

Business & Politics in the Muslim World
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Azerbaijan

Political Front

- Azerbaijani Opposition Journalist Gets Amnesty

The president of Azerbaijan has granted amnesty to an opposition journalist who rights groups say was jailed for his critical writings. Musfiq Huseynov was among 99 people granted amnesty by President Ilham Aliyev.

- Azerbaijan Democratic Party: Opposition parties to mull configuration of forces
“No concrete decision has been made regarding establishment of an opposition alliance in Azerbaijan,” Azerbaijan Democratic Party Chairman Sardar Jalaloglu said.

- Azerbaijan's opposition party attempts to picket outside U.S. embassy in Baku
A group of members of Azerbaijan's opposition Muasir Musavat Party attempted to picket outside the U.S. embassy in Azerbaijan, the party's press office said.

- Azerbaijani Human Rights Commissioner's Office to observe municipal elections
The employees of Azerbaijani Human Rights Commissioner's Office will observe the municipal elections to be held on Dec. 23. Some 38 representatives would observe the voting in Baku and various regions, military units, jails, detention facilities and give information to the office through the hotline of CEC.

- Municipal elections campaign ends in Azerbaijan

In accordance with the Electoral Code, the municipal elections campaign ended at 08.00 today – 24 hours before the voting. Spokesman for the Central Election Commission (CEC) Azer Sariyev said promotion materials had already been removed from the campaign boards

- Municipal election in Azerbaijan organized very well, CoE observers

The municipal election in Azerbaijan was organized very well, said members of the observation mission of the CoE Congress of Local and Regional Authorities at a press conference.

Geo Strategic Front

- Azerbaijani MP: Azerbaijan's protest note against U.S. Congress decision to give positive result

“I think the note of protest the Azerbaijani Foreign Ministry has presented to the U.S. State Department is a positive step,” Azerbaijani member of parliament Fazil Mustafa said.

- Azerbaijan, Iran discuss military cooperation

Azerbaijani Defense Minister, Colonel-General Safar Abiyev met with the ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran to Azerbaijan Mohammad Bagir Bahrami on Dec. 25

Economic /Energy Front

- Baku hosts symposium "Energy Exporters: Politics, Society, Economics"

A two-day symposium on "Energy Exporters: Politics, Society, Economics" is underway in the Azerbaijan Diplomatic Academy (ADA) in Baku. The Azerbaijani Diplomatic Academy (ADA) plans to admit students to the BA courses in the coming years, ADA Rector and Deputy Foreign Minister Hafiz Pashayev told reporters.

- Iranian ambassador: Iran, Azerbaijan need new gas pipeline

Iran transfers most of part of Azerbaijani natural gas it receives to Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic, and uses the rest for its domestic needs, said Iranian Ambassador to Azerbaijan Mohammad Baghir Bahrami.

- Azerbaijan signs new oil and gas contract

Today, the State Oil Company of Azerbaijan Republic (SOCAR) signed PSA contract with the Bahar Energy Limited Company for the exploration, rehabilitation, development and production of a unit, which includes the Bahar and Gum Daniz offshore fields located in the Azerbaijan sector of the Caspian Sea.

- Azerbaijan's 2010 public budget approved

Azerbaijan's 2010 state budget was approved with a deficit limit of 1.249 billion manat. Four sources are provided to finance the budget deficit, via revenues from state property privatization and domestic and foreign loans. Under the "Law on the 2010 Public Budget," forecasts on public budget revenues amount to 10.015 billion manat (31.5 percent of GDP), including a centralized income of 9.552 billion manat, local revenues of 462.98 million manat and expenses of 11.264 billion manat, including centralized expenditures of 10.069 billion manat and local expenditures of 1.194 billion manat.

- Baku hosts int'l conference on global financial crisis

An international conference on Global Financial Crisis: Azerbaijan's Model of Economic Security and World Practice started in Azerbaijan State Economic University (ASEU) on Dec. 21. The two-day event is co-organized by ASEU, Turkey's Sakarya University and Turkish World Research Foundation.

Social Front

- Azerbaijani film wins special prize of Human and War Film Festival

Human and War Film Festival has ended in Yekaterinburg, Russia. Azerbaijani documentary "Nickname is Mikhailo" won special prize of the festival.

- Azerbaijani ombudsman asks president to pardon 1,000 prisoners

Azerbaijan's Ombudsman Elmira Suleymanova has appealed to Azerbaijani President to pardon about 1,000 prisoners. Nearly 300 prisoners, including underage persons, women, ill-health persons, old prisoners had been earlier pardoned through ombudsman's appeals.

Kazakastan

Political Front

- Former Kazakh Uranium Company Chief Hospitalized During Trial

Mukhtar Dzhakishhev, the former head of Kazakh uranium producer KazAtomProm, was taken from an Astana courtroom and hospitalized today, RFE/RL's Kazakh Service reports.

Geo Strategic Front

Economic /Energy Front

Social Front

- Kazakh Lawmakers Want To Reverse Hijab School Ban

Kazakh students meet with an Islamic spiritual representatives in Aktobe
A group of Kazakh parliament members is urging Education Minister Zhanseit Tuymebaev to reverse a ban on Islamic head scarves among high-school and university students, RFE/RL's Kazakh Service reports.

Kyrgyzstan

Political Front

- Violent Death Of Kyrgyz Journalist Follows A Disturbing Pattern

Gennady Pavlyuk was thrown from the sixth floor of this building in Almaty.

A prominent voice of political dissent in Kyrgyzstan was silenced today when opposition journalist Gennady Pavlyuk died from injuries sustained when he fell from a high-rise building in Kazakhstan.

- Parliamentary commission to elect new speaker

Two new deputies have been sworn to oath in the Parliament Saturday.

Asylbek uulu Damirbek and Bakytbek Nurjanov joined Ak Zhol Fraction taking up chairs of ex-speaker of the Parliament Aitibai Tagaev and Bakyt Torobaev

Geo Strategic Front

- Kyrgyz leader: Eurasian security one of our priority issues

“One of our priority issues is ensuring security, we can not speak of security in Europe and Asia separately. Everything should be considered in context of the Eurasian continent,” Kurmanbek Bakiev, President of Kyrgyzstan said at informal summit of heads of state in Almaty (Kazakhstan).

- China to seal border during New Year celebrations

China will seal its border with Kyrgyzstan during New Year’s celebrations, State Border Service of Kyrgyzstan reported. The following entry points on Kyrgyz-Chinese part of the state border will be temporary closed

- Russia, Kyrgyzstan to sign military cooperation agreement in 2010

Russia and Kyrgyzstan will probably sign a military cooperation agreement in early 2010, Valentin Vlasov Ambassador of Russia to Kyrgyzstan said meeting with the press Wednesday. As to Vlasov, the document has been completely drawn out by the Kyrgyz side.

- Bakiev: Kyrgyzstan should not restrict foreign policy to old ties

Kyrgyzstan should not restrict its foreign policy to old ties, Kurmanbek Bakiev the President of Kyrgyzstan said Thursday on celebration of 65th anniversary of the Kyrgyz Foreign Ministry.

Economic /Energy Front

- Kyrgyz banks’ deposits grow by 1,109,9bln soms last week

Deposits in acting commercial banks of Kyrgyzstan grew by 1,109,9 billion soms last week, Kyrgyz National Bank reported.

- Russia- Kyrgyzstan sales turnover to reach \$1.3bln

Russia-Kyrgyzstan sales turnover could reach \$1.3 billion at the end of the year, Valentin Vlasov Ambassador of Russia to Kyrgyzstan said meeting with the press in Bishkek on Wednesday.

- Parliament ratifies republican budget for 2010

The Parliament of Kyrgyzstan has ratified republican budget for 2010 and 2011-2012 estimates in the second and third readings on Thursday. As to Askarbek Shadiey Chairman of the Budget and Finances Committee, budget revenues made up 52,100 billion soms and expenditures-65,670 billion soms in 2010. “Thus, budget gap comes to 13,400 billion soms that amounts to 5.6 percent of GDP

Social Front

- OSCE Urges Action On Kyrgyz Press 'Safety Crisis'

"Violence against journalists [in Kyrgyzstan] has risen further in the last months," says The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe urged Kyrgyzstan today to prevent attacks on journalists after a leading opposition reporter was killed in neighboring Kazakhstan this month

- Seven Kyrgyz Died At Hajj This Year

Muslim pilgrims gather at Mount Arafat, southeast of the city of Mecca, on November 26.

BISHKEK -- Seven Kyrgyz Muslims died this year while making the hajj pilgrimage to Saudi Arabia, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports

- Kyrgyz City Launches Campaign Against Prostitution

An official in the southern Kyrgyz city of Osh says the city administration has launched a campaign against prostitution, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports.

- Kyrgyzstan draws up pension insurance program for migrant workers

Program of voluntary pension insurance for migrant workers is drawn up in Kyrgyzstan, Aigul Ryskulova Labor, Employment and Migration Minister said at open parliament hearings Monday.

Tajikistan

Political Front

Geo Strategic Front

- Tajikistan Opens Border So Afghan Shepherds Can Go Home

A Tajik border official has said 25 Afghan shepherds and thousands of sheep stranded for nine days by a snowstorm crossed through the Vakhon Mountains to return to Afghanistan, RFE/RL's Tajik Service reports.

- Tajik leader calls again on CIS leaders for common position for Afghanistan

-- Speaking at an informal summit of seven CIS heads of state in Kazakhstan, President Emomali Rahmon on December 19 called once again on CIS leaders to have more active position on the issues related to providing security and settling Afghan problems, according to presidential press service.

- Tajik defense minister departs for Islamabad to establish military-technical cooperation

Tajik Defense Minister, Colonel-General Sherali Khairulloyev, today departed for Islamabad, Pakistan for an official visit, according to the Ministry of Defense (MoD).

Economic /Energy Front

- Tojiktransgaz top managers go to Tashkent this week to discuss gas price for 2010

A delegation of Tojiktransgaz (Tajik state natural-gas distributor), led by its director general, Saidmamad Sharofiddinov is expected to go to Tashkent, Uzbekistan this week to discuss with top managers of the Uzbek gas supplier, Uztransgaz, gas price for 2010, the source at Tojiktransgaz told Asia-Plus on Monday.

- Parliament to consider draft monetary policy for 2010

A regular sitting of the sixth session of the Majlisi Namoyandagon (Tajikistan's lower chamber of parliament) that is taking place in Dushanbe today is expected to consider the country's draft monetary policy for 2010 Muhammadato Sulstonov,

- Parliament endorses bill on use of renewable energy resources

-- Deputies of the Majlisi Namoyandagon (Tajikistan's lower chamber of parliament) have endorsed the bill on use of the renewable energy resources in Tajikistan. A regular sitting of the sixth session of the Majlisi Namoyandagon of the third convocation, presided over by its head, Saydullo Khairulloyev, was held today.

- Dushanbe hosts international water problem conference in June 2010

On December 21, the 64th session of the UN General Assembly approved the resolution entitled “Midterm Comprehensive/Global Review of the Implementation of International Decade of Actions “Water for Life” that demonstrates that Tajikistan’s initiatives on water problems are of global significance, Asia-Plus has learned from the Permanent Mission of Tajikistan to the United Nations.

Social Front

- Minister of culture represents Tajikistan at Mevlana Memorial Celebrations in Turkey

Minister of Culture Mirzoshorukh Asrori represented Tajikistan at the Mevlana Memorial Celebrations, dedicated to famous Persian-Tajik poet and sufi mystic Jalal ad-Din Muhammad Rumi, that took place in Konya, turkey on December 10-17.

- Labor migration issues discussed in Dushanbe

A seminar formally titled “Regulating Labor Migration as An Instrument of Development and Regional Cooperation in Central Asia” took place in Dushanbe last Saturday, December 19. According to the Interior Ministry migration service, the meeting brought together representatives from president’s executive office, ministries of labor, health, finance, foreign affairs, education and the interior ministry migration service as well as representatives from the International Labor Organization (ILO) and independent experts to discuss policy frameworks, strategies and mechanisms for regulating labor migration as an instrument for development and cooperation in and among Central Asia countries.

- European Union supports civil society organizations in Tajikistan

The European Union has started funding 4 projects implemented by local and international non-governmental organizations, selected by a Call for Proposals launched in April 2009, under the "Non State Actors in Development" program, for a total amount of around EUR 750 000, according to the Delegation of the European Commission to Tajikistan.

Turkmenistan

Political Front

Geo Strategic Front

Economic /Energy Front

- Turkmenistan To Restore Gas Supplies To Russia

Ashgabat and Moscow have agreed to renew Turkmen gas supplies to Russia by January 10. The agreement, signed during a visit to Turkmenistan today by Russian President Dmitry Medvedev, follows a nine-month stoppage resulting from the rupture of the main Turkmen export pipeline to Russia.

Social Front

Uzbekistan

Political Front

- Uzbekistan Cracking Down On Dissent

The billboard reads "Constitution - symbol of freedom", in the city of
A U.S. rights watchdog says Uzbekistan has intensified attacks against rights activists ahead of this week's parliamentary election. Freedom House said it was "deeply troubled by an intensified crackdown on human rights defenders in Uzbekistan."

- Uzbekistan Airs Documentary Denouncing Imprisoned Rights Activists

Uzbek state television has broadcast a documentary denouncing imprisoned human rights activists as it increases pressure on activists in the run-up to parliamentary elections on December 27, RFE/RL's Uzbek Service reports. The documentary, "Violence Behind The Mask," was shown on the Uzbekistan state channel on December 21.

Geo Strategic Front

- Russian Foreign Minister Aims To Thaw Relations In Uzbekistan

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov has arrived in Tashkent for a two-day visit aimed at improving cooled relations between Moscow and Tashkent, RFE/RL's Uzbek Service reports

Economic /Energy Front

- Tojiktransgaz top managers go to Tashkent this week to discuss gas price for 2010

A delegation of Tojiktransgaz (Tajik state natural-gas distributor), led by its director general, Saidmamad Sharofiddinov is expected to go to Tashkent, Uzbekistan this week to discuss with top managers of the Uzbek gas supplier, Uztransgaz, gas price for 2010, the source at Tojiktransgaz told Asia-Plus on Monday.

Social Front

- Prominent Uzbek Writer Is Buried In Tashkent

Renowned Uzbek writer Odil Yakubov has been buried in the capital, Tashkent, RFE/RL's Uzbek Service reports. Yakubov, 83, had been hospitalized in poor health two weeks ago.

Detailed Report

Azerbaijan

Political Front

- Azerbaijani Opposition Journalist Gets Amnesty

The president of Azerbaijan has granted amnesty to an opposition journalist who rights groups say was jailed for his critical writings. Musfiq Huseynov was among 99 people granted amnesty by President Ilham Aliyev. Huseynov, a reporter with the opposition "Bizim yol" (Our Path) newspaper, was jailed for six years in 2008 on charges of accepting a bribe. Huseynov's relatives said recently he was suffering from tuberculosis in prison and that they were worried about his deteriorating health. Azerbaijan has faced persistent criticism over its heavy-handed treatment of independent media, most recently in a European Parliament resolution criticizing the jailing of opposition journalists.

http://www.rferl.org/content/Azerbaijani_Opposition_Journalist_Gets_Amnesty/1914448.html

- Azerbaijan Democratic Party: Opposition parties to mull configuration of forces
 "No concrete decision has been made regarding establishment of an opposition alliance in Azerbaijan," Azerbaijan Democratic Party Chairman Sardar Jalaloglu said. "The opposition parties should first study possibility of creating single political platform prior to the 2010 parliamentary elections. Then, based on the information received, they can think about configuration of the opposition forces," he said. "I think the opposition should determine what common position serious political forces can take to run for the 2010 parliamentary elections so that based on this we will create a model and configuration of our forces," Jalaloglu said. "The talks on this issue will begin after the

municipal elections,” the party chief said. Azerbaijan will hold municipal elections on Dec. 23.

URL: <http://www.today.az/news/politics/58348.html>

- Azerbaijan's opposition party attempts to picket outside U.S. embassy in Baku

A group of members of Azerbaijan's opposition Muasir Musavat Party attempted to picket outside the U.S. embassy in Azerbaijan, the party's press office said.

The picketers protested allocation of \$8 million by the U.S. Congress to the separatist Nagorno Karabakh. The police prevented the picket and several members of the party were taken to Nasimi district police office. They were released after they gave statements.

URL: <http://www.today.az/news/politics/58436.html>

- Azerbaijani Human Rights Commissioner's Office to observe municipal elections

The employees of Azerbaijani Human Rights Commissioner's Office will observe the municipal elections to be held on Dec. 23. Some 38 representatives would observe the voting in Baku and various regions, military units, jails, detention facilities and give information to the office through the hotline of CEC. The observers have officially been registered with the CEC and provided with memory book for observers and other necessary documents. Human Rights Commissioner Elmira Suleymanova will inform media representatives about results of the observation through CEC's Elections Information Center.

URL: <http://www.today.az/news/politics/58434.html>

- Municipal elections campaign ends in Azerbaijan

In accordance with the Electoral Code, the municipal elections campaign ended at 08.00 today – 24 hours before the voting. Spokesman for the Central Election Commission (CEC) Azer Sariyev said promotion materials had already been removed from the campaign boards. Sariyev said according to the Electoral Code, the campaign lasted for 28 days. Azerbaijan will hold municipal elections on Dec. 23. As many as 31,861 candidates will contest 15,682 seats in 1,718 municipalities nationwide.

URL: <http://www.today.az/news/politics/58421.html>

- Municipal election in Azerbaijan organized very well, CoE observers

The municipal election in Azerbaijan was organized very well, said members of the observation mission of the CoE Congress of Local and Regional Authorities at a press conference. Vice-President of the Congress Jean-Claude Frecon said the 15-member delegation visited more than 100 polling stations during the voting process. He praised the fact that polling stations were equipped with necessary facilities. He said the delegation members saw a significant progress in the election. Frecon also thanked the Azerbaijani government for the support shown to them before and after the election. Other members of the delegation praised the course of the voting, saying they just faced some irregularities which had no serious impact on the results. The mission's final opinion will be discussed at a meeting of the Bureau of the Congress to be held on January 15.

URL: <http://www.today.az/news/politics/58532.html>

Geo Strategic Front

- Azerbaijani MP: Azerbaijan's protest note against U.S. Congress decision to give positive result

“I think the note of protest the Azerbaijani Foreign Ministry has presented to the U.S. State Department is a positive step,” Azerbaijani member of parliament Fazil Mustafa

said. "The note was a necessary step as U.S. Congress decision to provide \$8 million in financial aid to the break-away Nagorno-Karabakh contradicts principle of Azerbaijan's territorial integrity," the MP said. "I think the Azerbaijani society should also do everything possible to protest the U.S. Congress decision," he said. "I believe the note will not affect Azerbaijan-U.S. relations. But Azerbaijan did the right thing. We need to protect our rights," Musatafa added. "As to U.S. reaction to Azerbaijan's note of protest, I think the U.S. realizes that it is a wrong step. The note of protest will give a positive result," he noted.

URL: <http://www.today.az/news/politics/58351.html>

- Azerbaijan, Iran discuss military cooperation

Azerbaijani Defense Minister, Colonel-General Safar Abiyev met with the ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran to Azerbaijan Mohammad Bagir Bahrami on Dec. 25. The defense cooperation between the two countries were discussed at the meeting, Defense Ministry Spokesperson Eldar Sabiroglu said. The ambassador introduced new defense attaché of the Iranian embassy to the defense minister.

URL: <http://www.today.az/news/politics/58585.html>

Economic /Energy Front

- Baku hosts symposium "Energy Exporters: Politics, Society, Economics"

A two-day symposium on "Energy Exporters: Politics, Society, Economics" is underway in the Azerbaijan Diplomatic Academy (ADA) in Baku. The Azerbaijani Diplomatic Academy (ADA) plans to admit students to the BA courses in the coming years, ADA Rector and Deputy Foreign Minister Hafiz Pashayev told reporters. The State Students Admission Commission (SSAC) will conduct the first phase of exams for the master's degree in higher educational institutions and the Azerbaijan Diplomatic Academy on the MBA and TEMPUS international programs on Dec. 19, the SSAC reported. So far, 424 applications were submitted to compete for 273 sits. As many as 360 applicants have appealed for MBA studies, 64 for TEMPUS and 123 - for MA at the ADA. The applications were submitted in an online mode form from Nov. 26 to Dec.4 and then forwarded to the commission. Pashayev said a new building for the ADA is being constructed. It will be put into exploitation in two years. No action by Armenia can make Turkey to speed up ratification of the protocols, former Adviser to U.S. President Frederick Starr said. "To sign a piece of paper is an easy part of the process," Professor at the Johns Hopkins University Starr said. "It is much more difficult to reach a national consensus." Given the difficult situation in the domestic politics in Turkey and Armenia, Starr does not believe in easy solution of the problem. "Only philosopher and psychiatrist may understand internal policy of Turkey and Armenia related to protocols," Starr said. "Signing of the protocols is a complicated process in both countries," he added.

The symposium is held to increase knowledge about Azerbaijan in the world scientific communities, to establish links between the Azerbaijani and foreign scholars, to enhance relations to implement educational reforms in Azerbaijan. Doctors of philosophic sciences and people working for doctor's degree of Azerbaijan and other countries are attending the symposium. During the event, twenty young Azerbaijani scholars, including those studying in doctorate of prestigious European and U.S universities, will discuss the distinguishing features of energy exporting countries. In his opening speech, U.S. Dr. Frederick Starr stressed the role of the ADA. "I admire the work of the Diplomatic Academy not only in Azerbaijan but throughout the region and the world," the Johns

Hopkins University Professor Starr said. He said that ADA plays a role of a mediator and a peculiar brain in the region in exchange of scientific ideas and experiences, which is very important.

URL: <http://www.today.az/news/politics/58353.html>

- Iranian ambassador: Iran, Azerbaijan need new gas pipeline

Iran transfers most of part of Azerbaijani natural gas it receives to Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic, and uses the rest for its domestic needs, said Iranian Ambassador to Azerbaijan Mohammad Baghir Bahrami. Iran and Azerbaijan are much closer to each other than all other nations and peoples."The evidence is common religious, historical, cultural and linguistic bonds between Iran and Azerbaijan, and existence of more than 30 million Azerbaijanis in Iran. We buy gas from Azerbaijan, taking into account that we are border countries, and have neighborly relations. This is beneficial for both Iran and Azerbaijan", he added. The diplomat noted that Iran offers to bring the volume of Azerbaijani gas imports to 5 billion cubic meters a year."To achieve this, there is a need to build a new gas pipeline between Iran and Azerbaijan. Iran will transfer part of gas to Nakhchivan, and use the rest for its needs without any transfer to a third country", he added. He also said that the last official visit by the Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov to Iran was very important in terms of developing ties between the two countries in all fields.

URL: <http://www.today.az/news/business/58346.html>

- Azerbaijan signs new oil and gas contract

Today, the State Oil Company of Azerbaijan Republic (SOCAR) signed PSA contract with the Bahar Energy Limited Company for the exploration, rehabilitation, development and production of a unit, which includes the Bahar and Gum Daniz offshore fields located in the Azerbaijan sector of the Caspian Sea. SOCAR Head Rovnag Abdullayev and CEO Bahar Energy Limited Richard McDougall signed the agreement in Baku. Bahar Energy Limited was registered in the free trade zone Jebel Ali in the UAE. SOCAR signed memorandum of understanding with the company on April 16, 2009. The Gum Daniz field has operated since 1955 locates at 21 kilometers south-east of Baku. So far, the field has produced about 28.9 million tons of oil and 27 billion cubic meters of gas. The Bahar field operated since 1969 is located at 40 kilometers southeast of Baku. So far, the field has produced more than 16.8 million tons of oil and nearly 128.7 billion cubic meters of gas. During the next five years, experts predict decline in gas production at the Bahar field at 15 percent and condensate -10 percent. Therefore SOCAR believes it would be possible to stabilize oil production and increase reserves of residual hydrocarbons through attracting foreign capital to implementation of short-term rehabilitation programs at these fields.

URL: <http://www.today.az/news/business/58428.html>

- Azerbaijan's 2010 public budget approved

Azerbaijan's 2010 state budget was approved with a deficit limit of 1.249 billion manat. Four sources are provided to finance the budget deficit, via revenues from state property privatization and domestic and foreign loans. Under the "Law on the 2010 Public Budget," forecasts on public budget revenues amount to 10.015 billion manat (31.5 percent of GDP), including a centralized income of 9.552 billion manat, local revenues of 462.98 million manat and expenses of 11.264 billion manat, including centralized expenditures of 10.069 billion manat and local expenditures of 1.194 billion manat. The

minimum income limit to budget revenues from state agencies and companies approved by the Tax Ministry amounts to 3.98 billion manat. Profit tax from contractors on oil and gas production contracts amounts to 330 million manat, taxes consolidated by the Azerbaijan state oil company - 1.2 billion manat, tax and non-tax revenues from the non-oil sectors - 2.45 billion manat, and the State Customs Committee - 1.1 billion manat. The maximum limit of consolidated budget expenditures is 12.636 billion manat.

The deficit of the consolidated budget, excluding SOFAZ revenues, was approved at 6.714 billion manat. The forecasts were made taking into account oil prices at \$45 per barrel.

URL: <http://www.today.az/news/business/58422.html>

- Baku hosts int'l conference on global financial crisis

An international conference on Global Financial Crisis: Azerbaijan's Model of Economic Security and World Practice started in Azerbaijan State Economic University (ASEU) on Dec. 21. The two-day event is co-organized by ASEU, Turkey's Sakarya University and Turkish World Research Foundation. Opening the event, rector of ASEU, MP Shamsaddin Hajiyev said a lot of accomplishments had been achieved in Azerbaijan thanks to successful economic policy initiated by national leader Heydar Aliyev and being continued by President Ilham Aliyev. He noted preventive measures had been taken in the country to avoid negative impacts of the global financial crisis. "In spite of the crisis, Azerbaijan maintains its leadership position across the world for rate of economic growth," he added. MP Rabiyyat Aslanova stressed the importance of "such events", saying scientists from various countries have to share their opinions on how to avoid negative impacts of the crisis. Other speakers in the event, spoke of Azerbaijan's economic successes during the global financial crisis.

URL: <http://www.today.az/news/business/58407.html>

Social Front

- Azerbaijani film wins special prize of Human and War Film Festival

Human and War Film Festival has ended in Yekaterinburg, Russia. Azerbaijani documentary "Nickname is Mikhailo" won special prize of the festival. The film producer "Salname" studio said that the film had been awarded for the best dramatic solution of its hero. Russian director Vadim Salikov and his film "The Expectation" won Grand Prix of the festival, which was dedicated to 70th anniversary of the World War II. This was third prize won by "Nickname is Mikhailo" this year.

URL: <http://www.today.az/news/society/58386.html>

- Azerbaijani ombudsman asks president to pardon 1,000 prisoners

Azerbaijan's Ombudsman Elmira Suleymanova has appealed to Azerbaijani President to pardon about 1,000 prisoners. Nearly 300 prisoners, including underage persons, women, ill-health persons, old prisoners had been earlier pardoned through ombudsman's appeals. "The parliament adopted pardon act upon initiative of President of Heydar Aliyev Foundation, parliamentarian Mehriban Aliyeva in March which applied to 1,000 prisoners," Ombudsman's Office said. Since March, 2009, the Human Rights Commissioner has appealed to pardon over 80 prisoners more, including journalist Miushfig Huseynov under the Pardon Act adopted in March.

URL: <http://www.today.az/news/society/58461.html>

Kazakastan

Political Front

- Former Kazakh Uranium Company Chief Hospitalized During Trial

ASTANA -- Mukhtar Dzhakishev, the former head of Kazakh uranium producer KazAtomProm, was taken from an Astana courtroom and hospitalized today, RFE/RL's Kazakh Service reports. Nurlan Beisekeev, Dzhakishev's lawyer and the only person allowed to attend the proceedings, told RFE/RL that Dzhakishev's blood pressure abruptly became very high and an ambulance was called to the courtroom. The judge decided to continue the trial without him. The hearings began on December 22 and are being held behind closed doors, despite the Prosecutor-General Office's previous pledges to hold a transparent attended by members of the media. Dzhakishev and a number of his associates were arrested in May and have been held in a National Security Committee jail in Astana since then. Dzhakishev's relatives and colleagues say he has suffered from health problems while in detention. Opposition groups in Kazakhstan consider the charges against him and his co-workers to be politically motivated.

http://www.rferl.org/content/Former_Kazakh_Uranium_Company_Chief_Hospitalized_During_Trial/1911860.html

Geo Strategic Front

Economic /Energy Front

Social Front

- Kazakh Lawmakers Want To Reverse Hijab School Ban

Kazakh students meet with an Islamic spiritual representatives in Aktobe
A group of Kazakh parliament members is urging Education Minister Zhanseit Tuymebaev to reverse a ban on Islamic head scarves among high-school and university students, RFE/RL's Kazakh Service reports. Lawmaker Rozakul Khalmuradov, told a session of parliament that the Education and Science Ministry had ordered all schools and universities to ban hijabs and other religious clothing on October 26, before Tuymebaev headed the ministry. Rozakulov called the ban unconstitutional because it restricts religious freedom.

An increasing number of students and young teachers who wear hijabs at schools in Kazakhstan complain that they are being urged to shed the head scarves. Human rights activists have said that such pressure violates students' rights.

http://www.rferl.org/content/Kazakh_Lawmakers_Want_To_Reverse_Hijab_School_Ban/1912908.html

Kyrgyzstan

Political Front

- Violent Death Of Kyrgyz Journalist Follows A Disturbing Pattern

Gennady Pavlyuk was thrown from the sixth floor of this building in Almaty.
A prominent voice of political dissent in Kyrgyzstan was silenced today when opposition journalist Gennady Pavlyuk died from injuries sustained when he fell from a high-rise building in Kazakhstan. Investigators are treating his death as a murder. Pavlyuk's body was discovered outside an apartment block in Almaty on December 16 with multiple injuries, including a cracked skull and broken ribs. His feet and hands were bound behind his back with duct tape. Pavlyuk worked for several newspapers in Kyrgyzstan, including as editor in chief of the Bishkek edition of the Russian weekly "Argumenty i fakty" and

for the Russian "Komsomolskaya Pravda v Kirgizii." Pavlyuk, an ethnic Russian, often wrote under his Kyrgyz penname, Ibragim Rustamek. The 51-year-old never regained consciousness following the attack, remaining in a coma in an Almaty hospital until his death. Supporters have described Pavlyuk's murder as an attack on press freedom and follows a spate of violent incidents against Kyrgyz journalists and civil society representatives this year. His work as an opposition supporter and outspoken critic of the Kyrgyz government has led to speculation that his death was related to his work. Gennady Pavlyuk He was reportedly planning to launch an online publication called atameken.kg, the same name as the Kyrgyz opposition party Ata-Meken. Ata-Meken leader Omurbek Tekebaev has reportedly said he held a meeting with Pavlyuk earlier this month and that the "plan to set up the publication was in place." However, Tekebaev insists that atameken.kg was going to be an independent, "patriotic" website, not an official party newspaper as some media have reported. "I think this is a politically motivated crime," he said on December 21. "It's yet another attack in order to restrict freedom of speech in Kyrgyzstan." "During the past several months," Tekebaev told RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service, Pavlyuk "published several articles and interviews in which he criticized the current Kyrgyz authorities, explaining the real meaning of their newly initiated reforms."

http://www.rferl.org/content/Violent_Death_Of_Kyrgyz_Journalist_Follows_A_Disturbing_Pattern/1910726.html

URL: <http://eng.24.kg/politic/2009/12/26/10033.html>

- Parliamentary commission to elect new speaker

Special parliamentary commission was established for election of a new speaker. The decision was made at a parliament session on Thursday. The commission includes seven persons: five members of the parliamentary fraction Ak Zhol, one Social Democrats fraction's deputy and one member of the Communist fraction. Preparations for a secret voting go on at the time.

URL: <http://eng.24.kg/politic/2009/12/24/10016.html>

Geo Strategic Front

- Kyrgyz leader: Eurasian security one of our priority issues

"One of our priority issues is ensuring security, we can not speak of security in Europe and Asia separately. Everything should be considered in context of the Eurasian continent," Kurmanbek Bakiev, President of Kyrgyzstan said at informal summit of heads of state in Almaty (Kazakhstan). "Sometimes informal meetings are way more effective than official events, as they allow free discussion on topical issues," presidential press service quoted the leader. In course of the meeting, the presidents of Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan signed a joint customs bill to come into force on January 1, 2010. Leaders of Kyrgyzstan, Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Russia, Tajikistan and Turkmenia took part in the summit.

URL: <http://eng.24.kg/cis/2009/12/21/9983.html>

- China to seal border during New Year celebrations

China will seal its border with Kyrgyzstan during New Year's celebrations, State Border Service of Kyrgyzstan reported. The following entry points on Kyrgyz-Chinese part of the state border will be temporary closed: Torugart-Avtodorozhny- from December 30, 2009 till January 3, 2010; Irkeshtam-Avtodorozhny- from December 28, 2009 till January

3, 2010. The Kyrgyz Border Service asks citizens to plan their trips along the routes beforehand.

URL: <http://eng.24.kg/politic/2009/12/23/10010.html>

- Russia, Kyrgyzstan to sign military cooperation agreement in 2010

Russia and Kyrgyzstan will probably sign a military cooperation agreement in early 2010, Valentin Vlasov Ambassador of Russia to Kyrgyzstan said meeting with the press Wednesday. As to Vlasov, the document has been completely drawn out by the Kyrgyz side. All the materials are under consideration of the Russian Defense Ministry at the time. The ambassador told the presidents of both countries were preparing reports on the agreement to be supposedly hand over to Russian and Kyrgyz leadership in January.

The sides began to work out the military cooperation agreement following the meeting of the presidents in summer 2009 at Issyk-Kul lake. Information about possible location of Russian troops in South Kyrgyzstan in the line with CSTO appeared at that time. The intention induced negative reaction of official Tashkent. Therewith, one of these days Nikolai Bordyuzha CSTO Secretary General stated, in his view, deployment of Russian military base in south region of the republic was not necessary.

URL: <http://eng.24.kg/community/2009/12/23/10008.html>

- Bakiev: Kyrgyzstan should not restrict foreign policy to old ties

Kyrgyzstan should not restrict its foreign policy to old ties, Kurmanbek Bakiev the President of Kyrgyzstan said Thursday on celebration of 65th anniversary of the Kyrgyz Foreign Ministry. In view of the president, foreign policy of Kyrgyzstan should remain multi-vector. He outlined necessity of “efficient cooperation with different continents, countries, international organizations on all levels.” As to Bakiev, diplomats should clearly understand strategic goals and priorities of the country, predict changes in the world, operatively and coordinately respond to challenges and threats, analyze plans and projects of various geopolitical players, improve foreign policy on the basis of national interests. “We should proceed from real view of the international situation. Every decision in foreign policy sphere has to follow thorough analysis of its consequences for Kyrgyzstan,” the president said. It is time to reconsider situation over Kyrgyzstan and country’s capabilities for counteraction to modern challenges and threats. “I do not mean radical changes in foreign policy course. We will strictly observe agreements and liabilities,” he added.

URL: <http://eng.24.kg/politic/2009/12/24/10017.html>

Economic /Energy Front

- Kyrgyz banks’ deposits grow by 1,109,9bln soms last week

Deposits in acting commercial banks of Kyrgyzstan grew by 1,109,9 billion soms last week, Kyrgyz National Bank reported. As of December 18, 2009 amount of deposits has reportedly reached 37,625,1 billion soms, while the week ago the rate made up 36,515,2 billion soms. The main part of the amount is traditionally foreign currency deposits, which averaged to 23,300,5 billion soms as of December 18, 2009 having increased by 530.4 million soms. National currency deposits amounted to 14,324,6 billion soms, while a week ago the rate came to 13,745,1 billion soms (579.5 million soms increase).

URL: <http://eng.24.kg/business/2009/12/23/10012.html>

- Russia- Kyrgyzstan sales turnover to reach \$1.3bln

Russia-Kyrgyzstan sales turnover could reach \$1.3 billion at the end of the year, Valentin Vlasov Ambassador of Russia to Kyrgyzstan said meeting with the press in Bishkek on

Wednesday. In 2008 sales turnover between the countries made up \$1.8 billion, while the rate could decline by 30 percent in 2009, the embassy's estimates said. Therewith, jointly with Russia Kyrgyzstan has opened combine harvester assembly plant in 2009. Nowadays the countries consider establishment of tractor assembly line in the republic.

URL: <http://eng.24.kg/cis/2009/12/23/10007.html>

- Parliament ratifies republican budget for 2010

The Parliament of Kyrgyzstan has ratified republican budget for 2010 and 2011-2012 estimates in the second and third readings on Thursday. As to Askarbek Shadiey Chairman of the Budget and Finances Committee, budget revenues made up 52,100 billion soms and expenditures-65,670 billion soms in 2010. "Thus, budget gap comes to 13,400 billion soms that amounts to 5.6 percent of GDP. Internal and external reserves will be allocated for filling up the gap," Shadiey said. Besides, over 20 billion will be reportedly transferred to the development budget.

According to the parliament member, deputies have managed to raise 500 million soms for implementation of some suggestions. "In particular, it was decided to allocate 12 million soms to the National Eye Microsurgery Hospital, 12 million- to the Kyrgyz Haematology Center, 15 million- State Physical Culture and Sports Agency, 5 million – for replenishment of library's fund, 16 million- for payment of increment in judges' pensions, 100 million-capital investments, sum of promotional grants will be increased by 50 millions, financing of the Finance Ministry for support of population amid utility hikes will be raised by 190 million soms, and at least 100 million soms is allocated for additional expenses," he added.

Daniyar Usenov the Prime Minister of Kyrgyzstan admitted that 2008 budget had some shortcomings. "But we correct them. As for budget of 2009, it is implemented word for word. Collection of all residual funds will be carried out on December 28-30," the prime minister said.

URL: <http://eng.24.kg/politic/2009/12/24/10020.html>

Social Front

- OSCE Urges Action On Kyrgyz Press 'Safety Crisis'

"Violence against journalists [in Kyrgyzstan] has risen further in the last months," says The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe urged Kyrgyzstan today to prevent attacks on journalists after a leading opposition reporter was killed in neighboring Kazakhstan this month. Gennady Pavlyuk, a staunch critic of Kyrgyzstan's government, died in hospital on December 22 after he was thrown out of a tall building with his hands tied behind his back. Kyrgyzstan's opposition described it as an attack on press freedom by the authorities. President Kurmanbek Bakiev's office said it had nothing to do with the case. "Violence against journalists has risen further in the last months," the OSCE quoted its media freedom representative, Miklos Haraszti, as saying in a statement. "The Kyrgyz government must publicly acknowledge the safety crisis of Kyrgyzstan's press and stop treating it as 'crime as usual.'" In a letter to Kyrgyz Foreign Minister Kadyrbek Sarbaev, Haraszti cited several other cases when journalists were attacked or threatened in the strategic ex-Soviet republic where the United States operates a military air base. The OSCE said two other Kyrgyz journalists had been murdered and seven others attacked during the past year. None of these incidents has been solved, it said. "As international experience demonstrates, impunity leads to further violence," Haraszti said in the

statement. Pavlyuk was attacked while on a visit to Almaty, the financial capital of Kazakhstan about 250 kilometers north of the Kyrgyz capital, Bishkek where he was based. Kazakh police said they treated the case as murder. In Bishkek, family and friends held a wake for Pavlyuk as dozens of journalists and politicians filed past his coffin to bid him farewell. The funeral was scheduled for December 24. In a separate statement, U.S.-based press freedom group Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) said it was concerned. "We call on Kazakh authorities to thoroughly and aggressively investigate the apparent murder of Gennady Pavlyuk, including the possibility that he had been killed in retaliation for his critical reporting on the Kyrgyz government," it quoted its regional coordinator Nina Ognianova as saying. Kyrgyzstan's opposition has accused Bakiev of tightening his grip on power since a disputed presidential election in July. Bakiev's administration says it is committed to promoting democracy and press freedom. Bakiev, who has denied opposition allegations of vote rigging in the July poll, came to power in 2005 after violent protests toppled his long-serving predecessor, Askar Akaev. Initially hailed in the West as a liberal leader in an otherwise authoritarian region, he has gradually consolidated power and fostered closer ties with Russia, which also operates a military air base in Kyrgyzstan.

http://www.rferl.org/content/OSCE_Urges_Action_On_Kyrgyz_Press_Safety_Crisis/1911931.html

- Seven Kyrgyz Died At Hajj This Year

Muslim pilgrims gather at Mount Arafat, southeast of the city of Mecca, on November 26.

BISHKEK -- Seven Kyrgyz Muslims died this year while making the hajj pilgrimage to Saudi Arabia, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports. Murataaly-Hajji Jumanov, the chief mufti of the Kyrgyz Spiritual Directorate, said in Bishkek today that a total of 4,782 Kyrgyz visited the holy city of Mecca, Saudi Arabia, for the hajj that was held this year from November 25-29. He said flights to Mecca were made by several air companies based in Kyrgyzstan.

The final group of Kyrgyz pilgrims returned from Mecca on December 20.

http://www.rferl.org/content/Seven_Kyrgyz_Died_At_Hajj_This_Year/1910897.html

- Kyrgyz City Launches Campaign Against Prostitution

OSH, Kyrgyzstan -- An official in the southern Kyrgyz city of Osh says the city administration has launched a campaign against prostitution, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports. Tursunay Aitmatova, the head of the Osh's administration security and defense office, told RFE/RL that the department will carry out surprise raids and check suspected brothels and other sites. Aitmatova added that in addition to law-enforcement officials, journalists and civil representatives will be involved in the campaign. Osh police said four cases have been initiated recently on charges of inducement to sexual activity, and some 250 sex workers have been ordered to be tested for sexually transmitted diseases.

The Osh region has seen a rapid increase in HIV/AIDS, drug addiction, and prostitution in recent years. Some 80 percent of officially registered HIV-positive people in the region are drug users.

http://www.rferl.org/content/Kyrgyz_City_Launches_Campaign_Against_Prostitution/1910267.html

- Kyrgyzstan draws up pension insurance program for migrant workers

Program of voluntary pension insurance for migrant workers is drawn up in Kyrgyzstan, Aigul Ryskulova Labor, Employment and Migration Minister said at open parliament hearings Monday. The measure is taken to protect native migrant workers. "At least one or two percent of the transferred to the homeland money will supposedly keep on personal account of a worker in the social fund. When migrant workers are not able to work, they can use the money if required," Ryskulova added.

URL: <http://eng.24.kg/politic/2009/12/21/9993.html>

Tajikistan Political Front

Geo Strategic Front

- Tajikistan Opens Border So Afghan Shepherds Can Go Home

DUSHANBE -- A Tajik border official has said 25 Afghan shepherds and thousands of sheep stranded for nine days by a snowstorm crossed through the Vakhon Mountains to return to Afghanistan, RFE/RL's Tajik Service reports.

Border official Firdavs Davlatov told RFE/RL that the shepherds and some 3,500 sheep crossed into Afghanistan's Khargushi region on December 16 after being trapped in the Langhar region. Davlatov said the decision to open the border for the shepherds and their flocks was made following a request by the Afghan Consulate in Khorugh, the administrative center of Badakhshan Province.

He said the shepherds had to travel some 80 kilometers on Tajik territory. Zabehullah Naseeri, the second secretary of the Afghan Consulate in Badakhshan, told RFE/RL that crossing through Tajikistan was the only safe path for the shepherds and expressed his gratitude to Tajik officials for their understanding. Davlatov said the shepherds were provided with medical and veterinary assistance when they entered Tajikistan. Tajikistan shares a 1,400 kilometer border with Afghanistan.

<http://www.asiaplus.tj/en/news/36/60593.html>

- Tajik leader calls again on CIS leaders for common position for Afghanistan

DUSHANBE, December 21, 2009, Asia-Plus -- Speaking at an informal summit of seven CIS heads of state in Kazakhstan, President Emomali Rahmon on December 19 called once again on CIS leaders to have more active position on the issues related to providing security and settling Afghan problems, according to presidential press service.

The informal summit that brought together the presidents of Tajikistan, Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, and Turkmenistan took place in a place near Almaty, Kazakhstan on December 19-20 to discuss security and economic integration. The meeting participants, in particular, discussed issues related to further development of the CIS, the Eurasian Economic Community (EAEC) and the Collective Security Treat Organization (CSTO) as well as the current situation in the Central Asian region. Speaking at the meeting, President Rahmon noted that the CIS should work out a common position for the Afghan problems on international arena. Tajik leader also called on his CIS counterparts to have more active positions on the security provision and Afghan problems settlement issues, the press service said. The CIS leaders also welcomed Kazakhstan's chairmanship in the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Besides, the presidents of Belarus, Kazakhstan and Russia agreed on Saturday to create a single economic space by January 1, 2012, RIA Novosti reported on december 19. In their joint statement, the three leaders noted that they were committed to

the further deepening of the integration process within EAEC area, as they thereby confirmed as their subsequent goal the creation, no later than January 1, 2012, of a unified economic space of Belarus, Kazakhstan and Russia. We will recall that Russian President Dmitry Medvedev, Belarus President Alexander Lukashenko and Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev signed a package of deals on November 27 in Minsk to create a customs union with common tariffs, paving the way for a single economic space. In June 2009, the heads of governments of Russia, Kazakhstan and Belarus notified the World Trade Organization (WTO) of their intention to join the world trade club as a customs union. The three ex-Soviet republics suspended their bilateral negotiations on the WTO entry to hold consultations on a common position on the customs union. In October 2009, Russia, Kazakhstan and Belarus announced they would resume talks on WTO accession separately, but on synchronized positions.

<http://www.asiaplus.tj/en/news/48/60609.html>

- Tajik defense minister departs for Islamabad to establish military-technical cooperation

DUSHANBE, December 22, 2009, Asia-Plus -- Tajik Defense Minister, Colonel-General Sherali Khairulloyev, today departed for Islamabad, Pakistan for an official visit, according to the Ministry of Defense (MoD). The source at a MoD said that it was the first visit the Tajik defense minister to Pakistan and during his stay in Islamabad, Khairulloyev would hold talks with political and defense officials of Pakistan. "Military and military-technical cooperation as well as training of personnel for Tajik national army are among major topics of Khairulloyev's discussions with his Pakistani counterpart, Chaudhry Ahmad Mukhtar, and other Pakistan defense officials," the source said. According to him, Khairulloyev's visit to Islamabad is expected to result in signing of a memorandum of cooperation between the defense ministries of the two countries. In the meantime, Pakistani news agency Online International News Network (OINN) reported today that a seven member Tajik Defense delegation, led by the Defense Ministry of Tajikistan, Colonel-General Sherali Khairulloyev, is arriving today (Tuesday) on three days visit to Pakistan. According to details during his visit the delegation will call on Federal Minister for Defense, Ch. Ahmad Mukhtar, and other senior defense officials of Pakistan. The visit of Tajikistan Defense delegation to Pakistan will further enhance bilateral cooperation between the countries particularly in field of defense

<http://www.asiaplus.tj/en/news/36/60691.html>

Economic /Energy Front

- Tojiktransgaz top managers go to Tashkent this week to discuss gas price for 2010

DUSHANBE, December 21, 2009, Asia-Plus -- A delegation of Tojiktransgaz (Tajik state natural-gas distributor), led by its director general, Saidmamad Sharofiddinov is expected to go to Tashkent, Uzbekistan this week to discuss with top managers of the Uzbek gas supplier, Uztransgaz, gas price for 2010, the source at Tojiktransgaz told Asia-Plus on Monday. According to him, the Uzbek side has not yet specified the gas price for the next year. "In 2010, Tajikistan intends to purchase some 400-500 million cubic meters of natural gas from Uzbekistan," the source said. At present, Uzbekistan is supplying some 31,000 cubic meters of natural gas per hour to Tajikistan. In the meantime, Radio Liberty's Tajik Service reported on December 14 that the Tojiktransgaz head Saidmamad Sharofiddinov told RFE/RL that Uzbekistan is insisting to keep the

2009 gas price -- some \$240 per 1,000 cubic meters of gas. Sharofiddinov said world gas prices have fallen and therefore Tashkent should decrease its price as well. He added that Tajikistan expects Uzbekistan to decrease its price for gas by 30 percent. Uzbekistan supplies some 95 percent of Tajikistan's gas needs and disagreements between the two countries in recent years have caused Uzbek officials to turn off the gas flow to Tajikistan that has led to severe energy shortages, particularly during the winter, RFE/RL's Tajik service reported.

<http://www.asiaplus.tj/en/news/31/60599.html>

- Parliament to consider draft monetary policy for 2010

DUSHANBE, December 23, 2009, Asia-Plus --A regular sitting of the sixth session of the Majlisi Namoyandagon (Tajikistan's lower chamber of parliament) that is taking place in Dushanbe today is expected to consider the country's draft monetary policy for 2010. Muhammadato Sultonov, a spokesman for the Majlisi Namoyandagon, said that the parliament would also consider amendments to the laws on veterans, state duty, migration as well as the administrative code.

<http://www.asiaplus.tj/en/news/16/60694.html>

- Parliament endorses bill on use of renewable energy resources

DUSHANBE, December 23, 2009, Asia-Plus -- Deputies of the Majlisi Namoyandagon (Tajikistan's lower chamber of parliament) have endorsed the bill on use of the renewable energy resources in Tajikistan. A regular sitting of the sixth session of the Majlisi Namoyandagon of the third convocation, presided over by its head, Saydullo Khairulloev, was held today. Presenting the bill, MP Yusufjon Akhmedov said that it had been worked out by MPs Saydullo Khairulloev, Shodi Shabdolov and Ismoil Talbakov. "This law will define legal and organizing aspects of use of renewable energy resources in Tajikistan," said Akhmedov, "The law will also promote development of so-called small power engineering in our country. According to the preliminary estimates, reserves of the small power engineering in Tajikistan amount to some 3 million megawatt." Besides, adoption of this law promotes improvement of the environment and climate protection measures in the region, he added. Speaking at the session, MP Shodi Shabdolov, who is one of authors of the bill, noted that the law should promote acceleration of construction of small hydropower plants and use of wind power and solar energy in the country. "In our opinion, the law will also improve conditions for attraction of foreign investments for development of Tajikistan's energy sector," stressed Shabdolov, "We offer to set up a special republican fund for implementation of this law." Renewable energy is energy generated from natural resources such as sunlight, wind, rain, tides, and geothermal heat, which are renewable (naturally replenished). According to Wikipedia, in 2006, about 18% of global final energy consumption came from renewables, with 13% coming from traditional biomass, such as wood-burning and 3% from hydroelectricity. New renewables (small hydro, modern biomass, wind, solar, geothermal, and biofuels) accounted for 2.4% and are growing very rapidly. The share of renewables in electricity generation is around 18%, with 15% of global electricity coming from hydroelectricity and 3.4% from new renewables. Wind power is growing at the rate of 30% annually, with a worldwide installed capacity of 121,000 megawatts (MW) in 2008, and is widely used in European countries and the United States

<http://www.asiaplus.tj/en/news/16/60728.html>

- Dushanbe hosts international water problem conference in June 2010

DUSHANBE, December 23, 2009, Asia-Plus -- On December 21, the 64th session of the UN General Assembly approved the resolution entitled “Midterm Comprehensive/Global Review of the Implementation of International Decade of Actions “Water for Life” that demonstrates that Tajikistan’s initiatives on water problems are of global significance, Asia-Plus has learned from the Permanent Mission of Tajikistan to the United Nations. The resolution, in particular, notes that water resources are of significant importance for sustainable development, including environmental protection and poverty and starvation reduction and are necessary to improve health and wellbeing of people, the source said. According to him, the plan of events provides for holding High Level International UN Conference on the midterm comprehensive/global review of the implementation of International Decade of Actions “Water for Life” 2005-2015 in Dushanbe in June 2010 and conducting High-Level Dialogue of UNGA in New York on March 22, 2010 – World Water Day. Representatives for governmental institutions and non-governmental organizations, civil society and private sector will take part in the Dialogue to discuss the implementation of International Decade of Actions “Water for Life” 2005-2015, the source said. We will recall that on December 23, 2003, the General Assembly proclaimed the period from 2005 to 2015 as the International Decade for Action, “Water for Life”, commencing on World Water Day, March 22, 2005 (resolution 58/217). It welcomed the decision of the Commission on Sustainable Development to consider water, sanitation and human settlements as the thematic cluster in the first cycle, 2004-2005, and invites the Commission to work within existing resources to identify possible activities and programs in connection with the Decade within the framework of its consideration of that cluster at its twelfth and thirteenth sessions. The Assembly invited the Secretary-General to take the appropriate steps to organize the activities of the Decade, taking into account the results of the International Year of Freshwater and the work of the Commission on Sustainable Development at its twelfth and thirteenth sessions. It also called upon the relevant United Nations bodies, specialized agencies, regional commissions and other organizations of the United Nations system to deliver a coordinated response, utilizing existing resources and voluntary funds, to make “Water for Life” a decade for action. By its resolution 59/228 of December 22, 2004, the Assembly called on the United Nations system to step up efforts to make the International Decade a period for delivering on promises through the use of existing resources and voluntary funds.

<http://www.asiaplus.tj/en/news/198/60718.html>

Social Front

- Minister of culture represents Tajikistan at Mevlana Memorial Celebrations in Turkey

DUSHANBE, December 21, 2009, Asia-Plus -- Minister of Culture Mirzoshorukh Asrori represented Tajikistan at the Mevlana Memorial Celebrations, dedicated to famous Persian-Tajik poet and sufi mystic Jalal ad-Din Muhammad Rumi, that took place in Konya, turkey on December 10-17. According to the Ministry of Culture (MoC), a million or so people gather in Konya for more than 700-year-old tradition taking place at the Museum of Mawlana Rumi in Konya, which gives the festival its name. The festival takes place over a fortnight starting at the beginning of December with the highlight being the final night – December 17. traditional sufi dance is performed during the Mevlana Memrial Celebrations in Konya. Sufi whirling (or Sufi spinning), is a physically active meditation, which originated among Sufis, and which is still practiced by the Sufi

Dervishes of the Mawlawiya Order. It is a customary dance performed within the Sama, or worship ceremony, through which dervishes aim to reach the source of all perfection. This is sought through abandoning one's nafs, egos or personal desires, by listening to the music, focusing on God, and spinning one's body in repetitive circles, which has been seen as a symbolic imitation of planets in the Solar System orbiting the sun. In this customary dance the dance leader represents the sun and other dancers are the stars in orbit. There are four dances representing the four seasons and dancers spin for up to 15 minutes continuously. The participants wear tall conical hats and white dresses that spin out like upside-down umbrellas as they perform their dizzying dances accompanied by an orchestra playing pipes, drums and fiddles. Dancers fix their gaze on the floor and hold their arms high to receive heavenly blessings as they spin rotate anti-clockwise and amazingly maintain their position to each other. Jalal ad-Din Muhammad Balkhī also known as Jalāl ad-Din Muhammad Rumi, and popularly known as Mawlana but known to the English-speaking world simply as Rumi (September 30, 1207 – December 17, 1273), was a 13th-century Persian poet, jurist, theologian, and sufi mystic. Rumi is a descriptive name meaning "the Roman" since he lived most of his life in an area called Rum because it was once ruled by the Byzantine Empire.

Rumi was born in the Iranian north eastern province of Khorasan in the city of Balkh (now in Afghanistan), the hometown of his father's family. Some scholars, however, argue that he may have been born in Vakhsh, a small town located at the river Vakhsh in what is now Tajikistan. Vakhsh belonged to the larger province of Balkh, and in the year Rumi was born, his father was an appointed scholar there. Both these cities were at the time included in the Greater Persian cultural sphere of Khorasan, the easternmost province of historical Persia. Rumi lived most of his life under the Sultanate of Rum, where he produced his works and died in 1273 CE. He was buried in Konya and his shrine became a place of pilgrimage. Following his death, his followers and his son Sultan Walad founded the Mawlawiya Sufi Order, also known as the Order of the Whirling Dervishes, famous for its Sufi dance known as sama ceremony. Rumi's works are written in the new Persian language. Although Rumi's works were written in Persian, Rumi's importance is considered to transcend national and ethnic borders. His original works are widely read in their original language across the Persian-speaking world. Translations of his works are very popular in other countries. His poetry has influenced Persian literature as well as Urdu literature. His poems have been widely translated into many of the world's languages and transposed into various formats; Rumi was described as the "most popular poet in America" in 2007

<http://www.asiaplus.tj/en/news/44/60635.html>

- Labor migration issues discussed in Dushanbe

DUSHANBE, December 21, 2009, Asia-Plus -- A seminar formally titled "Regulating Labor Migration as An Instrument of Development and Regional Cooperation in Central Asia" took place in Dushanbe last Saturday, December 19. According to the Interior Ministry migration service, the meeting brought together representatives from president's executive office, ministries of labor, health, finance, foreign affairs, education and the interior ministry migration service as well as representatives from the International Labor Organization (ILO) and independent experts to discuss policy frameworks, strategies and mechanisms for regulating labor migration as an instrument for development and cooperation in and among Central Asia countries. The seminar participants also discussed

the project, Regulating Labor Migration and cooperation in Central Asia, which is financed by the European commission. The overall objective of the project is to ensure the development of a more comprehensive strategy for labor migration and more effective regulation of migration flows in Central Asia. The specific objectives include developing harmonized policies, legislation and administrative tools for the management of labor migration in order to assist migrant workers and their families and to ensure that both sending and receiving countries benefit to the maximum extent from migration by supporting the development of a more comprehensive labor migration strategy for the region. The meeting participants also discussed issues related to a survey on the current labor migration situation and recommendations on improvement of the process of collecting, updating and exchanging data on labor migration both at national and regional levels that are being worked out by independent experts, the source said. Besides, they considered analysis of offer of labor resources, protection of labor and social care of labor migrants working abroad.

<http://www.asiaplus.tj/en/news/39/60630.html>

- European Union supports civil society organizations in Tajikistan

DUSHANBE, December 23, 2009, Asia-Plus -- The European Union has started funding 4 projects implemented by local and international non-governmental organizations, selected by a Call for Proposals launched in April 2009, under the "Non State Actors in Development" program, for a total amount of around EUR 750 000, according to the Delegation of the European Commission to Tajikistan. The new thematic program "Non State Actors and Local Authorities in Development" was introduced in 2007. It aims to support small scale initiatives by civil society organizations (and local authorities) from the European Union and partner countries in the area of development. The overarching objective of this program is poverty reduction in the context of sustainable development, including the pursuit of the Millennium Development Goals. The program is actor-oriented. It aims at strengthening the capacity of civil society organizations as a pre-condition for a more equitable, open and democratic society through support to their "own initiatives". These finalists of the NSA Call for Proposals have been selected to implement the following projects: The two-year project "Promoting civil participation in the reform of residential building maintenance and management in urban areas", will be implemented by the Consumers' Union of Tajikistan (CU) in five cities of Tajikistan – Dushanbe, Khujand, Chkalovsk, Kulob, and Qurghon Teppa. The project will assist in promoting the development and enforcement of effective and rational housing stock self-management in urban areas, through awareness raising and media campaigning, assistance in the de-monopolization of the housing service sector by promoting local legal acts, through trainings for housing management companies, etc., thus contributing to the development of effective management in residential blocks and to saving and restoration of existing housing in urban areas of Tajikistan. The project "An Early Years Support Centre service in Dushanbe" will be implemented in Dushanbe by the British organization HealthProm in partnership with the Disabled Women's League "Ishtirok". The project will establish a new Early Years Support Centre (EYSC), which will enlarge the day care work at the Centre for children with disabilities and their families "Kishte" (created in 2006). The project has the overall objective of reducing the number of children at risk of poverty in Dushanbe. The EYSC will support vulnerable young children and families to reduce the risk of social exclusion and increase their capacity to

thrive by training mothers to become financially active; providing crisis support and short term accommodation for women and children at risk; providing counseling and support to parents and awareness training for local administrators; and providing training for professionals in child care and early intervention. The project "Economic development and welfare of disabled and their families in rural areas" implemented by local NGO "Munis" in the Hissar and Shahrinow districts, aims to improve living condition of vulnerable groups of citizens, especially women and disabled people. The project intends to get better the social care for the target groups and increase their incomes, through developed system of caring for the well being of families headed by women bread-winners or having a disabled family member. The project "Sustainable social-economic community development through decentralized natural resource management in Sughd" will be implemented in the districts: Asht, Ghonchi, Spitamen, Jabborrasoulov, Ayni of Sughd province, by the international NGO Christian Aid, in partnership with the Agency Support Development Process Nau (ASDP Nau). The project aims to promote sustainable socio-economic development of local communities through local administration reform and good management of natural resources (including renewable energy sources). This will be achieved by capacity development of Jamoats and Mahalla Committees in organizational effectiveness, inclusive development and alternative energy management; development of a sustainable local alternative energy management model and improving access to energy sources, as well as awareness raising campaigns and empowerment of local authorities on renewable energy challenges.

<http://www.asiaplus.tj/en/news/198/60736.html>

Turkmenistan

Political Front

Geo Strategic Front

Economic /Energy Front

- Turkmenistan To Restore Gas Supplies To Russia

Turkmen President Gurbanguly Berdymukhammedov (center) and his Russian counterpart, Dmitry Medvedev, during a visit to a Russian school in Ashgabat today
December 22, 2009

(RFE/RL) -- Ashgabat and Moscow have agreed to renew Turkmen gas supplies to Russia by January 10. The agreement, signed during a visit to Turkmenistan today by Russian President Dmitry Medvedev, follows a nine-month stoppage resulting from the rupture of the main Turkmen export pipeline to Russia. Turkmen authorities blamed Moscow for the incident, which stoked tensions between the two countries and came amid contractual disputes over the price Russia should pay for Turkmen supplies.

Medvedev's visit to Ashgabat today appeared intended to mend ties. It comes just over a week after Turkmenistan launched a new export pipeline to China that circumvented Russian-operated distribution networks. During his talks with Turkmen President Gurbanguly Berdymukhammedov today, Medvedev described Turkmenistan as "a close friend." "We have just discussed with you, esteemed Gurbanguly Maylikgulyyevich [Berdymukhammedov], the international agenda of the day. And we, indeed, have close or coinciding assessments of the main issues of the day, about how to establish security in the world and on our Eurasian continent," Medvedev said.

Accompanying the Russian president in Ashgabat, the deputy chief executive of Russia's gas giant Gazprom, Aleksandr Medvedev, said the two sides were planning to renew gas supplies "from January 1, 2010, but no later than January 10." Medvedev said the deal will see up to 30 billion cubic meters (bcm) of gas supplied to Russia annually -- about two-thirds the level of recent years. The Russian president did not specify whether those volumes would be purchased over the next few years. Medvedev also seemed to suggest the price Russia would pay for Turkmen gas would be pegged to global gas prices. "For the first time in the history of Russian-Turkmen relations," he said, "gas supplies will be determined on the basis of a price formula which is in full agreement with the conditions of the European gas market." Price formulation has been the key factor in the two countries' months-long dispute, with Turkmenistan insisting that Russia pay "European" prices according to an existing contract, and Russia insisting that the price should drop according to falling global gas prices. Gazprom had been contracted to purchase up to 65 bcm annually from Turkmenistan through 2028. But none of that gas has flowed since the rupture in April of the main export pipeline connecting Turkmenistan to Russia. Turkmenistan blamed Gazprom for causing the explosion by unexpectedly reducing the flow of incoming natural gas, leading to a rupture on the Turkmen side of the pipeline. Analysts estimate Turkmenistan has been losing \$1 billion every month due to the cutoff.

A new pipeline transporting Turkmen gas to China opened on December 14, breaking Russia's near monopoly over Central Asia's gas-export routes. The pipeline, which will carry gas from eastern Turkmenistan through Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan into China's northwestern Xinjiang region, was launched during an inauguration ceremony attended by the Chinese, Kazakh, Turkmen, and Uzbek presidents. According to plan, the Turkmenistan-China pipeline's full capacity of 40 bcm should be achieved by 2012. A new pipeline to Iran, due to be launched later this month, will eventually send another 8 bcm of Turkmen gas to Iran.

Social Front

Uzbekistan

Political Front

- Uzbekistan Cracking Down On Dissent

Uzbekistan -- The billboard reads "Constitution - symbol of freedom", in the city of Tashkent. A U.S. rights watchdog says Uzbekistan has intensified attacks against rights activists ahead of this week's parliamentary election. Freedom House said it was "deeply troubled by an intensified crackdown on human rights defenders in Uzbekistan." The Washington-based group also accused Uzbekistan of not making "any credible efforts to reverse its brutal and sustained repression of civil society." Freedom House pointed out while freeing opposition politician Sanjar Umarov from jail last month, Uzbekistan at the same time is locking up other dissidents. The charges by Freedom House echo those leveled by Human Rights Watch. Sunday's election is certain to hand Karimov's allies all seats in the lower house in a country that has no officially registered opposition parties. Candidates from four parties and one environmental movement, all publicly supporting Karimov, are running for 150 seats.

http://www.rferl.org/content/Uzbekistan_Cracking_Down_On_Dissent/1911242.html

- Uzbekistan Airs Documentary Denouncing Imprisoned Rights Activists

Uzbek President Islam Karimov: Still waiting for the "free and fair" sign of approval

TASHKENT -- Uzbek state television has broadcast a documentary denouncing imprisoned human rights activists as it increases pressure on activists in the run-up to parliamentary elections on December 27, RFE/RL's Uzbek Service reports. The documentary, "Violence Behind The Mask," was shown on the Uzbekistan state channel on December 21. It portrayed four jailed activists as dangerous recidivist criminals. International human rights organizations say the four were convicted of trumped-up or politically motivated charges and are political prisoners. The program claimed that Isak Abdullaev, an author of several critical articles about Uzbek President Islam Karimov who is in prison after being convicted of financial crimes, is a polygamist who kept illegal weapons. Independent journalist Salijon Aburahmonov, who is serving a 10-year prison term, is shown in the film as a drug dealer. Dissident Uzbek poet Yusuf Juma in 2005 Poet Yusuf Juma, sentenced to five years in jail, was portrayed as a habitual criminal. Farmer Oyazimkhon Khidirova, sentenced for fraud, is shown in the courtroom repenting and admitting her guilt. Some rights activists say they believe the film was produced based on an order from the Uzbek government. Abdurakhmon Tashanov, the chairman of the Tashkent-based rights organization Ezgulik (Benevolence), told RFE/RL he thinks the documentary was made to mislead some visiting international rights activists about conditions inside the country. He added that it is also intended to intimidate and pressure younger rights activists. Nodir Akhatov, an activist from Uzbekistan's southern Kashkadaryo region, told RFE/RL that the documentary presents a biased, completely one-sided view of the four prisoners. He said in the case of Juma's trial, the film shows only prosecutors accusing him and does not show comments from Juma, his lawyers, or activists who spoke in his favor. Akhatov added that the film does not even say what crimes Juma was convicted of. Meanwhile, both Freedom House and Human Rights Watch (HRW) said earlier this week that the Uzbek government has intensified pressure on opposition and rights activists ahead of the December 27 parliamentary elections. In a statement, the New York-based HRW described recent attempts by Uzbek authorities to crack down on political and civic activism in the country, including the detention and house arrest of activists in recent weeks. The release said at least six rights activists have had their passports temporarily confiscated, one was severely beaten and ill-treated while in detention, and another opposition leader was expelled from the country. Candidates from only four pro-government political parties that are already represented in parliament -- the People's Democratic Party, the Adolat (Justice) Social Democratic Party, the Liberal Democratic Party, and the National Revival Party -- as well as the Ecological Movement of Uzbekistan, were officially registered to run candidates for the 150 parliamentary seats. Not a single opposition party was registered for the elections. In March 2006, businessman Sanjar Umarov and Nodira Hidoyatova, leaders of the opposition Sunshine Uzbekistan Coalition, were sentenced to 14 and 10 years in jail, respectively, on charges of committing financial crimes. Both denied any wrongdoing. Umarov was released under amnesty on November 7 due to ill health. Hidoyatova was released a few months after being sentenced in 2006. Bahodir Choriev, the leader of the opposition Birdamlik (Solidarity) party, who returned to Uzbekistan from exile in October, was reportedly expelled from the country on December 11. Human Rights

Watch reported that Birdamlik activists were also prevented from attending their constituent assemblies in November.

Uzbekistan has been ruled by Karimov since 1989. None of the country's parliamentary or presidential elections has been deemed free and fair by Western-based international monitoring organizations since Uzbekistan gained independence in 1991.

http://www.rferl.org/content/Uzbekistan_Airs_Documentary_Denouncing_Imprisoned_Rights_Activists/1912145.html

Geo Strategic Front

- Russian Foreign Minister Aims To Thaw Relations In Uzbekistan

TASHKENT -- Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov has arrived in Tashkent for a two-day visit aimed at improving cooled relations between Moscow and Tashkent, RFE/RL's Uzbek Service reports. Lavrov will meet with Uzbek President Islam Karimov and Foreign Minister Vladimir Norov to discuss regional security and cooperation issues. Tashkent political analyst Toshpulat Yuldashev says he thinks Lavrov's visit illustrates the Kremlin's attempts to keep Uzbekistan within its sphere of influence. He says Uzbekistan is increasingly strengthening its diplomatic relations with Western countries and China, and avoids participating in the Russian-led Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and the Collective Security Treaty Organization. Farkhod Tolipov, another political analyst in Tashkent, says that due to the unstable situation in Afghanistan the importance of the Central Asian region for the United States and NATO is increasing.

Tolipov adds that as a result, Russia is reviewing its relations with Uzbekistan and might change its political strategy towards the country. He says Uzbekistan has been sending warnings to Russia by missing several CIS summits and other collective organization meetings -- Karimov did not attend an informal CIS presidential summit in Almaty on December 19-20. But Tolipov says Uzbekistan wants Moscow to support Tashkent in negotiations over natural gas and water resources with neighboring Central Asian countries. He adds that Russia provides Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan with financial assistance -- two countries that have serious disagreements with Uzbekistan over water issues. Tolipov says Uzbek-Russian relations would improve if Russia provided similar assistance to Uzbekistan. The Russian Embassy in Tashkent said Uzbekistan has the fourth-largest trade turnover of CIS countries with Russia after Ukraine, Belarus, and Kazakhstan. Trade between the two countries from January-October 2009 amounted to some \$2 billion.

http://www.rferl.org/content/Russian_Foreign_Minister_Aims_To_Thaw_Relations_In_Uzbekistan/1910090.html

Economic /Energy Front

- Tojiktransgaz top managers go to Tashkent this week to discuss gas price for 2010

DUSHANBE, December 21, 2009, Asia-Plus -- A delegation of Tojiktransgaz (Tajik state natural-gas distributor), led by its director general, Saidmamad Sharofiddinov is expected to go to Tashkent, Uzbekistan this week to discuss with top managers of the Uzbek gas supplier, Uztransgaz, gas price for 2010, the source at Tojiktransgaz told Asia-Plus on Monday. According to him, the Uzbek side has not yet specified the gas price for the next year. "In 2010, Tajikistan intends to purchase some 400-500 million cubic meters of natural gas from Uzbekistan," the source said. At present, Uzbekistan is

supplying some 31,000 cubic meters of natural gas per hour to Tajikistan. In the meantime, Radio Liberty's Tajik Service reported on December 14 that the Tojiktransgaz head Saidmamad Sharofiddinov told RFE/RL that Uzbekistan is insisting to keep the 2009 gas price -- some \$240 per 1,000 cubic meters of gas. Sharofiddinov said world gas prices have fallen and therefore Tashkent should decrease its price as well. He added that Tajikistan expects Uzbekistan to decrease its price for gas by 30 percent. Uzbekistan supplies some 95 percent of Tajikistan's gas needs and disagreements between the two countries in recent years have caused Uzbek officials to turn off the gas flow to Tajikistan that has led to severe energy shortages, particularly during the winter, RFE/RL's Tajik service reported.

<http://www.asiaplus.tj/en/news/31/60599.html>

Social Front

- **Prominent Uzbek Writer Is Buried In Tashkent**

TASHKENT -- Renowned Uzbek writer Odil Yakubov has been buried in the capital, Tashkent, RFE/RL's Uzbek Service reports. Yakubov, 83, had been hospitalized in poor health two weeks ago. He wrote dozens of novels in addition to serving as chairman of the Uzbek Writers Union, editor in chief of the newspaper "Uzbekistan Literature and Art," and heading the Uzbek state film studio. He was vice president of the Assembly of Culture of Central Asia and even served in the Soviet Congress of Peoples Deputies while Mikhail Gorbachev was president. RFE/RL reported that Yakubov was hospitalized due to poor health two weeks ago. Shukrillo (one name), an Uzbek poet and Soviet-era political prisoner, told RFE/RL that Uzbeks and the literary world have lost a great writer with the death of Yakubov. He said writers like Yakubov come along only once every century. Shukrillo added that Yakubov's writing reflected deep care for people's demands of officials and a refusal to praise the state. As a result, he said, Yakubov lived a modest life and received little support from the government. Yakubov, who frequently spoke to RFE/RL, was a close friend of famous Kyrgyz writer Chingiz Aitmatov, who died in June 2008. Exiled Uzbek opposition leader Mohammad Salih, who had worked with Yakubov at the Writers Union, told RFE/RL that Yakubov was not only a great writer but an important politician. He said Yakubov raised important issues - - such as cotton monoculture and Uzbek soldiers dying during the Soviet war in Afghanistan -- during sessions of the Congress of People's Deputies. Salih added that during Yakubov's leadership of the Writers Union from 1987-92, it was "a cradle for opposition ideas" and such opposition movements as Birlik (Unity) and Erk (Liberty) were founded with the support of the union. Hamrakul Askar, Yakubov's aide, told RFE/RL that Yakubov regrets that for the last 10 years his literary works have "stayed on his desk" unpublished. Among Yakubov's most famous works are the short stories "Peers," "Two Loves," "Muqaddas," "Bird Wings," and novels "It's Not Easy To Become A Man," "Treasures of Ulugbek," "Conscience," "White-White Swans," and "Justice."

http://www.rferl.org/content/Prominent_Uzbek_Writer_Is_Buried_In_Tashkent/1911149.html