

Report No.136

PROJECT ON BUSINESS AND POLITICS IN THE MUSLIM WORLD

EUROPEAN UNION, CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE

INCLUDING RUSSIA AND BALTIC STATES

Weekly report 5th Sep to 11th Sep 2010

Presentation: 15th Sep 2010

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(About Sources)

The report is a collection of news regarding the socio- economic, political, cultural and environmental events in the Central and Eastern Europe and Russia. The data for the report is collected through the following News sources: BBC Online Monitoring News-Reuters-Associated Press News-Washington Post-NEW YORK TIMES -Bloomberg-EUROPA News-POLONIA Today Online-Centre for Russian, East European and Eurasian Studies-News Now Eastern Europe-China news-FOCUS News-Fox.news.com-International Herald Tribune-STRATFOR- Economist, Foreign Affairs-Official websites of CEE States, IMF, World Bank and EU etc.

(About Region)

According to UN Statistics Division, the following states have been classified as the Eastern Europe. These states were once under the Soviet Union's influence and were part of the Warsaw Pact, i.e. Poland, Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia (Central Europe), Belarus & Ukraine(Eastern Europe), and Estonia Latvia, Lithuania (Baltic States).



Key words for headings (in the Report Summary): -

EU-Geo-strategic front- Geo-strategic Front-Financial and Economic Front-Social Front - Cyber news-Central & Europe-Eastern Europe-Baltic States-Russia

Headlines

Central Europe (Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia & Hungary)

Poland

- Polish president at Baltic summit-10.09.2010
- Kaczynski: Polish president should resign-Sept. 11, 2010
- Yanukovich makes last minute Poland trip cancellation-07.09.2010
- India, Poland to strengthen ties
- VAT hike crucial for Poland's deficit battle, says minister-10.09.2010
- European Stocks Climb to Four-Month High; BP, Ericsson Rally-September 08, 2010,
- In Poland, Barroso predicts 'Europe 2020' success
- Polish Public Largely Against Joining Euro Zone
- Poland one of most competitive markets in CEE, says WEF report-10.09.2010
- Ex-Polish leader denies knowledge of CIA site-Associated Press / September 9, 2010
- Call for Polish state honor for former Indian maharaja

Czech Republic

- Czech foreign minister says EU must keep promise to Turkey
- Premier Power Opens New Office in Prague, Czech Republic
- Czechs prepare for major job market reforms-09 September 2010
- Czech Yield Falls to Record Low in Local Bond Sale on Eurobond, Austerity
- Global Space Event in The Golden City-7 September 2010,

Slovakia

- Hungarian FM wants direct negotiation with Slovakia on dual citizenship issue
- Austrian chancellor reaffirms stand on Slovak nuclear reactors construction
- ECB leaders furious with Slovakia-10th September 2010
- Slovak premier woos German investors-Sep 10, 2010,

- Slovakia Announces VAT Rise, by Ulrika Lomas, Tax-News.com, Brussels-Sep 08,
- REFILE-Orphanides-Slovakia aid move shows need for binding rules
- Europe's most persecuted people?-9th September 2010

Hungary

- Fidesz win at local poll key to revive Hungary -PM
- Hungary visa restrictions not ruled out, minister says
- Hungary PM sees "tough job" in planning 2011 budget
- Hungary won't seek to renew IMF, EU loans-ASSOCIATED PRESS
- Hungary cbank says no room for monetary stimulus
- Hungary eyes a million new jobs by 2020
- Hungarian Local Election Candidates Caught On Tape.

Eastern Europe (Belarus & Ukraine)

Belarus

- Pres election date in Belarus not to be named Tuesday
- OSCE Minsk Group co-chairmen meet with Armenian FM
- Belarus opposition activist complains of 'prostitute' smear
- Belarus, Ukraine to consider exchange of border treaty instruments Sept
- Russia, Belarus ordered to agree on customs duty on oil products
- Relations with Poland key
- There will be the economy, there will be policy.
- Belarus journalist 'suicide' mystery

Ukraine

- Ukraine's president vows to unite country, build new state
- Ukraine's opposition blocks parliament doors
- Ukraine's Yanukovich to visit EU, snub NATO for second time
- Ukrainian president conditionally backs merger with Russian energy giant

- Belarus, Ukraine to consider exchange of border treaty instruments Sept
- Ukraine Pushes for Reduced Gas Price
- Chinese experience helps Ukraine stage football games:

Baltic States (Estonia, Latvia & Lithuania)

Estonia

- 2011 budget takes shape-Sep 08, 2010
- Teamwork lands team in U.S. court-Aug 11, 2010
- Helmand mission accomplished for Raisma-Aug 04, 2010
- Estonia in brief - 2010-09-08-Sep 08, 2010
- Saaremaa reveals sunken warships-Sep 08, 2010

Latvia

- Politicians offering more hot air-Sep 08, 2010
- Political insincerity about the pension system?-Sep 08, 2010
- Germany's Merkel defends nuclear plant deal.
- Latvia in brief - 2010-09-08-Sep 08, 2010
- Latvian economy still struggling
- Police riding in style-Sep 08, 2010

Lithuania

- Lithuania wants binding bids for new nuclear plant contract-Sep 10, 2010
- EFF Experts Address Security, Openness, and Privacy at United Nations' Internet Governance Forum Conference Set for September 14-17 in Vilnius, Lithuania
- Polish president at Baltic summit-10.09.2010
- Lithuania issues \$750 mln 7-yr bond

Russia

- Russia, US talks on Iranian nuclear crisis
- World chess boss to retire from regional presidency

- Changing face of Russia-Pakistan ties
- Dinner, with Questions 3 Priorities, 3 Solutions in EU-Russian Ties
- China to lend Russia \$6 bln for coal supplies
- Russia-based economic forum "more practical": China official
- Russian economy struggles, while budget deficit
- Jobs rebound as economic growth returns
- European Standard for Russia's Modernization
- Russia to reform police system
- Microsoft antipiracy efforts caught up in Russian political scandal

Report Summary

Central Europe (Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia & Hungary)

Poland

Political Front

President Bronislaw Komorowski has arrived in Riga for a summit of the three Baltic States: Lithuania, Estonia and host Latvia. The discussions focus on energy related matters, international security as well as cooperation within the European Union and NATO.

The opposition lead by Jaroslaw Kaczynski, who lost in the recent early presidential elections, said the current administration was "completely abandoning" the investigation into the crash that killed his twin brother, President Lech Kaczynski and 95 others. He called on the country's current leadership to resign over the investigation into the tragedy.

Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich has cancelled his visit to Poland tomorrow, where he was scheduled to appear at the Economic Forum in Krynica. Yanukovich also informed his Polish counterpart Bronislaw Komorowski that he will not be able to meet him even on 25 September during the Polish head of state's visit to Ukraine for the 10th anniversary of the opening of the Cemetery of the Victims of the Totalitarian Regime in Kharkiv. The remains of some 3,800 Polish officers imprisoned and murdered by Stalin's NKVD police in the spring of 1940 are buried there.

India and Poland on Tuesday discussed ways to strengthen bilateral relationship, especially in defense, trade and investment, during delegation-level talks between Prime Minister

Manmohan Singh and his visiting Polish counterpart, Donald Tusk. India is at present looking to Poland for maintenance of Soviet\Russian equipment, including aircraft and for the supply of auxiliary equipment such as tank recovery vehicles.

Czech Republic

Czech Foreign Minister Karel Schwarzenberg in an interview with The New York Times called on the European Union on Monday to keep its promise regarding Turkey's EU membership bid. "A promise must be kept,"

Slovakia

Hungarian Foreign Minister Janos Martonyi said on Monday in Austria that Hungary wants to conduct negotiations on the controversial issue of dual citizenship "with our Slovak friends directly."The two sides "don't need any help from a third party," In May this year, Hungary attempted to pass a law granting dual citizenship to ethnic Hungarians living abroad. This move resulted in tensions with Slovakia, as some 500,000 ethnic Hungarians live in Slovakia, accounting for about 10 percent of the total Slovak population.

Austrian Chancellor Werner FAYMANN met Slovakian Prime Minister at a working lunch Sunday in Vienna, reaffirming his stand on the extension of Slovak nuclear power plant and expressed his deep concerns about the construction of two remaining reactors about 100 km from the border with Austria.

Hungary

Hungary's prime minister told supporters on Friday the country can take a "giant step forward" if his ruling FIDESZ party wins municipal elections next month, enabling it to revive the weak economy. Viktor Orban's centre-right FIDESZ has retained a three-to-one lead in opinion polls since ousting the Socialists from power in April.

Immigration Minister of Hungary, Jason Kenney, said his European counterparts were shocked yesterday when he told them about the number of asylum-seekers to Canada, many of them eastern European Roma.

Eastern Europe (Belarus & Ukraine)

Belarus

The date of the presidential elections in Belarus will not be named on Tuesday, on the first day of the extraordinary session of the Belarusian parliament, Lydia Yermoshina, head of the Central Electoral Commission of Belarus, told journalists here on Tuesday. "The date of the elections will not be named today," she said

An opponent of Belarus' authoritarian government on Thursday claimed police had jailed his daughter on false allegations of prostitution and human trafficking. Aleksander Protsko is an active member of Za Svobodu (For Freedom), a Belarusian civic group opposed to the strongman regime of President Aleksander Lukashenko. Protsko said his daughter had been travelling to Ukraine with two friends on August 18 when Belarusian border police detained her citing her possible work as a prostitute abroad, or potential activities as a human trafficker.

Ukraine

Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich, who is the Honorary Head, of the country's ruling Party of Regions, has called on regional party members to make every effort to unite Ukraine and to be open for a dialogue with all parties operating in Ukraine "as success can be reached only in a monolithic state." The appeal came out of Party of Regions' national assembly entitled "Building a New Country" held in Kiev on Thursday.

Opposition deputies in Ukraine's notoriously unruly parliament are blocking doors to the chamber with chairs as a protest against austerity measures. Opposition lawmakers cover their seats in parliament with posters, one of them reading "Stop to gas tyranny!" minutes before the legislature opened its session, the first after summer recess, in Kiev, Ukraine, Tuesday, Sept. 7, 2010. Opposition lawmakers are protesting against a hike in gas and utilities prices and other government policies.

Ukraine's President Viktor Yanukovich is to visit Brussels, the European Union's headquarters, on Monday - but to avoid visiting NATO for the second time in six months. Yanukovich is seen as a strongly pro-Russian figure, which reversed his predecessor's bid to join NATO. But he wants to maintain close ties with the EU, and made Brussels the destination of his first foreign visit on March 1, just days after his inauguration.

Latvia

Businessmen representing various national economy sectors said in a debate hosted by the business portal Nozare.lv that Political parties' programs for the 10th SAEIMA elections on Oct. 2 are largely made up of slogans, and it appears that the parties have not yet decided how their promises will be implemented.

Roberts Kilis, social anthropologist and advisor to Latvia's president, Valdis Zatlers has warned that the high rate of emigration, unemployment and an ageing population will soon be hitting Latvians in the pocketbook, because new demographic alert now demands changes in the way the pension system operates. To the BBC news agency he explained that the birthrate in the country is below an average of 1.4 children per woman, which is not enough to sustain the population.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel during a visit to Latvia defended her government's decision to extend the lifetime of the country's nuclear plants against criticism that the deal guarantees huge windfall profits to utility companies.

Lithuania

The Lithuanian government said Friday it wanted to see binding tenders from international firms wanting to build a new nuclear power plant in the country. Following the submission of proposals in November, the investor would be selected by the end of 2010, the Ministry of Energy said in a statement.

President Bronislaw Komorowski has arrived in Riga for a summit of the three Baltic states: Lithuania, Estonia and host Latvia. The discussions focus on energy related matters, international security as well as cooperation within the European Union and NATO.

Russia

Deputy Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov met on Tuesday with U.S Special Advisor for Arms Control Robert Einhorn. The two sides discussed in details the Iranian nuclear crisis. Russia announced recently that Russian proposal to enrich uranium for Iran still stands and will not withdraw the proposal. Russia supported the sanctions imposed by UNSC recently against Iran, and strongly disapproved Washington and EU to impose additional sanctions against Iran

The president of the Russian Republic of Kalmykia, Kirsan Ilyumzhinov, is leaving his post after four terms in office. In an official statement on his website, Ilyumzhinov announced his support for Russian President Medvedev's policy of replacing veteran regional leaders with younger ones.

The main outcome of the last month's quadripartite summit of Russia, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Tajikistan hosted by President Dmitry Medvedev at the Black Sea resort, Sochi, from India's perspective, was that Moscow decisively moved to de-hyphenate its relations with Islamabad and New Delhi.

It is no secret that the relations between the EU and Russia have suffered from differences of opinion and action and that a lot of work remains to be done on both sides to optimize the potential that the EU and Russia share. The EU is the most important export market for Russia, and Russia is among the top-three trading partners of the EU. Of foreign direct investments to Russia, about 80 percent come from EU countries. In energy, the interdependency is evident. Geographic proximity could contribute to the competitiveness of both Russia and the EU, but that should not be taken for granted in today's world of global competition. Currently, the most pressing issue is Russia's accession to the World Trade Organization. Another key

factor that would integrate European markets further is harmonization of technical standards. The EU has no reason to press Russia in this matter and no need to dictate the rules.

Economic Front

Poland

Speaking at the 20th Economic Forum for Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) in Krynica, European Commission President José Manuel Barroso said he was confident that the 'Europe 2020' economic strategy would succeed where its predecessor had failed. The Economic Forum is one of the most significant international events in the region, billing itself as the 'Central European Davos', in reference to the annual World Economic Forum in the Swiss town. Among this year's attendees are the presidents of Poland, Ukraine, Estonia and several EU figures, including European Commission President José Manuel Barroso and European Parliament President Jerzy Buzek. Three topics dominate the agenda this year: the EU's Eastern neighbors, energy and the economic crisis.

According to the results of a survey conducted in June the opposition to Poland's possible adoption of the euro is growing in the country in reaction to the Greek public finance crisis, with 47% of Poles against the plan, compared to 38% in December 2009.

The latest Global Competitiveness Report, released today by World Economic Forum (WEF) puts Poland among the leaders in central and Eastern Europe (CEE) in terms of competitive economy. Poland rose to 39th from 46th most competitive economy worldwide last year, according to the Geneva-based World Economic Forum's annual report. Only the Czech Republic and Estonia get higher ratings.

Czech Republic

Premier Power Renewable Energy, Inc. (OTCBB:PPRW), a global leader in the development, design, engineering, and construction of solar power systems for commercial, government, and utility markets in the United States and Europe, announced today it has opened an office to serve new and existing customers in the Czech Republic.

The Czech labor market was hit hard by the economic crisis and the new government will need to implement key reforms if the country is to achieve its employment target under the 'Europe 2020' strategy. Raising the employment rate to 75% is one of the five priorities of a draft ten-year economic plan unveiled by the European Commission in March, called 'Europe 2020'.

The European Union country sold 6.77 billion koruna (\$343.8 million) more of its 2.8 percent notes after the first and second part of today's auction, less than the target of 7 billion koruna, the Prague-based central bank said on its Bloomberg page.

Slovakia

The ECB is furious with Slovakia as news leaks that one of the more recent entries to the European Union has refused to participate in the Greek loan bailout. While the refusal of the Slovak authorities to participate is obviously disappointing it should not impact upon the success or failure of the Greek bailout package. However, it could have far-reaching consequences for those looking to join the European Union in the future.

Slovakia's centre-right coalition government has united on plans to temporarily increase the rate of value-added tax (VAT) from 19% to 20% from January 1, 2011, in a bid to reduce the country's public deficit. This 1% increase in VAT, which forms part of a series of austerity measures designed to cut the fiscal deficit by EUR1.7bn next year, is due to remain in force until the public deficit returns to 3% of gross domestic product (GDP).

Hungary

Hungary's prime minister said planning the 2011 budget will be a tough job as the government has to balance rebuilding the economy with maintaining social safety. Fidesz government bowed to European Union demands to reduce the budget deficit below the bloc's 3 percent of GDP ceiling next year.

However FIDESZ is committed that it will not seek any more loans from the International Monetary Fund or the European Union and will be able to meet its financing needs by selling bonds to international and domestic investors. The IMF, the EU and the World Bank gave Hungary a bailout of 20 billion (\$26 billion) in late 2008 to help the country avoid defaulting on its debts. The standby deals end in October and November.

Eastern Europe (Belarus & Ukraine)

Belarus

The Economic Court of the CIS has given Moscow and Minsk one month for an out-of-court settlement of the matter on Russia's duties on oil products supplied to Belarus, the court's press office reported to RBC. Consequently, the court granted Russia's request for an extrajudicial dispute resolution.

President of Belarus Alexander Lukashenko Belarus has said that he needs to work hard on building up good-neighborly relations with Poland, especially trade and economic relations. The most important thing today is to increase exports of Belarusian products to its neighbors.

Ukraine

Ukraine is willing to give Russia joint control of a pipeline to southeastern Europe in exchange for access to gas supplies. The governments are seeking to create a joint venture between NAFTOGAZ UKRAINY AND GAZPROM, both of which were once part of the Soviet

gas monopoly, by the end of this year. The agreement would reduce the price Ukraine pays for Russian gas.

Baltic States (Estonia, Latvia & Lithuania)

Estonia

The plans of Estonian ministries for next year are being revealed in the course of budgetary negotiations and hence the state budget for 2011 is also being formed; as usual the ministry of social affairs has the biggest gap between the amount of requested funds and the amount that the Ministry of Finance has earmarked for it.

Latvia

Figures released Wednesday confirmed that the troubled economy of Latvia is still struggling to return to growth after contracting 18 per cent in 2009 - the deepest recession in the European Union. Data from the national statistics office said that compared to the second quarter of 2009 gross domestic product (GDP) in the second quarter of 2010 decreased by 2.1 per cent

Lithuania

Lithuania sold \$750 million of seven-year paper on Tuesday, the second dollar bond this year, the Finance Ministry said on Tuesday. Lithuania, which saw its economy drop 14.8 percent in 2009, avoided seeking international assistance as neighboring Latvia, by tapping international markets to finance its budget deficit. The paper was sold at a yield of 5.249 percent and a coupon of 5.125, the ministry added

Russia

China agreed last month to lend Russia about \$6 billion in exchange for increased coal supplies over the next quarter century, the Russian energy ministry said in a statement on its website. Russian coal supplies to China skyrocketed last year to 12million tones from 0.76 million tons in 2008. Under the terms of the agreement, it will boost annual shipments to 15 million tones within the next five years and to 20 million tones thereafter.

A top Chinese energy official said in a recent interview with Xinhua that the 6th International Baikal Economic Forum that concluded on Thursday had become more practical with many proposals for specific economic cooperation projects. Participants have obviously become more interested and practical in strengthening mutual economic cooperation and proposing joint projects. More than 1,600 representatives from 17 countries and regions took part in the forum and signed six agreements and two memoranda of understanding, according to Russia's Federation Council.

While developed economies such as the U.S. and Britain are struggling with unemployment and a weak economic pull out of recession, Russia's job market is rebounding strongly after a horror 2009.

Social Front

Poland

Polish academics and Indophiles have requested newly elected Polish President Bronislaw Komorowski to posthumously honor the late Maharaja of Jamnagar who cared for more than one thousand Polish children during World War II. Thousands of Poles were exiled to the most inhospitable parts of the USSR after the Red Army had invaded Poland in 1939 under the Ribbentrop-Molotov pact. But once the Nazis under Hitler invaded the USSR in August 1941, Soviet leader Joseph Stalin freed many of those captives. Unable to return to their motherland, Polish children and their families from Ashkhabad and Samarkand were offered asylum by Jam Saheb Digvijaysinhji in his state of Jamnagar in what is now Gujarat. From 1942 to 1946 these children lived in Kathiawar Peninsula, not far from the summer residence of Maharaja Jam Saheb, and in Poland till this day they are known as the "Children of Jamnagar". Jam Saheb had died way back in 1966.

Czech Republic

The 61st International Astronautical Congress (IAC) will take place in Prague from September 27 to October 1. The annual congress encourages the advancement of space knowledge and enables the global space community to share its experience and deepen worldwide cooperation. The event spotlights the long space research and development history and ambitions of the Czech Republic, which joined ESA in 2008.

Slovakia

President Sarkozy's controversial roundup and deportation of thousands of gypsies currently living in France has been condemned by many quarters—the Pope, the president of the EU Commission and a UN committee. The Roma in question are EU citizens who had every right to move to France, but not to stay indefinitely without a job. Yet despite the high-level criticism of Sarkozy's move, his policy signals a gathering tempo of persecution of the Roma people in Europe. Last week seven Roma were killed by a gunman in Slovakia, before he turned the weapon on himself. Eight similar killings have taken place in neighboring Hungary over the past 18 months, and 30 firebombing attacks have been reported.

Hungary

With municipal elections in Hungary less than a month away, competition between main rivals is getting increasingly aggressive. Tapes revealed this week appear to show ruling party

candidates for local council posts plotting how to use the State Audit Office to discredit a town mayor from a rival political grouping.

Eastern Europe (Belarus & Ukraine)

Belarus

There is a continuing mystery surrounding the death of Belarus journalist - and outspoken government critic - Oleg Bebenin. He was found hanged in his country house near Minsk six days ago, and police were quick to say it was a case of suicide. But his relatives, colleagues and opposition political leaders are unconvinced that he took his own life.

Ukraine:

Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich said Ukraine could draw on China's experience in staging international events to prepare for the 2012 European Football Championship. "China's successful experience in staging the Beijing Olympics and Shanghai World Expo will help us to run the football games," Yanukovich said after visiting the Ukrainian and Chinese pavilions at the Shanghai Expo.

Baltic States (Estonia, Latvia & Lithuania)

Estonia

On July 28, NATO awarded the treaty organization's International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) medal to Estonian health care expert Anu Raisma for her work in developing the health care sector in Helmand province in Afghanistan. The award was bestowed on Raisma, who is winding up her civilian mission to the war torn country, by Lieutenant Colonel Jonathan Cox of the U.K. Defense Forces and Captain Saleem Khan of the U.S. Marines.

The wrecks of three British warships sent to forestall a Soviet and German takeover of the Baltic States after 1917's October revolution have been found off the coast of Saaremaa in Estonia. An Estonian minesweeper have located the remains of the cruiser HMS Cassandra and two Flower Class sloops, HMS Myrtle and HMS Gentian, in deep water near the island of Saaremaa.

Latvia

The Latvian State Police Traffic monitoring bureau now patrols on streets of Riga and on state highways with 16 new BMW motorbikes. The company selling these bikes, BM Auto,

satisfied the strictly set demands called for in the open competition for the contract. Specifically designed for the needs of the state police motorcycle, the motorcycles and equipment cost almost 250,000 LATS (357,100 Euros).

According to the 'Progress in International Reading Literacy Study,' reports by Nozare.lv, the Latvian schoolchildren read very little outside of school and have a bad attitude towards reading. The country comes last out of the 45 countries, including South Africa, which were included in. Poor reading ability will definitely be a basis for poor school achievements in other subjects. At the same time, the businesswoman noted that Latvian schools are allocated 0.69 LATS (0.98 Euros) for each pupil towards school books. In Estonia, the same figure stands at 30 Euros per pupil, while in Lithuania it is 20 Euros.

Russia

The United Russia party leader Boris Gryzlov has said that Russian President Dmitry Medvedev has approved a plan that seeks an overhaul of the country's police system in order to curb corruption and usurpation of power. In December, Medvedev ordered an extensive reform of the interior ministry in an effort to deal with police brutality, corruption among officers as well as using of officer's position to suppress citizens' rights and freedoms.

Cyber and Internet News

Estonia

Accusations of stealing more than 9.4 million U.S. dollars from more than 2,100 ATM terminals in 280 different cities has gotten 26-year-old Sergei Tsurikov, from Tallinn, Estonia and his seven accomplices extradited to the U.S. for trial. Tsurikov has been charged with wire fraud, computer fraud, as well as aggravated identity theft and is said to be involved in a criminal ring all around the world. ATMs were hacked into in Ukraine, Italy, Hong Kong and the U.S. as the crime was committed in a duration of 12 hours on Nov. 8, 2008.

According to the U.S. Embassy in Estonia, Embassy and U.S. Justice Department officials successfully concluded arrangements with Estonian authorities for the extradition on Aug. 5 of Tsurikov to the United States. He was arrested by local authorities last year and was initially handed over to the Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) for questioning. At the time the FSB already had two other suspects indicted in the same case in their custody – Viktor Pleshchuk, 28, of St. Petersburg, Russia and Oleg Covelin, 28, of Chisinau, Moldova.

Lithuania

Experts from the Electronic Frontier Foundation (EFF) will address security, openness, privacy, and other issues at the United Nations' Internet Governance Forum (IGF), set for September 14-17 in Vilnius, Lithuania. This is the fifth meeting of the IGF, which was

established to discuss public policy issues related to Internet governance on a global scale. Approximately 1,500 government policymakers, technologists, politicians, and others will attend. EFF experts will participate in nine workshops in Vilnius.



Microsoft's long taken aggressive steps to curb the rampant piracy of its software in Europe, but it seems like things have gotten a little out of hand: a new report in the New York Times today says Russian authorities are using piracy "investigations" as a pretext for seizing computers and other materials from political opponents of the government and news organizations. Microsoft and its lawyers have described the company as a "victim" and pushed for criminal charges. Making matters even worse, Microsoft is also accused of refusing to help targeted groups which have specifically purchased software to avoid being raided -- the company has said it's a matter for the Russian security police.

Detailed Report

Central Europe (Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia & Hungary)

Poland

Political Front

Polish president at Baltic summit-10.09.2010

President Bronislaw Komorowski has arrived in Riga for a summit of the three Baltic states: Lithuania, Estonia and host Latvia. The discussions focus on energy related matters, international security as well as cooperation within the European Union and NATO. The visit comes as Mr. Komorowski's second official foreign trip of his term in office, following talks in Brussels, Paris and Berlin. It is to underline the importance of regional cooperation, with one of the aims being a debate on the shape of the new EU budget. During the fifth Riga Conference the Polish president will meet his opposite numbers: Lithuania's Dalia Grybauskaite, Latvia's Valdis Zatlers and Estonia's Toomas Ilves.

Kaczynski: Polish president should resign-Sept. 11, 2010

WARSAW, Poland, Sept. 11 (UPI) -- The brother of the Polish president killed in a spring plane crash called on the country's current leadership to resign over the investigation into the tragedy. Jaroslaw Kaczynski, who lost in the recent early presidential elections, said the current administration was "completely abandoning" the investigation into the crash that killed his twin brother, President Lech Kaczynski and 95 others.

Yanukovich makes last minute Poland trip cancellation-07.09.2010

Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich has cancelled his visit to Poland tomorrow, where he was scheduled to appear at the Economic Forum in Krynica. Yanukovich, who was elected as president of Ukraine in February this year, informed his Polish counterpart Bronislaw Komorowski of his decision during a phone conversation today.

Mr Yanukovich also informed President Komorowski that he will not be able to meet him on 25 September either, during the Polish head of state's visit to Ukraine for the 10th anniversary of the opening of the Cemetery of the Victims of the Totalitarian Regime in Kharkiv. The remains of some 3,800 Polish officers imprisoned and murdered by Stalin's NKVD police in the spring of 1940 are buried there.

India, Poland to strengthen ties

India and Poland on Tuesday discussed ways to strengthen bilateral relationship, especially in defence, trade and investment, during delegation-level talks between Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and his visiting Polish counterpart, Donald Tusk. Defence cooperation with Poland surged in the Cold War era from the early 70s when much of the Indian defence equipment was of Soviet origin and has continued, albeit at a low key since. India is at present looking to Poland for maintenance of Soviet/Russian equipment, including aircraft and for the supply of auxiliary equipment such as tank recovery vehicles.

Poland

Economic Front

VAT hike crucial for Poland's deficit battle, says minister-10.09.2010

Head of the PM's advisors Michal Boni has said higher VAT will not negatively affect Polish economic growth, nor household budgets. Minister Michal Boni explained the move will yield an additional 6 billion zloty (roughly 1.5 billion euro) in state revenue, thus helping reduce the budget deficit. Speaking on the public TVP television broadcaster at the Krynica Economic Forum currently on in southern Poland, Boni, minister without portfolio, argued the the VAT hike is crucial for trimming the deficit. Boni said the revenue could be used for the valorization of health and retirement pensions.

European Stocks Climb to Four-Month High; BP, Ericsson Rally-September 08, 2010,

European stocks rose to a four-month high as improved demand for government bonds from Portugal to Poland helped ease concern about sovereign debt and shares of BP Plc advanced. BP gained for a seventh straight day as its credit rating was raised three levels and the company released its internal investigation on the Gulf of Mexico oil spill. Sanofi-Aventis SA rose 2.1 percent after Citigroup Inc. raised its price estimate for the drugmaker by 15 percent. Ericsson AB climbed 4.6 percent as Credit Suisse AG recommended the world's largest maker of wireless phone networks

In Poland, Barroso predicts 'Europe 2020' success

Speaking at the 20th Economic Forum for Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) in Krynica, European Commission President José Manuel Barroso said he was confident that the 'Europe 2020' economic strategy would succeed where its predecessor had failed. The Economic Forum is one of the most significant international events in the region, billing itself as the 'Central European Davos', in reference to the annual World Economic Forum in the Swiss town. Among this year's attendees are the presidents of Poland, Ukraine, Estonia and several EU figures, including European Commission President José Manuel Barroso and European Parliament President Jerzy Buzek. Three topics dominate the agenda this year: the EU's Eastern neighbors, energy and the economic crisis. Barroso aims to fill four million vacant jobs in EU. The 20th Economic Forum opened on Wednesday (8 September) in Krynica, Poland with a message of optimism from the Commission president. The four-day event, hosted every year in this small spa town close to the Polish-Slovak border, gathers officials and representatives of large companies, NGOs and the media from across Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) and neighbouring countries

Polish Public Largely Against Joining Euro Zone

Opposition to Poland's possible adoption of the euro is growing in the country in reaction to the Greek public finance crisis, with 47% of Poles against the plan, according to the results of a survey conducted in June, Poland's finance ministry said in a statement Thursday. Compared with a survey in December 2009, the opponents to euro-zone entry grew by four percentage points, while the number of people who would like Poland to join the European Union's single-currency bloc shrank by five percentage points to 38%

Poland one of most competitive markets in CEE, says WEF report-10.09.2010

The latest Global Competitiveness Report, released today by World Economic Forum (WEF) puts Poland among the leaders in central and eastern Europe (CEE) in terms of competitive economy. Poland rose to 39th from 46th most competitive economy worldwide last year, according to the Geneva-based World Economic Forum's annual report. Only the Czech Republic and Estonia get higher ratings. Slovakia, meanwhile, has gone in a reverse direction,

plummeting from 39th to 60th place. The Global Competitiveness Report puts Poland ahead of Spain and Italy on 12 key indicators of competitiveness, including stability of the political system, state of infrastructure, taxes and scientific research.

Poland

Social Front

Ex-Polish leader denies knowledge of CIA site-Associated Press / September 9, 2010

WARSAW — A former Polish president who was in office during the time the CIA is suspected of running a secret prison in his country says he has no knowledge of the facility or of harsh interrogation techniques allegedly used against terror suspects there

Call for Polish state honor for former Indian maharaja

Warsaw, Sep 8 : Polish academics and Indophiles have requested newly elected Polish President Bronislaw Komorowski to posthumously honour the late Maharaja of Jamnagar who cared for more than one thousand Polish children during World War II. Thousands of Poles were exiled to the most inhospitable parts of the USSR after the Red Army had invaded Poland in 1939 under the Ribbentrop-Molotov pact. But once the Nazis under Hitler invaded the USSR in August 1941, Soviet leader Joseph Stalin freed many of those captives. Unable to return to their motherland, Polish children and their families from Ashkhabad and Samarkand were offered asylum by Jam Saheb Digvijaysinhji in his state of Jamnagar in what is now Gujarat. From 1942 to 1946 these children lived in Kathiawar Peninsula, not far from the summer residence of Maharaja Jam Saheb, and in Poland till this day they are known as the "Children of Jamnagar". Whenever any Indian president comes to Poland on a state visit, the survivors of this association calls on the Indian dignitary to express their gratitude. To commemorate Jam Saheb's memory and his act of generosity, these experts from the Polish-Asian Studies at Warsaw University have now requested the president to decorate the maharaja posthumously. Jam Saheb had died way back in 1966.

Czech Republic

Political Front

Czech foreign minister says EU must keep promise to Turkey

Czech Foreign Minister Karel Schwarzenberg called on the European Union on Monday to keep its promise regarding Turkey's EU membership bid. "A promise must be kept," Schwarzenberg said in an interview with The New York Times as he spoke about the recent controversial Roma deportation policy by France. The newspaper noted that the furor this summer over France's expulsions of Roma to Romania and Bulgaria -- European Union countries whose citizens still

have limited rights to free travel in the 27-nation bloc -- would pale by comparison to the prospect of full EU membership for Turkey.

Czech Republic

Economic Front

Premier Power Opens New Office in Prague, Czech Republic

Premier Power Renewable Energy, Inc. (OTCBB:PPRW), a global leader in the development, design, engineering, and construction of solar power systems for commercial, government, and utility markets in the United States and Europe, announced today it has opened an office to serve new and existing customers in the Czech Republic. “The opening of this new office in Prague firmly establishes our presence in and dedication to the solar electric power generation market in the Czech Republic,” said Dean R. Marks, chief executive officer of Premier Power. “This location will be our portal to eastern Europe, serving the great demand for solar photovoltaic power generation in the Czech Republic and in nearby countries as well.”

Czechs prepare for major job market reforms-09 September 2010

The Czech labour market was hit hard by the economic crisis and the new government will need to implement key reforms if the country is to achieve its employment target under the 'Europe 2020' strategy. Raising the employment rate to 75% is one of the five priorities of a draft ten-year economic plan unveiled by the European Commission in March, called 'Europe 2020'. The strategy defines five headline targets at EU level, which member states will be asked to translate into national goals reflecting their differing starting points. The education picture is mixed, while most member states will adopt R&D targets below the EU-wide goal of 3% of GDP. The Czech government approved the country's own target: a 75% employment rate among 20-64 year olds by 2020 – the same figure as the EU's overall objective.

Czech Yield Falls to Record Low in Local Bond Sale on Eurobond, Austerity

Czech borrowing costs fell to a record low at a sale of three-year bonds as an issue of debt in Euros this week allowed the government to trim local supply, while investor demand increased on fiscal-austerity plans. The European Union country sold 6.77 billion koruna (\$343.8 million) more of its 2.8 percent notes after the the first and second part of today's auction, less than the target of 7 billion koruna, the Prague-based central bank said on its Bloomberg page.

Czech Republic

Social Front

Global Space Event in The Golden City-7 September 2010,

This month the International Astronautically Congress will be held in Prague for the first time in 33 years. The global event highlights the growing activities in space industry, science and education in the Czech Republic — ESA's newest Member State. The 61st International Astronautically Congress (IAC) will take place in Prague from September 27 to October 1. The annual congress encourages the advancement of space knowledge and enables the global space community to share its experience and deepen worldwide cooperation. The event spotlights the long space research and development history and ambitions of the Czech Republic, which joined ESA in 2008.

Slovakia

Political Front

Hungarian FM wants direct negotiation with Slovakia on dual citizenship issue

Hungarian Foreign Minister Janos Martonyi said on Monday in Austria that Hungary wants to conduct negotiations on the controversial issue of dual citizenship "with our Slovak friends directly." "The two sides "don't need any help from a third party," said Martonyi at a joint press conference with his Austrian counterpart Michael Spindelegger in Vienna. In May this year, Hungary attempted to pass a law granting dual citizenship to ethnic Hungarians living abroad. This move resulted in tensions with Slovakia, as some 500,000 ethnic Hungarians live in Slovakia, accounting for about 10 percent of the total Slovak population.

Austrian chancellor reaffirms stand on Slovak nuclear reactors construction

Austrian Chancellor Werner FAYMANN met Slovakian Prime Minister Iveta Radicova at a working lunch Sunday in Vienna, reaffirming his stand on the extension of Slovak nuclear power plant, according to a press release on Sunday. At the working lunch, FAYMANN expressed his deep concern about the construction of two remaining reactors of the Mechovce Nuclear Power Plant located in eastern Slovakia, about 100 km from the border with Austria.

Slovakia

Economic Front

ECB leaders furious with Slovakia-10th September 2010

The ECB is furious with Slovakia as news leaks that one of the more recent entries to the European Union has refused to participate in the Greek loan bailout. While the refusal of the Slovak authorities to participate is obviously disappointing it should not impact upon the success

or failure of the Greek bailout package. However, it could have far-reaching consequences for those looking to join the European Union in the future.

Slovak premier woos German investors-Sep 10, 2010,

Bratislava - Slovakia is introducing reforms in a bid to create a more favourable climate for foreign investment, Prime Minister Iveta Radicova said Friday. 'Slovakia will become more attractive to investors, with less corruption and transparent bidding procedures and competition rules,' she said in a speech to German and Slovak industrialists.

Slovakia Announces VAT Rise, by Ulrika Lomas, Tax-News.com, Brussels-September 08,

Slovakia's centre-right coalition government has united on plans to temporarily increase the rate of value-added tax (VAT) from 19% to 20% from January 1, 2011, in a bid to reduce the country's public deficit. This 1% increase in VAT, which forms part of a series of austerity measures designed to cut the fiscal deficit by EUR1.7bn next year, is due to remain in force until the public deficit returns to 3% of gross domestic product (GDP). The Slovakian finance ministry estimates that this will be in 2013 at the earliest. The government expects to generate around EUR160m in additional revenues as a result of the higher tax rate.

REFILE-Orphanides-Slovakia aid move shows need for binding rules

BRATISLAVA, July 26 (Reuters) - Slovakia's refusal to pay into Europe's crisis fund shows the need for countries to sign up to binding financial disaster rules, European Central Bank Governing Council member Athanasios Orphanides said on Monday. Orphanides said Slovakia's decision "highlighted the challenge of successfully achieving cohesiveness and solidarity of member states within the EU."

Slovakia

Social Front

Europe's most persecuted people?-9th September 2010

President Sarkozy's controversial roundup and deportation of thousands of gypsies currently living in France has been condemned by many quarters—the Pope, the president of the EU Commission and a UN committee. The Roma in question are EU citizens who had every right to move to France, but not to stay indefinitely without a job. Yet despite the high-level criticism of Sarkozy's move, his policy signals a gathering tempo of persecution of the Roma people in Europe. Last week seven Roma were killed by a gunman in Slovakia, before he turned the weapon on himself. Eight similar killings have taken place in neighbouring Hungary over the past 18 months, and 30 firebombing attacks have been reported. In Rome, the mayor has begun demolishing shanties in effort to push the migrants out of the city. In both Serbia and Kosovo

there have been ethnic stabbings of large numbers of Roma, who were driven out by Albanians after 1999 and are not welcome to return. Closer to home, Roma have been driven out of Northern Ireland in racist attacks. These developments should worry us all. As history has shown, the widespread maltreatment of a large, stateless minority can have devastating consequences.

Hungary

Political Front

Fidesz win at local poll key to revive Hungary -PM

BUDAPEST, Sept 10 (Reuters) - Hungary's prime minister told supporters on Friday the country can take a "giant step forward" if his ruling Fidesz party wins municipal elections next month, enabling it to revive the weak economy. Viktor Orban, whose centre-right Fidesz has retained a three-to-one lead in opinion polls since ousting the Socialists from power in April, said putting Hungary back onto its feet would require an unprecedented effort

Hungary visa restrictions not ruled out, minister says

Immigration Minister Jason Kenney said his European counterparts were shocked yesterday when he told them about the number of asylum-seekers to Canada, many of them eastern European Roma.

Hungary

Economic Front

Hungary PM sees "tough job" in planning 2011 budget

BUDAPEST, Sept 11 (Reuters) - Hungary's prime minister said planning the 2011 budget will be a tough job as the government has to balance rebuilding the economy with maintaining social safety, news website naplo-online.hu reported late on Friday. Hungarian markets breathed a sigh of relief this week after the centre-right Fidesz government bowed to European Union demands to reduce the budget deficit below the bloc's 3 percent of GDP ceiling next year. But after a string of confusing comments by the new government and Budapest's shock decision in July to show its international lenders the door, investors are sceptical and want to see firm plans on how the country will tackle its deficit. "Planning the next budget will be a tough job as we will have to sustain the country's ability to function, rebuild the economy and maintain ... social safety," Prime Minister Viktor Orban was quoted by naplo-online.hu as saying.

Hungary won't seek to renew IMF, EU loans-ASSOCIATED PRESS

BUDAPEST, Hungary (AP) - Hungary will not seek any more loans from the International Monetary Fund or the European Union and will be able to meet its financing needs by selling bonds to international and domestic investors, Economics Minister Gyorgy Matolcsy said Wednesday. Matolcsy also said the government is committed to a state budget deficit target of 3.8 percent of GDP this year, and of below 3 percent in 2011. The IMF, the EU and the World Bank gave Hungary a bailout of 20 billion (\$26 billion) in late 2008 to help the country avoid defaulting on its debts. The standby deals end in October and November

Hungary cbank says no room for monetary stimulus

BUDAPEST, Sept 6 (Reuters) - Hungary's central bank on Monday batted back government suggestions it should use monetary stimulus similar to that seen in major developed economies to bolster a sluggish domestic recovery. In a statement that comes after comments from Economy Minister Gyorgy Matolcsy on Friday, the National Bank of Hungary said the government had more efficient tools to stimulate the economy and that further monetary stimulus is not justified now.

Hungary eyes a million new jobs by 2020

The Hungarian government has pledged to create one million jobs over the next ten years – an ambitious plan that would help bring the country's employment rate up to 70% by the year 2020. The 'Europe 2020' strategy, adopted in June, has set an EU-wide goal of increasing the employment rate among 20-64 year olds to 75% by 2020. According to government sources, the European Commission has unofficially proposed Hungary a national target of between 68% and 70%.

Hungary

Social Front

Hungarian Local Election Candidates Caught On Tape.

With municipal elections in Hungary less than a month away, competition between main rivals is getting increasingly aggressive. Tapes revealed this week appear to show ruling party candidates for local council posts plotting how to use the State Audit Office to discredit a town mayor from a rival political grouping. Reportedly recorded at a meeting of prospective mayoral and parliament member appointees co-operating with the ruling Fidesz party, which stormed to unprecedented parliamentary victory in April, the tape shows officials planning to ask for an audit by the State Audit Office in the town of Kony, northwest Hungary, where the current mayor is a Socialist.

Eastern Europe (Belarus & Ukraine)

Belarus

Political Front

Pres election date in Belarus not to be named Tuesday

MINSK, September 7 (Itar-Tass) - The date of the presidential elections in Belarus will not be named on Tuesday, on the first day of the extraordinary session of the Belarusian parliament, Lydia Yermoshina, head of the Central Electoral Commission of Belarus, told journalists here on Tuesday. "The date of the elections will not be named today," she said

OSCE Minsk Group co-chairmen meet with Armenian FM

Armenian Foreign Minister Edward Nalbandian on Thursday received OSCE Minsk Group co-chairmen Bernard Fassier, Robert Bradtke, and Igor Popov in Yerevan on Thursday as part of a regional visit of the OSCE Chairman-in-Office Andrzej Kasprzyk, Armenia Today said. The Armenian Foreign Ministry reported that the co-chairmen presented to Nalbandian the results of discussions held earlier in Baku and Khankendi in Azerbaijan. The OSCE Minsk Group was established to resolve a territorial conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia centering on the region of Nagorno-Karabakh.

Belarus opposition activist complains of 'prostitute' smear

Kiev/Minsk - An opponent of Belarus' authoritarian government on Thursday claimed police had jailed his daughter on false allegations of prostitution and human trafficking, the Belapan news agency reported. Aleksander Protsko is an active member of Za Svobodu (For Freedom), a Belarusian civic group opposed to the strong-man regime of President Aleksander Lukashenko. Protsko said his daughter had been travelling to Ukraine with two friends on August 18 when Belarusian border police detained her citing her possible work as a prostitute abroad, or potential activities as a human trafficker. The younger Protsko, whose first name was not made public, is a 26-year-old woman with a university education and a stable income, and allegations she might be working as a prostitute or a human trafficker are 'ridiculous' and 'trumped up,' her father said, in a letter to a Gomel province prosecutor.

Belarus, Ukraine to consider exchange of border treaty instruments Sept

MINSK, September 8 (Itar-Tass) -- The question of completing of the enactment of the Belarusian-Ukrainian border treaty may be cleared up in late September. This date was mentioned by the head of the Belarusian Foreign Ministry, Sergei Martynov, who responded to reporters' questions following today's trilateral meeting of the foreign ministers of Belarus, Lithuania and Ukraine.

Belarus

Economic Front

Russia, Belarus ordered to agree on customs duty on oil products

The Economic Court of the CIS has given Moscow and Minsk one month for an out-of-court settlement of the matter on Russia's duties on oil products supplied to Belarus, the court's press office reported to RBC. Consequently, the court granted Russia's request for an extrajudicial dispute resolution.

Relations with Poland key

Belarus intends to intensify trade and economic relations with Poland, said President of Belarus Alexander Lukashenko, BelTA learnt from the presidential press service. When coordinating the appointment of the Consul General of Belarus in Bialystok, Alexander Berebenya, the President stressed that he needs to work hard on building up good-neighborly relations with Poland, especially trade and economic relations.

There will be the economy, there will be policy.

The most important thing today is to increase exports of Belarusian products, the head of state said. When appointing new ambassadors to the Czech Republic and Slovakia, Vasily Markovich and Vladimir Serpikov, Alexander Lukashenko stressed that they will work in the countries which are comparable to the territory of Belarus and with which Belarus has established good cooperation

Belarus

Social Front

Belarus journalist 'suicide' mystery

There is a continuing mystery surrounding the death of Belarus journalist - and outspoken government critic - Oleg Bebenin. He was found hanged in his country house near Minsk six days ago, and police were quick to say it was a case of suicide. But his relatives, colleagues and opposition political leaders are unconvinced that he took his own life. "Neither his recent behaviour nor his behaviour on the day of his death gave any indication that such a tragedy might occur by his own hand," said opposition leader Andrei Sannikov. And Natallya Radzina, the editor of the website that Bebenin founded, Charter 97, said: "We doubt that it was a suicide for many reasons. He was a happy and stable person... He loved his work. No suicide note was found."

Ukraine

Political Front

Ukraine's president vows to unite country, build new state

Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich, who is the Honorary Head of the country's ruling Party of Regions, has called on regional party members to make every effort to unite Ukraine and to be open for a dialogue with all parties operating in Ukraine "as success can be reached only in a monolithic state." The appeal came out of Party of Regions' national assembly entitled "Building a New Country" held in Kiev on Thursday

Ukraine's opposition blocks parliament doors

KIEV, Ukraine — Opposition deputies in Ukraine's notoriously unruly parliament are blocking doors to the chamber with chairs as a protest against austerity measures. Opposition lawmakers cover their seats in parliament with posters, one of them reading "Stop to gas tyranny!" minutes before the legislature opened its session, the first after summer recess, in Kiev, Ukraine, Tuesday, Sept. 7, 2010. Opposition lawmakers are protesting against a hike in gas and utilities prices and other government policies. The Verkhovna Rada sees frequent clashes between members that go far beyond rhetoric. Lawmakers kicked and punched each other on Tuesday as opposition deputies tried to seize control of the speaker's podium. Dissenters sometimes break the electronic vote-tallying machine, and in a session this spring the parliament speaker stood shielded by umbrellas as opponents threw eggs and smoke bombs

Ukraine's Yanukovich to visit EU, snub NATO for second time

Brussels - Ukraine's President Viktor Yanukovich is to visit Brussels, the European Union's headquarters, on Monday - but to avoid visiting NATO for the second time in six months, officials confirmed. Yanukovich is seen as a strongly pro-Russian figure, who reversed his predecessor's bid to join NATO. But he wants to maintain close ties with the EU, and made Brussels the destination of his first foreign visit on March 1, just days after his inauguration.

Ukrainian president conditionally backs merger with Russian energy giant

Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich would conditionally agree to merge the state energy firm Naftogaz with Russian gas giant Gazprom, Energy Minister Yuriy Boiko said Wednesday. "We have a stance of our president that any associations are established only on a parity basis, taking into account our national interests," Boiko said at a cabinet meeting.

Belarus, Ukraine to consider exchange of border treaty instruments Sept

MINSK, September 8 (Itar-Tass) -- The question of completing of the enactment of the Belarusian-Ukrainian border treaty may be cleared up in late September. This date was mentioned by the head of the Belarusian Foreign Ministry, Sergei Martynov, who responded to reporters' questions following today's trilateral meeting of the foreign ministers of Belarus, Lithuania and Ukraine.

Ukraine

Economic Front

Ukraine Pushes for Reduced Gas Price

KIEV — Ukraine is willing to give Russia joint control of a pipeline to southeastern Europe in exchange for access to gas supplies, Prime Minister Mykola Azarov said in an interview. The governments are seeking to create a joint venture between Naftogaz Ukrainy and Gazprom, both of which were once part of the Soviet gas monopoly, by the end of this year, Azarov said Thursday. The agreement would reduce the price Ukraine pays for Russian gas, he said. "I have a hope that we will meet the year 2011 with a new gas agreement," Azarov said. The current price calculation "means we are doomed to have an unfair price."

Ukraine

Social Front

Chinese experience helps Ukraine stage football games:

Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich said Ukraine could draw on China's experience in staging international events to prepare for the 2012 European Football Championship. "China's successful experience in staging the Beijing Olympics and Shanghai World Expo will help us to run the football games," Yanukovich said after visiting the Ukrainian and Chinese pavilions at the Shanghai Expo. Ukraine and China had decided to comprehensively lift their cooperation, creating new prospects for partnership in economy, science, energy, education and culture, said Yanukovich.

Baltic States (Estonia, Latvia & Lithuania)

Estonia

Economic Front

2011 budget takes shape-Sep 08, 2010

TALLINN - The plans of Estonian ministries for next year are being revealed in the course of budgetary negotiations and hence the state budget for 2011 is also being formed; as usual the ministry of social affairs has the biggest gap between the amount of requested funds and the amount that the Ministry of Finance has earmarked for it, reports Postimees. On Sept. 2, the minister of finance, Jurgen Ligi, gave an overview to the government about ministries' requests for funding for next year...

Teamwork lands team in U.S. court-Aug 11, 2010

TALLINN - Accusations of stealing more than 9.4 million U.S. dollars from more than 2,100 ATM terminals in 280 different cities has gotten 26-year-old Sergei Tsurikov, from Tallinn, and his seven accomplices extradited to the U.S. for trial. Tsurikov has been charged with wire fraud, computer fraud, as well as aggravated identity theft and is said to be involved in a criminal ring all around the world. ATMs were hacked into in Ukraine, Italy, Hong Kong and the U.S. as the crime was committed in a duration of 12 hours on Nov. 8, 2008. According to the U.S. Embassy in Estonia, Embassy and U.S. Justice Department officials successfully concluded arrangements with Estonian authorities, in particular the Estonian Criminal Police and Prosecutor's Office, for the extradition on Aug. 5 of Tsurikov to the United States. He was arrested by local authorities last year and was initially handed over to the Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) for questioning. At the time the FSB already had two other suspects indicted in the same case in their custody – Viktor Pleshchuk, 28, of St. Petersburg, Russia and Oleg Covelin, 28, of Chisinau, Moldova.

Helmand mission accomplished for Raisma-Aug 04, 2010

APPRECIATED: Anu Raisma ends her assignment in Afghanistan, where she helped the ongoing development of the health care services. TALLINN - On July 28, NATO awarded the treaty organization's International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) medal to Estonian health care expert Anu Raisma for her work in developing the health care sector in Helmand province in Afghanistan. The award was bestowed on Raisma, who is winding up her civilian mission to the war torn country, by Lieutenant Colonel Jonathan Cox of the U.K. Defense Forces and Captain Saleem Khan of the U.S. Marines

Estonia

Social Front

Estonia in brief - 2010-09-08-Sep 08, 2010

Estonians have lost interest in going to work in Ireland and are showing increased interest towards Nordic states, Spain and Italy, reports Delfi. Labor markets in Germany and Austria will open up for Estonians on May 1 next year. "People have explicit plans for going," said European job-seeking office Eures' chief Marta Traks. Thus people are now inquiring about taxation and rights in the target country, rather than showing just general interest. "Young people are looking for challenges," said Traks. People who have problems servicing their loans are also looking for better opportunities. In Estonia 37 percent of young people are jobless. According to a human resources report published in July, a tenth of Estonian residents have left to work or live abroad

Saaremaa reveals sunken warships-Sep 08, 2010

TALLINN - The wrecks of three British warships sent to forestall a Soviet and German takeover of the Baltic States after 1917's October revolution have been found off the coast of Saaremaa in

Estonia, writes The Guardian on Aug. 23. Sonar searches by an Estonian minesweeper have located the remains of the cruiser HMS Cassandra and two Flower Class sloops, HMS Myrtle and HMS Gentian, in deep water near the island of Saaremaa. The operation completes a jigsaw puzzle started by divers who found parts of the Myrtle in 1937, and a later team which attached a memorial plaque to the ship's sheared-off stern 10 years ago. It is also a belated tribute to the accuracy of Royal Navy navigation in 1919, when the two smaller ships sank after hitting mines

Latvia

Political Front

Politicians offering more hot air-Sep 08, 2010

CITIZEN ACTION: A recent debate showed that political parties still have no specific plans for the country. RIGA - Political parties' programs for the 10th Saeima elections on Oct. 2 are largely made up of slogans, and it appears that the parties have not yet decided how their promises will be implemented, businessmen representing various national economy sectors said in a debate hosted by the business portal Nozare.lv. Furniture maker Dailrade koks board chairman Andris Jansons said, after reading five leading political parties' election programs, that it was outrageous that only a couple of programs mentioned any figures at all, and none offered any specific information on further tax policy and budget consolidation

Political insincerity about the pension system?-Sep 08, 2010

RIGA - The high rate of emigration, unemployment and an ageing population will soon be hitting Latvians in the pocketbook, because this demographic alert now demands changes in the way the pension system operates, warns Roberts Kilis, social anthropologist and advisor to Latvia's president, Valdis Zatlers. To the BBC news agency he explained that the birthrate in the country is below an average of 1.4 children per woman, which is not enough to sustain the population.

Germany's Merkel defends nuclear plant deal.

RIGA, Latvia — German Chancellor Angela Merkel on Tuesday defended her government's decision to extend the lifetime of the country's nuclear plants against criticism that the deal guarantees huge windfall profits to utility companies. On a visit to Latvia, Merkel told reporters that more than half of the extra profits will flow to state coffers, through a new nuclear fuel tax aimed at raising €2.3 billion (\$3 billion) annually between 2011 and 2016, and from contributions to a special fund promoting renewable energy

Latvia

Economic Front

Latvia in brief - 2010-09-08-Sep 08, 2010

Latvian schoolchildren read very little outside of school and have a bad attitude towards reading; the country comes last out of the 45 countries, including South Africa, which were included in the 'Progress in International Reading Literacy Study,' reports Nozare.lv. The findings worry Latvian publishers. "This kind of discovery makes you think that without serious measures for improving reading ability, literacy figures for Latvian schoolchildren will only continue to fall. Poor reading ability will definitely be a basis for poor school achievements in other subjects," believes publisher Apgada Zvaigzne ABC Chairwoman Vija Kilbloka. At the same time, the businesswoman noted that Latvian schools are allocated 0.69 lats (0.98 euros) for each pupil towards school books. In Estonia, the same figure stands at 30 euros per pupil, while in Lithuania it is 20 euros. Apgads Zvaigzne ABC will hold a Latvian National Children's Reading Congress at the Latvian National Theater on Sept. 11

Latvian economy still struggling

Riga - Figures released Wednesday confirmed that the troubled economy of Latvia is still struggling to return to growth after contracting 18 per cent in 2009 - the deepest recession in the European Union. Data from the national statistics office said that compared to the second quarter of 2009 gross domestic product (GDP) in the second quarter of 2010 decreased by 2.1 per cent

Latvia

Social Front

Police riding in style-Sep 08, 2010

RIGA - The Latvian State Police Traffic monitoring bureau now patrols on streets of Riga and on state highways with 16 new BMW motorbikes. The company selling these bikes, BM Auto, satisfied the strictly set demands called for in the open competition for the contract. Specifically designed for the needs of the state police motorcycle, the motorcycles and equipment cost almost 250,000 lats (357,100 euros), according to official data of the Ministry of the Interior

Lithuania

Political Front

Lithuania wants binding bids for new nuclear plant contract-Sep 10, 2010

Vilnius - The Lithuanian government said Friday it wanted to see binding tenders from international firms wanting to build a new nuclear power plant in the country. Following the submission of proposals in November, the investor would be selected by the end of 2010, the Ministry of Energy said in a statement. Energy Minister Arvydas Sekmokas said the beginning of negotiations on the new plant was planned for the end of the year.

EFF Experts Address Security, Openness, and Privacy at United Nations' Internet Governance Forum Conference Set for September 14-17 in Vilnius, Lithuania

Vilnius, Lithuania - Experts from the Electronic Frontier Foundation (EFF) will address security, openness, privacy, and other issues at the United Nations' Internet Governance Forum (IGF), set for September 14-17 in Vilnius, Lithuania. This is the fifth meeting of the IGF, which was established to discuss public policy issues related to Internet governance on a global scale. Approximately 1,500 government policymakers, technologists, politicians, and others will attend. EFF experts will participate in nine workshops in Vilnius, including "The Future of Privacy," with EFF Senior Staff Attorney Kevin Bankston and EFF International Rights Director Katitza

Polish president at Baltic summit-10.09.2010

President Bronislaw Komorowski has arrived in Riga for a summit of the three Baltic states: Lithuania, Estonia and host Latvia. The discussions focus on energy related matters, international security as well as cooperation within the European Union and NATO. The visit comes as Mr. Komorowski's second official foreign trip of his term in office, following talks in Brussels, Paris and Berlin. It is to underline the importance of regional cooperation, with one of the aims being a debate on the shape of the new EU budget. During the fifth Riga Conference the Polish president will meet his opposite numbers: Lithuania's Dalia Grybauskaite, Latvia's Valdis Zatlers and Estonia's Toomas Ilves

Lithuania

Economic Front

Lithuania issues \$750 mln 7-yr bond

VILNIUS, Sept 7 (Reuters) - Lithuania sold \$750 million of seven-year paper on Tuesday, the second dollar bond this year, the Finance Ministry said on Tuesday. Lithuania, which saw its economy drop 14.8 percent in 2009, avoided seeking international assistance as neighboring Latvia, by tapping international markets to finance its budget deficit. The paper was sold at a yield of 5.249 percent and a coupon of 5.125, the ministry added

Russia

Political Front

Russia, US talks on Iranian nuclear crisis

MOSCOW, Sept 7 (KUNA) -- Deputy Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov met on Tuesday with U.S. Special Advisor for Arms Control Robert Einhorn. The two sides discussed in details the Iranian nuclear crisis, Russian Foreign Ministry said in a statement. The Russian

proposal to enrich uranium for Iran still stands and will not withdraw the proposal, Russian Presidential Aide Sergei Prikhodko announced recently. Russia supported the sanctions imposed by UNSC recently against Iran, and strongly disapproved Washington and EU to impose additional sanctions against Iran

World chess boss to retire from regional presidency

The president of the Russian republic of Kalmykia, Kirsan Ilyumzhinov, is leaving his post after four terms in office. In an official statement on his website, Ilyumzhinov announced his support for Russian President Medvedev's policy of replacing veteran regional leaders with younger ones.

Changing face of Russia-Pakistan ties

Last month's quadripartite summit of Russia, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Tajikistan hosted by President Dmitry Medvedev at the Black Sea resort, Sochi, must have made South Block strategists sit up. From India's perspective, the main outcome was that Moscow decisively moved to de-hyphenate its relations with Islamabad and New Delhi. Little wonder then, that even three weeks after the summit there has been no reaction from New Delhi.

Dinner, with Questions

SOCHI, Russia—Prime Minister Vladimir Putin invited around 50 foreign guests to dinner this week and told them he was aware of the risk that Russia's autocratic political system could concentrate too much power on one man. That is why, he said, he and President Dmitry Medvedev—who he helped elevate to Russia's top job in 2008—are sharing power. Longer term, he said, Russia will need to develop political institutions to broaden decision-making. Prime Minister Vladimir Putin gestures during a discussion at the Black Sea resort of Sochi, in Russia, on Monday. Nevertheless, most guests took away the opposite message: Power in Russia isn't going to be decentralized soon. And the person it would be centralized on was their host, who many present felt sent a signal that he plans on returning as president in 2012.

3 Priorities, 3 Solutions in EU-Russian Ties

Russia is our strategic partner and a major player in many areas. Russia is also a European country and our close neighbor. The time is ripe to give a new boost to European Union-Russian relations, while continuing open and sincere dialogue based on common interests and values. It is no secret that the relations between the EU and Russia have suffered from differences of opinion and action and that a lot of work remains to be done on both sides to optimize the potential that the EU and Russia share.

The first relates to the economy. The EU is the most important export market for Russia, and Russia is among the top-three trading partners of the EU. Of foreign direct investments to Russia, about 80 percent come from EU countries. In energy, the interdependency is evident. Geographic proximity could contribute to the competitiveness of both Russia and the EU, but that should not be taken for granted in today's world of global competition.

Currently, the most pressing issue is Russia's accession to the World Trade Organization. Another key factor that would integrate our markets further is harmonization of technical standards. The EU has no reason to press Russia in this matter and no need to dictate the rules. But let's be frank. A set of carefully prepared standards and legislation is there for Russia to grasp — that is, “euro standards” of proven high quality and earned consumer trust in Europe and elsewhere in the world. President Dmitry Medvedev, a committed supporter of modernization and innovation, has said European standards can't be that bad. Also for Russian consumers, the euro standard has been synonymous with good quality for decades. Russian companies would be the ones benefiting the most from harmonized regulation because that would bolster their competitiveness in the European market.

The ultimate goal is a free-trade area between Russia and the EU. We should not see our economies as rivals but make them more attractive by means of enhanced integration. This could open a new window of opportunity for both in the increasingly competitive global market.

Second, we need to facilitate interaction between our people. Visa-free travel would benefit tens of millions of people. The EU and Russia agreed to pursue visa freedom as a long-term goal in 2003 and are committed to reaching it. But all technical and societal criteria have to be met. Russian and EU experts need to continue the discussions and examine where sufficient progress has been made and where steps still need to be taken. This paves the way for the negotiations on a visa-waiver agreement.

The third goal relates to foreign and security policies. Partnership can only be successful in the long run if it is value-based and pursued in the spirit of mutual respect and confidence. Progress has been made in the area of external security — for example, in international crisis management on the coast of Somalia and in Chad. But we could do much more together, including in the areas close to the EU and Russia, as well as in the civilian sector, like cooperation in emergency situations.

Russia

Economic Front

China to lend Russia \$6 bln for coal supplies

MOSCOW, Sept 7 (Reuters) - China agreed last month to lend Russia about \$6 billion in exchange for increased coal supplies over the next quarter century, the Russian energy ministry said in a statement on its website. Russian coal supplies to China skyrocketed last year to 12 million tonnes from 0.76 million tonnes in 2008. Under the terms of the agreement, it will boost annual shipments to 15 million tonnes within the next five years and to 20 million tonnes thereafter.

Russia-based economic forum "more practical": China official

The 6th International Baikal Economic Forum that concluded on Thursday had become more practical with many proposals for specific economic cooperation projects, a top Chinese energy official said in a recent interview with Xinhua. "Participants have obviously become more interested and practical in strengthening mutual economic cooperation and proposing joint projects," head of China's National Administration of Energy (NEA) Zhang Guobao said. More than 1,600 representatives from 17 countries and regions took part in the forum and signed six agreements and two memoranda of understanding, according to Russia's Federation Council.

Russian economy struggles, while budget deficit

A new paradigm so far in 2010 is the emerging markets economies performing better than their developed counterparts. A notable exception, however, is Russia, which is actually underperforming most advanced economies. In fact, according to data compiled by the CIA, Russia was the 8th worst performing economy in the world in 2009.

Jobs rebound as economic growth returns

While developed economies such as the U.S. and Britain are struggling with unemployment and a weak economic pull out of recession, Russia's job market is rebounding strongly after a horror 2009.

Russia

Social front

European Standard for Russia's Modernization

Amid all of the talk of modernization, the Russian economy is gradually changing, but it is doing so despite government modernization policies and programs, not because of them. In recent years, PSA Peugeot-Citroen, Mitsubishi Motors and Volkswagen have opened factories in the Kaluga region, Siemens opened a transformer plant near Voronezh, and Western investors have launched a range of businesses manufacturing construction materials and food products. Russian businesses are also increasing their activity — for example, Magnitogorsk Iron & Steel Works

has opened a new steel-plate rolling plant. Moreover, investment has increased in oil refining and chemical production, and a new cement plant owned by LSR Group should begin operations by the end of the year. This factory is the first cement plant to be built after the collapse of the Soviet Union. All of these projects have been carried out without any assistance from the state. Despite all of the loud proclamations of the government's commitment to supporting modernization, there are strong doubts about whether the authorities have any real intentions to modernize the country.

Russia to reform police system

Russian President Dmitry Medvedev has approved a plan that seeks an overhaul of the country's police system in order to curb corruption and usurpation of power, the United Russia party leader Boris Gryzlov has said. In December, Medvedev ordered an extensive reform of the interior ministry in an effort to deal with police brutality, corruption among officers as well as using of officer's position to suppress citizens' rights and freedoms. At a meeting with Medvedev, Gryzlov, who is also the speaker of the lower house of the Russian parliament, proposed that the new plan should outline all police powers.

Microsoft antipiracy efforts caught up in Russian political scandal



Microsoft's long taken aggressive steps to curb the rampant piracy of its software in Europe, but it seems like things have gotten a little out of hand: a new report in the New York Times today says Russian authorities are using piracy "investigations" as a pretext for seizing computers and other materials from political opponents of the government and news organizations. What's more, apparently Microsoft is quite supportive of these raids -- its lawyers have described the company as a "victim" and pushed for criminal charges. Making matters even worse, Microsoft is also accused of refusing to help targeted groups which have specifically purchased software to avoid being raided -- the company has said it's a matter for the Russian security police. For its part, Microsoft issued a statement today saying that if their outside investigators "do not comport with professional ethics, anticorruption laws, or Microsoft policies, we terminate our relationship with them" and that the company "will act to ensure due process is followed in antipiracy cases that involve Microsoft products." Sounds like this story's going to get even more complicated -- we'll be following it closely.