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**Weekly Report**  
**Central Asia**  
**Uzma Siraj**

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<b>Azerbaijan</b>	
Political Front.....	3
Geo strategic Front.....	3
Economic/Energy Front.....	4
Social Front.....	4
<b>Kazakhstan</b>	
Political Front.....	4
Geo strategic Front.....	4
Economic/Energy Front.....	4
Social Front.....	5
<b>Kyrgyzstan</b>	
Political Front.....	5
Geo strategic Front.....	6
Economic/Energy Front.....	6
Social Front.....	6
<b>Tajikistan</b>	
Political Front.....	6
Geo strategic Front.....	6
Economic/Energy Front.....	7
Social Front.....	7
<b>Turkmenistan</b>	
Political Front.....	7
Geo strategic Front.....	7
Economic/Energy Front.....	7
Social Front.....	8
<b>Uzbekistan</b>	
Political Front.....	8
Geo strategic Front.....	8
Economic/Energy Front.....	8
Social Front.....	8

**Outline**

**Azerbaijan**

**Political Front**

- Executive power chiefs receive instructions concerning parliamentary elections in Azerbaijan

**Geo strategic Front**

- Azerbaijani Defense Ministry Rejects 'Laughable' Armenian Statement
- Armenia Warns Azerbaijan Over New UN Resolution

- The Wider Implications Of The Russian-Armenian Defense Deal
- UN General Assembly expected to discuss resolution on Azerbaijan's occupied territories in September
- Azerbaijan studies Russia-Armenia military protocol

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

- Baku to host 1st Renewable Energy Caucasus Forum
- India seeks to invest in Azerbaijan's oil and gas sector

#### **Social Front**

- EU Pressures Azerbaijan On 'Donkey Bloggers'

#### **Kazakhstan**

##### **Political Front**

- Nazarbayev appoints new head of National Security Committee

##### **Geo strategic Front**

- Kazakh president's refusal from nuclear arms is historic – experts

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

- Kazakhstan pushes Islamic finance post-crisis

##### **Social Front**

- 'Award' Visit For Jailed Kazakh Rights Defender
- Kazakh Journalists Covering Sufi Trial Briefly Detained

#### **Kyrgyzstan**

##### **Political Front**

- Interview: Osh Governor Says 'We Have To Remove The Fear'
- Protesters In Southern Kyrgyz City Want Old Mayor Back
- No Kosovo For Kyrgyzstan
- In Kyrgyzstan 190 criminal cases commenced against Kurmanbek Bakiyev's milieu
- General Prosecutor Office of Kyrgyzstan completed investigation of April events
- Two political parties refused to participate in the election campaign in Kyrgyzstan
- Parties canvassing before the beginning of the pre-election campaign violate Election Code
- OSCE/ODIHR to prepare recommendations to Kyrgyz authorities prior to parliamentary elections

##### **Geo strategic Front**

- June events in Kyrgyzstan forced CSTO countries to change the Charter

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

- Kyrgyz government cannot expend 6 percents of GDP on infrastructure development - Chyngyz Makeshov

##### **Social Front**

- Obama orders to allocate 10 mln dlrs for displaced Kyrgyz persons
- Kyrgyz Authorities Say Schools In South To Open On Time
- Few Turkmen, Uzbek Students Return To Kyrgyz University

#### **Tajikistan**

##### **Political Front**

- Twenty-Five Militants Escape Prison In Tajikistan

##### **Geo strategic Front**

- Tajik, Kazakh FMs sign government-to-government agreement
- Tajikistan, Armenia underline necessity of expansion of bilateral cooperation
- Tajik official dismisses fears of militant attacks on Kyrgyzstan

### **Economic/Energy Front**

### **Social Front**

- 5,500 Tajiks to perform Hajj this year
- Women Appeal Against 'Impending Hijab Ban' At Tajik City Market
- Tajikistan's Official Calm Belies Potential Prison Break Crisis

### **Turkmenistan**

### **Political Front**

### **Geo strategic Front**

- Kabul to host meeting of Turkmen-Afghan commission on cooperation
- Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan to hold talks in Islamabad

### **Economic/Energy Front**

- Delegation of Turkmenistan to attend conference of Asian oil companies
- Turkmenistan Tips Its Hand On Future Energy Exports

### **Social Front**

- Turkmenistan Removes Gold Statue Of Niyazov From Ashgabat

### **Uzbekistan**

### **Political Front**

### **Geo strategic Front**

- Chinese delegation visits Uzbekistan

### **Economic/Energy Front**

### **Social Front**

- Uzbekistan Burns Half A Ton Of Seized Afghan Heroin
- Disabled Uzbek Man Tries To Crown President

## **Summery**

### **Azerbaijan**

### **Political Front**

- Executive power chiefs receive instructions concerning parliamentary elections in Azerbaijan

Executive power chiefs have received instructions in Azerbaijan due to upcoming parliamentary elections. "The heads of the executive bodies are instructed to create conditions for use of sitres envisaged for promotion by all interested persons,

### **Geo strategic Front**

- Azerbaijani Defense Ministry Rejects 'Laughable' Armenian Statement

BAKU -- Azerbaijan's Defense Ministry has rejected as "laughable" a claim by Yerevan that Russia could back Armenia in case of a new conflict over the disputed region of Nagorno-Karabakh, RFE/RL's Azerbaijani Service reports.

- Armenia Warns Azerbaijan Over New UN Resolution

YEREVAN -- Armenia's Foreign Ministry has warned Azerbaijan against trying to push through the United Nations General Assembly a fresh resolution that accuses Yerevan of occupying Azerbaijani lands and thereby hampering a peaceful resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, RFE/RL's Armenian Service reports.

- The Wider Implications Of The Russian-Armenian Defense Deal

Russian President Dmitry Medvedev and Armenian President Serzh Sarkisian signed a protocol last week prolonging the two countries' 1995 bilateral defense treaty. While the protocol is deemed a mere prolongation of the existing treaty, there are important new features.

- UN General Assembly expected to discuss resolution on Azerbaijan's occupied territories in September

Resolution on Nagorno-Karabakh conflict entitled "The situation in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan" will possibly be discussed at the UN General Assembly meeting on Sept. 9, a UN source told APA's Washington DC correspondent.

- Azerbaijan studies Russia-Armenia military protocol

Azerbaijan is studying military agreement signed between Russia and Armenia on lease of the military base in Gyumri.

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

- Baku to host 1st Renewable Energy Caucasus Forum

Azerbaijan's capital will host the 1st Renewable Energy Caucasus Forum in September. The forum will be co-organized by the Academy of European Management and EVRA International, Inc.

- India seeks to invest in Azerbaijan's oil and gas sector

India intends to invest in oil and gas sector of Azerbaijan, Joint Secretary (Eurasia Division) in India's Ministry of External Affairs, Mr. Ajay Bisaria said at the meeting with a group of journalists from CIS countries in Delhi.

#### **Social Front**

- EU Pressures Azerbaijan On 'Donkey Bloggers'

Nice to see the EU's foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton take a stand on the case of Azerbaijan's "donkey bloggers," who in 2009 received jail terms, ostensibly on hooliganism charges.

#### **Kazakhstan**

##### **Political Front**

- Nazarbayev appoints new head of National Security Committee

ASTANA, August 23 (Itar-Tass) -- Kazakhstan's President Nursultan Nazarbayev on Monday, August 23, appointed Nurtai Abykayev as the new head of the National Security Committee.

##### **Geo strategic Front**

- Kazakh president's refusal from nuclear arms is historic – experts

MOSCOW, August 27 (Itar-Tass) -- A refusal of Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev from nuclear armaments is a historic event, Russian and Kazakh experts said at a Moscow roundtable on Friday.

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

- Kazakhstan pushes Islamic finance post-crisis

Seeking to diversify its financial industry after a banking crisis, oil-rich Kazakhstan is drawing on Arab and Malaysian investment in an effort to build an Islamic finance industry among its 13 million Muslims.

### **Social Front**

- 'Award' Visit For Jailed Kazakh Rights Defender

The head of a European human rights watchdog has visited jailed Kazakh rights activist Yevgeny Zhovtis to congratulate him on being awarded the group's annual prize, RFE/RL's Kazakh Service reports.

- Kazakh Journalists Covering Sufi Trial Briefly Detained

On August 26, police in Almaty detained a group of journalists and kept them at a police station for three hours without any explanation, RFE/RL's Kazakh Service reports.

### **Kyrgyzstan**

#### **Political Front**

- Interview: Osh Governor Says 'We Have To Remove The Fear'

Sooronbai Jeenbekov was named governor of the southern region of Osh by interim President Roza Otunbaeva in April, almost two months before the clashes between ethnic Uzbeks and Kyrgyz in the Osh and Jalal-Abad regions that led to nearly 400 deaths and thousands of homes and businesses being destroyed.

- Protesters In Southern Kyrgyz City Want Old Mayor Back

BATKEN -- Some 100 protesters are picketing the mayor's office in Kyrgyzstan's southern city of Batken to demand that former Mayor Seidakmat Ermatov be reinstated, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports.

- No Kosovo For Kyrgyzstan

There is growing resistance in Kyrgyzstan to having police from the Organization for Cooperation and Security in Europe (OSCE), an organization in which Kyrgyzstan is a member, sent to two cities in the south.

- In Kyrgyzstan 190 criminal cases commenced against Kurmanbek Bakiyev's milieu

190 criminal cases are commenced on the fact of crimes committed by high ranking officials during the era of Kurmanbek Bakiyev. The Prosecutor General of Kyrgyzstan Baytemir Ibraev stated at the government session today.

- General Prosecutor Office of Kyrgyzstan completed investigation of April events

General Prosecutor Office of Kyrgyzstan has completed investigation of April events when over 80 people were killed near the Government House in Bishkek. The Prosecutor General Baytemir Ibraev stated in the government today.

- Two political parties refused to participate in the election campaign in Kyrgyzstan

Two political parties refused to participate in the election campaign.

Algyr-Kyraan political organization told 24.kg news agency that they decided not to run for seats in the 5th convocation of Zhogorku Kenesh.

- Parties canvassing before the beginning of the pre-election campaign violate Election Code

“The parties canvassing before the beginning of the pre-election campaign are harshly violating Election Code and must incur responsibility,” Galina Skripkina, the member of the Central Election Commission of Kyrgyzstan, stated to 24.kg news agency.

- OSCE/ODIHR to prepare recommendations to Kyrgyz authorities prior to parliamentary elections

Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe will prepare a number of recommendations to the Kyrgyz authorities prior to the parliamentary elections. Some of them, according to the bureau, must be implemented before the Election Day, the OSCE Centre in Bishkek announced today.

### **Geo strategic Front**

- June events in Kyrgyzstan forced CSTO countries to change the Charter  
June events in Kyrgyzstan forced Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) countries to change the organization's charter. This is one of the results of the informal summit in Yerevan, which brought together the presidents of Russia, Armenia, Tajikistan, Belarus, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan. Only the president of Uzbekistan failed to come through illness, Russian media reports.

### **Economic/Energy Front**

- Kyrgyz government cannot expend 6 percents of GDP on infrastructure development - Chyngyz Makeshov  
"Kyrgyz government cannot expend 6 percents of GDP on infrastructure development as international financial institutions advice to do," Executive Director of Businessmen Union Chyngyz Makeshov stated at the session of the Council for Business Development and Investment.

### **Social Front**

- Obama orders to allocate 10 mln dlrs for displaced Kyrgyz persons  
WASHINGTON, August 28 (Itar-Tass) -- US President Barack Obama has ordered to allocate up to 9.5 million dollars in assistance to displaced people in Kyrgyzstan, the press office of the White House said on Friday. These funds will be disbursed from the Emergency Refugee and Migration Assistance Fund.

- Kyrgyz Authorities Say Schools In South To Open On Time  
Education Minister Kanat Sadykov said that university students' new academic year had been postponed in order to prevent the students being used by different political groups during the upcoming election campaign.

- Few Turkmen, Uzbek Students Return To Kyrgyz University  
OSH -- The rector of the largest university in Osh says many students from Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan are not expected to return to school this semester, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports.

### **Tajikistan**

#### **Political Front**

- Twenty-Five Militants Escape Prison In Tajikistan  
DUSHANBE -- Tajik authorities say some 25 Islamic militants serving long jail terms have escaped from prison, killing at least five prison guards.

#### **Geo strategic Front**

- Tajik, Kazakh FMs sign government-to-government agreement  
DUSHANBE, August 25, 2010, Asia-Plus -- The first sitting of the Council of Foreign Ministers of Tajikistan and Kazakhstan took place in the Kazakh capital Astana on August 24.

- Tajikistan, Armenia underline necessity of expansion of bilateral cooperation  
DUSHANBE, August 23, 2010, Asia-Plus -- On Friday August 20, Foreign Minister Hamrokhon Zarifi met in Yerevan with His Armenian counterpart Edvard Nalbandyan on

sidelines of an informal meeting of the heads of state of member nations of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) that took place in the Armenian capital the same day, according to the Tajik MFA information department.

- Tajik official dismisses fears of militant attacks on Kyrgyzstan

DUSHANBE, August 23, 2010, Asia-Plus – A senior Tajik security official says Kyrgyzstan's concerns about the infiltration of Islamic militants from Tajikistan into Kyrgyzstan are unfounded, RFE/RL's Tajik Service reported on August 20.

### **Economic/Energy Front**

#### **Social Front**

- 5,500 Tajiks to perform Hajj this year

DUSHANBE, August 25, 2010, Asia-Plus -- Registration of Tajik Muslims who want to perform Hajj this year will last until August 31, according to the Committee on Religious Affairs. "Saudi authorities have allocated a quota of 5,500 hajjis to Tajikistan this year, which is 500 more than last year," said the source.

- Women Appeal Against 'Impending Hijab Ban' At Tajik City Market

QORGHONTEPPA, Tajikistan --- A group of women market merchants in the southern Tajik city of Qorghonteppa say they are coming under pressure to stop wearing the hijab, RFE/RL's Tajik Service reports.

- Tajikistan's Official Calm Belies Potential Prison Break Crisis

A major international manhunt is under way after dozens of enemies of the Tajik state broke out from prison this week, but you wouldn't know it from the official reaction.

### **Turkmenistan**

#### **Political Front**

#### **Geo strategic Front**

- Kabul to host meeting of Turkmen-Afghan commission on cooperation

The second meeting of the intergovernmental Turkmen-Afghani commission on trade-economic and technical cooperation will take place in the capital of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Kabul, on August 30-31.

- Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan to hold talks in Islamabad

The second meeting of the intergovernmental Turkmen-Pakistani commission will take place in Islamabad on August 24-25. The delegation of Turkmenistan will be headed by Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Rashid Meredov.

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

- Delegation of Turkmenistan to attend conference of Asian oil companies

The Director of the State Agency for Management and Use of Hydrocarbon Resources under the President of Turkmenistan, Yagshigeldy Kakayev has left for Seoul, where he will participate in a conference at the level of heads of national oil companies of Asian countries.

- Turkmenistan Tips Its Hand On Future Energy Exports

An oil platform in Turkmenistan's Caspian Sea territory -- the president indicated that Turkmenistan is willing to open up Caspian development to U.S. and other companies.

Turkmenistan, so key to the energy plans of so many, had long shown its readiness to break Russia's stranglehold on its gas and oil exports. But Ashgabat has offered few hints as to who it prefers as an alternative.

## **Social Front**

- Turkmenistan Removes Gold Statue Of Niyazov From Ashgabat

A prominent 12-meter golden statue of Turkmenistan's former dictator Saparmurat Niyazov has been taken down in the capital Ashgabat -- a move further eroding the personality cult around the late Central Asian leader.

## **Uzbekistan**

### **Political Front**

### **Geo strategic Front**

- Chinese delegation visits Uzbekistan

Delegation of China headed by Liu Yunshan, member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, met the Speaker of Legislative Chamber of Oliy Majlis of Uzbekistan Dilorom Tashmuhamedova in Tashkent on 24 August.

### **Economic/Energy Front**

## **Social Front**

- Uzbekistan Burns Half A Ton Of Seized Afghan Heroin

Authorities in Uzbekistan have incinerated nearly a half ton of confiscated Afghan heroin worth an estimated street value of \$150 million in Europe.

- Disabled Uzbek Man Tries To Crown President

TASHKENT -- A disabled Uzbek man has ridden over 500 kilometers in his wheelchair - in the hope of crowning President Islam Karimov on Independence Day, RFE/RL's Uzbek Service reports

## **Detailed Report**

### **Azerbaijan**

#### **Political Front**

- Executive power chiefs receive instructions concerning parliamentary elections in Azerbaijan

Executive power chiefs have received instructions in Azerbaijan due to upcoming parliamentary elections. "The heads of the executive bodies are instructed to create conditions for use of sites envisaged for promotion by all interested persons," the Azerbaijani Presidential Administration official Zeynal Nagdaliyev said today in a speech at the opening of the CEC training courses on improvement of district electoral commissions chairmen's skills. He said during the municipal elections violations of law were revealed in some polling stations, which caused cancellation of election results in these electoral commissions.

"The Azerbaijani President dismissed head of the Naftalan Executive Power because of these irregularities. Control will be even more rigid in the parliamentary elections," Nagdaliyev added. Fewer violations were revealed in the municipal elections in 2009 than in the previous elections, he said. According to Nagdaliyev, 62 polling stations will be moved and repair works will be held in 1,076 polling stations by Sept. 1.

The parliamentary elections in Azerbaijan are scheduled for early November.

#### **Geo strategic Front**

- Azerbaijani Defense Ministry Rejects 'Laughable' Armenian Statement

BAKU -- Azerbaijan's Defense Ministry has rejected as "laughable" a claim by Yerevan that Russia could back Armenia in case of a new conflict over the disputed region of Nagorno-Karabakh, RFE/RL's Azerbaijani Service reports.

Armenian Defense Minister Seyran Ohanian told RFE/RL on August 25 he had "no doubts" that under an agreement signed with Russia last week, Russia would openly support Armenia in the event of a new conflict with Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh that "became a threat to the Republic of Armenia."

But Eldar Sabiroglu, the head of the Azerbaijani Defense Ministry press service, on August 26 rejected that claim.

Sabiroglu told ANS-TV that "it is our land and it is occupied by Armenia. The Armenian separatists must be driven out of there at all cost."

Referring to the updated Russian-Armenian agreement, Sabiroglu said: "This agreement is between two states, it is up to them. But this protocol cannot hinder or stop the Azerbaijani Army." He also said Azerbaijan had no choice but to upgrade its armed forces by acquiring new weaponry.

Nagorno-Karabakh, situated in southwestern Azerbaijan and populated mainly by ethnic Armenians, erupted in ethnic clashes beginning in the late 1980s, prompting a war that left some 30,000 dead. The territory, which declared independence in 1991, remains in dispute despite years of failed efforts by international mediators and a cease-fire has not prevented occasional skirmishes.

- Armenia Warns Azerbaijan Over New UN Resolution

YEREVAN -- Armenia's Foreign Ministry has warned Azerbaijan against trying to push through the United Nations General Assembly a fresh resolution that accuses Yerevan of occupying Azerbaijani lands and thereby hampering a peaceful resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, RFE/RL's Armenian Service reports.

The draft resolution, which the General Assembly is expected to discuss on September 9, upholds the right of Azerbaijanis "expelled" from Karabakh and the Armenian-controlled territories surrounding it to return to their homes. It also urges the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) to send a fact-finding mission to the conflict zone to investigate the conflict parties' compliance with "international humanitarian law." Armenian Foreign Ministry spokesman Tigran Balayan told RFE/RL that the document, if adopted, would cause "serious damage" to international efforts to end the Karabakh dispute. Armenian diplomats are now trying to prevent its passage, Balayan said, adding that Yerevan continues to believe that no international bodies except the OSCE Minsk Group should be involved in the search for a solution to the conflict.

"There is no way it won't pass," predicted Aleksandr Arzumanian, an opposition leader who headed the Armenian mission at the UN in the early 1990s. "The General Assembly statutes are such that even if five countries vote for and all others abstain, a resolution is deemed adopted. In such cases, most countries usually abstain."

That is what happened in March 2008, when the General Assembly backed a similar Azerbaijani-drafted resolution. It referred to Karabakh as an internationally recognized part of Azerbaijan and demanded the "immediate, complete, and unconditional withdrawal of Armenian forces" from occupied Azerbaijani lands.

Only 39 UN member states, most of them affiliated with the Organization of the Islamic Conference, voted for it, while over 150 others abstained or voted against. The latter

included the United States, Russia, and France, the three co-chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group.

That resolution was touted as a "great diplomatic victory" by Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev. The Armenian government rejected it and accused Baku of seeking to derail the peace process.

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- The Wider Implications Of The Russian-Armenian Defense Deal

Russian President Dmitry Medvedev and Armenian President Serzh Sarkisian signed a protocol last week prolonging the two countries' 1995 bilateral defense treaty. While the protocol is deemed a mere prolongation of the existing treaty, there are important new features.

First, Russia undertakes to guarantee Armenia's territorial integrity in its entirety, and not just its borders with Turkey and Iran, as before. This pledge is already contained in the current Russian military doctrine, which calls an attack on any member of the Moscow-led Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) an attack on all. Azerbaijan, which talks about using all means necessary to restore control over Nagorno-Karabakh, is being put on notice: war against Armenia is not an option.

Second, Russia is signaling it is not about to leave anytime soon. The treaty with Armenia has been extended through 2044. This is becoming a trend: earlier this year, Ukraine agreed to host the Russian Black Sea Fleet through 2042. Russian strategists are beginning again to think in the long term. Some analysts believe this trend will continue in Moldova. From Moscow's perspective, however, it is crucial to consolidate a military presence in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, Central Asia's two fragile states sharing the potentially explosive Ferghana Valley and situated too close for comfort to Afghanistan.

Thus, Russia is busy creating a security system around its perimeter. All his differences with Moscow notwithstanding, Belarusian President Alyaksandr Lukashenka has recently dropped his objections to chairing the CSTO. Two years after the war with Georgia, Russia has become entrenched militarily in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. It has also intensified contacts with Ukraine and Moldova, neither of which belongs to the CSTO. And next month, Medvedev is due in Baku.

### A Geopolitical Vacuum

The Russian leadership is obviously capitalizing on the pause in the NATO enlargement process. Both Ukraine and Georgia, mostly through their own actions, are much farther away from acceding to the Atlantic alliance than they were in 2008. The Obama administration, unlike its Republican predecessor, has little interest in combating Russian influence in the former Soviet republics. For the United States, the reset in U.S.-Russian relations holds out the promise of strategic cooperation on the issues of utmost importance to Washington, such as Afghanistan and Iran. Moscow's own drive toward technological modernization prioritizes relations with North America and the European Union.

Nagorno-Karabakh is perhaps the thorniest of post-Soviet frozen conflicts. True to the new trend, the leading powers of the West have expressed little concern over the strengthening of Moscow's strategic position in its immediate neighborhood. Partly this was due to the voluntary nature of the new agreements. The cash-strapped Ukrainians have agreed to the extension of the Sevastopol lease in exchange for a substantial subsidy; the Armenians have just won an unambiguous Russian security guarantee for their strategically isolated state.

Partly the reason for acquiescence has been the convergence of interest: the United States shares Russia's concern over the stability of Kyrgyzstan and its neighbors. Where Washington disagrees with Moscow, as on Georgia, the disagreement has been securely fenced off.

It is also important that the long lull in NATO's eastern enlargement has resulted from the changes in the candidate countries themselves -- and not from any deal with Moscow. Ukraine has seen a change of government and, consequently, a strategic reassessment; and Georgia resorted to force against its breakaway province, provoking a war with Russia. What is no less important is the sense of strategic overstretch that was discernible even before the global crisis both in the United States and in the European Union. Neither NATO nor the EU will begin moving east again for a long time.

#### A New, Grown-Up CSTO

Which means that, in the foreseeable future, Russia may have fewer impediments than ever to play a role it has always coveted, that of a principal security provider and peace guarantor in the space once covered by the Soviet Union. If the Russians are serious about exercising that role, they will have to adapt their policies and mend their ways. Above all, they will need to refocus their strategy from an essentially negative one -- resisting NATO's drive and U.S. deployments -- to a positive one: conflict prevention and conflict resolution.

Conflict prevention would necessitate a thorough reform of the CSTO away from a club of Russia's friends into an effective security tool, first of all in Central Asia. The region looks increasingly fragile, both from within and in view of the developments next door, particularly in Afghanistan. A NATO-like political structure, plus a modern integrated security toolbox and a much better analytical capacity, would help turn the toy copy of the Warsaw Pact into a functioning regional mechanism adequate to the new challenges. The reformed CSTO would not need to bother looking beyond Central Asia: bilateral treaties, like the Russo-Armenian one, would suffice. Conflict resolution would require determined efforts to bring the post-Soviet conflicts to a close, two decades after the break-up of the USSR. The Transdniestrian one appears easiest to resolve, but it still demands some heavy lifting in Tiraspol and Chisinau, as well as close coordination with Kyiv and good-faith cooperation with the European Union and the United States. To ease the Abkhaz and Ossetian situations, Russia would need, already now, to start opening up to the Georgian people and, eventually, to the government in Tbilisi -- probably after President Mikheil Saakashvili bows out at the end of his second term.

It is the Karabakh issue that looks the most difficult and dangerous one by far.

By expanding its guarantees to Armenia and extending the treaty's term, Moscow has given a warning to Baku to drop war as an instrument of policy. Now it needs to make another step, by producing incentives for both Armenia and Azerbaijan to reach a peace

deal. A decade ago, at Key West, Florida, the deal was almost done, but it fell through because, unlike their leaders, the two countries' elites were not yet ready to embrace it. Now, with the support of the Minsk group and its U.S. and French co-chairs, as well as the regional power Turkey, Russia needs to take the lead in bringing the sides to a final settlement. Over time, that will be the ultimate proof of its security-building capacity.

- UN General Assembly expected to discuss resolution on Azerbaijan's occupied territories in September

Resolution on Nagorno-Karabakh conflict entitled "The situation in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan" will possibly be discussed at the UN General Assembly meeting on Sept. 9, a UN source told APA's Washington DC correspondent.

"Libya as a representative country which is chairing UN GA 64th Assembly has proposed to schedule a debate on Azerbaijan's resolution as well as Kosovo and other issues on the same day. Last decision will be made soon," the source said.

Azerbaijan's resolution was on UN GA agenda for a number of years. It was as well scheduled for the next UN GA session's agenda under number 39.

The Sept. 9 debate will clarify the opinions of UN member countries on the conflict. For the first time a EU ambassador will attend the session as an observer.

- Azerbaijan studies Russia-Armenia military protocol

Azerbaijan is studying military agreement signed between Russia and Armenia on lease of the military base in Gyumri.

"Any agreement or treaty between Russia and Armenia applies only to those countries. But the security in the South Caucasus and issue of the volume of conventional and strategic weapons in the region are not problems of just these two states. These matters are decided by the flank agreement in accordance with the OSCE concept on security in Europe," Head of Azerbaijani Presidential Administration's Socio-political Department Ali Hasanov told journalists today.

"Now, our military specialists and the OSCE officials are engaged in defining the compliance with the quota. After outcome of the study is available, the Azerbaijani government will express its position on this issue."

Baku hopes that Moscow will fulfill its commitments on non-usage of resources and arms of the Russia's 102nd Military Base accommodated in Armenia against Azerbaijan, Azerbaijani Foreign Ministry Spokesman Elkhan Polukhov said earlier.

Hasanov recalled that Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia and Russia joined the OSCE flank agreement on the South Caucasus in 1992. The document stipulates a precise volume of conventional weapons to be available on the South Caucasus, including amount of military equipment, aircraft, tanks and other armored vehicles - quota of arms is determined for each country.

There have been armament and military forces in the Nagorno-Karabakh for several years outside this quota and beyond the OSCE control. They are not being monitored and there is no count. The quota of the Armenian armed forces also includes a Russian military base. Russian weapons placed in Armenia shall not exceed the quota.

The conflict between the two South Caucasus countries began in 1988 when Armenia made territorial claims against Azerbaijan. Armenian armed forces have occupied 20 percent of Azerbaijan since 1992, including the Nagorno-Karabakh region and 7 surrounding districts.

Azerbaijan and Armenia signed a ceasefire agreement in 1994. The co-chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group - Russia, France, and the U.S. - are currently holding the peace negotiations.

Armenia has not yet implemented the U.N. Security Council's four resolutions on the liberation of the Nagorno-Karabakh region and the occupied territories.

### **Economic/Energy Front**

- Baku to host 1st Renewable Energy Caucasus Forum

Azerbaijan's capital will host the 1st Renewable Energy Caucasus Forum in September. The forum will be co-organized by the Academy of European Management and EVRA International, Inc.

The idea to hold the event was supported by the European Commission whose chief for environmental issues sent a letter to the forum's organizers to express his backing.

The goals of the forum are the further development and transfer of clean technologies, together with the acceleration of environmental business growth and supply base in the Caucasus Region; attracting oil and gas companies, banks and investment institutions to further successful investments in the renewable energy industry in the Caucasus Region as well as addressing timely restructuring in regards to climate change.

Participants will include Caucasus & international governmental organizations, representatives of the EU, from the fields of Industry, banking, science as well as cleantech organizations, consulting and investment institutions, and universities.

- India seeks to invest in Azerbaijan's oil and gas sector

India intends to invest in oil and gas sector of Azerbaijan, Joint Secretary (Eurasia Division) in India's Ministry of External Affairs, Mr. Ajay Bisaria said at the meeting with a group of journalists from CIS countries in Delhi.

India's Indian State Oil Company holds talks with State Oil Company of Azerbaijan, the Indian official added.

He noted that Indian construction companies would participate in the construction of oil and gas pipelines.

"Azerbaijan's Deputy Foreign Minister will pay a visit to New-Delhi soon. Four problems will be discussed during the visit."

### **Social Front**

- EU Pressures Azerbaijan On 'Donkey Bloggers'

Nice to see the EU's foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton take a stand on the case of Azerbaijan's "donkey bloggers," who in 2009 received jail terms, ostensibly on hooliganism charges.

In a statement today Ashton said:

The High Representative regrets the decision by the Supreme Court of Azerbaijan on 19 August 2010 to uphold the prison sentences against youth activists Emin Abdullayev and Adnan Hajizade. The High Representative considers that the shortcomings of the trial, notably with regards to international standards of fairness and transparency, and its conclusion, send a negative signal with regard to the situation of freedom of expression in Azerbaijan. The High Representative calls on Azerbaijan to release Emin Abdullayev and Adnan Hajizade.

Prior to their arrest, the bloggers had distributed a satirical video on YouTube mocking the government for supposedly wasting oil revenues -- the video involved them dressing in donkey suits. (More background here.)

Unfortunately Ashton's statement probably won't do much good. The EU has made similar statements before and Hillary Clinton brought up the issue with Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev on her recent visit there, but to no avail.

While the government wants to send a message to its tech-savvy, opposition-minded youth that it won't stand for this kind of thing, it does care what the outside world thinks about it. (It certainly didn't like the bad headlines over "The Washington Post" corruption story.)

Azerbaijan does desperately want to be seen as Western, but only in that it has glitzy airports, fancy football teams, and Gucci boutiques. It's not so bothered about the rule of law or free media part. In fact, for now, it doesn't even seem to be interested in making a gesture that would likely win some brownie points from the EU and United States.

There's elections in October, so that might be the time for a "benevolent" gesture, which would be a convenient smokescreen for the likely flawed elections. We'll see.

### **Kazakhstan**

#### **Political Front**

- Nazarbayev appoints new head of National Security Committee

ASTANA, August 23 (Itar-Tass) -- Kazakhstan's President Nursultan Nazarbayev on Monday, August 23, appointed Nurtai Abykayev as the new head of the National Security Committee.

He will replace Adil Shayakmetov.

"Nurtai Abykayevich has lived up to expectations in all the positions to which he was appointed by the president. The head of state expresses confidence that he will also live up to his expectations in this office and fulfil all the tasks that have been set for the National Security Committee," presidential chief of staff Aslan Musin said.

Major-General Nurtai Abykayev is 63 years old; he headed the National Security Committee in 1998-1999, then worked as first deputy foreign minister and chairman of the upper house of parliament – the Senate. In 2007-2008, Abykayev was Kazakhstan's ambassador to Russia. In the past two years he was first deputy foreign minister.

#### **Geo strategic Front**

- Kazakh president's refusal from nuclear arms is historic – experts

MOSCOW, August 27 (Itar-Tass) -- A refusal of Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev from nuclear armaments is a historic event, Russian and Kazakh experts said at a Moscow roundtable on Friday.

The roundtable discussed anti-nuclear initiatives of Nazarbayev. The president proposed in Astana on Thursday to draft a declaration, which would confirm the readiness of all nations to progress towards nuclear-free world ideals. The statement was made ahead of the World Day against Nuclear Tests.

"Being guided with constitutional principles, Kazakhstan has become a full-fledged member of the international community and has made an enormous contribution to the comprehensive system of continental security and non-proliferation of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction," Kazakh Ambassador to Russia Zautbek Turisbekov said. "Disarmament is a complex process, which must be implemented step by step. Kazakhstan has a moral right for disarmament because people of Kazakhstan have

experienced the effect [of nuclear weapons. A total of 490 nuclear tests were made in Kazakhstan within 40 years. The tests affected 1.5 million people and vast lands],” he said.

“The closure of the Semipalatinsk nuclear test range and the creation of a nuclear-free zone in Central Asia are symbols of our hope that a nuclear-free world is an attainable goal,” the Kazakh president said. “Whenever one speaks about nuclear disarmament, one must remember history. A next war may become the end of this civilization,” the ambassador said. “People of Russia and Kazakhstan are brothers and neighbors. It is necessary to develop friendship,” he said.

### **Economic/Energy Front**

- Kazakhstan pushes Islamic finance post-crisis

Seeking to diversify its financial industry after a banking crisis, oil-rich Kazakhstan is drawing on Arab and Malaysian investment in an effort to build an Islamic finance industry among its 13 million Muslims.

Its success may depend on the fate of pioneer investors and the commitment of its secular government to clear the way for a long-awaited sovereign issue of sukuk, or Islamic bonds, which could prompt other issuers to follow.

"If we are able, Inshallah (God willing), to create a strong base of corporate clients, it will allow us to devote more attention to medium-sized and small retail business," said Adlet Aliyev, chief dealer for Al Hilal Bank in Kazakhstan.

Al Hilal, owned by the government of Abu Dhabi, was the first bank to respond when Kazakhstan passed new laws last year to allow an Islamic finance industry. The bank opened its Kazakh offices in March 2010. Though modern Islamic finance began three decades ago, its major principles, such as a prohibition on paying interest, would have been familiar to Muslim traders on the medieval Silk Road through Kazakhstan and Central Asia. Sixteen million people live in Kazakhstan, about 80 percent of them Muslim. Vast oil and metals reserves have helped its economy, at nearly \$110 billion the largest in Central Asia, to expand by an average 9 percent a year in the last decade.

"They have an abundance of assets and they have deep pockets to invest," said Razi Pahlavi Abdul Aziz, consultant with Amanie Business Solutions, a Kuala Lumpur-based firm which advises on sharia or Islamic law. Al Hilal employs 45 people in its pristine, glass-fronted head office on the upper slopes of Almaty, Kazakhstan's largest city and financial centre. A handful more work in a branch in the capital, Astana, and a second branch is planned in Shymkent. The bank aims to invest \$250 million in Kazakhstan this year, rising to as much as \$1 billion over the next two years.

It intends at first to finance the corporate sector, Aliyev said, particularly large businesses. It is engaged in about 20 projects, offering finance via the commodity murabaha structure, which allows clients to buy an asset on deferred payment terms before selling to a third party, a method compliant with the requirement that all financial transactions involve an asset.

### **SPREADING THE WORD**

Muhammad Husain ibn Usman Alsabekov, Kazakhstan's deputy chief mufti, believes grass-roots demand for Islamic finance will grow as the population becomes more aware of the sector. When he was appointed 23 years ago, Kazakhstan had 68 mosques. Today, there are approximately 2,500. Almaty's blue-domed Central Mosque is big enough to hold only half of the 14,000 worshippers who attend Friday prayers each week, he says.

"For a simple Muslim, there is no need for interest. Money should be for the benefit of all." Investors, though, are cautious. The financial crisis humbled the once-proud Kazakh banking sector; international creditors were forced to write off billions of dollars of debt in a restructuring process that followed local bank defaults. "Islamic banking is looking for high returns and safety hubs -- which is not Kazakhstan," said Yekaterina Trofimova, director of financial institutions at credit rating agency Standard & Poor's.

"But Kazakhstan needs diversification in all aspects of banking and this adds a little more colour and diversity."

Analysts say it is no coincidence that Kazakhstan passed laws to facilitate an Islamic finance industry during a crisis. As Western credit dried up, new money from Asia ensured that 2008 and 2009 were record years for foreign direct investment.

"On the government level, the idea must have been to look for all available avenues to diversify the country's funding base," said Milena Ivanova-Venturini, head of research for central Asia at investment bank Renaissance Capital.

"Kazakhstan, being a majority Muslim country, can play this card and tap into the Islamic pool of funding."

As global financial markets recover and more familiar financing avenues reopen, however, promoting Islamic finance could become harder. High-profile defaults and rising costs have soured the appeal of Islamic bonds for some conventional borrowers in the Gulf. [ID:nLDE66D11A]

Respondents to a Reuters poll in July estimated global sukuk sales this year at \$23-25 billion, barely changed from last year's \$23.3 billion and substantially below previous estimates. [ID:nSGE66I01J]

#### SOVEREIGN SUKUK

The issuance of a sovereign sukuk would therefore be an important step in Kazakhstan's development of its Islamic finance industry. But the country's cancellation of a \$500 million-plus Eurobond issue this year, in favour of domestic borrowing, suggests the government may not be in a hurry.

The Finance Ministry told Reuters it was examining the possibility of a sovereign sukuk issue, but it has declined to give details about the possible date or size.

A London-based banker, who declined to be named, said he expected a delicate balancing act between those in the secular government who take a strictly Islamic approach towards sukuk issuance, and those who question the cost and effort involved.

Support will come from the Regional Financial Centre of Almaty (RFCA), a vehicle to attract investment that is regulated by a state agency with a direct line to Nursultan Nazarbayev, the 70-year-old president who has been in power for two decades.

Timur Omarov, head of Islamic finance at the RFCA's regulatory agency, said preparatory work was under way to create the legal basis to issue sovereign sukuk.

"We would like to see the creation of a benchmark in order that corporate issuers -- Samruk-Kazyna, KazAgro and others -- can issue sukuk," he said, referring to Kazakhstan's sovereign wealth fund and its state-run agricultural holding firm. Al Hilal Bank's next challenge, says Aliyev, is to "popularise" Islamic products via seminars and client meetings.

Investors from Malaysia, the world's largest sukuk market, are planning to establish a second Islamic bank in Kazakhstan. Malaysian financial firm AmanahRaya will

participate in the three-way venture with local brokerage Fattah Finance and state-run Development Bank of Kazakhstan.

"On the one hand, it's a rival," said Aliyev. "But on the other hand, competitive markets grow the quickest. It's a good incentive always to be on top form."

### **Social Front**

- 'Award' Visit For Jailed Kazakh Rights Defender

The head of a European human rights watchdog has visited jailed Kazakh rights activist Yevgeny Zhovtis to congratulate him on being awarded the group's annual prize, RFE/RL's Kazakh Service reports.

Bjorn Engesland, secretary-general of the Norwegian Helsinki Committee, spent two hours with Zhovtis at the prison in northeastern city of Oskemen on August 26.

The committee awarded Zhovtis its Andrey Sakharov Freedom Award 2010, describing him as "one of the most significant human rights defenders in Kazakhstan for two decades." It said that through his work, Zhovtis had "contributed to the strengthening of human rights in his home country." Zhovtis was sentenced to four years in prison last year over a car accident in which he killed a pedestrian. An initial police investigation that found him not responsible for the crash was later overturned. His supporters say the authorities used the case to put pressure on Zhovtis and punish him for his activities.

Roza Akylbekova, the acting director of the Kazakhstan International Bureau for Human Rights and Rule of Law, will receive the award on Zhovtis's behalf at a ceremony in Oslo on September 9.

- Kazakh Journalists Covering Sufi Trial Briefly Detained

On August 26, police in Almaty detained a group of journalists and kept them at a police station for three hours without any explanation, RFE/RL's Kazakh Service reports.

The correspondents from RFE/RL and the local newspapers "Alash ainy," "Ush qiyan," "Dorozhny patrol," and "Orda KZ" were detained as they attempted to attend the trial of an alleged leader of a religious group that has been branded extremist.

The Almaty district court in Almaty is trying a leader of the NGO Senim-Bilim-Omir (Trust-Knowledge-Life), a Sufi group. No details of the case have been made public.

RFE/RL correspondent Kuanyshbek Kari says the police demanded written explanations for why the journalists wanted to attend the trial, searched their professional equipment and personal belongings, and took their pictures and fingerprints.

### **Kyrgyzstan**

#### **Political Front**

- Interview: Osh Governor Says 'We Have To Remove The Fear'

Sooronbai Jeenbekov was named governor of the southern region of Osh by interim President Roza Otunbaeva in April, almost two months before the clashes between ethnic Uzbeks and Kyrgyz in the Osh and Jalal-Abad regions that led to nearly 400 deaths and thousands of homes and businesses being destroyed.

A native of the Kara-Kulja district of Osh Oblast, Jeenbekov was an active member of Otunbaeva's Social Democratic Party. Jeenbekov, 51, served as agriculture minister in 2007 when Almazbek Atambaev was prime minister. Before that he was a parliament deputy for several years beginning in the late 1990s.

Jeenbekov tells RFE/RL about the Kyrgyz government's authority in the south, what he thinks caused the deadly ethnic clashes in Osh, and why people oppose the deployment of an international Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) police

force to southern Kyrgyzstan. Jeenbekov spoke to RFE/RL's Venera Djumataeva, Pete Baumgartner, and Alisher Toksonbaev in his Osh office on August 26.

RFE/RL: Some observers say Kyrgyzstan's central government does not control the situation in the southern regions or that it is very weak here. How do you respond to such charges?

Sooronbai Jeenbekov: I am working here in the Osh region and I represent the central government. All [of the central government's] representatives are working in all the Osh districts. Of course there are problems. After such bloody events in Osh, and the entire government changing just before the clashes, these things have affected the system of governance that exists here.

I would say the central government is gradually, day by day, increasing its power. But there are forces that want to disturb the central government. Some of them are trying to ensure that the parliamentary elections [scheduled for October 10] are canceled.

We will hold very clean, transparent elections and whichever party wins, the victory will be theirs.

Internal and external "friends," people from the previous regime, these are all rich and powerful forces. Just think, Kyrgyzstan is the only country in the region that has adopted a new constitution with a parliamentary, democratic system. Many of these [forces] don't like that. But we understand that and will do everything to guarantee that each vote will be counted in the elections.

We will not behave like [former President Kurmanbek Bakiev's] Ak-Jol party, throwing thousands of [opposition] ballots away and spoiling the election. We will hold very clean, transparent elections and whichever party wins, the victory will be theirs.

RFE/RL: Can you discuss what you see as some of the causes of the ethnic clashes in Osh and Jalal-Abad?

Jeenbekov: I understand that big powers have their own geopolitical interests in Kyrgyzstan. [Some want Kyrgyzstan] to be unstable, but they shouldn't have pursued their interests in such a bloody way.

We also have internal forces here in Kyrgyzstan; people who support the previous [Bakiev] regime. Even in the law enforcement agencies, which were very corrupt [under Bakiev], we still have people [working] from the former regime.

An ethnic Uzbek woman reacts in front of the ruins of her house, destroyed during the ethnic clashes in Osh. There are people who do not want Kyrgyzstan to be a democratic country -- because now it is becoming [that]. And these people have always existed and they will continue to exist. But [even they] have to help us in establishing a democratic country.

RFE/RL: What is the division of power between you, the governor, and Osh city Mayor Melis Myrzakmatov?

Jeenbekov: My office is working together with the Osh mayor but I am responsible for the seven districts of Osh Oblast, since I'm the governor. And the mayor is responsible just for the city.

RFE/RL: How are your relations with the mayor?

Jeenbekov: We are working together [laughs]. The most important thing for us is to keep the peace.

RFE/RL: So do you want him to continue in his post as mayor?

Jeenbekov: It is not within my competency to determine if he stays. I don't decide such things.

Rebuilding Trust Between Communities

RFE/RL: How will ethnic Uzbeks and Kyrgyz be able to live together after the unrest? There are lots of rumors that people are afraid to go out at night. How will you deal with such things?

Jeenbekov: Of course, things will not change and trust [cannot be restored] overnight. It will take years to do this.

Probably during the election campaign, some politicians will use these tensions, this situation, to escalate the problems in Osh. We have to watch for this. These problems should not be the main subject of political discourse [during the election campaign].

Some ethnic Uzbek politicians used the situation and the Uzbek people to try to further their goals. Many politicians used people, and that resulted in the massacres. Only common people suffered.

But I must say that many [Kyrgyz and Uzbeks] are living together normally, as they were before [the unrest]. In the Osh Oblast districts of Uzgen, Aravan, and Mookat, the relations [between Kyrgyz and Uzbeks and the situation is relatively normal]. However, fear does still exist on both sides.

RFE/RL: What about Osh?

Jeenbekov: Since the problems started in Osh [and] it was the center of the problems, the situation is not as it is in other places. But it is slowly getting better.

RFE/RL: There are reports that many Uzbeks are leaving the Osh region. Do you have any information on that?

Jeenbekov: Yes, some Kyrgyz and Uzbek people are leaving Osh. It's a natural process -- people always look for a better place to live and work. It's

Some Kyrgyz fear the OSCE mission will create a separate Uzbek state, like Kosovo in Serbia. wrong to say that only Uzbeks are leaving. Lots of Kyrgyz people have gone to villages [outside of Osh], to Bishkek and other places in northern Kyrgyzstan, as well as to Russia. You cannot stop them from leaving.

RFE/RL: Do you think they are leaving permanently?

Jeenbekov: I don't know. It's up to them.

RFE/RL: Will the out-migration reach a critical point?

Jeenbekov: I don't think so.

...And Rebuilding Homes

RFE/RL: The Kyrgyz government used to appoint ethnic Uzbek deputies in areas with large Uzbek populations. Does this practice continue?

Jeenbekov: Yes, it is still exactly like that -- for example my deputy is an ethnic Uzbek. The Aravan, Uzgen, and Kara-Suu districts [which all have large ethnic Uzbek populations] also have Uzbek deputies. And the four other districts [in the Osh region] all have Uzbek representatives in the local governments.

RFE/RL: Is aid being given to the ethnic Uzbeks who lost their homes?

Jeenbekov: On that issue we have a special state commission responsible for rebuilding Osh and Jalal-Abad. And the chief of that commission is the deputy prime minister. So all money and funds go to that commission [it is not done at the local level].

RFE/RL: Has the money started to come to those who need it?

Jeenbekov: There was recently an international conference in Bishkek at which donors promised to give around \$1 billion. I cannot say when this money is coming to Kyrgyzstan, but at least they pledged it.

#### Punishing The Guilty

RFE/RL: Can you give an update on the number of people arrested and prosecuted? And to the reports that the police were overreacting and largely arresting only ethnic Uzbeks in the aftermath of the clashes.

Jeenbekov: Yes, we received this information as well and we tried to act quickly on these reports. But suspicious people should be detained. Some of the most suspicious people [involved in the ethnic clashes] have escaped from the region but are still being sought. Those who were innocent have been released.

In the Osh region more than 1,100 criminal cases have been opened -- that is excluding the [crimes committed in the] city of Osh. But we know of many such cases when people were arrested and later released because they had done nothing wrong.

RFE/RL: What about the businessmen in Osh who have left. Do you think they will return?

Jeenbekov: We realize that without foreign investment we cannot develop the Kyrgyz economy. And we are trying to explain to all potential foreign investors that we will provide security to them. Most of them are still waiting and I think they are waiting until the parliamentary elections; they want to see if they will be peaceful. After the parliamentary elections I hope [the foreign investors] will come back.

Frankly speaking, it was a real war. Some people are blaming law enforcement forces, but they don't realize that 12 policemen were also killed during the clashes.

RFE/RL: As you know, many guns and weapons were taken from the police and military, can you speak about how they will be retrieved?

Jeenbekov: Law enforcement agencies are working hard to get all of the weapons back. Lots of people returned them voluntarily. Many of them did not use them but were just carrying them around. They were just scared. Some weapons or guns were even unusable. But it's difficult to say how many of them are left [among the public].

#### Why Kyrgyz Fear The OSCE

RFE/RL: Can you explain why there has been so much opposition to the OSCE police advisory group being deployed to southern Kyrgyzstan?

Jeenbekov: There is a problem. Our people here have a fear [of foreign forces].

We haven't properly informed people about the OSCE police force.

In 1990, when Kyrgyz and Uzbeks fought and killed each other, the center of the fighting wasn't in Osh, it was in Uzgen. In Osh in 1990 there were not so many killings and burning of houses like there were this time. In Osh, there were only a few cases of nighttime killings.

Back then it was the Soviet Union and Soviet forces entered the city, considered the situation, and took only one side. Lots of Kyrgyz people were arrested, some were executed, and many were given 20-year prison sentences. The unrest wasn't investigated properly [by the Soviets] and there was little analysis about who was really guilty of committing crimes. And the Kyrgyz people have very strong memories of these events and how the Soviet forces handled the situation.

People who were 20 years old then are only 40 now, and many of those people think [a foreign force] will come and do the same thing: only Kyrgyz people will be arrested and executed. This is one factor.

Secondly, there should be a proper explanation of why this OSCE police force is coming to Kyrgyzstan. For instance, I, as governor, have little idea of what this OSCE police force is supposed to do.

There is talk on television that the OSCE mission is coming. But even if I don't fully understand its mission, and if I haven't seen any agreement on it, how can ordinary people understand?

We haven't properly informed people about the OSCE police force. We say they will come and consult, but still there is a big protest among people about their deployment, we have to keep that in mind. We have to consider that the majority is opposed to the OSCE police. But if it is the correct decision to bring them, then the people will ultimately understand it. There is still danger in Osh. People feel this in their hearts and we have to remove the fear.

- Protesters In Southern Kyrgyz City Want Old Mayor Back

BATKEN -- Some 100 protesters are picketing the mayor's office in Kyrgyzstan's southern city of Batken to demand that former Mayor Seidakmat Ermatov be reinstated, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports.

Batken Oblast Governor Sultanbay Aijigitov announced on August 24 the appointment of Ashym Rayimkulov as the city's new mayor.

Aijigitov told RFE/RL he decided to replace Ermatov because of the latter's involvement in "political games" and shortcomings in the organization of the June 2010 referendum on a new constitution.

Meanwhile, Ermatov told RFE/RL his dismissal was the result of personal tensions between himself and Aijigitov.

Ermatorov said he openly told Aijigitov that he would not support any political party, and so Aijigitov decided to get rid of him on the eve of the parliamentary election campaign. Campaigning starts September 10 for elections scheduled for October 10.

Ermatorov was appointed Batken mayor during the rule of former President Kurmanbek Bakiev who was ousted in April 2010.

- No Kosovo For Kyrgyzstan

There is growing resistance in Kyrgyzstan to having police from the Organization for Cooperation and Security in Europe (OSCE), an organization in which Kyrgyzstan is a member, sent to two cities in the south. The topic is already a hot issue in campaigning for seats in Kyrgyzstan's parliament, even though campaigning has not officially started yet. Hundreds of people were killed, thousands injured, tens of thousands temporarily displaced, and hundreds of millions of dollars of destruction done when ethnic Kyrgyz and Uzbeks clashed in and around the cities of Osh and Jalal-Abad from June 10 to 14. Local security forces admit they were insufficient in number to contain such a massive outbreak of violence. And tensions are still high more than two months later.

Some help would seem to be in order. The interim government in Bishkek thought so and agreed to allow 52 unarmed OSCE police advisers to be stationed for four months in Osh and Jalal-Abad. The foreign police would be there to help local forces.

Some, especially the Uzbek community in the south, hope for more than just help from the OSCE. The Uzbeks would like someone to oversee the work of local law enforcement officials, nearly all of whom are ethnic Kyrgyz.

Others, mainly the ethnic Kyrgyz community in the south, believe the OSCE force is coming to Kyrgyzstan for a different purpose.

'No Kosovo In Kyrgyzstan!'

One protester makes the point clear. In July, Osh Mayor Melis Myrzakmatov questioned the usefulness of foreign police. He asked what they could do without knowledge of the local languages, cultures, and traditions. This argument is more sophisticated than the reason that brings many people out on the streets (and on the square in front of Myrzakmatov's office).

The first protests against sending OSCE police started in Osh at that time, followed by similar demonstrations in the capital, Bishkek. In Osh, some people carried signs reading "No Kosovo" or "No Yugoslavia in Kyrgyzstan!"

Demonstrators, especially in Osh, are convinced the OSCE will send its small force to Kyrgyzstan as a prelude to dismantling the country, just like what happened in the former Yugoslavia. No one will say it aloud, but "No Kosovo" to the Kyrgyz protesters means no autonomous Uzbek region within Kyrgyzstan.

Greater autonomy, but not political autonomy, was one of the subjects Uzbek community leader Kadyrjon Batyrov brought up in May a few weeks after former President Kurmanbek Bakiyev was chased from power.

Many now look at such comments as having provoked the conflict that erupted in June because some on the Kyrgyz side took that to mean an Uzbek state within what is currently Kyrgyzstan. Some believe the OSCE will help the Uzbeks, who are nearly as numerous as the Kyrgyz in parts of the south, create just such a political entity, something like Kosovo.

This is what protesters told me when I was there in late July and this is what protesters continue to say on the Kyrgyzstan-based independent television channel K-Plus.

- In Kyrgyzstan 190 criminal cases commenced against Kurmanbek Bakiyev's milieu

190 criminal cases are commenced on the fact of crimes committed by high ranking officials during the era of Kurmanbek Bakiyev. The Prosecutor General of Kyrgyzstan Baytemir Ibraev stated at the government session today.

He said that 124 criminal cases are pleaded in the General Prosecutor's Office, 16 – in the State National Security Service (GSNB), 43 – in the Fiscal Police, 6 – in the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD). 18 cases have been submitted to the court...Generally, 78 people are accused and 48 of them are put on the wanted list.

The damage cost of the detected crimes perpetrated by high ranking officials and Bakiyev's milieu amounts around 6 billion soms and \$130 million.

- General Prosecutor Office of Kyrgyzstan completed investigation of April events

General Prosecutor Office of Kyrgyzstan has completed investigation of April events when over 80 people were killed near the Government House in Bishkek. The Prosecutor General Baytemir Ibraev stated in the government today.

Over 50 volumes of criminal cases were compiled. Some citizens were accused and 11 of them are put under arrest while other 11 people undergo other restraints. 5 persons are put into wanted list.

Following people are found guilty: ex-president Kurmanbek Bakiyev, his brother Zhanysh, his sons Marat and Maxim, a dozen of high ranking officials – Daniyar Usenov, Nurlan Temirbaev, Bakyt Kalyev, Murat Sotalinov, Moldomusa Kongantiev.

Baytemir Ibraev informed that General Prosecutor Office is expecting results of the ballistic tests. After April events over thousand of firearm must be examined.

- Two political parties refused to participate in the election campaign in Kyrgyzstan

Two political parties refused to participate in the election campaign.

Algyr-Kyraan political organization told 24.kg news agency that they decided not to run for seats in the 5th convocation of Zhogorku Kenesh.

Another political organization decided to be out the political game is Democratic Party of Women and Youth of Kyrgyzstan “Novaya Sila”. Its leader Tokon Shaylieva a well-known businesswoman and ex-deputy refused to comment on.

Thus, 55 political parties will run for mandates of Zhogorku Kenesh. The Central Election Commission assumes that some political organizations may drop out of election race-2010.

Yesterday was a deadline for conducting parties’ conventions for forming party lists according to Election Code. Political organizations have to submit them to the Central Election Commission by August 31.

- Parties canvassing before the beginning of the pre-election campaign violate Election Code

“The parties canvassing before the beginning of the pre-election campaign are harshly violating Election Code and must incur responsibility,” Galina Skripkina, the member of the Central Election Commission of Kyrgyzstan, stated to 24.kg news agency.

According to her, the citizens of the republic, to whom quarter or community committee members, third parties authorized by parties come with agitation appeals, must submit a relevant claim to the district election committee and the CEC.

“For the first time, the parties will receive a strict warning, but if they send their agitators again before September 10, 2010, then they will be set down,” Galina Skripkina emphasized.

- OSCE/ODIHR to prepare recommendations to Kyrgyz authorities prior to parliamentary elections

Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe will prepare a number of recommendations to the Kyrgyz authorities prior to the parliamentary elections. Some of them, according to the bureau, must be implemented before the Election Day, the OSCE Centre in Bishkek announced today.

The ODIHR recommends to the Kyrgyz authorities to provide protection against multiple voting. In particular, they suggested to use absentee voters and labeling. Moreover, they also believe that Kyrgyzstan should simplify the procedure for counting and review procedures for voter registration and after the election to separate it from the institute registration.

The bureau believes that the authorities need to organize regular training of polling station and to inform citizens about the system of governance and political parties. ODIHR recommends publishing key documents on the languages of national minorities. This, according to experts, will allow to involve more people in political life and to discuss with them important issues.

Another recommendation addressed to the media, which call to provide citizens with access not only to the official, but also to alternative information, to avoid any bias in the coverage of elections.

### **Geo strategic Front**

- June events in Kyrgyzstan forced CSTO countries to change the Charter

June events in Kyrgyzstan forced Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) countries to change the organization's charter. This is one of the results of the informal summit in Yerevan, which brought together the presidents of Russia, Armenia, Tajikistan, Belarus, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan. Only the president of Uzbekistan failed to come through illness, Russian media reports.

According to the newspaper RBK daily, closed part of the summit was delayed for several hours. "By the evening it became clear that reporters will not question the presidents, and format of the press conference has been changed into the statement to the press," the newspaper notes.

Dmitry Medvedev, President of Armenia Serzh Sargsyan and Nikolai Bordyuzha announced that the deliberation of the situation in Kyrgyzstan was a preliminary decision to do the transformation of the CSTO. Amendments to the charter of the organization must be prepared by December, when the summit to be held in Moscow. As the Russian leader explained, they (amendments) must ensure "prompt response" to situations like the one that occurred in the Kyrgyz Republic, the newspaper said.

Does this mean that the CSTO may have the right to intervene in internal conflicts and establish order in the country or help the current regime of the country CSTO military equipment remains unclear, says RBK daily. Dmitry Medvedev stated only that "all the leaders agreed that the lessons of the events in Kyrgyzstan are pushing to ensure more effective mechanism." "We agreed that by December, will be prepared proposals for the alteration of the charter documents of the CSTO, which serve as the basis for our activities - so that they could be more effective institutions, perhaps, with expanded powers," Russian President Dmitry Medvedev said.

As an example he cited the experience of NATO and a number of other international organizations such as the EU and the UN. According to him, this experience should be analyzed. It is possible that by the end of the year, countries agreed to expand the scope of liability CRRF (collective rapid reaction forces) through assistance in internal conflicts. That is, rapid reaction may be entitled to render military assistance to the current regime of CSTO in case of internal conflicts.

"The events in Kyrgyzstan that deposed President Kurmanbek Bakiyev and still ongoing unrests clearly rattled the leadership of all countries of the organization. Probably for this reason even the Belarusian leader, whose election in February 2011, did not oppose the idea of enhancement the effectiveness of the unit," the statement said.

### **Economic/Energy Front**

- Kyrgyz government cannot expend 6 percents of GDP on infrastructure development - Chyngyz Makeshov

"Kyrgyz government cannot expend 6 percents of GDP on infrastructure development as international financial institutions advice to do," Executive Director of Businessmen Union Chyngyz Makeshov stated at the session of the Council for Business Development and Investment.

“According to estimations the republic has to spend near to \$300 million on the infrastructure in 2010. But these demands cannot be met at the expense of the state budget,” he argued. “Today the question of the hour is the promotion of the partnership between the government and the private sector.”

“Private entrepreneurs might to contribute to the construction of the paid roads, to start running out of use airports. They might to bring into operation the rubbish processing plant in the capital. But it is needed to amend a law about the partnership between the state and the private sector to raise additional money,” Chyngyz Makeshov said. He suggested creation of a working group to amend the relevant law.

### **Social Front**

- Obama orders to allocate 10 mln dlrs for displaced Kyrgyz persons

WASHINGTON, August 28 (Itar-Tass) -- US President Barack Obama has ordered to allocate up to 9.5 million dollars in assistance to displaced people in Kyrgyzstan, the press office of the White House said on Friday. These funds will be disbursed from the Emergency Refugee and Migration Assistance Fund.

The document dated August 26 does not explain whether the authorities in Bishkek will get additional assistance, or the sum in question is part of the package drawn up in Washington after the recent riots in Kyrgyzstan. As U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian affairs Robert Blake said late last July the Obama Administration had promised Kyrgyzstan up to 48 million dollars in emergency aid.

- Kyrgyz Authorities Say Schools In South To Open On Time

Education Minister Kanat Sadykov said that university students' new academic year had been postponed in order to prevent the students being used by different political groups during the upcoming election campaign.

OSH, Kyrgyzstan -- Kyrgyz authorities say the new academic year for secondary schools in the southern cities of Osh, Jalal-Abad, and Batken will begin as planned on September 1 -- but that university students will start theirs several weeks later than normal, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports.

Deputy Prime Minister Oktomkhan Abdullaeva said at a meeting with local authorities in Osh today that all the universities in the south would start the new academic year on October 18.

Education Minister Kanat Sadykov told RFE/RL on April 24 that university students' new academic year had been postponed in order to prevent the students being used by different political groups during the upcoming election campaign.

Parliamentary elections are scheduled for October 10 and the election campaign kicks off on September 10. Sadykov also said that the new academic year for secondary schools in the region would start on September 1.

The statements came after Osh Mayor Melis Myrzakmatov on August 23 said the academic year there should be indefinitely postponed due to security concerns.

Myrzakmatov said some 500 additional police were needed in the city to provide adequate security for the schools. He warned that without police at Osh schools, a situation similar to Russia's 2004 Beslan school hostage-taking tragedy could result. Sadykov, speaking on August 24 at a UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) ceremony delivering school supplies for students to Osh school administrators, said the Education Ministry had been working with security forces to allay concerns regarding the safety of

schoolchildren in Osh. Nearly 400 people were killed in the Osh and Jalal-Abad regions in June when clashes erupted between ethnic Uzbeks and Kyrgyz.

- Few Turkmen, Uzbek Students Return To Kyrgyz University

OSH -- The rector of the largest university in Osh says many students from Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan are not expected to return to school this semester, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports.

Osh State University Rector Mukhtar Orozbekov told RFE/RL on August 26 that judging by regional media reports, the Turkmen government will not allow most of its students studying in Osh to return there. He said 640 students from Turkmenistan studied at Osh State University in the spring. They were evacuated from Osh during the deadly clashes between ethnic Uzbeks and Kyrgyz in the city in mid-June.

Orozbekov said many of the 872 students from Uzbekistan are also unlikely to return for the upcoming semester due to security concerns. But he said he expects most of the large contingent of students from Pakistan -- of which 290 attended Osh State University in the spring -- Tajikistan (138 attended last year), India (151), and Nepal (123) to return.

Orozbekov added that applications from prospective students for this school year are down by 50 percent compared to 2009. Osh State University has some 25,000 students studying in 15 different departments. Orozbekov said there were a total of 2,250 foreign students studying at the school during the 2010 spring semester.

Kyrgyz officials announced on August 25 that the start of the school year at universities in the Osh and Jalal-Abad regions will be postponed until October 18.

Orozbekov said a major reason for the delay is so that students can complete the summer semester, which was canceled after the outbreak of the ethnic clashes in mid-June. He said the canceled summer classes will be held in September.

Education Minister Kanat Sadykov told RFE/RL on August 24 that the postponement is also to prevent students from being manipulated or mobilized by political groups during the parliamentary election campaign, which begins on September 10. The elections are scheduled for October 10.

### **Tajikistan**

#### **Political Front**

- Twenty-Five Militants Escape Prison In Tajikistan

DUSHANBE -- Tajik authorities say some 25 Islamic militants serving long jail terms have escaped from prison, killing at least five prison guards.

The inmates broke free overnight from a detention center of Tajikistan's State Committee of National Security in the capital, Dushanbe. Officials said the inmates were among some 50 people convicted by the Supreme Court last week of terrorism, drug trafficking, and seeking the violent overthrow of the government.

They were sentenced to prison terms ranging from 10 to 30 years. Officials said some of the prisoners belonged to the radical Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU). There were nationals of Afghanistan and six Russian citizens among the escapees.

National Security Committee First Deputy Chairman Qosimjon Ghafforov told journalists that 10:15 p.m. on August 22 "a group of prisoners who were temporarily kept in the jail of the State Security Committee of the Republic of Tajikistan, taking advantage of the negligence of the jail warden, based on their plot and using weapons, occupied part of the prison and again committed a crime."

"They brutally killed the jail warden, Karimov Nurmatqul -- who was born in 1979 in Aini region of Sughd province -- and seriously wounded two other wardens," Ghafforov added.

Ghafforov said the group then released another 22 prisoners, including Afghan and Russian nationals serving jail time on terrorism and drug-trafficking charges.

Ghafforov said the prison uprising had been led by Hekmat Azizov, a brother of slain suspected IMU member Nemat Azizov, who was serving 25 years on terrorism, kidnapping, and drug- and weapon-smuggling charges. Sources within the Justice Ministry told RFE/RL's Tajik Service that the escapees also included Abdurasul Mirzoev, the brother of jailed Tajik General Ghaffor Mirzoev. Abdurasul Mirzoev was sentenced last month to 30 years in a closed trial. The escaped convicts were also said to include two sons of slain former minister Mirzo Ziyoev who were jailed last month for plotting to overthrow the government. Ghafforov said Dushanbe was seeking help from Afghanistan and Russia in apprehending the escapees. "The State National Security Committee along with other enforcement entities is doing all that it can to detain and punish that criminal group. For the successful completion of this job, the State National Security Committee of Tajikistan will cooperate with certain structures of Russia and Afghanistan and other countries." The Interior Ministry and the National Security Committee have deployed extra forces on roads in Dushanbe and surrounding areas and all cars are being inspected. Border posts have also been put on alert.

### **Geo strategic Front**

- Tajik, Kazakh FMs sign government-to-government agreement

DUSHANBE, August 25, 2010, Asia-Plus -- The first sitting of the Council of Foreign Ministers of Tajikistan and Kazakhstan took place in the Kazakh capital Astana on August 24.

According to the Tajik MFA information department, the sides discussed a broad range of issues related to bilateral cooperation between the two countries, interaction between them within regional and international organizations, as well as a number of regional and international issues being of mutual interest, including security in the Central Asian region, the situation in neighboring Kyrgyzstan and the Afghan problems. A special attention was paid to the issue of rational use of water-and-energy resources in the region. The first meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers of Tajikistan and Kazakhstan resulted in signing of a government-to-government agreement between the two countries on mutual provision of parcels of land for construction of buildings for diplomatic missions. The document was inked by Tajik Foreign Minister Hamrokhon Zarifi and Kazakhstan's Secretary of State and Foreign Minister Kanat Saudabayev. The sides also signed a protocol of the first meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers of Tajikistan and Kazakhstan that outlines further expansion of mutually beneficial cooperation between the two countries.

- Tajikistan, Armenia underline necessity of expansion of bilateral cooperation

DUSHANBE, August 23, 2010, Asia-Plus -- On Friday August 20, Foreign Minister Hamrokhon Zarifi met in Yerevan with His Armenian counterpart Edvard Nalbandyan on sidelines of an informal meeting of the heads of state of member nations of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) that took place in the Armenian capital the same day, according to the Tajik MFA information department.

The two discussed state and prospects of further expansion of bilateral mutually beneficial cooperation between Tajikistan and Armenia.

Zarifi and Nalbandyan expressed satisfaction with the level of political contacts between their countries both in bilateral and multilateral formats and pointed to the necessity of intensification of work of the Tajik-Armenian intergovernmental commission for trade and economic cooperation.

The sides also exchanged views on a number of regional and international issues and ways for further expansion of bilateral interaction within international and regional organizations.

- Tajik official dismisses fears of militant attacks on Kyrgyzstan

DUSHANBE, August 23, 2010, Asia-Plus – A senior Tajik security official says Kyrgyzstan's concerns about the infiltration of Islamic militants from Tajikistan into Kyrgyzstan are unfounded, RFE/RL's Tajik Service reported on August 20.

Tajik General Abdullo Nazarov, the head of the National Security Committee's office in Gorno Badakhshan, which borders northern Afghanistan and southern Kyrgyzstan, told RFE/RL by phone from Khorog that such worries by Bishkek are baseless.

Sultonbek Ayjigitov, the head of Kyrgyzstan's Batken region, warned last week about the possible infiltration of militants from Tajikistan and proposed additional security measures be taken along the Kyrgyz-Tajik border.

And last month, several other top Kyrgyz officials noted the presence of Islamic militants in northern Afghanistan and warned they might stage cross-border attacks on Kyrgyzstan from Tajikistan.

Additionally, Afghan security forces have recently killed or detained several suspected members of the banned Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) in districts close to the Tajik border. But Nazarov said he had the impression that Kyrgyz security officials have no idea what is happening in the region, and when they see a report about possible extremist attacks they "hit the panic button."

Mohammad Roziq Yaqubi, the security chief in Afghanistan's Kunduz Province, confirmed the presence of suspected IMU militants in that region.

He said Islamic militants from Central Asia have no bases in the town of Kunduz, but about 20 IMU fighters may be hiding in villages around the province.

Yaqubi said that when the Taliban controlled Afghanistan, the IMU had its headquarters in Kunduz and some IMU members might still have friends there who could provide a "safe haven." Tajik analyst Qosim Bekmuhammad believes that fake reports about "possible cross-border attacks" are published for political purposes.

He says Russia wants to validate and expand its military presence in the strategically important Ferghana Valley, and that "by spreading warnings about attacks, some Kyrgyz officials are playing into Russia's hands."

### **Economic/Energy Front**

### **Social Front**

- 5,500 Tajiks to perform Hajj this year

DUSHANBE, August 25, 2010, Asia-Plus -- Registration of Tajik Muslims who want to perform Hajj this year will last until August 31, according to the Committee on Religious Affairs. "Saudi authorities have allocated a quota of 5,500 hajjis to Tajikistan this year,

which is 500 more than last year,” said the source, “This year, Tajik pilgrims will have to pay 3,191 U.S. dollars (this amount includes travel expenses, board and lodging, and purchase of animal for sacrificing during the Hajj), which is 151 U.S. dollars less than last year.” In the meantime, the Committee on Religious Affairs has introduced age restrictions on those who want to perform the Hajj this year. Only citizens aged 18 to 80 will be able to perform the Hajj, the source said.

This year’s Hajj will take place in November.

The Hajj is the annual pilgrimage to Mecca, Saudi Arabia. It is currently the largest annual pilgrimage in the world, and is the fifth pillar of Islam, a religious duty that must be carried out at least once in their lifetime by every able-bodied Muslim who can afford to do so. The Hajj is a demonstration of the solidarity of the Muslim people, and their submission to God. The pilgrimage occurs from the 8th to 12th day of Dhu al-Hijjah, the 12th and last month of the Islamic calendar. Because the Islamic calendar is a lunar calendar, eleven days shorter than the Gregorian calendar, the Gregorian date of the Hajj changes from year to year. As of 2009, about two million pilgrims participate in this annual pilgrimage.

- Women Appeal Against 'Impending Hijab Ban' At Tajik City Market

QORGHONTEPPA, Tajikistan --- A group of women market merchants in the southern Tajik city of Qorghonteppa say they are coming under pressure to stop wearing the hijab, RFE/RL's Tajik Service reports.

Speaking for the group, Mavluda Muralieva said that two days ago men who introduced themselves as officials from the regional government said the women would have to change their dress as of September 5.

That followed a recent visit to the market by Khatlon Governor Ghaybulloh Afzal, who was upset that merchants were not wearing national dress. He suggested those who did not should be barred from trading at the market.

Eshan Saidjon Sorbonkhujja, who is Tajikistan's deputy mufti and also heads the Islamic council in Khatlon province, similarly told RFE/RL that "this hijab is Iranian or Arab, these types of dress are not our [national] dress. Clothes that are European or Russian are also not our dress."

The women have appealed to the Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan (IRPT) and plan to appeal to President Emomali Rahmon to intervene. They stress that Tajik law sets no norms for how to dress. Haidarali Sherkhonov, who is first deputy director of the Qorghonteppa market, the largest in Khatlon province, agrees. He has suggested that vendors should wear a special overall and a badge to distinguish them from shoppers.

Kamariddin Afzali, the official IRPT representative in Khatlon, said that any directive banning the hijab would be unconstitutional. Women merchants say they would accept the market administration requesting a change in dress, but they will not accept a ban on the hijab. The women merchants said they would not compromise, and if they were forced out of the market, they would go to court to defend their rights.

One vendor who wears a hijab said today the women had contacted lawyers who are prepared to represent them.

- Tajikistan's Official Calm Belies Potential Prison Break Crisis

A major international manhunt is under way after dozens of enemies of the Tajik state broke out from prison this week, but you wouldn't know it from the official reaction.

Among the 25 men who escaped from a high-security State Security Ministry prison on the night of August 22-23 were Tajiks convicted of planning to overthrow the government. Others had been imprisoned for terrorist and Islamic militant activities. Eleven were foreigners, including Uzbek, Afghan, and Russian citizens of North Caucasus origin.

The prison break was carried out within sight of the presidential palace and left one guard dead and another beaten up. Just hours later, in a prison belonging to the Justice Ministry within the same walled complex, four guards were killed in a firefight with the escapees.

The brazen escape has led the authorities to dispatch additional troops in an attempt to catch the fugitives before they can leave the country. Their presumed destination is Afghanistan, where some of the escapees reportedly spent time in the 1990s.

High-profile fugitivesThe escape has attracted the attention of outsiders, with Russia's Federal Security Service agreeing on August 25 to help with the search operation, and Tajik authorities requesting help from Interpol and neighboring countries. Kyrgyzstan has responded by strengthening security measures along the Tajik border. And inside the country, as Tajiks question how such a bold maneuver could be carried out without inside help, the Prosecutor-General's Office has opened a criminal investigation and discussed whether to press charges against prison officials. But while the escape might appear to be too close for comfort for Emomali Rahmon, the Tajik president has gone about business as usual. On August 25, Rahmon went ahead with a scheduled trip to the southern Khatlon region, opening new schools and discussing education. And during his numerous meetings with local people, Rahmon made no mention of the escape that is on the minds of so many in Tajikistan.

#### High-Profile Prisoners

Upon hearing news of the prison break, speculation was rife in Dushanbe that family members of two high-profile men with ties to the government were involved.

One of these central figures is the former chief of the presidential guard, Ghaffor Mirzoev, a onetime Rahmon ally who is currently serving a 30-year prison sentence on charges including uprising against the government.

The second is Mirzo Ziyoev, a former Islamic opposition commander who went on to join the government as emergency situations minister and who was killed during a mysterious military operation in the eastern Tavildara district in 2009.

The Tajik government has since provided clarity by releasing a list of the 25 wanted men and their pictures. The list indeed included the names of a brother of Mirzoev and an uncle and brother of Ziyoev. However, Mirzoev himself and two of Ziyoev's sons who were sentenced to long prison terms in separate cases this year were not on the list.

Juma IbrohimovMany of the fugitives, including Hikmat Azizov and Juma Ibrohimov, are believed to be loyal allies of Ziyoev who fought alongside him against the secular government during Tajikistan's 1992-97 civil war.

The whereabouts of the men is unknown and details of the break sparse, with government officials reluctant to disclose any details that could hinder the ongoing investigation and search operations.

However, it is known that at least seven security checkpoints have been set up on the highway connecting the Tajik capital and the northern province of Sughd.

And RFE/RL's Tajik Service has reported that government troops have been dispatched to the Rasht Valley, including the Tavildara district, a onetime stronghold of the Islamic opposition and birthplace of many of the fugitives.

RFE/RL's correspondent in Rasht, Mahmud Shodi, reports that a search operation for the escaped convicts is taking place in the area, and is causing panic and fueling speculation among locals.

#### Challenge To Government

The "prison break of the century" is also a hot topic among insiders and experts on Tajikistan.

"Under the current circumstances in Tajikistan, it is very difficult for these men to unite under one specific aim and cause trouble for the government," says Davlati Usmon, a former member of the Islamic opposition and former presidential candidate. "It's very difficult but not impossible. The government, too, is concerned that they would create serious problems for authorities."

Parviz Mullojonov, a Dushanbe-based political expert, suggests that the fugitives "have no clear support base in Tajikistan now, therefore it would be impossible for them to destabilize the country," but that this could change if they "and other forces who oppose the government decided to cooperate."

Andrei Grozin, the head of the Central Asian department at the Moscow-based Institute of CIS Countries, suggests that the escape puts the spotlight on widespread corruption in the Tajik prison system. Grozin does not rule out that "someone from very high position" could have been involved.

#### ...And Serious Signal To President

Tajikistan's security service is largely filled with people loyal to Rahmon. Many of the highest positions are held by people from the president's native south.

But Usmon says this incident is a serious warning to the president to review his security policies.

Whatever the reason behind the prison break -- corruption or the incompetence of current security officials -- the president can no longer rely on these people, Usmon says.

"It's time for the president to change his criteria for selecting security officials, and it better be based on professionalism."

### **Turkmenistan Political Front**

#### **Geo strategic Front**

- Kabul to host meeting of Turkmen-Afghan commission on cooperation

The second meeting of the intergovernmental Turkmen-Afghani commission on trade-economic and technical cooperation will take place in the capital of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Kabul, on August 30-31.

As Deputy Prime Minister Tuvakmamed Japarov reported at a regular government meeting, the sides will consider issues related to building up trade-economic cooperation, construction of the transnational gas pipeline Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India and electricity facilities, as well as expansion of humanitarian ties.

- Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan to hold talks in Islamabad

The second meeting of the intergovernmental Turkmen-Pakistani commission will take place in Islamabad on August 24-25. The delegation of Turkmenistan will be headed by Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Rashid Meredov.

At a government meeting on August 20, Rashid Meredov said that the bilateral meeting will focus on the detailed discussion of issues related to the implementation of the project on construction of the Turkmenistan - Afghanistan - Pakistan - India (TAPI) gas pipeline, as well as opportunities for export of Turkmen electricity to Pakistan through Afghanistan the Turkmenistan.ru correspondent reported from Ashgabat,

In addition, the vice premier noted that the agenda includes other important aspects of interstate cooperation in several key areas, including trade and economic sphere, agriculture, health.

### **Economic/Energy Front**

- Delegation of Turkmenistan to attend conference of Asian oil companies

The Director of the State Agency for Management and Use of Hydrocarbon Resources under the President of Turkmenistan, Yagshigeldy Kakayev has left for Seoul, where he will participate in a conference at the level of heads of national oil companies of Asian countries.

As the Turkmenistan.ru correspondent reports from Ashgabat referring to the official information, the visit to the Republic of Korea will continue until August 26.

- Turkmenistan Tips Its Hand On Future Energy Exports

An oil platform in Turkmenistan's Caspian Sea territory -- the president indicated that Turkmenistan is willing to open up Caspian development to U.S. and other companies.

Turkmenistan, so key to the energy plans of so many, had long shown its readiness to break Russia's stranglehold on its gas and oil exports. But Ashgabat has offered few hints as to who it prefers as an alternative.

That changed last week, when President Gurbanguly Berdymukhammedov gathered energy officials together on August 12 and outlined, in much more detail than usual, the country's export-diversification policy.

It's a strategy that is pioneering in its calls for increased cooperation with Western companies, unambiguous in its preference for deals with China, and surprising for its failure to even mention traditional energy partner Russia and the EU's Nabucco gas-pipeline project.

The general idea, according to Turkish energy analyst Mehmet Seyfedin, is for Turkmenistan to increase its pool of energy partners without angering Moscow. "Turkmenistan wants to show a counterbalance policy in its foreign relations, and we see that Turkmenistan wants to prevent Russia's pressure on it," Seyfedin says. Seyfedin says that if Turkmenistan wants leverage in its dealings with Russia, "it needs the Western countries -- especially the United States." But Ashgabat is being cautious not to appear to be leaning too far toward the West. "To prevent misunderstandings, [Turkmenistan] also signed some agreements with the Gulf countries, which also are in close relationships with U.S. companies," the Turkish analyst explains.

### **Italy Gets A Foot In The Door**

The most sensational news may have been Berdymukhammedov's instructions for a new production-sharing agreement to be worked out that would allow a foreign company in on the development of the Nebit-Dag oil and gas field in western Turkmenistan.

Upon inking the deal, the Italian company Eni would become only the second foreign company -- after the China National Petroleum Corp (CNPC) -- to have an onshore contract in Turkmenistan.

It is not unheard of for Turkmenistan to work with foreign entities on the development of offshore resources, but for Western companies, securing such contracts has traditionally been difficult.

Discussing the development of Turkmenistan's Caspian shelf, Berdymukhammedov indicated a willingness to loosen things up, saying bids from the U.S. companies Chevron, TX Oil, and ConocoPhillips, as well as the United Arab Emirate's Mudabala, were being considered.

Berdymukhammedov also made clear that in terms of export routes, Turkmenistan was looking south.

Officials were instructed to "take all necessary measures" to ensure that arrangements for gas to be sold via the proposed Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) pipeline would be worked out by the end of the year. Those plans would have to overcome the instability in Afghanistan that has thwarted the TAPI project for the past 15 years, however.

The need to boost gas supplies to Iran was also mentioned, although Berdymukhammedov did not specify whether he was talking about new gas exports or fulfillment of existing contracts.

The biggest consumer of Turkmen gas to the east, China, was by no means forgotten.

The Turkmen president named China, already contracted to purchase some 40 billion cubic meters (bcm) of gas annually, as his preferred source of a \$4.18 billion loan that would allow for the development of the country's largest gas field, South Yolotan. With estimated reserves of 4 trillion-14 trillion cubic meters, South Yolotan could potentially meet the European Union's gas needs for more than 20 years.

The Turkmen government has yet to say who, if anyone, it would involve in developing the field or which direction the gas would flow, but China would appear to have the inside track.

China provided Turkmenistan with a \$3 billion loan last year for developing South Yolotan, and the provision of another \$4 billion for the completion of the project's first stage would put China in an enviable position when the time comes for Ashgabat to decide on consumers and partners for the project.

**Russia Left Out In The Cold?**

The most glaring absence from Berdymukhammedov's plans is Russia, which has extensive control of the Soviet-era export pipelines on which Turkmenistan depends, and which just two years ago was buying some 40-50 bcm of gas, accounting for about 90 percent of Turkmenistan's exports.

That, however, was before Russian-Turkmen gas relations soured at the start of 2009 due to a price dispute, and took a nasty turn in the spring when the main pipeline carrying Turkmen gas to Russia exploded. After that, supplies stopped completely, and the blame game began.

Russia eventually worked out a new deal, but it called for only a quarter of what Turkmenistan used to supply.

Berdymukhammedov's failure to mention Russia can be taken as a sign that relations have not improved and that Turkmenistan is looking beyond Russia for customers.

Aleksandr Yakovlev of the RosBusiness Consulting Agency suggests, however, that this is just business as usual. "The suppliers, the owners of the minerals, owners of the resources are inviting a significant number of transcontinental, transnational corporations, world megagiants, into partnerships," he says.

The same is true for those seeking to buy energy resources. "The consumers are trying to find among these numerous suppliers, on a competitive basis...those suppliers of resources who are offering more advantageous conditions," Yakovlev says.

Another key player left out of Berdymukhammedov's plans was the EU-backed Nabucco pipeline project, a 3,300-kilometer initiative intended to bring some 31 bcm of gas to the European Union annually. Many believe the project is not possible without Turkmenistan's participation as a supplier. But none of the companies Berdymukhammedov mentioned were shareholders in the Nabucco project.

Just a day after Berdymukhammedov's speech, however, came a sign that the Turkmen leader intends to make good on his calls for diversification, and that Europe's energy needs would not be forgotten.

In Baku on August 12, the first Turkmen oil was loaded into the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline. The oil came from Turkmenistan's Cheleken field in the Caspian Sea, and most of it will eventually reach the EU. It was a modest start, just 36,500 barrels, but plans call for supplies to increase to nearly 1 million barrels monthly.

#### **Social Front**

- Turkmenistan Removes Gold Statue Of Niyazov From Ashgabat

A prominent 12-meter golden statue of Turkmenistan's former dictator Saparmurat Niyazov has been taken down in the capital Ashgabat -- a move further eroding the personality cult around the late Central Asian leader.

Workers removed the statue on August 25 and were dismantling the base on August 26.

The Arch of Neutrality was a centerpiece of the capital, Ashgabat, and the most distinctive monument built in honor of Niyazov.

The statue stood on a 70-meter white tile-clad tripod and rotated to face the sun. Niyazov -- who renamed himself the Great Turkmenbashi, the "Father of All Turkmen" -- died in 2006 after two decades of iron-fisted rule.

#### **Uzbekistan**

#### **Political Front**

#### **Geo strategic Front**

- Chinese delegation visits Uzbekistan

Delegation of China headed by Liu Yunshan, member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, met the Speaker of Legislative Chamber of Oliy Majlis of Uzbekistan Dilorom Tashmuhamedova in Tashkent on 24 August.

During the talks, the sides noted that cooperation between Uzbekistan and China was developing consistently in all areas, including the parliamentary sphere.

On the same day, the members of the Chinese delegation visited the state museums of Temurids' history and history of Uzbekistan, as well as Hazrati Imam (Hastimom) complex in the capital.

The relations between the two countries are developing dynamically in the spirit of the Inter-state treaty on partnership relations of friendship and cooperation, signed during the state visit of President Islam Karimov to China in 2005.

In June 2010, President of China Hu Jintao paid a state visit to Uzbekistan. More than 10 documents on cooperation in various fields were signed during that visit.

### **Economic/Energy Front**

### **Social Front**

- Uzbekistan Burns Half A Ton Of Seized Afghan Heroin

Authorities in Uzbekistan have incinerated nearly a half ton of confiscated Afghan heroin worth an estimated street value of \$150 million in Europe.

Officials say more than 700 kilograms of illegal drugs, including 497 kilograms of heroin, were burned on August 26 in the smelting furnace of a Soviet-era metals factory outside of Tashkent before an audience of diplomats and journalists.

Olimjon Turakulov, a spokesman for Uzbekistan's SNB domestic security services, said the drugs being destroyed had already been used as evidence in trials against drugs traffickers.

He said the incinerated drugs represent just part of about 2.5 tons of drugs seized from smugglers coming out of Afghanistan since the start of 2010.

- Disabled Uzbek Man Tries To Crown President

TASHKENT -- A disabled Uzbek man has ridden over 500 kilometers in his wheelchair - - in the hope of crowning President Islam Karimov on Independence Day, RFE/RL's Uzbek Service reports.

Mavlonkhon Turaev, 38, arrived in Tashkent on August 26 from his native Namangan province in eastern Uzbekistan. Turaev brought with him a crown he said he made out of silver and precious stones.

He told journalists that he plans to crown Karimov on September 1, Uzbekistan's Independence Day. Turaev said he went to the presidential office on August 26 to explain his plan, but when officials said they would take the crown and give it to Karimov, he declined to leave it with them. Turaev said the crown, which weighs 6 kilograms, cost around \$1,000 to make. He said it is a replica of the crown of 14th-century Central Asian ruler Timur (Tamerlane).

Timur was born into the Turco-Mongol tribe of Barlas, not far from Samarkand, and is considered the founder of the Timurid Empire and Timurid dynasty in Central Asia.

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