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CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE INCLUDING RUSSIA AND BALTICS

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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

Poland

- Russia, Poland, EU Had 'Very Good' Gas Talks-20 September 2010-Bloomberg
- End of EU subsidies?-20.09.2010 10:33
- Poland attacks Franco-German EU farm proposals-Sep 21, 2010
- From Poles apart to best friends-09/21/2010
- Poland's special insight into Millennium Development Goals
- Economic forum brings young leaders to Poland-Wed, Sep 22 2010
- PKO sees net profit improving each quarter-Thu Sep 23, 2010
- Over 5,000 Poles protest at pay freeze-Wednesday, September.
- Counsel Calls On Polish Prosecutor to Investigate Torture of Detainee at CIA Black Site
- Pole equality chief claims church is right to ban gay teachers

Czech Republic

- FM due in Prague to discuss Czech, EU foreign policies
- President says university not for everyone
- Czech government adopts austerity budget
- Czechs halt Google's 'Street View,' cite privacy-Sep 22-Associated Press
- Czech workers protest wage cuts, cabinet holds firm

Slovakia

- Lower salaries for constitutional officials
- Slovakia plans to completely withdraw troops from Kosovo, deploy soldiers to Afghanistan
- Slovak Freedom and Solidarity: results are binding for politicians-Sep 21 2010
- Slovakia's referendum fails on low voter turnout -19.09.2010
- Brussels wants to increase EU's own budget-21 September 2010

Hungary

- Nuclear waste tops Hungary's priorities at EU helm-23 September 2010
- The German luxury carmaker Audi will invest 900 million euros (1.2 billion dollars) in its Hungarian plant by 2013,
- Hungary Sees Tighter Bond Spreads on Deficit Pledge-September 24, 2010
- Surprise figures show Hungarians are shopping more-Sep 22, 2010,
- TV rejects political ad of gypsies
- EU deputy welcomes Roma strategy plan-23rd September 2010

Eastern Europe (Belarus & Ukraine)

Belarus

- Kuwait FM, counterparts discuss ways to boost economic relations-Sept 21
- Syrian-Belarusian Discussions to Establish Joint Car Manufacturing Company
- Kyrgyzstan Debates Customs Union Entry
- CIS region invites Indian investments-Hyderabad, Sept. 24
- Belarus's long-serving president to run again-Reuters/Minsk
- Venezuela saves Belarus from economic crisis
- Belarusian cultural activities begin on Wednesday

Ukraine

- Ukraine, China sign memorandum on cooperation in coal industry
- Ukraine to join European Energy Community Printer friendly-21 Sep 2010
- Ukraine to host UN-backed forum marking Chernobyl anniversary
- Ukraine is set to Increase its Food Production to Help United Nations Fight Hunger
- The Foundation for Effective Governance and Financial Times to Host 'Ukraine: Reforms, Competitiveness, Investments' Conference in Kyiv
- Ukraine discourages banks from short-term FX borrowing
- Ukraine to host UN-backed forum marking Chernobyl anniversary

Baltic States (Estonia, Latvia & Lithuania)

Estonia

- Baltic leaders back Latvian premier ahead of elections (Roundup)
- Gas draft law attacked-Sep 22, 2010-From wire reports
- Limits of fair play tested by airBaltic
- Companies failing on price posting
- Senior CPC official opens first Confucius Institute in Baltic region

Latvia

- The unemployment rate has tripled
- Latvia signs 1.9-billion-euro loan deal with Nordics
- Trade balance worsens

Lithuania

- Heidelberg Klaipeda to invest in port development 10 mln litas
- Mudslinging erupts within Riga City Council
- Freedom Fund Established
- The appointment of a bankruptcy administrator for a company

- EU Economy: Commission Approves Lithuania and Romania's Efforts To Reduce Excessive Budget Deficit As Effective

Russia

- Russia, China to keep to agreement over ESPO oil price
- Eager to invest in Iranian energy, Russians seek support to undercut Western sanctions
- Iran to make its own anti-aircraft missile system – defense minister
- Israeli Leaders Slam Bill Clinton over Immigrant Comments
- Arctic must remain zone of peace: Putin
- Russia bans missiles to Iran
- Russia's 16-year WTO bid faces many hurdles
- RI, Russia to establish economic forum
- Medvedev, panel to discuss def sector innovative dev ways
- TVEL wins tender for Ukraine nuclear fuel plant -23 September 2010
- Oleg Yesayan delivers lecture on Karabakh issue at Moscow State Institute of International Relations
- Israel mulls leasing land in Russia
- Soviet Coup Plotter Yanayev died at 73 of Long Illness

Caucasian Russian States

- At least 42 injured in suicide bombing in North Caucasus
- Senior Caucasus Rebel Killed in Dagestan Fighting
- Exiled Chechen leader back in London after Polish ruling

Chechnya

- Chechen president leads police operation in highlands
- Russia asks Poland to extradite exiled Chechen leader

Overview of the report

At the political front of Central Europe most of the Governments are facing internal political crises. Especially the Polish President, the Czech Prime Minister and the Hungarian Orban have been facing very massive opposition from the opposition parties. At the Eastern European Front the Belarusian President has lost the favor of Russia but could not yet get the supportive favorable sign from the West where he is still known as the Last Dictator of Europe.

The newly elected Ukrainian President has not yet succeeded in creating an impression of real Non-Aligned Ukraine. He knows that the friendship with Russia at the cost of damaging relations with the West will not continue in the future Scenario of the Region. Moreover Ukraine is still confused regarding its future relation with EU and NATO.

Another aspect of the regional politics is that various Arab Countries like Syria, Kuwait and Israel are competing here to gain most of the sphere of influence in the socio-political and economic arena of the region. To some extent these Central European States have been persuading quite neutral path with respect to mutual rivalries of these Muslim Arab States and Israel.

Israel has recently tried to have footing even in the Caucasian Muslim state of Tataristan. The young Russian immigrants in Israel have been considering an obstacle to peace by even former US President Bill Clinton. These young Russian Jews in the IDF (Israel Defense Force) have been regarded as the hardest-core people against a division of the land

Report Summary

Geo-Political Front

Poland

The European Union said it had "very good" talks Saturday with Poland and Russia on adjusting a new gas supply contract between the countries to align it with the bloc's laws. Poland reached a preliminary agreement with Russian gas export monopoly GAZPROM in January but the contract was not signed. European Commission was assessing the deal in the light of EU laws related to the pipeline's management, access to third parties and tariffs. The new deal will raise annual deliveries of gas to Poland to as much as 10.2 billion cubic meters from about 7.4 bcm.

In the forthcoming EU budget, the Polish government wants to replace the EU the subsidies for companies with better loans and guarantees. The move is set to strengthen the EU budget, which is to become operational from 2013. The EU's current 2007-2013 budget has set aside around 5.26 billion euro for subsidies in the four main operating programs in Poland

Poland's Agriculture Minister has accused France and Germany of trying to exert undue pressure on other governments in talks on reforming the European Union's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) from 2013. Recently the French and German Farm Ministers agreed the main objectives for the CAP reform, but failed to set a figure for the future subsidies.

Israeli and Polish diplomats met at a conference in Jerusalem marking the 20th anniversary of the renewal of bilateral relations after breaking off ties in 1967. Poland, which during the Communist era hated Israel and the Jews, is now one of the country's best friends in Europe. The conference was cosponsored by The Polish Institute of International Affairs and the Israel Council on Foreign Relations.

Meanwhile, Israeli Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman was due in Prague for talks with leaders of the Czech Republic on Monday. The talks are expected to focus on Czech and EU foreign policies. The Czech government pushed for closer ties between the EU and Israel when it held the 27-nation bloc's rotating presidency last year.

President Václav Klaus while opening the new academic year at the Economics and Public Administration Faculty of Prague's University of Economics (VŠE) has said the quality of Czech higher education is disintegrating because of an over-abundance of students and shortage of professors. The slogan 'every Czech a university graduates' was naturally childish and nonsense and responsible for decreasing the quality of university education as well as of secondary school education.

Slovakia

The leaders of the four parties of the Centre-Right Governing coalition in Slovakia met recently to discuss details of government spending cuts and nominations for posts in the State Administration. Prime Minister Iveta Radicova told reporters after the Coalition Council meeting that the leaders had agreed that the salaries of all Constitutional Officials, including judges in Slovakia would be reduced by at least 10%.

The Defense Ministry says it has proposed to completely withdraw Slovak troops from Kosovo. The ministry says 140 servicemen now deployed in Kosovo with the NATO-led force should be home by year's end. The government and Parliament will have to approve the ministry's decision.

The bid by a new centre-right party to reform Slovakian parliament through a popular referendum failed Saturday for lack of voter interest. According to the state statistical offices, only 22.84 per cent of Slovakia's 4.3 million voters participated in the referendum. That was well below the 50 per-cent threshold needed for the ratification of any law in Slovakia. However, as had been expected, most of the voters supported all six issues including controversial proposals to downsize parliament, cut the privileges of politicians, and abolish radio and television license fees.

Hungary

The Hungarian EU Presidency, to be held in the first half of 2011, wants to conclude EU legislation on regulating the disposal of nuclear waste and spent fuel. Hungarian Minister for National Development over whelming supported the European Commission revised plans Nuclear Safety Directive, which made nuclear safety standards established by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) legally binding upon the EU member states. EU in 1957 by concluding the EURATOM Treaty had established the European Atomic Energy Community. EURATOM was originally created to coordinate member states research programs for the peaceful use of nuclear energy and to establish safety standards. In June 2009, the European Union revised the Nuclear Safety Directive, and made International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)'s nuclear safety standards legally binding upon all member states.

Eastern Europe (Belarus & Ukraine)

Belarus

Kuwaiti Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al Sabah on Tuesday met separately with his counterparts from New Zealand, Belarus and Cyprus to discuss ways to boost economic relations. Meanwhile, the Syrian Minister of Industry Fuad Issa al-Juni on Tuesday discussed with Chairman of Board of Directors of Belarusian MAZ and MZNT companies in the line with the President Bashar al-Assad's visit to Belarus in July.

The Belarusian recant role in the Kyrgyzstan coup and giving exile to the former Kyrgyz head has doubted the Kyrgyzstan's joining a customs bloc with neighboring Kazakhstan, Russia and Belarus. For the weak Kyrgyz economy, harmonizing customs arrangements with Russia and Kazakhstan is seen as essential if it is to continue trading with them on anything like equal terms. Last year, these two states accounted for over 28 and ten per cent of Kyrgyzstan's foreign trade, respectively. Kyrgyzstan's president Roza Otunbaeva has announced that her country wanted to join the customs union during a July meeting of the Eurasian Economic Community, EURASEC, a wider grouping of former Soviet states. She has already ordered a working group to look into the economic implications of joining the customs bloc, which is moving towards the eventual creation of a common market encompassing a population of some 170 million people by the end of 2012.

Ukraine

Ukraine's coal industry ministry and China's state development bank reached an agreement on cooperation in the coal industry. The document will provide an algorithm for further implementation of investment to three investment projects to be launched in the Lugansk and Donetsk regions in eastern Ukraine.

Ukraine will join the European Energy Community on 24 September, ahead of the Group's Eighth Ministerial Meeting in Skopje, the capital of the ex-Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. European Commission president Jose Manuel Barroso congratulated his Ukrainian counterpart Viktor Yanukovich on deciding to join the Energy Community and noted "real progress" on energy sector reform, "particularly with the adoption of a new gas law". The EU is financing two feasibility studies on the modernization of the Ukrainian gas transit system and "stands ready to promote a trilateral dialogue with Ukraine and Russia on energy issues.

Ukraine, one of the world's major wheat producers, is set to help United Nations fight hunger in several regions of the world. In his speeches and meetings with the world's leaders Yanukovich said that Ukraine will soon play a much more important role in fighting world food crisis because of the country's large agricultural potential. Notably, last year Ukraine became the donor of the UN World Food Program for the first time

Baltic States (Estonia, Latvia & Lithuania)

Estonia

The prime ministers of neighboring Estonia and Lithuania weighed in on Latvia's forthcoming general election campaign on Friday by offering unequivocal support for incumbent Prime Minister Valdis Dombrovskis. Speaking at the Baltic Economic Forum in Riga, Lithuania's Andrius Kubilius and Estonia's Andrus Ansip both paid tribute to Dombrovskis' efforts to rescue the stricken Latvian economy in 2009.

Russia

Russia's Deputy Prime Minister Igor Sechin said after a meeting with Chinese officials that Chinese officials have not sought to revise an earlier agreement over the cost of oil delivered to China via a recently launched 67-km spur from the Eastern Siberia-Pacific Ocean (ESPO) pipeline. All the parameters were in line with the agreement, and there is no question of revision.

Even as the White House praised Russia for declining to sell anti-aircraft missiles to Iran in violation of U.N. sanctions, Russian diplomats were quietly recruiting other countries this week to undercut tougher penalties imposed on the Islamic Republic of Iran. Russia supported weak U.N. sanctions approved in June to pressure Iran over its nuclear program. But it has strongly objected to tougher sanctions added individually by the United States, the European Union and four other allied countries. It fears those sanctions may also end up hurting Russian businesses that do business in Iran

On the other hands, the Iranian Defense Ministry said on Friday that Iran will make its own anti-aircraft missile systems comparable with Russia's S-300. He was responding to Russian President Dmitry Medvedev's announcement to ban the delivery of various armaments, including S-300, to Iran in compliance with the UN Security Council Resolution 1929 of June 9 2010.

Israeli leaders have sharply criticized Bill Clinton over comments the former U.S. president made this week calling Russian immigrants in Israel an obstacle to peace. Clinton is generally a well-loved figure in Israel for his efforts to broker a Mideast peace deal in the 1990s, he said at a round-table group this week in New York that the most recent arrivals in Israel have the hardest time agreeing to share the land with the Palestinians. "An increasing number of the young people in the IDF (Israel Defense Force) are the children of Russians and settlers, the hardest-core people against a division of the land. This presents a staggering problem," Clinton said. "It's a now different Israel. Sixteen percent of Israelis speak Russian.

Caucasian Russian States

A suicide bomber has blown him up in the Republic of Dagestan, injuring at least 42 people, including several police officers. Meanwhile the Russia's counterterrorist forces killed the head of a rebel group in the North Caucasus Province of Dagestan on Saturday. "Alibek Abunazarov was on the federal wanted list for a long time.

Exiled Chechen separatist leader Akhmed Zakayev has returned to London after Poland declined a request from Russia to extradite him on charges of murder, kidnapping and terrorism. Mr. Zakayev was granted political asylum by Britain in 2003, and the UK authorities have rejected Russian demands for his extradition. Denmark also refused similar requests from Moscow after detaining Mr. Zakayev during a conference

there on Chechnya's bid for independence. The former actor handed himself over to Polish prosecutors last Friday after arriving in Warsaw for a similar conference. The urbane Mr Zakayev (51) is critical of radical Chechen rebels who have become increasingly influenced by Islamist extremism, and represents a more moderate strand of the separatist movement that wants talks with Moscow. He is a friend of actor Vanessa Redgrave, who campaigned on his behalf and paid his bail when he was arrested in London.

Economic Front

Poland

Speaking in New York during a two day conference devoted to Millennium Development Goals preceding the 65th UN General Assembly Session, Foreign Minister said Poland's experience as a recipient of humanitarian aid gives his country a unique insight into the needs of nations which can benefit from the UN Millennium Development Goals project. He spoke of the unique experience of Poland has gained in extending aid to underdeveloped countries,

This year marked the 5th Economic Forum of Young Leaders between 7-12 Septembers in NOWY SACZ, which took place in concert with the Economic Forum in KRYNICA, commonly referred to as the DAVOS of the East. In virtue of NOWY SACZ'S strategic location to KRYNICA, the town serves as an ideal place to host a forum. Spearheaded by the NOWY STAW FOUNDATION in LUBLIN and funded through the Youth in Action Program, the event is a perfect example of European citizenship in action. The Lisbon Treaty, the Global Economic crises and Poland's role in Europe remained the main issues for debates.

Czech Republic

The centre-right Czech government Thursday adopted a belt-tightening budget for next year limiting the public finance deficit to 4.6 percent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) set by the European Union for the country. He forecasted that the targeted deficit would be 3.5 percent of GDP in 2012 and 2.9 percent in 2013.

Hungary

The German luxury carmaker Audi will invest 900 million euros (1.2 billion dollars) in its Hungarian plant by 2013, Prime Minister Viktor Orban and Audi Chief Rupert Stadler said on Thursday. Stadler said Audi, a unit of Europe's largest carmaker Volkswagen, aimed to become the number one premium automaker in the world by 2015, overtaking BMW and Mercedes-Benz, respectively number one and two globally.

Hungarian bond spreads over German debt will probably narrow as the country reduces its budget deficit to less than the European Union's limit next year. Prime

Minister Viktor Orban's government this month pledged to reduce the 2011 shortfall to less than 3 percent of Gross Domestic Product.

Retail sales in Hungary rose by 1.7 per cent in July compared to the same month last year, the first increase in over three years, according to official figures released Wednesday. Analysts had forecast a slight year-on-year drop in July sales following a 4.6-per-cent fall in June.

Eastern Europe (Belarus & Ukraine)

Belarus

A panel of diplomats from CIS countries threw open opportunities for Indian exporters and business houses for export of various products and setting up joint venture units at a seminar on '**Focus CIS Region**' organized by the Engineering Export Promotion Council (EPEC) here on Friday. The Centre has already taken a string of initiatives to enhance trade between India and CIS region, including Government Lines of Credit (LOC), Inter-Banking Relations, Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement and Bilateral Investment Protection Agreement. India's major items of exports to Belarus include fish file, extracts of coffee, raw tobacco, compounds of carbon acid, antibiotics, footwear and electric transformers, while its imports from Belarus included potash fertilizers, polyamides, tires, artificial threats, intermediate iron or alloy-free steel and electric integrated circuits.

Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko, in power since 1994, will run again in the upcoming December 19 presidential elections, an official at the country's electoral commission said yesterday. Lukashenko, 55, had previously said he would seek a new five-year term. His closest challenger pulled out earlier this month, saying he believed the poll would be rigged. He controls most media in the country of 10million. The EU and US have long shunned Lukashenko, accusing him of maintaining power through illegitimate elections and harshly suppressing dissent.

The Latin American country has. Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko said that Venezuela has "saved" his country from an economic crisis by sending oil to Minsk after Russia stopped subsidizing shipments of crude oil to Belarus. He added that, unlike Russia, which has gradually increased the price of oil and gas purchased by Belarus in recent years, Venezuela "sells oil under normal conditions.

Ukraine

The Ukrainian Foundation for Effective Governance (FEG), in partnership with the Financial Times, will host an international strategic forum "Ukraine: Reforms, Competitiveness, and Investments." The interactive panel discussions will focus on Ukraine's current economic outlook, the Ukrainian government's progress in realizing economic reforms, and unrivalled insight into investment opportunities in the country.

Ukraine's central bank has ordered local banks to deposit parts of foreign short-term loans they take up into a special account to protect the HRYVNIA UAH. The measure may cut the inflow of foreign currency in the short term prompting some HRYVNIA weakness, but should decrease its volatility in the longer term, analysts say.

Baltic States (Estonia, Latvia & Lithuania)

Estonia

Prime Minister Andrius Kubilius calls the statements regarding the government's plans to nationalize the assets of gas company LIETUVOS DUJOS, The statement is considered as a an "unacceptable threat," by several Estonians.

The Estonian Consumer Protection Board issued a warning on Sept. 17 that when consumers begin to make travel plans, they should take into account the problems encountered by some with the activities of the aviation firm Air Baltic.

Latvia

Since in July 2010, the current account surplus in Latvia's balance of payments has been dropped to 38.7 million lats (55.2 million euros), the Baltic state of Latvia signed agreements Tuesday with neighboring countries, making 1.9 billion Euros available to it as part of a total 7.5-billion-euro (10-billion-dollar) loan package brokered by the European Union and International Monetary Fund (IMF).

Lithuania

Klaipeda Free Economy Zone has signed an agreement with a new investor Heidelberg Klaipeda for allocation of more than ten million LITAS in development of logistics terminal. The investor is global concern's Heidelberg cement subsidiary in Lithuania. This is 21st investor in LEZ of Klaipeda. Heidelberg cement Klaipėda belongs to Heidelberg cement Scandinavian unit. The company plans to import to Lithuania high-quality concrete via the new terminal. The terminals output is expected at 50,000-70,000 tons per year.

Russia.

The governments of Indonesia and Russia will soon sign an agreement to set up a bilateral economic forum to address issues on economic and trade cooperation between the two countries. According to Trade Ministry data, the value of Indonesia's exports to Russia in the first half of this year reached US\$242 million, while the value of imports was \$540.3 million.

President Dmitry Medvedev is to chair a meeting of the commission on the modernization and technological development of the Russian economy. The Commission's meeting is to take place at the Ramenskoye Instrument-Making Plant and

will be devoted to the theme of innovative development of the defense-industry and the modernization of the Armed Forces of Russia.

Social front

Poland

More than 5,000 Polish civil servants took to the streets of Warsaw on Wednesday in a protest at pay freezes proposed by the government in the 2011 budget. Demonstrators, among them police officers, firemen, border and prison guards as well as tax collectors, marched around Parliament.

Counsel for accused USS-COLE bombing plotter Abd al-Rahim al-Nashiri today called on the Polish government to investigate and prosecute Polish officials who knew about and authorized al-Nashiri's detention and torture in a CIA's secret prison in Poland after being kidnapped by the CIA. In response to the announcement, the American Civil Liberties Union today called on the Obama administration to broaden its own investigation into the Bush-era torture program and include top-level U.S. officials who may have known about such abuses.

Poland's Equality Minister is facing accusations of homophobia and calls for her to quit after she said Catholic schools had the right to fire gay and lesbian teachers. Elzbieta Radziszewska, a member of the governing Civic Platform party, said Catholic schools could dismiss gay members of staff, or refuse to hire them, because their sexuality was at odds with the teachings of the church.

Czech Republic

The Czech Republic has refused to grant Google permission to expand its "Street View" because the mapping feature invades peoples' privacy, the government's privacy watchdog said Wednesday. The Czech Office for Personal Data Protection has been investigating the issue since April, and last week it did not give Google Inc. the necessary registration for "Street View" in the Czech Republic.

Like Poland, about 40,000 policemen, nurses and clerks in Czech Republic marched through streets of Prague on Tuesday to protest against a plan to slash public sector wages, but the Czech government remained determined to push ahead with cutting the deficit. The labor protest, the biggest in years, is the first test of the new centre-right cabinet's resolve to narrow the budget gap to 4.6 percent of gross domestic product next year from 5.3 percent this year.

Hungary

Hungarian state television has rejected a political ad from a far-right party that talks about 'Gypsy criminals.' Hungary is holding municipal elections on Oct 3. An advertisement by Jobbik, a parliamentary party criticized for its extreme nationalist and

racist views, talks about the need to get rid of 'parasites' such as corrupt politicians, multinational companies, banks and 'Gypsy criminals.' Hungarian Television said on Friday it refused to run the ad because it did not comply with broadcast rules and was misleading and offensive.

Eastern Europe (Belarus & Ukraine)

Belarus

The Abu Dhabi Authority for Culture and Heritage (ADACH) will be hosting a number of events in the capital as part of cultural activities related to the Republic of Belarus between Wednesday and Friday. It includes a Belarusian Arts Exhibition, a gala concert and the performance by world-famous National Academic Bolshoi Ballet Theatre of the Republic of Belarus.

Ukraine

Ukraine will host a high-level United Nations-backed conference next year to mark the 25th anniversary of the 1986 Chernobyl nuclear accident and assess the progress towards restoring and normalizing life in the region affected by the disaster.

Baltic States (Estonia, Latvia & Lithuania)

Estonia

Li Changchun, a senior official of the Communist Party of China (CPC), opened here on Wednesday the first Confucius Institute in the Baltic region. Li, a member of the Standing Committee of the CPC Central Committee's Political Bureau, said he hopes the facility, jointly launched by Estonia's prestigious Tallinn University and China's Guangxi University with the help of the Chinese Language Council and would serve as a regional center for spreading Chinese culture and offer quality courses for Estonians who are interested in the Chinese language and eager to understand the Chinese culture. Tallinn University is the sole university in this Baltic country that boasts a Chinese major. It has enrolled Chinese-learning students in the past two decades.

Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin at the first Arctic Forum in Moscow, called for “a zone of peace” in the Arctic as Canada, Denmark, Norway, Russia and the United States are locked in a race over how to divide up the Arctic, after US researchers said recently that global warming might leave it ice-free by 2030.

Russia

President of Israeli International Association of Businessmen Leonid Litinetsky made the request to Russia's republic of Tatarstan to lease 1.5 million hectares of its land. Israeli businessmen would use the leased land for agricultural production,

introducing innovation technologies, processing plant-growing products and cattle-breeding.

Detailed Report

Poland

Political Front

Russia, Poland, EU Had 'Very Good' Gas Talks-20 September 2010-Bloomberg

BRUSSELS — The European Union said it had "very good" talks Saturday with Poland and Russia on adjusting a new gas supply contract between the countries to align it with the bloc's laws. Poland reached a preliminary agreement with Russian gas export monopoly Gazprom in January. The contract was not signed, however, after the European Commission said it was assessing the compatibility of the deal with EU law, including issues related to the pipeline's management, access to third parties and tariffs. The new deal will raise annual deliveries of gas to Poland to as much as 10.2 billion cubic meters from about 7.4 bcm. The increase will cover a supply gap after one of the country's transit sources halted last year and will help secure supply from the Yamal pipeline

End of EU subsidies?-20.09.2010 10:33

In the forthcoming EU budget, it has been reported that the Polish government wants to end EU subsidies for companies by replacing them with preferential loans and guarantees. The move is set to bolster the EU budget, which is to become operational from 2013, with loan repayments rather than hand out one-off subsidies, and will allow for more companies to receive loan packages. "We would like more funds to go to businesses in the form of loans," Elzbieta Bienkowska, regional development minister told Gazeta Wyborcza, adding that a final decision is yet to be taken formally. "In the future the ratio of loans to subsidies may amount to 70/30 percent, or even 80/20 percent," informs Bienkowska. The EU's current 2007-2013 budget has opposite proportions of subsidies to loans, with around 5.26 billion euro set aside for subsidies in the four main operating programs in Poland

Poland attacks Franco-German EU farm proposals-Sep 21, 2010

LA HULPE, BELGIUM, Sept 21 (Reuters) - Poland's agriculture minister has accused France and Germany of trying to exert undue pressure on other governments in talks on reforming the European Union's common agricultural policy (CAP) from 2013. In a joint paper published last week, the French and German farm ministers agreed the main objectives for the CAP reform, but failed to set a figure for the future budget -- currently worth about 50 billion euros (\$52.38 billion) a year. But Paris and Berlin did

signal their opposition to equal per-hectare subsidies for farmers across the EU, saying it would not reflect the economic reality in Europe -- a reference to the lower costs faced by farmers in poorer central and eastern states

From Poles apart to best friends-09/21/2010

Israeli and Polish diplomats met at a conference in Jerusalem marking the 20th anniversary of the renewal of bilateral relations. Poland, which during the Communist era reviled Israel and the Jews, is now one of the country's best friends in Europe. Israeli and Polish diplomats were in accord over the warmth of the relationship at an intensive oneand- a-half day conference in Jerusalem this week to mark the 20th anniversary of the renewal of bilateral relations, after breaking off ties in 1967. The conference was cosponsored by The Polish Institute of International Affairs and the Israel Council on Foreign Relations. While some speakers wanted to focus on the diplomatic process and its development, others said that the relationship between Poland and Israel was unique because it had been preceded by an almost one-thousand-year symbiosis between Poles and Jews, and because, in a sense, the State of Israel was an extension of that relationship

Economic Front

Poland's special insight into Millennium Development Goals

Speaking in New York, Foreign Minister Radoslaw Sikorski said Poland's experience as a recipient of humanitarian aid gives his country a unique insight into the needs of nations which can benefit from the UN Millennium Development Goals project. The head of Poland's diplomacy took the floor during a two day conference devoted to Millennium Development Goals preceding the 65th UN General Assembly Session. In his address Minister Sikorski spoke of the unique experience Poland has gained in extending aid to underdeveloped countries, being itself a recipient of international help not so long ago

Economic forum brings young leaders to Poland-Wed, Sep 22 2010

This year marked the 5th Economic Forum of Young Leaders between 7-12 September in Nowy Sacz, which took place in concert with the Economic Forum in Krynica, commonly referred to as the Davos of the East. In virtue of Nowy Sacz's strategic location to Krynica, the town serves as an ideal place to host a forum. Spearheaded by the Nowy Staw Foundation in Lublin and funded through the Youth in Action program, the event is a perfect example of European citizenship in action. A labyrinth of issues from the Lisbon Treaty, to the economic crises and Poland's role in Europe are increasingly prescient. To explore these economic and political questions demands a forum

PKO sees net profit improving each quarter-Thu Sep 23, 2010

WARSAW, Sept 23 (Reuters) - Poland's top bank PKO BP PKOB.WA expects its net profit to rise quarter after quarter, likely hitting 3 billion zlotys (\$1 billion) in all of 2010, as economic recovery boosts revenue and holds down provisions. PKO Chief Executive Zbigniew Jagiello told reporters on Thursday the state-controlled lender's bottom line would "improve every quarter if no one-offs occur

Social front

Over 5,000 Poles protest at pay freeze-Wednesday, September.

More than 5,000 Polish civil servants took to the streets of Warsaw on Wednesday in a protest at pay freezes proposed by the government in the 2011 budget, an AFP correspondent said. Skip related content. Demonstrators, among them police officers, firemen, border and prison guards as well as tax collectors, marched between the finance ministry, the seat of parliament and Prime Minister Donald Tusk's office after a walkout call by Poland's main trades unions OPZZ and Solidarity.

Counsel Calls On Polish Prosecutor to Investigate Torture of Detainee at CIA Black Site

NEW YORK - September 21 - Counsel for accused USS Cole bombing plotter Abd al-Rahim al-Nashiri today called on the Polish government to investigate and prosecute Polish officials who knew about and authorized al-Nashiri's detention and torture in Poland after he was kidnapped and transported there by the CIA. In response to the announcement, the American Civil Liberties Union today called on the Obama administration to broaden its own investigation into the Bush-era torture program to include top-level U.S. government officials who may have known about and authorized such abuse

Pole equality chief claims church is right to ban gay teachersPremium Article !

Poland's equality minister is facing accusations of homophobia and calls for her to quit after she said Catholic schools had the right to fire gay and lesbian teachers, and then "outed" a gay man live on TV. In a press article, Elzbieta Radziszewska, a member of the governing Civic Platform party, said Catholic schools could dismiss gay members of staff, or refuse to hire them, because their sexuality was at odds with the teachings of the church. She referred to the sexuality of a man during a debate with him on live television, apparently outing him. In a heated discussion with Krzysztof Smiszek, deputy head of the Polish Society for Anti-Discrimination Law, she said "we know he is a member of the homosexual society and an activist for the Campaign Against Homophobia".

Czech Republic

Political Front

FM due in Prague to discuss Czech, EU foreign policies

PRAGUE — Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman was due in Prague for talks with leaders of the Czech Republic on Monday. Lieberman will meet with Czech Prime Minister Petr Necas, as well as the foreign and defense ministers. The talks are expected to focus on Czech and EU foreign policies. The Czech government pushed for closer ties between the EU and Israel when it held the 27-nation bloc's rotating presidency last year.

President says university not for everyone

President Václav Klaus opened the new academic year at the Economics and Public Administration Faculty of Prague's University of Economics (VŠE) on a dampening note. In a speech he gave students on Monday, Klaus said the quality of Czech higher education is disintegrating because of an over-abundance of students, some of whom, he insinuates, are simply not university material. The Czech Press Agency (ČTK) reported that Klaus told the students "The slogan 'every Czech a university graduate' is naturally childish nonsense that is decreasing the quality of university education as well as of secondary school education." It's true that the shortage of professors in the country has made it a stretch in the last few years to accommodate the growing number of university students (though the amount of graduates as a percentage of the overall population is still much lower than Western Europe), and the prevailing apolitical wisdom is that if university education is to remain free for Czech students, universities will have to be more selective in their admissions

Economic Front

Czech government adopts austerity budget

The centre-right Czech government Thursday adopted a belt-tightening budget for next year limiting the public finance deficit to 4.6 percent of gross domestic product (GDP). Skip related content. "The government has adopted a budget plan for 2011 with a deficit of 135 billion koruny (5.5 billion euros/ 7.3 billion dollars). The public finance deficit will not cross 4.6 percent of GDP in 2011," Prime Minister Petr Necas told reporters. He said the targeted deficit would be 3.5 percent of GDP in 2012 and 2.9 percent in 2013. This year's plan is more ambitious than the 4.8 percent of GDP target set by the European Union for the country, which joined the bloc in 2004, but higher than the three percent set for euro zone members.

Social front

Czechs halt Google's 'Street View,' cite privacy-Sep 22-Associated Press

PRAGUE (AP) - The Czech Republic has refused to grant Google permission to expand its "Street View" because the mapping feature invades peoples' privacy, the government's privacy watchdog said Wednesday. The Czech Office for Personal Data

Protection has been investigating the issue since April, and last week it did not give Google Inc. the necessary registration for "Street View" in the eastern European country but did not explain why. Google at the time considered it a temporary decision. On Wednesday, the U.S. Internet giant said it was closely cooperating with the Czech government agency and providing all the details required to be allowed to continue in collecting data

Czech workers protest wage cuts, cabinet holds firm

PRAGUE, Sept 21 (Reuters) - Thousands of policemen, nurses and clerks marched through Prague on Tuesday to protest against a plan to slash public sector wages, but the Czech government remained determined to push ahead with cutting the deficit. The labour protest, the biggest in years, is the first test of the new centre-right cabinet's resolve to narrow the budget gap to 4.6 percent of gross domestic product next year from 5.3 percent this year. On Tuesday, about 40,000 soldiers, policemen, doctors and other professionals protested in Prague against proposals to slash government spending by 10 percent to prevent the country from falling deeper into debt.

Slovakia

Political Front

Lower salaries for constitutional officials

The leaders of the four parties of the centre-right governing coalition in Slovakia met recently to discuss details of government spending cuts and nominations for posts in the state administration. Prime Minister Iveta Radicova told reporters after the Coalition Council meeting that the leaders had agreed that the salaries of all constitutional officials in Slovakia would be reduced by at least 10%. Pay cuts will cover all 2,600 constitutional officials, including judges.

Slovakia plans to completely withdraw troops from Kosovo, deploy soldiers to Afghanistan

BRATISLAVA, Slovakia (AP) — The Defense Ministry says it has proposed to completely withdraw Slovak troops from Kosovo. The ministry says 140 servicemen now deployed in Kosovo with the NATO-led force should be home by year's end. The government and Parliament will have to approve the ministry's decision.

Slovak Freedom and Solidarity: results are binding for politicians-Sep 21 2010

SLOVAKIA's seventh referendum, which took place on September 18, did not end up as a fiasco, according to Richard Sulík, the chairman of the Freedom and Solidarity (SaS), who had feared that it might turn out that way. Many more voters than the 400,000 people who had signed the petition to initiate the referendum turned out to vote – in the end more than a million citizens went to the polls on September 18 2010.

Nevertheless, this represented less than 23 per cent of all registered voters and the referendum is officially not valid as a turnout over 50 per cent is required for a plebiscite to be binding in Slovakia. Sulík said in the aftermath of the referendum that it was a great success that 23 per cent of Slovak voters took part in the vote, adding that at least a million voters have shown that they care about the future of Slovakia and did not allow politicians to manipulate them.

Slovakia's referendum fails on low voter turnout -19.09.2010

The bid by a new centre-right party to reform Slovakian parliament through a popular referendum failed Saturday for lack of voter interest. Only 22.84 per cent of Slovakia's 4.3 million voters participated in the referendum according to the state statistical offices SU SR, which posted unofficial results on an internet website. That was well below the 50 per-cent threshold needed to validate the outcome under Slovakian law. Those voters, who participated, however, supported all six issues in the referendum with a clear majority, as had been expected. They backed controversial proposals to downsize parliament, cut the privileges of politicians, and abolish radio and television license fees

Economic Front

Brussels wants to increase EU's own budget-21 September 2010

The European Commission is considering boosting the role played by the EU's own resources in the next budgetary cycle, the institution's vice-president, Maroš Šefčovič, told EurActiv Slovakia in an interview. The Commission can publish data on the European Union's revenue and expenditure and propose alternatives, but the final decision on the post-2013 budget issues rests with member states and the European Parliament, he said

Hungary

Political Front

Nuclear waste tops Hungary's priorities at EU helm-23 September 2010

The Hungarian EU Presidency, to be held in the first half of 2011, wants to conclude EU legislation on regulating the disposal of nuclear waste and spent fuel.

Background

The 1957 Euratom treaty establishing the European Atomic Energy Community has marked Europe's long history of cooperation on nuclear energy. Euratom was originally created to coordinate member states' research programmes for the peaceful use of nuclear energy and to establish safety standards. In June 2009, the European Union adopted a revised Nuclear Safety Directive, which made nuclear safety standards established by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) legally binding. Last

March, European Commission President José Manuel Barroso announced that the EU executive would table legislative proposals on the treatment of nuclear waste by the end of the year. Tamás Fellegi, Hungarian minister for national development, gave his support to European Commission plans to adopt a directive on nuclear waste management in the first half of 2011. The European Commission will table a draft directive in October, an EU official confirmed. Speaking at a Budapest conference entitled 'Nuclear Energy in Europe: From Acceptance to Ownership', Fellegi said his country was ready to take up the challenge and conclude negotiations on the directive with the EU's 26 other member states and the European Parliament

Economic Front

The German luxury carmaker Audi will invest 900 million euros (1.2 billion dollars) in its Hungarian plant by 2013,

The German luxury carmaker Audi will invest 900 million euros (1.2 billion dollars) in its Hungarian plant by 2013, Prime Minister Viktor Orban and Audi chief Rupert Stadler said on Thursday. "We want to increase our sales by 50 percent by 2015, equivalent to 1.5 million cars each year," Stadler said at a joint press conference with Orban. Audi, a unit of Europe's largest carmaker, Volkswagen, aims to become the number one premium automaker in the world by 2015, overtaking BMW and Mercedes-Benz, respectively number one and two globally

Hungary Sees Tighter Bond Spreads on Deficit Pledge-September 24, 2010

Sept. 24 (Bloomberg) -- Hungarian bond spreads over German debt will probably narrow as the country reduces its budget deficit to less than the European Union's limit next year, said Gyula Pleschinger, the new head of the government debt agency. Prime Minister Viktor Orban's government this month pledged to reduce the 2011 shortfall to less than 3 percent of gross domestic product, two months after falling out with international lenders over the same target. The forint strengthened and government bond yields dropped

Surprise figures show Hungarians are shopping more-Sep 22, 2010,

Budapest - Retail sales in Hungary rose by 1.7 per cent in July compared to the same month last year, the first increase in over three years, according to official figures released Wednesday. Analysts had forecast a slight year-on-year drop in July sales following a 4.6-per-cent fall in June.

Social front

TV rejects political ad of gypsies

BUDAPEST (Hungary) - HUNGARIAN state television has rejected a political ad from a far-right party that talks about 'Gypsy criminals.' Hungary is holding municipal

elections on Oct 3. An advertisement by Jobbik, a parliamentary party criticised for its extreme nationalist and racist views, talks about the need to get rid of 'parasites' such as corrupt politicians, multinational companies, banks and 'Gypsy criminals.' Hungarian Television said on Friday it refused to run the ad because it did not comply with broadcast rules and was misleading and offensive. Jobbik president Gabor Vona said Hungarian state radio also banned the ad. He described the decisions as an 'unprecedented' step against freedom of expression. Jobbik won 16.7 per cent of the votes in April's parliamentary elections.

EU deputy welcomes Roma strategy plan-23rd September 2010

Roma MEP Livia Járóka has welcomed the Hungarian government's pledge to launch a European Roma strategy during its stint at the helm of the EU presidency next year. Hungary said it planned to come forward with an action plan "based on economic attributes instead of ethnicity". The move follows the uproar over the treatment of Roma by the French authorities, which have closed dozens of encampments occupied by Roma people in recent weeks. French president Nicolas Sarkozy has come in for fierce criticism for his support of the policy which has also seen hundreds of Roma deported from his country under the crackdown. In a speech in Strasbourg during a debate on the issue in parliament, Járóka - the only Roma MEP - welcomed the announcement of Hungarian PM Viktor Orbán on launching a European Roma strategy during the upcoming Hungarian presidency in the first half of 2011

Eastern Europe (Belarus & Ukraine)

Belarus

Political Front

Kuwait FM, counterparts discuss ways to boost economic relations-Sept 21

(KUNA) -- Kuwaiti Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al Sabah on Tuesday met separately with his counterparts from New Zealand, Belarus and Cyprus to discuss ways to boost economic relations.

Syrian-Belarusian Discussions to Establish Joint Car Manufacturing Company

Damascus, (SANA) – Minister of Industry Fuad Issa al-Juni on Tuesday discussed with Chairman of Board of Directors of Belarusian MAZ and MZNT companies the draft project of establishing a joint Syrian-Belarusian company for manufacturing cars and trucks.

The project comes as part of the resumption of the discussions between the two sides which started during President Bashar al-Assad's visit to Belarus in July. The two sides agreed on the share percentage in the joint company which is to build MZNT truck and MAZ buses in Syria in cooperation with Minsk Company for Manufacturing Truck in addition to the public and private sectors

Kyrgyzstan Debates Customs Union Entry

As Kyrgyzstan's government seriously considers joining a customs bloc with neighboring Kazakhstan as well as Russia and Belarus, some economic experts have voiced doubts over the wisdom of doing so, at least in the near future. Kyrgyzstan's president Roza Otunbaeva announced that her country wanted to join the customs union during a July meeting of the Eurasian Economic Community, EurAsEC, a wider grouping of former Soviet states. Otunbaeva ordered a working group to look into the economic implications of joining the customs bloc, which is moving towards the eventual creation of a common market encompassing a population of some 170 million people by the end of 2012. For the weak Kyrgyz economy, harmonizing customs arrangements with Russia and Kazakhstan is seen as essential if it is to continue trading with them on anything like equal terms. Last year, these two states accounted for over 28 and ten per cent of Kyrgyzstan's foreign trade, respectively. The introduction of common customs rules for Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan at the beginning of July was a step towards a new divide that will set members of the customs union apart from non-members. Customs Deal Brings Kazaks Closer to Russia

Economic Front

CIS region invites Indian investments-Hyderabad, Sept. 24

A panel of diplomats from CIS countries threw open opportunities for Indian exporters and business houses for export of various products and setting up joint venture units at a seminar on 'Focus CIS Region' organised by the Engineering Export Promotion Council (EEPC) here on Friday. The Centre has already taken a string of initiatives to enhance trade between India and CIS region, including Government Lines of Credit (LOC), inter-banking relations, Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement and Bilateral Investment Protection Agreement. Mr. Oleg Laptinok, Ambassador, Embassy of the Republic of Belarus, said exports of engineering goods from India to Belarus increased from Rs 10.13 crore in 2008-09 to Rs 43.90 crore in 2009-10. These included products such as iron and steel bar, machine tools, residual engineering items and transport equipment. India's major items of exports to Belarus include fish file, extracts of coffee, raw tobacco, compounds of carbon acid, antibiotics, footwear and electric transformers, while its imports from Belarus included potash fertilisers, polyamides, tyres, artificial threads, intermediate iron or alloy-free steel and electric integrated circuits. Belarus's total exports were of the order of \$21.41 billion, while its imports touched \$28.39 billion. On trade between India and Azerbaijan, India imported goods worth Rs 1,335.72 crore, while exported products worth Rs 142 crore in 2009-10. While India's major items of import from Azerbaijan included aluminium and related products, organic chemicals and vegetables, export included products such as pharma, apparel, machinery, paper, tobacco, medical instruments, dye and paint.

Belarus's long-serving president to run again-Reuters/Minsk

Belarussian President Alexander Lukashenko, in power since 1994, will run again in the upcoming December 19 presidential elections, an official at the country's electoral commission said yesterday. Lukashenko, 55, had previously said he would seek a new five-year term. His closest challenger pulled out earlier this month, saying he believed the poll would be rigged. Analysts say that Lukashenko will have little trouble winning re-election. He controls most media in the country of 10mn wedged between Poland and Russia and has won popular support by maintaining Soviet-era subsidies. Speaking to students on the day his re-election bid was announced, Lukashenko hailed Belarus's state-dominated economy as a model. The global financial crisis, he said, showed the perils of relying excessively on the private sector. To overcome the crisis, countries "have strengthened the role of the state which Belarus has always done", Lukashenko said, according to the Interfax news agency. "Suddenly the Belarus model proved to be eagerly sought," he added. So far, 15 contenders including Lukashenko have registered with the commission, official Nikolai Lazovik said. Contenders have until 1600 GMT on Friday to register, he added. The EU and US have long shunned Lukashenko, accusing him of maintaining power through illegitimate elections and harshly suppressing dissent

Venezuela saves Belarus from economic crisis

The Latin American country has sent oil to Minsk after Russia stopped subsidizing shipments of crude oil to Belarus. Belarussian President Alexander Lukashenko said that Venezuela has "saved" his country from an economic crisis after Russia stopped subsidizing oil sent to Minsk, Efe reported. "Had Venezuela not helped us, we would have faced a very bad time. They saved us," Lukashenko acknowledged, as reported by official news agency Belta. He added that, unlike Russia, which has gradually increased the price of oil and gas purchased by Belarus in recent years, Venezuela "sells oil under normal conditions." Belarus' president said that his country has also supported Venezuela. "We do not extract oil and go. We are engaged in house building. We are building entire cities and producing oil. We are very pleased with our cooperation projects

Social front

Belarusian cultural activities begin on Wednesday

THE Abu Dhabi Authority for Culture and Heritage (ADACH) will be hosting a number of events in the capital as part of cultural activities related to the Republic of Belarus between Wednesday and Friday, according to a statement by Adach. As part of the project, a Belarusian Arts Exhibition prepared by the Belarusian Museum of Modern Fine Arts will be launched on Wednesday evening at the Emirates Palace Hotel. The official opening, however, will be on Thursday with a gala concert at the Emirates Palace. The concert will see the world-famous National Academic Bolshoi Ballet Theatre of the Republic of Belarus performing "Romeo & Juliette," and the Belarusian State Choreographic Company, "Khoroshki," performing fiery traditional dance compositions. On Friday, the cultural days will continue at the National Theatre

with a concert of the Chamber Orchestra of Young Talents from the Republican Music College under the Belarusian State Academy of Music, and with another fiery performance of Khoroshki

Ukraine

Political Front

Ukraine, China sign memorandum on cooperation in coal industry

KIEV, Sept. 23 (Xinhua) -- Ukraine's coal industry ministry and China's state development bank reached an agreement on cooperation in the coal industry Thursday. "We have signed a document which provides an algorithm for further implementation of investment projects," Yuriy Yaschenko, the Ukrainian coal industry minister, told reporters after a meeting with Gao Jian, deputy head of the State Development Bank of China. The memorandum applies to three investment projects to be launched in the Lugansk and Donetsk regions in eastern Ukraine, Yaschenko said.

Ukraine to join European Energy Community Printer friendly-21 Sep 2010

London, 21 September (Argus) — Ukraine will join the European Energy Community on 24 September, ahead of the group's eighth ministerial meeting in Skopje, the capital of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Ascension to the community — an EU initiative founded in 2005 to establish common market rules in southeast Europe — has been seen as a step towards the further reform of Ukraine's energy sector. Last week, European Commission president Jose Manuel Barroso congratulated his Ukrainian counterpart Viktor Yanukovich on deciding to join the Energy Community and noted “real progress” on energy sector reform, “particularly with the adoption of a new gas law”. The EU is financing two feasibility studies on the modernisation of the Ukrainian gas transit system and “stands ready to promote a trilateral dialogue with Ukraine and Russia on energy issues,” Barroso said. Ukraine has been an observer to the Energy Community since the group's first meeting in 2006.

Ukraine is set to Increase its Food Production to Help United Nations Fight Hunger

KYIV, Ukraine, September 23, - Ukraine, one of the world's major wheat producers, is set to help United Nations fight hunger in several regions of the world. This was one of the key messages the Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich conveyed to the United Nations during his visit to the UN General Assembly. In his speeches and meetings with the world's leaders Yanukovich expressed his certitude that Ukraine will soon play a much more important role in fighting world food crisis because of the country's large agricultural potential. Notably, last year Ukraine became the donor of the UN World Food Program for the first time

Ukraine

Economic Front

The Foundation for Effective Governance and Financial Times to Host 'Ukraine: Reforms, Competitiveness, Investments' Conference in Kyiv

KYIV, Ukraine, Sept. 24 /PRNewswire/ -- The Ukrainian Foundation for Effective Governance (FEG), in partnership with the Financial Times, will host an international strategic forum "Ukraine: Reforms, Competitiveness, Investments." The interactive panel discussions will focus on Ukraine's current economic outlook, the Ukrainian government's progress in realizing economic reforms, and unrivalled insight into investment opportunities in the country.

Ukraine discourages banks from short-term FX borrowing

KIEV, Sept 24 (Reuters) - Ukraine's central bank has ordered local banks to deposit parts of foreign short-term loans they take up into a special account to protect the hryvnia UAH, a banking source told Reuters on Friday. The measure may cut the inflow of foreign currency in the short term prompting some hryvnia weakness, but should decrease its volatility in the longer term, analysts say. Citing a letter circulated by the regulator among banks, the source said the central bank was reviving an old regulation -- requiring banks to deposit 20 percent of money borrowed abroad for less than 183 days with it -- from October 1

Ukraine

Social front

Ukraine to host UN-backed forum marking Chernobyl anniversary

Ukraine will host a high-level United Nations-backed conference next year to mark the 25th anniversary of the 1986 Chernobyl nuclear accident and assess the progress towards restoring and normalizing life in the region affected by the disaster. The country's President Viktor Yanukovich told the opening day of the General Assembly's annual General Debate today that the forum will be held in Kyiv, the capital, next April, and will also discuss nuclear safety issues.

Baltic States (Estonia, Latvia & Lithuania)

Estonia

Political Front

Baltic leaders back Latvian premier ahead of elections (Roundup)

Riga - The prime ministers of neighbouring Estonia and Lithuania weighed in on Latvia's forthcoming general election campaign on Friday by offering unequivocal

support for incumbent Prime Minister Valdis Dombrovskis. Speaking at the Baltic Economic Forum in Riga, Lithuania's Andrius Kubilius and Estonia's Andrus Ansip both paid tribute to Dombrovskis' efforts to rescue the stricken Latvian economy, which contracted by 18 per cent in 2009

Estonia

Economic Front

Gas draft law attacked-Sep 22, 2010-From wire reports

VILNIUS - Prime Minister Andrius Kubilius calls the statements regarding the government's plans to nationalize the assets of gas company Lietuvos Dujos, which were published in several daily newspapers starting Sept. 20, an "unacceptable threat," reports news agency ELTA. "This is a publicly expressed threat to disrupt gas supplies if the Lithuanian government implements the EU directives, and such a threat is completely unacceptable and intolerable

Limits of fair play tested by airBaltic

RIGA - The Estonian Consumer Protection Board issued a warning on Sept. 17 that when consumers begin to make travel plans, they should take into account the problems encountered by some with the activities of the aviation firm airBaltic, reports EPL Online. The Board said that it has been contacted by several consumers over the past few days who have bought plane tickets with favorable prices based on airBaltic's advertising campaign, but received an announcement from the aviation firm soon afterward that canceled the flight the consumer bought

Companies failing on price posting

TALLINN - According to official statistics, in August 43 percent of the inspected companies in Estonia did not follow the requirement of showing prices in two currencies. From July 1 to June 30, 2011, the prices of goods and services offered to the customer have to be presented both in kroons as well as in euros.

Estonia

Social Front

Senior CPC official opens first Confucius Institute in Baltic region

TALLINN, Sept. 22 (Xinhua) -- Li Changchun, a senior official of the Communist Party of China (CPC), opened here on Wednesday the first Confucius Institute in the Baltic region. Li, a member of the Standing Committee of the CPC Central Committee's Political Bureau, said he hopes the facility, jointly launched by Estonia's prestigious Tallinn University and China's Guangxi University with the help of the Chinese

Language Council (also known as Hanban), would serve as a regional center for spreading Chinese culture and offer quality courses for Estonians who are interested in the Chinese language and eager to understand the Chinese culture. Tallinn University is the sole university in this Baltic country that boasts a Chinese major. It has enrolled Chinese-learning students in the past two decades.

Latvia

Economic Front

The unemployment rate has tripled

The unemployment rate has tripled, hitting 22 per cent at the start of 2010 before falling back to 16 per cent in June. Tax revenues fell 30 per cent last year and government debt is projected to rise to 74 per cent of GDP this year, up from just 7.9 per cent in 2007. So what went wrong for the fastest-growing of the “Baltic Tigers”, a country that enjoyed annual growth rates in excess of 10 per cent between 2004 and 2007?

Latvia signs 1.9-billion-euro loan deal with Nordics

Riga - The Baltic state of Latvia signed agreements Tuesday with neighbouring countries, making 1.9 billion euros available to it as part of a total 7.5-billion-euro (10-billion-dollar) loan package brokered by the European Union and International Monetary Fund (IMF)

Trade balance worsens

RIGA - In July 2010, the current account surplus in Latvia's balance of payments dropped to 38.7 million lats (55.2 million euros), show data from the Bank of Latvia, reports news agency LETA. The revenue account balance rose a little over the course of the month, but the total trade balance of goods and services worsened

Lithuania

Political Front

Heidelberg Klaipeda to invest in port development 10 mln litas

(Lithuania) -- Klaipeda Free Economy Zone has signed an agreement with a new investor Heidelberg Klaipeda for allocation of more than ten million litas in development of logistics terminal. The investor is global concern's Heidelbergcement subsidiary in Lithuania. This is 21st investor in LEZ of Klaipeda. Heidelbergcement Klaipeda belongs to Heidelbergcement Scandinavian unit. The company plans to import to Lithuania high-quality concrete via the new terminal. The terminal's output is expected at 50,000-70,000 tonnes per year. The undertaking will secure approximately 15-20 working places for Klaipeda inhabitants, Klaipeda LEZ expects. The terminal

enterprise is going to build more effective operations in Lithuania; besides, the company plans to decrease packaging and transport costs, by using completely automated packaging techniques

Mudslinging erupts within Riga City Council

RIGA - Riga Mayor Nils Usakovs (Harmony Center) is determined to ensure stability at Riga City Council after claims surfaced of an attempted mutiny by his Vice-mayor, Ainars Slesers (Latvia's First Party/Latvia's Way). LETA reports that Usakovs met on Sept. 16 with Edgars Jaunups (New Era) and Slesers after Jaunups' public claims that Slesers had offered to oust Usakovs, and for Jaunups to take his place

Freedom Fund Established

RIGA - This week will see the opening in the Baltic States of the Baltic-American Freedom Foundation, reports news agency LETA. The goal of the fund is to offer financial support to students and young professionals from Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia to enable them to gain work experience or to study in the United States, and to make a contribution to the development of the Baltic States through the knowledge and experience obtained

The appointment of a bankruptcy administrator for a company

ECOVIS Miškinis, Kvainauskas ir partneriai advokatu kontora The Law on Enterprise Bankruptcy of the Republic of Lithuania (hereinafter – the Law on Enterprise Bankruptcy) provides that a court or a judge who has made a decision to institute bankruptcy proceedings must appoint the bankruptcy administrator for the enterprise (Article 10 Part 4 Point 1 of the Law on Enterprise Bankruptcy). The bankruptcy administrator can be an individual or a legal entity

Lithuania

Social Front

EU Economy: Commission Approves Lithuania and Romania's Efforts To Reduce Excessive Budget Deficit As Effective

On 16 February 2010, the Council recommended to implement fiscal consolidation in 2010 as planned in the budget for 2010 and to outline the consolidation strategy towards the correction of the excessive deficit by 2012 for both countries. Today, the Commission has approved the efforts taken by the respective governments and said that no further steps in the excessive deficit procedure are needed at present.

Russia

Political Front

Russia, China to keep to agreement over ESPO oil price

LOS ANGELES, Sept. 24 -- Russia's Deputy Prime Minister Igor Sechin, shrugging off earlier reports, said Chinese officials have not sought to revise an earlier agreement over the cost of oil delivered to China via a recently launched 67-km spur from the Eastern Siberia-Pacific Ocean (ESPO) pipeline. "The Chinese side has not raised the issue," said Sechin after a meeting with Chinese officials. "All the parameters are in line with the agreement, and there is no question of revision," he said. Chinese officials earlier said imports of Russian oil via the spur should be priced at a lower rate because ESPO blend crude travels just 67 km to China from the terminus of the main line at Skovorodino, while ESPO blend sold at Kozmino on the Pacific Coast is carried by railcar some 2,000 km beyond Skovorodino.

Eager to invest in Iranian energy, Russians seek support to undercut Western sanctions

United Nations _ Even as the White House praised Russia for declining to sell anti-aircraft missiles to Iran in violation of U.N. sanctions, Russian diplomats were quietly recruiting other countries this week to undercut tougher penalties imposed on the Islamic Republic. Russia supported weak U.N. sanctions approved in June to pressure Iran over its nuclear program. But it has strongly objected to tougher sanctions added individually by the United States, the European Union and four other allied countries. It fears those sanctions may also end up hurting Russian businesses that do business in Iran

Iran to make its own anti-aircraft missile system – defense minister

PARIS, September 24 (Itar-Tass) -- Iran will make its own anti-aircraft missile systems comparable with Russia's S-300, the Iranian Defense Ministry said on Friday. "We will build a long-range anti-aircraft missile system analogous to S-300," Defense Minister Ahmad Vahidi said. Earlier this week Russian President Dmitry Medvedev signed an ordinance "On Measures in Fulfillment of UN Security Council Resolution 1929 of June 9, 2010" that banned the delivery of various armaments, including S-300, to Iran.

Israeli Leaders Slam Bill Clinton over Immigrant Comments

JERUSALEM — Israeli leaders have sharply criticized Bill Clinton over comments the former U.S. president made this week calling Russian immigrants in Israel an obstacle to peace. Clinton is generally a well-loved figure in Israel for his efforts to broker a Mideast peace deal in the 1990s, he said at a round-table group this week in New York that the most recent arrivals in Israel have the hardest time agreeing to share the land with the Palestinians. "An increasing number of the young people in the IDF (Israel Defense Force) are the children of Russians and settlers, the hardest-core people against a division of the land. This presents a staggering problem," Clinton said. "It's a different Israel. Sixteen percent of Israelis speak Russian." The remarks were first reported by Foreign Policy Magazine's Cable blog.

Arctic must remain zone of peace: Putin

MOSCOW: Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin called on Thursday for “a zone of peace” in the Arctic as North Pole neighbors scramble to stake their claims to the region’s energy-rich seabed. “We think it is imperative to keep the Arctic as a zone of peace and co-operation,” Putin told international participants at the first Arctic Forum in Moscow, which stressed the eye-watering potential for offshore development. “We all know that it is hard to live alone in the Arctic,” Putin said. “We have heard futuristic predictions threatening a battle for the Arctic’. But we are carefully tracking the situation in the region, and we clearly see that the majority of scary scenarios about the Arctic do not have any real basis.” Canada, Denmark, Norway, Russia and the United States are locked in a race over how to divide up the Arctic, after US researchers said recently that global warming might leave it ice-free by 2030.

Russia bans missiles to Iran

MOSCOW, AFP - President Dmitry Medvedev on Wednesday signed a decree banning supplies of S-300 missiles and other arms to Iran in a long-awaited move after weeks of deliberations by Russian officials. "Dmitry Medvedev signed a decree 'on Measures to implement the United Nations Security Council resolution 1929 from June 9, 2010'," the Kremlin said. The decree published on the Kremlin website forbids supplies of the S-300 air defense missiles to the Islamic republic, among other weapons

Russia.

Economic Front

Russia's 16-year WTO bid faces many hurdles

GENEVA—Russia has held its first negotiations to join the World Trade Organization in over a year, and faced a barrage of questions over its trade restrictions on products from pork to automobiles. The last major economy outside the WTO gave up in 2009 on joining the body, along with ex-Soviet republics Belarus and Kazakhstan. Russian negotiator Maxim Medvedkov told diplomats his country was increasing exports and sticking to its commitments. Still, the 16-year-old Russian bid is beset with problems and appears years away from completion. Many countries expressed concern at Tuesday's meeting. The U.S. focused on trade barriers based on sanitary standards, while the EU noted higher Russian tariffs on pigs and cars. Japan criticized Moscow's wheat trade restrictions

RI, Russia to establish economic forum

The governments of Indonesia and Russia will soon sign an agreement to set up a bilateral economic forum to address issues on economic and trade cooperation between the two countries, an official says. Trade Minister Mari Elka Pangestu said Tuesday the forum would function as a place for Jakarta and Moscow to discuss and exchange

potentials and constraints in boosting trade and investment. Mari said that among the constraints that currently hindered the growth of Indonesia's exports to Russia was limited access to export finance from either Russian or Indonesian export facilities. The absence of direct transportation to send goods from Indonesia to Russia, had become a major concern, she added. According to Trade Ministry data, the value of Indonesia's exports to Russia in the first half of this year reached US\$242 million, while the value of imports was \$540.3 million, bringing the deficit to \$298 million.

Medvedev, panel to discuss def sector innovative dev ways

MOSCOW, September 22 (Itar-Tass) - President Dmitry Medvedev is to chair a meeting of the commission on the modernization and technological development of the Russian economy here on Wednesday. The Commission's meeting is to take place at the Ramenskoye instrument-making plant. The panel's meeting will be devoted to the theme of innovative development of the defence-industry complex and the modernization of the Armed Forces of Russia. A key report is to be made by Defence Minister Anatoly Serdyukov.

TVEL wins tender for Ukraine nuclear fuel plant -23 September 2010

The Ukrainian government has reportedly declared Russian nuclear fuel company TVEL the winner of the tender to construct a fuel manufacturing plant in Ukraine. Ukraine's cabinet approved the Ministry of Fuel and Energy's proposal to construct the nuclear fuel plant at a meeting on 22 September, the country's national news agency Ukrinform reported.

Russia

Social front

Oleg Yesayan delivers lecture on Karabakh issue at Moscow State Institute of International Relations

September 24, 2010 - On September 23, the Ambassador of Armenia to Russia Oleg Yesayan delivered an open lecture at Moscow State Institute of International Relations (MGIMO). The lecture, entitled Armenia-Russia Relations and Basic Principles of Armenia's Foreign Policy, was timed to Armenia's Independence Day. The Ambassador briefed the audience on Karabakh conflict settlement, presenting Armenia's position on the issue. The lecture, attended by students, experts of the Caucasus Research Center and MGIMO professors, was followed by the Q&A session.

Israel mulls leasing land in Russia

Israel has asked Russia's republic of Tatarstan to lease 1.5 million hectares of its land, said a visiting Israeli businessman on Friday, Xinhua reported. President of Israeli International Association of Businessmen Leonid Litinetsky made the request when

paying a business visit to the republic in Volga region. Litinetsky said Israeli businessmen would use the leased land for agricultural production, introducing innovation technologies, processing plant-growing products and cattle-breeding

Soviet Coup Plotter Yanayev died at 73 of Long Illness

MOSCOW -- Gennady Yanayev, a leader of the abortive 1991 Soviet coup who briefly declared himself president replacing Mikhail Gorbachev, has died at age 73, Russia's Communist Party announced Friday. In one of the indelible images of the putsch that hastened the collapse of the Soviet Union, Yanayev's hands shook visibly as he announced that he was taking over as president. Yanayev was later quoted by a newspaper as saying he was drunk when he signed the decree elevating himself from the vice-presidency.

Caucasian Russian States

At least 42 injured in suicide bombing in North Caucasus

Moscow - A suicide bomber has blown himself up in the republic of Dagestan, injuring at least 42 people, including several police officers, according to media reports Saturday. The suicide bomber had earlier set off explosives after approaching police guarding a site where security forces had fought suspected militants late on Friday.

Senior Caucasus Rebel Killed in Dagestan Fighting

MOSCOW (Reuters) - Russia's counterterrorist forces killed the head of a rebel group in the North Caucasus province of Dagestan on Saturday, after a suicide bomber wounded at least 26 people, Russian news agencies reported. "Alibek Abunazarov was on the federal wanted list for a long time. According to our information, he was involved in several terrorist acts, (as well as) attacks on, and killings of policemen," the state-run RIA Novosti agency quoted a local law enforcement official as saying.

Exiled Chechen leader back in London after Polish ruling

EXILED CHECHEN separatist leader Akhmed Zakayev has returned to London after Poland declined a request from Russia to extradite him on charges of murder, kidnapping and terrorism. Mr Zakayev was granted political asylum by Britain in 2003, and the UK authorities have rejected Russian demands for his extradition. Denmark also refused similar requests from Moscow after detaining Mr Zakayev during a conference there on Chechnya's bid for independence. The former actor handed himself over to Polish prosecutors last Friday after arriving in Warsaw for a similar conference to push the restive region's bid for sovereignty. "Mr Zakayev is free. He has the right to go where he pleases," said Polish court spokesman Wojciech Malek. "The court has not imposed any restrictions on him." Judge Piotr Schab explained that Mr Zakayev's status in Britain afforded him protection in Poland from Russia's extradition request. "It is clear that a decision by any member state has the same effect across the entire European

Union,” he said. The urbane Mr Zakayev (51) is critical of radical Chechen rebels who have become increasingly influenced by Islamist extremism, and represents a more moderate strand of the separatist movement that wants talks with Moscow. He is a friend of actor Vanessa Redgrave, who campaigned on his behalf and paid his bail when he was arrested in London. After the court released him, Mr Zakayev said his arrest had been caused by a “misunderstanding” on Moscow’s part that it could pressure Poland into deporting him.

Chechnya

Chechen president leads police operation in highlands

GROZNY, September 24 (Itar-Tass) -- A sweeping search for militants is underway in Chechen highlands, a source at the Chechen administration told Itar-Tass on Friday.

Russia asks Poland to extradite exiled Chechen leader

WARSAW/LONDON (Reuters) - Russia has filed a formal request with Poland to extradite exiled Chechen leader Akhmed Zakayev to face trial on murder, kidnap and terrorism charges, Polish prosecutors said on Wednesday. Zakayev was arrested and briefly detained in Poland last week while attending a meeting of Chechen separatists. After his release, he flew back to London, where he has lived since Britain gave him political asylum in 2003. But he says he will return to Poland to fight his extradition if the case goes ahead.