



Turkic Council Monthly News Bulletin

May 2013

PREPARED BY TURKIC COUNCIL SECRETARIAT

Azerbaijan

President Ilham Aliyev receives chair of European Conservatives and Reformists group in European Parliament

May 1 (AzerTAc). President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev has today received a delegation led by Martin Callanan, the chair of the European Conservatives and Reformists political group in the European Parliament. President Ilham Aliyev praised development of relations between Azerbaijan and the European Union in a variety of fields. The Head of State recalled his visit to Brussels, as well as visits by President of the European Council Herman Van Rompuy, President of the European Commission Jose Manuel Barroso, and High Representative of the European Union Catherine Ashton to Azerbaijan.

The Azerbaijani leader hailed cooperation between the country and the organization, stressing the importance of expansion of these ties. Martin Callanan said the EU was interested in expanding relations with Azerbaijan, which, he added, had a favorable strategic location.

They discussed prospects for Azerbaijan-EU cooperation and regional relationship. They also discussed the current state of and prospects for talks to settle the Armenia-Azerbaijan Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

Azerbaijan, U.S. discuss military cooperation

May 1 (AzerTAc). Azerbaijan and the U.S. have today discussed the military cooperation and situation in the region as Azerbaijan's defence minister Safar Abiyev met a delegation led by William Fraser Commander, U.S. Transportation Command.

U.S. Ambassador to Azerbaijan Richard Morningstar was also present at the meeting.

IFC ready to increase funding for energy efficiency projects in Azerbaijan

May 1 (AzerTAc). The International Finance Corporation (IFC) is ready to accept proposals from banks to start financing projects in the field of renewable energy and energy efficiency, IFC resident representative to Azerbaijan Aliya Azimova said. IFC has previously announced that it will provide a loan to Bank Respublika to start financing projects in this area as well as expand lending to small and medium enterprises (SME). A \$15 million loan is part of the first IFC funding project for renewable energy and energy efficiency in Azerbaijan. "There was no such product in Azerbaijan. Theoretically other banks may also apply with their proposals but to date have not done so," Azimova added.

According to her, IFC intends to resume work on raising public and business awareness in the field of energy efficiency. "A few years ago we conducted a survey to find out the potential of the energy efficiency market in Azerbaijan. We want to resume work in this direction in order to raise awareness of people and businesses on this niche. There will be no special project. We will work within a regional initiative," Azimova said. Approval of the loan to Bank Respublika is expected by IFC's board of directors on May 20 of this year. From a line of credit of \$15 million, the Finance Corporation will provide \$14 million and \$1 million will be attracted as part of the Canada Climate Change Programme. "The project will extend access to finance small and medium-sized enterprises and stimulate the growth of the non-oil sector in Azerbaijan as well as positively affect job creation and economic development in the country. Moreover, this project will be a positive sign for other

commercial lenders and increase the interest of investors to the areas of renewable energy and energy efficiency in Azerbaijan. This will also help to establish criteria for financing of this sector in the country," the IFC said earlier.

Azerbaijani President receives BP Group Chief Executive

May 2 (AzerTAc). President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev has today received Group Chief Executive of BP Robert Dudley. They noted Azerbaijan and BP enjoyed long-term successful cooperation. The Azerbaijani President and the BP Group Chief Executive hailed the Azerbaijan-BP cooperation as strategic. Robert Dudley briefed the Head of State on work done on a block of the Azeri-Chirag-Gunashli fields. They noted the work on the Shahdeniz field was successfully implemented. They also discussed the current state of and prospects for cooperation between the country and the company.

Azerbaijani President receives European Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy

May 2 (AzerTAc). President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev has today received a delegation led by European Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy Stefan Fule. They praised development of cooperation between Azerbaijan and the European Union. President Ilham Aliyev and EU Commissioner Stefan Fule stressed the importance of reciprocal visits in terms of expansion of the bilateral ties. They noted the Azerbaijan-EU cooperation reached the level of strategic partnership in the fields of energy and fight against terrorism. They said relations between the country and the organization produced good results in a variety of fields. President Ilham Aliyev and Stefan Fule also discussed the current state of and prospects for the Azerbaijan-EU cooperation.

Azerbaijani, Indian FMs sign cooperation agreement

May 3 (AzerTAc). Foreign ministries of Azerbaijan and India have inked an agreement on cooperation in Dehli. The agreement was signed by Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov and his Indian counterpart Salman Khurshid. The Azerbaijani FM will end his visit to India and Sri Lanka on May 8.

Azerbaijani President receives former Uruguayan leader

May 6 (AzerTAc). President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev has today received former Uruguayan President Luis Alberto Lacalle. They underlined the importance of the first Southern Caucasus Forum to be held in Baku. They noted good opportunities for development of the bilateral cooperation between Azerbaijan and Uruguay.

Azerbaijan, OSCE: prospects of cooperation discussed

May 6 (AzerTAc). Vice-speaker of Azerbaijan Parliament Bahar Muradova today met with a visiting delegation of the OSCE PA led by the Organization's special representative for the South Caucasus Joao Soares. Muradova said Azerbaijan attaches great importance to cooperation with the OSCE, and is interested in continuation of bilateral ties. The sides noted that the OSCE Minsk Group carries out certain work to solve the Armenia-Azerbaijan Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Muradova said: "Azerbaijan is for sooner resolution of the problem and believes in the role of Minsk Group." Both sides condemned the policy of occupation and aggression that threatens not only a state's, but also the region's and the world's security. "Azerbaijan expects fair solution to the problem," Muradova added. The OSCE PA special representative praised the cooperation between Azerbaijan and the OSCE. Azerbaijan's parliamentary delegation to PA works fruitfully and efficiently, Soares

underlined. The sides had a comprehensive exchange of views on a number of other questions of mutual interest.

Foreign ministries of Azerbaijan and Sri Lanka sign protocol on cooperation

May 6 (AzerTAc). The ministries of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan and Sri Lanka have signed a protocol on cooperation. The document was inked at a meeting of foreign ministers Elmar Mammadyarov of Azerbaijan and Gamini Lakshman Peiris of Sri Lanka. Before the signing ceremony, the two ministers discussed how to boost relationship between Azerbaijan and Sri Lanka. The Sri Lankan minister praised political relations between the two countries, adding that bilateral cooperation also covers economic, trade, energy and tourism spheres. Lakshman Peiris hailed economic development of Azerbaijan. He said official Baku's securing a seat on the UN Security Council proves the country's increasing prestige across the world. Mammadyarov said there was great potential to expand cooperation between Azerbaijan and Sri Lanka in a variety of spheres. He noted Sri Lanka had rich experience in tea production and there were good prospects for development of bilateral cooperation in this sphere. He also said the two countries enjoy great opportunities to cooperate in cultural, energy, tourism and maritime transport areas. The Sri Lankan minister said his country may benefit from the rich experience and historic traditions of Azerbaijan in energy sphere. Minister Mammadyarov praised the progress that Sri Lanka had made since the end of war. He also highlighted the Armenia-Azerbaijan Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. The minister pointed out that because of its aggression policy Armenia isolated itself from development processes in the region. He added official Yerevan would not benefit from these development processes unless it quits its policy of aggression. The two ministers also discussed the ways of strengthening a legal framework for bilateral collaboration and prospects for cooperation in international organizations, particularly the UN and Non-Aligned Movement.

Azerbaijan, Uruguay discuss interparliamentary cooperation

May 6 (AzerTAc). Azerbaijan and Uruguay have explored ways of developing the cooperation between legislative bodies as a group of Azerbaijani parliamentarians visited Uruguay. Azerbaijan's delegation included head of the working group on Azerbaijan-Uruguay interparliamentary relations Javanshir Feyziyev and MP Aslan Jafarov. The MPs met chairman of the House of Representatives of the Uruguayan Parliament Herman Cardoso to discuss prospects for development of inter-parliamentary cooperation and strengthening of relations in a variety of fields. On behalf of chairman of Azerbaijan's Parliament Ogtay Asadov, the Azeri MPs invited him to Baku. The Azerbaijani delegation also met members of Uruguay-Azerbaijan inter-parliamentary friendship group to discuss the contribution of parliamentary diplomacy to developing the bilateral cooperation, and exchange views over regional and global issues. The Uruguayan MPs recalled their visits to Baku in 2011-2012, and described Azerbaijan as a country of "important geopolitical position, rich resources and strong development" in the region. The Azerbaijani parliamentarians also met former Uruguayan president, senator Luis Alberto Lacalle to discuss the issues related to a conference of the Club of Madrid to be held in Baku on May 6-9. MPs Feyziyev and Jafarov also met chairman of Uruguayan Broad Front party (Frente Amplio) Monica Xavier to discuss how to expand the existing bilateral relations. The visit also saw the Azerbaijani MPs meet a number of Uruguayan state and governmental officials, including Secretary of State of the Presidential Administration Diego Canepa, minister of foreign affairs Luis Almagro and minister of Livestock, Agriculture, and Fisheries Tabare Aguerre.

Azerbaijani President meets Georgian counterpart

May 7 (AzerTAc). President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev has today met Georgian counterpart Mikheil Saakashvili. During the meeting, they noted the importance of the first South Caucasus Forum in Baku in terms of strengthening international cooperation. The presidents praised development of bilateral relations between Azerbaijan and Georgia.

First South Caucasus Forum kicks off in Baku

President Ilham Aliyev attends the opening ceremony of the Forum

May 7 (AzerTAc). The first South Caucasus Forum has today started in Baku. President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev and his spouse Mehriban Aliyeva attended the opening ceremony of the Forum. Co-organized by Nizami Ganjavi International Center and the Club de Madrid and supported by Azerbaijan State Committee for Work with Diaspora, the South Caucasus Forum brings together more than 300 foreign experts, high ranking officials, former heads of state and government, and scientists. Opening the event, co-chair of the Board of Directors of the Nizami Ganjavi International Center, director of the Library of Alexandria Ismail Serageldin stressed the importance of the South Caucasus Forum. He thanked the Azerbaijani government for the excellent organization of the event. "We are gathered here with one aim today - to participate in the First South Caucasus Forum on the subject of "Joint societies". I want to indicate that the forum will discuss issues such as a clash of civilizations, shared values and norms that govern our societies. In fact, questions may be asked on any topic. People discuss issues relating to cultural differences between them, gender equality, formation of a sustainable society in the future, etc. The forum is attended by leaders, presidents, prime ministers from practically all over the world. These people lived and led their countries in a period of transition, and have come to this forum to share their experience with us. Of course, they will express their opinion within the framework of the forum.

Mikheil Saakashvili: Azerbaijan is an important country supplying European markets with energy carriers

May 7 (AzerTAc). Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili has praised Azerbaijan's energy potential, saying the country was an important supplier of energy carriers to European markets. Speaking at the first South Caucasus Forum in Baku, President Saakashvili said: "If Azerbaijan continues developing and remains stuck to this course the country will make more achievements." "Today when crisis hit countries in different parts of the world, Azerbaijan is an exception thanks to national leader Heydar Aliyev and President Ilham Aliyev."

The Georgian leader said he believes that time would come when the South Caucasus would be a single whole, adding: "Armenia will then need advanced communications and will be unable to stay isolated from this process." President Saakashvili called on Europe and the world community to increase efforts towards solving conflicts in the South Caucasus to ensure stability in the region.

OSCE 'attaches' great importance to cooperation with Azerbaijan

May 7 (AzerTAc). OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Special Representative on South Caucasus Joao Soares has said OSCE puts special emphasis on its relationship with Azerbaijan as he met Speaker of the Azerbaijan Parliament Ogtay Asadov in Baku. Asadov provided an insight into the country's policy, adding that after regaining its independence Azerbaijan embarked on the path towards European integration. The Parliament Speaker

said: "The OSCE Minsk Group is engaged in settlement of the Armenia-Azerbaijan Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. We want OSCE to increase its efforts towards solving the dispute." On economic development of Azerbaijan, Asadov said efficient use of oil revenues and the realization of energy projects contributed to creating thousands of new work places in the country. He also noted Azerbaijan played an important role in ensuring the energy security of Europe. Soares said OSCE was making great efforts to solve the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, adding the organization tries to use every chance to bring peace to the region of conflict.

Azerbaijani, Turkish business circles explore opportunities for cooperation

May 8 (AzerTAc). Members of Bursa Initiator Businessmen Group have met Secretary General of Azerbaijan National Confederation of Entrepreneurs Mahammadali Afandiyev in Baku to explore opportunities for further cooperation. Afandiyev briefed the Turkish businessmen on Azerbaijan's economic achievements. The Secretary General said his country pays special attention to development of non-oil sector, adding the private sector provides 83 percent of GDP in Azerbaijan. He said the number of foreign investors, including Turkish businessmen, making investments in the country's economy was rapidly increasing.

On Azerbaijan-Turkey political and economic ties, Afandiyev said fraternal relations were rapidly developing day by day. He said today all advantageous conditions were created for foreign investors, including the Turkish ones. At his words, online registration for business activities was already available in the country. The Turkish businessmen highlighted the purpose and mission of the Bursa Initiator Businessmen Group. The entrepreneurs expressed their intention to build business relationship with Azerbaijani counterparts.

President Ilham Aliyev attends Victory Day ceremony in Baku

May 9 (AzerTAc). A solemn ceremony has taken place in Baku to mark the 68th anniversary of the Victory over fascism in the World War II. President Ilham Aliyev and first lady Mehriban Aliyeva attended the event.

Azerbaijan, South African Republic discuss prospects for cooperation

May 9 (AzerTAc). Ministries of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan and South African Republic have held political discussions. According to the Azerbaijan Foreign Ministry, the two countries' delegations were led by Azerbaijani deputy FM Khalaf Khalafov and South African Deputy Minister of International Relations and Cooperation Marius Llewellyn Fransman. Stressing that Azerbaijan's foreign policy was many-branched, Khalafov said that Azerbaijan was keen on cooperation with SAR. He also underlined the importance of expansion of Azerbaijan-SAR relations within international organizations. Fransman stressed the importance of studying Azerbaijan's oil practice. Speaking about the Armenia-Azerbaijan Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, the Azerbaijani deputy FM said that Armenian non-constructive position was an obstacle in peaceful settlement of the conflict. The South African Deputy Minister said that his country supported Azerbaijan's territorial integrity and criticizes Armenian policy of occupation.

Türk Telekom proposes project of Turkic-speaking states' e-commerce net

May 9 (AzerTAc). Azerbaijan's Communications & IT Minister Ali Abbasov has received Türk Telekom's CEO Tahsin Yılmaz. During the meeting, Yılmaz informed of successful experience of localization of Türk Telekom's educational program "Vitamin" in

Azerbaijan, stressed the importance of Trans-Eurasian Information Super Highway (TASIM) and stated the necessity to develop content and e-commerce, especially between the Turkic-speaking countries. Yilmaz also announced the discussion of this issue with colleagues from Central Asia.

President Ilham Aliyev attends solemn ceremony on 90th anniversary of national leader Heydar Aliyev

May 10 (AzerTAc). A solemn ceremony has today been held to mark the 90th anniversary of Azerbaijan's national leader Heydar Aliyev. Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev, his spouse Mehriban Aliyeva and family members, as well as state and government officials, and representatives of the diplomatic corps in Baku attended the event. President Ilham Aliyev made a speech at the event. The President described national leader Heydar Aliyev as "the architect of the Azerbaijani state and a historical personality who devoted his whole life to his people and served them with loyalty". The President highlighted the national leader's tenure as the head of Azerbaijan, adding these years marked development in all spheres of the country's life. He said 13 years of Heydar Aliyev's leadership of Azerbaijan in the Soviet era saw the country become one of the most developed republics. "The great leader did much to ensure Azerbaijan's socio-economic development, and promote the country's national values." The President said the years when Heydar Aliyev was far from the leadership marked the beginning of negative processes in the country, adding the then authorities were helpless against these difficulties. President Ilham Aliyev noted that after returning to power the national leader made courageous steps towards strengthening Azerbaijan's independence, building modern political system in the country, and laying the foundations of its development. The President touched upon the founding of the New Azerbaijan Party, which, he said, had played a crucial role in the country's socio-political life. The Head of State hailed the national leader's return to power as "a turning point in our contemporary history". The President said national leader Heydar Aliyev's policy had been successfully continued. President Ilham Aliyev also highlighted Azerbaijan's achievements in the last ten years, saying the country is carrying out large-scaled projects and developing its non-oil sector. The President said independence was the greatest wealth, adding: "We have an independent powerful state." The ceremony continued with demonstration of a film on national leader Heydar Aliyev's life and activities, which was followed by a concert.

Connecticut recognizes Khojaly Massacre

May 10 (AzerTAc). The General Assembly of Connecticut State, the USA, has issued a document recognizing the Khojaly Massacre committed by Armenian armed forces against Azerbaijani civilians in 1992. In the proclamation, the state's legislators offer their condolences to relatives of the people brutally killed by Armenians in the town of Khojaly in Azerbaijan during the Nagorno-Karabakh war. The document stresses the 613 civilians had been killed in Khojaly and Armenian violence had been asserted by the international organizations as Human Rights Watch and Mass Media of the US and other countries. The draft document was submitted by Connecticut State Senator Andrew Maynard and House of Representatives member Kevin Ryan. Late into the night of February 25, 1992, the town of Khojaly, situated within the administrative borders of the Nagorno-Karabakh region of Azerbaijan, came under intensive fire from the towns of Khankendi and Askeran already occupied by Armenian armed forces. The Armenian forces, supported by the ex-Soviet 366th regiment, completed the surrounding of the town already isolated due to ethnic cleansing of the Azerbaijani population of the neighbouring regions. The joint forces

occupied the town, which was ruined by heavy artillery shelling. Thousands of fleeing civilians were ambushed by the Armenian forces. Punitive teams of the so-called Nagorno-Karabakh defence army reached the unprotected civilians to slaughter them, mutilating some of the bodies.

Some 613 civilians, including 106 women, 70 elderly and 83 children, were killed in the massacre. A total of 1,000 civilians were disabled. Eight families were exterminated, and 25 children lost both parents, while 130 children lost one parent. Moreover, 1,275 innocent people were taken hostage, while the fate of 150 remains unknown.

Azerbaijan`s Shusha and Hungarian Gyongyos become sister cities

May 10 (AzerTAc). Azerbaijan`s Shusha and Hungarian Gyongyos have signed a memorandum to become sister cities. The document was signed by head of Shusha Executive Authorities, chairman of the Public Union "Azerbaijani Community of Nagorno-Karabakh" Bayram Safarov and Mayor of Gyongyos Laszlo Farago. The document covers the intentions to establish economic, cultural and humanitarian relations, cooperate in the field of tourism and education, promote awareness about the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and Shusha in Hungary, other ways of information exchange and joint cooperation. Prior to the signing ceremony, a meeting was held with participation of members of Gyongyos Mayor`s Office, city residents and Azerbaijani community in Hungary. Laszlo Farago provided an insight into Gyongyos city`s history and achievements. Bayram Safarov highlighted the history of Shusha. He also spoke about the atrocities committed by the Armenians in the Nagorno-Karabakh and barbarous destruction of Azerbaijani monuments dating back to the past few centuries in Shusha, the pearl of the Caucasus. Addressing the event, Azerbaijan`s ambassador to Hungary Vilayat Guliyev noted "this day" was "remarkable" for him. He added the memorandum would contribute to strengthening fraternal relations between the two countries. Guliyev also thanked Gabor Vona, chairman of third parliamentary party "For a Better Hungary", and Marton Gyongyosi, Deputy Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee of the Hungarian Parliament, Co-chairman of the Hungary-Azerbaijan parliamentary group for their support. Other speakers at the event included Gabor Vona, Marton Gyongyosi, and Azerbaijani MP Elman Mammadov,

Presidents of Azerbaijan and Austria meet one-on-one

May 13 (AzerTAc). Following the official welcoming ceremony, presidents Ilham Aliyev of Azerbaijan and Heinz Fischer of Austria met in private. During the meeting, they praised development of the Azerbaijan-Austria relations in various fields, including political and economic ones. The presidents noted the importance of high-level reciprocal visits in terms of development of bilateral ties between the two countries. They said President Ilham Aliyev`s official visit to Austria would contribute to developing relationship between the two countries.

Azerbaijan and two more countries to launch STEFI money transfer system this May

May 13 (AzerTAc). Azerpocht Ltd, the national postal operator of Azerbaijan, continues testing of the system of urgent money transfers (UMTs) via Secured Transfer of Electronic Financial Information (STEFI) with two more countries including Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan this May. According to the Ministry of Information and Communication Technologies, Azerpocht has already carried out exchange on urgent money transfers via STEFI with Belarus this year. The advantage of the new system is that the term money transfer is conducted within an hour, and the amount transferred to the recipient is paid for 3 hours. Today, Azerpocht (Ministry of Communications & IT) provides money transfers

with Russia, Moldova, Belarus, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Georgia and the United Arab Emirates. The Secured Transfer of Electronic Financial Information (STEFI) is intended to complement the IFS family. The International Financial System application (IFS) is a software application developed by the Postal technology Centre (PTC) to help Posts replace their traditional paper money order services with electronic money order services. IFS uses electronic data interchange (EDI) to send international money order data electronically, using sophisticated data encryption techniques to ensure the integrity of the data sent over the postal network. IFS also helps Posts provide electronic domestic money orders services.

On initiative of Azerbaijan UN Security Council issues press statement

May 15 (AzerTAc). The UN Security Council has issued a press statement on the deadly attacks that occurred in the Turkish town of Reyhanli, Hatay. According to permanent mission of Azerbaijan to the United Nations, the statement has been issued on the initiative of Azerbaijan. The members of the Security Council condemned in the strongest terms the deadly attacks that occurred on Saturday, in the Turkish town of Reyhanli, Hatay, which resulted in the deaths of at least 46 people and dozens of injuries. The members of the Security Council expressed their deep sympathy and sincere condolences to the families of the victims of these heinous acts, and to the Government and people of Turkey.

The U.N Security Council reaffirmed that terrorism, in all its forms and manifestations, constitutes one of the most serious threats to international peace and security, and that any acts of terrorism are criminal and unjustifiable, regardless of their motivation, wherever, whenever and by whomsoever committed. The members of the Security Council reiterated their determination to combat all forms of terrorism, in accordance with its responsibilities under the Charter of the United Nations. The Security Council reminded States that they must ensure that measures taken to combat terrorism comply with all their obligations under international law, in particular international human rights, refugee and humanitarian law.

The statement also highlighted the need to bring perpetrators, organizers, financiers and sponsors of these reprehensible acts of terrorism to justice, and urged all States, in accordance with their obligations under international law and relevant Security Council resolutions, to cooperate actively with the Turkish authorities in this regard.

European Parliament hosts “Azerbaijani night”

May 16 (AzerTAc). The European Parliament (EP) has hosted an “Azerbaijani night” co-organized by the Azerbaijani embassy to Belgium and SOCAR’s office in the country. The event has brought together MPs of both EP and Azerbaijani Parliament, journalists, members of the Azerbaijani Diaspora in Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxemburg, as well as Azerbaijani students in these countries. Delivering speeches at the event, Azerbaijani ambassador to Belgium Fuad Isgandarov, member of the EP Kristina Ojuland and Azerbaijani MP Samad Seyidov spoke of the relations between Azerbaijan and EU, as well richness of Azerbaijan’s national culture and music. Azerbaijani Honorary Artist, jazzman Emil Afrasiyab performed a concert program at the event.

Azerbaijan`s top diplomat attends meeting of FMs of Visegrad Group and Eastern Partnership

May 18 (AzerTAc). Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov has attended a meeting of foreign ministers of Visegrad Group and Eastern Partnership in Krakow, Poland.

The meeting chaired by Polish Foreign Minister Radoslaw Sikorski brought together Catherine Ashton, EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice president of the European Commission, Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy Stefan Fule, foreign ministers from Azerbaijan, Hungary, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Lithuania, Ireland, Ukraine, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Armenia. The meeting featured discussions on the Eastern Partnership summit to be held this autumn in Vilnius. The meeting participants also adopted a joint statement on the Eastern Partnership Programme. Addressing the event, Elmar Mammadyarov highlighted the current state of and prospects for the Azerbaijan-EU cooperation. The Minister said Azerbaijan`s partnership relations with the EU would further develop. He noted Azerbaijan would take an active part in joint programs and projects with the EU.

Speaker of Iran`s Islamic Consultative Assembly meets Azerbaijani delegation

May 20 (AzerTAc). Speaker of the Islamic Consultative Assembly of Iran, Ali Larijani has met Azerbaijan`s delegation led by chairman of the Caucasian Muslims Office, Allahshukur Pashazade. The discussions focused on development of relations between Azerbaijani and Iranian states and peoples. They stressed the role of parliaments of the two countries in development of bilateral ties. Pashazade spoke of Azerbaijan`s development, as well as the country`s achievements in strengthening the protection of human rights and freedom of religion. According to him, on the initiative of President Ilham Aliyev new mosques are built and old ones repaired in the country. Larijani said development of bilateral relationship reflects common interests of the Azerbaijani and Iranian peoples. They also praised the activity of interparliamentary friendship groups in development of relations between the two countries.

Azerbaijan trade turnover hits \$8556,9 mln

May 20 (AzerTAc). In January-March 2013, Azerbaijan carried foreign trade operations with 124 countries. According to the State Statistical Committee, in the reporting period the foreign trade of Azerbaijan made \$8556,9 mln. Of them, export made \$6345,8 mln and import-\$2211,1 mln. Surplus balance made \$4134,7 mln. Some 81,5% of trade operations were carried out with Italy, Russia, Thailand, Indonesia, Germany, Turkey, Taiwan (province of China), Israel, the US, Indonesia, , France, India, China, Portugal, the UK, France, Georgia, Greece, the Czech Republic, and Japan.

President Ilham Aliyev receives Turkish National Education Minister

May 21 (AzerTAc). President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev has today received a Turkish delegation led by Minister of National Education Nabi Avci. During the meeting, they noted bilateral friendship and fraternal relations between Azerbaijan and Turkey were developing on all fronts, including in the field of education. The Azerbaijani President and the Turkish Minister expressed confidence that close educational relations between the two countries would continue to develop. They stressed the importance of Turkish Minister of National Education Nabi Avci`s visit to Azerbaijan in terms of strengthening the educational cooperation even more.

President Ilham Aliyev receives Georgian Minister of Internal Affairs

May 21 (AzerTAc). President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev has today received Georgia's Minister of Internal Affairs Irakli Gharibashvili. The Minister conveyed greetings of Georgian Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili to the Head of State. Mr. Gharibashvili said it was his first visit to Azerbaijan as a minister, noting his country attaches special significance to strategic partnership with official Baku. He expressed confidence that Georgia's new government would make every effort to boost and deepen strategic partnership and friendship relations between the two countries. Mr. Gharibashvili said Georgian Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili made one of his first visits to Azerbaijan, describing it as a vivid evidence of the level of the bilateral relations. President Ilham Aliyev said Azerbaijan and Georgia share ancient historical ties, friendship and fraternal relations. The Head of State said he was pleased with endeavors by the new government of Georgia to further expand friendship and strategic partnership ties with Azerbaijan. The Azerbaijani leader said he would spare no efforts to further strengthen these relations, and advance them. On cooperation between law enforcement agencies, President Ilham Aliyev stressed significance of bolstering fight against crime and promoting exchange of information. The Head of State expressed his gratitude for the greetings of Bidzina Ivanishvili, and asked Mr. Gharibashvili to extend his greetings to the Georgian Prime Minister too.

Azerbaijani President receives Spanish Defense Minister

May 21 (AzerTAc). President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev has today received a Spanish delegation led by Minister of Defense Pedro de Morenes y Alvarez de Eulate. President Ilham Aliyev praised political relations between Azerbaijan and Spain. The Head of State said there was big potential to develop the bilateral ties in a variety of fields, including economy and mutual investment making. The President stressed the importance of reciprocal visits in terms of expansion of the bilateral relationship between the two countries. The Azerbaijani leader underlined the significance of carrying out such visits in a more intensive manner. President Ilham Aliyev expressed hope that Pedro de Morenes y Alvarez de Eulate's visit to Azerbaijan would contribute to developing military cooperation between the two countries. The Spanish Minister said he was deeply impressed by large-scale development processes in Baku. He noted his visit to Baku created good opportunities for discussing the Azerbaijan-Spain relations, as well as prospects for the military cooperation.

Azerbaijani President receives Gambian FM

May 22 (AzerTAc). President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev has today received Foreign Minister of Gambia, Mrs. Susan Waffa-Ogoo. The FM said it was her second visit to Azerbaijan, adding she was deeply impressed by large-scale development processes in Baku since her last trip. Mrs. Susan Waffa-Ogoo handed over a letter of Gambian President Yahya Jammeh to the Head of State. The Azerbaijani leader thanked the Gambian President for his letter. President Ilham Aliyev praised development of bilateral relations between Azerbaijan and Gambia. The Head of State stressed the importance of the two countries' mutual support within international organizations. The President expressed hope that the Gambian FM's visit to Azerbaijan would open new opportunities for development of cooperation between the two countries in a variety of fields.

Azerbaijani President receives chairman of House of Representatives of Uruguayan Parliament

May 22 (AzerTAc). President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev has today received an Uruguayan delegation led by chairman of the House of Representatives of the Parliament Herman Cardoso. The Head of State said bilateral relations between Azerbaijan and Uruguay were rapidly developing. The President stressed the importance of reciprocal visits in terms of development of the bilateral ties. President Ilham Aliyev said there were good opportunities for development of cooperation between the two countries on all fronts. The Azerbaijani leader noted the role of inter-parliamentary relationship in terms of expanding the bilateral ties. The Head of State expressed confidence that Herman Cardoso's visit to Azerbaijan would be a success, adding this visit will contribute to developing the Azerbaijan-Uruguay relations even more. The chairman of the House of Representatives of the Uruguayan Parliament said there was big potential for development of bilateral relations between Azerbaijan and Uruguay in all fields. He noted the fact that there was a long distance between Azerbaijan and Uruguay could not prevent expansion of cooperation between the two countries. During the meeting, they noted the two countries enjoyed good opportunities for expansion of bilateral ties in the fields of politics, economy, trade, tourism, and agriculture. The Azerbaijani President and the Uruguayan chairman stressed the importance of making relevant steps to achieve this. They also discussed the Armenia-Azerbaijan Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

'Azerbaijan is an important partner for NATO'

May 23 (AzerTAc). NATO's Assistant Secretary General Gabor Iklody has hailed Azerbaijan's contribution to peacemaking mission in Afghanistan, calling the country an important partner for NATO. He hailed Azerbaijan's intention to continue to be involved in the peacemaking activities even after 2014 when NATO troops will be pulled out from the country.

Azerbaijan, NATO PA discuss development of cooperation

May 24 (AzerTAc). Chairman of the Milli Majlis, Azerbaijan's Parliament, Ogtay Asadov has met NATO Parliamentary Assembly president Hugh Bayley, who attends the Annual Conference of Parliamentary Network on the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund in Baku. Asadov said Azerbaijan pays special attention to developing ties with NATO. He said Azerbaijan's national leader Heydar Aliyev took into consideration international influence of NATO and signed an agreement on joining "Partnership for Peace" (PfP) program. Asadov said: "Azerbaijan, which had an observer status before, today is an associate member of the NATO PA. First deputy chairman of the Milli Majlis Ziyafet Asgarov's heading the Azerbaijani delegation to the organization illustrates how much importance we put on our relationship with the organization." The Speaker of the Parliament said Azerbaijan was determined to continue its cooperation with NATO. He noted the decision to hold NATO PA Rose Roth seminar in Baku in 2014 was welcomed in Azerbaijan.

Bayley said NATO was keen to deepen relations with Azerbaijan. He hailed the activity of the Azerbaijani delegation at the NATO PA.

Azerbaijan, WB discuss cooperation

May 24 (AzerTAc). Azerbaijan and the World Bank have explored ways of developing cooperation as the WB Regional Director for the South Caucasus Henry Kerali has visited the Central Bank of Azerbaijan (CBA) to meet its chairman Elman Rustamov.

Both Kerali and Rustamov praised the cooperation between the World Bank and Azerbaijan, and stressed the importance of developing it even further. They considered signing a draft agreement that will see the country and the World Bank conduct joint studies.

Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev receives PACE President

May 26 (AzerTAc). President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev has today received a delegation led by President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) Jean-Claude Mignon. The Head of State hailed the Azerbaijan-PACE cooperation as successful, and stressed the role of reciprocal visits and meetings in expanding the relations.

President Ilham Aliyev expressed confidence PACE President Jean-Claude Mignon's visit would open up good opportunities for discussing prospects for the bilateral cooperation.

Jean-Claude Mignon said he was pleased to be visiting Azerbaijan for the second time, adding he witnessed rapid development processes in the country. He stressed the importance of Azerbaijan's achievements, particularly in the economic area. Jean-Claude Mignon said one of the aims of the visit was to discuss preparations ahead of Azerbaijan's presidency of the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers. They discussed cooperation between Azerbaijan and Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.

Azerbaijan-Georgia-Turkey business forum kicks off in Gabala

May 25 (AzerTAc). An Azerbaijan-Georgia-Turkey business forum has started in Gabala. In his remarks, Azerbaijan's Minister of Economic Development Shahin Mustafayev stressed the forum's importance. He also hailed the economic relations between the three countries. "Our three countries play an essential role in sustaining the energy security in Europe, while the region's importance is increasing day-by-day." Speakers said Azerbaijan-Turkey-Georgia regional cooperation must be an example to the world. The forum was attended by more than 250 businessmen from the three countries, as well as Georgian Economic Minister Giorgi Kvirikashvili, Turkish Economic Minister Zafer Caglayan, and Secretary General of the Cooperation Council of Turkic Speaking States Halil Akinci. The next forum will be held in Batumi.

Azerbaijan's President attends official reception on Republic Day

May 27 (AzerTAc). President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev has today attended an official reception to mark the Republic Day at the Buta Palace. The event started with the performance of Azerbaijan's anthem. The Head of State delivered a speech at the event. The official reception was followed by a concert.

President Ilham Aliyev visits monument to Azerbaijan Democratic Republic

May 27 (AzerTAc). President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev has today visited a monument to the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic in the Istiglaliyyat Street. A guard of honor was lined up around the monument. The Head of State laid a wreath at the monument as a military orchestra performed the anthem of Azerbaijan Republic.

President Ilham Aliyev attends opening of 2nd World Forum on Intercultural Dialogue in Baku

May 29 (AzerTAc). The 2nd World Forum on Intercultural Dialogue has today kicked off in Azerbaijan's capital, Baku. President Ilham Aliyev attended the opening

ceremony of the Forum, which is taking place under the motto “Living Together Peacefully in a Diverse World”. The President made a speech at the ceremony. Held under the patronage of the Azerbaijani President, the Forum will feature several sessions.

International Bank of Azerbaijan named “Best Local Bank”

May 30 (AzerTAc). “Emeafinance” magazine, the leading information and analytical publication in Europe, has announced its list of the best banks in Europe, the Middle East and Africa for 2012. International Bank of Azerbaijan (IBA) was named Best Local Bank. According to the magazine, “In 2012, the net profit of the International Bank of Azerbaijan increased by 80% and amounted to AZN 43.4 million, active and loan portfolios grew by 17.5% and 22%, respectively. As a symbolic recognition of the achievements, the International Bank of Azerbaijan was awarded as the Best Local Bank in the category “Best Bank in CIS, Central and Eastern Europe”. The award is assigned to the IBA already 5th year. The London-based “Emeafinance” magazine is dedicated to the finance sectors in Europe, Middle East and Africa. Its readership includes financial institutions from throughout the world and the top managers of leading companies. The magazine is the world’s only publication covering all finance-related events, activities, developments, financial services and products, as well as innovations in the area of services and technologies of the region. Every year, Emeafinance names the best banks in more than 20 nominating categories, including Islamic banking, syndicated loans, mergers and etc.

KAZAKHSTAN

May 6, 2013

Kazakhstan to build first major wind power plant

By Aynur Jafarova, Azernews

Kazakhstan will build the first large wind power plant (WPP) at the Yereimentau site in Akmola region with the capacity of 45 megawatts.

The First Wind Power Plant LLP and the Eurasian Development Bank (EDB) signed an agreement on a credit line worth 14.2 billion tenge (over \$93.8 million) to finance the turnkey construction of the WPP in Kazakhstan, a statement published by the First Wind Power Plant LLP on Friday said.

"The implementation of the project for the WPP construction is the first step towards the introduction of alternative energy, namely, the use of wind energy, which will reduce emissions of greenhouse gases and produce 172 million kilowatt/hours of electrical energy per year without fossil fuels. This will save more than 60 million tons of coal, as well as improve the reliability of the electricity supply in the region," the statement said.

It said the construction of the WPP will also allow to meet the projected electricity demand, taking into account the growth of the population, quality of life, intensive residential and public construction, social and cultural development, and to create additional jobs in the process of construction and operation of the facility.

"In addition, in the framework of the upcoming exhibition 'EXPO-2017', it is planned to provide power supply of the exhibits through the energy generated by the Yereimentau WPP," the statement says.

The first WPP, a 100-percent subsidiary of Samruk-Green Energy LLP, was established on June 27, 2011. Its core function is the production of energy from renewable energy sources. Renewable energy, which is commonly called alternative energy, is an alternative to fossil fuels. It comes from natural resources such as sunlight, wind, rain, tides, and geothermal heat, which are naturally replenished.

Experts believe that Kazakhstan has to turn to alternative energy sources by 2030, as the traditional sources are being exhausted and their prices are rising. They say about 20-30 percent of domestically consumed energy can be saved through the use of alternative energy.

Given Kazakhstan's natural conditions, the most promising alternative energy sector is probably wind-power generation. Relevant studies conducted in the Kazakh regions showed that wind-power generation has great potential.

Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev set the task to receive 50 percent of the country's energy from renewable sources by 2050.

In late January, an action plan was adopted for the development of renewable energy sources for the period from 2013 to 2020.

May 17, 2013

Railroad Crossing Signals Prosperity for Kazakhstan and Neighboring Turkmenistan



Kazakhstan President Nursultan Nazarbayev and Turkmenistan President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov celebrated the opening of a railroad crossing between their respective cities of Bolashak and Serkhetyaka on May 11. During the opening ceremony, the Presidents emphasized the importance of the railroad in the Mangistau region, which will now become a hub for trade and transit.

Launched in 2007, the railroad project, which will span Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, is a catalyst for opportunity and economic growth in Kazakhstan and the entire Mangistau region. Presidents Nazabayev and Berdimuhamedov recognized the increase in trade that will occur between their two countries in addition to the exports that will also flow to the Middle East and Southeast Asia thanks to the railroad corridor. Not only will the railroad stimulate the movement of goods, it will encourage travel in the region. President Nazabayev anticipates an increase in inter-country transit and the creation of jobs.

President Nazabayev credited the success of the railroad project to the economic stability of Kazakhstan. He also said he was confident in the railroad's potential. "In the future, we plan the creation of a route that will connect the transportation network of Central Asia, the Middle East and Europe," he said. Completion of major infrastructure projects in collaboration with neighboring countries is proof of Kazakhstan's reputation as a land of peace and prosperity.

May 31, 2013

Sixth Astana Economic Forum and World Anti-Crisis Conference Tackle Global Economic Woes



By Rufiya Ospanova, Astana Times

ASTANA – Kazakhstan President Nursultan Nazarbayev greeted several thousands of world leaders, scholars, economists and leading experts in various fields as he opened the Sixth Astana Economic Forum (AEF) and the World Anti-Crisis Conference (WAC) on May 23 in Astana.

The President set the tone for the forum as he highlighted some of the economic challenges facing the world. “The collapse of the Cypriot financial system made us doubt the approaching of an era of overall economic stability (following the global economic crisis). I know there are theories rejecting the relationship of the Cyprus incident with the global crisis. But this is a fact,” Nazarbayev said.

He noted that many problems of the global crisis have not yet been tackled and so the global economic crisis cannot yet be considered over. In fact, he told the assembled dignitaries, the crisis has entered a new stage, which will be accompanied by painful outbreaks of a number of local financial systems. “I believe this is the first lesson that should be learnt and taken into account in the formation of a global anti-crisis plan,” he said. Kazakhstan has successfully implemented its anti-crisis programme, which has helped preserve jobs and spur positive economic growth. But that has not been the case worldwide.

The President noted that one year ago he proposed a G-Global idea to positive response. The essence of G-Global is to propose positive alternatives to the chaotic dynamics of changing global paradigms as the world continues to develop.

“It is based on the unifying potential of five simple and clear principles: first, evolution and rejection of revolutionary changes in politics; second, justice, equality and consensus; third, global tolerance and trust; fourth, global trans-parency; fifth, constructive multi-polarity.”

The President recognized that a new type of global economy is emerging and that new principles of international relations and new values of public life are being approved. “Therefore, it is important to find the right solutions to global problems,” the President said as he concluded his opening remarks and wished success to the forum participants and delegates of the World Anti-Crisis Conference in their discussions and formations of solutions to the world’s economic issues.

Vuk Jeremic, President of the 67th session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), also gave remarks during the forum’s opening. “I am happy to be back to what UNESCO has called ‘the city of peace’ (Astana),” he said.

Jeremic underlined that it is important that events such as the forum and the anti-crisis conference are taking place in Kazakhstan and noted the role of Almaty in furthering the activities of the United Nations (UN) in Kazakhstan and the region.

“Almaty is uniquely positioned to play a role as a hub for UN activities in the region,” Jeremic said. He also stressed the importance of forming recommendations to address global economic issues that take into account the specifics of individual nations. “The purpose of the Sixth Astana Economic Forum is to provide additional tools for all countries,” he said.

Nikola Gruevski, Prime Minister of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Wu Hongbo, United National Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs also spoke to the gathering. Wu Hongbo read a statement from UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon.

The President of the United Nations Economic and Social Council Nestor Osorio also told the participants that “there is a clear need for greater transparency.”

“Following the Forum about 80 agreements and memoranda for the amount of \$2.7 billion were signed. Innovative technologies were attracted. Nobel laureates and other experts gave lectures at the universities,” co-chairperson of the coordination council of the Eurasian Economic Club of Scientists Association, member of the Senate of the Parliament of Kazakhstan Serik Nogerbekov said at the final press conference. Draft resolution with recommendations for G-20 was also following the Sixth Astana Economic Forum.

“This draft was actively discussed at G-Global communicative platform. Today, this draft has been adopted,” Nogerbekov concluded.

The World Anti-Crisis Conference, held at the initiative of President Nazarbayev and with full support of the UN General Assembly, is meant to elaborate the Global Anti-Crisis plan for the UN based on democratic principles and encompassing the interests of all countries. The WAC will be dedicated to the problems of the world financial system, which, since the beginning of the Great Recession, has been experiencing major changes, the scale of which has not yet been fully understood. The international community is still trying to rehabilitate financial channels for domestic and international growth. Discussions about development of economic and financial infrastructure are also part of the WAC agenda.

Efforts to Create UN Regional Diplomacy Hub in Almaty Continue

By Nadezhda Khamitova

ASTANA, May 27 – Kazakhstan is working with the United Nations on turning Almaty into a UN regional diplomacy hub, the country’s foreign minister announced last week in Astana drawing enthusiastic support from a visiting top level UN official.

Speaking at a May 23 press conference during the Sixth Astana Economic Forum, Kazakhstan’s Foreign Minister Erlan Idrissov noted that the establishment of a UN regional hub in Almaty is not an easy process and requires a lot of time and efforts.

He has also noted that Almaty has already become an international center which serves regional needs.

“The facts that more than 16 offices of the UN system organizations are already present in Almaty and most of them have regional character are the best proof for that,” Idrissov stressed adding that the work on the establishment of such a hub is a “working process.” He went on to highlight Kazakhstan’s readiness to create all conditions needed for the work of international organizations in Almaty, as stated in an earlier meeting between President Nursultan Nazarbayev and UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon “We hope our cooperation will result in the creation of a UN regional representation office in our country,” the foreign minister told the press conference adding that the participation of Kazakhstan’s delegation in the UN General Assembly in September 2013 will help promote the case.

Speaking alongside Erlan Idrissov, President of the 67th session of the United Nations General Assembly Vuk Jeremic offered his views on the matter.

“There is a UN centre in Vienna and there is a UN centre in Bangkok, there is a vast geography between those two places... One actually asks oneself a question as to where to place another hub? Given Kazakhstan’s prominence, given Kazakhstan’s engagement and also the role it has played in the past and in the face of the challenges that the world faces,

security ones like Afghanistan, but also developmental ones, I think it's not too difficult to make a strong case for a UN activities center being placed here," Jeremic said. Jeremic is an elected official whose job is to chair the proceedings of the UN General Assembly session during one year. The decision on the establishment of a UN regional diplomacy hub lies within the purview of UN offices.

To recall, Kazakhstan has offered to host a UN hub in Almaty where Central Asian countries can co-operate on aiding Afghanistan and promoting regional development and humanitarian assistance efforts.

At a June 2012 meeting with head of UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan Ján Kubiš, President Nursultan Nazarbayev proposed to set up such a hub. "Kazakhstan is ready to participate in stabilizing Afghanistan and facilitating peace there," the President said without defining the schedule for the completion of the project.

Almaty has already established itself as one of Central Asia's largest business, tourism and transportation hubs. "Kazakhstan today has a thriving economy, governed by consumers, not plans. With material improvements, the city has also developed a well-deserved pride and self-confidence," said Thomas Mirow, the then-president of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development at the EBRD annual meeting in Kazakhstan in May 2011.

"We have been developing Almaty as a major business and financial centre, promoting tourism and services," President Nazarbayev told a meeting of investors earlier this year. As Kazakhstan's largest city and its capital at independence in 1991, it was inevitable that those policies would transform Almaty into a major transportation hub and regional centre for visiting foreign businessmen and investors.

The government will impose restrictions on oil imports from Russia by Jan. 1, 2014, Oil and Gas Minister Sauat Mynbaev told the Mazhilis, the lower house of Parliament, on April 22. Mynbaev said the restrictions would be applied under the existing agreement with Russia on the oil trade. "If we do not take this action, the country will be flooded by imports of Russian oil this year. We should instead export it abroad," he said. The minister said that currently Kazakhstan's own oil refineries were not operating at maximum capacity because of the large quantity of imported petroleum products in the domestic market.

Egypt, the world's largest wheat buyer, will consider resuming imports of grain from Kazakhstan, the state-run Middle East News Agency (MENA) reported on April 11. Reda Aggag, an advisor to Supply Minister Bassem Oda met with Kazakh officials to discuss new purchases, MENA said. Egypt, the Arab world's most populous nation, has not imported any grain from Kazakhstan since 2009-10, when it bought 180,000 metric tons, according to

Nomani Nomani, an adviser to the minister and former head of Egypt's General Authority for Supply Commodities. In 2011, Egypt refused to accept four cargoes of Kazakh wheat because of the high proportion of damaged grain in them and replaced them with Russian grain, Nomani said. Kazakh wheat imports will only resume if Kazakhstan resolves that problem, he said.

Speaking at the European Bank of Reconstruction and Development's 22nd Annual Meeting of the Board of Governors and Business Forum in Istanbul, Turkey, Finance Minister of Kazakhstan Bolat Zhamishev announced on May 10 that **the country will raise funds by issuing a Eurobond worth €1 billion.** "In 2013 we would like to go back to the borrowing market and I think that we will probably borrow up to \$1 billion, it will be in US dollars," he told the annual meeting. "We are going to the external markets not for money but for credit, for loans, for benchmarks and in order to make ourselves present in this market," he told reporters. Kazakhstan already has four Eurobonds, one of them used here as an example is called the Kazakhstan 2021 and is floating on the London Stock Exchange with Bank of America Merrill Lynch as the book runner and Deutsche Bank as the paying agent. Outstanding at the moment are €47 million which will until 2021 give the Kazakh government a total of €100 million, the initial investment of €100,000 began on December 29 in 2005. The governments of Russia and the UK are guarantors on the bond and it matures twice a year.

Kazakhstan has raised its oil export tax by 50 percent to \$60 per metric ton (\$8.19 dollars per barrel), effective from April 13 to get a larger share of revenue from sales of crude, the Kazakhstanskaya Pravda newspaper said. Kazakhstan is Central Asia's biggest oil producer and it began taxing crude oil exports in May 2008 to raise cash as global credit markets tightened. The duty was eliminated in January 2009 but it was restored at a rate of \$20 per metric ton in August 2010, and then raised to \$40 per metric ton in January 2011. Kazakhstan is raising the tax after industrial production growth slowed in 2012 compared to the previous year. "The nation does not plan to raise the tax further this year," Economy and Budget Planning Deputy Minister Marat Kussainov said, according to an Interfax report.

A Kazakh-Swiss joint venture to produce the chemical element tantalum will be launched in the Congo and Rwanda, Kazatomprom chief Vladimir Shkolnik told journalists attending the first meeting of the Kazakhstan-Switzerland Business Council on April 13. "Switzerland is interested in creating such a joint venture because we are the largest processor of this metal and we have the unique technology for processing of the product with high added value," he said. The Ulba Metallurgical Plant in Ust-Kamenogorsk produces tantalum from imported raw material. The Swiss company owns the African mines. The parties are ready to invest up to \$100 million.

According to the press service of the Kazakh Ministry of Economy and Budget Planning, **Kazakhstan will chair the 47th Annual Meeting of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) in 2014.** At the annual meeting of the Board of Governors of the Asian Development Bank, India officially transferred ADB Board of Governors' chair in 2014 to Kazakhstan. Thus, according to the Ministry, ADB meeting will be held in Astana on 2-3 May, PM's official website reports. According to preliminary estimates, the ADB meeting in Astana will gather about 5,000 people .

The Karaganda and Schuchinsk resort area in the future will be part of the Astana agglomeration. This was announced at the IV International Investment Forum Astana Invest 2013 by Kazakhstan Prime Minister Serik Akhmetov.

In this regard, President Nursultan Nazarbayev has urged the government's foreign partners to invest more actively in the development of Kazakhstan's capital. "The support of specific business initiatives, improvement of the business climate and the expansion of public-private partnerships is a priority for the government. We are open and willing to consider any business initiatives and proposals from the business community. We invite all interested entrepreneurs and investors to interact and cooperate," Nazarbayev said.

On May 22, a decree on creation of National Holding Baiterek was signed by the President of Kazakhstan and published on the official Akorda website. Kuandyk Bishimbayev will head the new holding. The main mission of the holding as defined by the President will be providing funding to the state programme of industrialization. The JSC Baiterek will manage shares and stakes of national development institutions, national companies and other legal entities belonging to the holding by right of ownership and given to the new body in trust management. The President has directed that the legislative basis of the holding be developed by Jan. 1, 2014.

Prime Minister Serik Akhmetov has instructed the Ministry of Industry and New Technologies to present to the government by August 1 Kazakhstan's energy-saving programme, Energy Saving 2020.

This means having all aspects of the plan, including financing, ready by then. President Nazarbayev has called for an annual 10 percent reduction in energy use by 2015 in both industry and domestic use.

The Prime Minister stressed that it is vital for both national and regional governments to meet this target.

Expedition 35 to the International Space Station (ISS) came to a safe conclusion on May 14 when the three-man crew touched down in Kazakhstan. The crew – Commander Chris Hadfield from Canada, and Flight Engineers Tom Marshburn from the United States and Roman Romanenko from Russia – had started their voyage from Kazakhstan 146 days prior, in December, when they took off from the Baikonur Cosmodrome.

More than 10,000 children’s holiday camps, which will take care of about 1.3 million children, will operate in Kazakhstan this summer, Minister of Education and Science Bakhytzhan Zhumagulov said at a meeting of the government on May 21. “This year 10,487 recreation camps will function in Kazakhstan. More than 2.1 million children will attend the holiday camps. Of those, about 1.3 million children or 58.9 percent will improve their health,” Zhumagulov stated. According to the minister, at the beginning of the summer season, five new health and recreation facilities are expected to open. This year, it is planned to assist about 450,000 to 680,000 or 65.4 percent of orphans, disabled children and children from low-income families. In general, according to the minister, 5.5 billion tenge (\$36,452,790), which is 2.7 billion (\$17,895,006) more than last year will be allocated from local budgets for the summer holidays for socially disadvantaged children and improving conditions at the camps.

Kazakhstan has developed a unique method to detect toxic chemicals in the environment after rocket launches. The scientists of the Gharysh – Ecology research centre have created and patented a unique method of detecting toxic rocket fuel chemicals in the environment after the launch of rockets, Chairman of the National Space Agency of Kazakhstan Talgat Mussabayev said in an exclusive interview for the website of the Prime Minister of Kazakhstan. Highly toxic fuels have a negative effect on the environment in Kazakhstan. According to bilateral agreements, the Russian side has pledged to facilitate the phased reduction of launches of carrier rockets Proton from the Baikonur cosmodrome which have adversely affected the environment.

Construction of a joint facility to process uranium by Canada’s Cameco and Kazakhstan’s KazAtomProm National Nuclear Company will start in 2018, KazTAG reported, citing Robert Steane, Cameco senior vice president and chief operating officer as quoted in the company’s statement issued for the 26th sitting of the Foreign Investors Council on May 22. “There is a memorandum signed with KazAtomProm to transfer the company’s own technology to construct and operate a highly efficient and environmentally friendly facility that will be processing 6,000 tons of uranium (UO₃) a year, relying on the Ulba Metallurgical Plant [engaged in production of uranium, beryllium and tantalum products for the needs of the nuclear power industry] based in UstKamenogorsk.” The actual transfer of technology will take place upon the start of construction in 2018. The facility is to begin uranium production in 2020.” The feasibility study for the project is to be

launched in 2014. “The Ulba Plant is an ideal place, given its long history of metallurgical production, infrastructure, technical expertise [it was established in 1949]”, the statement reads, adding that as soon as Kazakhstan and Canada sign a bilateral agreement on the peaceful use of atomic power, the transfer of the technology will expand cooperation between the two companies.” KazAtomProm, including its stakes in other companies, produced a total of 11,900 tons of natural uranium in 2012 (over 20 percent of global production). In 2011, the company produced 11,079 tons.

According to the Kazakhstan’s Central Bank Chairman (Governor) Grigoriy Marchenko, **a single currency within the Customs Union of Kazakhstan, Russia and Belarus may emerge within 10 years’** time, the country’s Prime Minister’s press service reported on May 24. “It took Europe about five decades... It could take us a decade if we build on the Eurozone experience. So far no concrete moves have been made towards introducing a single currency,” Marchenko said. According to him, “to run a single currency, the Customs Union member states should work out single macroeconomic parameters similar to those in place within the EU.”

TURKEY

Japanese, French firms win Turkey nuclear plant contract

2 May 2013

A partnership between Japan's Mitsubishi Heavy Industries and France's Areva have been granted a multi-billion dollar contract to build a new nuclear power plant on the Black Sea. The partnership between Mitsubishi and Areva had won the rights to construct four nuclear reactors, the project reportedly costing around 2.0 trillion yen (20.5 billion US dollars).

The nuclear plant will be built by the Japanese-led group in Sinop, on the Black Sea coast. The article said that Erdogan declared Turkey's faith in Japan's technological prowess and the efficiency and safety of its nuclear industry. Erdogan reportedly said that he believed Japan's nuclear technologies have improved after the 2011 Fukushima nuclear disaster. "Erdogan said Japan has experience and know-how in coping with earthquakes. Erdogan also said that the Sinop project could prove as a stepping stone and lead to more nuclear reactor construction contracts in Turkey for Japanese firms. "Turkey would welcome a Japanese bid on a proposed third (nuclear) plant and is working to select a site," Erdogan said. "The country wants to have as many reactors as possible in operation by 2023," the Turkish premier added

This deal marks the first successful Japanese bid for an overseas nuclear project since the March 2011 tragedy where an earthquake caused a huge tsunami that crippled cooling systems at the Fukushima nuclear power plant. The Nikkei, in an earlier article, said that the Mitsubishi- Areva consortium is tasked to build four nuclear reactors with a combined output of 4.5 million kilowatts. Construction is most likely to begin in 2017, with the first reactor coming on-line by 2023. Japan Prime Minister Shinzo Abe is set to visit Turkey on Friday, the last leg of his four-nation trip which started in Moscow. Erdogan will be keen to announce the deal as hosts the Japanese premier.

Turkey-South Korea free trade deal in effect

2 May 2013

Turkish Minister of Economy Zafer Caglayan stated that the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between Turkey and South Korea was in effect as of Wednesday allowing 93 percent of Turkey's industrial exports to South Korea to take place tax-free.

Both parties agreed on reducing the tariffs to zero gradually in ten years within scope of the Free Trade Agreement, was told in a statement released on Wednesday.

Stating that 93 percent of Turkey's industrial exports would enter South Korea free of customs tax, Caglayan said that a seven year agenda was set to implement a reduction on customs tax for some electronics, iron and steel, textile and automotive imports from South Korea which corresponds to 22 percent of South Korean exports to Turkey.

Turkey ratifies agreement with Azerbaijan for investment protection

3 May 2013

On May 2, the Cabinet of Ministers of Turkey ratified an agreement with Azerbaijan on mutual stimulation and protection of investments.

With the ratification of the agreement, mutual investments will be protected in accordance with international legal norms.

The term of this agreement, signed earlier between the governments of Turkey and Azerbaijan is for 10 years.

President Gul visits Portugal

6 May 2013

Turkish President Abdullah Gul on May 5 evening arrived Portuguese capital city Lisbon for a formal visit on the invitation of his Portuguese counterpart Anibal Cavaco Silva.

Gul and his accompanying delegation arrived Lisbon's military airport, Figo Maduro on Sunday evening where he was welcomed by Portugal's Minister for Regional Development Miguel Piores Maduro and Turkey's Ambassador in Lisbon, Ebru Barutcu Gokdenizler.

Touching onto his trip to Portugal, Gul stated at a press conference prior to his departure from Istanbul, "I will exchange views with my interlocutors on our European Union process, latest developments in the Mediterranean region as well as on international issues."

Gul is set to hold a bilateral meeting with Silva and he is expected to receive separately the country's parliament speaker and prime minister. Gul will also participate in the closing session of Turkish-Portuguese Business Forum.

Turkey's First Lady Hayrunnisa Gul, Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu, Culture and Tourism Minister Omer Celik as well as a group of Turkish businesspeople are accompanying the Turkish president on his visit.

Trade volume between the countries had tripled over the past decade to exceed \$1 billion in 2012.

Turkey Sees Future in Asia With Joining SOC

6 May 2013

Frustrated in its attempt to join the European Union, NATO-member Turkey last week signed up as a partner with the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), the security bloc dominated by China and Russia that includes the Central Asian states. But, Ankara still has major differences with China and Russia that need to be ironed out.

Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu described the signing of the SCO cooperation agreement as an historic day for his country, saying Turkey is the first NATO state to establish such a relationship with the SCO. "If we look from a Cold War perspective," he said, "these may seem like mutually exclusive institutions. However, the Cold War has ended. Turkey won't be a slave of the Cold War logic."

The United States has questioned whether Turkey can become a member of a security organization besides NATO, like the SCO. But the Turkish foreign minister argues such dual membership is possible now that Moscow and Beijing are no longer considered enemies by NATO.

Semih Idiz, a diplomatic columnist for the Turkish newspaper Taraf, says Ankara is attracted by the SCO because it shares cultural values with several SCO member states.

"Some members are of Turkish origin and one member, Tajikistan, is of Farsi origin, but nevertheless it is Islamic predominantly," said Idiz. "And the fact there are shared cultural values in these groups tends to let people believe that this is a kind of Islamic entity or Turkish Islamic entity."

China, Russia and four Central Asian nations - Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan - formed the SCO in 2001 as a regional security bloc to fight threats posed by radical Islam and drug trafficking from neighboring Afghanistan.

Sinan Ulgen, a visiting scholar at the global research group Carnegie Europe, says Ankara's signing of the cooperation agreement with the SCO is meant to send a message to the European Union.

"They were meant to be read as a warning to EU members that continue to condone obstructionist policies in relation to EU member accession prospects," said Ulgen. "And the second reason is that Turkey wants to demonstrate that [it has] now become not only a regional power, but also a global actor."

Turkish Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan has called the delay in Turkey joining the EU "unforgivable" and has accused Brussels of not being a fair or genuine negotiating partner.

Diplomatic columnist Idiz says there are also limitations to how close Turkey's relationship with the SCO can become due to its major differences with two key SCO members - Russia and China.

"There are differing interests between Turkey and the key members of SCO, Russia for one. Syria [and Turkey] are diametrically opposed and are accusing each other very silently diplomatically," he said. "Also China, who only two years ago was being accused of perpetrating genocide against Uighur Turks in the Xinjiang province [of China], for example. But they can agree on trade, and I think that will be the driving force here."

Ankara has said it will continue to develop its relationship with the SCO. How that relationship develops could depend on whether or not its bid to join the EU finds new

momentum.

Still, observers say that even if Turkey's dreams of EU membership are shattered, it will likely attract new suitors besides the SCO, given its rapidly growing economy.

Israel, Turkey draft accord on Gaza flotilla raid

7 May 2013

Israel and Turkey reached a draft accord to mend a three-year diplomatic crisis stemming from a deadly Israeli raid on a Gaza-bound flotilla, officials said.

The draft agreement on compensation for the families of nine Turkish activists killed by Israeli commandos May 31, 2010, was reached during a Jerusalem meeting that brought the highest-level Turkish diplomatic mission to Israel since relations were frozen after the raid, officials said.

"The meeting was conducted in a good and positive manner," the office of Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu said.

"The delegations reached an agreed draft, but further clarifications are required on certain subjects," the office said, adding the two sides expected "to come to an agreement in the near future."

The Turkish delegation, led by Foreign Affairs Undersecretary Feridun Sinirlioglu, a former Turkish ambassador to Israel, kept a low profile, saying in a brief statement an agreement was near.

Netanyahu was in China when Monday's meeting took place. Israeli national security adviser Yaakov Amidror and Joseph Ciechanover, appointed by Netanyahu in August 2010 to represent Israel, led the Israeli delegation.

The meeting lasted more than eight hours, officials said. It followed a daylong meeting between the two delegations in Ankara, Turkey, last month.

Turkey used to be Israel's closest ally in the region and its most important partner in the Muslim world.

But Ankara broke off relations after the Israeli commandos raided the Turkish ship MV Mavi Marmara in international waters of the Mediterranean Sea as the ship attempted to break Israel's naval blockade of the Gaza Strip.

All nine activist casualties were caused by gunshots, some of them at point-blank range or from behind, a 2011 U.N. report said. Many other people were injured in the raid.

The ship -- one of six in a "Gaza Freedom Flotilla" -- was carrying humanitarian aid and construction materials. Its crew had the stated intention of breaking blockade.

U.S. President Barack Obama brokered the Turkish-Israeli reconciliation when he visited Israel in March. He urged renewed cooperation between the two important U.S. allies as the Syrian war threatened to spill over and destabilize the broader region.

In a 30-minute phone call March 22, Netanyahu officially apologized to Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan for operational mistakes that led to the deaths and promised compensation and a further easing of restrictions on Gaza.

Erdogan accepted the apology and both leaders agreed to enter into discussions on Israel's "non-liability" compensation to the families.

Once compensation terms are reached, Israel and Turkey are expected to normalize relations and send ambassadors to each other's nations, The Jerusalem Post said.

Egypt: Prime Minister to Attend Business Forum in Turkey

8 May 2013

Egyptian Prime Minister Hisham Kandil participated on 10 May the two-day annual meeting and business forum of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) in Turkey.

He convened with ministers of planning and investments to arrange for his participation and headed the Egyptian delegation on behalf of President Mohamed Mursi, reported the state news agency.

EBRD, Founded in 1991, uses the tools of investment to help build market economies and democracies in 30 countries from central Europe to central Asia.

The bank extended its mandate last year to include Egypt and other Arab countries following the Arab Spring uprisings.

On the sidelines of these meetings, Kandil participated in the joint Egyptian-Turkish Business Council to shed the lights on investment projects and probe increasing Egyptian exports to Turkey.

Turkey has agreed on a \$2 billion budget support package to Egypt last year.

The trade exchange between the two countries rose to \$5 billion in 2012.

"T-129 Atak" helicopter draws attention

8 May 2013

The "T-129 Atak" helicopter drew high attention during the 11th International Defense Industry Fair in Istanbul.

Officials from Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Pakistan, Lebanon, United Arab Emirates, Libya and Turkmenistan showed great interest in the helicopter during the fair which took place in TUYAP Fair and Congress Center on Tuesday.

An official of Turkish Aerospace Industries Gorkem Bilgi told Anadolu Agency that 59 helicopters would be produced definitely and 32 others would be optional, and they would be given to Turkish Land Forces.

The "T-129 Atak" type helicopter was designed to fulfill the needs of the Turkish Armed Forces.

781 firms from 50 countries attend the fair at TUYAP Fair and Congress Center until May 10.

Turkey's first indigenous drone ready for deployment

8 May 2013

MALE-class unmanned aerial vehicle ANKA has performed well at tests, it is ready for duty.

Six years after the launching of the project, Turkey's first indigenous surveillance drone is now ready for deployment, its manufacturer has said.

Named after a phoenix-like mythological creature, the ANKA is Turkey's first-ever medium altitude long endurance (MALE) unmanned aerial vehicle developed entirely by Turkish engineers.

It was an attraction for aviation enthusiasts visiting the 11th International Defense Industry Fair in Istanbul, and it certainly is a pride for the Turkish Aviation and Space Industry Corporation, or TUSAS, the state-owned manufacturer.

"It carries a 120-kg camera, stays up in the air for 18 hours. The plane needs no human interference for its functions including take-off and landing. The most important feature of the ANKA is that it is designed by Turkish engineers. If we need to make any changes to it, we can do it ourselves," Remzi Barlas, head of the UAV project, told the Anadolu Agency.

The plane, originally developed for the Turkish Armed Forces' surveillance and reconnaissance needs, is expected to end Turkey's dependence on foreign manufacturers. Turkey has a number of surveillance drones in its arsenal, the Israeli-made Herons. ANKA's price tag will hover between \$5 million and \$8 million and that it will be sold also to foreign buyers, Barlas said.

"It has a system of protecting itself against frosting which is far better than all other rival systems. It can fly up to 15-20 nautical miles faster than the rival planes," he said.

Ankara Hosts Triple Balkan Summit

14/05/2013

The third meeting of Triple Balkan Summit was held in Ankara on May 14-15. Serbian president Tomislav Nikolic and Chairman of the Presidency in Bosnia Herzegovina Nebojsa Radmanovic attended the meeting hosted by Turkish President Abdullah Gul, Turkish Anadolu Agency reported, citing a statement issued by Turkish Presidency.

Current issues related to the three countries and Balkans were discussed in the meeting. Economy ministers of the three countries also convened in order to talk about establishing a Triple Trade Committee.

According to the statement, the works to increase the cooperation between the three countries in fields of economy, energy, transportation, environment, agriculture and farming were carried on with determination. "The visit by the chairman of the Presidency of Bosnia-Herzegovina to Belgrade, Serbia in April this year is a concrete picture of the triple summit process. The foreign ministers of the countries has contributed a lot to reestablish permanent peace, stability, and sensibility in Balkans and reinforcing the regional cooperation. The meeting in Ankara led to the presentation of the determination to develop and maintain the process," said Turkish Presidency. The first meeting was hosted by Turkish President Abdullah Gul in Istanbul on 24th April, 2010, while the second meeting was hosted by then Serbian president Boris Tadic on 26th April, 2011.

Turkish premier to receive highest state welcome during US visit

15 May 2013

Erdogan was greeted in double military honors on arrival in Washington on 15 May. Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan received the highest state welcome during his official visit to the United States.

Erdogan was welcomed in two separate full military honors, one at the airport and the other at the White House upon his arrival in Washington as the formal guest of US President Barack Obama.

Erdogan stayed at Washington's Blair House, the official state guest house for the US president.

Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu, Economy Minister Zafer Caglayan, European Union Minister and the Chief Negotiator Egemen Bagis as well as a group of nearly 100 Turkish businesspeople accompanied Erdogan.

Obama spent an whole day with Erdogan and the two leaders made a joint press conference after their bilateral meeting. Obama also hosted dinner for Erdogan.

Economic issues to top the agenda of the visit

The leaders mainly discussed economic issues as well as allegations over chemical

weapons use by forces loyal to Syrian President Bashar al-Assad.

Meetings were held to incorporate Turkey in the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) agreement which will be signed between the US and the EU.

As per the Customs Union Agreement Turkey had signed with the EU, Turkey needs to apply the same tariffs as the EU to industrial products imported from third countries.

The country will be obliged to lower customs duties in line with a potential Foreign Trade Agreement (FTA) the EU will sign with the US, but it would not benefit from similar tariff reductions that will be made by the US as Ankara is not a member of the EU.

Turkey, US agree 'al-Assad should go for a free Syria'

17 May 2013

Turkey and Syria agreed that a democratic process without Syrian President Bashar al-Assad was needed for a democratic transition of the war-torn country, U.S. President Barack Obama said today in a press conference with Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan.

"We [referring to Erdoğan] both agree al-Assad needs to go," Obama said following a meeting the Turkish premier that lasted more than two hours.

Obama also offered his condolences over deadly Reyhanlı attacks and said his country would always be on Turkey's side in its efforts to fight terrorism.

"We will continue to increase the pressure on al-Assad regime and we will continue to work with the opposition," the U.S. president said, who also thanked Turkey and Turkish people "for the hospitality shown to the Syrian refugees."

Turkey will also play a major role in efforts to bring together all sides of the conflict at a planned international conference to be held soon, adding that efforts will continue to create a Syria "free from al-Assad's tyranny."

Turkish Prime Minister Erdoğan said the meeting was a milestone in Turkey-U.S. relations. He also emphasized that Syria was on the top of the agenda of the meeting.

"During the talks we saw that our thoughts on the process until today and on what can be done from now on overlapped," Erdoğan said, adding that backing the opposition, preventing the use of chemical weapons respect of the minorities' rights were the main priorities.

Working dinner on Syria

Regarding his previous statements on the use of chemical weapons as the U.S. government's "red line," Obama told reporters that he preserved the option to take additional steps but those would not be unilateral.

"There are a whole range of options that the United States is already engaged in. And I preserve the options of taking additional steps, both diplomatic and military, because

those chemical weapons inside of Syria also threaten our security over the long term as well as our allies and friends and neighbors," he said, adding that the Syrian conflict was an international problem.

"It's very much my hope to continue to work with all the various parties involved, including Turkey, to find a solution that brings peace to Syria, stabilizes the region, stabilizes those chemical weapons, but it's not going to be something that the United States does by itself, and I don't think anybody in the region, including the prime minister, would think that U.S. unilateral actions in and of themselves would bring about a better outcome inside of Syria."

Erdoğan said both countries were sharing all information regarding the use of chemical weapons and missiles in Syria.

"I want to see the glass half full. We want to see the sensibility of the international community. I believe that the United States is showing efforts [in Syria]. We will work to [find a quicker solution] with members of the U.N. Security Council, of the Arab League or other countries who show their sensibility even if they are outside [the region]," Erdoğan said adding that Turkey's goal was to end the violence in its neighboring country.

"The only thing that we want is to save Syria from an autocratic regime and a dictatorship."

Erdoğan said they would continue to discuss the Syria issue with Obama during a working dinner May 16. Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu and intelligence chief Hakan Fidan, U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry and Obama's National Security adviser Thomas Donilon are also expected to participate in the dinner.

Saudi crown prince in Ankara for Syria

21 May 2013

Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Salman bin Abdulaziz, also the deputy prime minister and defense minister held talks with President Abdullah Gül on May 21 with the Syrian conflict at the top of his agenda.

The two signed a cooperation agreement on defense during the prince's first foreign visit since he became the crown prince.

The planned two-day visit comes prior to today's Friends of Syria meeting in Jordan and U.S.-Russia-led Geneva conference for Syria in June.

His visit aims at enhancing cooperation and coordination between the two countries.

Bilateral ties, military, economic and cultural issues along with regional and international developments were to be discussed according to a written statement from the Turkish Presidency on May 20.

The visit was aiming to boost bilateral relations, the statement also said. The Saudi Crown Prince is accompanied by a number of officials, including Foreign Minister Prince Saud al-Faisal, Information Minister Abdul Aziz Khoja and the Economy and Planning Minister

Muhammad al-Jasser. Prince Salman is due to meet Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan today.

Saudi Arabia, along with Qatar, are reportedly arming Syrian rebels and paying salaries.

Turkey locks down border with Syria

22 May 2013

Turkey has locked down a border crossing with Syria following a deadly twin blast on the southern border, which killed 51 people.

According to local media, Ankara has shut the Yayladagi gate, located 90 kilometers from the Turkish border town of Reyhanli.

Turkish nationals in Syria and non-Syrian citizens transiting through Turkey will be allowed to cross into the north, whereas the way back to Syria will be closed.

Turkish authorities have also stepped up security in the country, after two car bombs went off with a 15-minute interval outside the city hall in the Turkish town of Reyhanli on May 11.

Turkey pinned the blame for what it called a "terrorist attack" on the Syrian regime, an allegation Damascus strongly denied.

French and Turkish investors explore opportunities in Ghana

22 May 2013

French investors from various sectors visited Ghana on May 22 to explore investment and business opportunities, a statement from the French Embassy in Accra announced.

It described the delegation as high-level managers from 30 companies in the infrastructural, banking, technology, telecommunications, oil and construction industries and public works.

French Ambassador to Ghana, Frederic Clavier said the "delegation discussed development opportunities in Ghana".

The West African country is enjoying political stability and stable macroeconomic indicators, which had attracted significant foreign direct investment.

Clavier indicated that France was prepared to deepen bilateral relations with Ghana by opening new tracks, where both countries can co-operate for political, social and economic developments.

He said Ghana continued to be the trail blazer and a beacon of hope in all aspects of democratic governance, which has eluded many African nations.

Clavier said Ghana's democratic nature enabled countries such as France to easily invest in it.

In a related development, a six-member Turkish business delegation, presently in Ghana, also discussed opportunities that exist in the construction, fertilizer and polyvinyl chloride (PVC) pipe industry for investment.

Ghana's Trade and Industry Minister, Haruna Iddrisu assured them of government's commitment to providing an enabling environment for foreign investors and for public-private partnerships to thrive.

Turkish "Mevlana Exchange Programme" for education starts

24 May 2013

Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu and Turkey's YOK Chairman Gokhan Cetinsaya have signed an agreement on 23 May to cooperate for the new Mevlana Exchange Programme for education on behalf of Turkish Foreign Ministry and Turkey's Higher Education Board, YOK.

Turkey's Higher Education Board's (YOK) newly established program, the Mevlana Exchange Program was made public in Turkish capital Ankara.

Speaking before the signing ceremony in Ankara, Davutoglu stated that the new programme started in the very right time, in a compelling framework. Davutoglu said that education institutions have always carried the global knowledge to next generations, which should help each student to become an honored, ethical and well informed human.

He said that the level of Turkish universities, students and academicians has to rise as Turkey did in several areas in last ten years. "Now, we are ninth in world who is represented mostly. Hopefully we will be amongst top five in two years," he added.

Cetinsaya stated that the cooperation agreement, signed between YOK and Turkey's Foreign Ministry is not just on Mevlana Exchange Program yet it is going to be related to all Turkey's foreign relations and said, "ease of visa application process, preparation of certificate of equivalence, promotion of the universities are among the articles of the cooperation agreement."

He noted that the program was parallel with Turkey's 2023-year aims by saying, "In the scope of reaching our target of 21st century, globalization is a must. We target our institution to be internationalized as we are living in the 21st century."

Cetinsaya said, like Turkey's Foreign ministry, in order to run the new exchange program smoothly, they had been holding talks with Turkish Airlines and Yunus Emre Culture Centres.

He said, this newly formed exchange program was actually Turkey's exchange program with the globe and underscored, "Even before holding the official introduction of the program, we have signed 228 protocols with 32 different countries across the globe as of today."

He said, the program would start running for the 2013-2014 education year between foreign higher education institutions and 37 universities in Turkey.

Mevlana Exchange Programme is a programme which aims the exchange of students and academic staff between the Turkish higher education institutions and higher education institutions of other countries. With the regulation published on August 23, 2011, students and academic staff exchange between Turkish higher education institutions and of other countries has been possible. Mohammed Jalaladdin Rumi, known as Mevlana is accepted worldwide as an intellectual with his point of view to people and life. UNESCO, due to the 800th anniversary of Mevlana's birth, declared the year 2007 as Mevlana and Tolerance year.

Number of Syrians in Turkey at 194,908

24 May 2013

Turkish Prime Ministry Disaster and Emergency Management Directorate (AFAD) announced Friday that there were 194,908 Syrians currently staying in Turkey after fleeing clashes in their country.

In a written statement release, AFAD reminded that they set up 5 tent cities in Hatay, 2 in Sanliurfa, 3 in Gaziantep and one each in Osmaniye, Kahramanmaras, Adana and Adiyaman and one container city each in Kilis, Sanliurfa and Gaziantep.

AFAD said that Syrian citizens taking shelter in Turkey over a year were provided with lodging, food, health services, security, social activities, education, religious services, banking, translation services and communications.

It was said that 309,205 Syrians fled to Turkey so far and 114,297 of them returned to Syria.

Syrian citizens are provided meal three times a day, AFAD also said.

Turkey's EU Ministry set to fund NGOs

25 May 2013

Turkey's European Union Ministry has launched a grant program of 9 million euros for media institutions and nongovernmental organizations in order to promote dialogue between civil society in the EU and Turkey.

The ministry announced the program, "Strengthening Civil Society Dialogue between the EU and Turkey - III Grant Programs," May 24 in a written statement.

The program, which is divided into a "Political Criteria Grant Program" and a "Media Grant Program," will finance Turkey and EU media institutions' and NGOs' common projects in the two domains.

The main aim of the Political Criteria Program is "to give opportunities to NGOs in Turkey to get familiar with the policies of the European Union concerning political issues... and to be prepared for accession through strengthening contacts and mutual exchange of experience between all civil society actors on political issues in the member states and Turkey," the statement said.

Applying NGOs should be working in the human rights, anti-discrimination or democracy and rule of law field.

The ministry set aside 6 million euros of the total amount to the program, and 3 million euros will be granted through the Media Grant Program. The main goal here is “to increase the professional competencies and qualifications of the media organizations and NGOs in the field of media and to establish a sustainable dialogue between the media organizations in Turkey and the EU member states,” according to the statement.

Associations, foundations, media organizations and similar institutions or actors working in these domains in a member state of the EU or Turkey can apply to the grant program. The deadline for submission to the Political Criteria Program is July 5, while media grant program submissions can be made until July 12.

Turkish President Gül welcomes the EU's Syria arms decision

29 May 2013

Turkish President Abdullah Gül welcomed yesterday the EU decision to lift the arms embargo on the Syrian opposition.

“It’s obvious that nobody can suppress people through arms and the army. In this respect, we welcome the world and international community to stake a claim on [the Syrian] opposition and support them,” Gül said yesterday at a joint press conference with Tunisian President Moncef Marzouki.

Asked about the interference in the clashes in Syria of the policies of Hezbollah and Iran, the Turkish president warned against a “sectarian clash” that could spark in the region.

The “fever” in Syria should not spill out, Gül said, warning against “proxy wars” in the Middle East. “That door must not be opened. If sectarian wars erupted, a situation that would be cursed by all the Islamic world and future generations would emerge.” Actors in the region “should not act in a way aiming to gain position,” he added.

‘Politicians decide on polls’

For his part, Marzouki expressed concern for Tunisian youngsters that go to Syria to take part in clashes. Those young people might create problems in the future when they come back to Tunisia, he said.

The politicians will decide whether to hold three polls in 2014, Gül also said, declining to elaborate further on the possibility Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan recently voiced on a referendum for a new Constitution, the local elections set for March 2014 and the presidential elections in August 2014.

“I have nothing to say. We leave it to the politicians,” Gül told reporters.

Turkey starts construction of third bridge over Bosphorus strait

29 May 2013

Turkey launched the construction of a third bridge over the Bosphorus Strait in Istanbul with 10,000 people attending the ground breaking ceremony on Wednesday.

The grand ceremony was attended by Turkish President Abdullah Gul, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan and other top government officials, who claimed it as the world's widest suspension bridge.

The proposed 1,275-meter-long suspension bridge over the Bosphorus is planned to connect Garipce on the European side with the Poyrazkoy neighborhood in Beykoz on the Asian side.

The prime minister set a two-year timeline for the project to be finalized while addressing a grand gathering on the construction field in Garipceon village on the European side of Istanbul by the Black sea.

The project marks the beginning of the country's second-largest build-operate-transfer scheme to date. It is estimated to cost 6 billion U.S. dollars and aims to ease traffic in the highly congested city of nearly 15 million.

Speaking during the ceremony, Erdogan called on Turkish construction firm ICTAS and Italian construction group Astaldi, the tender winners for the project, to complete the bridge by May 29, 2015.

Turkish FM addresses members of Syrian National Coalition

30 May 2013

Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu on Wednesday addressed the Syrian opposition coalition which has been holding week-long talks in Istanbul, Anadolu Agency reported.

Turkish diplomatic sources said Davutoglu made a speech at the opposition meeting in line with a joint request of the foreign ministers of 11 core member countries of "the Friends of Syria" group which held a meeting last week in Amman, Jordan.

Sources said that Davutoglu expressed full support by the Friends of Syria group to the opposition, saying that the group will respect decisions the opposition will take in unity and that it wanted to see concrete results from opposition's meetings as soon as possible.

On behalf of "Friend of Syria" group, Qatari Minister for Foreign Affairs Khalid al-Attiyah, US Ambassador to Syria Robert Ford and France's Ambassador to Syria Eric Chevallier also participated in the opposition's Istanbul meeting.

Mavi Marmara victims commemorated on third anniversary in Gaza

31 May 2013

A ceremony to commemorate the victims of the Mavi Marmara raid was held on the third anniversary on Friday at Gaza port.

Kemal Ozturk, the Anadolu Agency Executive Board Chairman and Director General, who was in Gaza for the inauguration of the agency's Gaza office, delivered a speech at the ceremony where authorities representing the Foreign Ministry of Palestine in Gaza and the Foundation for Human Rights and Freedoms and Humanitarian Relief (IHH) and head

of Anadolu Agency Arabic Desk Turan Kislakci were also present.

Ozturk stated the Mavi Marmara flotilla attack marked one of the deepest sorrows of Turkey in history.

Stating that nine people were killed and tens others were wounded, Ozturk said, "I'd like to say something to the brave children of Palestine. The Palestine issue is the issue of all Muslims. And the Muslim community expects one thing from you. They expect Palestinian brothers reconcile. And hopefully we will be first to announce their news of making peace."

Mavi Marmara, a ship in Gaza-bound aid flotilla, organized by the Free Gaza Movement and IHH in 2010 was carrying humanitarian aid and construction materials with the intention of breaking the Israeli-Egyptian blockade on the Gaza Strip.

On May 31, 2010, Israeli soldiers boarded the ships from speedboats and helicopters to attack, and killed nine Turks aboard, which worsened the relations between Turkey and Israel.