

**Business & Politics in the Muslim World**  
**News Monitoring**  
**March 5 to 12, 2010**  
**Weekly Report**  
**Central Asia**  
**Uzma Siraj**

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- Azerbaijan President strongly condemns decision of U.S. House of Representatives committee on foreign affairs
- Baku to host meeting on Caspian security

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### **Turkmenistan**

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- Uzbek President signs resolution on developing ties with Korea

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- Forced Move Puts Central Asian Library's Rare Collection At Risk
- Torture, abuse mark Uzbekistan's rights record: U.S.

### **Summery**

#### **Azerbaijan**

#### **Political Front**

#### **Geo Strategic Front**

- Berezovsky Says Azerbaijan And Armenia Should Not Trust Russia

LONDON -- Former Russian oligarch Boris Berezovsky has told RFE/RL's Azerbaijani Service that Armenia and Azerbaijan should not look to Moscow to help solve the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Berezovsky, who lives in self-imposed exile in Britain, said Russia will always impede efforts to resolve the conflict.

- Polish PM Talks Economy In Georgia, Energy In Azerbaijan

TBILISI -- Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk is in Georgia on a visit aimed at boosting economic ties, as he continues a tour of the South Caucasus.

- Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Meets With Minsk Group Co-Chairs  
YEREVAN -- Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov says Baku accepts "with some exceptions" the revised "Madrid Principles" for resolving the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, RFE/RL's Armenian Service reports.

- 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.

- Baku to host meeting on Caspian security

Deputy foreign ministers of Caspian littoral states will convene in the Azeri capital Thursday to discuss security in the Caspian Sea.

### **Economic /Energy Front**

- Azerbaijan's prime minister meets IMF officials

Prime Minister of Azerbaijan Artur Rasizade met International Monetary Fund's representatives Ratna Sahay and Nienke Oomes

### **Social Front**

- Jailed Azerbaijani Bloggers' Appeal Rejected

The Baku appeals court has upheld the prison sentences handed down last November to bloggers Adnan Hajizada and Emin Milli, RFE/RL's Azerbaijani Service reports.

- Rights Envoy Concerned By Azerbaijan's Jailed Journalists

Council of Europe Human Rights Commissioner Thomas Hammarberg has expressed concern that some journalists in Azerbaijan have been imprisoned on fabricated charges of hooliganism, RFE/RL's Azerbaijani Service reports.

### **Kazakstan**

#### **Political Front**

- Ex-Kazatomprom Chief Jailed For 14 Years

ASTANA -- A court in the Kazakh capital has sentenced Mukhtar Dzhakishev, the former head of state nuclear company Kazatomprom, to 14 years in prison.

- Majilis ratifies Baikonur agreement

(SRI) - Majilis, the lower house of Kazakhstan's parliament, ratified an agreement on Russia's use of the Baikonur Cosmodrome on Wednesday, the Kazinform news agency reported.

#### **Geo Strategic Front**

### **Economic /Energy Front**

- Court Orders Kazakh Oil Workers Back On The Job

A court in southwestern Kazakhstan has ruled that a strike by several thousand workers at an oil producing subsidiary of KazMunayGaz is illegal, RFE/RL's Kazakh Service reports.

- KazMunaiGas EP says strike output loss rises

ALMATY, March 10 (Reuters) - Kazakh oil producer KazMunaiGas Exploration and Production (KMGq.L: Quote, Profile, Research) RDGZ.KZ said on Wednesday daily output loss from a strike at its OzenMunaiGas (OMG) unit was increasing.

### **Social Front**

- Fugitive Kazakh Banker Blames Nazarbaev's Relative For Strike

ZHANA OZEN, Kazakhstan -- A former Kazakh banker has accused President Nursultan Nazarbaev's son-in-law of prompting a strike by several thousand workers at an oil facility in southwestern Kazakhstan, RFE/RL's Kazakh Service reports.

- **Kazakh Dams Break, Causing Evacuations And Deaths**

ALMATY (Reuters) -- Thousands of people have been evacuated and some killed in Kazakhstan after severe floods destroyed several dams in the south of the Central Asian state, the Emergencies Ministry said.

- **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 Opposition Party Demands President And His Son Resign**

BISHKEK -- The Kyrgyz opposition Ata-Meken (Fatherland) party has demanded that President Kurmanbek Bakiev and his son resign, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports.

- **Protesters Try To Send Presidential Son Into Exile**

NARYN, Kyrgyzstan -- Some 3,000 people rallied today in the central Kyrgyz city of Naryn to demand that President Kurmanbek Bakiev's son, Maksim, resign as head of a state agency and leave the country, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports.

- **U.S. General's Kyrgyz Visit Rivals Russian Influence**

BISHKEK (Reuters) -- U.S. General David Petraeus has arrived in Kyrgyzstan, a day after the United States said it would build an antiterrorism training center for the former Soviet republic in Central Asia.

- **U.S. Says No Plan For Base In Southern Kyrgyzstan**

BISHKEK -- The U.S. Embassy in Kyrgyzstan says the United States does not plan to have a military base in southern Kyrgyzstan, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports.

- **U.S. To Set Up Antiterrorism Center In Southern Kyrgyzstan**

BISHKEK -- The United States says it will help to set up an antiterrorism training center in the southern Kyrgyz city of Batken, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports.

- **Kyrgyzstan to open its Embassy in Afghanistan**

The press-service of the President Secretariat reported: Kyrgyzstan will open its Embassy in Afghanistan.

### **Economic /Energy Front**

- **Computerization of the State Tax Service**

Almazbek Kochkorov, the head of the project "Restructuring and modernization of tax administration of Kyrgyzstan" said at the meeting with large taxpayers that the State Tax System will be completely computerized in 2011.

### **Social Front**

- **Kyrgyz Rights Group Criticizes 'Attack On Press Freedom'**

BISHKEK -- A Kyrgyz rights group says it is seriously concerned by what it calls a coordinated attack by authorities on freedom of speech.

- **Kyrgyz Village Head Sacked For Beating Journalist**

OSH, Kyrgyzstan -- The head of a village in the southern Kyrgyz region of Osh has been sacked for beating a local journalist, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports.

- **Business Associate Of Kyrgyz President's Son Wanted By Italy**

BISHKEK -- A business associate of Kyrgyz President Kurmanbek Bakiyev's son says he will step down as head of his company after a warrant was issued for his arrest in Italy, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports.

- Kyrgyz Women Politicians, Activists March In Bishkek

Some 30 female politicians and rights activists marched in Bishkek today to raise the issue of women's rights on International Women's Day, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports.

## **Tajikistan**

### **Political Front**

- Tajik President Selects Veteran To Head His Office

DUSHANBE -- Tajik President Emomali Rahmon has appointed veteran economist Matlubkhon Davlatov to head the presidential office, RFE/RL's Tajik Service reports.

- CCR releases list of MPs elected through party-list system

DUSHANBE, March 6, 2010, Asia-Plus -- Tajikistan's Central Commission for Elections and Referenda (CCER) has released the list of members of the Majlisi Namoyandagon (Tajikistan's lower chamber of parliament) of the fourth convocation elected through a proportional, party list system from a single nationwide constituency.

- A number of government bodies reorganized in Tajikistan

DUSHANBE, March 9, 2010, Asia-Plus -- President Emomali Rahmon today signed a decree introducing changes to the government structure of the country.

- President Rahmon shakes up officials

DUSHANBE, March 11, 2010, Asia-Plus -- President Emomali Rahmon yesterday introduced a number of staff changes.

Rahmat Bobokalnov was appointed Minister of Land Reclamation and Water Resources replacing Said Yoqubzod, who was elected to the Majlisi Namoyandagon (Tajikistan's lower chamber of parliament).

### **Geo Strategic Front**

### **Economic /Energy Front**

- Four companies to compete for contract for development of Tajikistan's silver deposit

DUSHANBE, March 6, 2010, Asia-Plus -- The Government of Tajikistan has endorsed the short list of companies that will compete for the contract for development of the Konimansuri Kalon (Big Konimansur) silver deposit in the Tajik northern Sughd province, Asia-Plus has learned at the State Committee for Investments and State-owned Property Management (GosKomInvest).

- ADB director general visits Tajikistan

DUSHANBE, March 12, 2010, Asia-Plus -- Director General of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) Juan Miranda, accompanied by Deputy Director General Werner Liepach, and Senior Adviser Tatsuya Kanai will arrive in Tajikistan on March 15 to have talks with senior government officials and donors, according to ADB's Tajikistan Resident Mission (TJRM).

### **Social Front**

- Sheikh Tantawi, Prominent Sunni Muslim Voice, Dead At 81

(RFE/RL) -- One of the most prominent and respected moderate voices in the Sunni Muslim world, Sheikh Muhammad Sayed Tantawi, died today during a visit to Saudi Arabia. He was 81.

- Dushanbe celebrates 1200th anniversary of Imam Bukhari

DUSHANBE, March 11, 2010, Asia-Plus -- A republican scientific-practical conference devoted to the 1200th anniversary of the imam of hadith, Muhammad Ibn Ismail, popularly known as Al-Bukhari or Imam Bukhari, will take place in Dushanbe on March 12.

### **Turkmenistan**

#### **Political Front**

#### **Geo Strategic Front**

- Russian Foreign Minister to visit Turkmenistan

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov will visit Turkmenistan on March 15-16, RIA Novosti reported with reference to the Russian Foreign Ministry's spokesman Andrei Nesterenko.

#### **Economic /Energy Front**

#### **Social Front**

- Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov congratulates Turkmen women on International Women's Day

President of Turkmenistan Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov sent a congratulatory message to the fellow countrywomen. The message was published in the country's central print press.

### **Uzbekistan**

#### **Political Front**

#### **Geo Strategic Front**

#### **Economic /Energy Front**

- Japan allocates US\$457,679 to Uzbek projects

Japan allocates US\$457,679 to six projects within the no-string aid of the Government of Japan to grass-root projects. Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Japan to Uzbekistan Tsutoma Hiraoka will sign grant-contracts on 9 March 2010.

- Uzbek President signs resolution on developing ties with Korea

President of Uzbekistan Islam Karimov signed a resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers on realizing agreements, reached during the state visit of the President to the Republic of Korea, and further developing bilateral cooperation.

#### **Social Front**

- Activist's Arrest Sparks Protest In Uzbekistan

About 150 people in northeastern Uzbekistan have held a rally to protest the arrest of a local activist, RFE/RL's Uzbek Service reports.

- Forced Move Puts Central Asian Library's Rare Collection At Risk

TASHKENT -- One of the most prestigious libraries in Central Asia has been forced to move, potentially endangering some of its ancient and rare documents, RFE/RL's Uzbek Service reports.

- Torture, abuse mark Uzbekistan's rights record: U.S.

ALMATY (Reuters) - Uzbekistan jailed political opponents, routinely tortured prisoners and committed other serious rights violations last year, effectively making it Central Asia's most authoritarian state, the United States said.

## **Detailed Report**

### **Azerbaijan**

### **Political Front**

### **Geo Strategic Front**

- Berezovsky Says Azerbaijan And Armenia Should Not Trust Russia

LONDON -- Former Russian oligarch Boris Berezovsky has told RFE/RL's Azerbaijani Service that Armenia and Azerbaijan should not look to Moscow to help solve the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Berezovsky, who lives in self-imposed exile in Britain, said Russia will always impede efforts to resolve the conflict.

"It is in Russia's interest to make the conflict even more complicated in order to divide and rule," he said. Berezovsky said Russia's current leaders are neither experienced nor adequately educated. He said their primary interest is to exploit the Karabakh conflict to make money. Berezovsky, 64, added that the strategic interests of post-Soviet countries and Russia diverge. He said nobody will help the post-Soviet Eurasian states stand up to Russia's expansion and domination so they must rely on their own efforts.

Berezovsky said Western countries are mainly concerned with their own short-term interests. He said for that reason people in the former Soviet republics should be politically active and ready to fight for their freedoms every day.

Berezovsky served in 1998-99 as chairman of the Executive Committee of the secretariat of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). He was also the deputy secretary of Russia's Security Council during President Boris Yeltsin's term in office and a Duma deputy from 1999-2000. In 2001, he fled to Britain, where he obtained political asylum. The Russian authorities have launched several investigations into his business activities.

In 2007 a Moscow court found him guilty of embezzlement and sentenced him to six years in jail, accusing him of stealing some \$9 million from Aeroflot. He was charged in 2009 with theft of thousands of cars and sentenced him to 13 years in jail.

Berezovsky said the charges are politically motivated.

- Polish PM Talks Economy In Georgia, Energy In Azerbaijan

TBILISI -- Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk is in Georgia on a visit aimed at boosting economic ties, as he continues a tour of the South Caucasus.

Tusk was due to meet President Mikheil Saakashvili as well as opposition leaders. He also visited Polish members of the European Union Observer Mission in Georgia (EUMM). The EUMM -- comprising some 225 members -- is the only international mission monitoring areas near Georgia's breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, where tensions remain in the wake of the August 2008 war between Russia and Georgia. Tusk arrived in Tbilisi today from Baku, where energy issues were at the top of his agenda in meetings with officials including President Ilham Aliyev.

For several years Warsaw has been negotiating to have supplies of Baku's crude oil reach Poland through a planned extension of the Odesa-Brody pipeline to Plock, a town in the

north of Poland. After talks on March 10, Tusk said it was time to give new impetus to this initiative.

"Poland has already fairly done its part of the job, but the venture's success depends on more countries," he told the Polish Press Agency PAP. Currently, the Odesa-Brody pipeline carries Russian oil south from Brody to Odesa. If that direction were reversed and the pipeline extended, an existing pipeline could carry Azerbaijani oil to Georgia and from there it could be shipped to Odesa by tanker. From Ukraine it could be pumped via the extension to Poland. Some observers expressed disappointment that Azerbaijan's human rights situation reportedly was not part of Tusk's discussions with officials.

His visit coincided with a court hearing for two opposition bloggers jailed on what their supporters say were politically motivated charges.

However, Tusk reportedly did not raise the issue of the jailed activists, or meet with opposition or civil society representatives in Baku.

Razi Nurullayev, the deputy chairman of the opposition Popular Front Party, linked Tusk's apparent silence on human rights with the economic interests Poland is seeking to expand with Azerbaijan. "Poland is a country that has gone through a lot while fighting for independence and against socialism," Nurullayev told RFE/RL's Azerbaijani Service. "Then when they [eventually] established independence and democracy, they keep ignoring democratic efforts in other countries, including Azerbaijan. I think Poland is sacrificing fundamental freedoms for economic interests."

On March 12, Tusk is due to travel to Armenia.

- Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Meets With Minsk Group Co-Chairs

YEREVAN -- Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov says Baku accepts "with some exceptions" the revised "Madrid Principles" for resolving the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, RFE/RL's Armenian Service reports.

Mammadyarov met in Paris on March 6 with the co-chairs to discuss the most recent amendments to those basic principles, a statement on the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) website said. Mammadyarov did not specify which points of the Madrid Principles Baku considers unacceptable.

The co-chairs unveiled the original Madrid Principles in November 2007. The new version was presented to the Armenian and Azerbaijani sides in December 2009 and January 2010, respectively. Both sides have since sent written comments and proposals to the co-chairs.

Neither the original nor subsequent texts have been made public in their entirety. But the original Madrid Principles are believed to include "a referendum or popular vote" at some unspecified future date on the status of Nagorno-Karabakh. Azerbaijan's Constitution, however, does not permit a referendum on the territorial-administrative structure of the country.

Moreover, the decision on Nagorno-Karabakh's future permanent legal status would be made only after the consequences of the conflict had been addressed, meaning after Armenian forces withdrew from seven districts of Azerbaijan contiguous to Nagorno-Karabakh that they occupied between 1991 and 1994.

The co-chairs also said they will meet in Paris at an unspecified date later this month with Armenian Foreign Minister Eduard Nalbandian. Nalbandian is scheduled to accompany Armenian President Serzh Sarkisian on a state visit to France that starts March 9.

- 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.

- Baku to host meeting on Caspian security

Deputy foreign ministers of Caspian littoral states will convene in the Azeri capital Thursday to discuss security in the Caspian Sea.

The 2-day meeting will also be attended by representatives of border services, customs committees, interior ministries and ministries for emergencies.

Agreements to be reached at the gathering will be included in the agenda of an upcoming meeting of presidents of Caspian littoral states.

### **Economic /Energy Front**

- Azerbaijan's prime minister meets IMF officials

Prime Minister of Azerbaijan Artur Rasizade met International Monetary Fund's representatives Ratna Sahay and Nienke Oomes.

The IMF officials praised the fact that Azerbaijan managed to survive the global financial crisis. They described the GDP growth rate in Azerbaijan in 2009 as "the highest indicator across the world."

They also noted due to preventive measures by the Azerbaijani government, the inflation was dramatically declined in the country, while the poverty level decreased to 11 percent.

They also discussed other issues including improvements in institutional and management reforms, development of non-oil sector and plans to use effectively the Oil Foundation's revenues.

### **Social Front**

- Jailed Azerbaijani Bloggers' Appeal Rejected

The Baku appeals court has upheld the prison sentences handed down last November to bloggers Adnan Hajizada and Emin Milli, RFE/RL's Azerbaijani Service reports.

Hajizada's lawyer, Isaxan Asurov, told RFE/RL that the decision is "unfair, illegal, and biased." The two men became famous for posting satirical comments on the Internet about the political situation in Azerbaijan. In one such posting, a donkey tells journalists how well the government treats donkeys.

The two bloggers were detained last July after a scuffle at a restaurant. They said they were victims of an unprovoked attack, but police charged them with hooliganism and inflicting minor bodily harm.

A Baku district court found them guilty in November and sentenced Hajizada to two and Milli to 2 1/2 years in prison. Their lawyers appealed those sentences, questioning the fairness of the preliminary investigation and the trial.

The appeal process started in December and was postponed several times due to the absence of either lawyers or witnesses, heavy snowfall, or insufficient time to become familiarized with the investigation materials.

International human rights organizations and politicians from several Western governments have criticized the jailing of the bloggers.

- **Rights Envoy Concerned By Azerbaijan's Jailed Journalists**

Council of Europe Human Rights Commissioner Thomas Hammarberg has expressed concern that some journalists in Azerbaijan have been imprisoned on fabricated charges of hooliganism, RFE/RL's Azerbaijani Service reports.

Hammarberg was speaking on March 5 at a press conference at the end of a five-day visit to Azerbaijan during which he met with government officials and opposition politicians. He also visited the Naxcivan Autonomous Republic, where human rights violations have been reported.

Hammarberg told journalists he will monitor the cases of journalists and bloggers jailed for criticizing the country's leadership, including Eynulla Fatullayev, editor of the independent newspaper "Realny Azerbaijan."

Additionally, bloggers Adnan Hajizada and Emin Milli have been jailed since July on hooliganism charges. Human rights organizations and many western governments have called the charges against the bloggers politically motivated because of their opposition activities.

### **Kazakastan**

#### **Political Front**

- **Ex-Kazatomprom Chief Jailed For 14 Years**

ASTANA -- A court in the Kazakh capital has sentenced Mukhtar Dzhakishev, the former head of state nuclear company Kazatomprom, to 14 years in prison.

Dzhakishev's lawyer, Nurlan Beysekeev, confirmed the sentence to reporters outside the courtroom. Dzhakishev was accused of financial crimes, charges he denied and said were politically motivated. Kazakh prosecutors announced at the start of this month that there was a new investigation into allegations that Dzhakishev was involved in money laundering. Dzhakishev took over as head of Kazatomprom in 1998, taking a nearly bankrupt company and turning it into the world's biggest producer of uranium, a feat accomplished last year just a few months after Dzhakishev's arrest.

- **Majilis ratifies Baikonur agreement**

(SRI) - Majilis, the lower house of Kazakhstan's parliament, ratified an agreement on Russia's use of the Baikonur Cosmodrome on Wednesday, the Kazinform news agency reported.

The agreement, signed in January 2004, extends Russia's lease of the facility until 2050 and envisions for Russia to phase out the Proton rockets that use highly toxic fuel in favor of more environmentally friendly Angara rockets

#### **Geo Strategic Front**

#### **Economic /Energy Front**

- **Court Orders Kazakh Oil Workers Back On The Job**

A court in southwestern Kazakhstan has ruled that a strike by several thousand workers at an oil producing subsidiary of KazMunayGaz is illegal, RFE/RL's Kazakh Service reports. At court proceedings in the town of Zhanaozen initiated by Ozenmunaygaz's parent company, Exploration Production KazMunayGaz, the workers were also ordered to return to their jobs.

The workers have officially been on strike since March 4, although they began work stoppages three days earlier. Ikhlas Shangereev, trade union chairman at one of Ozenmunaygaz's units, told RFE/RL on March 10 that the strikers have not yet received the court decision.

He added that the court ruled that each worker who has been on strike since March 4 must pay 707 tenge (\$5).

Striking worker Tabyn Ergenov told RFE/RL that the protesters will not end the strike before a new pay system is reviewed and the Ozenmunaygaz management is sacked.

On February 23, new Ozenmunaygaz Director Bagytkali Biseken issued an official decree according to which the "industry" salary ratio was replaced by a "regional" ratio. Many workers said that their salaries decreased as a result. The management said salaries actually increased by a small percentage. No compromise was found during strike negotiations between the workers, on one side, and Exploration Production KazMunayGaz CEO Kenzhebek Ibrashev and Biseken on the other.

- **KazMunaiGas EP says strike output loss rises**

ALMATY, March 10 (Reuters) - Kazakh oil producer KazMunaiGas Exploration and Production (KMGq.L: Quote, Profile, Research) RDGZ.KZ said on Wednesday daily output loss from a strike at its OzenMunaiGas (OMG) unit was increasing.

"As provisionally estimated on 10 March 2010, the loss of daily production at OMG has reached 700 tonnes per day compared to estimated losses of 200-400 tonnes per day in the earlier days of the industrial action," it said in a statement.

"The impact on the company's full year production will depend on how quickly the production at OMG is stabilized."

KazMunaiGas EP said last week OMG workers protested against a new pay structure which cut bonus payments in favour of regular wages.

On Wednesday it said a local court had declared the strike illegal. (Writing by Olzhas Auyezov; Editing by Greg Mahlich)

### **Social Front**

- **Fugitive Kazakh Banker Blames Nazarbaev's Relative For Strike**

ZHANAOKEN, Kazakhstan -- A former Kazakh banker has accused President Nursultan Nazarbaev's son-in-law of prompting a strike by several thousand workers at an oil facility in southwestern Kazakhstan, RFE/RL's Kazakh Service reports.

Mukhtar Ablyazov, the exiled former top manager of the BTA Bank, said on March 11 in an address to the strikers that the owner of the facility, Ozenmunaygaz, is controlled by Timur Kulibaev, Nazarbaev's son-in-law, through its parent company.

Thousands of workers went on strike on March 4 at the Ozenmunaygaz facility in the town of Zhanaozen.

In his statement on the "Respublika" website, Ablyazov said Ozenmunaygaz is "lying" when it says it does not have enough money to give the striking workers a wage increase.

He accused Kulibaev of embezzling funds from KazMunayGaz -- the parent company of Ozenmunaygaz -- and called on Kazakh political parties and citizens to support the strikers. Kulibaev is the chairman of the board of KazMunayGaz.

Striking worker Tabyn Ergenov told RFE/RL that no political party or nongovernmental organization has commented on the mass strike.

Ergenov added that the strikers' main demand is for Ozenmunaygaz's management to be sacked for violating "the constitutional rights of workers."

Daulet Zhumadil, a KazMunayGaz manager, told RFE/RL that 115 striking workers went back to work following a Zhanaozen court order on March 10 that the strike was illegal and workers should return to their jobs.

Kulibaev has been mentioned as a possible successor to Nazarbaev. He is deputy chairman of Samruk-Kazyna, the state body that oversees all Kazakh energy producers, including oil, natural gas, and nuclear companies.

Abylazov has lived in London since his BTA Bank was taken over by the Kazakh government last year. In recent weeks he has published on opposition websites various allegations about Kulibaev's involvement in corrupt business deals, including one in which the Chinese National Petroleum Corporation allegedly paid him tens of millions of dollars in bribes.

- **Kazakh Dams Break, Causing Evacuations And Deaths**

ALMATY (Reuters) -- Thousands of people have been evacuated and some killed in Kazakhstan after severe floods destroyed several dams in the south of the Central Asian state, the Emergencies Ministry said.

Spring flooding is a recurring problem in Central Asia but a sudden rise in temperatures following weeks of heavy snow storms has exacerbated the problem this year.

The Kazakh Emergencies Ministry said two dams had burst near the Kazakh financial capital Almaty when melt water swept through the area, flooding villages and causing mudslides.

"Some have died and their identity and number is being verified," the ministry said in a statement. It could give no further information when contacted by Reuters.

The Emergencies Ministry said the latest floods mainly affected two settlements, Zhylbulak and Kyzyl-Agash, where a total of about 4,000 people were evacuated to safer areas. Separately, it said a helicopter with eight people on board disappeared from radar screens today during a separate rescue operation in eastern Kazakhstan where several districts were cut off from the rest of the country by heavy snowstorms.

- **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 Haraszti 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 Opposition Party Demands President And His Son Resign

BISHKEK -- The Kyrgyz opposition Ata-Meken (Fatherland) party has demanded that President Kurmanbek Bakiev and his son resign, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports.

The party statement came after reports earlier this week that Italian authorities have issued a warrant for the arrest of Yevgeny Gurevich, a business associate of Bakiev's son, Maksim. Gurevich is accused of embezzling some \$2.7 billion from Italian telecom companies.

Gurevich is the head of the MGN Group, which has been involved in the Kyrgyz investment market since 2008. It has numerous holdings, including banks, and is one of Kyrgyzstan's most powerful conglomerates. Gurevich announced on March 10 that he is stepping down from MGN to "fix misunderstandings [that have] occurred in Italy."

MGN is also a major partner of Kyrgyzstan's Central Agency for Development and Investments, which is headed by the president's son, Maksim Bakiev. The agency was created by the president in November.

The Ata-Meken statement says "the state lobbied the interests of individuals, damaging national interests and creating conditions that enabled a private company to receive fantastic profits at the cost of the country's impoverishment."

Ata-Meken said that Gurevich should be arrested and Maksim Bakiev, who the party said "discredited himself with dubious financial and political projects," should resign from his post along with his father.

Roza Otunbaeva, the leader of the Social Democratic faction in parliament, said in parliament on March 11 that "the individual presented by Bakiev's

government as a financial genius [Gurevich] turned out to be an accountant for the Italian mafia."

Otunbaeva called on the pro-government Ak-Jol (Bright Path) party -- which holds and overwhelming majority in parliament -- to start putting the country's interests first.

- Protesters Try To Send Presidential Son Into Exile

NARYN, Kyrgyzstan -- Some 3,000 people rallied today in the central Kyrgyz city of Naryn to demand that President Kurmanbek Bakiev's son, Maksim, resign as head of a state agency and leave the country, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports.

Maksim Bakiev, 32, is the head of the Central Agency for Development and Investments, a newly created position that he was appointed to by his father on November 2.

The protesters demanded that Maksim Bakiev leave Kyrgyzstan by March 16 otherwise they will hold large protests in the region and make political demands. Demonstrators said the agency led by Bakiev has "misused its power" and made serious errors and miscalculations when privatizing "industrial facilities, mineral resources, and mines in the region." Protesters also demanded authorities lower prices for electricity and heating.

Maksim Bakiev "Dear people, I urge you to support me in demanding that Maksim Bakiev leave Kyrgyzstan within one week," one of the Naryn residents who addressed the rally, Tologon Kasymaliev, told the cheering crowd. "Please, join me in this demand."

Leading opposition activists and politicians arrived in Naryn to support the demonstrators, including former Kyrgyz Foreign Minister Roza Otunbaeva, who is the leader of the Social Democratic faction in parliament, and Temir Sariev, the leader of the opposition Ak Shumkar (White Falcon) party.

Naryn is Kyrgyzstan's largest region by territory and the area's capital, also called Naryn, has a population of some 52,000 people.

- Protesters Try To Send Presidential Son Into Exile

NARYN, Kyrgyzstan -- Some 3,000 people rallied today in the central Kyrgyz city of Naryn to demand that President Kurmanbek Bakiev's son, Maksim, resign as head of a state agency and leave the country, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports..

The visit comes a day after U.S. diplomats confirmed Washington will provide \$5.5 million to the Kyrgyz government toward the construction of a counterterrorism training center in southern Kyrgyzstan. The U.S. Embassy in Bishkek, in a "talking points" memo issued on March 9, said construction of the center will begin next year, and that it will belong to Kyrgyzstan.

The memo also stated that "the U.S. does not have and is not seeking to obtain a base in southern Kyrgyzstan." Nevertheless, Petraeus's visit today came amid speculation that the planned training center could irritate Russia, which has plans for a military base in that area, as well as regional actors like Iran, which today expressed concerns over the presence of "foreign military bases" in the region.

The meeting was not open to the media and was not followed by a press conference, but a statement on the Kyrgyz president's website said Petraeus thanked Kyrgyzstan for its support of the U.S.-led Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan.

U.S. military cargo continues to move through the Manas "transit center." Bakiev said that "all the main challenges and security threats to Central Asia" come from Afghanistan, adding, "Therefore, Kyrgyzstan is interested in providing security and stability in this country, and it will continue to offer its endeavor for rebuilding Afghanistan -- along with the international community."

- U.S. General's Kyrgyz Visit Rivals Russian Influence

BISHKEK (Reuters) -- U.S. General David Petraeus has arrived in Kyrgyzstan, a day after the United States said it would build an antiterrorism training center for the former Soviet republic in Central Asia.

Both the United States and Russia have military air bases in Kyrgyzstan, and the visit by Petraeus, head of U.S. Central Command, is likely to irritate Moscow, which sees the poor but strategically placed country as part of its sphere of influence.

The U.S. Embassy said Petraeus had arrived and would hold two days of talks with Kyrgyz officials but gave no details.

Kyrgyzstan alarmed the United States last year when it said it would close the U.S. Manas air force base after receiving a promise of \$2 billion in aid from Russia.

It later reversed its decision after Washington paid \$180 million to keep the base, vital for supplying U.S. forces in nearby Afghanistan.

Russia, while saying it does not see Washington as a strategic competitor in Central Asia, has made clear that the U.S. military presence is not welcome. The presence of the two bases has come to symbolise Russia-U.S. rivalry in the region.

On March 9, the U.S. Embassy said the \$5.5 million antiterrorist center would be built in Batken in southern Kyrgyzstan -- where Russian and Kyrgyz officials had earlier said Moscow might consider building a similar military facility.

The embassy rejected speculation that Washington wanted to open another military base in Kyrgyzstan, stressing that the new centre would belong to the Kyrgyz government.

Kyrgyzstan's Defense Ministry said it could not give any details.

Analysts say that Central Asia, a mainly Muslim but secular region, has become increasingly susceptible to militant ideas in the past few years because of deepening gloom about economic stagnation and poverty.

- U.S. Says No Plan For Base In Southern Kyrgyzstan

BISHKEK -- The U.S. Embassy in Kyrgyzstan says the United States does not plan to have a military base in southern Kyrgyzstan, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports.

The statement came in response to news that Washington is helping with the construction of a Kyrgyz antiterrorism center. U.S. Embassy officials told RFE/RL that a new antiterrorism center, to be built next year in the Batken district, will belong to Kyrgyzstan, not the United States.

The statement also says that the United States allocated \$5.5 million for the project at the Kyrgyz government's request. The construction of the center is a part of a wider project that includes a newly built military hospital in the village of Besh-Kungey as well as a training center for the Kyrgyz military's rapid reaction unit "Chayan" (Scorpion), in the nearby town of Tokmok. The U.S. provided several million dollars toward the construction of the new facilities.

The U.S. began using a military base at Manas airport outside of Bishkek in 2003 to deliver nonmilitary cargo to Afghanistan.

- U.S. To Set Up Antiterrorism Center In Southern Kyrgyzstan

BISHKEK -- The United States says it will help to set up an antiterrorism training center in the southern Kyrgyz city of Batken, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports.

A U.S. Embassy spokesperson told RFE/RL that the project will cost \$5.5 million. In October, the U.S. government helped to start construction on the infrastructure for the

Chayan (Scorpion) elite military unit in the southern town of Tokmok. That project could cost a total of \$9 million when finished.

In August 2009, Kyrgyz President Kurmanbek Bakiev and his Russian counterpart, Dmitry Medvedev, agreed to establish a Russian military base in southern Kyrgyzstan. There has been little done on the project since that agreement, however.

- 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**

- Computerization of the State Tax Service

Almazbek Kochkorov, the head of the project "Restructuring and modernization of tax administration of Kyrgyzstan" said at the meeting with large taxpayers that the State Tax System will be completely computerized in 2011.

He said the businessmen will get an opportunity to contact with tax officers directly from home or office. Taxmen's work will be also significantly simplified. Starting from the 1 January, the government has launched a project providing the concession of a tax declaration by means of the Internet. However, the project did not work at full capacity as the majority of Kyrgyzstanis were not informed about the program, Kochkorov said.

Besides that, the project of the Asian Development Bank will provide not only computerization of work process but also modernization of buildings and rooms of the Tax Servants.

The deployment of the automated taxation system would expedite processing functions, stamp out corruption and provide with transparent and qualitative work.

### **Social Front**

- Kyrgyz Rights Group Criticizes 'Attack On Press Freedom'

BISHKEK -- A Kyrgyz rights group says it is seriously concerned by what it calls a coordinated attack by authorities on freedom of speech.

In a statement, the For Democracy and Civil Society coalition said most Kyrgyz Internet users since March 10 had not been able to access popular news websites such as Fergana.ru and that broadcasts of RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service had been stopped in recent days.

In a statement, RFE/RL President Jeffrey Gedmin said, "The Kyrgyz government has been hostile to freedom of the press for some time. This incident is the latest effort by the government to restrict access to free, unbiased, and independent news. Unfortunately, as Freedom House noted in its most recent 'Freedom in the World' report, the situation is only getting worse."

The group and opposition party Ata Meken linked the moves to reports carried on the websites and on RFE/RL about an arrest warrant issued by The group and opposition

party Ata Meken linked the moves to reports carried on the websites and on RFE/RL about an arrest warrant issued by Italy for a business associate of President Kurmanbek Bakiev's son, Maksim.

- **Kyrgyz Village Head Sacked For Beating Journalist**

OSH, Kyrgyzstan -- The head of a village in the southern Kyrgyz region of Osh has been sacked for beating a local journalist, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports.

Kyrgyz human rights activist Noomanjan Davydov told RFE/RL on March 9 that Nurabad village head Kochkorbek Mamasaidov beat up Hashimjan Halbekov, a freelance journalist for the Uzbek-language newspaper "Osh sadosi" (Voice of Osh), on January 13.

Davydov said Halbekov is known for his thorough coverage of the activities of local authorities and Mamasaidov was not happy with his reports.

Halbekov was hospitalized and has had several operations. Local police are investigating the case.

- **Business Associate Of Kyrgyz President's Son Wanted By Italy**

BISHKEK -- A business associate of Kyrgyz President Kurmanbek Bakiev's son says he will step down as head of his company after a warrant was issued for his arrest in Italy, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports.

Yevgeny Gurevich, who is also known as Eugene Gourevitch, told journalists through a representative in Bishkek today that he is leaving all his posts to "fix misunderstandings [that have] occurred in Italy."

Italian media reported on March 9 that a judge in Rome had issued an arrest warrant for Gurevich, who is accused of embezzling some \$2.7 billion from divisions of Telecom Italia and the Fastweb telecom company between 2003 and 2006.

He is being charged with criminal conspiracy and money laundering as part of a bigger case involving dozens of others.

Gurevich has reportedly held a U.S. passport since 1990.

The MGN Group has been actively involved in the Kyrgyz investment market since 2008. It has numerous holdings, including banks, and is one of Kyrgyzstan's most powerful conglomerates. MGN became a major partner of Kyrgyzstan's Central Agency for Development and Investments, which is led by President Bakiev's son, Maksim Bakiev. The acronym MGN is thought by many to stand for Maksim, Gurevich, and Nadel, the last name of businessman Mikhail Nadel. Both Gurevich and Maksim Bakiev have repeatedly denied having business ties with each other.

Kyrgyzstan's state Development Fund, which reports directly to the president, announced today that it has annulled all agreements it has made with MGN.

- **Kyrgyz Women Politicians, Activists March In Bishkek**

Some 30 female politicians and rights activists marched in Bishkek today to raise the issue of women's rights on International Women's Day, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports. The demonstrators gathered near a monument to Soviet-era female activist Urkiya Salieva and marched to the monument of Kurmanzhan Datka, the 19th-century female ruler of Kyrgyzstan's southern regions. Former Foreign Minister Roza Otunbaeva, the leader of the opposition Social Democratic party faction in parliament, said during the march that although the government put up monuments to prominent female historical

figures, there are currently thousands of women facing domestic violence and other problems in the country who do not receive any attention or government support.

Aziza Abdyrasulova, chairwoman of the human rights organization Kylym Shamy (Torch of the Century), told RFE/RL that the goal of the march was to focus the government's attention on these problems.

In 2009, the number of women seeking shelter because of domestic violence against them increased by 40 percent over the previous year.

## **Tajikistan**

### **Political Front**

- Tajik President Selects Veteran To Head His Office

DUSHANBE -- Tajik President Emomali Rahmon has appointed veteran economist Matlubkhon Davlatov to head the presidential office, RFE/RL's Tajik Service reports.

Davlatov, 60, had taught economics at Tajik State University and then from 1991-2001 chaired the State Property Committee. He was later named head of the State Committee on State Spending and Finances, and in 2006 he was appointed a state adviser on economic affairs.

Tajik journalist Saymuddin Dustov told RFE/RL that Rahmon was likely seeking an experienced and loyal individual who could work professionally with different political and economic groups to ensure that presidential orders are implemented. Dustov said Davlatov would appear to fit that description.

But opposition politician Amniyat Abdalnazar suggested to RFE/RL that the main reason behind the appointment was not Davlatov's professionalism but the fact that he is thought to be Rahmon's uncle or otherwise related.

Former presidential office head Amirsho Miraliev stepped down after winning election to the lower chamber of the Tajik parliament on February 28.

- CCR releases list of MPs elected through party-list system

DUSHANBE, March 6, 2010, Asia-Plus -- Tajikistan's Central Commission for Elections and Referenda (CCER) has released the list of members of the Majlisi Namoyandagon (Tajikistan's lower chamber of parliament) of the fourth convocation elected through a proportional, party list system from a single nationwide constituency.

Five political parties managed to pass the 5 percent threshold needed to get a seat: People's Democratic Party (PDPT); the Islamic Revival Party (IRPT); the Communist Party (CPT); the Agrarian Party (APT); and the Party of Economic Reforms.

The People's Democratic Party:

1. Amirsho Miraliyev;
2. Akramsho Felaliyev;
3. Ms. Khairinisso Yusufi;
4. Ziyoratsho Sadullo;
5. Mahmadsarif Haqdodov;

6.  
Husein Aliyev;
7.  
Ms. Khadicha Hakimova;
8.  
Said Yoqubzod;
9.  
Nizom Qosimpuri Jahongir;
10.  
Ms. Munavvara Kenjayeva;
11.  
Ms. Bibidavlat Avazlshoyeva;
12.  
Jumaboy Sanginov;
13.  
Ms. Makhfirat Khidirova;
14.  
Bek Qurbonov;
15.  
Talbak Salimov;
16.  
Ms. Gulnora Hasanova.

The Islamic Revival Party:

1.  
Muhiddin Kabiri;
2.  
Umarali Hisainov.

The Communist Party:

1.  
Shodi Shabdolov;
2.  
Ismoil Talbakov.

The Agrarian Party:

1.  
Amir Qaraqulov.

The Party of Economic Reforms:

1.  
Mahmadsharif Nozimov.

Besides, the ruling PDPT won elections in 38 of 40 single-mandate constituencies, while voting will be re-run in the Konibodom constituency.

The PDPT member Nasrullo Mahmudov and candidate of the Social-Democratic Party (SDPT) Shokirjon Hakimov are competing for a seat in parliament in the Konibodom constituency. Since none of the contenders managed to win an absolute majority during

the first round, the second round of voting will take place in this constituency on March 14. Two other seats in the single-mandate constituencies were split between APT and the Party of Economic Reforms.

Thus, PDPT won 54 seats out of 63 in the Majlisi Namoyndagon in the February 28 poll. The results mean little will change from the previous parliament where PDPT held 57 seats.

- A number of government bodies reorganized in Tajikistan

DUSHANBE, March 9, 2010, Asia-Plus -- President Emomali Rahmon today signed a decree introducing changes to the government structure of the country.

By president's decree the State Committee for Statistics has been reorganized into the Agency for Statistics under the President of Tajikistan. The Agency for Land Management, Geodesy and Cartography has been reorganized into the State Committee for Land Management, Geodesy and Cartography.

By president's decree the Committee for Religious Affairs and the Antimonopoly Agency have been established under the Government of Tajikistan.

Besides, the Agency for Commodities Procurements, Services and Works and Organization of Exchange Activities within the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade has been reorganized into the Agency for Commodities Procurements, Services and Works and Organization of Exchange Activities under the Government of Tajikistan and the Agency for Special Property within the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade has been reorganized into the Agency for Special Property under the Government of Tajikistan. The government is to take measures to ensure implementation of the decree within a three-month period.

- President Rahmon shakes up officials

DUSHANBE, March 11, 2010, Asia-Plus -- President Emomali Rahmon yesterday introduced a number of staff changes.

Rahmat Bobokalnov was appointed Minister of Land Reclamation and Water Resources replacing Said Yoqubzod, who was elected to the Majlisi Namoyandagon (Tajikistan's lower chamber of parliament).

Mahmadtohir Zokirov was appointed to head the State Committee for Land Management, Geodesy and Cartography. Jumakhon Davlatov was appointed State Adviser to the President for Policy of Law.

Ms. Bakhtiya Muhamamdiyeva was appointed Director of the Agency for Statistics under the President of Tajikistan, and Asvat Asoyev was appointed the First Deputy Director of this Agency. Asvat Asoyev was appointed Deputy Director of the Agency for Statistics under the President of Tajikistan.

Ms. Gulnora Hasanova was appointed Chairperson of Amonatbank (Tajikistan's savings bank). Lolakhon Rahmonov was appointed Director of the Agency for Special Property under the Government of Tajikistan, and Mahmadzohir Sohibov was appointed Director the Agency for Commodities Procurements, Services and Works and Organization of Exchange Activities under the Government of Tajikistan.

Amonullo Ashour was appointed to head the Antimonopoly Agency under the Government of Tajikistan.

Emin Sanginov was appointed the First Deputy Minister of Labor and Social Protection, Sulton Rahmatov was appointed the First Deputy Minister of Land Reclamation and

Water Resources, Ms. Munavvara Ismoilova was appointed the First Deputy Chairperson of the State Committee for Land Management, Geodesy and Cartography, and Nusratullo Nozaninov and Sharofiddin Bobonazarov were appointed Deputy Chairmen of the State Committee for Land Management, Geodesy and Cartography.

Jamoliddin Nouraliyev was appointed the first Deputy Minister of Finance, and Rajabali Rajabov was appointed Deputy Minister of Finance.

Besides, Abdusattor Rajabov was appointed to head the defense and law and order department within the President's Executive Office, and Nourali Riroyev was appointed head of the organizing department within the President's Executive Office.

Ms. Gavhar Sharofova was appointed Director of the Civil Servants Training Institute under the President of Tajikistan.

### **Geo Strategic Front**

#### **Economic /Energy Front**

- Four companies to compete for contract for development of Tajikistan's silver deposit

DUSHANBE, March 6, 2010, Asia-Plus -- The Government of Tajikistan has endorsed the short list of companies that will compete for the contract for development of the Konimansuri Kalon (Big Konimansur) silver deposit in the Tajik northern Sughd province, Asia-Plus has learned at the State Committee for Investments and State-owned Property Management (GosKomInvest).

The government approved the short list on March 2 and four companies are on this list, namely BHP Billiton from the Netherlands, which is a leading global natural resources company, Zijin Mining, which is one of the largest Chinese gold producers, Jinchuan Group Ltd (JNMC), which is largest Chinese nickel and cobalt producer, and a consortium grouping Kaztsink (Kazakhstan), Glenore International (Switzerland), Kominmasur (Kazakhstan) and ore refinery Adrasman (Tajikistan), the source at GosKomInvest said. According to him the mentioned consortium is led by Kaztsink, which is one of leading zinc producers in the post Soviet-area.

We will recall that the tender for development of the Konimansuri Kalon deposit was announced in November 2009.

The Government of Tajikistan has appointed International Finance Corporation (IFC) to be the lead advisor in selecting a private investor to develop the Konimansuri Kalon mine's silver deposits project, which is expected to generate significant benefits for the country.

The infrastructure advisory agreement signed on March 12, 2009 presents an opportunity to develop a project that possibly holds one of the world's larger silver deposits and could help strengthen Tajikistan's fiscal resources. IFC is committed to ensuring a transparent and competitive process for the selection of a developer. The project is a key part of the government's strategy to attract private investment and introduce best practices in procurement. Although Tajikistan has rich deposits of minerals, its remote geographic location and low levels of foreign investment have impeded the development of the mining sector.

The Konimansuri Kalon in the Asht district, Sughd province is estimated to contain around 1 billion tons of ore and according to expert estimates, one ton of the deposit's ore contained around 49 grams of silver, with 0.38 percent zinc and 0.49 percent lead.

- ADB director general visits Tajikistan

DUSHANBE, March 12, 2010, Asia-Plus -- Director General of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) Juan Miranda, accompanied by Deputy Director General Werner Liepach, and Senior Adviser Tatsuya Kanai will arrive in Tajikistan on March 15 to have talks with senior government officials and donors, according to ADB's Tajikistan Resident Mission (TJRM).

Mr. Miranda, who joined ADB in 2004, is the Director General of the Central and West Asia Department covering 10 countries – Afghanistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. Deputy Director General Werner Liepach joined the Bank in 1992; and Mr. Kanai in 2008.

During the stay, Mr. Miranda and his team will meet with President Emomali Rahmon, and senior government officials to discuss ADB's assistance program in the country, which focuses on strengthening regional cooperation through improving energy and transport infrastructure, and private sector development.

On March 16, the delegation will depart for Almaty, Kazakhstan.

Tajikistan joined ADB in 1998, and to date has received total assistance of about \$560 million in concessional loans, grants and technical assistance from this institution. ADB's grant assistance package to Tajikistan for 2010 is about \$74 million. The assistance program is expected to support energy and private sector development.

ADB, based in Manila, is dedicated to reducing poverty in the Asia and Pacific region through inclusive economic growth, environmentally sustainable growth, and regional integration. Established in 1966, it is owned by 67 members – 48 from the region.

### **Social Front**

- Sheikh Tantawi, Prominent Sunni Muslim Voice, Dead At 81

(RFE/RL) -- One of the most prominent and respected moderate voices in the Sunni Muslim world, Sheikh Muhammad Sayed Tantawi, died today during a visit to Saudi Arabia. He was 81.

For 14 years, Tantawi used his position as grand sheikh of Al-Azhar University in Cairo to defend traditional interpretations of Sunni Islam against challenges from radical Islamist groups such as the Taliban and Al-Qaeda.

He repeatedly condemned the use of terrorist attacks against civilian targets and labeled extremism in general as against Islam.

"It is not appropriate to link Islam to terrorism and destruction," he said in an interview with RFE/RL's Tajik Service in October. "Terrorism means destroying lives of peaceful people, and all religions and humanity condemn it."

As the head of Sunni Islam's most prominent theological institute, Tantawi's opinions and fatwas carried tremendous moral and legal weight. Al-Azhar's teachers are traditionally respected throughout the Sunni Muslim world, and its grand sheikh's views are given particular consideration.

In 2003, Tantawi notably called suicide bombers "enemies of Islam." He also spoke out against the misuse of the word "jihad" by extremist groups, saying the difference between the meaning of jihad in Islam as a religion of peace and its meaning for extremist groups is "like the earth and the sky."

- Dushanbe celebrates 1200th anniversary of Imam Bukhari

DUSHANBE, March 11, 2010, Asia-Plus -- A republican scientific-practical conference devoted to the 1200th anniversary of the imam of hadith, Muhammad Ibn Ismail, popularly known as Al-Bukhari or Imam Bukhari, will take place in Dushanbe on March 12.

According to the Minister of Culture (MoC), organized by a MoC and the Academy of Sciences of Tajikistan, the conference is one of events dedicated to designation of Dushanbe as Capital of Islamic Culture for the year 2010.

The President of the Academy of Sciences Mamadsho Ilolov, Minister of Culture Mirzoshorukh Asrori as well as members of the visiting delegation of ECO (Economic Cooperation Organization) Cultural Institute (ECI) and researchers will deliver statements at the conference.

Muhammad Ibn Ismail Ibn Ibrahim Ibn al-Mughirah Ibn Bardizbah al-Bukhari, popularly known as Al-Bukhari or Imam Bukhari (194/810—256/870), was a famous Sunni Islamic scholar of Persian ancestry. He was, perhaps, best known for authoring the hadith collection named Sahih Bukhari, a collection which Sunni Muslims regard as the most authentic of all hadith compilations and the most authoritative book after the Qur'an.

It will be the second event dedicated to designation of Dushanbe as Capital of Islamic Culture for the year 2010. We will recall that the republican scientific-practical conference entitled "The Tajiks and Islamic Culture" was held in Dushanbe last month. Besides, a seminar entitled "Role of Woman in Islam" and a number of other events will take place in Tajikistan this year.

### **Turkmenistan**

#### **Political Front**

#### **Geo Strategic Front**

- Russian Foreign Minister to visit Turkmenistan

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov will visit Turkmenistan on March 15-16, RIA Novosti reported with reference to the Russian Foreign Ministry's spokesman Andrei Nesterenko.

"Russia highly values relations with Turkmenistan and attaches great importance to the further strengthening and development of mutually beneficial bilateral cooperation and interaction in political, trade-economic, educational and other fields," the diplomat said. It is expected that during his visit Sergei Lavrov will meet with President of Turkmenistan Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov and Foreign Minister Rashid Meredov.

According to Nesterenko, the sides plan to "discuss the prospects for expanding mutually beneficial economic relations, increasing trade, intensifying cooperation of the Russian regions with Turkmenistan." The sides will also discuss the progress of implementation of existing bilateral agreements and development of cooperation in such areas as education and culture. Urgent international issues, the situation in Central Asia and increasing the interaction between the foreign ministries of Russia and Turkmenistan will be also touched upon.

#### **Economic /Energy Front**

#### **Social Front**

- Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov congratulates Turkmen women on International Women's Day

President of Turkmenistan Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov sent a congratulatory message to the fellow countrywomen. The message was published in the country's central print press.

"Our dear mothers and beloved women - guardians of the family hearth, who put their hearts into raising conscientious, hardworking, devoted to their Motherland, highly intellectual, physically and morally healthy citizens and real patriots - greatly contributed to the fact that every day the Turkmen people get more recognition in the world," the message says.

Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov emphasized that today Turkmen women "work with inspiration in the state organizations, various sectors of the economy, in the sphere of science, education, culture, and occupy prominent positions in public life and thus make a worthy contribution to the prosperity of the motherland."

"The state will always take care of you and create all the conditions so that you can do things you love and get not only moral satisfaction, but also the material wealth so that you can be really happy," - he said.

By tradition, on the occasion of March 8, Turkmen women were presented in the festive atmosphere with prizes on behalf of the President of Turkmenistan.

### **Uzbekistan**

#### **Political Front**

#### **Geo Strategic Front**

#### **Economic /Energy Front**

- Japan allocates US\$457,679 to Uzbek projects

Japan allocates US\$457,679 to six projects within the no-string aid of the Government of Japan to grass-root projects.

Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Japan to Uzbekistan Tsutoma Hiraoka will sign grant-contracts on 9 March 2010.

The grants will be issued to secondary school No. 37 of Andijan city (US\$97,023), Board School No. 31 for infants of Pakhtabad district of Andijan region (US\$97,072), secondary school No. 22 Kasb district of Kashkadarya region (US\$84,784), secondary school No. 36 of Bulungur district of Samarkand region (US\$82,618), school No. 1 of Samarkand city (US\$47,693) and secondary school No. 9 Gulistan district of Syrdarya region (US\$48,489).

Schools will receive furniture, sport inventory, machinery and other equipment within the grants.

- Uzbek President signs resolution on developing ties with Korea

President of Uzbekistan Islam Karimov signed a resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers on realizing agreements, reached during the state visit of the President to the Republic of Korea, and further developing bilateral cooperation.

The document was adopted in order to ensure timely realization of bilateral inter-governmental and inter-departmental agreements on developing trade-economic, investment and cultural-humanitarian cooperation between Uzbekistan and Korea,

reached during the state visit of the Uzbek President Islam Karimov to the Republic of Korea on 10-12 February 2010.

The resolution approved Action Plan on realization of signed agreements, reached during the visit, and the list of investment projects, which are realized with the participation of the Korean corporations and companies. These documents were not disclosed.

Heads of ministries and departments, business entities were entrusted to ensure timely and quality execution of action plan and present quarterly reports on its implementation to the Government of Uzbekistan, the document said.

### **Social Front**

- **Activist's Arrest Sparks Protest In Uzbekistan**

About 150 people in northeastern Uzbekistan have held a rally to protest the arrest of a local activist, RFE/RL's Uzbek Service reports.

Protester Olim Hasanov told RFE/RL that the people gathered in front of the municipal council building in Parkent, in Tashkent Oblast.

He said that Azamat Yakubov, the chairman of Parkent's community committee, planned to lay a gas mainline in his neighborhood. But the prosecutor's office accused him of embezzling some 5 million soms (\$2,500) of the 10 million soms that his neighbors had contributed toward the cost of the project and ordered his arrest on March 10.

Another participant in the demonstration, who asked to remain anonymous, told RFE/RL that Yakubov was arrested because of his human rights activities.

He added that town prosecutor Abdugani Nabiev, who met with the protesters earlier today, told them that if they do not end the picket they will be taken to jail.

- **Forced Move Puts Central Asian Library's Rare Collection At Risk**

TASHKENT -- One of the most prestigious libraries in Central Asia has been forced to move, potentially endangering some of its ancient and rare documents, RFE/RL's Uzbek Service reports.

The buildings housing the Alisher Navoi Library in Tashkent -- which with 10 million books in 75 different languages is among the region's largest -- were demolished on March 4. The library also has some of Central Asia's most important historical documents.

In 2003, the library lost its original building in downtown Tashkent, which was demolished to make room for a new building for the Senate, the upper chamber of the Uzbek parliament.

Officials had since moved the library to buildings vacated by the Tashkent city administration and the Committee of State Security.

Library director Malika Matmurodova told RFE/RL that the books, historical documents, and manuscripts are currently being transported to various different government buildings around the Uzbek capital.

Farida Nosirova, the chief of the library's preservation department, told RFE/RL that all the books -- especially manuscripts that are centuries old -- need to be kept under special conditions that do not exist at present.

She said there are many ancient manuscripts written in Farsi and Arabic that need extremely urgent care or they could be damaged beyond repair.

The Alisher Navoi Library was established in Tashkent in 1870 but has not functioned normally since it was moved in 2003.

- Torture, abuse mark Uzbekistan's rights record: U.S.

ALMATY (Reuters) - Uzbekistan jailed political opponents, routinely tortured prisoners and committed other serious rights violations last year, effectively making it Central Asia's most authoritarian state, the United States said.

In its annual survey of human rights in 194 countries, the U.S. State Department used considerably stronger language to describe abuses in Uzbekistan than in reporting on other nations in the ex-Soviet region north of Afghanistan and Iran.

"The government continued to commit serious abuses and authorities restricted political and civil liberties," it said. "...Law enforcement and security officers routinely beat and otherwise mistreated detainees to obtain confessions or incriminating information."

The sharp language comes despite Washington's steps to normalize relations with Uzbekistan, Central Asia's most populous nation which has agreed to host an alternative supply route for NATO-led troops fighting in neighboring Afghanistan.

"Torture and abuse were common in prisons... Family members reported several deaths in custody of prisoners who were serving sentences on charges related to religious extremism," it said.

Uzbekistan's foreign ministry spokesman said he could not immediately comment on the report. A Muslim nation with a Soviet-style command economy, Uzbekistan has long rejected Western allegations of mass human rights violations, saying its actions are in line with its laws. President Islam Karimov, in power for 20 years, tolerates no dissent and public criticism of his rule is taboo.

Over years, Uzbekistan has intensified its campaign against independent media, driving Western outlets out of the country and putting pressure on local reporters. Reuters has been covering Uzbekistan from neighboring Kazakhstan since 2008.

"Police and security services subjected print and broadcast journalists to arrest, harassment, intimidation, and violence, as well as to bureaucratic restrictions on their activity," the U.S. report said.

Other Central Asian countries' human rights record also remained poor last year, it said, while adding that there were "modest improvements in some areas" in Turkmenistan, another country it classified as "authoritarian."

In Kazakhstan, the region's top oil producer where the United States is the biggest foreign investor, the report said key problems included severe limits on people's right to change their government, and restrictions on freedom of speech.