

**Business & Politics in the Muslim World**  
**News Monitoring**  
**Weekly Report**  
**June 26 to July 2, 2010**  
**Central Asia**  
**Uzma Siraj**

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- Armenian FM Deems Baku 'Responsible' For Karabakh Fighting
- Azerbaijani foreign minister appreciates recent statement by presidents of Russia, France and U.S.
- Bulgarian president arrives in Azerbaijan

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

- Azerbaijan and Iran can increase trade turnover to 10 billion dollars"

#### **Social Front**

- European Broadcasters Call For Media Freedoms
- Azerbaijan Allows Jailed Blogger To Attend Father's Funeral.

#### **Kazakastan**

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- Nazarbaev Says Kyrgyz Conflict Threatened Regional Stability
- Six Months Into OSCE Chair, Kazakhstan Found Wanting In Kyrgyz Events
- Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan Clash Over Border Policy

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

- Russia, Kazakhstan Launch Customs Union - Without Belarus
- Kazakhstan plans major power plant by 2015

#### **Social Front**

- Two killed in Kazakh coal mine blowout -ministry
- Kazakhstan's Nazarbaev University Opens In Astana

#### **Kyrgyzstan**

#### **Political Front**

- New Kyrgyz Constitution Comes Into Force
- Kyrgyz Leader To Meet Vote Observers
- Kyrgyzstan's Leader Says Voters Approve New Constitution
- Western Nations, Institutions Praise Kyrgyz Referendum, As Russia Expresses Doubts

#### **Geo Strategic Front**

- Tajik General Denies Involvement In Kyrgyz Violence
- Tajik President Agrees To CSTO Aid Deal For Kyrgyzstan

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

#### **Social Front**

- Two Kyrgyz Rights Activists Arrested In Osh
- Jailed Kyrgyz Rights Activist Accused Of Murder
- NGO Says Journalists Were Attacked In Southern Kyrgyzstan

#### **Tajikistan**

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- It is still a long way to full national consolidation in Tajikistan, says expert

#### **Geo Strategic Front**

- Tajik General Denies Involvement In Kyrgyz Violence
- Tajik President Agrees To CSTO Aid Deal For Kyrgyzstan
- Uzbekistan annuls air traffic agreement with Tajikistan

## **Economic /Energy Front**

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#### **Turkmenistan**

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- Turkmenistan and France discuss prospects of cooperation
- President of Ukraine invites Turkmen leader on friendly visit to Kiev
- Delegation of Ukraine headed by Minister of Foreign Affairs visits Ashgabat

### **Economic /Energy Front**

- Turkmenistan plans to supply China with more than 40 billion cubic meters of gas per year
- IMF predicts impressive growth of Turkmenistan's economy

### **Social Front**

- UN develops project to support Government of Turkmenistan

#### **Uzbekistan**

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- Uzbekistan Annuls Air Traffic Agreement With Tajikistan
- Uzbekistan Sending Wounded Refugees Back To Kyrgyzstan

## **Summery**

#### **Azerbaijan**

### **Political Front**

### **Geo Strategic Front**

- Clinton Travels To Central Europe And Caucasus

U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton is traveling to Central Asia and the Caucasus. Her first stop is Ukraine, where Clinton will discuss bilateral ties with President Viktor Yanukovich and other officials.

- Armenian FM Deems Baku 'Responsible' For Karabakh Fighting

YEREVAN -- Armenian Foreign Minister Edward Nalbandian has claimed the international community holds Azerbaijan primarily responsible for the latest upsurge in cease-fire violations around the breakaway Azerbaijani region of Nagorno-Karabakh, RFE/RL's Armenian Service reports.

- Azerbaijani foreign minister appreciates recent statement by presidents of Russia, France and U.S.

Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov highly assessed and recognized very important the recent statement by the presidents of the OSCE Minsk Group co-chair-countries in Toronto.

- Bulgarian president arrives in Azerbaijan

President of Bulgaria Georgi Parvanov has today arrived in Azerbaijan for a working visit.

### **Economic /Energy Front**

- Azerbaijan and Iran can increase trade turnover to 10 billion dollars"

"Azerbaijan-Iran trade turnover comes close to \$500 millions, but both countries can increase it up to \$10 billions. We will put our efforts into achieving this goal," said Iran's Minister of Finance and Economy Seyyid Shamsaddin Hussaini.

### **Social Front**

- European Broadcasters Call For Media Freedoms

European public service broadcasters today called on all governments to respect freedom of expression and freedom of the media.

- Azerbaijan Allows Jailed Blogger To Attend Father's Funeral

Azerbaijani officials have said they will allow a jailed blogger out of prison to attend his father's funeral, RFE/RL's Azerbaijani Service reports.

### **Kazakhstan**

### **Political Front**

### **Geo Strategic Front**

- Nazarbaev Says Kyrgyz Conflict Threatened Regional Stability

Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbaev speaks at the opening of the High-Level Conference on Tolerance and Non-Discrimination in Astana on June 29.

- Six Months Into OSCE Chair, Kazakhstan Found Wanting In Kyrgyz Events

The Kazakh Foreign Ministry calls the Kyrgyz crisis a "big test" for Kazakhstan's OSCE chairmanship. Pictured here: Kazakh Foreign Minister Kanat Saudabaev, who is also the OSCE's chairman in office.

- Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan Clash Over Border Policy

For much of September, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan have engaged in a heated diplomatic exchange over a shooting incident along their shared frontier. The row underscores the fact that border sensitivities in Central Asia continue to foster instability.

### **Economic /Energy Front**

- Russia, Kazakhstan Launch Customs Union - Without Belarus

Russia and Kazakhstan have launched a customs union in an effort to boost trade and investment between them. Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin told a government session that Belarus was still welcome to join, saying Moscow was seeking "full-fledged, mutually beneficial cooperation" with Minsk.

- Kazakhstan plans major power plant by 2015

Kazakh and South Korean firms plan to complete construction by 2015 of a major new power plant to help meet an electricity shortage in southern Kazakhstan, the companies involved in the project said on Monday.

### **Social Front**

- Two killed in Kazakh coal mine blowout -ministry

KARAGANDY, Kazakhstan, June 24 (Reuters) - A gas blowout killed two coal miners in a Kazakh mine owned by ArcelorMittal <MT.N> <ISPA.AS>, the world's largest steelmaker, the local branch of the Emergencies Ministry said on Thursday.

- Kazakhstan's Nazarbaev University Opens In Astana

ASTANA -- A ceremony was held today in Astana for the beginning of classes at a new university named after Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbaev, RFE/RL's Kazakh Service reports.

## **Kyrgyzstan**

### **Political Front**

- New Kyrgyz Constitution Comes Into Force

Interim government head Roza Otunbaeva could be sworn in on July 3, according to election authorities.

- Kyrgyz Leader To Meet Vote Observers

Kyrgyz interim leader Roza Otunbaeva will meet on June 29 with representatives of foreign observer missions after voters overwhelmingly backed a new constitution in a referendum.

- Kyrgyzstan's Leader Says Voters Approve New Constitution

BISHKEK -- Two weeks after ethnic clashes rocked southern Kyrgyzstan, the government says it will adopt a new constitution after people across the country voted in a referendum.

Security was tight amid fears of further unrest, but many say they hope the June 27 referendum will enable the country to establish Central Asia's first parliamentary democracy.

- Western Nations, Institutions Praise Kyrgyz Referendum, As Russia Expresses Doubts

Members of a local electoral commission empty a ballot box at a polling station in Bishkek on June 27. The United States, United Nations, European Union, and Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) have all praised Kyrgyzstan for having conducted a peaceful constitutional referendum.

### **Geo Strategic Front**

- Tajik General Denies Involvement In Kyrgyz Violence

A top Tajik security official has rejected reports that he and other Tajiks were involved in last month's ethnic violence in Kyrgyzstan, RFE/RL's Tajik Service reports.

- Tajik President Agrees To CSTO Aid Deal For Kyrgyzstan

DUSHANBE -- The head of the Commonwealth of Independent States' security organization says Tajikistan has agreed to help stabilize southern Kyrgyzstan, RFE/RL's Tajik Service reports.

### **Economic /Energy Front**

### **Social Front**

- Two Kyrgyz Rights Activists Arrested In Osh

OSH, Kyrgyzstan -- Two Kyrgyz human rights activists have been detained and questioned by the Osh Prosecutor-General's Office, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports.

Aziza Abdrasulova, director of the nongovernmental organization (NGO) Torch of the Century, told RFE/RL that she and Tolekan Ismailova, chairwoman of the NGO Citizens Against Corruption, were arrested on June 28 due to a typographical error made in transcribing interviews they gave to a local media outlet.

- Jailed Kyrgyz Rights Activist Accused Of Murder

The Kyrgyz Prosecutor-General's Office says that jailed rights activist Azimjan Askarov is accused of instigating interethnic hatred and the killing of a policeman, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports.

- NGO Says Journalists Were Attacked In Southern Kyrgyzstan

A Kyrgyz journalists' organization says several journalists were attacked while covering the ethnic violence in the southern cities of Jalal-Abad and Osh last month, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports.

## **Tajikistan**

### **Political Front**

- It is still a long way to full national consolidation in Tajikistan, says expert DUSHANBE, June 26, 2010, Asia-Plus -- To reach full national consolidation Tajikistan has to pass through the stage of national unity while it is still a long way off, Tajik political scientist Abduvani Mamadzimov said in an interview with Asia-Plus.

### **Geo Strategic Front**

- Tajik General Denies Involvement In Kyrgyz Violence

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- Tajik President Agrees To CSTO Aid Deal For Kyrgyzstan

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- Uzbekistan annuls air traffic agreement with Tajikistan

DUSHANBE, June 30, 2010, Asia-Plus – Uzbekistan has terminated a key air-traffic agreement with neighboring Tajikistan and may temporarily close its airspace to Tajik aircraft, RFE/RL's Tajik Service reported on June 29.

### **Economic /Energy Front**

## **Social Front**

### **Turkmenistan**

#### **Political Front**

#### **Geo Strategic Front**

- Turkmenistan and France discuss prospects of cooperation

On June 30, Turkmen President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov received Anne-Marie Idrac, Secretary of State for Foreign Trade of France, and Aymeri de Montesquiou Fezensaka, senator and personal representative of the President of France to promote political and economic relations between France and Central Asia.

- President of Ukraine invites Turkmen leader on friendly visit to Kiev

On the occasion of his birthday President of Turkmenistan Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov received a congratulatory message from President of Ukraine Viktor Yanukovich.

- Delegation of Ukraine headed by Minister of Foreign Affairs visits Ashgabat

The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, Konstantin Gryshchenko, visited Ashgabat leading the high-level delegation. The delegation included heads of major Ukrainian companies.

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

- Turkmenistan plans to supply China with more than 40 billion cubic meters of gas per year

The construction of the second line of the Turkmenistan - China gas pipeline provides for additional supplies of Turkmen natural gas to China. As the Turkmenistan.ru

correspondent reports from Ashgabat, Turkmenistan's Foreign Ministry spokesman said this on 28 June at a briefing for foreign reporters, responding to the question of Reuters news agency.

- IMF predicts impressive growth of Turkmenistan's economy

The Turkmen economy is projected to grow impressively in 2010 and the fiscal balance is expected to remain in surplus, ITAR TASS reported referring to the IMF's statement for press on the conclusion of the annual review of Turkmenistan's economy.

#### **Social Front**

- UN develops project to support Government of Turkmenistan

The Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the UN Secretariat is currently developing a project to support the Government of Turkmenistan. The project provides for a specific program of cooperation in the field of retraining, development of regulatory documents and other spheres. As the State News Agency of Turkmenistan (TDH) reports, this was announced on June 28 by Alexei Tikhomirov, representative of the department, during a meeting with President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov.

#### **Uzbekistan**

##### **Political Front**

##### **Geo Strategic Front**

- Uzbekistan Annuls Air Traffic Agreement With Tajikistan

DUSHANBE -- Uzbekistan has terminated a key air-traffic agreement with neighboring Tajikistan and may temporarily close its airspace to Tajik aircraft, RFE/RL's Tajik Service reports.

- Uzbekistan Sending Wounded Refugees Back To Kyrgyzstan

OSH, Kyrgyzstan -- Kyrgyzstan's Health Ministry has said it's begun transporting wounded refugees from Uzbekistan to hospitals in the southern Kyrgyz regions of Osh and Jalal-Abad, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports.

#### **Detailed Report**

##### **Azerbaijan**

##### **Political Front**

##### **Geo Strategic Front**

- Clinton Travels To Central Europe And Caucasus

U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton is traveling to Central Asia and the Caucasus. Her first stop is Ukraine, where Clinton will discuss bilateral ties with President Viktor Yanukovich and other officials.

The State Department says also on the agenda in Kyiv is Ukraine's announcement at the Nuclear Security Summit earlier this year in Washington to get rid of all of its highly enriched uranium.

Clinton's five-day tour will also take her to the capitals of Poland, Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia.

- Armenian FM Deems Baku 'Responsible' For Karabakh Fighting

YEREVAN -- Armenian Foreign Minister Edward Nalbandian has claimed the international community holds Azerbaijan primarily responsible for the latest upsurge in

cease-fire violations around the breakaway Azerbaijani region of Nagorno-Karabakh, RFE/RL's Armenian Service reports.

The U.S., Russian, and French mediators acting under the aegis of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the European Union had deplored last week's deadly fighting in the northeastern part of Karabakh.

Yet neither the mediators nor the EU explicitly blamed either side for the most serious armed incident on the Armenian-Azerbaijani "line of contact" in more than two years. They urged both sides to exercise restraint and seek a peaceful solution to the Karabakh dispute.

But Nalbandian insisted on June 25 in Yerevan that such statements are "primarily addressed to Azerbaijan."

"In contacts with us, those making such statements, especially after the latest incident, are telling us, 'You can clearly see to whom our statements are addressed,'" he said at a news conference with Austrian Foreign Minister Michael Spindeleger.

Nalbandian stressed at the same time that Yerevan expects a more "clear-cut stance" from the international community on the Karabakh clash as well as Azerbaijan's regular threats to resolve the conflict by force.

Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev again warned on June 24 that his troops will try to win back the disputed region and the Azerbaijani districts surrounding it if long-running peace talks with Armenia do not yield an agreement acceptable to Baku.

Speaking to Azerbaijani soldiers at the at the end of what the Azerbaijani Defense Ministry called large-scale military exercises held in an undisclosed location from June 21-24, Aliyev praised the country's military capacity and said the level of professionalism as well as the "moral and combat abilities of the army" are growing.

June 24 also marked the 92nd anniversary of the establishment of Azerbaijan's armed forces.

Azerbaijan's defense budget has increased thirteenfold since 2003, when Aliyev became president. Baku will spend some \$2.15 billion on its military this year.

Aliyev also blamed Karabakh Armenian forces for not withdrawing from Nagorno-Karabakh and the surrounding territories they control in Azerbaijan. "There are resolutions and decisions by international organizations," he said, "but the occupier ignores them." Aliyev added that "we are ready to continue negotiations, if they bring results, or we may choose the other option. We have to be ready for any option. Azerbaijan has been displaying a constructive position for more than 20 years. But for how long do we have to wait?"

Aliyev's appearance at the military exercises follows a June 21 incident in which one Azerbaijani and four Armenian servicemen were killed in a skirmish on the "line of contact" separating Karabakh Armenian and Azerbaijani troops.

At the same time, a top Armenian security official today dismissed speculation on June 25 that an armed conflict with Azerbaijan is imminent.

"We are now prepared for any scenario, but do not support artificial rumors circulating in our society that war is imminent," said Artur Baghdasarian, the secretary of Armenian President Serzh Sarkisian's National Security Council.

- Azerbaijani foreign minister appreciates recent statement by presidents of Russia, France and U.S.

Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov highly assessed and recognized very important the recent statement by the presidents of the OSCE Minsk Group co-chair-countries in Toronto.

"Occupation is occupation, and everyone recognize it. My optimism about the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict settlement will intensify if we know what the Armenians want. If they want annexation of Karabakh, it is impossible. If they continue to insist on the independence of this region, this is also impossible," said Mammadyarov on June 29 at a meeting with members of the Bundestag during his working visit to Germany.

Mammadyarov said he is confident that Russian President Dmitry Medvedev will strive to resolve the conflict. "Medvedev, as a lawyer and an "honest broker", understands that there is a fact of occupation, and that the Armenian armed forces should be withdrawn from the occupied territories," the minister said.

Mutual trust between the three OSCE Minsk Group co-chair countries is very important in resolving the conflict," Mammadyarov said. "If we want to achieve peace in the region, this peace must be based on international law," said Mammadyarov.

Speaking about the process of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict settlement, Mammadyarov said Azerbaijan accepted updated version of the Madrid principles. "Basically, we have agreed upon them," said the minister.

Their main provisions are: to, at the first stage, release 5 of the 7 occupied regions around Nagorno-Karabakh, provided that the remaining 2 districts will be released after 5 years; to unblock communications in the region (here the agenda also includes opening of Turkish-Armenian border ); carrying out restoration work, the return of refugees to their homes, deployment of peacekeeping forces to ensure the security of the population; an interim status for Nagorno-Karabakh with a wide self-government; and only in the end, restoring confidence between the parties, it will be possible in a calm atmosphere to discuss the final status of Nagorno-Karabakh, the minister said.

The possibility of a meeting of foreign ministers of Armenia and Azerbaijan within the OSCE Ministerial Council meeting in Astana on July 16-17 will be discussed during OSCE Minsk Group co-chairs' visit to the region, said Elmar Mammadyarov.

The possibility of a meeting of foreign ministers of Armenia and Azerbaijan in Astana depends on the schedules of Ministers, Mammadyarov added.

- Bulgarian president arrives in Azerbaijan

President of Bulgaria Georgi Parvanov has today arrived in Azerbaijan for a working visit.

A guard of honor was lined up for the Bulgarian President at the Heydar Aliyev International Airport decorated with the national flags of Azerbaijan and Bulgaria.

President Georgi Parvanov and his spouse Zorka Parvanova were welcomed by Azerbaijan`s Minister of Economic Development Shahin Mustafayev and other officials.

### **Economic /Energy Front**

- Azerbaijan and Iran can increase trade turnover to 10 billion dollars"

"Azerbaijan-Iran trade turnover comes close to \$500 millions, but both countries can increase it up to \$10 billions. We will put our efforts into achieving this goal," said Iran`s Minister of Finance and Economy Seyyid Shamsaddin Hussaini.

The minister noted Iran-Azerbaijan deep-rooted historical ties provide opportunities for expanding economic relations. The Iranian Minister said he had been received by

President Ilham Aliyev to discuss development of bilateral relations. He pointed out friendly relationship between Presidents Ilham Aliyev of Azerbaijan and Mahmoud Ahmedinejad of Iran contribute to development of bilateral relations between the two countries.

### **Social Front**

- European Broadcasters Call For Media Freedoms

European public service broadcasters today called on all governments to respect freedom of expression and freedom of the media.

They made that call in a declaration adopted at a General Assembly of the European Broadcasting Union, which was held in Azerbaijan.

The declaration goes on to condemn arrests, harassment, and intimidation of journalists, and also calls on governments to bring to justice those responsible for attacks on reporters.

It also raises EU concerns about various cases in Azerbaijan in which journalists and other individuals exercising their universal right of freedom of expression have been prosecuted on questionable grounds.

In April, the European Court of Human Rights ruled that Azerbaijan should release journalist Eynulla Fatullayev from jail and pay him 25,000 euros in moral damages.

Fatullayev was jailed for 8 1/2 years in 2007 for terrorism, inciting interethnic hatred, and tax evasion. He was also found guilty at a separate trial earlier the same year of "giving wrong information" about the killings of Azerbaijani civilians in 1992 in the village of Khojaly during the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

In late December 2009, prison guards at the labor camp where Fatullayev is serving his prison term found 0.22 grams of heroin in his pockets and shoes. Fatullayev says the drugs were planted by camp guards.

- Azerbaijan Allows Jailed Blogger To Attend Father's Funeral

Azerbaijani officials have said they will allow a jailed blogger out of prison to attend his father's funeral, RFE/RL's Azerbaijani Service reports.

The Justice Ministry's penitentiary service told RFE/RL that Emin Milli would be released from prison for three days to attend the funeral of his father, Pasha Abdullayev, who died on June 28. Milli and Adnan Hajizada were detained after a scuffle at a Baku restaurant in July 2009. They were found guilty in November of hooliganism and inflicting minor bodily harm and sentenced to 2 1/2 and two years in prison, respectively. Human rights groups say the charges against the two are politically motivated in retaliation for their satirical comments about government policy.

A Baku appeals court upheld their conviction in March despite numerous international calls for clemency.

Abdullayev, 75, had been ill for some time. The funeral will take place in Neftchala, in southeastern Azerbaijan.

### **Kazakastan**

#### **Political Front**

#### **Geo Strategic Front**

- Nazarbaev Says Kyrgyz Conflict Threatened Regional Stability

Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbaev speaks at the opening of the High-Level Conference on Tolerance and Non-Discrimination in Astana on June 29.

ASTANA -- Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbaev has warned in Astana that the recent conflict in Kyrgyzstan has threatened stability in the region, RFE/RL's Kazakh Service reports.

Nazarbaev, speaking at the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe's (OSCE) Conference on Tolerance and Nondiscrimination, said the violence between ethnic Uzbeks and Kyrgyz was a "significant challenge" to the region and a "threat to all OSCE...states."

Nazarbaev proposed establishing an OSCE Tolerance and Nondiscrimination Center that he said could facilitate discussion between different ethnic and religious societies and contribute to conflict prevention in OSCE member countries.

The two-day conference was organized to help implement OSCE policies related to promoting tolerance, nondiscrimination, and intercultural dialogue, which Kazakhstan's OSCE chairmanship has listed as its key priorities.

Some 600 participants are expected to participate in the conference, including Knut Vollebaek, the OSCE high commissioner on national minorities; Janez Lenarcic, the director of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights; Dunja Mijatovic, the OSCE representative on freedom of the media; Jorge Sampaio, the UN high representative for the Alliance of Civilizations; and Mevlut Cavusoglu, the president of the Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly.

Kazakh officials have trumpeted their role in working internationally and bilaterally to curb fallout from Kyrgyzstan -- most notably when it worked with Russia and the United States to seek a deal for ousted President Kurmanbek Bakiev to leave for exile in April -- in part to counter the criticism engendered when their country was picked to assume the rotating chairmanship of the OSCE.

Kazakhstan took over the OSCE chairmanship from Greece in January. When bidding for the right to hold the OSCE chair, Kazakhstan promised to liberalize its laws on elections, the media, and political parties to bring them closer to democratic standards. But critics say any reforms carried out by Astana have been cosmetic.

Kazakhstan, the first ex-Soviet republic to assume the OSCE chairmanship, has never held an election judged free and fair by Western monitoring organizations. The lower house of Kazakhstan's parliament contains the members of only one party, Nazarbaev's Nur-Otan.

- Six Months Into OSCE Chair, Kazakhstan Found Wanting In Kyrgyz Events

The Kazakh Foreign Ministry calls the Kyrgyz crisis a "big test" for Kazakhstan's OSCE chairmanship. Pictured here: Kazakh Foreign Minister Kanat Saudabaev, who is also the OSCE's chairman in office.

When Kazakhstan became the first post-Soviet country to chair the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in January, few would have guessed it would face its sternest test in neighboring Kyrgyzstan.

But that's exactly what happened when former Kyrgyz President Kurmanbek Bakiev was deposed in April and replaced with a pro-democratic interim government -- as well as in the weeks that followed, when clashes between ethnic Kyrgyz and Uzbeks left hundreds dead and displaced hundreds of thousands more.

As Kazakhstan hits the halfway mark in its one-year chairmanship, many observers have said the OSCE's response to the crisis in Kyrgyzstan has been lackadaisical, if not downright negligent.

As chair, Kazakhstan argued against international intervention in the crisis and closed its borders with Kyrgyzstan. Both moves have prompted claims from critics that Kazakhstan's national and regional interests have undermined its effectiveness in guiding the OSCE, which -- as the only international organization permanently on the ground in the region -- could and should have been more proactive.

Kazakhstan, however, defends the OSCE's role in Kyrgyzstan. Kazakh Foreign Ministry spokesman Askar Abdrakhmanov tells RFE/RL that the OSCE responded vigorously to the unrest and coordinated closely with other international bodies.

Kazakhstan's borders were closed to displaced Kyrgyz fleeing the violence in the south of the country.

"As far as the situation in Kyrgyzstan is concerned, clearly it is a big test for the Kazakh chairmanship. It is still ongoing and there are still many questions," Abdrakhmanov says. "But it is worth mentioning that from the beginning of the crisis in Kyrgyzstan, the OSCE was the first organization to participate in the stabilization of the situation in that country."

#### Preventing It From Spreading

Abdrakhmanov also noted that Kazakhstan had played a key role in removing Bakiev from the country -- personally guaranteeing his safe flight to Belarus, where he has been living in exile ever since -- and thus "averting greater bloodshed."

Other observers argue that the authoritarian regimes in the region -- including Kazakhstan -- are primarily interested not in addressing the Kyrgyz unrest but in preventing it from spreading to their own countries.

"It seems that [Kazakhstan] has stood back and, if not enjoying what is going on, certainly feels that this is a very good example of what happens if an authoritarian regime is replaced by a rather confused liberal-democratic one," says Paul Quinn-Judge, the Bishkek-based director of the Central Asia Project of the International Crisis Group.

Kuban Abdymen, a Bishkek-based analyst and journalist, agrees, saying, "The latest revolution in Kyrgyzstan forced Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and Russia to take this very seriously. From this point of view, Kazakhstan has acted more like Russia's ally in regard to Kyrgyzstan than as the chairman of the OSCE."

In the days after Bakiev's ouster, one of Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbaev's first acts was to close his country's border with Kyrgyzstan, cutting off trade and preventing an inflow of people unnerved by the unrest.

That move, says Tolganai Umbetalieva, the director of the Almaty-based Central Asian Foundation for the Development of Democracy, was dictated by Kazakhstan's fears for its own stability.

"Kazakhstan quickly made this decision [to close the border]. All the colored revolutions that have taken place in the post-Soviet space have, of course, had a very strong impact on our government," she says. "And it is trying by all means to maintain stability and to maintain the public's passivity, so that it doesn't come out against the state."

#### 'Did A Lot Of Damage'

Quinn-Judge condemns the border closing as harmful to the new government in Kyrgyzstan.

"The Kazakh approach to Kyrgyzstan since April has been not very supportive, and that's putting it incredibly mildly," he says. "Closing the border with Kyrgyzstan after the

change of power in early April was not a helpful gesture and did a lot of damage to the Kyrgyz economy."

Uzbek President Islam Karimov could come out smelling pretty good.

Ironically, Quinn-Judge notes, Uzbekistan is emerging as the most constructive regional player in the Kyrgyz crisis. Longtime Uzbek leader Islam Karimov, frequently criticized by the West as a dictator, boosted his international standing by coping ably with the flood of refugees streaming out of southern Kyrgyzstan earlier this month.

"I would imagine that the Kazakhs are rather dismayed by the fact that the Uzbeks are scoring lots and lots of points in the international community, surprisingly enough, by their handling of the refugee issue -- which, in fact, has been very prompt and efficient," Quinn-Judge says. "The new Kyrgyz government, the provisional government, is going out of its way to praise Islam Karimov, which is most definitely not music to the Kazakh leadership's ears.

"I strongly suspect that in the long run, if we try to look back at the horrible situation now from the vantage point of six months from now, we may well find that Islam Karimov has emerged as the winner in this whole sorry affair."

Andrei Grozin, the director of the Central Asia Department of Moscow's Institute of the Commonwealth of Independent States, says Kazakhstan has been primarily interested in the OSCE chairmanship from the beginning for its own domestic political purposes.

"The project of chairing the OSCE was viewed from the beginning as a PR project oriented primarily for domestic consumption," Grozin says. "It was intended to once again show the population how lucky it is to have such a national leader [as Nazarbaev] and how lucky it is in general. All efforts have been made in this direction."

Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbaev: "Impressive achievements"

Obsessed With Summit

The OSCE came under fire for tapping Kazakhstan, with its poor human rights record and rubber-stamp parliament, to serve as its first post-Soviet chair. But Kazakh Foreign Minister Kanat Saudabaev, who holds the chairman in office post, noted in his first address before the OSCE's Permanent Council in January that the decision to allow Kazakhstan to head the security body was "a sign of the objective recognition by the international community of the impressive achievements of Kazakhstan and President Nursultan Nazarbaev."

Grozin says the Kazakh chairmanship has been single-mindedly focused on its bid to host an OSCE summit before the end of the year. The OSCE has not been able to hold a summit since 1999 because the consensus-based organization has been unable to agree on an agenda or on tangible results, such as agreements to be signed.

"It seems to me that Kazakhstan, in its chairmanship of the OSCE, is busy with completely other matters. The interethnic violence in the south of Kyrgyzstan just isn't a priority for Foreign Minister Saudabaev," Grozin says. "They are paying quite a bit more attention to some sort of on-the-sidelines, behind-the-scenes discussions with representatives of Western political elites about holding an OSCE summit in Astana."

Quinn-Judge agrees, saying the Kazakhs are "obsessed" with the summit project and that it "does seem to be the only thing they are talking about." He says the Kazakhs view the proposed summit as "aimed at boosting the president's role in the country," rather than a bid to break the organizational deadlock at the OSCE.

Kazakh political analyst Umbetalieva is equally cynical about Kazakhstan's attitude toward its leadership of the OSCE.

"Kazakhstan lost interest in the OSCE almost as soon as it took the post [of chairman]," she says. "If you look at Kazakhstan's domestic and international interests, you can see that domestic political interests dominate. Our government simply uses the OSCE to achieve its own ends and meet its own needs."

- Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan Clash Over Border Policy

For much of September, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan have engaged in a heated diplomatic exchange over a shooting incident along their shared frontier. The row underscores the fact that border sensitivities in Central Asia continue to foster instability.

The face-off between Astana and Tashkent began in early September, when a Kazakhstan citizen was reportedly seriously wounded while grazing his horse near the frontier, according to the Almaty daily Ekspress-K. Kazakhstani officials maintain the shooting was deliberate. Uzbek authorities have countered that the wounded Kazakhstani was among a group of seven men on horseback who ignored verbal warnings to turn away from the border. When the horsemen did not respond, an Uzbek border guard fired warning shots. The wound was caused by a stray bullet, Uzbek authorities insist.

Tension escalated September 22 after the Uzbek embassy in Kazakhstan issued a statement condemning Kazakhstani authorities and the media for making "irresponsible and tactless statements" concerning the shooting incident. Kazakhstan's behavior "may not only worsen Uzbek-Kazakh relations but also provoke tension in border areas," the Uzbek statement said. It also accused Kazakhstan of trying to utilize the incident for "populist and other narrow political ends."

The Kazakhstani Foreign Ministry blasted the Uzbek statement as "irresponsible and contrary to international diplomatic practice and regards it as meddling in Kazakhstan's internal affairs." Kazakhstani diplomats went on to note that the country's border service had registered 1,127 border violations "by the Uzbek side" since last November. During that period, no incident provoked Kazakhstani border forces to resort to force. Over the same span, Uzbek border troops have been involved in five shooting incidents along the Kazakhstani frontier, resulting in one death and one wounding.

Kazakhstan's deputy foreign minister, Nurlan Onzhanov said during a news conference September 23 that the tendency of Uzbekistan's border troops to use excessive force is "taking on a systemic nature." At the same news conference, the chairman of Kazakhstan's National Security Committee, Bolat Zakiyev, complained that Uzbek officials showed "no desire" to address border issues.

On September 26, Kazakhstani and Uzbek officials engaged in another round of mutual recrimination. Uzbek diplomats characterized Kazakhstan's complaints as "unjustified and unconstructive." Meanwhile, the Speaker of Kazakhstan's Majlis, or lower house of parliament, Zharmakhan Tuyakbay, called on the government in Astana "to take a more principled line" against Uzbekistan, instead of "reacting sluggishly to every incident along the Kazakh-Uzbek border," Ekspress-K reported.

Tuyakbay described the Kazakhstani citizens involved in the early September shooting as "peasant farmers." He added that many in rural Kazakhstan "do not know where the border line goes because there are neither border posts nor control strips there," according

to the Ekspress-K report. "People will take a long period of time to understand the existence of the border and get used to this."

The lack of clearly defined and tightly controlled borders in Central Asia has often provoked tension in Central Asia since the collapse of the Soviet Union. A few years ago, radical Islamic insurgents took advantage of the porous frontiers to wage an insurgent campaign that destabilized Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. [For background see the Eurasia Insight archive]. More recently, widespread smuggling prompted Uzbek authorities to seal the country's border, disrupting regional trade. [For background see the Eurasia Insight archive].

According to an expert who asked for anonymity, this latest Kazakhstani-Uzbek row could hint at a broader pattern of instability. In particular, Uzbek frontier policy could fuel tension between Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. Bishkek and Tashkent clashed over border issues less than a year ago, when Uzbekistan destroyed a bridge that connected the two countries. [For background see the Eurasia Insight archive].

Kyrgyz-Uzbek tension, in turn, could easily have a spillover effect on China. China signed agreements with Russia, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan at a recent Shanghai Cooperation Organization meeting. The agreements seek to promote free trade in Central Asia - something that regional experts believe could reinforce China's regional security policies. Squabbling between those states is not likely to please Beijing, as it seems to dim hopes that goods and services will be able to flow freely in the near future.

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

- Russia, Kazakhstan Launch Customs Union - Without Belarus

Russia and Kazakhstan have launched a customs union in an effort to boost trade and investment between them. Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin told a government session that Belarus was still welcome to join, saying Moscow was seeking "full-fledged, mutually beneficial cooperation" with Minsk.

Belarus has not yet ratified all the necessary documents to join the customs union.

Minsk has linked the ratification of the documents with a demand that Russia cancel export duties on oil.

- Kazakhstan plans major power plant by 2015

Kazakh and South Korean firms plan to complete construction by 2015 of a major new power plant to help meet an electricity shortage in southern Kazakhstan, the companies involved in the project said on Monday.

Kazakh state holding firm Samruk-Kazyna last year signed a deal with Korea Electric Power Corp (KEPCO) (015760.KS) and construction company Samsung C&T to build and operate the Balkhash coal-fired power plant.

The project has been valued at between \$2.5 billion and \$4.5 billion. London-listed copper major Kazakhmys (KAZ.L) is also a shareholder in the project.

The joint venture partners said in a statement that they had participated in a teleconference on Monday with Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev to mark the official ceremony for the start of construction.

The power plant will serve a region that is home to more than 40 percent of Kazakhstan's population.

KEPCO and Samsung C&T will hold a combined 65 percent stake in the project. Samruk-Kazyna will hold 25 percent plus one share and Kazakhmys the rest of the shares.

The plant will have power generating capacity of 1,320 megawatts, which can be increased to 2,640 megawatts.

### **Social Front**

- Two killed in Kazakh coal mine blowout -ministry

KARAGANDY, Kazakhstan, June 24 (Reuters) - A gas blowout killed two coal miners in a Kazakh mine owned by ArcelorMittal <MT.N> <ISPA.AS>, the world's largest steelmaker, the local branch of the Emergencies Ministry said on Thursday.

The accident occurred at 2240 local time (1640 GMT) on Wednesday in a ventilation shaft in the Tusup Kuzembayev mine, one of several coal mines operated by ArcelorMittal around its steel plant in the central Karagandy region, the ministry said.

ArcelorMittal Temirtau, the company's unit in Kazakhstan, confirmed the accident and said that a search for two missing miners was continuing. It did not confirm any deaths.

At the time of the accident, 168 miners were underground. A third miner was injured and saved by a colleague, ArcelorMittal said in a statement, while the rest escaped unharmed.

Accident-prone mines across the former Soviet Union have been the scene of several disasters in recent years. Russia is inspecting safety at all its coal mines after blasts killed 66 miners in May at a mine owned by Rospadskaya <RASP.MM>. In Kazakhstan, an explosion at a copper mine owned by Kazakhmys <KAZ.L> killed three people at the weekend.

The Karagandy branch of the emergencies ministry said a special commission would be set up to investigate the accident after an operation to retrieve the miners' bodies was completed.

- Kazakhstan's Nazarbaev University Opens In Astana

ASTANA -- A ceremony was held today in Astana for the beginning of classes at a new university named after Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbaev, RFE/RL's Kazakh Service reports.

Nazarbaev said at the opening ceremony that Nazarbaev University "will become a national brand of Kazakhstan that will combine the advantages of the national education system and the best of international research and education practice," the university's press service reported.

He told prospective students: "Young people should try to enroll in this university. I have agreed to give my name to it, so you should not fail me."

Prime Minister Karim Masimov also met today with representatives from several foreign universities to sign partnership agreements for Nazarbaev University. Among those reportedly working with the new university in some capacity are University College London, Carnegie Mellon University, the University of Wisconsin, Duke University, the University of Pittsburgh, and the University of Pennsylvania.

University officials said the school will eventually be able to accommodate some 20,000 students and teachers and offer degrees in engineering, natural science, and medicine.

Nazarbaev said university graduates will receive diplomas that will be recognized in Kazakhstan and abroad.

This year, 500 scholarships covering tuition and room and board have been allocated for Nazarbaev University students.

By 2012, a graduate school of business and public policy is due to be opened, and doctorate and master's degree programs are also planned.

## **Kyrgyzstan**

### **Political Front**

- **New Kyrgyz Constitution Comes Into Force**

Interim government head Roza Otunbaeva could be sworn in on July 3, according to election authorities.

Kyrgyzstan's new constitution has come into force after election authorities released the final results of a referendum on the charter last week, clearing the way for the inauguration of an interim president.

According to the results, 90.55 percent of voters backed the new constitution in the June 27 referendum, just 8.07 percent voted against.

Turnout was 72.24 percent. Election commission head Akylbek Sariev has said the release of the final tally paves the way for interim leader Roza Otunbaeva to be sworn in as president on July 3. "Roza Otunbaeva is to be registered as president of the Kyrgyz Republic and receive the presidential identification, the [presidential] badge, and the state flag of the president of the Kyrgyz Republic," Sariev said.

The new constitution was proposed by Kyrgyzstan's interim leaders who came into power after President Kurmanbek Bakiev was ousted following mass street protests in April.

The June 27 referendum took place two weeks after deadly clashes between ethnic Kyrgyz and Uzbeks in the south of the country.

- **Kyrgyz Leader To Meet Vote Observers**

Kyrgyz interim leader Roza Otunbaeva will meet on June 29 with representatives of foreign observer missions after voters overwhelmingly backed a new constitution in a referendum.

More than 90 percent of voters approved the proposed constitution in a referendum on June 27. It will would pave the way for the first parliamentary democracy in Central Asia and allow parliamentary elections planned for October.

However, opposition leaders said the figures were impossibly high given the fallout from this month's ethnic violence that left hundreds of people dead. Meanwhile, the United States, United Nations, European Union, and Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe have praised Kyrgyzstan for having conducted a peaceful constitutional referendum.

UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon said the orderly manner of the referendum demonstrates that the Kyrgyz people want peace. Maja Kocijancic, a spokeswoman of EU foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton, told RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service that the vote marks an "important step toward a re-establishment of the constitutional order and democratic process" in the country.

The interim government called the referendum after President Kurmanbek Bakiev was overthrown in April.

- **Kyrgyz Leader To Meet Vote Observers**

Kyrgyz interim leader Roza Otunbaeva will meet on June 29 with representatives of foreign observer missions after voters overwhelmingly backed a new constitution in a referendum.

Speaking to reporters on June 25, President Roza Otunbaeva promised the government would provide the security necessary to carry out the referendum, even amid reports of ongoing violence against minority Uzbeks in southern Kyrgyzstan.

"People want to come and vote," she said. "They believe the referendum will give stability, legitimized power, and Kyrgyzstan will at last get into the legal field, that's the main feeling people are living with."

Full RFE/RL coverage of the Kyrgyz clashes, including videos, analysis, slideshows, and on-the-ground reports

Otunbaeva spoke after meeting the head of the regional, Russia-led Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). That group has been criticized for not offering aid sooner, and some question whether the promised assistance will do much to help provide any real security. CSTO chief Nikolai Bordyuzha said the organization had agreed to supply helicopters and other nonlethal military aid.

"We will cooperate in exposing the organizers of the mass disturbances, who are provocateurs that even today are trying to destabilize the situation," he said, "and in bringing them to justice."

Change 'By Any Means'?

In today's referendum, voters are being asked whether they support the current leadership along with changes to the constitution that would weaken the president's power and move Kyrgyzstan toward a parliamentary political system. In a televised national address on June 24, Otunbaeva appealed for people to vote, saying those who provoked the recent violence aimed to disrupt the referendum.

"Such unrest may continue without end unless the people of Kyrgyzstan draw a line under it," she said. "The country cannot remain in a state of uncertainty for long. We need to bring order, but that's impossible without adopting a new constitution and establishing state institutions."

The government took power in April after protests and bloody clashes ousted President Kurmanbek Bakiev. Since then, a growing opposition led mostly by former security officials has been campaigning against the new leaders, and now the referendum. Ata-Jurt Party leader Omurbek Suvanaliev is among the most prominent. The former interior minister volunteered this month to be acting police chief in the Osh region, worst hit by the recent violence. But he quit after the government decided it would go ahead with the referendum.

"Why did the interim government decide to proceed with such a plan?" he says. "Because they know the majority of the population doesn't support them. They want to usurp power by any means."

Former Kyrgyz Interior Minister Omurbek Suvanaliev (photo by Gregory Feifer)

Suvalniev says the ongoing violence in the south -- Bakiev's stronghold where many Kyrgyz oppose the interim leadership -- will force the government to falsify the vote. He says he may organize street protests if he deems the voting unfair.

In southern Kyrgyzstan, witnesses have told of widespread mutilations, beheadings and other brutal violence, mostly carried out by Kyrgyz against the ethnic Uzbek minority, which has traditionally owned most of the region's businesses.

On June 24, officials charged that relatives of Bakiev worked with the Taliban and other Islamist groups to provoke the recent violence by organizing mercenaries to shoot at both sides.

## So Many Questions

But opposition leader Suvaliev says the violence broke out spontaneously after a casino fight between Kyrgyz and Uzbek youths. He also denies the overwhelming opinion among ethnic Kyrgyz that the violence was orchestrated by Uzbeks, saying there's been no evidence of mercenaries or rapes of Kyrgyz women many attackers say prompted them to take revenge against Uzbeks.

Most of the burned and looted houses in the city of Osh are Uzbek. Kyrgyz houses among them have been largely left unscathed. Doctors in the region have also said many of the victims bore knife wounds and burns, contradicting the widespread belief the violence was mostly orchestrated and relied on weapons stockpiled in advance.

Thousands of refugees are returning from camps across the border in Uzbekistan, where reports say the government is forcing people to leave. But witnesses in southern Kyrgyzstan say ethnic Uzbeks are still terrified by sporadic violence, looting, and threats, some carried out by rogue security forces.

In Bishkek on June 25, human rights groups called for the release of an activist they say was arrested in the south earlier this month while filming local police shooting at ethnic Uzbek civilians.

Aziz Abdurasulova (center) protests in front of the Kyrgyz parliament in Bishkek on June 25 (photo by Gregory Feifer)

Aziz Abdurasulova, director of the Kylym Shamy human rights group, worked with Azimjan Askarov and says she was in phone contact with him before he was detained.

"At first I told him that if he saw soldiers, he didn't have to worry," she says. "But when he said they were shooting at peaceful civilians, and I became frightened and told him to flee."

Abdurasulova says that although ethnic Uzbeks have suffered most of the atrocities, she doesn't want to say who's to blame for fear of provoking more killings. She and other rights activists appear unwilling to criticize the government too loudly for not doing more to provide security.

That may be an acknowledgment that the hard-pressed government has few choices in a region it now barely controls. Many in this relatively free and open society see the current leadership as the only hope for Kyrgyzstan to emerge from the kind of strict authoritarianism that has enveloped its Central Asian neighbors.

## No Miracles

The government is banking on the referendum to legitimize its rule, in a country that appears to be falling apart. However, government chief of staff Emilbek Kaptagaev denies talk of the leadership's imminent collapse, saying he and his fellow ministers never envisioned staying in power more than six months after inheriting an isolated country whose treasury had been plundered.

Interim government chief of staff Emilbek Kaptagaev (photo by Gregory Feifer)

"The interim government never promised economic progress or any other miracle," he says. "When the opposition joined together two years ago to battle Bakiev, we gave ourselves two main tasks: ending rule by a single family and returning stolen state assets."

Kaptagaev says the government now wants only to carry out constitutional reform and conduct free and fair parliamentary elections that will be announced after the referendum.

Whether it succeeds is important far beyond Kyrgyzstan's borders, not only because of fears the ethnic clashes could spread to other Central Asian countries, all of which have large groups of various ethnic minorities. Kyrgyzstan is also home to a U.S. air base at the Manas airport, outside Bishkek, that is vital for supplying troops in Afghanistan.

A Kyrgyz soldier takes part in the constitutional referendum during early voting in Osh on June 25.

On June 25, U.S. State Department spokesman Philip Crowley told reporters Washington is closely observing preparations for the referendum

"We hope for a fair and transparent referendum that can be an effective step in the path towards democratic governance in Kyrgyzstan," he said.

But while Bishkek may welcome the support, its relations with the United States -- along with the base's future -- are far from clear. The country's leaders blame Washington for helping prop up Bakiev by paying hundreds of millions of dollars to keep the Manas base open. They say the Obama administration shut its eyes to Bakiev's authoritarianism, encouraging him to act with impunity in cracking down against opponents.

The legacy of Bakiev's rule, his critics say, is now helping make real hope for stability in this impoverished former Soviet republic very slim.

- Kyrgyzstan's Leader Says Voters Approve New Constitution

BISHKEK -- Two weeks after ethnic clashes rocked southern Kyrgyzstan, the government says it will adopt a new constitution after people across the country voted in a referendum.

Security was tight amid fears of further unrest, but many say they hope the June 27 referendum will enable the country to establish Central Asia's first parliamentary democracy.

Election officials say that with nearly all votes counted, over 90 percent of participants backed the proposed constitution. Turnout was put at nearly 70 percent. Final results are expected later this week. At a news conference in Bishkek, interim Kyrgyz leader Roza Otunbaeva said that voters have approved a new constitution and had chosen to put the country on a new course and break with its "authoritarian" past.

"This is a historic day for our republic. We believe the referendum was valid and a new constitution has been adopted despite fierce opposition from adversaries of this constitution," Otunbaeva said.

"More than half the country's citizens voted in the referendum, meaning our people have put a decisive end to the era of authoritarian rule by one family under two previous presidents."

The new constitution reduces the president's powers and paves the way for the Central Asian country to become the first parliamentary democracy in a region generally run by authoritarian rulers.

Otunbaeva cast her ballot this morning in Osh, a southern city partially ruined in bloody ethnic violence this month that killed at least 275 people and forced another estimated 400,000 people, mostly ethnic Uzbeks, from their homes in the region. The area is a stronghold of deposed former President Kurmanbek Bakiev, whom the government accuses of provoking this month's violence.

In addition to approving the new constitution, voters were asked to give legitimacy to Otunbaeva's presidency, which will last until December 2011. She said she would form a new caretaker government that will take over from the current interim government. It

came to power in the aftermath of a popular uprising that ousted Bakiev from the presidency in April.

The new government will stay in power until parliamentary elections tentatively scheduled for October. Future parliamentary elections will be held every five years and the presidency limited to one six-year term.

Otunbaeva said she had voted in Osh to show the country is united.

#### Low Voting In The South

Few international observers monitored the referendum. Officials said turnout was highest in Bishkek and northern provinces, where official figures said more than 70 percent of eligible voters cast their ballots. Voting numbers, however, were by far the lowest in the south, with around 50 percent turning out to vote in Osh city.

The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) said in a statement on June 28 that the vote was "largely transparent" but noted the need for improvements ahead of upcoming parliamentary elections.

Officials took mobile voting stations into some villages. RFE/RL correspondents in the area say people were too afraid to leave their homes in some areas, where officials sent buses to transport voters to polling stations.

There were mixed feelings about the referendum among ethnic Uzbeks.

Osh resident Hayrulla Jalolov, who was wounded during the violence, said he cast his vote in the hope it would bring peace to Kyrgyzstan and put an end to the chaos.

Another ethnic Uzbek resident of Osh, Gulasal Vohidjonova, said she and many of her relatives did not take part. "One reason is that I don't have any identification documents, they were all destroyed when my house was burned down," she said.

Many others said their passports were also destroyed during the violence or raids by security forces.

The referendum took place amid tight security. The Interior Ministry said it stationed nearly 8,000 police officers, with some 12,000 volunteers mobilized to help the police. The army was also put on standby.

Critics say the referendum should not have been carried out so soon after this month's violence. But deputy leader of the interim government, Almazbek Atambaev, said putting off the vote would have handed victory to those who the interim authorities say provoked the violence to exploit problems that have lasted for the past two decades.

"Kyrgyzstan's main problem is poverty. Because if someone's poor, he starts to blame neighbors, other people who speak different languages or follow different faiths. The problem is that for the past 20 years, the country worked to support whichever family was in power," Atambaev said.

After casting her ballot in the capital Bishkek, Rizbe Butova said she believed the government would be able to establish real democracy in Kyrgyzstan because that's what society wants.

Butova said this month's violence was Kyrgyzstan's equivalent of the September 11, 2001 attacks on the United States, and that most people want to step away from the brink of ethnic conflict.

Otunbaeva on June 27 said she would appoint a government commission to conduct an investigation into the cause of the violence, and that international experts would take part.

- Western Nations, Institutions Praise Kyrgyz Referendum, As Russia Expresses Doubts

Members of a local electoral commission empty a ballot box at a polling station in Bishkek on June 27.

By RFE/RL

The United States, United Nations, European Union, and Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) have all praised Kyrgyzstan for having conducted a peaceful constitutional referendum.

In Washington, State Department spokesman Philip Crowley praised “the peaceful conduct of ordinary citizens who voted without incident.” He added that the White House hoped the referendum is the first step toward peace and stability after what has been a volatile few months.

"The United States calls on the provincial government and all of the citizens of Kyrgyzstan to use this opportunity to advance the process of reconciliation and accountability to ensure future interethnic harmony and move Kyrgyzstan forward on a path to security, stability, democracy, and prosperity for all citizens of the republic," he said.

Voters in Osh use a mobile ballot box during the June 27 referendum.

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said the outcome of the referendum demonstrates that the Kyrgyz people are aspiring for peace and stability after weeks of violence and disorder.

"The adoption of a new constitution is an important step towards promoting the rule of law and establishing a legitimate, democratically elected government," Ban said. "The United Nations will continue to support Kyrgyzstan and its people as they prepare for parliamentary elections later this year."

The UN has provided technical support to the referendum process and constitutional reform. It will continue to advise the government on constitutional reform, building of democratic institutions, and organization of the general election planned for the fall of this year.

Maja Kocijancic, a spokeswoman for EU foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton, told RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service that the June 27 vote marks an "important step toward a re-establishment of the constitutional order and democratic process" in the country.

The OSCE praised Kyrgyzstan for holding a "largely transparent" referendum on a new constitution.

Kyrgyz officials say some 90 percent of participants approved the constitution, paving the way for the first parliamentary democracy in Central Asia and allowing parliamentary elections planned for October.

According to election officials, nearly 70 percent of 2.7 million eligible voters took part in the referendum, only two weeks after deadly ethnic violence in southern provinces killed at least 270 people and forced some 400,000 – mostly ethnic Uzbeks -- from their homes.

In a statement on June 28, the OSCE noted the challenging circumstances, including what it called the "pervasive atmosphere of fear and intimidation in parts of the south," which may have kept some potential voters home.

The OSCE and local observers also noted some shortcomings during the process, including incorrect ballot counting. In some polling stations, voters were not checked to prevent possible cases of multiple voting, observers say.

The OSCE's Boris Frlec in Bishkek: "The provisional government and other authorities should be commended..."

But the OSCE said "efforts were made to enfranchise internally displaced voters who often had no identification papers."

"Considering the extremely difficult environment in which this referendum took place, only weeks after the violence in Osh and Jalal-Abad," said Boris Frlec, the head of the observer team from the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, "the provisional government and other authorities should be commended for organizing a remarkable, peaceful process."

The referendum also gave legitimacy to the interim government, which came to power in April in the aftermath of public protests that toppled President Kurmanbek Bakiev.

Roza Otunbaeva, the head of the interim government, outlined her intentions at a news conference shortly after polls closed.

"After a very modest inauguration ceremony, I will be granted presidential powers according to the constitution of 2007," she said. "Then I will begin forming a new government -- a government that will not be called provisional, but it will be a technical government. In English, they say 'a caretaker government.'"

The new constitution considerably reduces presidential powers, the first move of its kind in Central Asia, a region notorious for autocratic presidents.

Roza Otunbaeva: "In English, they say 'a caretaker government.'"

Otunbaeva said voters had chosen to put an end to the era of "authoritarian rule by one family under two previous presidents" -- a reference to Bakiev and his predecessor Askar Akaev, both overthrown by public uprisings amid widespread allegations of corruption and nepotism.

Russian President Dmitry Medvedev, however, expressed doubts about the viability of the political system that would be ushered in under the new constitution.

"I don't really understand how a parliamentary republic would work in Kyrgyzstan," he said. "Will this not lead to a chain of endless problems, to reshuffles in parliament, to certain political groups gaining power, to uncontrollable shifts of power from one person to another, and, finally, will this not help extremist-minded forces come to power?"

In a separate statement, Russia's Foreign Ministry offered measured praise for the vote, expressing hope that the referendum will "facilitate political stability" in Kyrgyzstan.

Neighboring Tajikistan welcomed Kyrgyzstan's referendum results, with the Foreign Ministry saying Dushanbe would work with any government the people of Kyrgyzstan choose for themselves.

Other neighboring Central Asian states have yet to give official reactions to the Kyrgyz referendum.

Final results of the referendum will be available later in the week.

### **Geo Strategic Front**

- Tajik General Denies Involvement In Kyrgyz Violence

A top Tajik security official has rejected reports that he and other Tajiks were involved in last month's ethnic violence in Kyrgyzstan, RFE/RL's Tajik Service reports.

General Abdullo Nazarov, the head of the National Security Ministry's office in the southeastern region of Badakhshan, told RFE/RL that reports are unfounded that he and other Tajiks were either involved in fomenting or directly taking part in the deadly violence in southern Kyrgyzstan between ethnic Uzbeks and Kyrgyz.

Nazarov blamed the ethnic clashes on some "superpowers" who he said wanted to "ignite a fire" in Kyrgyzstan in order to embed themselves in the region's affairs. He said these unnamed powers also wanted to create instability in Tajikistan but failed because the Tajik government is strong enough to resist such moves.

Nazarov said Kyrgyzstan is the weak link in the region and it was thus possible to start ethnic clashes in Osh and Jalal-Abad -- in the same region where violence between ethnic Uzbeks and Kyrgyz killed hundreds of people in 1990.

Nazarov was responding to reports by some media outlets that Nazarov met in Tajikistan with Janysh Bakiev, former Kyrgyz President Kurmanbek Bakiev's brother, before the violence broke out in Kyrgyzstan.

The reports were attributed by some sources to Kubat Baibolov, the deputy head of the Kyrgyz Security Service.

But Nazarov said Baibolov did not actually ever make such a statement.

Baibolov last month denied saying Tajiks had been involved in the violence.

The head of Kyrgyzstan's Security Service, Keneshbek Duishebaev, later said some members of the now defunct United Tajik Opposition had been involved in planning the unrest. He did not give any names.

Nazarov, who until May was a deputy head of the National Security Ministry in Dushanbe, noted that as soon as he was named security chief in Badakhshan some "provocateurs" immediately released information that something was going to happen in Badakhshan or other parts of eastern Tajikistan.

Nazarov was fired from the KGB in Soviet times shortly after he accused the agency of orchestrating violence that led to the bloody suppression of political protests in Dushanbe in February 1990. In 1992, when Tajikistan's civil war began, Nazarov went to Afghanistan with the Tajik opposition forces and returned back to the country in 1997 after the peace agreement was signed that ended the war.

He then returned to work with Tajikistan's security service as part of a deal in which members of the United Tajik Opposition were to receive 30 percent of the posts in the government.

- Tajik President Agrees To CSTO Aid Deal For Kyrgyzstan

DUSHANBE -- The head of the Commonwealth of Independent States' security organization says Tajikistan has agreed to help stabilize southern Kyrgyzstan, RFE/RL's Tajik Service reports.

Nikolai Bordyuzha, the secretary-general of the CIS's Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), said after meeting in Dushanbe today with President Emomali Rahmon that the Tajik leader had signed a CSTO agreement providing emergency aid to Kyrgyz law-enforcement agencies.

The issue had been previously discussed at a CSTO Security Council meeting in Moscow on June 14.

Bordyuzha said he had even discussed with Rahmon what kind of weapons and technical and special equipment should be sent to Kyrgyz forces to help restore order in the cities of Osh and Jalal-Abad, where at least 291 people were killed and thousands left homeless after several days of ethnic clashes in mid-June.

Bordyuzha noted that he recently visited the conflict area in Kyrgyzstan and is satisfied with the measures being taken by authorities to bring stability there. He added that based

on his visit he is "more than sure" that the region's "narco-mafia" had a hand in the deadly ethnic violence.

Bordyuzha also took part in a meeting today of the heads of antidrug agencies in CSTO countries in Dushanbe. The CSTO has expressed concern with the increase in drug trafficking from Afghanistan.

Viktor Ivanov, the head of Russia's antidrug agency, met with Rahmon on July 1 and stated that Tajikistan needs help dealing with the increase in narco-trafficking from Afghanistan.

Ivanov said it is possible that Russian border guards who patrolled the Tajik-Afghan border until July 2005 could return to Tajikistan if "both sides had such an interest."

Meanwhile, Tajik Ambassador to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Nuriddin Shamsov said Tajikistan is prepared to contribute to the proposed deployment of an OSCE "police task force" to help Kyrgyz security services.

### **Economic /Energy Front**

#### **Social Front**

- **Two Kyrgyz Rights Activists Arrested In Osh**

OSH, Kyrgyzstan -- Two Kyrgyz human rights activists have been detained and questioned by the Osh Prosecutor-General's Office, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports.

Aziza Abdrasulova, director of the nongovernmental organization (NGO) Torch of the Century, told RFE/RL that she and Tolekan Ismailova, chairwoman of the NGO Citizens Against Corruption, were arrested on June 28 due to a typographical error made in transcribing interviews they gave to a local media outlet.

The two were discussing the number of victims in the Nariman district of Osh after a raid by Kyrgyz government troops. They said that two people in Nariman were killed and 39 wounded, but Abdrasulova told RFE/RL that one of the media outlets falsely wrote 20 instead of two and published the mistaken number.

Due to the typo, the rights activists were accused of disseminating false information.

Ismailova said they were released from the Osh prosecutor's office after being interrogated for three hours. They were also asked questions as witnesses to some criminal cases of mass murder and mass disorder.

She said Kyrgyz interim government head Roza Otunbaeva called the two activists and asked them what had happened.

Ismailova told RFE/RL that a group of human rights activists working in southern Kyrgyzstan is running into obstacles from local authorities during their work in registering human rights violations and other crimes in the region.

At least 275 people were killed and hundreds of thousands of people, mainly ethnic Uzbeks, fled their homes when ethnic fighting broke out between ethnic Uzbeks and Kyrgyz in the southern cities of Osh and Jalal-Abad on June 10.

- **Jailed Kyrgyz Rights Activist Accused Of Murder**

The Kyrgyz Prosecutor-General's Office says that jailed rights activist Azimjan Askarov is accused of instigating interethnic hatred and the killing of a policeman, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports.

The prosecutor's office issued a press release on June 30 that details Askarov's arrest on June 16 during the ethnic violence in southern Kyrgyzstan.

It says that Askarov, the head of the human rights organization Air, was detained in the village of Bazar-Korgon in the Jalal-Abad region on charges of inciting national hatred, organizing riots, and killing police officer Myktybek Sulaymanov on June 13.

Sulaymanov's burnt body was found buried a short distance from the highway. The press release says that on June 24 Askarov's lawyer, Nurbek Toktakunov, filed a complaint with the prosecutor's office saying that Askarov has severe bruises on his body as a result of being tortured while in detention.

After Toktakunov's complaint was filed, investigators stated that Askarov was beaten by one of his cellmates. In a request to the prosecutor's office on June 25, Askarov allegedly said he had no complaints to make against his cellmate or against any police officers, and he refused to undergo a medical checkup.

Meanwhile, Aziza Abdurasulova, the director of the Torch of the Century human rights group who had worked with Askarov, told RFE/RL on June 26 that she was in phone contact with Askarov before he was detained.

Human rights groups have called for Askarov's release, claiming that he was arrested while filming local Kyrgyz police shooting at ethnic Uzbek civilians.

At least 291 people were killed and hundreds of thousands, mainly ethnic Uzbeks, fled their homes when ethnic fighting broke out between ethnic Uzbeks and Kyrgyz in the southern cities of Osh and Jalal-Abad on June 10.

- **NGO Says Journalists Were Attacked In Southern Kyrgyzstan**

A Kyrgyz journalists' organization says several journalists were attacked while covering the ethnic violence in the southern cities of Jalal-Abad and Osh last month, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports.

The Public Association of Journalists (PAJ) said that six journalists were attacked and beaten in Osh, another suffered severe burns, and photographer Pazyle Sarybaev is still missing. In addition, the homes of four journalists were damaged after they were set on fire.

It added that Osh-based Keremet TV cameraman Batyr Mamatjanov, who was seriously injured on June 11 when a crowd attacked his car and seized his camera, remains in critical condition in hospital with broken ribs and a head injury.

PAJ coordinator Meri Bekeshova told RFE/RL the association has given financial and technical help to the journalists who suffered attacks, with assistance from International Media Support, a Danish nonprofit organization.

At least 291 people were killed and hundreds of thousands fled their homes in the clashes between ethnic Uzbeks and Kyrgyz in Osh and Jalal-Abad that began on June 10.

## **Tajikistan**

### **Political Front**

- It is still a long way to full national consolidation in Tajikistan, says expert DUSHANBE, June 26, 2010, Asia-Plus -- To reach full national consolidation Tajikistan has to pass through the stage of national unity while it is still a long way off, Tajik political scientist Abdugani Mamadazimov said in an interview with Asia-Plus.

According to him, the main reason for civil war in Tajikistan was "the fight between Communism and Political Islam over the national ideology." "During the civil confrontation, the military and political situation has changed and parochial local-territorial values came in stead of national values and ideology," Mamadazimov noted.

“To reestablish peace in the country a good will of both confronting sides was necessary, and therefore, the government and the United Tajik Opposition (UTO) made equal contribution to reestablishment of peace in Tajikistan,” the political scientist said.

According to him, peace has been reestablished in Tajikistan and has gained irreversible character, however, “some mistakes, made by the government or structures being close to the political leadership of the country, have affected the general picture of peace and national accord recently.”

“Since 1997, the ideology of so-called ‘Shukrona’ (mercifully) has been intensively propagated in Tajikistan. I agree that this ideology works in the sociopolitical sphere, but it does not promote economic and social development,” said the expert, “In this connection, there is discontent, because some 50 percent of our population lives below the poverty line.”

We will recall that Tajikistan marks the National Unity Day on June 27. The General Agreement on the Establishment of Peace and National Accord in Tajikistan was signed in Moscow on June 27, 1997.

For the purposes of achieving peace and national accord in Tajikistan and overcoming the consequences of the civil war, inter-Tajik talks on national reconciliation were conducted from April 1994 to 1997 under the auspices of the United Nations. Protocols that were agreed and signed in the course of eight rounds of talks between delegations of the Government of Tajikistan and the United Tajik Opposition (UTO), six meetings between the President of Tajikistan and the UTO leader, and also three rounds of consultations between the delegations of the sides in Almaty, Ashgabat, Bishkek, Islamabad, Kabul, Mashhad (Iran), Moscow, Tehran and Khusdeh (Afghanistan) constituted the General Agreement on the Establishment of Peace and National Accord in Tajikistan.

### **Geo Strategic Front**

- **Tajik General Denies Involvement In Kyrgyz Violence**

A top Tajik security official has rejected reports that he and other Tajiks were involved in last month's ethnic violence in Kyrgyzstan, RFE/RL's Tajik Service reports.

General Abdullo Nazarov, the head of the National Security Ministry's office in the southeastern region of Badakhshan, told RFE/RL that reports are unfounded that he and other Tajiks were either involved in fomenting or directly taking part in the deadly violence in southern Kyrgyzstan between ethnic Uzbeks and Kyrgyz.

Nazarov blamed the ethnic clashes on some "superpowers" who he said wanted to "ignite a fire" in Kyrgyzstan in order to embed themselves in the region's affairs. He said these unnamed powers also wanted to create instability in Tajikistan but failed because the Tajik government is strong enough to resist such moves.

Nazarov said Kyrgyzstan is the weak link in the region and it was thus possible to start ethnic clashes in Osh and Jalal-Abad -- in the same region where violence between ethnic Uzbeks and Kyrgyz killed hundreds of people in 1990.

Nazarov was responding to reports by some media outlets that Nazarov met in Tajikistan with Janysh Bakiev, former Kyrgyz President Kurmanbek Bakiev's brother, before the violence broke out in Kyrgyzstan.

The reports were attributed by some sources to Kubat Baibolov, the deputy head of the Kyrgyz Security Service.

But Nazarov said Baibolov did not actually ever make such a statement.

Baibolov last month denied saying Tajiks had been involved in the violence.

The head of Kyrgyzstan's Security Service, Keneshbek Duishebaev, later said some members of the now defunct United Tajik Opposition had been involved in planning the unrest. He did not give any names.

Nazarov, who until May was a deputy head of the National Security Ministry in Dushanbe, noted that as soon as he was named security chief in Badakhshan some "provocateurs" immediately released information that something was going to happen in Badakhshan or other parts of eastern Tajikistan.

Nazarov was fired from the KGB in Soviet times shortly after he accused the agency of orchestrating violence that led to the bloody suppression of political protests in Dushanbe in February 1990.

In 1992, when Tajikistan's civil war began, Nazarov went to Afghanistan with the Tajik opposition forces and returned back to the country in 1997 after the peace agreement was signed that ended the war.

He then returned to work with Tajikistan's security service as part of a deal in which members of the United Tajik Opposition were to receive 30 percent of the posts in the government.

- Tajik President Agrees To CSTO Aid Deal For Kyrgyzstan

DUSHANBE -- The head of the Commonwealth of Independent States' security organization says Tajikistan has agreed to help stabilize southern Kyrgyzstan, RFE/RL's Tajik Service reports.

Nikolai Bordyuzha, the secretary-general of the CIS's Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), said after meeting in Dushanbe today with President Emomali Rahmon that the Tajik leader had signed a CSTO agreement providing emergency aid to Kyrgyz law-enforcement agencies.

The issue had been previously discussed at a CSTO Security Council meeting in Moscow on June 14.

Bordyuzha said he had even discussed with Rahmon what kind of weapons and technical and special equipment should be sent to Kyrgyz forces to help restore order in the cities of Osh and Jalal-Abad, where at least 291 people were killed and thousands left homeless after several days of ethnic clashes in mid-June.

Bordyuzha noted that he recently visited the conflict area in Kyrgyzstan and is satisfied with the measures being taken by authorities to bring stability there. He added that based on his visit he is "more than sure" that the region's "narco-mafia" had a hand in the deadly ethnic violence.

Bordyuzha also took part in a meeting today of the heads of antidrug agencies in CSTO countries in Dushanbe. The CSTO has expressed concern with the increase in drug trafficking from Afghanistan.

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Meanwhile, Tajik Ambassador to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Nuriddin Shamslov said Tajikistan is prepared to contribute to the proposed deployment of an OSCE "police task force" to help Kyrgyz security services.

- Uzbekistan annuls air traffic agreement with Tajikistan

DUSHANBE, June 30, 2010, Asia-Plus – Uzbekistan has terminated a key air-traffic agreement with neighboring Tajikistan and may temporarily close its airspace to Tajik aircraft, RFE/RL's Tajik Service reported on June 29.

Ismoil Talbakov, a member of Tajikistan's lower house of parliament, interpreted the Uzbek move as an attempt to thwart Tajikistan's economic development. Some Tajik analysts agreed, pointing to an earlier blockade by Uzbekistan of rail freight cars bound for Tajikistan.

But Tajik air-navigation expert Mahmadyusuf Shodiev said that all international air-navigation, including flights between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, is regulated by international rules and takes place under international supervision. Shodiev said that therefore there are no grounds for concern about flight safety.

Under the now terminated 1993 agreement, Uzbek air-traffic controllers guided planes overflying Uzbek territory to land in Tajikistan's northern Sughd Province, while Tajik air-traffic controllers provided similar guidance to Uzbek planes landing in Uzbekistan's southern Surkhndarya Province.

Aziz Nabiev, head of the air-navigation service at Tajikistan's Transport and Communications Ministry, told RFE/RL that the countries signed a temporary agreement on June 26 at Uzbekistan's insistence. Under that agreement, each country's air-traffic controllers will take complete responsibility for guiding its planes to land. In addition, Uzbekistan has asked that Tajik planes no longer begin their descent to land in Sughd from Uzbek airspace.

Tajik officials say they have submitted the draft of a new permanent agreement to Uzbekistan but have not received a response to that proposal.

Nabiev, for his part, explained that if Uzbekistan closes its airspace to Tajik planes they could be re-routed through the airspace of other countries. He said this would, however, be more expensive.

Uzbekistan has also annulled an analogous air-traffic agreement with Kyrgyzstan.

### **Economic /Energy Front**

### **Social Front**

#### **Turkmenistan**

### **Political Front**

### **Geo Strategic Front**

- Turkmenistan and France discuss prospects of cooperation

On June 30, Turkmen President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov received Anne-Marie Idrac, Secretary of State for Foreign Trade of France, and Aymeri de Montesquiou Fezensaka, senator and personal representative of the President of France to promote political and economic relations between France and Central Asia.

The distinguished guests arrived in Ashgabat at the head of their country's delegation to attend the first meeting of the Intergovernmental Turkmen-French commission on economic cooperation. As the Turkmenistan.ru correspondent reports from Ashgabat quoting the press service of the head of state, during the meeting the sides expressed the highest degree of interest in the further development of bilateral relations.

During the visit, members of the French delegation held a series of important meetings with the government of Turkmenistan. Aspects of cooperation were discussed in more details at the first meeting of the Intergovernmental Turkmen-French commission on economic cooperation, which was held at "President" hotel in Ashgabat.

The session of the commission was attended by leaders and representatives of several government departments of Turkmenistan and the Republic of France. The Turkmen side of the commission is headed by Deputy Chairman of the Cabinet of Ministers of Turkmenistan Deryageldi Orazov, and the French side is headed by Secretary of State for Foreign Trade Anne-Marie Idrac.

Members of the committee called for intensification of interstate cooperation in trade and economic sector, in energy, construction, textile industry, transport and communications.

- President of Ukraine invites Turkmen leader on friendly visit to Kiev

On the occasion of his birthday President of Turkmenistan Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov received a congratulatory message from President of Ukraine Viktor Yanukovich.

As the Turkmenistan.ru correspondent reports from Ashgabat quoting the press service of the head of state, the Ukrainian president expressed warm congratulations and best wishes to the President of Turkmenistan as well as his conviction that the "positive experience of partnership and mutual understanding accumulated by Ukraine and Turkmenistan during the years of joint work will promote the further development of cooperation for the benefit of our countries and peoples."

"With the view of taking the political dialogue to the highest level" Viktor Yanukovich invited Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov to pay an unofficial friendly visit to Ukraine on July 10, 2010. "I am confident that this visit will give a fresh impetus to the development and strengthening of the Ukrainian-Turkmen cooperation in many spheres of mutual interest," the head of Ukraine said.

- Delegation of Ukraine headed by Minister of Foreign Affairs visits Ashgabat

The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, Konstantin Gryshchenko, visited Ashgabat leading the high-level delegation. The delegation included heads of major Ukrainian companies.

As the Turkmenistan.ru correspondent reports from Ashgabat quoting the press service of the Turkmen Foreign Ministry, the head of the Ukrainian Foreign Ministry was received by President of Turkmenistan Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov. During the visit, the Ukrainian delegation also held talks with the government officials and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan.

The sides discussed issues of cooperation, confirming their readiness to take this cooperation to a new level. At the talks in the Foreign Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the sides noted "mutual support and cooperation of the two countries in the political sphere, in the framework of international organizations."

The sides agreed to more actively use the mechanism of ministerial talks on topical issues of international politics for the effective implementation of bilateral relations, as well as to improve the legal base of cooperation between the two countries and decisions of consular and visa issues.

### **Economic /Energy Front**

- Turkmenistan plans to supply China with more than 40 billion cubic meters of gas per year

The construction of the second line of the Turkmenistan - China gas pipeline provides for additional supplies of Turkmen natural gas to China. As the Turkmenistan.ru correspondent reports from Ashgabat, Turkmenistan's Foreign Ministry spokesman said this on 28 June at a briefing for foreign reporters, responding to the question of Reuters news agency.

"In fact, we are talking about the increase in gas supplies to China above 40 billion cubic meters of gas per year committed to China via the existing pipeline," the representative of the Turkmen Foreign Ministry explained.

- IMF predicts impressive growth of Turkmenistan's economy

The Turkmen economy is projected to grow impressively in 2010 and the fiscal balance is expected to remain in surplus, ITAR TASS reported referring to the IMF's statement for press on the conclusion of the annual review of Turkmenistan's economy.

According to the statement, a team from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) led by Mrs. Veronica Bacalu visited Ashgabat on June 16–29, 2010. During the visit, the IMF team held discussions with the Turkmen authorities on recent economic developments, exchanged views on near and medium-term outlook, and took stock of the ongoing reforms. At the conclusion of the mission, Mrs. Bacalu said that "the economy of Turkmenistan performed strongly in 2009, notwithstanding the challenging global environment."

"The successful reforms of the past two years in monetary, foreign exchange, and fiscal areas facilitated the strong performance. Real GDP growth was solid, supported by government investment policy and record-high foreign direct investment. Improved access to foreign exchange and the stability of the exchange rate have helped build trust in the national currency and the banking system. Inflation has been maintained at a low level," the head of the IMF mission said. According to her, as global demand recovers and Ashgabat's gas export volumes increase through the existing and new pipelines, "the Turkmen economy is projected to grow impressively in 2010." Bacalu predicted that the fiscal balance is expected to remain in surplus.

As she noted, "continuation of macroeconomic reforms will be important for further diversification and strengthening of the economy for the benefit of the Turkmen people." The IMF supports the authorities of Turkmenistan in their efforts to "improve the macroeconomic management, reform the financial sector, and expand private sector activity to achieve long-run sustainable growth," Bacalu said.

### **Social Front**

- UN develops project to support Government of Turkmenistan

The Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the UN Secretariat is currently developing a project to support the Government of Turkmenistan. The project provides for a specific program of cooperation in the field of retraining, development of regulatory documents and other spheres. As the State News Agency of Turkmenistan (TDH) reports, this was announced on June 28 by Alexei Tikhomirov, representative of the department, during a meeting with President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov.

During the meeting, they also discussed a number of issues relating to various aspects and prospects of cooperation. Turkmenistan and UN act as reliable and long-term partners in achieving the Millennium Development Goals, the implementation of which will be discussed at the upcoming regular session of the UN General Assembly in the

autumn this year. The President of Turkmenistan will attend this session along with other heads of state, the agency said.

## **Uzbekistan Political Front**

### **Geo Strategic Front**

- Uzbekistan Annuls Air Traffic Agreement With Tajikistan

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Uzbekistan has also annulled an analogous air-traffic agreement with Kyrgyzstan.

- Uzbekistan Sending Wounded Refugees Back To Kyrgyzstan

OSH, Kyrgyzstan -- Kyrgyzstan's Health Ministry has said it's begun transporting wounded refugees from Uzbekistan to hospitals in the southern Kyrgyz regions of Osh and Jalal-Abad, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports.

A ministry press release said that 17 ambulances went to the Kyrgyz-Uzbek border to take wounded ethnic Uzbek citizens of Kyrgyzstan to hospitals in the Osh region.

On June 30, eight more ambulances are expected to deliver wounded refugees from Uzbekistan to hospitals in the Jalal-Abad region.

The press release said officials plan to transport a total of some 180 injured refugees back to Kyrgyzstan.

It noted that some 2,240 people have asked for medical assistance and an additional 1,050 have been hospitalized since violence broke out between ethnic Uzbeks and Kyrgyz in the southern cities of Osh and Jalal-Abad on June 10.

At least 275 people were killed and hundreds of thousands of people, mainly ethnic Uzbeks, fled their homes during the days after the fighting started.

### **Economic /Energy Front**

### **Social Front**

- Jailed Uzbek Sports Journalist Won't Appeal Conviction

The mother of jailed Uzbek sports journalist Khairulla Khamidov says he will not appeal his conviction to a higher court, RFE/RL's Uzbek Service reports.

Khamidov's mother, Muqaddas Khamidova, told RFE/RL that her son told her of his decision during a visit at a Tashkent prison earlier this month. She said he told her there was no hope for an appeal to be successful and that he had therefore decided against it.

Khamidov's mother added that her son is in satisfactory condition and that all family members can meet with him individually. She said that he is due to be transferred to another jail soon.

Meanwhile, Surat Ikromov, a leader of the Independent Group for Human Rights Defenders, told RFE/RL that appeals by people found guilty under Article 244 of the Criminal Code -- establishment and participation in religious extremist groups -- are rarely ever successful. But he added that he thinks Khamidov should still file an appeal.

A court in the town of Gulbakhor, outside of Tashkent, sentenced Khamidov in May to six years in prison after finding him and 18 others guilty of being members of the banned extremist Islamic group Jihadchilar (Jihadists).

Khamidov, 34, is well-known in Uzbekistan for a popular Islamic radio program he hosted, his work as a soccer commentator, and his poetry. His arrest in January sparked a strong wave of protests in Uzbekistan.

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