

BUSINESS AND POLITICS IN THE MUSLIM WORLD

TURKEY

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SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

POLITICAL NEWS

Turkish warplanes bombed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) camps in northern Iraq.

The air strike was carried out against a group of terrorists seen moving toward the Turkish border. The students association WONDER provides opportunity to study in Vienna to the students of Imam-Hatip schools whom want to continue their studies by wearing headscarfs. This association was established in 2000 when twelve students leave Turkey to Vienna due to headscarf problem. This association marked recently its 10th anniversary of its foundation. It is a source of hope and useful for the students whom want headscarves. Turkish schools, which operate around the world, have contributed to the improvement of relations between Kosovo and Turkey, Kosovo's deputy agriculture minister, Fikrin Damka, appreciated the performance of these Turkish schools and its contribution in promoting peace, love and reconciliation. In addition he said these schools are a source of maintenance of well and friendly relations of Turkey and Kosovo.

GEO-STRATEGIC NEWS

Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu has said Israel should respect the fundamental and inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and end the blockade on Gaza. Baku has warned that the parliamentary elections held in the occupied Azerbaijani territory of Nagorno-Karabakh on Sunday will hamper the ongoing attempts to resolve the dispute between Armenia and Azerbaijan. The Turkish foreign minister Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu says Turkey will open its ports to ships and planes from Cyprus if a trade embargo on the breakaway Turkish Cypriots is lifted in return. He further said the world should allow Cypriot Turks to trade through its sea ports of Kyrenia and Famagusta as well as Ercan airport, in Nicosia. Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev urged Turkish business companies to invest in Kazakhstan. The current trade volume of both the states is about \$3 billion that is expected to be reached to \$ 25 billion by 2020. A passenger ship carrying 500 supporters and \$20 million worth of humanitarian supplies started its journey from İstanbul to Gaza this weekend in a show of solidarity with the Palestinian people and in a bid to break Israel's years-long siege of the Gaza Strip. Spain expressed on Thursday eagerness to invest in wind energy in Turkey.

ECONOMIC NEWS

Turkish businessmen have invested more than \$7 billion in Turkmenistan. The Kuwaiti government has invited Turkish contractors to participate in upcoming tenders for infrastructure projects totaling \$24 billion. Independent Industrialists and Businessmen's Association (MÜSİAD) President Ömer Cihad Vardan has said that the record profits registered by companies last year despite a contraction in demand and a difficult business environment prove that Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan was right in his earlier statement that the recent global economic crisis would just glance off of the Turkish economy, with the recession only slightly affecting the market. A countrywide strike in solidarity with the workers from Turkey's former alcohol and tobacco monopoly Tekel who lost their jobs after the monopoly's privatization ended without any clashes.

SOCIAL NEWS

Social inequality remains a major problem in Turkey, with an overwhelming majority of the nation believing that an unequal distribution of income exists among the population, a report has revealed.

POLITICAL NEWS

Turkish jets bomb terrorist camp in northern Iraq

Turkish warplanes bombed outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) camps in northern Iraq on Thursday.

The air strike was carried out against a group of terrorists seen moving toward the Turkish border. Twenty warplanes took part in the strike on targets in the Zap and Hakurk regions along the border. The Turkish military's press office declined to confirm or deny the attack.

Villagers in northern Iraq said Turkish jets bombed at least three villages in the Kandil Mountains, near the area where Iraq, Iran and Turkey intersect. The bombing went on for about two hours.

Jabar Yawer, a spokesman for the northern Iraq regional military, called the peshmerga, said they had heard reports of bombing near the Kandil Mountains but had no details. Ömer Çelik, a lawmaker from the governing Justice and Development Party (AK Party), urged Iraq's Kurdish administration to stop outlawed PKK terrorists in Iraq from launching attacks on Turkey. Turkish warplanes have often targeted Turkish warplanes have often targeted hideouts in northern Iraq that terrorists have used to stage hit-and-run attacks on Turkish targets for decades.

22 May 2010, Saturday
TODAY'S ZAMAN WITH WIRES İSTANBUL

Former Roj TV director admits receiving funding from terrorist PKK

Manouchehr Zonoozi, a former director of Roj TV, has admitted that financial assistance flows to the television station from the terrorist Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), in a recent interview with Berlingske Tidende, a Danish daily.

Turkey says Roj TV is a mouthpiece for the outlawed PKK. The station continues to broadcast with a Danish license.

"I served as the Roj TV director for 10 years. I would be the first to be imprisoned [for links to a terrorist organization]. I am not telling all this for personal interests. I continue to receive death threats. I told police several times that I'd like to testify against Roj TV. But they ignored my calls. I am tired of waiting. I cannot stand the lies about Roj TV," Zonoozi stated.

Berlingske Tidende also published photos of top officials from Roj TV on a secret visit to PKK training camps. In the photos, Zonoozi is seen side-by-side with Murat Karayılan, the leader of the PKK. Since the interview, Danish police have increased security around Zonoozi, fearing a violent response from the terrorist organization.

GThe former director also said he established a publishing house in Denmark to have the voice of Kurds heard in the country, but lost confidence in the "real administrators" of Roj TV.

"I did not know about the links between Roj TV and the PKK when I starting serving as the station's director. But I started witnessing financial aid flowing to the station from the PKK between 2005 and 2006. The station's bank account showed that the aid was really substantial.

At the beginning, I thought it was financial aid coming from ordinary Kurds and it had nothing to do with the PKK. But when I visited a PKK training camp in Arbil, I learned that the aid was coming from the PKK. I should not have been so unwise to believe that 16 million euros would come from the Kurdish public," Zonoozi remarked.

Asked about the PKK's impact on Roj TV broadcasts, Zonoozi said many correspondents at the station are trained at PKK camps.

"There are correspondents at PKK training camps, and they are in direct contact with the organization's high-level figures. They are trained there. If you visit Roj TV studios in Belgium, you would see many workers whose legs and arms were amputated after clashes," he added.

25 May 2010, Tuesday

TODAYS ZAMAN

CHP delegates convene to elect new leader

Republican People's Party (CHP) delegates are geared up to elect a new party chairperson as well as members of the party's administrative bodies as its 33rd ordinary congress gets under way today.

The 1,250 party delegates will vote today for a new party leader. CHP bylaws require that potential candidates garner signatures from at least 20 percent of delegates to qualify for

candidacy. The only candidate as of Friday afternoon was Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, with no last-minute declarations of candidacy expected. In a related development, Rahşan Ecevit, the wife of late social democrat Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit, who co-founded the Democratic Left Party (DSP), released a statement endorsing Kılıçdaroğlu's candidacy. She said she was likely to participate in this weekend's congress. "We, as the Ecevits, might say 'yes' to the CHP one more time," she said in her message of support.

Former party leader Deniz Baykal resigned from his post on May 10 following the release of video footage that allegedly captured him in an intimate setting with female party deputy. The footage was posted online and led to massive public controversy. CHP İstanbul deputy Kılıçdaroğlu announced his candidacy earlier this week. If elected, he will be the seventh chairman in the history of the party, established in 1923 by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of modern Turkey.

Baykal is not expected to attend the congress. The opening speech will be delivered by CHP Deputy Chairman Cevdet Selvi, who has acted as a spokesperson for Baykal since his resignation.

On the second day of the congress, delegates will vote to elect members of the party's 20-person Central Executive Committee (MYK), 80-person Party Council and 15-seat Higher Disciplinary Council.

Delegates will also decide

Delegates will also decide tomorrow over whether to implement a new party bylaw adopted in an extraordinary congress held Dec. 21, 2008.

Over 800 members of the foreign and domestic press have completed accreditation procedures to cover the congress at Ankara's Atatürk Sports Hall. Delegates, guests and VIPs will be seated in the tiers of the sports hall, while a platform for journalists has been set up near the podium from which speeches will be delivered. A private security firm has been contracted to ensure the safety of congress participants.

The congress is of critical importance as it determines the makeup of the new administration that will steer the CHP during elections in 2011.

The congress is slated to begin today at 10 a.m. Following Selvi's opening remarks, other members of the CHP are expected to deliver comments. After the voting, the CHP's leader-elect will give a thank-you speech.

22 May 2010, Saturday

TODAY'S ZAMAN ANKARA

Turkish schools boost mutual relations between Kosovo, Turkey

Turkish schools, which operate around the world, have contributed to the improvement of relations between Kosovo and Turkey, Kosovo's deputy agriculture minister, Fikrin Damka, said on Friday.

Along with Damka, a delegation with the participation of Müfera Şinik, one of the deputy speakers of Kosovo's Parliament, and Şarık Cibo, president of the Prizren Businessmen and Craftsmen's Association (ESNAF), visited the Mediterranean Industrialists and Businessmen's Association (ASİAD) in the southern province of Mersin on Friday.

Speaking during the visit, Damka noted that students studying at Turkish schools in Kosovo will make a contribution to the development of Kosovo in the future. Stating that the number of Turkish schools will be increased in the coming months, Damka said his country and Turkey have a good relationship; however, Turkish schools will foster better relations between the two

countries. “Turkish schools promote love, peace and reconciliation throughout the world as well as in Kosovo,” stated Damka.

In addition, Damka invited Turkish businessmen to invest in Kosovo. “As the Kosovo government, we are ready to give necessary support to Turks wanting to invest [in the country]. We are planning on hosting a delegation from Turkey in Kosovo soon to brainstorm on Turkey and Kosovo,” Damka said. Damka also pointed out that Turkey’s agriculture industry is excellent and that Kosovo always wants to exchange opinions with Turkey on agriculture.

Gökhan Sadıkoğlu, the president of ASIAD, noted that they were pleased to host Damka and the delegation, adding that they will do what is necessary for the benefit of Turkey’s future.

23 May 2010, Sunday

TODAYS ZAMAN

Disappointed imam-hatip students given opportunity to study in Vienna

Disappointed imam-hatip students given oppoWONDER, an association based in Vienna that helps Turkish students study at local universities if they are unable to attend universities in Turkey, has recently marked the 10th anniversary of its foundation.

The association, which was established in 2000 by 12 Turkish students who were unable to attend Turkish universities due to the headscarf problem and went to Vienna to continue their education, has been a source of hope for over 1,000 Turkish students, giving them the opportunity to pursue their studies abroad.

The founders aimed to provide the necessary support for the academic careers of its members in Vienna and other locations in Europe. Now hundreds of female students are able to pursue their undergraduate or graduate education without being obliged to remove their headscarves.

Although they faced some difficulties adjusting to a new culture in the beginning, now they have begun learning a second foreign language in addition to German. Sunday’s Zaman paid a visit to WONDER’s Istanbul office and brought together students who have recently been to Vienna and those who have completed their education there. Some of the students were in Turkey last week to sate their longing for their home country for a while.

Şeyma Filiz, a 20-year-old graduate of the Adapazarı İmam-hatip High School traveled to Vienna just two months ago, which is why her eyes fill with tears whenever she hears the word “Turkey.” Filiz is currently taking German courses and plans to enroll at the Vienna University of Technology’s architecture department. She says she plans to return to Turkey after she gets her undergraduate degree. She has been taking tours round Vienna since she arrived to learn about the architectural structure of the city. Filiz says she also helps design WONDER’s website. “To be honest, leaving Turkey in such a situation is insulting. Sentences like ‘I wish I were in Turkey now’ spring to mind whenever I face a difficulty in Vienna. But God opened a different door for us. This is my greatest relief,” she says.

Among the biggest NGOs in Vienna, the

Among the biggest NGOs in Vienna, the association targets students who want to study or who are already studying in European universities after graduating from imam-hatip high schools (religious high schools), which are classified as vocational high schools. Student Selection Examination (ÖSS) scores, which are the determining factor in university admissions, are calculated differently for graduates of vocational schools than other student, severely limiting their choice of universities even if they receive high raw scores.

bl ‘I’d have liked to study in my country’

Most of the Turkish students accommodated in WONDER's five-story dormitory in the center of Vienna are female and imam-hatip school graduates. But WONDER also accepts male students and non-imam-hatip graduates. The students' expenses are met by sponsors in Turkey. The Austrian authorities also help Turkish students studying in Vienna. Kadıköy İmam-hatip High School graduate Recep Belen, who currently attends German courses and plans to study architecture, says there is nothing in Vienna to compare to İstanbul's Çamlica Hill, adding that he will return to Turkey after his graduation. "I chose to study here because of the lower coefficient imposed [when calculating the ÖSS scores] for imam-hatip graduates, but I would have liked to study in my own country," he says.

There are also students who have completed their education in Vienna with the assistance of WONDER and who have begun working in Vienna instead of returning to Turkey. One of them is another imam-hatip graduate, Muradiye Ateş, who went to Vienna nine years ago. She studied economics and is now pursuing her doctorate in Vienna. She also got married there and has a child. "Vienna is a beautiful city in which to study. My husband is also pursuing his doctorate degree here, but we want to use our experience and knowledge in our own country and contribute to Turkey," she says.

Ayşegül İlhan is a 26-year-old research assistant in the nephrology department at the Medical University of Vienna. "I have been in Vienna for eight years. But still, whenever I hear a folk song from Turkey, my eyes fill with tears," she says.

For 19-year-old Sümeyra Geçici, traveling to Vienna for the first time was like falling into a foreign movie. Geçici says she hopes to study genetics in Vienna and to return to Turkey as a qualified employee. "I don't want to see myself separated from Turkey. Here, I've seen the transformation of an unpleasant situation into a pleasant one. I have not been exposed to different treatment just because I am a Turk here," she says.

Kara: We're trying to meet students' needs with help of Turkish benefactors

WONDER President Yusuf Kara says the association provides a support network for students studying in Vienna and always stands by them. "There are almost no students left from the first group in Vienna. They have either returned to Turkey or went to other countries to work. Academics, architects, engineers and doctors formed part of this group. We have over 350 graduates, over 50 postgraduate students and nearly 200 undergraduates students. We try to provide opportunities for our students thanks to the support of businessmen in Turkey. We have always tried to do our best. We know that if we act sincerely and work hard enough, God will help us," he tells Sunday's Zaman.

23 May 2010, Sunday

TODAYS ZAMAN

GEO-STRATEGIC NEWS

Blockade must end, says Davutoğlu at UN meeting in İstanbul

Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu has said Israel should respect the fundamental and inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and end the blockade on Gaza.

Str"Turkey does not want the current situation in Palestine that resembles a modern ghetto to continue and wants all practices that threaten humanitarian rights there to be stopped," the top Turkish diplomat noted. "The blockade on Gaza must come to an end. This is and will be our policy," he added.

Davutoğlu reiterated Turkey's solidarity with the Palestinian people and support for them to have a normal life on the land in which they are the indigenous inhabitants. He was speaking at a press

conference following the first session of a two-day meeting of the UN Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People that started in İstanbul on Tuesday. Davutoğlu said it was a significant development and also meaningful that the meeting had convened in Turkey.

The committee was established in 1975 as a subsidiary body to the UN General Assembly with a mandate to promote the Palestinians' national rights.

Davutoğlu stressed that the Palestinian issue has an internationally strategic dimension, but for Turkey, it is, above all, a humanitarian issue. "We want the children of Gaza and the West Bank, just like children in other parts of the world, to look to the future with hope. We want Palestinian people to be allowed to be connected with the outside world so that they can fulfill their needs," he added.

The Gaza Strip has been under a tightened Israeli and Egyptian economic blockade since 2007 when the Hamas movement took over the territory after being elected in the 2006 elections. The blockade was enforced to put pressure on Hamas and to stop weapons being smuggled in.

In response to a question regarding the Turkish government's reaction if Israel prevents the humanitarian aid ships that will set sail for Gaza on Thursday from reaching their destination, Davutoğlu said they were not expecting a crisis over the matter. "We are hoping that tension will not arise over there. Similar civilian initiatives have been formulated at certain times relating to different issues in the past, too, and they were generally received with understanding because of their civilian character. We hope and expect Israel and the NGOs to behave with common sense here as well," Davutoğlu said. The Israeli Defense Ministry earlier said they would prevent the fleet from arriving at the port of Gaza.

Nine ships will depart from Antalya to carry humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip on Thursday. Volunteers from over 50 countries will be on board the ships in an attempt to show a civilian reaction to the blockade in Gaza.

Speaking to Today's Zaman on the sidelines of the meeting, a foreign ministry official said it was not clear what would happen to the ships. "The thing is we do not have a rational government on the part of Israel, so we cannot anticipate what they will do," the official said, also adding that they had underlined the move's civilian character and explained to Israel that it was not an "armada."

Davutoğlu assessed the Palestinian issue in the speech he delivered at the meeting's first session. He started his address by acknowledging the Palestinians' long-standing plight. "Today, the fulfillment of the rightful aspirations of the Palestinian people to establish a homeland has become all the more essential. There is no more room to maneuver to further deny their legitimate rights," he said. In that regard, he noted that the launching of proximity talks between Palestine and Israel was a positive step. He stressed the significance of the maintenance of talks and said unilateral and provocative actions should not be allowed to disrupt the process.

"Especially, Israel should be obliged to act with common sense so as not to hinder the re-launching of the direct talks," he stated, adding that a substantial part of the burden has to be shouldered by the international community.

"There should be a strong international commitment toward Palestinian statehood with clear objectives, clear terms of reference for the negotiations and time frames," Davutoğlu said.

He expressed his hopes for the prospect of peace in the Middle East in general, too. "A pessimist sees the difficulty in every opportunity, while the optimist sees opportunity in every difficulty," he said, and added that he preferred to be an optimist. "I firmly believe that it is high time for all

of us to unite our ranks and overcome the hurdles along our way to create a peaceful, secure, stable and prosperous region which we all deserve,” he concluded.

26 May 2010, Wednesday

TODAYS ZAMAN

Davutoğlu denies tension with US over Iran swap deal

Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu yesterday waved off media comments that a nuclear swap deal Iran agreed to with Turkey and Brazil has strained Ankara’s relations with the United States, saying US President Barack Obama’s policy of engagement paved the way for the Turkish efforts for a negotiated settlement.

Iran on Monday formally presented a letter outlining the deal, co-sponsored by Turkey and Brazil, to the UN’s atomic watchdog, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). The Turkish Foreign Ministry said in a statement released later in the day that the content of the letter was “positive and constructive.”

But the United States appears to disagree. Although it hailed the diplomatic efforts of Turkey and Brazil, the White House has said the deal has not removed concerns over Iran’s nuclear program. The US and its allies also complain that Iran refuses to stop enriching uranium, something which could eventually enable it to produce nuclear weapons, and continue to push for sanctions against Iran in the UN Security Council. According to a Washington Post report, Obama spent more than an hour on the phone with Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan on Wednesday explaining to him why the deal his country cut with Iran was “incongruous with a US push to isolate the Islamic republic over its nuclear program” and said the US push for sanctions would continue despite the deal.

Davutoğlu, however, said the telephone conversation was not as tense as was reported in the media. “On the contrary, it was a very constructive conversation during which both sides expressed their views,” he told reporters at a press conference. “Efforts to create tensions between Turkey and the United States will remain fruitless,” he added.

The foreign minister said the deal with Iran was not the success of Turkey and Brazil alone. “This is a success of the policy of engagement of Mr. Obama. This is a success of his vision of peace which earned him the Nobel Peace Prize,” said Davutoğlu.

Talks with Sarkozy

Ever since Iran agreed to the May 17 deal, under which it will send some of its low-enriched uranium to Turkey in exchange for the delivery of uranium enriched by France and Russia, Ankara has been seeking support for the compromise, saying it offers a chance for a peaceful solution to the dispute over Iran’s nuclear program.

On Monday Erdoğan spoke to French President Nicolas Sarkozy, who agreed to “give a little time for dialogue” on the dispute. Statements released by the offices of Erdoğan and Sarkozy noted Sarkozy’s suggestion that Paris and Ankara should “stay in touch and give a little time for dialogue” -- taking into consideration the fact that Iran had introduced the deal to the IAEA.

“At this point, the response by the Vienna Group [made up of potential suppliers of higher enriched uranium -- namely the United States, Russia and France -- and the IAEA] is of extreme importance. We expect France’s support for the implementation of this agreement as a permanent member of the UN Security Council and of the Vienna Group,” Erdoğan told Sarkozy, according to his press office.

Erdoğan also initiated a separate telephone conversation with Saudi Arabian King Abdullah on Monday evening, during which he discussed developments regarding Iran's nuclear program, his office said.

26 May 2010, Wednesday

TODAY'S ZAMAN İSTANBUL

Davutoğlu challenges EU on Cyprus trade restrictions

European Union candidate Turkey will open its ports and airports to ships and planes from EU-member Greek Cyprus if the economic isolation of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (KKTC), in the northern part of the divided island, is lifted in return, Turkey's Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu stated yesterday

Davutoğlu's remarks came in response to a question by a Greek Cypriot deputy after the minister delivered a speech at a meeting of the political committee of the Europe-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly (EMPA) held in İstanbul.

Referring to remarks within his speech that he didn't want "any borders," the Greek Cypriot deputy asked why, then, Turkey didn't open its ports to EU-member Greek Cyprus, Anatolia agency reported. Recalling that Ankara had lent its full support to an UN reunification plan back in 2004, Davutoğlu went on to say, "If the Greek Cypriots had also said 'yes,' to this peace [plan], then today there would be neither a divided border nor a closed port."

While noting that Turkish Cypriots are isolated in every sphere and are unable to even play an international football match while Greek Cypriots comfortably enjoy international recognition and EU membership, Davutoğlu indicated that reducing the issue to the opening of Turkey's ports to Greek Cypriots would be unfair under these circumstances.

"Here, I would like to see a Turkish Cypriot around this table, too, as a Mediterranean [representative]. I would like him to sit next to you as a deputy of one united Cyprus in peace. Why didn't this happen? Is the reason for this not happening the Turkish Cypriots who said 'yes' to the Annan plan, or those who said 'no'?"

"We want all borders in Cyprus to be eliminated. We are also ready to open all Turkish ports to the Greek Cypriots. In turn, there is only one thing that we want," Davutoğlu said, adding that the world should allow Turkish Cypriots to trade through its seaports of Girne (Kyrenia) and Magusa (Famagusta) as well as Ercan Airport in Lefkoşa.

Turkey, which does not recognize the Greek Cypriot administration, has constantly called on the EU to fulfill its commitment to end the isolation of the Turkish Cypriots as a condition for opening its ports and airports to traffic from Greek Cyprus. The EU unveiled a plan to ease the isolation of the Turkish Cypriots by establishing direct trade with the KKTC after they voted for the UN plan -- led by former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan -- to reunite the island, but it was never implemented because of opposition from several members including Greek Cyprus, which joined the EU a few days after the Greek Cypriots rejected the same UN plan in April 2004 in a simultaneous referendum.

"The world will open three ports for Turkish Cypriots. We will open all ports of Turkey to Greek Cypriots. ... We are ready to do this, if the European Union is ready, if the international community is ready and if Greek Cypriots are ready."

'Turkey has a right to have a say on Iran issue'

Earlier in the day, Davutoğlu, delivering a speech at the "Forum-İstanbul 2023" conference, touched upon the ongoing debate over a joint declaration signed by Iran, Brazil and Turkey in Tehran on Monday.

With the declaration, Iran agreed to ship much of its low-enriched uranium to Turkey. Nevertheless, some major powers, particularly Washington, asserted that the deal failed to address all the concerns about Tehran's controversial nuclear program. Calling for a participatory political rearrangement within the international system, Davutoğlu said: "As Turkey, we have this [goal] before us: the question of how the participatory relationship between regional problems and global system will be. This question will remain on the agenda as we approach 2023."

As a matter of fact, this question is behind debates concerning Iran as well, he said.

"We say that if a problem about Iran influences us, then we have a right to have a say in this problem. As long as we must tolerate its result, then we have the right to participate in the flow of the process as well," Davutoğlu said, adding that Turkey would not accept being considered "an ordinary executor" of a decision made by being excluded from the decision-making process. Brazil and Turkey, both non-permanent members of the UN Security Council, brokered a surprise deal on Monday in which Iran agreed to send its high-enriched uranium to Turkey in return for fuel rods for a medical research reactor. Turkey, Brazil and Iran have urged a halt to talk of further sanctions because of the deal, but critics in the West insist the deal was only a tactic to avert or delay sanctions.

Despite the deal brokered by Turkey and Brazil, the US proposed a draft sanctions resolution, agreed by all five permanent UN Security Council members after months of negotiation, to the UN Security Council on Tuesday.

22 May 2010, Saturday

TODAY'S ZAMAN ANKARA

Baku warns of elections' impact on Karabakh talks

Baku has warned that the parliamentary elections held in the occupied Azerbaijani territory of Nagorno-Karabakh on Sunday will hamper the ongoing attempts to resolve the dispute between Armenia and Azerbaijan because the elections form part of Armenia's strategy to impose a fait-accompli solution.

"The Republic of Azerbaijan shares the concerns of its international partners about the negative effect on the ongoing peace process by the illegal 'parliament elections' held in the occupied territories of the Republic of Azerbaijan on May 23, 2010," read a written statement released on Monday by the Azerbaijani Foreign Ministry.

"The Republic of Azerbaijan shall never accept the fait accompli-based solution the Armenian side is trying to impose. The conflict in and around the Nagorno-Karabakh region of Azerbaijan can only be solved on the basis of respect for territorial integrity, sovereignty and inviolability of the internationally recognized borders of Azerbaijan and peaceful coexistence of the Armenian and Azerbaijani communities in the Nagorno-Karabakh region within Azerbaijan fully and equally enjoying the benefits of democracy and prosperity," the ministry said.

On Sunday, the 57-nation Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) had called the elections in the dispute region "illegal" and in contravention of the Geneva Convention and resolutions of the UN Security Council, the OIC and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

Calling on the international community to condemn this process and deem it illegitimate, the Jeddah-based OIC reiterated its support for Azerbaijan's efforts toward a peaceful solution to the territory issue on the basis of the relevant international resolutions.

OIC-member Iran separately announced on Tuesday that it does not recognize the election results in Nagorno-Karabakh, while the Iranian Embassy in Baku emphasized that the country hadn't delegated any representative or observer during the elections.

26 May 2010, Wednesday

TODAY'S ZAMAN ANKARA

Turkey calls for end of Turkish Cypriot embargo

The Turkish foreign minister says Turkey will open its ports to ships and planes from Cyprus if a trade embargo on the breakaway Turkish Cypriots is lifted in return.

Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu says the world should allow Cypriot Turks to trade through its sea ports of Kyrenia and Famagusta as well as Ercan airport, in Nicosia.

Davutoğlu was speaking in İstanbul on Friday before a meeting with UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon expected to focus on Cyprus.

Cyprus was split into an internationally recognized Greek Cypriot south and a breakaway Turkish Cypriot north in 1974 when Turkey's military intervened following a coup by supporters of union with Greece.

Turkey does not recognize the Greek Cypriot government and doesn't allow its ships and planes to enter Turkish ports and airspace.

21 May 2010, Friday

TODAYS ZAMAN

Kazakhstan calls on Turkey to seize investment opportunities

The Kazakh president has urged Turkish companies not to miss investment opportunities in Kazakhstan expected to amount to some \$25 billion by 2020.

In closing remarks at a two-day business forum, Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev said Turkey has made large investments in construction projects but they also wanted to see production-related investments in Kazakhstan. "Some 144 businesses will start working this year, and nearly \$5 billion has been invested thus far. There will be new businesses amounting to \$25 billion within the 2020 innovation program. Do not miss this opportunity. Of a total \$108 billion in investments made in Central Asia, 80 percent of this was made in Kazakhstan. We have revamped our infrastructure and increased investors' confidence," Nazarbayev said on Tuesday at the forum organized by the Turkish Exporters Assembly (TİM) and the Turkish Confederation of Businessmen and Industrialists (TUSKON), which started on Monday. One-hundred fifty businessmen from Turkey attended the business forum, which was jointly kicked off by Turkish President Abdullah Gül and Nazarbayev. Turkish companies have concluded hundreds of bilateral meetings with around 350 Kazakh companies. Nazarbayev said Turkish businessmen should first invest in chemistry, petrochemistry, agricultural equipment, energy, transportation and logistics.

Nearly \$400 million in deals have been concluded as a result of 1,400 meetings held between Kazakh and Turkish companies over the two days of the forum. Gül said at the forum that he had conveyed the problems that businessmen face to Nazarbayev and pledged there will be steps to solve them. Following their meetings in Astana on Tuesday, the two leaders spoke at a news conference where they vowed to boost bilateral trade and to address conflicts in the region together.

At a joint news conference with his Turkish counterpart in Astana, the Kazakh president said their nations will play an important role in Asia; he described Turkey and Kazakhstan as two

countries jointly working in international politics. “Kazakhstan is chairing the rotating presidency of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Turkey also will take the term presidency of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA) in July. Astana and Ankara are working hand-in-hand in international politics. The two countries will play an important role in Asia,” Nazarbayev noted.

Gül said trade between the two countries now stands at \$3 billion and their goal is to achieve \$10 billion in the near future. The two leaders also spoke of cooperation in energy and education.

26 May 2010, Wednesday

TODAY’S ZAMAN İSTANBUL

Greece rejects proposal for unarmed flights

Greece has dismissed a Turkish proposal for military planes that patrol the Aegean Sea to fly unarmed, saying Turkey continues to pose a security threat.

“Flying military aircraft unarmed does not mean reduced tension or risk of accident,” Greek Alternate Foreign Minister Dimitris Droustas was quoted as saying in remarks published on Saturday. “Greek planes fly armed because they are facing an unknown threat since the Turkish side does not present flight plans to enter the Athens FIR [flight information region]. ... The Turkish war threat remains in place. ... This is what should be eradicated,” he said in an interview with the Greek *Isotimia* weekly.

Turkey presented the proposal for unarmed flights during a visit by Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan to Athens earlier this month as a way of reducing tensions and boosting confidence between the two neighbors in the Aegean, which would in turn pave the way for mutual cuts in defense expenditures. Chief of Staff Gen. İlker Başbuğ repeated the offer last week. He said most Turkish flights already take off unarmed, except for a few that are tasked with protecting planes on training missions.

24 May 2010, Monday

TODAY’S ZAMAN İSTANBUL

İstanbul conference raises hopes for war-torn Somalia

Dozens of nations have pledged to help Somalia build a strong police and military, achieve peace and stability and eradicate the piracy that has plagued international maritime trade.

Country representatives who met in İstanbul at a three-day UN-sponsored conference for Somalia said on Saturday that strengthening law enforcement in the impoverished and lawless African nation was essential given the chaotic situation and deepening divisions among militant groups.

“If we do not tackle the basic causes onshore, we will never be able to stop the piracy offshore,” UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon said at the end of the conference on Saturday. “Despite the risk ... the UN and the international community will not stand by and watch Somalia’s struggle alone.”

Somalia has been a state of anarchy since 1991, when warlords overthrew longtime dictator Mohamed Siad Barre and then turned on each other. Piracy is flourishing off the coast, while insurgents with alleged links to al-Qaeda launch daily attacks. The weak UN-sponsored transitional government, meanwhile, controls only a few blocks of the capital, Mogadishu, with the help of 5,300 African Union peacekeepers.

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insurgents with alleged links to al-Qaeda launch daily attacks. The weak UN-sponsored transitional government, meanwhile, controls only a few blocks of the capital, Mogadishu, with the help of 5,300 African Union peacekeepers.

Political turmoil erupted this week as President Sheik Sharif Sheik Ahmed fired Prime Minister Omar Abdirashid Ali Sharmarke, only to reverse his decision on Thursday, saying the country needed unity among its leaders. Ban said it was time for the international community to “redouble our efforts” to help Somalia and that the transitional government represents the country’s best chance in years to escape from the endless cycle of war and humanitarian disaster. The conference participants -- representatives of 55 nations and 12 international organizations -- expressed “grave concern over the increase in acts of piracy and armed robbery at sea against vessels off the coast of Somalia,” according to a joint statement released at the end of the meeting.

The joint declaration said that “a bright future for Somalia is possible” and that the international community would offer support. Turkey signed a deal to provide military training to Somali soldiers.

“We send a clear and strong message to the people of Somalia that they are not alone in the search for peace, reconciliation and prosperity after so many years of poverty, hardship and suffering,” the declaration said. Ban thanked those offering training, but also noted, “We need to do more to pay them after that training.”

For his part, Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, speaking at a joint press conference following his bilateral meeting with Ban on the same day, said Turkey would never leave Somalia alone, highlighting the presence of historical ties between his country and Somalia. “Lending our best support is also a historical duty for us,” Erdoğan said.

24 May 2010, Monday

TODAY’S ZAMAN WITH WIRES ANKARA

Gül says Central Asia important for Turkey

Turkey attaches great importance to the Turkic nations of Central Asia, President Abdullah Gül said at a press conference in İstanbul on Sunday before his trip to Kazakhstan.

Noting that the decision has been made to meet with the leaders of Turkic countries several times a year, Gül said Turkey’s relations with Kazakhstan “run perfectly” in every sphere. Telling reporters that the trade volume between the two countries has reached \$3 billion and that Turkish contractors have completed projects amounting to \$11 billion, the president said several agreements will be signed to improve the already excellent relations.

Gül said Turkish educational institutions in Kazakhstan show that relations between Turkey and Kazakhstan are multidimensional.

Gül said that during his visit he will meet with Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev and then travel to the city of Turkestan to visit Hoca Ahmet Yesevi University and attend the opening ceremony of an associated hospital.

President Gül is also scheduled to open the Astana branch of the Yunus Emre Foundation on May 26. Public Works and Housing Minister Mustafa Demir, İstanbul Mayor Kadir Topbaş and Turkish Confederation of Businessmen and Industrialists (TUSKON) Chairman Rızanur Meral will accompany Gül on his Kazakhstan visit.

24 May 2010, Monday

TODAYS ZAMAN

Hariri visits Turkey amid tensions with Israel

Lebanese Prime Minister Saad Hariri had closed-door talks with his Turkish counterpart, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, and Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu this weekend, on the last stop of his tour of the Middle East before his departure for the US amid growing tensions between Lebanon and Israel due to Syria's alleged delivery of Scud missiles to Hezbollah.

Speaking during a stop in Egypt on Saturday, Hariri stressed the need for Lebanon to protect itself from all external threats and dangers, adding that the threats that are being issued against Lebanon, Syria and Palestine can be resolved through peaceful means. Later in the day, the Lebanese leader arrived in Turkey, holding a two-hour meeting with Erdoğan and Davutoğlu. No statement was issued after the talks.

Hariri and Erdoğan also discussed a nuclear fuel swap deal Iran agreed to with Brazil and Turkey as well as efforts to isolate Iran over its disputed nuclear program. Lebanon holds the rotating presidency of the UN Security Council through May 31 and is known for its opposition to sanctions against Iran. Lebanon is expected to abstain in any vote on Iran, diplomats say.

Turkish Finance Minister Mehmet Şimşek met with Hariri earlier this week to discuss a free trade agreement between Lebanon and Turkey. Hariri is paying his first official visit to the US today to discuss measures to deter Israel from attacking his country with US President Barack Obama. Meanwhile, Obama is likely to raise the US' concerns about Syria arming Hezbollah when he meets with Hariri, a US official said on Friday.

24 May 2010, Monday

TODAY'S ZAMAN WITH WIRES İSTANBUL

Aid ship sets sail for besieged Gaza, bracing for Israeli blockade
passenger A ship carrying 500 supporters and \$20 million worth of humanitarian supplies started its journey from İstanbul to Gaza this weekend in a show of solidarity with the Palestinian people and in a bid to break Israel's years-long siege of the Gaza Strip.

The "Mavi Marmara" (Blue Marmara), sailing under both Palestine and Turkish flags, left for the Mediterranean city of Antalya after a send-off ceremony at the historic Sarayburnu area on Saturday. The ceremony was joined by around 5,000 supporters and activists. The ship will join a convoy to bring supplies to Palestinians behind the Gaza blockade. In the past, the Israeli navy has blocked several ships' attempts to breach the Gaza blockade.

The Mavi Marmara will join two other Turkish ships in Antalya before departing for Gaza on Tuesday. The ships are expected to get to Gaza later this month. They will meet up with two British, one Greek, one Irish, one Algerian and one Kuwaiti ship in international waters. The nine-ship "Freedom Flotilla" convoy is expected to sail to Gaza within 24 hours of meeting up if they are not blocked by Israel.

The convoy, arranged by the Freedom Flotilla Coalition, is considered the boldest attempt by international aid groups to break the Israeli siege on the Gaza Strip. The coalition comprises the Free Gaza Movement (FG), a human rights group that in August 2008 sent the first international boats to land in the Port of Gaza in 41 years, the Turkey-based Humanitarian Aid Foundation (İHH), the European Campaign to End the Siege of Gaza (ECESG), Ship to Gaza Greece, Ship to Gaza Sweden and the International Committee to Lift the Siege on Gaza.

Delivering a speech at the ceremony, Bülent Yıldırım, the president of the İHH, the organization which arranged Mavi Marmara's departure, suggested that Israel has been "committing a silent genocide" in Gaza.

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The ships sailing off to Gaza solely carry humanitarian aid material, Yıldırım said, adding: "There will not even be a jackknife on these ships. These ships will carry only aid materials. If Israel attempts to shoot this ship, then it will be shooting humanity."

In Israel, Defense Minister Ehud Barak signed an order closing off the zone 20 nautical miles from the Gaza shoreline. The defense establishment said the navy would prevent the fleet from arriving at the Port of Gaza, but added that for operational reasons, they would not say where the ships would be intercepted, English-language Israeli daily Haaretz reported over the weekend. "Naval sources said they were concerned that people on board would initiate a provocation that would lead to a shooting incident or violence for the sake of media attention. The Israel Navy crews have been briefed on preventing a decline into violence. There is also concern that Gazans will try to take dozens of their boats out to sea to meet the aid ships. The navy is expected to act to keep the two groups separate," Haaretz said.

Earlier in the weekend, the Israeli media reported that an Israeli flotilla set off from the shores of Herzliya in response to the pro-Palestinian convoy. The banners the Israeli ships carried noted Gaza rocket fire toward Israel and displayed photos of captured Israel Defense Forces soldier Gilad Shalit, the reports said.

The Palestinian territory has been under a tightened Israeli and Egyptian economic blockade since 2007 when the Hamas movement took over the territory after being elected in the 2006 elections. The blockade was enforced to put pressure on Hamas and to stop weapons being smuggled in.

A report released by the UN Development Programme (UNDP) on Sunday said about three-quarters of the damage inflicted by Israel's war on Gaza more than a year ago has not been repaired.

Israel continues to bar construction materials from entering Hamas-ruled Gaza as part of the overall blockade of the territory. The UNDP said Gazans have carried out small-scale repairs worth \$173 million with recycled rubble or material smuggled through border tunnels. The report also said the international community has been largely sidelined in the reconstruction effort. The UN can do little because it refrains from buying smuggled goods. Israel says it bans construction materials to prevent them from being used by Hamas for military purposes.

The ongoing humanitarian tragedy in Gaza is at the center of tension in relations between Turkey and Israel. Turkey, a member of the NATO defense pact, has a history of military cooperation with Israel and of mediating for the Jewish state with the Arab world. But ties have been shaken by harsh and public criticism from both sides, culminating in Jerusalem in January in a televised reprimand of Turkey's outgoing Ambassador Oğuz Çelikkol.

Ankara says a return to normal bilateral relations is conditional on concrete steps by Israel to end the months-long humanitarian tragedy in Gaza as well as a sign of willingness to revive peace efforts in the Middle East.

Meanwhile, a decree appointing Çelikkol back to Ankara was published in the Official Gazette, and thus went into force, on Saturday. According to the same decree, Çelikkol will be replaced by Kerim Uras, a young diplomat with expertise on Cyprus affairs.

24 May 2010, Monday

TODAY'S ZAMAN WITH WIRES ANKARA

Gul Sends Condolence Letter To Medvedev Over Tragic Bus Accident
We Will Support All Educational Cooperation With Kazakhstan, Turkish President
Monday, 24 May 2010

USAK PUBLICATION

Turkish President Abdullah Gul said Monday Turkey would support all educational cooperation with Kazakhstan.

Such a cooperation is vital not only for the development of our two countries but also to carry the feelings of friendship and brotherhood to new generations, Gul said.

President Gul visited the Hoca Ahmet Yesevi International Turkish-Kazakh University where he attended a ceremony to inaugurate the Medical Faculty building. Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev was also present at the inauguration ceremony.

Later, Gul and Nazarbayev attended a ground breaking ceremony for a library at the university. After visiting the Museum of Turkish World, Gul proceeded to a ceremony in which the Hoca Ahmet Yesevi International Turkish-Kazakh University presented the title of honorary professor to Gul.

Speaking at the ceremony after receiving the title of honorary professor, Gul said that he was excited to be in Turkestan and the Hoca Ahmet Yesevi University.

Receiving the title of honorary professor from the Hoca Ahmet Yesevi University carries a special meaning, Gul said.

Relations between Turkey and Kazakhstan are friendly, brotherly and "exceptional", Gul stressed.

Reminding that a Turkish Council was established under an agreement signed in Nakhchivan by Turkish countries last year, Gul said that the Turkish Academy, an organ of the Turkish Council, will be inaugurated in Astana.

Nazarbayev made great efforts for the establishment of the Turkish Council and for development of relations in the Turkish world, Gul noted.

Nazarbayev, in his part, said that there were many areas that united Turkey and Kazakhstan.

"Our past is common and so are our wishes. We will carry our brotherhood to the future,"

Nazarbayev said.

Turkey is Kazakhstan's trustable strategic partner, Nazarbayev also said.

Monday, 24 May 2010

Iran Develops Ties with Turkey Based On Brotherhood And Friendship, Rahimi

Tuesday 25 May 2010

USAK PUBLICATION

Iranian Vice-President Muhammad Riza Rahimi said Tuesday Iran developed ties with Turkey based on brotherhood and friendship.

According to a statement issued by the Iranian Presidential Press Center, Rahimi evaluated Turkey-Iran relations while receiving Turkish Ambassador in Tehran Umit Yardim.

The interests of Turkey and Iran are not different from each other, Rahimi said.

It is crucial for the two countries to further develop relations, Rahimi said.

All conditions and opportunities are ready for Turkey and Iran to have closer cooperation, Rahimi said.

I hope that Turkey and Iran would reach a trade volume of 30 billion USD. There are many

things we could do when it comes to customs, border, joint industrial sites, transportation and commerce, Rahimi said.

Iran does not see its interests as different than those of Turkey, Rahimi underlined.

Ambassador Umit Yardim, in his part, said that there was a potential for Turkey and Iran to boost commercial relations.

Economic and commercial cooperation may play a vital role in the development of Turkey and Iran, Yardim said.

We must speed up joint projects and are determined to increase the trade volume between Turkey and Iran, Yardim also said.

Tuesday, 25 May 2010

Turkish Premier Aims to Upgrade Relations with Brazil To Strategic Partnership

Thursday, 27 May 2010

USAK PUBLICATION

The Turkish prime minister said on Wednesday that he aimed to upgrade relations with Brazil to strategic partnership with his formal visit.

Turkey's Premier Recep Tayyip Erdogan said economic and commercial relations would constitute the most important part of that partnership.

Erdogan said Turkish-Brazilian relations had gained a new dimension after Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva's visit to Turkey in May 2009.

"Our contacts have increased, cooperation has boosted, and our relations have gained a new momentum after Lula's visit," Erdogan said Turkish-Brazilian Business Forum in Sao Paulo. Erdogan is the first Turkish prime minister ever to visit Brazil.

"I wish today's meeting will have concrete benefits to both sides, and boost our economic relations," he said.

Erdogan said Turkey and Brazil, two important actors of different geographies, should boost their cooperation not only in bilateral level but also regional and global level.

On Iran's nuclear program, Erdogan said Turkey and Brazil achieved a significant success on May 17.

"We have become the architects of a promising step aiming at the solution of Iran's nuclear program controversy, which has engaged the international community for a long time," Erdogan said.

Erdogan said Turkey and Brazil, as members of the United Nations (UN) Security Council and G-20, were contributing to global peace and welfare.

"Our cooperation will gain a new dimension with the third forum of the Alliance of Civilizations Initiative Brazil will host in Rio de Janeiro on May 28," he said.

Erdogan said these contacts and close cooperation were the first examples of how big things Turkey and Brazil could achieve in their region and the world.

Brazil was the biggest tenth economy in the world, Erdogan said.

Erdogan also said Turkey had become the 17th biggest economy in the world today with an annual growth of 4.3 percent, and it was the biggest sixth economy in Europe.

Premier Erdogan is paying a formal visit to Brazil, the first leg of his formal tour to Brazil, Argentina and Chile.

Erdogan attended the inauguration ceremony of Turkey's new Consulate General in Sao Paulo, and First Turkey Export Goods Fair, and visited Embraer, the third biggest aircraft factory in the world, on Wednesday.

On Thursday, Erdogan is scheduled to meet Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva and exchange views on international and regional matters. Two countries are expected to sign several agreements during the prime minister's visit.

Premier Erdogan will also meet Michel Elias Temer, the president of the Chamber of Deputies of Brazil.

Erdogan is expected visit Brazilian Oil Company Petrobras, which carries out joint oil research studies with Turkey's TPAO in the Black Sea.

The Turkish prime minister will proceed to Rio de Janeiro on May 27 to attend Third Forum of the Alliance of Civilizations which will take place on May 28-29.

Erdogan will address the opening of the forum and attend lunch which will be hosted by Brazilian President Silva.

Premier Erdogan will return to Turkey on June 2 after visiting Argentina and Chile.

Thursday, 27 May 2010

Spain Willing To Invest In Wind Energy In Turkey

Thursday, 27 May 2010

USAK PUBLICATION

Spain expressed on Thursday eagerness to invest in wind energy in Turkey.

Alberto Cena, the technical director of the Spanish Wind Energy Association (AEE), said that the association wanted to construct wind facilities and produce new projects in Turkey.

"Spain is very experienced in wind energy, and Spanish companies want to invest in other countries," Cena told AA correspondent in Istanbul.

Cena is visiting Istanbul to attend a conference.

The director said he wanted to give a message to Turkish executives that investment cost in wind energy was lower than they thought.

Cena said Turkey and Spain were a lot like each other, and two countries were depending other countries for energy.

"Therefore, the two countries should think of using a natural energy opportunity like wind energy," he said.

Cena said Spanish companies considered the biggest problem in Turkey as unclear laws regarding the renewable energy.

The director underlined importance of eliminating those uncertainties to pave the way for investments.

Cena said the geographical and wind conditions of Turkey and Spain were similar to each other, and Spain could reach other countries via Turkey.

Wind energy has reached 20,000 megawatts in Spain today, and Spain meets 14 percent of its electricity demand from wind energy.

The objectives of the association are to overcome the technical and statutory barriers that affect the growth of wind power; to maintain and consolidate the retributive regimen of the electrical production of wind origin that allows the sustainable development of the sector; to become the meeting point for the main characters of the wind power market and the only valid interlocutor of the sector; and to generate opportunities and to attract investment for the development of wind

energy.

Thursday, 27 May 2010

ECONOMIC NEWS

Turkish investment in Turkmenistan exceeds \$7 billion

Turkish businessmen have invested more than \$7 billion in Turkmenistan, Maksat Döwletsahedov, the Turkmen ambassador to Turkey, has said.

Döwletsahedov, speaking to the Anatolia news agency on Monday in the southeastern province of Mersin's Erdemli district, where he attended a meeting organized by the Joint Administration of Turkic Culture and Art (TÜRKSÖY) and the Erdemli Municipality, expressed satisfaction over the developing social and economic ties between Turkey and Turkmenistan. "There are currently around 600 Turkish companies operating in Turkmenistan," he said, adding: "These companies have undertaken almost 800 projects so far. The monetary value of Turkish businessmen's investments in Turkmenistan has exceeded \$7 billion."

The trade volume between the two countries is also on the rise, the ambassador stated, with Turkmenistan exporting natural gas and electricity to Turkey. Recalling that Turkey was the first country to recognize Turkmenistan when it declared its independence and opened the first embassy in Turkmenistan, Döwletsahedov said the two countries would further improve their relations.

25 May 2010, Tuesday

TODAY'S ZAMAN İSTANBUL

Kuwait invites Turkish contractors to bid on \$24 bln in projects

The Kuwaiti government has invited Turkish contractors to participate in upcoming tenders for infrastructure projects totaling \$24 billion, Finance Minister Mehmet Şimşek said on Monday. Speaking to the Anatolia news agency in Ankara, the minister recalled that he met with Kuwaiti Deputy Prime Minister Muhammad al-Sabah during the recent Arab Economic Forum and that al-Sabah conveyed the Kuwaiti government's invitation for Turkish construction firms to join approaching tenders for new infrastructure projects. "We are going to visit Kuwait to participate in a Turkey-Kuwait Joint Economic Commission this week. Al-Sabah asked me to bring a large group of representatives from construction firms. The deputy minister said he wanted to communicate the details of the new projects with our contractors in person since his country is keen to share Turkey's experiences in the construction industry," Şimşek explained. Noting that the size of the projects undertaken by Turkish contractors has reached \$155 billion in 70 different countries, Şimşek said the government is committed to doing its part so such successes can also be maintained in the years to come.

Kuwait is an attractive market for Turkish contractors that are keen to branch out into new areas. The Gulf country expects the construction projects to be completed prior to 2020, focusing in particular on infrastructure projects for the petrochemical industry. In addition, the amount of transportation, tourism, mass housing and business center projects that Kuwait plans to conclude in the next 10 years is expected to exceed \$50 billion.

Sharing his views on the issue, Şükrü Koçoğlu, president of the Turkish Construction Industry Employers' Union (İNTES), said on Monday in Ankara that Turkish contractors are renowned worldwide thanks to a number of successful projects that they have completed thus far. "We are receiving invitations to engage in new projects from Middle Eastern and North African countries

along with Russia and some others in Europe. There is cutthroat competition in the global construction market, and Turkish firms are strengthening their position every year.”

According to data from the Foreign Trade Undersecretariat, Turkish contractors have on average undertaken 395 projects per year between 2003 and 2009. In this period, 2008 saw 562 projects carried out by Turkish firms, its highest number to date. This number, however, fell to 337 last year due to a sharp decline in the market amid the global financial crisis. In 2009, the value of all construction projects undertaken by Turkish firms reached \$20 billion. Of the projects that have been started by Turkish contractors between 2003 and 2009, Russia has the largest share with 18.2 percent, followed by Libya, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan and the UAE.

25 May 2010, Tuesday

TODAY’S ZAMAN ANKARA

Turkmenistan to build new natural gas pipeline

Turkmenistan will start building an east-west pipeline in June with a capacity of 30 billion cubic meters per year. A resolution authorizing the start of construction was signed by President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov on Monday.

“The new gas pipeline will connect the eastern region of the country, where the largest natural gas reserves are concentrated, with the rapidly developing central and Caspian region of Turkmenistan,” Berdimuhamedov said, as quoted by the Turkmen media. He also asserted that the east-west gas link will make it possible to provide almost all factories and other facilities located throughout the country with natural gas.

The president instructed Turkmengaz and Turkmennebitgazgurlushik to cooperate in carrying out the design and construction of the pipeline, including the ground support communications in a segment stretching from the Shatlyk gas compressor station at the Dovletabat-Deryalyk gas pipeline to the Belek-1 station.

The pipeline will be around 1,000 kilometers long, and it is estimated that the gas flow will start by June 2015. The Turkmen press reported that the pipeline will provide gas to the domestic industry as well as aiming to diversify the country’s gas export channels.

The east-west pipeline will not only be confined to the Dovletabat field but will also connect to the South Yolöten-Osman and other gas fields in the region.

Turkmenistan has a total of 24.6 trillion cubic meters of proven gas reserves.

25 May 2010, Tuesday

TODAY’S ZAMAN İSTANBUL

MÜSİAD: Record profits prove crisis had minor impact

Independent Industrialists and Businessmen’s Association (MÜSİAD) President Ömer Cihad Vardan has said that the record profits registered by companies last year despite a contraction in demand and a difficult business environment prove that Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan was right in his earlier statement that the recent global economic crisis would just glance off of the Turkish economy, with the recession only slightly affecting the market.

“Contrary to the widely shared pessimistic opinion that the Turkish financial system would collapse due to the crisis, figures recently released by banks for their operations in 2009, along with the growth rates and record profits they registered last year, confirm that the crisis just touched and passed over Turkey,” he said, stressing that this is the first time in history that “Turkey was not overwhelmed by the adverse economic conditions of a crisis created by itself, but exited a global economic meltdown by directing toward a positive path.”

Vardan was speaking Monday at a press conference where he presented MÜSİAD's Turkish Economy Report for 2010, which was prepared under the main theme of "Time for Economic and Political Rise." He said that the crisis was brought under control early thanks to the radical and coordinated measures that were taken. "However, the sources of and damage caused by the crisis are yet to be eliminated." Vardan drew attention to the fact that Turkey is in no worse condition than any International Monetary Fund (IMF) member country, stressing that a new stand-by deal with the IMF is not necessary at all.

The global economy will continue to live with a high risk of a new crisis for at least the next 10 to 15 years, Vardan predicted. He cited a lack of a consensus in fundamental issues as the biggest threat to Turkey, calling on all circles of society to work together.

FX stability fund should be set up

In the report, MÜSİAD emphasized the need for a foreign exchange rate stability fund to balance foreign trade against a fall in the value of the euro, which may raise imports in the short term and have a negative impact on the foreign trade balance in the long run. MÜSİAD suggested that measures to reduce unemployment be taken and cooperation between the business world and universities be boosted.

The report also urged the government not to ignore the importance of the African, Eurasian and Latin American markets and to revise Turkey's growth model by implementing secondary reforms. MÜSİAD forecasts the year-end growth to be around 4 to 5 percent, the consumer inflation rate around 8 to 8.5 percent, the current account deficit around \$25 to 30 billion and the unemployment rate around 13 percent.

25 May 2010, Tuesday

TODAY'S ZAMAN İSTANBUL

ike in support of Tekel workers ends peacefully

A countrywide strike in solidarity with the workers from Turkey's former alcohol and tobacco monopoly Tekel who lost their jobs after the monopoly's privatization ended without any clashes Wednesday.

The strike had little impact on daily life as various confederations staged separate protests for different lengths of time. Some of the confederations staged a full one-day strike while others chose to reduce this to an hour. Workers protested about major shortcomings during the strike such as the lack of opportunities to find work with insurance and problems with Article 4/C of the Civil Servants Law; they also demanded improvements in working conditions.

Tekel workers who lost their jobs after the monopoly's sale to British American Tobacco (BAT) commenced a protest against the government in Ankara on Dec. 15. The protest continued through to March 2, lasting a total of 78 days. Unions including the Confederation of Turkish Labor Unions (Türk-İş), the Confederation of Revolutionary Workers' Unions (DİSK), the Turkish Public Workers' Labor Union (Kamu-Sen) and the Confederation of Public Sector Trade Unions (KESK) had earlier announced they would hold a protest on May 26 to "stop daily life." They, however, recently decided each union would be free to call a planned countrywide one-day strike on May 26 on their own, meaning a general strike was off the agenda.

Türk-İş President Mustafa Kumlu spoke to reporters in Zonguldak, where 30 miners died after being trapped deep inside the state-run Turkish Hard Coal Enterprises (TTK) Karadon mine following a large methane gas explosion on Monday of last week. He joined workers in a one-hour strike and criticized the government for leaving the mine in the hands of subcontractors that lacked the necessary experience in this field. The government faced harsh criticism following

last week's accident in Zonguldak where 28 workers died. KESK General Manager Sami Evren said during the protests in İstanbul on Wednesday they had earlier announced they would give up yesterday's strike should the government come up with some favorable solutions. "Since Feb. 22 when we announced the strike, the government hasn't made any progress and we had no choice but to stage this strike," he explained. Evren said they won't back down from their fight and recalled that other confederations had asked them to reduce the one-day strike to one hour but they had refused. KESK members met later in the day in Beyazıt Square to release a press statement. KESK Secretary-General Emirali Şimşek also called on the government on Wednesday in Ankara to improve working conditions in Turkey and dismiss such "unreliable systems" as Article 4/C. Recalling that 42 percent of workers are deprived of social security services in Turkey, he said the government should solve this problem as soon as possible. DİSK President Süleyman Çelebi accompanied member workers from İstanbul's Şişli district municipality in their one-hour strike. Speaking to reporters, Çelebi criticized the government and likened working life in Turkey to "a horror movie." "We have lost 63 mine workers in the past six months. This is all because of irresponsibility, unsafe working practices and negligence." He said they were committed to supporting the rights of workers in Turkey in solidarity with other unions. Recalling that only 5 percent of workers in Turkey are registered with a labor union, he said people should be encouraged in this regard. He called on the government to improve working conditions with some new regulations.

Elsewhere, groups of workers from different unions staged strikes in the provinces of Samsun, Adana and Diyarbakır.

27 May 2010, Thursday

TODAY'S ZAMAN İSTANBUL

Markets anxious European crisis may hit Turkey's economy

The Turkish economy may not remain unscathed should the current financial tornado in the European markets spread throughout the continent before it stops, observers have argued.

European bank shares slumped on Tuesday in the wake of the Bank of Spain's takeover of a small regional savings bank, CajaSur, amid concerns that a sovereign debt crisis that began in Greece may turn into a wider banking crisis. European shares rallied from nine-month lows, but the euro remained under pressure amid continuing signs of banks' reluctance to lend to eurozone counterparts exposed to Southern European sovereign debt.

The İstanbul Stock Exchange (İMKB) closed the first session on Wednesday at 53,173.78 points with a 1.75 percent rise.

Meanwhile, Italy joined Greece, Spain, Portugal and Britain in trying to slash deficits, but the downside could be slower growth.

The Central Bank of Turkey said on Wednesday in its Financial Stability Report that the impacts of the financial problems experienced in Europe on Turkey have been limited thus far.

"Nevertheless, failure to take the problems in question under control would constitute the most serious risk in terms of global financial stability." The central bank said that if this happens, it may cause both a loss of confidence in financial markets and an interruption in the recovery process and thus may have a negative impact on Turkey.

Amid growing concerns that the eurozone crisis will spread and derail the global economic recovery, Turkey, with its economy highly integrated with the eurozone, will not be able stay out of the fire, İbrahim Öztürk, a professor of economics at Marmara University, told Today's Zaman in a phone interview. As regards the possible impacts of the EU debt crisis on the Turkish

economy, Öztürk said Turkey will not be able to escape the destructive waves from the continent. “Our economy is integrated with the EU; the union is our largest export market, and we attract the highest number of tourists from Europe. These two sectors will be hit first should the current crisis expand further,” he explained.

Observers argue that EU governments initially have to intensify their quest to step up fiscal consolidation and introduce growth-increasing reforms of pension systems, labor and other markets. Another major step the EU needs to take is the establishment a general mechanism that will allow for orderly debt workouts among other institutional reforms, an anchor of confidence in the markets. Economic recovery in the world’s richest countries is accelerating thanks to a “substantial” rebound in trade and growth in Asia, but austerity measures are needed to reduce deficits -- as Europe’s debt crisis proves. The period of significant financial instability that began in August 2007 is not yet over, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) warned in its latest biannual Economic Outlook.

Öztürk says the future of continent’s economy lies in the ability of the EU governments to handle the issue with a realistic fiscal rule. “If the current fire spreads to large EU economies such as Spain, then it will have a domino effect on others, eventually turning into a second wave of global financial turmoil after 2009.” Citing an “imbalanced expansion” in the EU as one of the major factors behind the current crisis on the continent, Öztürk said the EU lacks adequate experience in crisis management and that Turkey’s crisis experience could be a good example for the union. “They need to study Turkey’s experience ... learn lessons from it.”

Turkish Industrialists and Businessmen’s Association (TÜSİAD) Vice Chairman Tayfun Bayazit told the Anatolia news agency in İstanbul on Wednesday that they did not expect the euro to experience a serious loss in value, underlining that sustainability of the euro can only be maintained with the establishment of a healthy fiscal rule in the EU. Evaluating the latest developments and risks lingering in the market, Bayazit said the global financial markets are looking to establish a well-organized financial system that runs smoothly with healthy coordination between institutions and that Turkey, with its strong banking industry, will maintain its advantage to emerge as a leading figure in this regard.

Speaking about the growing EU crisis fears in markets, İş Bankası General Manager Ersin Özince said on Wednesday that the European Central Bank should create an environment of mutual trust in the markets if it wants to minimize problems. He said some European companies could be expected to focus on investments in relatively more sustainable markets such as Turkey and switch, for instance, production to Turkey to escape the destructive waves of uncertainty on the European continent. “Banks in Europe could call back loans, and this could place the non-financial sector in serious trouble.”

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TODAY’S ZAMAN WITH WIRES İSTANBUL

SOCIAL NEWS

Social inequality still a problem in Turkey, study reveals

Social inequality remains a major problem in Turkey, with an overwhelming majority of the nation believing that an unequal distribution of income exists among the population, a report has revealed.

The results of the report, titled “Social Inequality in Turkey, 2009,” were announced to the public yesterday at Sabancı University’s Karaköy Communication Center.

Professor Ali Çarkođlu and Professor Ersin Kalaycıođlu authored the study in the Turkey leg of the International Social Survey Program (ISSP), which was carried out in 45 countries. The ISSP is a continuing program of cross-national collaboration running annual surveys on topics important to the social sciences. The program began in 1984 with four founding members -- Australia, Germany, Great Britain and the United States -- and in 2008 grew to 45 member countries from around the world.

An overwhelming 92 percent of respondents said they believe there is an inequality in income distribution in Turkey. There is agreement among the respondents that the government should take necessary measures to remedy this unequal distribution of income. Ninety percent of respondents said the government is responsible for reducing the unequal income distribution among individuals, while 91 percent said the government has to provide a sufficient amount of financial aid to the unemployed and 75 percent of those surveyed said the government should provide more aid to those in need.

The study was carried out with financial assistance from the Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey (TÜBİTAK) and statistical support from the Turkish Statistics Institute (TurkStat).

Sixty-seven percent of respondents said those with a higher income should pay higher taxes, while 15 percent said they should pay the same amount of tax as today, regardless of how high their incomes are. Only 5 percent of respondents said those with a high income should pay less in taxes. According to 47 percent, the higher income groups are paying little in taxes under Turkey's current tax regime.

Çarkođlu said people with a lower income are paying higher taxes in Turkey through the collection of the value-added tax (KDV). "Turks want taxes to correspond to one's income and are aware that the current system runs against their interests," he said.

The survey also asked the respondents to compare their social position with that of the social environment in which they were born and raised. Forty-nine percent said there was no difference; their social position is no different from that of their parents. A total of 30.8 percent said their social position was lower than their elders, while 20 percent said they have a better social status than their parents.

Many of the Turks, around 80 percent, see receiving a good education as the most important key that brings success in life, followed by working hard, meeting the right people, having a well-educated parent and being ambitious. Around 80 percent of respondents do not think bribing people brings success, while around 70 percent do not think being male or female influences one's success in life. To a question asking about their views on their income, a striking 38.9 percent aged above 18 said they had never worked. Kalaycıođlu said the existence of so many people having no jobs despite being above 18 was an important result with regard to the performance of democracy in Turkey. He said it was difficult to find anyone above 18 years of age in Germany who had never worked.

When asked whether their mothers had held any job outside the home when they were in the 15-16 age bracket, 88.7 percent of respondents said their mothers worked only at home. Only 10.1 percent said their mothers worked outside the home when they were teenagers.

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COMMERTARY

YONCA POYRAZ DOĐAN / FATMA DIŐLI İSTANBUL

BERİL DEDEOĞLU

The EU's difficult days

The European Union's current economic crisis is a test for the relations amongst member states and the future of the EU. A test with two essential dimensions.

One of these derives from the problematic assistance between members that has provoked harsh debates within the EU. The decision to develop a rescue plan was a difficult choice for the governments of the richest members of the EU because everyone knew that the essential part of the financial burden would be theirs. The fading domestic political support for Chancellor Angela Merkel, friction in her coalition government and the fact that the rescue plan will be brought before Germany's Federal Constitutional Court are just a start. The feeling of "working for others" sparks serious social disturbance in creditor countries, and the governments have to manage this delicate situation. Besides, Greece, which will receive the financial help, has difficult choices ahead, too. On the one hand, there is the pressure of being condemned to other countries' assistance; on the other, the measures demanded by creditors will not be that easy.

The second dimension of the test concerning the rescue plan is about the problems in the internal functioning of the EU. Some member countries suggest that the voting rights of members who don't apply tougher finance regulations should be suspended in the EU decision-making process. It's not known if this measure could coerce a country that is unable or unwilling to implement those measures. What is certain is that it is perfectly possible to receive financial aid and to trifle away this money. Furthermore, if a country will be excluded from the "political union" without being excluded from the economic and monetary union, this bizarre circumstance will create an unmanageable situation for the EU.

One of the proposals in order to break this vicious circle is to make an adjustment in favor of the euro in the euro-dollar parity. This may create an advantageous position for the countries that provide financial assistance within the EU, even if this can be perceived as opportunism and deepen the lack of confidence between the member states. Moreover, any measure that will affect the US dollar will be undoubtedly scrutinized by the United States.

Every economic, financial and political step that concerns the EU's future is somehow related to the EU-US relationship. To summarize, since the end of the Cold War, the EU has made efforts to become a global political power; thus it sought its autonomy from the US. Nevertheless, the latter has always been reluctant about that. The bilateral relationship between these two actors has started to give the image of a quarrelsome marriage, especially in commerce, security and defense matters.

The "conjugal" problems have incited these two to look for other partners, and they have both fixed their eyes on Russia. The EU may have been quicker in launching rapprochement with Russia, bypassing the US. However, Russian-US rapprochement, which is of critical importance for global stability, is also under way, and now the EU seems to be at bay.

The US will not just watch the EU modify the euro-dollar parity for the euro's favor; it will use every political instrument at its disposal to prevent it. It seems that the US is offering the EU more financial assistance in exchange for political "loyalty" toward Washington. The US can naturally not allow any measure that would put the American economy in a difficult position, and by this means, it holds the EU's political destiny in its hands. The EU is anxious because it knows that it has to decide at once whether to accept the US' conditions or not.

26 May 2010, Wednesday

Is the European Union against Turkish Language?

Friday 28 May 2010
SEDAT LACINER
TODAYS ZAMAN

The European Union (EU) has an understanding of fostering multilingualism. EU institutions encourage EU citizens to speak as many languages as they can, as well as make significant contributions to the languages of minorities within the Union. The same stance is seen when we take the official languages of the EU into consideration: The languages of the member countries are also included in official languages of the EU. In this respect, 23 languages (German, English, French, Italian, Bulgarian, Czech, Dutch, Danish, Finnish, Greek, Hungarian, Portuguese, Spanish, Slovak, Slovenian, Romanian, Polish, Irish, Maltese, Estonian, Lithuanian, Latvian, and Swedish) are accepted as official languages of the EU. In addition, Catalan, Galician and Basque are semi-official languages of the Union.

Some of these languages are spoken by only a few hundred thousand people. For example, Maltese is a micro-language spoken by only 300,000 people, yet it is one of the official languages of the 'enormous' EU. Irish is known by just 300,000 people, but the number of people who really use this language daily is around 40,000. Only 1.1 million people speak Estonian etc. To sum up, the EU gives significant importance to languages in Europe and accepts even the languages spoken by just a few hundred thousand people as official languages to be able to keep the diversity. Too much money, time and energy are consumed while translating all the legislation into these languages.

Within these circumstances, there is a big language disregarded by the EU: Turkish. Turkish is the official language of one of the EU members: the Republic of Cyprus. If you take a look at the constitution of the Republic of Cyprus, it is written that the official languages of the state are Greek and Turkish. Greek and Turkish are side by side both on Cypriot money and the stamps. Do not misunderstand; I am not referring to the state founded in the north. I mean the south! One of official languages of the EU member Cyprus (Greek Cypriot Side) is still Turkish.

Turkish language is not only one of the two official languages of Cyprus, but also millions of EU citizens' mother tongue. Millions of Bulgarian Turks, hundred thousands of Greek West Thrace Turks and almost 5 million Turks dispersed over Western Europe speak mostly in Turkish in their daily lives. Today the number of EU citizens whose mother tongue is Turkish and who speak Turkish in daily life exceeds 3 million people. Turkish is the thirteenth most spoken language in the EU countries.

In short, Turkish is not a language to be overlooked. So why does the EU exclude Turkish from its official languages in spite of all these realities? Why does the EU, which accepts Northern Cyprus as an EU territory by violating its own laws, and made the Greek Cypriot side an EU member despite all the objections and the rule of law, not accept the official language of a full member state as an official language of the EU? Is Brussels allergic not only to the religion of the Turks, but also to the language of the Turks?

It is obvious that according to the EU laws Turkish has to be accepted as one of the official languages of the EU. This is not matter of negotiations. If the EU is a law-institution, the EU authorities have no right to neglect Turkish language. In 2004 the Muslim people of the island were kept outside of the EU, while the Christian Cypriots were accepted as EU citizens. The Brussels should not follow such a racist way in accepting the Turkish language.

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The Distance Between Ankara and Moscow Is Disappearing

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Turkey's multilateral foreign policy and its relations with Russia have deepened thanks to the negotiations that began on May 11 between Presidents Medvedev and Gul. Trade volume has reached approximately 40 billion dollars between these countries as they have gradually developed their economic relations. The increasing numbers of Russian tourists coming to Turkey, increasing cooperation in many areas, mutual confidence and interdependency have brought these countries closer.

During the effective two-day negotiations, 17 agreements on nuclear energy, abolishment of visas, transportation and cooperation among Ministries of Domestic Affairs were signed. These chapters are all certainly very important, especially the intergovernmental agreement to build Turkey's first nuclear power plant, which is a landmark deal. In this column, instead of analyzing all of the chapters, we will focus on security issues within the framework of the agreements concerning the domestic affairs of Russia and Turkey.

New Language to Solve the Problem: From Trade to Security

Not so many years have passed since we heard the slogan "Communists to Moscow". The tension of the Cold War had such a strong effect on Russian and Turkish societies that Turks could not hide their surprise when they saw Russians in Istanbul's Laleli district after 1989. However, in the following years, the increasing number of Russian tourists to Turkey and their purchases of various textile products led to the emergence of a big market called the "Market of Laleli." The trade relations that first started with the shuttle trade encouraged Turkish investors, particularly those in the construction sector. The huge shop centres of Turkish entrepreneurs started to be the heart of social life in Russian cities such as Moscow and St. Petersburg. Developing Turkish-Russian trade relations expanded to the energy field, tourism and other investment areas, and trade volume reached approximately 35-40 billion dollars. It is expected that this volume will reach 100 billion dollars in the coming years. Certainly, the increasing trade among the countries and the 3 million Russians who prefer Turkish coasts in summertime have shaped the interaction and political development to a great extent.

The increasing number of trade relations paved the way for cooperation in other areas. Trade networks which were developed within the framework of this approach- known as the "spill-over effect" in the literature- have recently started to build up the most interesting side of the changing relationship between Russia and Turkey from mistrust to confidence and from enmity to strategic partnership.

As remembered, after terrorist events such as the theatre siege of 2002 in Moscow and the tragedy of Beslan of 2004, Turkey was accused of being responsible for these attacks. Russian authorities waving the Turkish passports which were taken from suspects were still in living memory. Russia has gotten into the habit of describing Turkey as a "possible suspect" and a "bad neighbour" after every terrorist attack. It was an "open secret" for experts that as a kind of retaliation, some Russian officials gave support to the PKK terrorist organization, which has been a long-lasting headache for Turkey.

However, the relations between Turkey and Russia have been improving recently. The first signs of this positive change started to be seen after the attacks in Moscow on March 30, 2010 and "possible suspect" Turkey started to be seen as a close friend, and a fundamental and necessary

country in the cooperation. Although after the terrorist attacks in the Moscow metro, as a result of old habit, Kommersant, a high circulation Russian newspaper, published that approximately 30 "Chechen Black Widows" were trained in Turkey and accused Turkey, although these allegations were not supported by any Russian authorities. Moreover, this news was removed from the website one day later. Russian authorities neither accused Turkey nor implicitly targeted it. High ranked Turkish officials condemned the terrorist attacks in Russia and their statement highlighted that Turkey sincerely believed the necessity of international solidarity in countering terrorism; Turkey was in solidarity with Russia and was standing by that country against this heinous attack.

Towards A Common Security Perspective?

Certainly, building a common security perspective is the most important part of Turkish-Russian relations. A strategic and special relationship between two countries can only occur if there is interdependence in security matters. In this sense, the representative of Chechens, Kadirov, who accompanied Medvedev on his visit to Turkey, has special meaning. Besides, Turkish President Abdullah Gul who was welcomed by a special ceremony, received an honorary doctorate in the autonomous Tatarstan Republic of the Russian Federation due to his contributions to scientific studies, cultural studies and international relations. This also indicated that the relations in terms of confidence building measures were strengthened through cultural instruments.

It is also important that the Russian and Turkish domestic ministries increased cooperation in war on terror, narcotics and cross border crimes through agreements. In this sense, it is also an important step that during his visit to Turkey two months ago, Russian Minister of Domestic Affairs Rashid Nurgaliyev gave importance to the Turkish Police Academy where the Turkish police forces are trained. As remembered, the Turkish Police Academy competed with Moscow due to the fact that it received students from 15 countries of the former Soviet Union.

Afterwards, this competition has turned into cooperation in this new era in terms of relations between the two countries.

The chance of the agreements being signed on security issues depends on active communication between both sides and the establishment of a common perspective in this dialogue. Creating a common perspective can only be possible through cooperation in education. This broad approach between Ankara and Moscow derived its importance from cooperation in domestic security which was made permanent through agreements. The most obvious evidence can be seen in the abolishment of visas.

Increasing Trade and Building Confidence: Multilateral Interdependency

The abolishment of visas has great importance in terms of the relations between Russia and Turkey. If the societies become sceptical of each other, leaders can never make the agreements in order to encourage human mobility. This can only be possible through a change of mentality and increasing confidence. As the states trust each other they remove the barriers among the societies that they represent. Otherwise, states establish walls and lay mines and the societies become strangers to each other.

We can easily see that the confidence in Turkish-Russian Relations is growing and the cooperation that began through trade has expanded to other areas. The relations between these countries have evolved from an economic dimension to one of cultural and security matters. Accordingly, interdependency has gradually increased.

The developments of the last 20 years, especially the agreements signed within the last several years and the negotiations which started to be ordinary among headquarters, politicians and businessmen of both countries clearly indicate that the distance between Moscow and Ankara is

getting shorter and these two countries become closer.

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