

Business & Politics in the Muslim World
News Monitoring
Feb 27 to March 5, 2010
Weekly Report
Central Asia
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- Spanish foreign minister arrives in Baku

Spanish Foreign Minister Miguel Angel Moratinos arrived in Baku as part of a regional visit to the South Caucasus March 2. This is his first visit to the region as a representative of the Spanish presidency of the EU.

- Azerbaijan President strongly condemns decision of U.S. House of Representatives committee on foreign affairs

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- Azerbaijan exports crude oil to 30 countries
- SOCAR increases gas exports by 18% through supplies for Gazprom

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- Kazakhstan, Japan sign civil nuclear agreement

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- Kazakhstan invites Finland to cooperate in high technologies and scientific research

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- OSCE Official Says Kazakhs Must Loosen Media Grip

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- Prosecution demands four years of suspended sentence for ex-Foreign Minister of Kyrgyzstan

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- Uzbek Citizen Killed On Kyrgyz-Uzbek Border
- Kyrgyzstan to open its Embassy in Afghanistan

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- Kyrgyzstan and Russia signed agreement on economic cooperation program for 2010-2013
- European Union to allocate €50 million to Kyrgyzstan
- Russia and Kyrgyzstan to collaborate in oil-and-gas sector

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- Tajik Election Winner Threatened With Polygamy Charges
- Tajik Leader's Party Grabs Parliament Majority
- Tajik Deputy Loses Seat To Father-In-Law, Faces Prosecution
- Rahmon receives members of CIS election observation mission
- Early fraud allegations emerge in Tajik vote
- PDPT, CPT satisfied with the voting process

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- OSCE says Tajik elections failed to meet many key OSCE commitments
- Rahmon, Medvedev discuss bilateral cooperation

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- Tajik national football team climbs from 148th to 128th position in FIFA rankings

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- First Turkmen-Georgian political consultations held in Ashgabat
- Presidents of Turkmenistan and Russia talk over phone

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- President of Turkmenistan receives U.S. State Department special envoy for Eurasian energy
- EU supports Turkmenistan's energy strategy

Social Front

Dashoguz to host festival of Turkmen-Uzbek friendship

- OSCE supports reforms on democratization of Turkmen society

Uzbekistan

Political Front

- Uzbekistan's Top Education Officials Fired
- Avazjon Marahimov appointed as public education minister
- President appoints three Cabinet members

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- The former Uzbek Ambassador in Moscow Ilhom Nematov is appointed as the Ambassador in USA

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- Lufthansa returns to the market of Uzbekistan

Social Front

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- Innovations fair held in Tashkent

Summery

Azerbaijan

Political Front

- Azerbaijani ombudsman presents report on outcomes of 2009 to president and parliament

The Azerbaijani Ombudsman presented a report to the president and the Parliament of Azerbaijan on outcomes of 2009. 2009 Annual Report on the situation of safeguarding and protecting human rights and freedoms in Azerbaijan was submitted to the Cabinet of Ministers, the Constitutional Court, Supreme Court and the Prosecutor General in the order specified in the Constitution, the Ombudsman's office said.

- Opposition leader: Coalition of Azerbaijani opposition is unrealistic

"I believe that the creation of a coalition of Azerbaijani opposition is somewhat unrealistic," Chairman of opposition Democratic Party of Azerbaijan Sardar Jalaloglu said. "Representatives of political parties fail to do it because of their own interests and intrigues between them in the past," he said. Unified opposition candidate for the elections is more real, the DPA leader said.

Geo strategic Front

- Georgian Diplomat Reassures Azerbaijan Over Opening Of Border Crossing With Russia

A Russian border guard works at the Verkhny Lars checkpoint o the border between Georgia and Russia on March 1.

March 05, 2010 Georgian Deputy Foreign Minister Giga Bokeria told the parliament foreign-relations committee on March 4 that Azerbaijan has no reason to be apprehensive over the reopening of the Zemo/Verkhny Lars border crossing between Georgia and Russia, Caucasus Press reported.

- Spanish foreign minister arrives in Baku

Spanish Foreign Minister Miguel Angel Moratinos arrived in Baku as part of a regional visit to the South Caucasus March 2. This is his first visit to the region as a representative of the Spanish presidency of the EU.

- Azerbaijan President strongly condemns decision of U.S. House of Representatives committee on foreign affairs

President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev made a telephone call Friday to President of Turkey Abdullah Gul, AzerTAj state news agency reported.

During the conversation, the Head of State expressed his outrage against and strongly condemned the resolution passed by the US House Committee on Foreign Affairs. He

described it as the unfair decision misrepresenting historical truth and fueling tension in the region.

Economic/Energy Front

- UK official to mull energy projects in Baku

UK energy minister Lord Hunt will pay a visit to Baku, the British Embassy reported today. Hunt will arrive in the country March 3 in the framework of the visit to Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan Feb.28 - March 4.

- Azerbaijan exports crude oil to 30 countries

Azerbaijan exports crude oil and oil products via various routes to 30 countries of the world, said Rovnag Abdullayev, President of the country's state oil firm, SOCAR.

- SOCAR increases gas exports by 18% through supplies for Gazprom

This January the State Oil Company of Azerbaijan (SOCAR) increased volumes of gas exports from the country by 17.9 percent against last December when export rose by 57.1 percent compared with November of 2009.

Social Front

- Slain Azerbaijani Journalist's Killers Still Unknown

Five years after his death, the killers of Azerbaijani opposition journalist Elmar Huseynov have still not been brought to justice, RFE/RL's Azerbaijani Service reports. Huseynov, editor of the independent weekly "Monitor," was shot dead outside his apartment in Baku on March 2, 2005.

- EU Envoy, In Baku, Says Media Freedom High On Agenda

BAKU -- The EU's special representative for the South Caucasus has told RFE/RL's Azerbaijani Service that media freedom issues are high on his agenda as he begins a visit to Baku. Peter Semneby arrived in the Azerbaijani capital on February 23 for a three-day visit.

- Landslide activates in north Azerbaijan

Landslide has activated in Gusar region of Azerbaijan. The landslide covers an area of 10,000 square meters, the Ministry of Emergency Situations reported.

Kazakhstan

Political Front

Geo strategic Front

- Fugitive Kazakh Banker Detained In Moscow

ASTANA -- The former chairman of Kazakhstan's once influential Nauryz Bank has been detained in Moscow, RFE/RL's Kazakh Service reports.

- Kazakhstan hindering Russian space missions - official (AFP) - Kazakhstan, home of the space base used to launch rockets to the International Space Station (ISS), is interfering with Russian space missions, the head of Russia's space agency said Saturday.

- Kazakhstan's premier to visit Moscow March 3

MOSCOW, February 28 (Itar-Tass) - Kazakhstan's Prime Minister Karim Massimov is expected to make a working visit to Moscow Wednesday, March 3.

- Kazakhstan, Japan sign civil nuclear agreement

(SRI) - Japan signed a civil nuclear agreement with Kazakhstan on Tuesday which gives it access to stable supplies of uranium in exchange for nuclear technology, Reuters reported.

Economic/Energy Front

- Kazakhstan looks at new oil route to Europe

Kazakhstan, said on Tuesday, it was interested in establishing a new export route to carry its growing surplus of oil across the South Caucasus and the Black Sea to Europe.

- Kazakhstan invites Finland to cooperate in high technologies and scientific research

“Kazakh president set a target to draft a technological development program within a five-year industrial program, therefore, we must develop and apply our own technologies instead of importing them.

Social Front

- OSCE Official Says Kazakhs Must Loosen Media Grip

Kazakhstan must loosen its grip on the media further, an OSCE official has said, even though the former Soviet state has relaxed some controls since taking over as Europe's main rights and security watchdog chief.

Kyrgyzstan

Political Front

- Kyrgyz High Court Says Rally Regulation Illegal

BISHKEK -- Kyrgyzstan's Constitutional Court today ruled that a Bishkek city council regulation on seeking approval to hold mass gatherings is illegal, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports.

- Prosecution demands four years of suspended sentence for ex-Foreign Minister of Kyrgyzstan

The prosecution demands to criminate ex-Foreign Minister of Kyrgyzstan, Alikbek Dzhekshenkulov to 4 years of suspended sentence with postponement of execution of judgment. As of 26 February, 2010, the Pevomai district court held a regular meeting on ex-Foreign Minister of Kyrgyzstan Alikbek Dzhekshenkulov issue.

Geo strategic Front

- Checkpoint On Kyrgyz-Uzbek Border Closed

OSH -- The Kara-Suu checkpoint on the border between Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan has been closed, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports. Cholponbek Turusbekov , the deputy head of Kyrgyzstan's Border Guard Service, told RFE/RL that the decision to close the border crossing March 1 was taken by Uzbekistan.

- Uzbek Citizen Killed On Kyrgyz-Uzbek Border

KADAMJAY, Kyrgyzstan -- An Uzbek citizen has been shot dead near the Airybaz checkpoint on the Kyrgyz-Uzbek border, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports.

Cholponbek Turusbekov, the deputy chairman of Kyrgyzstan's Border Guard Service, told RFE/RL that Kyrgyz border guards opened fire today at a vehicle that ignored their demand to stop and continued across the border, which is in the southwestern Batken region. The car's driver was killed.

- Kyrgyzstan to open its Embassy in Afghanistan

The press-service of the President Secretariat reported: Kyrgyzstan will open its Embassy in Afghanistan. Reportedly, the Kyrgyz President Kurmanbek Bakiev signed a decree about “Establishment of the Kyrgyz Republic Embassy to the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan”

Economic/Energy Front

- Russia interested in Kyrgyz energy sector

Sergei Shmatko said on Saturday the Russian Federation is being interested in the investment component of Kyrgyz energy sector cooperation. By the Minister, Kyrgyzstan undertakes serious steps toward market liberalization, particularly in the market mechanisms of energy sector.

- Kyrgyzstan and Russia signed agreement on economic cooperation program for 2010-2013

Kyrgyzstan and Russia have signed an agreement on economic cooperation program for 2010-2013. The agreement was approved and adopted at the session of the Kyrgyz-Russian Inter-governmental Commission on trade, economic, science, technical and humanitarian cooperation on 27 February, 2010, in Moscow.

- European Union to allocate €50 million to Kyrgyzstan

The European Union will allot more than € 50 million to the Kyrgyz Republic. The statement was voiced by the press-service of the Kyrgyz Foreign Ministry at the Eleventh Meeting of the Cooperational Council between the European Union and Kyrgyzstan in Brussels.

- Russia and Kyrgyzstan to collaborate in oil-and-gas sector

Russia and Kyrgyzstan has come to an agreement about the collaboration in the oil-and-gas sector. The statement was voiced at the session of Kyrgyz-Russian Inter-governmental Commission on trade, economic, science-technical and humanitarian cooperation on 27 February, 2010.

Social Front

- Kyrgyz Activists Plan Protest On International Women's Day

BISHKEK -- Women's rights activists in Kyrgyzstan say they plan a public protest on International Women's Day next week, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports.

- Kyrgyz Jokes

Against a backdrop of authoritarianism, corruption, and cronyism, the Soviet joke was a welcome release valve. It's a tradition that has lived on in the post-Soviet world.

During the rule of the previous Kyrgyz president, Askar Akaev, who was ousted in 2005 in the so-called Tulip Revolution, Kyrgyz people joked about his government's tendency to appoint to high positions people from his home district of Kemin, north Kyrgyzstan.

For instance: President Askar Akayev has been addressing the Kyrgyz nation after the collapse of the Communist regime in 1991:

- Kyrgyz Human Rights Activist Reported Missing

Kyrgyz human rights activist Nematillo Botakoziev has been reported missing in Dushanbe, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports.

- International Organization Aid to develop Kyrgyz National Intellectual Property Strategy

An International Organization planned to allocate grant to developing of the National Strategy of the Intellectual Property in Kyrgyzstan, Mr. Ulan Melisbek, the Head of the Kyrgyzpatent said at the interview on 2 March, 2010.

Tajikistan

Political Front

- Tajik Opposition Threatens Protests After Poll

DUSHANBE (Reuters) -- Tajikistan's opposition threatened today to call street protests to challenge the result of a parliamentary election in the impoverished nation bordering Afghanistan.

- **Tajik Election Winner Threatened With Polygamy Charges**

International election monitors said the Tajik vote was neither fair nor free and did not meet international standards.

QURGHON-TEPPA, Tajikistan -- The winner of a local election in southern Tajikistan is being told to renounce his victory or face polygamy charges, RFE/RL's Tajik Service reports.

- **Tajik Leader's Party Grabs Parliament Majority**

DUSHANBE (Reuters) -- Tajik President Emomali Rahmon's party has retained its parliamentary majority, the Central Election Commission said today after a poll heavily criticized by international observers and opposition parties.

- **Tajik Deputy Loses Seat To Father-In-Law, Faces Prosecution**

QURGHON-TEPPA, Tajikistan -- Tajik parliament deputy Sayvali Nurov has lost his bid for reelection to his father-in-law and could be charged with assaulting an election official, RFE/RL's Tajik Service reports.

- **Rahmon receives members of CIS election observation mission**

DUSHANBE, February 27, 2010, Asia-Plus -- President Emomali Rahmon today received members of the CIS election observation mission, led by the CIC Executive Secretary Sergey Lebedev, according to presidential press service.

- **Early fraud allegations emerge in Tajik vote**

DUSHANBE, March 1, 2010, Asia-Plus -- Polls have closed in Tajikistan's parliamentary and local elections with opposition politicians in Tajikistan claiming that the vote was deeply flawed, Radio Liberty reported on February 28.

- **PDPT, CPT satisfied with the voting process**

DUSHANBE, March 1, 2010, Asia-Plus -- According to our preliminary count, the Communist Party (CPT) has definite advantage over other political parties in some single-mandate constituencies, CPT leader Shodi Shabdolov said in an interview with Asia-Plus.

Geo strategic Front

- **Russian first vice-premier visits Tajikistan**

DUSHANBE, March 1, 2010, Asia-Plus -- President Emomali Rahmon is receiving visiting Russian First Deputy Prime Minister, Igor Shuvalov, today, according to presidential press service.

- **OSCE says Tajik elections failed to meet many key OSCE commitments**

DUSHANBE, March 1, 2010, Asia-Plus -- Yesterday's parliamentary elections took place peacefully, but despite certain small positive steps failed to meet many key OSCE commitments, the international election observation mission concluded in a preliminary statement issued today.

- **Rahmon, Medvedev discuss bilateral cooperation**

DUSHANBE, March 5, 2010, Asia-Plus -- President Emomali Rahmon yesterday afternoon had a telephone conversation with his Russian counterpart, President Dmitry Medvedev, according to presidential press service.

Economic/Energy Front

Social Front

- **Tajik national football team climbs from 148th to 128th position in FIFA rankings**

DUSHANBE, March 5, 2010, Asia-Plus - Tajikistan's national football team climbed from 148th to 128th position in the FIFA World Rankings that was updated on March 3, 2010.

Turkmenistan

Political Front

- Turkmen Leader Calls For Liberalizing Criminal Code

ASHGABAT -- Turkmen President Gurbanguly Berdimukhammedov has called on the State Security Council to increase public influence on reforming the country's Criminal Code in accordance with international standards, RFE/RL's Turkmen Service reports.

- President of Turkmenistan severely reprimands chairman of state enterprise on Caspian Sea

President of Turkmenistan Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov severely reprimanded Toyly Komekov, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Chairman of the State Enterprise for the Caspian Sea under the President of Turkmenistan.

Geo strategic Front

- First Turkmen-Georgian political consultations held in Ashgabat

The first bilateral Turkmen-Georgian consultations at the level of deputy foreign ministers were held in Ashgabat on March 4. The Georgian delegation was headed by Deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Nalbandov. The Turkmen delegation was led by the First Deputy Foreign Minister Vepa Khadzhiyev.

- Presidents of Turkmenistan and Russia talk over phone

A telephone conversation between President of Turkmenistan Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov and President of Russia Dmitriy Medvedev took place on March 4. According to the Kremlin press service, the conversation was part of the regular exchange of views on topical issues of bilateral cooperation and interaction in international affairs.

Economic/Energy Front

- President of Turkmenistan receives U.S. State Department special envoy for Eurasian energy

The United States attaches great importance to strengthen the constructive dialogue with Turkmenistan, which is viewed as a responsible and reliable partner. This was stated by the U.S. State Department special envoy for Eurasian energy issues, Richard Morningstar, at a meeting with Turkmen President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov.

- EU supports Turkmenistan's energy strategy

The European Union supports the reformist policies of Turkmenistan, said the EU special representative for Central Asia, Pierre Morel, during a meeting with Turkmen President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov in Ashgabat on March 2.

Social Front

Dashoguz to host festival of Turkmen-Uzbek friendship

A festival of friendship between fraternal Turkmen and Uzbek peoples will be held in the city of Dashoguz on 17-19 September 2010. It will be organized by the Ministry of Culture and Broadcasting of Turkmenistan and administration of Dashoguz province.

- OSCE supports reforms on democratization of Turkmen society

A meeting was held at the Mejlis with representatives of the OSCE missions dealing with Central Asia, who arrived in Turkmenistan on a working visit.

Uzbekistan

Political Front

- Uzbekistan's Top Education Officials Fired

TASHKENT -- Uzbek President Islam Karimov has sacked the country's top education officials, RFE/RL's Uzbek Service reports.

- Avazjon Marahimov appointed as public education minister

President of Uzbekistan Islam Karimov signed a decree on 2 March approving the appointment of Avazjon Rahimovich Marahimov to the post of the minister of public education.

- President appoints three Cabinet members

President of Uzbekistan Islam Karimov signed decrees on 1 March on appointing the new minister of higher and specialized secondary education, as well as chairmen of the State Demonopolization Committee and the State Property Committee. In accordance with the decrees, Bakhodir Khodiyev was appointed to the post of the minister of higher and specialized secondary education.

Geo strategic Front

- Checkpoint On Kyrgyz-Uzbek Border Closed

OSH -- The Kara-Suu checkpoint on the border between Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan has been closed, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports.

- The former Uzbek Ambassador in Moscow Ilhom Nematov is appointed as the Ambassador in USA

Ilhom Nematov America Ovozi (Uzbek Service of Voice of America) reports that Ilhom Nematov, the former Ambassador of Uzbekistan in Russia, arrived in Washington DC in order to lead the diplomatic mission in this country. The Radio Station informs that on February 26 new Uzbek Ambassador delivered the letter of credence to US Department of State. However, due to the business trip of Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, Nematov was met by her deputy Jim Steinberg.

Economic/Energy Front

- Uzbekistan, Japan sign exchange notes

Ambassador of Japan to Uzbekistan Tsutomu Hiraoka met Vice-Prime Minister of Uzbekistan Abdulla Aripov on 1 March. The sides discussed issues of development and implementation of joint projects.

- Lufthansa returns to the market of Uzbekistan

German Lufthansa resumes the flights between Germany and Uzbekistan after nine-year break, Deutsche Welle reports. On March 28 the carrier company is launching new flights, including such destinations as Miami, Teheran and Tashkent.

Social Front

- Uzbek Citizen Killed On Kyrgyz-Uzbek Border

KADAMJAY, Kyrgyzstan -- An Uzbek citizen has been shot dead near the Airybaz checkpoint on the Kyrgyz-Uzbek border, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports.

- Dashoguz to host festival of Turkmen-Uzbek friendship

A festival of friendship between fraternal Turkmen and Uzbek peoples will be held in the city of Dashoguz on 17-19 September 2010. It will be organized by the Ministry of Culture and Broadcasting of Turkmenistan and administration of Dashoguz province.

- Innovations fair held in Tashkent

About 130 contracts worth a total of over UZS 3.2 billion were signed at the Third National Innovative Ideas, Technologies and Projects Fair held at UzExpoCenter on 1-3 March.

Detailed report

Azerbaijan

Political Front

- Azerbaijani ombudsman presents report on outcomes of 2009 to president and parliament

The Azerbaijani Ombudsman presented a report to the president and the Parliament of Azerbaijan on outcomes of 2009. 2009 Annual Report on the situation of safeguarding and protecting human rights and freedoms in Azerbaijan was submitted to the Cabinet of Ministers, the Constitutional Court, Supreme Court and the Prosecutor General in the order specified in the Constitution, the Ombudsman's office said. The report, which will be heard at a parliamentary meeting, will be published in the 'Assembly of legislative acts of Azerbaijan Republic' and the country's media for public.

The annual report reflects the restoration of human rights and freedoms specified in the Azerbaijani Constitution and international treaties to which our country joined, violated by government bodies and local authorities, human rights and prevent violations, as well as study of human rights situation, the outcome of work on legal education and scientific and analytical work, the ombudsman's cooperation with governmental institutions, public and media. It also covers issues of international relations, proposals and recommendations of the commissioner for human rights in connection with more reliable access to rights and freedoms. The annual report will be heard at a parliamentary meeting.

- Opposition leader: Coalition of Azerbaijani opposition is unrealistic

"I believe that the creation of a coalition of Azerbaijani opposition is somewhat unrealistic," Chairman of opposition Democratic Party of Azerbaijan Sardar Jalaloglu said. "Representatives of political parties fail to do it because of their own interests and intrigues between them in the past," he said. Unified opposition candidate for the elections is more real, the DPA leader said.

"We have already held talks on this issue and we can say that the main opposition forces support this idea. I think that the parties which we have proposed this format will create the appropriate committee within a few days and the process of defining common candidates will start," he added. "After this different configurations of the opposition forces, which will support those candidates, might be formed."

"But I think that these configurations will not be a union which will cover the entire opposition, because many parties were against each other with different charges, which does not allow the opposition to take part in the upcoming parliamentary elections with a single coalition," the DPA chairman explained. "The Azerbaijani opposition should understand one thing - we need to solve our problems," he said.

Geo strategic Front

- Georgian Diplomat Reassures Azerbaijan Over Opening Of Border Crossing With Russia

A Russian border guard works at the Verkhny Lars checkpoint on the border between Georgia and Russia on March 1.

March 05, 2010 Georgian Deputy Foreign Minister Giga Bokeria told the parliament foreign-relations committee on March 4 that Azerbaijan has no reason to be apprehensive over the reopening of the Zemo/Verkhny Lars border crossing between Georgia and Russia, Caucasus Press reported. Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov had expressed concern the previous day that the reopening could facilitate the overland transport by Russia of arms to Armenia. Visiting Tbilisi on March 3, Spanish Foreign Minister Miguel Angel Moratinos, whose country currently holds the rotating EU presidency, inspected the border crossing. U.S. Ambassador John Bass has expressed satisfaction at its reopening, which he termed "a positive step that will further the improvement of international relations and the economic status of the region's population." The opposition Christian Democrat faction within the Georgian parliament called for a closed session of the country's Security Council to assess the increased threat posed to Georgia by granting Russian citizens unimpeded entry to Georgia via Verkhny Lars. The population of the surrounding mountain district of Qazbegi fears that Russia is already planning "a new intervention" in Georgia with the aim of enabling Ossetians who fled South Ossetia prior to the collapse of the USSR to return to their homes.

Armenian Foreign Minister Eduard Nalbandian confirmed on March 2 reports that Armenia played a key role in mediating the talks between Russia and Georgia that led to the reopening of Verkhny Lars. Verkhny Lars served as Armenia's sole overland route to the former Soviet Union and Europe until it was summarily closed by the Russian authorities in June 2006, at the height of a Russian-Georgian spy scandal.

With Russian-Georgian trade having steadily declined over the past decade, the Upper Lars closure primarily hit trading companies shipping goods to and from Armenia. Armenian exporters of agricultural produce were particularly reliant on the crossing. They had to reroute their deliveries through the more expensive and time-consuming rail-ferry services between Georgia and Russia and Ukraine.

Arsen Ghazarian, chairman of the Armenian Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs, predicted on March 1 that the reopening of the Russian-Georgian border will boost exports of Armenian fruit and vegetables, starting this year. He said it would reduce exporters' transportation costs by at least 25 percent. According to Ghazarian, who also owns a cargo-shipment company, a single truck laden with agricultural products takes at least 23 days to reach Russia through the rail-ferry link. Going through Upper Lars will cut shipping time by half, he told journalists.

- Spanish foreign minister arrives in Baku

Spanish Foreign Minister Miguel Angel Moratinos arrived in Baku as part of a regional visit to the South Caucasus March 2. This is his first visit to the region as a representative of the Spanish presidency of the EU.

Moratinos visited the region in 2007 as acting chairman of the OSCE. Then, the Madrid principles regarding the Karabakh conflict were crafted.

He is accompanied by a large team of specialists, including representatives of the European Commission, EU ambassador in Azerbaijan Roland Kobia said earlier.

- Azerbaijani FM meets Russian Deputy Foreign Minister

Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov met with Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Grigory Karasin. The sides discussed resolution of Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict over Nagorno Karabakh, Azerbaijani-Russian relations and security in the region.

- Azerbaijan President strongly condemns decision of U.S. House of Representatives committee on foreign affairs

President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev made a telephone call Friday to President of Turkey Abdullah Gul, AzerTAj state news agency reported.

During the conversation, the Head of State expressed his outrage against and strongly condemned the resolution passed by the US House Committee on Foreign Affairs. He described it as the unfair decision misrepresenting historical truth and fueling tension in the region. He emphasized Azerbaijan had always been alongside Turkey and would continue to support this country. President Ilham Aliyev expressed his confidence that the attempts of Armenians - who committed genocides against Turkey and Azerbaijan at some points in history - to falsify the history will fail and not be accepted by the world community. The Turkish President, for his part, hailed President Ilham Aliyev's stance on the issue. The Presidents also discussed bilateral relations and situation in the region.

Economic/Energy Front

- UK official to mull energy projects in Baku

UK energy minister Lord Hunt will pay a visit to Baku, the British Embassy reported today. Hunt will arrive in the country March 3 in the framework of the visit to Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan Feb.28 - March 4. During his brief visit to Baku, the minister is expected to meet with President of State Oil Company of Azerbaijan Republic (SOCAR) Rovnag Abdullayev.

Over the past decade, great projects such as the development of the Azeri-Chirag-Gunashli field and Shah-Deniz field, as well as the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline turned Azerbaijan into a major world energy supplier, Hunt said.

"The Caspian region countries, including Azerbaijan, have significant reserves of hydrocarbons, which can bring great benefits to European consumers. Dream to bring Caspian gas directly to Europe is now closer to reality," he added.

- Azerbaijan exports crude oil to 30 countries

Azerbaijan exports crude oil and oil products via various routes to 30 countries of the world, said Rovnag Abdullayev, President of the country's state oil firm, SOCAR.

Abdullayev noted "among our consumers are the US, China, UK, Germany, France, Italy and Spain." According to Abdullayev, major international companies prefer high-quality Azerbaijani oil, and "are keen to ink long-term agreements with SOCAR."

- SOCAR increases gas exports by 18% through supplies for Gazprom

This January the State Oil Company of Azerbaijan (SOCAR) increased volumes of gas exports from the country by 17.9 percent against last December when export rose by 57.1 percent compared with November of 2009. The Company said that in January 2010 gas exports totaled 172.8 million cu m versus 146.58 million cu m in December and 167.32 million c.m. in January of 2009. Exports for December 2008 (178.45 million c. m.) still remain a record indicator for SOCAR.

In 2009, it was exported 1.03 bn c. m. versus 818.93 million c. m. in 2008. Last year SOCAR increased gas export by 25.9 percent. In January 2010, SOCAR launched gas supplies for Russia's Gazprom but that did not tell drastically on export volumes.

Social Front

- **Slain Azerbaijani Journalist's Killers Still Unknown**

Five years after his death, the killers of Azerbaijani opposition journalist Elmar Huseynov have still not been brought to justice, RFE/RL's Azerbaijani Service reports.

Huseynov, editor of the independent weekly "Monitor," was shot dead outside his apartment in Baku on March 2, 2005. Two Georgian citizens of Azerbaijani origin have been identified as suspects. Georgia says no formal request has been made to take legal action against them. Elsa Vidal of Reporters Without Borders (RSF) told RFE/RL that she considers it "shocking" that no one has been indicted despite government officials' pledges to solve the killing. She said it is increasingly unlikely that the killer will ever be identified and arrested.

Huseynov's wife, Rushaniyye Huseynova, recently appealed to the European Court of Human Rights about her husband's case. She accused the Azerbaijani government of inaction. Huseynov's friend and fellow journalist Eynulla Fatullayev launched a private investigation into the murder. In 2007, he published an article in his newspaper, "Realny Azerbaijan," claiming that senior Azerbaijani officials ordered Huseynov's killing.

Within months, Fatullayev was charged with defamation, terrorism, tax evasion, and incitement to ethnic hatred. He was tried and sentenced to eight years in jail.

- **EU Envoy, In Baku, Says Media Freedom High On Agenda**

BAKU -- The EU's special representative for the South Caucasus has told RFE/RL's Azerbaijani Service that media freedom issues are high on his agenda as he begins a visit to Baku. Peter Semneby arrived in the Azerbaijani capital on February 23 for a three-day visit. He said his talks with officials as well as opposition and civil society figures would also touch on energy and human rights as well as regional issues such as Azerbaijan's conflict with Armenia over the disputed Nagorno-Karabakh region.

RFE/RL asked Semneby if he planned to raise recent amendments imposing new restrictions on the media, or the case of two bloggers jailed on what supporters say were politically motivated charges. "These are issues that are high on our agenda and the list of issues that we bring up basically on every opportunity," he said. "I hope that we will see some movement forward in order for this not to grow [into] a more problematic issue in our relationship than it needs to be." Semneby also described as "questionable" aspects of the amendments passed earlier this month. The changes make it an offence to photograph, videotape, or make an audio recording of anyone without their permission.

- **Landslide activates in north Azerbaijan**

Landslide has activated in Gusar region of Azerbaijan. The landslide covers an area of 10,000 square meters, the Ministry of Emergency Situations reported.

The landslide came down in mid-March 2009 in the village of Urva of Gusar region, as a result of rainfall on Feb. 22, and activated, creating a serious threat to the houses located in the nearby territory. Presently, the relevant government bodies are making necessary arrangements. Gusar is located 200 km north of Baku.

Kazakhstan

Political Front

Geo strategic Front

- **Fugitive Kazakh Banker Detained In Moscow**

ASTANA -- The former chairman of Kazakhstan's once influential Nauryz Bank has been detained in Moscow, RFE/RL's Kazakh Service reports.

Murat Zhumanbay, a spokesman for Kazakhstan's Financial Police, said today in Astana that Kazakh and Russian officials are discussing Orazaly Erzhanov's possible extradition. He was arrested earlier this week. Kazakhstan issued an international warrant for Erzhanov's arrest five years ago. He is officially accused of organizing a criminal group that stole some \$30 million. The Nauryz Bank's operations were officially suspended in November 2004. Its liquidation is not yet complete. Several senior managers of the bank were jailed in 2005 on charges of corruption and theft of funds.

- Kazakhstan hindering Russian space missions - official (AFP) - Kazakhstan, home of the space base used to launch rockets to the International Space Station (ISS), is interfering with Russian space missions, the head of Russia's space agency said Saturday. Kazakhstan hindering Russian space missions: official Kazakhstan, home of the space base used to launch rockets to the International Space Station (ISS), is interfering with Russian space missions, the head of Russia's space agency said Saturday.

"Kazakhstan's position on various matters regarding the use of the Baikonur cosmodrome is complicating the execution of tasks in Russian space exploration," Anatoly Perminov was quoted as saying.

"Kazakhstan has announced an array of approaches to the organisation of international cooperation in space, limiting Russia's role and degree of participation," he added, quoted by Interfax and ITAR-TASS.

Russia's main base for civilian space missions is the Baikonur cosmodrome, administered by Russia but located on the territory of Kazakhstan, a former Soviet republic that gained independence from Moscow in 1991.

Kazakhstan has moved in recent years to assert greater control over Baikonur and over activities at the space base, which include supply missions to the ISS and launches of commercial satellites.

In 2007 Kazakhstan banned launches of rockets that would pass over provinces being visited by its President Nursultan Nazarbayev after a rocket carrying a Japanese satellite crashed into the steppe upon take-off.

- Kazakhstan's premier to visit Moscow March 3 MOSCOW, February 28 (Itar-Tass) - Kazakhstan's Prime Minister Karim Massimov is expected to make a working visit to Moscow Wednesday, March 3.

Agreement on the visit was reached in the course of a telephone conversation between Massimov and Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin, the Russian government's press service said Tuesday. "The two heads of government discussed the current trade and economic issues and various aspects of forming a customs union by Russia, Kazakhstan and Belarus," it said. "They agreed on a working meeting on March 3, for which Massimov will come to Moscow."

- Kazakhstan, Japan sign civil nuclear agreement (SRI) - Japan signed a civil nuclear agreement with Kazakhstan on Tuesday which gives it access to stable supplies of uranium in exchange for nuclear technology, Reuters reported.

Japanese utility Kansai Electric Power Co, trading house Sumitomo Corp and Tokyo-based Nuclear Fuel Industries Ltd in 2007 signed an accord with Kazakh state uranium company Kazatomprom on converting uranium products into components of nuclear fuel rods. Japan relies on nuclear power for about a quarter of its electricity and plans to increase production as part of plans to cut carbon emissions to combat climate change.

Kazakhstan, the world's leading producer of uranium, plans to produce 18,000 tons of uranium in 2010, Kazatomprom said in December. In 2009, the country produced 13,800 tons of uranium, up from 8,521 tons in 2008.

Economic/Energy Front

- Kazakhstan looks at new oil route to Europe

Kazakhstan, said on Tuesday, it was interested in establishing a new export route to carry its growing surplus of oil across the South Caucasus and the Black Sea to Europe.

Nursultan Nazarbayev, the Kazakh president, unveiled the oil export scheme after talks with Traian Basescu, Romania's leader, in Astana, the Kazakh capital. He said Kazakh oil could be transported in a new pipeline across Azerbaijan and Georgia to the Black Sea for transport to Romania by tanker. OSCE role highlights slow Kazakhstan reforms - Jan-04. Kazakhstan claims to be biggest uranium miner - Dec-30. The new route would help Kazakhstan reduce dependence on Russian pipelines that carry most of its westbound oil exports to market.

Analysts said Nazarbayev's announcement demonstrated a revival in Kazakh confidence in oil export routes in the South Caucasus that was damaged during a short war between Russia and Georgia in August 2008. Georgian pipelines and railways came under attack during the war exposing the vulnerability of energy export routes that have helped Caspian producers end dependence on Russian pipelines. Kazakhstan halted exports through a marine terminal at Batumi on Georgia's Black Sea coast during the war and said it might delay plans to expand the facility.

Kazakhstan needs to build new export pipelines to handle an expected surge in oil production after 2012 when the giant Kashagan field comes onstream in the Caspian Sea. Mr Nazarbayev said Kashagan crude delivered to Romania could enter a planned pipeline from the Black Sea port of Constanta to Trieste in Italy.

"We are interested in this and we have given instructions accordingly to the oil companies," he said in remarks posted on the presidential website. The pipeline from Constanta to Trieste would provide Romania with a strategic role as a transit route for Caspian oil to western Europe. Kazakhstan produced 1.5m barrels a day of oil last year and expects to double output after Kashagan comes onstream. KazMunaigas, Kazakhstan's state oil company, bought Rompetrol, the Romanian oil refining and distribution company, in 2008, establishing a foothold in European oil markets.

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- Kazakhstan invites Finland to cooperate in high technologies and scientific research
"Kazakh president set a target to draft a technological development program within a five-year industrial program, therefore, we must develop and apply our own technologies instead of importing them. We would like to engage Finish experts in our innovation research programs, as the Finish companies have made a big process in the sphere," said Minister of Industry and Trade Aset Isekeshev told the press briefing in Astana on Thursday.

Isekeshv urged the Finish companies to expand its investments in Kazakhstan. Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Paavo Väyrynen said that the strong point of Finland is its expertise in high technologies, which will benefit Kazakhstan more than Finish investments. Finish investment in Kazakhstan in January-November 2009 reached \$2.8 million. Demand for our products remains sound and our sales contracts for 2010 have been completed. We anticipate producing just over 300 kt of copper cathode equivalent, similar to the target for 2009, and the emphasis will remain on value and profitability rather than volume. We will continue to focus on managing costs and we anticipate making good progress on our growth projects in 2010. I look forward to reporting on these next year.

Social Front

- **OSCE Official Says Kazakhs Must Loosen Media Grip**

Kazakhstan must loosen its grip on the media further, an OSCE official has said, even though the former Soviet state has relaxed some controls since taking over as Europe's main rights and security watchdog chief. Rights groups criticize Kazakhstan's assumption in January of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe's (OSCE) rotating chairmanship since it has never held a vote judged free and fair and quashes criticism of its president. Kazakhstan, which has made tackling terrorism and development issues the focus of its OSCE leadership, must still scrap laws that restrict media freedom and unfairly punish journalists, OSCE media freedom head Miklos Haraszi said. "Nevertheless I believe the Kazakh chairmanship all-in-all is not a bad thing...it's good for the [Kazakh] establishment to see in a global light what is expected from them."

He gave the example of a Kazakh district court overturning last month a ban on media outlets carrying reports critical of businessman Timur Kulibayev, the president's son-in-law. The court also barred a move to seize the print runs of five newspapers after Haraszi complained to the OSCE's chairman-in-office, Kazakh Foreign Minister Kanat Saudabayev. "My expectation is that [the chairmanship] may cause irreversible changes for the good," he told journalists in a final briefing before he leaves his post on March 12. "My perception is that even the civil society of Kazakhstan acknowledges that [the chairmanship] gives them additional handles, additional tools," Haraszi said.

His slated successor is Dunja Mijatovic, who has been Bosnia's communications regulator. Haraszi's last report on the 56-nation OSCE region, released today, criticized Kazakhstan's recent passage of a broader law threatening a five-year prison term for publishing information about private lives which the state deems damaging.

The report also voiced concern about the punishment of a journalist who published leaked documents from Kazakhstan's security service and a Kyrgyz opposition reporter who fell to his death from an apartment block in Almaty. Oil-producer Kazakhstan has said it will also concentrate OSCE resources on developing transcontinental transport corridors and promoting environmental and energy security.

It holds the OSCE leadership until the end of the year.

Kyrgyzstan

Political Front

- **Kyrgyz High Court Says Rally Regulation Illegal**

BISHKEK -- Kyrgyzstan's Constitutional Court today ruled that a Bishkek city council regulation on seeking approval to hold mass gatherings is illegal, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports. The regulation in question is former Bishkek Mayor Daniyar Usenov's

proposal in November 2007 that the organizers of any mass gathering in the Kyrgyz capital must apply for a permit at least 10 days before the planned action.

Tolekan Ismailova, who heads the Bishkek-based nongovernmental organization Citizens Against Corruption, had asked the Constitutional Court to rule on the legality of that requirement.

Usenov is currently Kyrgyzstan's prime minister.

- Prosecution demands four years of suspended sentence for ex-Foreign Minister of Kyrgyzstan

The prosecution demands to criminate ex-Foreign Minister of Kyrgyzstan, Alikbek Dzhekshenkulov to 4 years of suspended sentence with postponement of execution of judgment. As of 26 February, 2010, the Pevomai district court held a regular meeting on ex-Foreign Minister of Kyrgyzstan Alikbek Dzhekshenkulov issue. The ex-head of foreign policy department was accused of complicity in the assassination of a Turkish citizen, Servet Cetin in Talas city. The military's top brass said a gun belonging to Alikbek Dzhekshenkulov had been used in the murder in 2007. Besides that, the state prosecutor's office charged Dzhekshenkulov with abuse of power (estimated damage 690,000 som) during his tenure as a foreign minister. The sides have already opened the debates. The prosecutor's office dismissed a charge toward the ex-Minister due to the absence of components of crime in the murder of Turkish businessman. In addition the prosecutor's office continue insisting on abuse of power by Dzhekshenkulov during his tenure as a Minister, supposedly that he has renewed all doors in the department's building thereby has damaged to the State Enterprise Kyrgyzdipservice. The prosecutor's office demands to sentence the principal on the murder case – Ilyas Abdykadyrov to twenty years of imprisonment. The debates will be open on 1 March, 2010, than the court will hear last plea and return a verdict.

Geo strategic Front

- Checkpoint On Kyrgyz-Uzbek Border Closed

OSH -- The Kara-Suu checkpoint on the border between Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan has been closed, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports. Cholponbek Turusbekov , the deputy head of Kyrgyzstan's Border Guard Service, told RFE/RL that the decision to close the border crossing March 1 was taken by Uzbekistan. He said that Uzbek officials attributed that decision to the "low number of people crossing the border at this segment of the Kyrgyz-Uzbek border." The Uzbek government introduced new regulations last month for Kyrgyz citizens who visit Uzbekistan regularly. Those regulations limit the number of times a Kyrgyz citizen may enter Uzbekistan to once every three months.

Hundreds of thousands of ethnic Uzbeks with Kyrgyz passports live in southern Kyrgyzstan, particularly in the Osh region. Many of them have relatives on the other side of the border.

Meanwhile, RFE/RL's Uzbek Service quotes Uzbek media as reporting that the checkpoint has been closed temporarily for renovation.

- Uzbek Citizen Killed On Kyrgyz-Uzbek Border

KADAMJAY, Kyrgyzstan -- An Uzbek citizen has been shot dead near the Airybaz checkpoint on the Kyrgyz-Uzbek border, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports.

Cholponbek Turusbekov, the deputy chairman of Kyrgyzstan's Border Guard Service, told RFE/RL that Kyrgyz border guards opened fire today at a vehicle that ignored their

demand to stop and continued across the border, which is in the southwestern Batken region. The car's driver was killed.

Turusbekov said the Border Guard Service has set up a special commission to investigate the incident and the results will be made public when it is completed.

- Kyrgyzstan to open its Embassy in Afghanistan

The press-service of the President Secretariat reported: Kyrgyzstan will open its Embassy in Afghanistan. Reportedly, the Kyrgyz President Kurmanbek Bakiev signed a decree about “Establishment of the Kyrgyz Republic Embassy to the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan” .Diplomatic mission of Kyrgyzstan to Kabul will be established with the aim of assisting further development of political, trade-economic and culture ties with Afghanistan.

Economic/Energy Front

- Russia interested in Kyrgyz energy sector

Sergei Shmatko said on Saturday the Russian Federation is being interested in the investment component of Kyrgyz energy sector cooperation. By the Minister, Kyrgyzstan undertakes serious steps toward market liberalization, particularly in the market mechanisms of energy sector. Sergei Shmatko has stated that the tariff increase on heat energy and electricity has made the energy sector more attractive for investors.

Kyrgyzstan has developed interesting project on construction of hydro power stations in the middle and upstream in the Naryn river, Shmatko said. He also pointed out that he finds interesting the privatization of distributing companies. Daniyar Usenov himself said that it concerns the projects on construction of small and medium hydropower plants upstream of coordinated hydroelectric system of Kambarata. They planned to construct at least 30 plants. The participants have agreed upon the strengthening of cooperation in energy sector and prepare project feasibility study of these plants.

- Kyrgyzstan and Russia signed agreement on economic cooperation program for 2010-2013

Kyrgyzstan and Russia have signed an agreement on economic cooperation program for 2010-2013. The agreement was approved and adopted at the session of the Kyrgyz-Russian Inter-governmental Commission on trade, economic, science, technical and humanitarian cooperation on 27 February, 2010, in Moscow.

The commission’s co-chairman, Energy Minister Sergei Shmatko said the program provides almost 60 campaigns aimed on the development of trade, economy, science, technical and humanitarian cooperation. Expectedly the program will raise bilateral relations and goods turnover between Kyrgyzstan and Russia.

- European Union to allocate €50 million to Kyrgyzstan

The European Union will allot more than € 50 million to the Kyrgyz Republic. The statement was voiced by the press-service of the Kyrgyz Foreign Ministry at the Eleventh Meeting of the Cooperational Council between the European Union and Kyrgyzstan in Brussels.

By the press-service, the EU is working out the aid program to Kyrgyzstan for 2011-2013. The total aid sum makes up almost €50 million. Besides that the EU is aimed to review the list of Kyrgyz airlines that were forbidden to enter airspace of the European territory.

- Russia and Kyrgyzstan to collaborate in oil-and-gas sector

Russia and Kyrgyzstan has come to an agreement about the collaboration in the oil-and-gas sector. The statement was voiced at the session of Kyrgyz-Russian Inter-governmental Commission on trade, economic, science-technical and humanitarian cooperation on 27 February, 2010.

The Commission instructed to the workgroup (WG) to provide practical realization of previously agreed arrangements on creation of joint Kyrgyz-Russian enterprise in oil-and-gas sector. The Kyrgyz Government is going to sell the state holding of Kyrgyzgas shares to the Gazprom.

“This will give the republic technical re-equipment and management improvement as well as the other advantages”, Daniyar Usenov said. He also said the Gazprom will provide Kyrgyz Republic with lower gas tariffs among world prices.

The development of the collaborations also provides realization of the geologic exploration program at the sites Kugart and Eastern Mailisuu IV till the end of 2011.

Social Front

- **Kyrgyz Activists Plan Protest On International Women's Day**

BISHKEK -- Women's rights activists in Kyrgyzstan say they plan a public protest on International Women's Day next week, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports.

The organizers told RFE/RL they would gather near the monument in Bishkek to Urkiya Salieva, a renowned female Communist activist in the 1920s. They said they would focus on the socio-economic problems faced by Kyrgyz women, the government's gender policies, and domestic violence. March 8 is marked as International Women's Day in the former Soviet Union.

- **Kyrgyz Jokes**

Against a backdrop of authoritarianism, corruption, and cronyism, the Soviet joke was a welcome release valve. It's a tradition that has lived on in the post-Soviet world.

During the rule of the previous Kyrgyz president, Askar Akaev, who was ousted in 2005 in the so-called Tulip Revolution, Kyrgyz people joked about his government's tendency to appoint to high positions people from his home district of Kemin, north Kyrgyzstan.

For instance: President Askar Akayev has been addressing the Kyrgyz nation after the collapse of the Communist regime in 1991:

"Dear compatriots, I won't promise you any kind of Communism, but there will be Keminism, for sure!"

Now, there is a new joke doing the rounds about the family of Kyrgyz President Kurmanbek Bakiev, who has two sons, Marat and Maksim.

Bakiev's wife, Tatiana, is walking through Bishkek's streets to assess the postrevolutionary development in the capital city.

As she's walking, she sees a new, tall building under construction and asks an aide: "Who is building it?"

"Maksim is building that one, dear Tatiana Vasil'evna."

"Who is building that one?" she then says, pointing to another new building.

"Maksim."

"And what about that big one?"

"Maksim is doing it, Mrs. Bakieva."

She thinks about what she has heard and says: "It seems to me that the only person working in this country is my son."

Maksim, the head of the Kyrgyz Central Agency for Development, Investments, and Innovations, has been accused of using his family connections to get good deals on shares and privatization, accusations he has firmly denied.

- **Kyrgyz Human Rights Activist Reported Missing**

Kyrgyz human rights activist Nematillo Botakoziev has been reported missing in Dushanbe, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports.

Botakoziev, 42, has not been seen since February 26 when he was at the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) office in Dushanbe applying for refugee status.

Botakoziev had applied for UNHCR protection after reportedly being repeatedly harassed by police in the southern Kyrgyz town of Nookat since 2004. He said he was being persecuted by the police because of issues related to his Uzbek wife, Mavlyuda Abdulazizova, who had been sentenced more than a decade ago in Uzbekistan on charges of attempting to overthrow the government. She was pardoned in July 1999 and fled to Kyrgyzstan, where she met and married Botakoziev. In September 2008, Nookat residents attacked the local administration building to protest an official refusal to allow a public celebration of the Muslim holiday of Eid. Botakoziev was accused of organizing the protest and a warrant was issued for his arrest. He fled to Tajikistan and denies any involvement in the protest. Botakoziev was also an associate of Kyrgyz journalist Alisher Saipov, who was shot dead in the southern Kyrgyz city of Osh in 2007.

- **International Organization Aid to develop Kyrgyz National Intellectual Property Strategy**

An International Organization planned to allocate grant to developing of the National Strategy of the Intellectual Property in Kyrgyzstan, Mr. Ulan Melisbek, the Head of the Kyrgyzpatent said at the interview on 2 March, 2010. He said the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) undertakes all financial responsibility of this program. However the precise amount of the sum the Head of the Kyrgyzpatent has not mentioned. The State Service of Intellectual Property of the Kyrgyz Republic has been working on the basis of the "Intellect" program, but the program will end in 2010. Thereby the new program will be developed within a year. "The program will let us work in compliance with the present reality", Ulan Melisbek has stated.

Tajikistan

Political Front

- **Tajik Opposition Threatens Protests After Poll**

DUSHANBE (Reuters) -- Tajikistan's opposition threatened today to call street protests to challenge the result of a parliamentary election in the impoverished nation bordering Afghanistan.

Any unrest in Tajikistan could worry the West, which uses the Muslim nation of seven million as part of a northern route supplying NATO troops fighting the Taliban in Afghanistan. Western monitors have denounced the February 28 vote for failing democratic standards. President Emomali Rahmon's party won 54 out of 63 seats in the lower house of parliament. The opposition Islamic Revival Party -- Central Asia's only official Islamic party -- won only two seats and has vowed to challenge the result in court. "If the courts take unfair decisions, we can organize public acts of protest as well as other actions within the country's legislation," said the party's leader Mukhiddin Kabiri. Speaking at a party meeting, he said he would take legal action as soon as this week but gave no further details.

Kabiri's party is a reformed wing of the once-powerful United Tajik Opposition which fought Rahmon's government in a 1992-1997 civil war. More than 100,000 people died in that war. Spurred by an economic crisis, discontent has been on the rise in Tajikistan in the past year because of growing poverty and crumbling Soviet-era infrastructure.

The inflow of remittances, one of the country's key sources of foreign currency, dropped almost by a third in 2009.

Despite growing hardship, outward gestures of protest remain rare in a country where Rahmon tolerates little dissent. The election monitoring arm of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) said on March 1 that serious irregularities meant Tajikistan's parliamentary election failed to meet basic democratic standards.

The opposition has said it had evidence of mass vote rigging. The central election commission has rejected all criticism, saying it had no evidence of large-scale violations. Rahmon has ruled Tajikistan, the poorest nation in the ex-Soviet Union with an average monthly wage of \$70, since 1992.

Signaling a possible succession plan to his long rule, Rahmon's 23-year-old son Rustami Emomali was elected into the capital Dushanbe's city council in a separate election held on February 28, the central election commission said.

- Tajik Election Winner Threatened With Polygamy Charges

International election monitors said the Tajik vote was neither fair nor free and did not meet international standards.

QURGHON-TEPPA, Tajikistan -- The winner of a local election in southern Tajikistan is being told to renounce his victory or face polygamy charges, RFE/RL's Tajik Service reports. Usmon Majidov, the head of the Islamic Renaissance Party (IRP) branch in the Vakhsh district of Khatlon Province, told RFE/RL that IRP candidate Qimatullo Murodov -- who was elected to a town council on February 28 -- was summoned to the local prosecutor's office on March 2. Qalandar Sadridinzodal, the IRP's leader in Khatlon Province, told RFE/RL that local prosecutors promised not to file polygamy charges against Murodov if he agrees to renounce his election to the council. Varqa Zainiddinov, the regional prosecutor's office spokesman, said that since polygamy is illegal anyone with more than one wife "should and would be brought to trial."

The IRP officially won 7.7 percent of the vote in the parliamentary elections and received two seats in the parliament's lower chamber. It finished a distant second to the ruling People's Democratic Party.

IRP leader Muhiddin Kabiri called the elections "repressive." International election-monitoring organizations said the vote was neither fair nor free and did not meet international standards.

News

- Tajik Leader's Party Grabs Parliament Majority

DUSHANBE (Reuters) -- Tajik President Emomali Rahmon's party has retained its parliamentary majority, the Central Election Commission said today after a poll heavily criticized by international observers and opposition parties.

The results mean little will change from the previous parliament where Rashmon's People's Democratic Party, in power for 17 years, held 57 seats and Islamists had two.

Western monitors denounced the vote in the former Soviet state for failing basic democratic standards, with irregularities including ballot-box stuffing and suspect proxy

voting. Rahmon's party won 53 seats out of 63 in the lower house of parliament in the February 28 poll, the election commission said, citing preliminary results.

The Islamic Revival Party, Tajikistan's main opposition movement and Central Asia's only Islamist party, won two seats, senior commission official Mukhibullo Dadajanov told reporters. Five seats will be split between communists and two other parties that usually support the government while voting will be re-run in one single-seat constituency, Dadajanov said. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), Europe's main election monitoring group, said on March 1 that serious irregularities meant Tajikistan's parliamentary election failed to meet basic democratic standards. The U.S. embassy also criticized "widespread fraud and irregularities."

"Initial evaluation of observations by embassy staff election observers indicates that the vote was beset by procedural irregularities and fraud, including cases of ballot stuffing," it said in a statement late on March 1. Tajikistan, which has a long border with Afghanistan, has never held an election deemed free and fair by Western monitors.

The Islamic Revival Party said today it would challenge the poll results in court. "There was mass fraud," the party's leader Mukhiddin Kabiri told reporters. "In a fair election we would have got 30 percent of votes." Dadajanov rejected all criticism.

"After every election someone is happy and someone is unhappy, both among voters and political parties," he said. "We have not received any proof of the violations that the Islamic Revival Party is talking about." Kabiri did not announce any plans for public protests which are a rare event in the tightly run nation still recovering from a civil war in the 1990s that pitched Islamists against Rahmon's government and killed more than 100,000 people.

- **Tajik Deputy Loses Seat To Father-In-Law, Faces Prosecution**

QURGHON-TEPPA, Tajikistan -- Tajik parliament deputy Sayvali Nurov has lost his bid for reelection to his father-in-law and could be charged with assaulting an election official, RFE/RL's Tajik Service reports. Nurov, a former administrator in the Vakhsh district of Tajikistan's southern Khatlon Province, was defeated in his bid for reelection by former Transportation Minister Abdusalim Salimov, his father-in-law.

Both are members of the ruling National Democratic Party of Tajikistan, which backed Salimov -- the former head of Khatlon Province -- over the incumbent Nurov. Nurov had predicted on the eve of the election that the ruling party would do everything to ensure his defeat because he had challenged some of its policies.

Ghoib Khojanazarov, the head of a polling station in Vakhsh, told RFE/RL that Nurov assaulted him on February 28 in front of several people after he let an elderly man cast a ballot on behalf of his sick wife. Nurov confirmed that he saw the old man vote more than once and reported it as a violation of election rules. But he denied punching Khojanazarov. Vakhsh district prosecutor Umed Karimov said an investigation of the incident has begun.

- **Rahmon receives members of CIS election observation mission**

DUSHANBE, February 27, 2010, Asia-Plus -- President Emomali Rahmon today received members of the CIS election observation mission, led by the CIC Executive Secretary Sergey Lebedev, according to presidential press service.

The sides discussed issues related to preparations for the February 28 parliamentary elections in Tajikistan. Lebedev noted that 160 CIS observers arrived in Tajikistan n

February 4. According to him, the election campaign was held in accordance with Tajikistan's parliamentary election code and in compliance with the Convention on Standards of Democratic Elections adopted by the CIS member nations in Chisinau in 2002. President Rahmon, for his part, noted that the country's government had undertaken all efforts to ensure holding of transparent and democratic elections. In the course of the talks, the sides also discussed cooperation between Tajikistan and the Russian Federation within the framework of CIS.

- Early fraud allegations emerge in Tajik vote

DUSHANBE, March 1, 2010, Asia-Plus – Polls have closed in Tajikistan's parliamentary and local elections with opposition politicians in Tajikistan claiming that the vote was deeply flawed, Radio Liberty reported on February 28. Observers say they expect authoritarian President Emomali Rahmon's People's Democratic Party to maintain tight control of the lower house of parliament -- the Majlis Namoyandagon -- once the results are finalized. The party held more than 50 of the 63 seats in the outgoing parliament.

With two hours of voting remaining, Tajikistan's Central Election Commission said 80 percent of the country's 3.5 million voters cast ballots. The commission did not release revised figures immediately after polls closed.

Opposition figures, meanwhile, complained about fraud and a lack of transparency in the vote. Rahmatillo Zoirov, the head of opposition Social-Democratic Party of Tajikistan, complained that in Dushanbe, his party's observers were made to sit in corners of the polling stations and were unable to keep an eye on the process. The Communist Party and the Islamic Revival Party (IRPT) have emerged as the main contenders to the ruling President People's Democratic Party. Both parties held a small number of seats in the outgoing assembly. The IRPT is Central Asia's only Islamist political party that is registered to work legally. With its young leadership and swelling ranks, the party aimed to use the election to strengthen its representation in the parliament. But despite campaigning hard, IRP leader Muhiddin Kabiri says he is discouraged by what he saw during the election day. "We hoped that these elections would be better in comparison to the elections of 2005. But unfortunately, according to reports we received in our election headquarters from polling stations, authorities in districts are still not ready for transparent and democratic elections," Kabiri said. News agencies quoted Kabiri as saying his supporters have registered numerous violations, including multiple voting and obstruction of the work of electoral observers and poll workers. Kabiri said he believed his party could have won 10 seats in parliament in a fair vote. The party has two seats in the outgoing legislature. International monitors are due to issue their assessment on March 1. Tajikistan has never held an election judged free and fair by Western observers and few analysts expect the February 28 vote to be an exception. Despite the criticism of his opponents, President Rahmon called the elections an important political event to promote the country's economic and social life. While voting close to his official residence in Dushanbe Rahmon told journalists that he prefers to keep quiet on election day and will answer questions later. "From the point view of improvement of the international image of Tajikistan, the more transparent, more free, and more democratic parliamentary elections are, the more important they for the people and the country of Tajikistan," Rahmon said in response to a question from RFE/RL's Tajik Service.

Tajikistan's Central Election Commission is expected to announce preliminary results on March 1. Official final results will be announced two weeks later.

- PDPT, CPT satisfied with the voting process

DUSHANBE, March 1, 2010, Asia-Plus -- According to our preliminary count, the Communist Party (CPT) has definite advantage over other political parties in some single-mandate constituencies, CPT leader Shodi Shabdolov said in an interview with Asia-Plus. According to him, the Communist Party has not bad results in a proportional, party list system as well. In the meantime, Muhiddin Kabiri, the leader of the Islamic Revival Party (IRPT), told Asia-Plus today that they have serious complaints and they will give a special news conference on this subject today. "Thy party board is currently discussing what to do under this situation," Kabiri said. As far as the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDPT) is concerned, Usmon Solehov, the head of the PDPT department for agitation and work with media, said that they were satisfied with the voting process as a whole. "Our party has inconsiderable critical remarks regarding the process of organization of elections, but we believe they will not affect the final results of elections," Solehov said.

The Central Commission for Elections and Referenda will announce preliminary results today afternoon, at 3:00 pm.

Geo strategic Front

- Russian first vice-premier visits Tajikistan

DUSHANBE, March 1, 2010, Asia-Plus -- President Emomali Rahmon is receiving visiting Russian First Deputy Prime Minister, Igor Shuvalov, today, according to presidential press service. The sides are expected to discuss state and prospects of further expansion of bilateral mutually beneficial cooperation Tajikistan and the Russian Federation. According to the MFA information department, Igor Shuvalov arrived in Dushanbe yesterday evening.

- OSCE says Tajik elections failed to meet many key OSCE commitments

DUSHANBE, March 1, 2010, Asia-Plus -- Yesterday's parliamentary elections took place peacefully, but despite certain small positive steps failed to meet many key OSCE commitments, the international election observation mission concluded in a preliminary statement issued today.

The observers noted that higher-level election commissions were more inclusive than in previous elections. But they also highlighted serious irregularities on election day, including a high prevalence of family and proxy voting and cases of ballot box stuffing.

The election law included significant shortcomings such as insufficient guarantees for an inclusive and pluralistic composition of election commissions and lack of safeguards relating to voter registration, campaigning and election day procedures.

Despite efforts to promote public awareness, the election campaign had a low profile. Some parties and candidates provided voters with political alternatives. Instances of violations or inconsistent application of campaign regulations hindered the establishment of a level playing field. While the pre-election media environment appeared to have been less controlled, state television news coverage of campaign activities was almost completely absent, limiting voters' ability to make an informed choice.

"I'm happy that election day took place in a generally good atmosphere, but I'm even more disappointed that these elections failed on many basic democratic standards. Such

serious irregularities weaken genuine democratic progress. There is still a long way to go, and hopefully the new parliament will take up this challenge," said Pia Christmas-Moeller, Special Coordinator of the OSCE short-term observers and Vice-President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly.

"Through our presence in the country and this joint assessment of the election, we want to underline the importance of further developing the European Parliament's co-operation with the newly elected Tajik parliament," said Elisabeth Jeggle, Head of the European Parliament delegation.

"This election saw a certain level of pluralism, but unfortunately the stated will of the authorities to follow democratic procedures did not translate into concrete measures to address the significant shortcomings that marred the campaign environment and election day," said Artis Pabriks, Head of the long-term election observation mission of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR).

- Rahmon, Medvedev discuss bilateral cooperation

DUSHANBE, March 5, 2010, Asia-Plus -- President Emomali Rahmon yesterday afternoon had a telephone conversation with his Russian counterpart, President Dmitry Medvedev, according to presidential press service.

The two discussed state and prospects of further expansion of bilateral mutually beneficial cooperation between Tajikistan and the Russian Federation as well as the progress of implementation of agreements reached during their last meetings.

Rahmon and Medvedev also exchanged views on the agendas and organizational aspects of the upcoming meetings of heads of state of the CIS, CSTO and SCO as well as ways to strengthen and improve activities of these organizations.

They also considered a number of regional and international issues being of mutual interest, presidential press service said. According to Russian media, the presidents also discussed plans of preparation of multilateral events in the first half-year of 2010, in particular, informal CIS summit that will take place in Moscow on May 8, joint participation in celebrations dedicated to the 65th anniversary of Victory in the Second Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945, the CSTO Collective Security session that will be held in St. Petersburg in June and the St. Petersburg economic forum.

Economic/Energy Front

Social Front

- Tajik national football team climbs from 148th to 128th position in FIFA rankings

DUSHANBE, March 5, 2010, Asia-Plus - Tajikistan's national football team climbed from 148th to 128th position in the FIFA World Rankings that was updated on March 3, 2010.

Among the top five teams are Spain, Brazil, the Netherlands, Italy and Germany. It is to be noted that Tajikistan's best result is the 118th position in 1997 and its worst result is the 180th position in 2003. The FIFA World Rankings is a ranking system for men's national teams in Association football, currently led by Spain. The teams of the member nations of FIFA, football's world governing body, are ranked based on their game results with the most successful teams being ranked highest. The rankings were introduced in 1992, and six teams (Argentina, Brazil, France, Germany, Italy and Spain) have held the top position, of which Brazil have spent longest ranked first.

A point system is used, with points being awarded based on the results of FIFA-recognized international matches. Under the existing system, rankings are based on a team's performance over the last four years, with more recent results and more significant matches being more heavily weighted to help reflect the current competitive state of a team.

Turkmenistan

Political Front

- **Turkmen Leader Calls For Liberalizing Criminal Code**

ASHGABAT -- Turkmen President Gurbanguly Berdymukhammedov has called on the State Security Council to increase public influence on reforming the country's Criminal Code in accordance with international standards, RFE/RL's Turkmen Service reports.

Berdymukhammedov also called for an improvement in the performance of law enforcement agencies and proposed reducing the maximum prison sentence for any crime to 15 years -- as it was during the Soviet era -- instead of the current maximum of 25 years.

He also suggested that for some minor crimes convicts should be allowed to pay a fine instead of going to jail.

Ashgabat-based political analyst Ashyrguly Bayriev tells RFE/RL that he welcomes Berdymukhammedov's proposals, adding that their implementation would give hope for democratic developments to take place in Turkmenistan.

The Turkmen Initiative for Human Rights and Turkmenistan's Independent Lawyers Association issued a joint report last month in which they stated that Turkmenistan's incarceration rate is one of the highest in the world. The report blamed the country's strict Criminal Code for prison overcrowding, leading to poor health conditions in jails.

- **President of Turkmenistan severely reprimands chairman of state enterprise on Caspian Sea**

President of Turkmenistan Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov severely reprimanded Toyly Komekov, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Chairman of the State Enterprise for the Caspian Sea under the President of Turkmenistan.

As the Turkmenistan.ru correspondent reports quoting the press service of the Turkmen leader, the President signed a decree reprimanding Toyly Komekov "for unsatisfactory performance of official duties and drawbacks in work." Toyly Komekov has been warned that if he fails to correct promptly the drawbacks he will be relieved of his duties, the press-service said.

Geo strategic Front

- **First Turkmen-Georgian political consultations held in Ashgabat**

The first bilateral Turkmen-Georgian consultations at the level of deputy foreign ministers were held in Ashgabat on March 4. The Georgian delegation was headed by Deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Nalbandov. The Turkmen delegation was led by the First Deputy Foreign Minister Vepa Khadzhiyev.

As the Turkmenistan.ru correspondent reports quoting the press service of the Foreign Ministry of Turkmenistan, the participants discussed a wide range of issues related to strengthening and intensification of Turkmen-Georgian cooperation. The sides noted the existing huge potential in the field of trade and economic partnership and agreed on

concrete steps for its implementation. Contacts in the humanitarian field, especially in education and science were a separate topic of discussions.

- Presidents of Turkmenistan and Russia talk over phone

A telephone conversation between President of Turkmenistan Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov and President of Russia Dmitriy Medvedev took place on March 4. According to the Kremlin press service, the conversation was part of the regular exchange of views on topical issues of bilateral cooperation and interaction in international affairs.

The heads of state discussed the preparation of meetings for the near future, in particular the informal meeting of the CIS heads of state in Moscow on 8 May 2010, and joint participation in ceremonies to mark the 65th anniversary of the Victory in the Great Patriotic War, as well as plans for visits by the President of Turkmenistan to Russian regions.

Gurbanguly Berdimukhammedov once again invited Dmitry Medvedev to pay an official visit to Turkmenistan, the dates of which will be agreed through the diplomatic channels.

Economic/Energy Front

- President of Turkmenistan receives U.S. State Department special envoy for Eurasian energy

The United States attaches great importance to strengthen the constructive dialogue with Turkmenistan, which is viewed as a responsible and reliable partner. This was stated by the U.S. State Department special envoy for Eurasian energy issues, Richard Morningstar, at a meeting with Turkmen President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov.

As the Turkmenistan.ru correspondent reports from Ashgabat quoting the press service of the head of state, the President of Turkmenistan and his guest discussed prospects of partnership in the energy industry. Richard Morningstar emphasized the growing interest of the world's largest companies, including American companies, in intensifying business contacts with Turkmen partners in the oil and gas sector.

According to Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov, Turkmenistan builds its policy on the basis of national economic interests and principles of equal and mutually beneficial cooperation. "This is the aim of our strategy of modernization and development of the fuel and energy sector, a key aspect of which is to diversify export routes for Turkmen energy resources," he said.

- EU supports Turkmenistan's energy strategy

The European Union supports the reformist policies of Turkmenistan, said the EU special representative for Central Asia, Pierre Morel, during a meeting with Turkmen President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov in Ashgabat on March 2.

The EU representative also stressed that leading European companies "expressed great interest in joining the ongoing projects in the promising Turkmen fuel and energy sector, as well as in the intensification of business relations in other sectors."

As the Turkmenistan.ru correspondent reports from Ashgabat quoting the press service of the head of state, in this context the sides noted the importance of the Memorandum of Understanding and Cooperation between Turkmenistan and the European Union in the field of energy signed in May 2008 that "laid the ground for productive partnership in this important area."

According to Pierre Morel, "this process gains new momentum owing to Turkmenistan's strategy for development of the national fuel and energy sector based on its modernization and diversification of routes for exports of Turkmen energy resources to the world markets."

Social Front

Dashoguz to host festival of Turkmen-Uzbek friendship

A festival of friendship between fraternal Turkmen and Uzbek peoples will be held in the city of Dashoguz on 17-19 September 2010. It will be organized by the Ministry of Culture and Broadcasting of Turkmenistan and administration of Dashoguz province.

As the Turkmenistan.ru correspondent reports from Ashgabat, President of Turkmenistan Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov signed a resolution to this effect in the course of the February 26 meeting of the Cabinet of Ministers. He instructed relevant officials to ensure the proper level of organization of the festival and approved the composition of the festival's organizing committee.

- OSCE supports reforms on democratization of Turkmen society

A meeting was held at the Mejlis with representatives of the OSCE missions dealing with Central Asia, who arrived in Turkmenistan on a working visit. The guests were briefed on the structure and areas of legislative work of the Parliament of Turkmenistan and discussed the current state and prospects of cooperation on a number of topical issues, the Turkmenistan.ru correspondent reports from Ashgabat referring to the official report.

"The successful implementation of reforms on democratization of the Turkmen society, active foreign policy of the head of state have the support of the OSCE missions who are ready to implement new joint projects with the Turkmen partners," the report says.

Representatives of the OSCE noted the productivity of work of the country's parliament in the sphere of national-legal implementation of the norms of international law and reaffirmed their interest in the further development of the constructive dialogue.

During the visit, the OSCE delegation held talks at the Foreign Ministry of Turkmenistan, National Institute for Democracy and Human Rights under the President of Turkmenistan, the Ministry of Nature Protection. Today the delegation is scheduled to visit Mary province.

Uzbekistan

Political Front

- Uzbekistan's Top Education Officials Fired

TASHKENT -- Uzbek President Islam Karimov has sacked the country's top education officials, RFE/RL's Uzbek Service reports.

Ministry officials told RFE/RL that National Education Minister Ghairat Shoumarov and Higher and Middle Professional Education Minister Azimjon Parpiev were fired on February 26 according to a presidential decree.

Tashkent-based independent journalist Sharof Ubaydullaev told RFE/RL that the presidential order is timely since Uzbekistan's education system is extremely corrupt. He said the sacking of the country's top education officials is a sign of possible improvement in the situation.

But Uzbek scholar Faizulla Ishokov told RFE/RL that firing the two ministers will not bring any noticeable improvements to the country's education system. "The system has to be completely taken out of its roots as the real situation with bribes in the educational

system has such a solid base," she said. Uzbek students have been known to pay bribes to be accepted into certain faculties or universities and to receive passing grades on exams or to receive their diplomas without having done the requisite coursework.

Shoumarov served as the rector of the University of World Languages in Tashkent, while Parpiev was the rector of the Tashkent Textile Institute, before their ministerial appointments in 2008.

- Avazjon Marahimov appointed as public education minister

President of Uzbekistan Islam Karimov signed a decree on 2 March approving the appointment of Avazjon Rahimovich Marahimov to the post of the minister of public education.

On 1 March, the head of the state appointed new minister of higher and specialized secondary education, as well as chairmen of the State Demonopolization Committee and the State Property Committee.

- President appoints three Cabinet members

President of Uzbekistan Islam Karimov signed decrees on 1 March on appointing the new minister of higher and specialized secondary education, as well as chairmen of the State Demonopolization Committee and the State Property Committee. In accordance with the decrees, Bakhodir Khodiyev was appointed to the post of the minister of higher and specialized secondary education. Jahongir Ismailov has become the chairman of the State Committee for Demonopolization and Development of Competition.

Aziz Abduhakimov, previously first vice-chairman of the State Committee for State Property Management, will head this committee as acting chairman.

Geo strategic Front

- Checkpoint On Kyrgyz-Uzbek Border Closed

OSH -- The Kara-Suu checkpoint on the border between Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan has been closed, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports.

Cholponbek Turusbekov, the deputy head of Kyrgyzstan's Border Guard Service, told RFE/RL that the decision to close the border crossing March 1 was taken by Uzbekistan. He said that Uzbek officials attributed that decision to the "low number of people crossing the border at this segment of the Kyrgyz-Uzbek border." The Uzbek government introduced new regulations last month for Kyrgyz citizens who visit Uzbekistan regularly. Those regulations limit the number of times a Kyrgyz citizen may enter Uzbekistan to once every three months. Hundreds of thousands of ethnic Uzbeks with Kyrgyz passports live in southern Kyrgyzstan, particularly in the Osh region. Many of them have relatives on the other side of the border. Meanwhile, RFE/RL's Uzbek Service quotes Uzbek media as reporting that the checkpoint has been closed temporarily for renovation.

- The former Uzbek Ambassador in Moscow Ilhom Nematov is appointed as the Ambassador in USA

Ilhom Nematov America Ovozi (Uzbek Service of Voice of America) reports that Ilhom Nematov, the former Ambassador of Uzbekistan in Russia, arrived in Washington DC in order to lead the diplomatic mission in this country. The Radio Station informs that on February 26 new Uzbek Ambassador delivered the letter of credence to US Department of State. However, due to the business trip of Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, Nematov was met by her deputy Jim Steinberg.

It is also expected that US President Barack Obama will meet new Ambassador. Following this meeting, Nematov will officially become the Republic of Uzbekistan Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Ambassador in USA, America Ovozi says.

It is interesting to note although US Department of State confirmed the arrival of the new ambassador, neither Uzbek government nor Uzbek Embassy in Washington made official statements on this appointment.

Ilhom Nematov will replace Abdulaziz Kamilov, the current deputy Uzbek Foreign Minister that has good chances to become the Foreign Minister.

Nematov finished his mission in Russia before the agreed term. The resignation of the Ambassador at the beginning of February became unexpected event both for the embassy employees and Nematov himself.

Economic/Energy Front

- Uzbekistan, Japan sign exchange notes

Ambassador of Japan to Uzbekistan Tsutomu Hiraoka met Vice-Prime Minister of Uzbekistan Abdulla Aripov on 1 March. The sides discussed issues of development and implementation of joint projects.

At the end of the talks, the governments of Uzbekistan and Japan signed exchange notes in the framework of the Japanese government's cultural assistance program. In accordance with the document, Japan will allocate JPY 33.2 million (almost USD 330,000) for the project of improvement of the lighting and audiovisual equipment of the Alisher Navoi State Academic Theater of Uzbekistan in Tashkent. On 3 February, President of Uzbekistan signed a resolution on the effective use of the grant of the government of Japan, issued for the provision of the theater with special equipment.

"The signed document will serve to further development of cooperation between Uzbekistan and Japan in the field of culture," Ambassador Tsutomu Hiraoka said. Japan supports wide-scale reforms implemented in Uzbekistan. The two countries have established close cooperation in various areas, including culture. Currently, an Uzbek-Japanese archaeological expedition is exploring territories of Qoratepa, Kampirtepa and Dalvarzintepa in Surkhandarya region of Uzbekistan.

- Lufthansa returns to the market of Uzbekistan

German Lufthansa resumes the flights between Germany and Uzbekistan after nine-year break, Deutsche Welle reports. On March 28 the carrier company is launching new flights, including such destinations as Miami, Teheran and Tashkent.

The Munich-Tashkent flight will be offered three times a week: on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Sundays at 8.30 pm. Tashkent-Munich flights will be carried by Boeing 737-800 on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, arriving in Munich at 10pm. The average flight duration is about 6 hours.

Bernhard Ludewig, the head of Lufthansa flight planning department in Europe, says that it has been nine years since the last Lufthansa flight to Uzbekistan. "Until 2001 we were flying from Frankfurt three times a week – Mr. Ludewig said. – However, after 9/11 the world flight connection has been changed and we had to shut down certain flights. In the following years we several times attempted to reopen this flight, but we also faced other events, such the war in Iraq, the threat of SARS and etch. In 2010 we are ready to fly to Tashkent". Mr. Ludewig noted that Lufthansa is planning to strengthen its positions in Central Asia.

Lufthansa representative also highlighted that Uzbekiston hova yollari has been the major carrier from Tashkent to Western Europe. "On this background, Lufthansa's offer is modest, but quite attractive".

Lufthansa provides air service to Central Asia, offering four flights from Frankfurt to Ashgabat (Turkmenistan) and daily flights to Kazakhstan. According to Mr. Ludewig, the flights to Tashkent will be demanded by businessmen, tourists and employees of international organizations

Social Front

- **Uzbek Citizen Killed On Kyrgyz-Uzbek Border**

KADAMJAY, Kyrgyzstan -- An Uzbek citizen has been shot dead near the Airybaz checkpoint on the Kyrgyz-Uzbek border, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports.

Cholponbek Turusbekov, the deputy chairman of Kyrgyzstan's Border Guard Service, told RFE/RL that Kyrgyz border guards opened fire today at a vehicle that ignored their demand to stop and continued across the border, which is in the southwestern Batken region. The car's driver was killed. Turusbekov said the Border Guard Service has set up a special commission to investigate the incident and the results will be made public when it is completed.

- **Dashoguz to host festival of Turkmen-Uzbek friendship**

A festival of friendship between fraternal Turkmen and Uzbek peoples will be held in the city of Dashoguz on 17-19 September 2010. It will be organized by the Ministry of Culture and Broadcasting of Turkmenistan and administration of Dashoguz province.

As the Turkmenistan.ru correspondent reports from Ashgabat, President of Turkmenistan Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov signed a resolution to this effect in the course of the February 26 meeting of the Cabinet of Ministers. He instructed relevant officials to ensure the proper level of organization of the festival and approved the composition of the festival's organizing committee.

- **Innovations fair held in Tashkent**

About 130 contracts worth a total of over UZS 3.2 billion were signed at the Third National Innovative Ideas, Technologies and Projects Fair held at UzExpoCenter on 1-3 March.

The forum was organized in the framework of implementation of the tasks set by President of Uzbekistan Islam Karimov to speed up modernization and re-equipment of production and increase production of competitive products. Ministries, departments, associations, banks, state and private companies from various sectors, scientific and educational establishments, scientific and technological centers, as well as individual inventors participated in the fair.

Over 600 prospective innovative projects and samples of highly technological equipment for industry and agriculture, healthcare and pharmaceutical sector, information technologies, science and education were presented at the forum.

The fair participants had the opportunity to discuss expansion of collaboration between science and industry at the practical seminars on intellectual property management, technology transfer and other topics.

On the last day of the fair, a round table on Innovative Development of Uzbekistan: Problems and Perspectives developed recommendations on development of innovative economy in the country.

The fair competed with the awarding ceremony of the winners of the best projects contest, which was held in 14 nominations, covering all sectors and areas presented at the forum.

Deputy Prime Minister of Uzbekistan Abdulla Aripov participated in the closing and awarding ceremonies of the third innovations fair.

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