed this approach and began to use the motto, "Politics should stay out of the judiciary." They meant that the democratically elected Parliament and government should not meddle with the judiciary. However, the judiciary was never concerned about the intervention of the bureaucratic state apparatuses. According to this logic, politics is what is democratically preferred and desired, but the rest is not regarded as political. Although the democratic multi-party system was introduced, the judicial system continued to function according to the single-party (CHP) system. Thus, only Parliament and the government changed as a result of the elections, but the judiciary stayed the same. During this period, state and government

became two distinct and separate notions. The judiciary continued to function both as the bearer and the tool of the single-party ideology. Since the justice minister was from another party (the Democrat Party [DP]), all of his powers enshrined in the Constitution were regarded as “intervention in the judiciary.” However, previously these powers would be considered normal.

After the military coup of May 27, 1960, this single-party judicial system was revived and in order to purge officials who had been appointed during the DP government, half of the members of the Supreme Court of Appeals and one-fifth of the Council of State and half of the judges in other courts were sacked. Thus, the CHP’s judiciary was rebuilt. After the Constitution of 1961, Parliament and the government had no power over the judiciary. The epithet “independent” came to be affixed to the judiciary, which was redesigned in compliance with a single-party mentality. This system was further bolstered after the military memorandum of 1971. With the military coup of 1980, the system was not tampered with much and the justice minister was recast as an influential figure in the system as he was appointed by the military. Thus, the controversial Supreme Board of Judges and Prosecutors (HSYK) was positioned in the judiciary as a small replica of the National Security Council (MGK) and as the main organ of the military tutelary mindset. Thanks to this judiciary, which not only failed to derive its legitimacy from the nation but also was isolated from society, political parties were closed down or attempts were made to shut them down, although this was disapproved of by society as a whole. For this reason, the judiciary’s and society’s perceptions of the EU were never the same. Since they are specifically trained to avoid the general public, the role of judicial activities is quite visible in the approach to the Kurdish issue, the Alevi issue, the religious minorities issue, the unresolved murders issue and similar issues.

In this country, democracy has a serious problem: the judiciary. While the judiciary is still feeding on the values of some 80 years ago, society has changed a lot and this has created a great conflict. As a result of this conflict, the constitutional amendments voted on in a referendum on Sept. 12 were drafted. Although they cannot be idealized, they are key to divorcing the judiciary from the single-party ideology. Thanks to these amendments, society’s representation in the judiciary, which is currently at 10 percent, will increase. The capabilities and tools provided by these amendments to the government to address meddling in the judiciary are the same as those available to governments in Europe.

On Sept. 12, democracy stepped on the island of the judiciary for the first time in the history of the Turkish republic. Based on these facts, one cannot help but agree with Can’s assertion that there is no judiciary in Turkey. I hope this true judiciary in the making will have the courage to face its own sins from its dark and evil past.

04 October 2010, Monday

Today’s zaman

Can you open a church in Turkey?

Orhan kemal cengiz

Until amendments were made to the Zoning Law in 2003, it was highly debatable whether a place of worship other than a mosque could be opened or what the relevant practices and procedures to do this might be.

The relevant article of Zoning Law No. 3194 used to read as follows:

“In the development of zoning plans, the required places for mosques shall be designated, taking into account the conditions of the planned districts and regions and their future needs. Provided that the permission of the mufti is obtained and the zoning legislation is respected, mosques can be built in provinces, sub-provinces and towns. Places for mosques cannot be allocated for other purposes in violation of the zoning legislation.” In the context of the European Union harmonization process, this article has been amended as follows:

“In the development of zoning plans, the required places of worship shall be designated, taking into account the conditions of the planned districts and regions and their future needs. Provided that the permission of the highest civilian administrator is obtained and the zoning legislation is respected, places of worship can be built in the provinces, sub-provinces and towns. Places for worship cannot be allocated for other purposes in violation of the zoning legislation.”

Implementation guidelines

However, where it involves non-Muslims, what the law provides for, implementation takes away. This practice has been put to use in the case of regulations concerning places of worship. The zoning law amendment cited above has been rendered non-functional through the Implementation Guidelines. The Implementation Guidelines indicate the following about religious facilities:

- a) Structural Conditions: Can be made in zoning parcels that have been designated for religious facilities in the zoning plans. In new planning sectors, they will be made such that the zoning parcel is not smaller than 2,500 meters squared.
- b) Construction Conditions: If there is no ruling to the contrary in the zoning plans, only religious facilities and their auxiliary buildings may occupy such spaces. Such spaces may not be used for commercial, residential, educational or other such functions. In zoning parcels in conformity with the structural conditions, unconnected structures may be included in the building design, on the condition that it is 10 meters away from the parcel's border. The floor area ratio can be a maximum of 60 percent. Buildings' maximum heights are unrestricted. Facilities such as a WC or fountain for ablutions may be built within the scope of the auxiliary building.
- c) Mosques must be constructed in conformity with the conditions published by the Directorate of Religious Affairs.

Though the legal code permits it, for a variety of reasons, non-Muslims who want to open a place of worship face major obstacles. It is impossible for a church with a congregation of 30-40 persons to purchase a lot that is 2,500 meters squared and build a building on it. Further, the condition that permission be obtained from civilian authorities, because it does not include explicit criteria, is a regulation subject to arbitrary responses. In practice, municipalities have rejected requests that space be allocated and a multiplicity of bureaucratic obstructions have been encountered. Subsequent to the adoption of the amendments to the Zoning Law, dozens of applications have been submitted and denied; only a handful of applications have been successful. In theory it is possible for non-Muslims to have places of worship. In reality, this problem remains unsolved.

Turkey's international obligations

The United Nations International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Turkey is signatory, ensures freedom of belief in its 18th Article. The UN Human Rights Committee, which is tasked with monitoring compliance with the covenant, in its General

Comment No. 22 concerning the scope of freedom of religion and belief, states, “The freedom to manifest religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching encompasses a broad range of acts ... including the building of places of worship.” According to the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), freedom of religion entails two kinds of obligations for signatory governments. One of these is “positive,” the other “negative” in nature. Positive obligation express the obligation to take measures that protect religions present in the society and that allow the adherents of those religions to perform their worship freely and without fear. Negative obligation is the obligation to not interfere. The secular state is obligated to treat religious beliefs impartially, to both protect them and ensure that disputes concerning them are conducted in a peaceable fashion and also to achieve cultural diversity that stimulates the perpetuation of a variety of beliefs. As the European Human Rights Commission stated, if the belief or religion in question represents a minority in the society, the state’s positive obligation becomes even more pronounced: “The protection of diversity of thought from suppression constitutes one of the fundamental characteristics of democratic societies which guarantee the right contained in the Convention.”

The European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR), when hearing a case concerning freedom of belief and dealing with a minority group in a country against whom an application is submitted, acts with increased sensitivity. A series of cases in which Bulgaria and Greece were found guilty due to their attitudes and actions towards Muslim minorities are suggestive in this regard. There was a case where Bulgaria was found guilty because it arbitrarily dismissed a mufti chosen by a Muslim congregation, the ECtHR announced these findings: “The Court recalls that religious communities traditionally and universally exist in the form of organized structures. They abide by rules which are often seen by followers as being of a divine origin. Religious ceremonies have their meaning and sacred value for the believers if they have been conducted by ministers empowered for that purpose in compliance with these rules. ... Where the organization of the religious community is at issue, Article 9 must be interpreted in the light of Article 11 of the Convention which safeguards associative life against unjustified state interference. Seen in this perspective, the believer’s right to freedom of religion encompasses the expectation that the community will be allowed to function peacefully free from arbitrary state intervention. Indeed, the autonomous existence of religious communities is indispensable for pluralism in a democratic society and is thus an issue at the very heart of the protection which Article 9 affords.”

It should be remembered that Greece, which in terms freedom of religion problems greatly resembles Turkey, has been repeatedly found guilty by the ECtHR due to the restrictions it has imposed on religious congregations outside of the Orthodox faith. In a case where a Jehovah’s Witness was convicted of opening a place of worship without obtaining the needed permission from the Greek authorities, the ECtHR found that Greece had implemented its formal regulations in an excessively restrictive and punitive fashion and convicted them of violating freedom of religion and belief.

The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), of which Turkey is a member, states in Paragraph 4 of Article 16 in its 1989 Vienna Concluding Document that with regard to religious communities within the domain of their sovereignty, member countries are obligated to “respect the right of these religious communities to establish

and maintain freely accessible places of worship or assembly, [and] organize themselves according to their own hierarchical and institutional structure.”

Similarly, with the European Union Accession Partnership Document, Turkey has pledged to “secure the full enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms by all individuals and further develop conditions for the enjoyment of freedom of thought, conscience and religion without discrimination and irrespective of language, race, color, sex, political opinion, philosophical belief or religion.”

As the statements above all show, all the arbitrary steps taken by civil authorities against the opening of new places of worship in Turkey are flagrant violations of Turkey’s obligations under international law.

03 October 2010, Sunday

Today’s zaman

Turkey at critical crossroads

Sule kulu

Following the approval of a set of constitutional amendments during the historic Sept. 12 referendum, Turkey is now getting ready to find a solution to one of its gravest problems: the Kurdish issue and the related Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) terrorism.

All actors involved in the problem are well aware of the fact that it is not easy to solve this long-standing issue overnight; however, almost everyone acknowledges that it is high time to take bold steps. In fact, the positive atmosphere in the country following the referendum and the willingness of the parties involved in the issue to take an active role in pushing for a sustainable peace, which the country has been longing for, show Turkey is at a critical crossroads.

“It is possible to say, in retrospect, that the referendum brought the need for a serious road map to the attention of Turkish politicians. We can discuss the results of Sept. 12, but the ‘divisive’ paranoia that erupted after the referendum is being replaced with common sense day by day,” says Star daily columnist Nasuhi Güngör. Underlining that much criticism can be directed at the government regarding the management of the democratic initiative launched last year, he quotes veteran journalist Cengiz Çandar, who had said that the presence of political will determined to go ahead with the initiative is in itself a reason for hope. “From every perspective, we are face to face with a complicated problem that is difficult to solve. There is on the one hand an oppressed and sometimes provoked Kurdish nationalism, which seeks an enemy in order to define itself, and there is on the other hand a Turkey that has been slow to understand Kurdish demands and that has only recently dared to confront the problem,” Güngör says.

Yeni Şafak’s Fehmi Koru asks whether it will be easy or difficult to address this problem through peaceful methods. “There are, of course, difficulties, but all signs seem to indicate that Turkey will be able to overcome this issue,” he says. He says the new picture that will emerge if the government’s ongoing efforts bear fruit will please everyone in the country. “Either easy or difficult, Turkey has already embarked on the road to maintain peace. There can be no turning back, there should not be. Everyone, of course -- the politicians in particular -- should plan for the future bearing in mind that we will soon live in a terror-free country,” he asserts.

According to Okan Müderrisoğlu from the Sabah daily, the public will soon witness a period when politics will have the final say, not violence. “Provocative attacks will be a

sign of desperation. They will not be able to change the direction the wind is blowing,”
he says.

01 October 2010, Friday

today's zaman
