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Azerbaijan

President of Azerbaijan extends Novruz Holiday greetings to Azerbaijani people

March 17 (AzerTAc). The President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev has extended Novruz Holiday greetings to the Azerbaijani people. The congratulation letter reads:

- Dear compatriots! I cordially congratulate you on Novruz holiday! I wish you health, happiness and success. Novruz is one of the most favourite holidays of our people. Thanks to the inexhaustible spiritual strength given by this holiday, which was always respected in Azerbaijan, we have managed to preserve our optimism over the centuries, in the difficult and challenging periods of our past, and always looked ahead with hope. A worthy continuation of the traditions of Novruz is an exceptional merit of the Azerbaijani people. A holiday of spring, which has absorbed the highest human qualities, as a large treasure of spirituality and wisdom, clearly demonstrates our devotion to the historical and cultural heritage.

After restoration of state independence, our free country has managed to build their own destiny in accordance with its dream, and this gives our people a true holiday atmosphere in such happy days. The ongoing positive changes in all spheres of our life gives each of us a deep sense of pride, elation and great belief that our country, conquering high peaks will reach the level of the world's most advanced countries in the coming years too. The reviving atmosphere of Novruz holiday, which increases a desire to create, quickly brings us to the objectives of establishing a complete modern strong state and a social well-being society.

These days, we again respectfully honour the memory of our loved ones, as well as the sons and daughters of Azerbaijan who sacrificed their lives for the independence and territorial integrity of their homeland. I believe that each new victory on the way to the overall development of our homeland, rejoices the souls of our martyrs. I also congratulate our countrymen living outside the country, with their hearts always beating with love for their motherland and a sense of national solidarity closely rallied around the ideology of Azerbaijanism.

Let this spring of our people bring abundance and prosperity to every home, every family! Happy Novruz!

Ilham Aliyev
President of the Republic of Azerbaijan

Azerbaijan sends letter to UN Secretary General over the facts of violation of ceasefire by Armenian armed forces

March 16 (AzerTAc). Permanent Representative of Azerbaijan to the United Nations Agshin Mehdiyev sent a letter to UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon about

violation of ceasefire by Armenia. The letter was circulated as an official document of the General Assembly and the UN Security Council. The letter notes that as a result of ceasefire violations by Armenia's armed forces in December 2011 and January 2012 two Azerbaijani servicemen were killed and one civilian was wounded. The annex to the letter says that during this period the Armenian armed forces targeted both military and civilians in Azerbaijan shooting from their positions both in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan and in Armenia. The letter condemned also the statements by Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan on the twentieth anniversary of the country's armed forces on January 22 and at the 9th Conference of the Volunteer Homeland Defenders Union on February 18. Ambassador Mehdiyev pointed out that the statements contained "examples of blatant cynical distortion and perversion of the root causes, course and consequences of the war unleashed by Armenia against Azerbaijan."

The document also stresses that Armenia continues to increase its military presence in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan. The conflict between the two South Caucasus countries began in 1988 when Armenia made territorial claims against Azerbaijan. Armenian armed forces have occupied 20 percent of Azerbaijani territories since 1992, including the Nagorno Karabakh region and 7 adjacent regions. The above mentioned information confirms that the policy of aggression, hatred and falsifications pursued by Armenia, continues to impede the efforts on settlement of the conflict on the basis of negotiations and poses serious threat for regional and international peace, security and stability. In the document, also it is underlined that Armenia continues to increase the military presence in occupied territories of Azerbaijan.

Azerbaijan and Serbia implement economic projects

March 16 (AzerTAc). A meeting of the Milli Majlis committee for economic policy has today held in Baku. The deputies examined the draft loan agreement on construction of the Ljig-Boljkovci, Boljkovci-Takovo and Takovo-Preljina roads as a part of E-763 highway of Serbia. Chairman of the committee Ziyad Samadzade said Azerbaijan makes investments in Turkey, Russia, Georgia and other countries. This agreement will also give an opportunity to make investments in the Serbian economy. According to the agreement, Azerbaijan will approve a loan in € 300 million for Serbia with 4% rate during 15 years.

We want Armenia's withdrawal from Nagorno-Karabakh rather than Eurovision, Egemen Bagis

March 16 (AzerTAc). We want Armenia's withdrawal from Nagorno-Karabakh rather than Eurovision, Turkish minister for EU Affairs Egemen Bagis told journalists after the meeting with Turkey's Eurovision representative Jan Bonomo. Bagis added Azerbaijan is a country moving towards democracy and UN membership. Azerbaijan has diplomatic, political and cultural relations with other participating countries of the Contest.

Azerbaijani Businessmen Union registered in Istanbul

March 16 (AzerTAc). In accordance with decision of the government of Turkey, Azerbaijani Businessmen Union was registered in Istanbul. The aim of the union is to

unite the businessmen and establish business relations, Azerbaijan Export and Investments Promotion Foundation (AZPROMO) said.

President Ilham Aliyev joins nationwide Novruz festivities in Baku

March 19 (AzerTAc). President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev and his spouse Mehriban Aliyeva have today attended nationwide Novruz festivities here. The Head of State and his spouse were warmly welcomed near the Maiden Tower by thousands of people who gathered here for the celebrations. President Ilham Aliyev lit a bonfire and then congratulated the crowd. The President made his remarks here. President and his spouse joined festivities at the Seaside National Park. They were presented keepsakes here. The Head of State and his spouse viewed art works presented here. The Head of State and his spouse listened to mugham singers. They saw ancient handicrafts and products grown in the country as well as works by young artists, designers and craftsmen.

They also watched the performance members of the Azerbaijan Armwrestling Federation. President Ilham Aliyev and his spouse Mehriban Aliyeva posed for photographs with wrestlers. President Ilham Aliyev was presented here the first ticket for 2012 FIFA U-17 Women`s World Cup which will be held in Azerbaijan.

President of Azerbaijan and his spouse signed the application file to the International Olympic Committee as part of the campaign to support Baku`s bid to host 2020 Summer Olympic Games. Participants in the celebrations included Prime Minister Artur Rasizade, Speaker of the Milli Majlis Ogtay Asadov and Head of the Presidential Administration Ramiz Mehdiyev, and other top-ranking officials.

Argentine senator passes document welcoming embassy opening in Azerbaijan

March 19 (AzerTAc). The Higher chamber of the National congress of Argentina, Senate has passed a document 'Declaration on satisfaction with establishment of the Embassy of Argentina in the fraternal country of Azerbaijan'. The author of the document is chairman of the group of friendship with Azerbaijan in Senate Pablo Verani. The document says that Argentina was one of the first countries which recognized the independence of Azerbaijan on 9 March 1992 and since that period the two countries have maintained friendly relations and cooperation. The two countries signed a number of documents in different fields. The group of friendship with Azerbaijan was set in the Argentine senate on 23 August 2011.

The document says that Azerbaijan and Argentina have mutually supplementary capacities, especially broad potential of cooperation in the sphere of scientific technologies, agriculture. The significant development in economic relations of the two countries is observed and in 2010 alone the trade between the two countries has increased by 44%. The document also says that the promising Azerbaijani-Argentine cooperation created the ground for establishing of diplomatic offices in both countries. For this purpose, the embassy of Azerbaijan started functioning in Buenos Aires in 2010 and finally this year the government of Azerbaijan also passed a decision to open an embassy in Baku. The document welcomes decree No 273/2012 signed by the president of Argentina which is related to opening of the Argentine embassy in Azerbaijan.

Soonest settlement of Nagorno-Karabakh conflict soon as possible is important, German FM

March 19 (AzerTAc). The soonest resolution of Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is vital for the region, said German Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle. According to www.stern.de web-site, Westerwelle met with the Armenian President as part of the South Caucasus trip and discussed the ways of settlement of Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. The Minister called on the conflicting sides to look for compromises and put all efforts into finding a peaceful solution to the conflict. Stern.de underlined that Nagorno-Karabakh is a territory of Azerbaijan according to international law, and these lands are still under occupation of Armenia, the weak nation which is virtually dependant on Russia in the conflict.

ICT Minister: Azerbaijan plans to invest \$3,5 billion in ICT projects

March 20 (AzerTAc). Azerbaijan plans to invest \$3,5 billion in ICT projects, Minister of Communications and Information Technologies Ali Abbasov said in his interview to Qatar News Agency (QNA), as part of participation in the Connect Arab Summit 2012 held in Doha, Qatar. Ali Abbasov said the attendance of Emir of Qatar Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani in the summit was a “strong indication” of the intentions of the State of Qatar to enhance ICT projects. He also praised the participation of high-ranking delegates of Arab nations in the summit, adding that it was another indication of how the Arab World intends to invest in ICT sector. Touching on Azerbaijan-Qatar relations, Abbasov said they were boosting day by day. He added the scope of cooperation had expanded in the last few years to reach new sectors such as tourism. The latest development was Qatar Airways` launching a direct route from Doha to Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan. The Minister also revealed the two governments are working on a new agreement in the field of ICT. The Minister said the objective of his country`s participation in the Connect Arab World Summit 2012 was to share Azerbaijan`s experience in the ICT sector with Arab countries and specifically changing legal framework in order to attract more investment in this sector. The Minister also said that Azerbaijan was also pursuing a grand ICT project similar to the Arab ICT Highway. The project was called the Trans-Eurasian Information Super Highway (TASIM). The project was backed by the international community during the UN`s General Assembly meeting in December, 2009. The project aims at bridging the information gap between the West (United States and Europe) and the Asia Pacific region. This will be achieved through building new networks in the region that will provide more internet traffic for the non-west users, allowing them to produce more content, said Abbasov adding the GCC can have a role to play in that project as well due to their location which lies between the West and the Asia Pacific. The Minister noted there will be another ICT project that aims to create an information highway starting from Germany all the way to the Sultanate of Oman. The project aims particularly at overcoming the weakness of connectivity in that area, as well as for providing more content from that region. The Minister referred to the implementation of E-Government services in his country five years ago and encouraged Arab countries to implement it as well plus the service that it allowed full transparency, increased the productivity of the government, offered new frontiers for small and medium businesses as well as limiting corruption. The Minister also revealed that his country will continue to enhance its ICT sector. He said that more projects will be on the way, including launching a new satellite

later in 2012 as well as introducing high-tech education, a plan that will be completed by 2020.

Macedonia removed visas for citizens of Azerbaijan for one year

March 22 (AzerTAc). Macedonia has unilaterally canceled visa regime for citizens of Azerbaijan for one year, the Foreign Ministry of Macedonia reported. The visa regime has also been canceled for the citizens of Russia, Ukraine and Kazakhstan up to March 15, 2013.

People visiting Macedonia could stay in the country for no more than 90 days within a six-month period.

OSCE Minsk Group co-chair countries issue joint statement on settlement of Nagorno-Karabakh conflict

March 23 (AzerTAc). French Minister of Foreign and European Affairs Alain Juppé, Secretary of State of the United States Hillary Clinton and Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov have issued a statement on settlement of the Armenia-Azerbaijan, Nagorno Karabakh conflict. The statement says "On the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the formal request to convene a conference on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, we, the Foreign Ministers of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chair countries, call upon the sides to demonstrate the political will needed to achieve a lasting and peaceful settlement. As Presidents Medvedev, Obama, and Sarkozy reiterated in their joint statement at Deauville on May 24, 2011, only a negotiated settlement can lead to peace, stability, and reconciliation, and any attempt to use force to resolve the conflict would bring only more suffering to a region that has known uncertainty and insecurity for too long." "Progress toward peace has been made. The joint statements of our three Presidents at L'Aquila in 2009, Muskoka in 2010, and Deauville in 2011 outlined elements of a framework for a comprehensive peace settlement. Recently, the January 23, 2012, joint statement in Sochi, Russia, by presidents Ilham Aliyev, Serge Sargsian and Dmitry Medvedev expressed the commitment of the two sides to accelerate reaching agreement on the Basic Principles. We urge the leaders of the sides to complete work as soon as possible on the framework agreement and subsequent final settlement – based on the Helsinki Final Act principles of non-use or threat of force, territorial integrity, and self-determination and equal rights of peoples; the United Nations Charter; and norms and principles of international law – which will allow the e

OSCE Minsk Group is very passive, Turkish Minister

March 25 (AzerTAc). "We consider that the OSCE Minsk Group is very passive," Turkish European Union Minister Egemen Bagis said. "The Minsk Group should either achieve a result for establishing consensus between Azerbaijan and Armenia or say that "we can't do this work, let someone else do this work". It must either do this work or confess that it can't." Bagis noted that Turkey "shared Azerbaijan's joy and grief". "The occupation of 20% of Azerbaijani territories by Armenia affects most of us. That's why I said that Armenia had to withdraw from Karabakh than Eurovision," the Turkish Minister added.

Nuclear Security Summit kicks off in Seoul President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev attends the Summit

March 26 (AzerTAc). President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev is attending the Nuclear Security Summit in Seoul, the Republic of Korea. The Nuclear Security Summit is the largest summit in the security field that discusses international cooperative measures to protect nuclear materials and facilities from terrorist groups in the 21st century, with participation from more than 53 heads of state, government and international organizations.

The event focuses on cooperative measures to combat the threat of nuclear terrorism, protection of nuclear materials and related facilities, prevention of illicit trafficking of nuclear materials, as well as nuclear safety which became the focus of renewed attention following the Fukushima nuclear accident. Participation of Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev in the Summit testifies to the country's strong international image. As part of the Summit, President of the Republic of Korea Lee Myung-bak today hosted a reception in honor of heads of delegations.

President Ilham Aliyev attended the event. Then, a working dinner for heads of delegations was held. South Korean Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade hosted a working dinner in honor of members of delegations.

Azerbaijan Milli Majlis Speaker meets Kyrgyz counterpart

March 27 (AzerTAc). Speaker of Azerbaijan Milli Majlis Ogtay Asadov has met in Almaty Chairman of Kyrgyzstan parliament (Jogorku Kenesh) Asilbek Jeenbekov. They discussed development of economic cooperation between Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan, also underlining the necessity of expansion of interparliamentary ties. They said both countries are interested in deepening cooperation in scientific, cultural, education and other spheres.

Azerbaijani and Spanish Diplomatic Academies ink cooperation memorandum

March 28 (AzerTAc). The diplomatic academies of Azerbaijan and Spain have today signed a memorandum of cooperation on the initiative of the Azerbaijan's Embassy in Spain.

The document envisages exchange of students and teachers, as well as organization of courses of studying the Caspian basin for Spanish diplomats by the Azerbaijan Diplomatic Academy.

The Azerbaijan Diplomatic Academy also signed an agreement with IE Business School in Madrid. As part of the agreement, the students of the academy can study at preferential terms at this university by the MBA program.

"Genocide of Azerbaijanis: Bloody chronicle of history" book presented

March 29 (AzerTAc). Presentation of the "Genocide of Azerbaijanis: the bloody chronicle of history" book was held here on Thursday. The book prepared by

“Azerbaijan” newspaper’s editorial office was dedicated to the memory of Azerbaijan’s national leader Heydar Aliyev. In his opening remarks, General Director of Azerbaijan State Telegraph Agency (AzerTAc) Aslan Aslanov pointed out “we have gathered here on the eve of one of the tragic chapters in our history - March 31 - Day of Genocide of Azerbaijanis. Holding the presentation of the relevant book today is symbolic.” AzerTAc Chief pointed out the aim of the book is to educate the world community on the truth on the Genocide of Azerbaijanis.

He pointed out the book is very important in terms of promoting better understanding of the atrocities committed by Armenian nationalists against Azerbaijanis. Speaking at the event, Chief of the Presidential Administration’s department for socio-political affairs Ali Hasanov noted that distribution and translation of research materials on the Armenian chauvinism, their bloody deeds is part of the awareness-raising campaign on the tragedy. Historians claim the publication is going to be a very good source for scholars. The book reveals genocide not only against Azerbaijanis but also Turks. The Day of Genocide of Azerbaijanis has been marked since 1998. A variety of events are held every year in late March in order to revere the memory of the genocide victims.

Presidents of Azerbaijan and Kyrgyzstan meet one-on-one

March 30 (AzerTAc). Following the official welcoming ceremony, President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev and his spouse Mehriban Aliyeva had a joint meeting with visiting President of Kyrgyzstan Almazbek Atambayev and his spouse Raisa Atambayeva.

Then, Presidents Ilham Aliyev of Azerbaijan and Almazbek Atambayev of Kyrgyzstan met in private. Both leaders expressed satisfaction with development of bilateral relations between Azerbaijan and Kyrgyzstan in a variety of fields. Good potential for expanding the relationship between the countries was underlined at the meeting. The importance of Kyrgyz President Almazbek Atambayev’s official visit to Azerbaijan for strengthening cooperation between the two countries was highlighted at the meeting. They also discussed bilateral, regional and international issues.

Azerbaijan and Kyrgyzstan sign bilateral documents

March 30 (AzerTAc). Following a meeting in presence of delegation, a signing ceremony of Azerbaijan-Kyrgyzstan documents was held with participation of Azerbaijan’s President Ilham Aliyev and President of Kyrgyzstan Almazbek Atambayev. Azerbaijan’s President Ilham Aliyev and President of Kyrgyzstan Almazbek Atambayev signed a joint statement of President of Republic of Azerbaijan and President of Kyrgyz Republic. Azerbaijan’s Minister of Internal Affairs Ramil Usubov and Chairman of Kyrgyz State Drug Control Service Vitaly Orozaliev signed an agreement on cooperation between Azerbaijan’s Ministry of Internal Affairs and Kyrgyzstan’s State Drug Control Service in fighting against illegal trade in narcotic and psychotropic substances and their precursors.

Azerbaijan's Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov and his Kyrgyz counterpart Ruslan Kazakbayev signed a protocol between the Republic of Azerbaijan and Kyrgyz Republic on Azerbaijan's World Trade Organization membership. Azerbaijan's Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov and Kyrgyz Foreign Minister Ruslan Kazakbayev signed an agreement on cooperation and mutual assistance between the governments of Azerbaijan and Kyrgyzstan in observation of tax legislation. Azerbaijan's Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov and Kyrgyz Foreign Minister Ruslan Kazakbayev signed an agreement on cultural cooperation between the governments of Azerbaijan and Kyrgyzstan. Azerbaijan's Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov and Kyrgyz Foreign Minister Ruslan Kazakbayev signed an agreement on cooperation between the governments of Azerbaijan and Kyrgyzstan in civil defense (protection), emergency response and prevention.

Azerbaijan launches its first antivirus software

March 31 (AzerTAc). The new and first antivirus software in Azerbaijani language "B.A.K.U" has been launched, the Ministry of Information and Communication Technologies of Azerbaijan said. The software users can ask questions online about any technical problem.

The antivirus will be updated once every three month. Specialists have worked eight months on the software. B.A.K.U antivirus software will also help parents to supervise the online activity of their children. They will be able to views the list of visited websites and block unwanted ones. Another feature of the antivirus is the ability to detect spyware. It will also clean up unwanted links from social networks and notify the users about them. The official distributor of the antivirus software is the company Montech.

Azerbaijani President receives European Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy

April 2 (AzerTAc). President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev has received European Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy Stefan Fule. They praised the Azerbaijan-European Union relations, saying they are developing in different fields. The importance of reforms carried out in Azerbaijan over the last years, and the country's economic development were stressed during the meeting. President Ilham Aliyev and Stefan Fule exchanged views on a range of issues between Azerbaijan and the European Union, including energy and security.

President of Azerbaijan receives Euronest Parliamentary Assembly Bureau delegation

April 2 (AzerTAc). President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev on Monday received a delegation of Euronest Parliamentary Assembly Bureau led by the Assembly's Co-President Kristian Vigenin. The Head of State highly valued the organization of the first meeting of the Euronest Parliamentary Assembly outside the boundaries of the EU in Azerbaijan's capital.

President Ilham Aliyev said Azerbaijan is interested in cooperation with Euronest Parliamentary Assembly. The upcoming discussions will contribute to the further expansion of cooperation between Azerbaijan and Euronest, the Azerbaijani leader emphasized.

The Assembly's Co-President Kristian Vigenin, in turn, said Euronest attaches great importance to the cooperation with Azerbaijan, adding the current visit is a striking illustration of this partnership. The sides also expressed confidence that ties between Azerbaijan, European Parliament and EU will be expanded.

President of Azerbaijan receives Finnish Foreign Minister

April 2 (AzerTAc). President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev has today received Foreign Minister of Finland Erkki Tuomioja and his accompanying delegation. The meeting highlighted expansion of the relations between Azerbaijan and Finland in various fields, cooperation within international organizations and other issues.

President Ilham Aliyev receives Lithuanian foreign minister

April 2 (AzerTAc). President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev has today received the Lithuanian Foreign Minister Audronius Ažubalis. They stressed successful development of the bilateral ties between Azerbaijan and Lithuania and the importance of reciprocal visits in terms of expanding relations. The Azerbaijani President and the Lithuanian FM also exchanged views on cooperation with Lithuania in the Azerbaijan-EU format.

Azerbaijan's President receives Transport Minister of Russia

April 2 (AzerTAc). President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev has today received Transport Minister of Russia Igor Levitin. They stressed the successful development of bilateral ties in various fields including the transport one and the importance of the Russian Minister's visit in terms of expanding cooperation in the relevant sphere.

Azerbaijan plays important role in energy security of Europe

April 2 (AzerTAc). Azerbaijan plays an important role in energy security of Europe, and is distinguished from other countries by its political and democratic development, co-president of the Euronest PA Christian Vigen said at a meeting with speaker of Azerbaijan Milli Majlis Ogtay Asadov. Vigen added the European Union highly appreciates this difference. Vigen thanked the Azerbaijani government and parliament for the high-level organization of the Euronest PA's session in Baku. The co-president underlined the Azerbaijani delegation's role in preparation of four reports in Euronest which he added will define principles and directions of the activity of the Assembly and its structures. He noted Azerbaijan was a reliable partner of the European Union. Vigen pointed out though Euronest had no powerful influence on settlement of regional conflict the Assembly supports peaceful solution to all problems, including the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. "We hope we will achieve this due to our joint efforts." Other co-president of the Euronest PA Boris Tarasyuk thanked the Azerbaijani government for the hospitality. Ogtay Asadov in turn said integration into Euro-Atlantic structures was one of the main priorities of Azerbaijan's foreign policy. Asadov expressed confidence

that the session of the Euronest PA in Baku would contribute to development of relations. The speaker pointed out Azerbaijan is the most reliable partner of the European Union in South Caucasus. He also expressed regret that regional conflicts exist in four members of Euronest. The speaker said Armenia does not honor decisions and resolutions of international organizations including UN, CoE and EU. He said Azerbaijan had opportunities to liberate its territories through other ways, but the country's President, parliament supports the conflict's settlement peacefully and on the basis of norms and principles of international law. The sides also discussed other issues including bilateral and multilateral cooperation

19 years elapsed since occupation of Kalbajar by Armenia

April 2 (AzerTAc). Nineteen years have passed since the occupation of Azerbaijan's Kalbajar region. As known, on March 27, 1993, the Armenian armed forces launched attack to the region which resulted in occupation of the area on April 2. During the occupation of 1936 square kilometres of Kalbajar region, 511 innocent people were killed by Armenians, 321 people taken prisoner and 53340 became IDPs. Azerbaijan lost its 55 servicemen.

Armenians took control over 132 buildings and destroyed more than 500 industrial, construction, catering and retail facilities, 116 libraries, 97 schools, 43 clubs, 9 kindergartens and hospitals. Kalbajar's residents, who live with a sense of homesickness, never forget about those terrible days. After the occupation, the UN Security Council adopted special Resolution (#822) demanding unconditional withdrawal of Armenian armed forces from Kalbajar region and other Azerbaijan's occupied areas.

Roundtable meeting on Azerbaijanis Genocide held in Moscow

April 2 (AzerTAc). A roundtable meeting on the subject "The Azerbaijanis Genocide, March 31, 1918: historical and legal aspects" took place in Moscow. The event was organized by Azerbaijani Youth Organization of Russia (AYOR) and Azerbaijani Club of the Russian State Humanitarian University. The honorary Chairman of the Azerbaijani club of Moscow State Institute of International relations, member of the executive committee of AYOR Natig Aliyev welcomed the participants. He said the aim of the roundtable meetings is to analyze the bloody tragic events in Azerbaijan during 1918-20s, reasons of the massacre committed by Armenian nationalists, in particular by the terrorist organization "Dashnaksutun" against Azerbaijani nation. Natig Aliyev said the national leader of Azerbaijan Heydar Aliyev, was the first, who gave the legal appraisal to the tragic events of 1918 and signed an executive order on the Day of Azerbaijanis Genocide, on March 31. Chairman of the Azerbaijani Club of the Russian State Humanitarian University Aytach Hasanova said representatives of Azerbaijani youth know well their history. Due to the knowledge it will be possible to raise awareness of the world community about history of Azerbaijan, she said. Participants of the meeting hailed the large-scale activity of the Heydar Aliyev Foundation and its Russian office under the leadership Leyla Aliyeva, who has initiated and carried out successful international campaign "Justice for Khojaly" and other actions to inform the world community about Azerbaijani realities.

Azerbaijani President receives Russian FM

April 3 (AzerTAc). President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev has today received Russian minister of foreign affairs Sergei Lavrov. The Russian FM said his bilateral meetings in Baku saw him discuss with Azerbaijani colleagues issues related to the expansion of relations between the two countries. Mr. Lavrov said all bodies of Azerbaijan and Russia had good cooperation, expressing satisfaction with the fact “this cooperation reached the level of strategic partnership”. The Russian FM said his country was interested in deepening the existing relationship with Azerbaijan. President Ilham Aliyev said relations between Azerbaijan and Russia were based on good neighborhood principles and were strategic in nature. The Head of State said Azerbaijan and Russia enjoyed good relations on all levels, and emphasized the importance of economic, political and humanitarian cooperation.

President Ilham Aliyev said last year saw the two countries` political cooperation strengthen and trade increase. He noted relations between Azerbaijan and Russia`s federal districts were intensively continuing. The Azerbaijani leader expressed hope the Russian FM`s visit would contribute to expanding the relationship between the two countries.

Baku hosts 2nd ordinary session of Euronest PA

April 3 (AzerTAc). Azerbaijan`s capital has today hosted the 2nd ordinary session of the Euronest Parliamentary Assembly. Held at Azerbaijan`s parliament, the Milli Majlis, the session brought together representatives from 15 EU countries and 40 members of the European Parliament. Borys Tarasyuk, Co-President of the Euronest Parliamentary Assembly, who chaired the session, hailed Azerbaijan`s organization of the event. Kristian Vigenin, Co-President of the Euronest Parliamentary Assembly, called Azerbaijan the capital of Eastern Europe. He stressed the importance of the session both in terms of the number of participants and its organization. Stefan Fule, European Commissioner for Enlargement and Neighbourhood Policy, emphasized the role of parliamentary diplomacy in developing relations between countries. He expressed confidence parliamentary diplomacy would have a positive impact on settlement of existing problems, including the Armenia-Azerbaijan Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Fule praised Azerbaijan`s achievements since the country restored its independence 20 years ago. He said Azerbaijan was a model of tolerance and secularism. Fule said Azerbaijan`s economy was rapidly developing and the country was renewing its infrastructure. “Azerbaijan was elected a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, the country is hosting high-profile international events, including the session of the Euronest Parliamentary Assembly. The country is preparing to host the Eurovision song contest. And it`s no coincidence that for the first time the Euronest Parliamentary Assembly`s session takes place outside Brussels - in Baku.” Fule said great hopes were pinned on Azerbaijan. The session featured the Adoption of amendments to the Rules of Procedure. The event also featured debates on a Draft Resolution on challenges for the future of democracy, including the question of free and independent media in Eastern Partnership and EU countries, which was presented by the Euronest PA Committee on Political Affairs, Human Rights and Democracy; a Draft Resolution on trade agreements between the EU and the Eastern European Partners, including the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas, and the EU assistance in this

field, which was presented by the Euronest PA Committee on Economic Integration, Legal Approximation and Convergence with EU Policies; a Draft Resolution on strengthening of civil society in the Eastern Partnership Countries, including the question of cooperation between government and civil society, and the question of the reforms aimed at empowerment of civil society, which was presented by the Euronest PA Committee on Social Affairs, Education, Culture and Civil Society; and a Draft Resolution on energy security, renewable energy, energy efficiency, energy infrastructure: developments in the Eastern Partnership and in the EU countries, which was presented by the Euronest PA Committee on Energy Security. All four draft resolutions were adopted by the session participants. The session will continue its work on Wednesday.

Azerbaijan`s President receives Ukrainian PM

April 4 (AzerTAc). President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev has today received Prime Minister of Ukraine Mykola Azarov and his accompanying delegation. During the conversation, the Head of State described the Ukrainian PM`s visit as a `good sign` of cooperation between the two countries, and expressed assurance that the visit would be `successful`, contributing to expansion of ties. President Ilham Aliyev stressed bilateral relations between Azerbaijan and Ukraine develop dynamically, underscoring existence of high-level political ties. The Head of State underlined importance of upgrading economic cooperation to the level of political relations. The President added that Azerbaijan places great emphasis on cooperation with Ukraine, highlighted significance of continuation of mutual activity in the bilateral, multilateral and regional format, and strengthening partnership relations between the two countries. Mykola Azarov extended greetings of Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich to the Azerbaijani President. The Prime Minister said the Ukrainian President deeply respects the President Ilham Aliyev and the Azerbaijani people. Mykola Azarov stressed he witnessed the great construction boom in Baku. The meeting also highlighted issues on energy, infrastructure, trade and economic cooperation. The Head of State asked the PM to pass on his greetings to the Ukrainian President.

Azerbaijani President officially welcomed to Czechia

April 5 (AzerTAc). President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev has today been given an official welcome to Czechia in Prague Castle. A guard of honor was lined up for the Azerbaijani President at the square decorated with the national flags of the two countries.

Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev and first lady Mehriban Aliyeva were welcomed by Czech President Vaclav Klaus and his spouse Livia Klausova. The presidents inspected a ceremonial guard of honor as an orchestra played the national anthems of Azerbaijan and Czechia. Czech state and government officials were introduced to Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev, while members of the Azerbaijani delegation to President Vaclav Klaus. Then official gifts were presented. The Azerbaijani President and his spouse signed the Prague Castle`s book of honorary guests.

Azerbaijani, Czech presidents have expanded meeting

April 5 (AzerTAc). Presidents Ilham Aliyev of Azerbaijan and Vaclav Klaus of Czechia have had an expanded meeting. The sides praised the bilateral relations, saying they were strengthening in a variety of fields, particularly political and economic ones. They pointed out to the existence of good potential for the expansion of the economic cooperation between Azerbaijan and Czechia. The sides also stressed the successful continuation of the two countries' relations within the European Union.

"World community supports quick settlement of Nagorno-Karabakh conflict", Sergey Lavrov

April 5 (AzerTAc). "We very deeply worry about the situation which has developed as a result of the conflict between our neighbors which has led to loss of many human lives including innocent people", the Russian minister of foreign affairs Sergey Lavrov told at the meeting with students in the Moscow State University's Baku branch. The minister noted that Russia from the very beginning aspired to help to find solution to the conflict. "As a co-chair of the OSCE Minsk Group, Russia together with the USA and France has made certain proposals for conflict settlement. Personally President Dmitry Medvedev has offered presidents of Azerbaijan and Armenia to start to discuss in this format those problems which yet don't allow reaching agreement on settlement. For these two years, the number of questions was essentially reduced. But there are two-three difficult questions to be solved", Lavrov underlined. According to Lavrov, there is no other way to solve the problem except peaceful solution. "The military way of solution would be a catastrophe", he stressed.

"On settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict there is a political will of the international community". At the same time, he noted that the intermediaries can't solve this problem for Azerbaijan and Armenia, but "can help with search of compromises". At his words, "the world community is for quick settlement of the conflict, but the final decision should be made by Baku and Yerevan".

Azerbaijan's E-government project to be launched in 2nd half of the year

April 8 (AzerTAc). Azerbaijan's Ministry of Communication and Information Technologies has said the country's Electronic-government project will be completed in the second half of the year. According to the Ministry, 16 government bodies had joined the project so far, with the number of the online services they provide exceeding 60. The estimated number of the online services to be available after the launch of e-government portal is 300.

Turkey will not remain indifferent to ongoing processes in region, President Gul

April 11 (AzerTAc). Turkey will not remain indifferent to the ongoing processes in the region, said Turkish President Abdullah Gul while addressing students of the Military Academy. The Turkish President said his country would always support Azerbaijan and try to contribute to restoration of rights of Azerbaijanis driven out from their lands in the wake of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

Baku hosts conference of heads of customs services of WCO European Region

April 12 (AzerTAc). A conference of the heads of customs services of the World Customs Organization European Region has today started here. Welcoming the participants, Azerbaijani deputy Prime-minister Abid Sharifov told of history of Azerbaijan`s independence. The Azerbaijani State Customs Committee and Macedonian Customs Department signed an agreement on cooperation.

Azerbaijani President receives WCO secretary general

April 13 (AzerTAc). President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev has received today secretary general of the World Customs Organization (WCO), Kunio Mikuriya. The Head of State said Azerbaijan was an active member of the WCO. President Ilham Aliyev underlined the importance of Baku`s hosting a conference of heads of customs services of the WCO European Region. He expressed hope the conference would contribute to strengthening cooperation between Azerbaijan and WCO. Kunio Mikuriya, in turn, praised the ongoing rapid economic development processes in Azerbaijan. He expressed satisfaction with his visit to Azerbaijan. Mikuriya noted the International conference on fighting against illegal drug trafficking held last year in Baku with support of President Ilham Aliyev was very useful for the WCO. He added a remarkable conference was held in Brussels as follow-up to this event.

They also said in the meeting good opportunities exist for expansion of cooperation between Azerbaijan and WCO.

NATO attaches great importance to cooperation with Azerbaijan

April 13 (AzerTAc). NATO attaches great importance to cooperation with Azerbaijan on regional security, Romanian Ambassador to Azerbaijan, NATO coordinator in Azerbaijan Daniel Christian Ciobanu said on Friday at the international conference in Baku on the importance of the upcoming Chicago`s NATO summit. The diplomat said NATO attaches great importance to regional security and cooperation with partners in his field. "Azerbaijan has been actively involved in restoring peace and stability in Asia, particularly in Afghanistan, adding that the Chicago summit will open up new opportunities for alliance partners," he emphasized.

Azerbaijani President receives Lithuanian former head of state

April 14 (AzerTAc). President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev has received today Vytautas Landsbergis, former Head of State of Lithuania, former chairman of Lithuanian Seimas, member of the European Parliament. The fact that Vytautas Landsbergis supported Azerbaijan`s just position when the country was elected member of the Council of Europe was praised during the meeting. Great changes, which occurred in Azerbaijan in all spheres after the country regained its independence, was stressed at the meeting. They also exchanged views on issues related to cooperation between Azerbaijan and European Parliament.

Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan discuss prospects for developing cooperation

April 14, (AzerTAc). Azerbaijan's Deputy Minister of Economic Development Niyazi Safarov met with Deputy Minister of Economy and Antimonopoly Policy of Kyrgyzstan Sanjar Mukanbetov to discuss prospects of cooperation between the countries.

The meeting was held as part of the visit of the Azerbaijani delegation led by Niyazi Safarov to Kyrgyzstan. Sanjar Mukanbetov expressed his assurance that the visit would contribute the expansion of cooperation between Azerbaijan and Kyrgyzstan. The Kyrgyz deputy minister also updated his Azerbaijani counterpart on socio-economic situation of the country.

Niyazi Safarov noted the marking of the 20th anniversary of Azerbaijan's independence in 2011 stressing the rapid economic development in the country in the past years.

Safarov also underlined that Azerbaijan is interested in the development of cooperation in trade, economic, investment and other spheres with Kyrgyzstan.

Light your fire! Azerbaijan starts giving simplified visas to foreigners in connection with Eurovision 2012

April 15 (AzerTAc). Azerbaijan has started giving simplified visas to foreigners who want to participate in the Eurovision 2012 song contest. The foreigners can get the visas from structures of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Consular department operating in international airports in Azerbaijan. The basis for getting visa is the invitation letter by Organizing Committee of Eurovision, document affirming the accreditation in accordance with the European Broadcasting Union's rules or ticket for Eurovision 2012. For the foreigners visiting Azerbaijan based on official invitation of the Organizing Committee, participants of the contest and members of the delegation accredited in accordance with the European Broadcasting Union's rules the visas will be given from April 15 to June 1, 2012. For journalists and fun-club members accredited in accordance with the rules of the European Broadcasting Union, including persons with tickets the visas will be granted from May 10 to June 1, 2012.

Kazakhstan

17 March 2012

Kazakhstan, Turkey held inter-foreign ministry consultations

ISTANBUL- Regular political consultations between the foreign ministries of Kazakhstan and Turkey took place in Ankara. The delegations were headed by Deputy Foreign Minister Amangeldy Zhumabayev from the Kazakh side, and Deputy Foreign Minister Fatih Ceylan from the Turkish side.

They discussed a wide range of issues regarding bilateral and multilateral relations between the two brotherly countries. Particular attention was paid to the prospects for further deepening of cooperation in political, economic, trade, scientific-technical, cultural and humanitarian spheres. In particular, there was noted the importance to develop strategic partnership and deepen economic and trade relations. The sides exchanged views on regional and international issues of mutual interest.

19 March 2012

Kazakhstan to supply trucks to Azerbaijan

Kazakhstan has concluded an export contract with Azerbaijan and Belarus for the supply of Hyundai trucks, Kazakh Industry and New Technologies Minister Asset Issekeshov said at the Fifth meeting of the Council of Exporters in Astana on Friday, according to Today.az.

"Contracts are signed for Kazakh accumulator supplies to Germany and China, locomotives to Tajikistan, Hyundai trucks to Azerbaijan and Belarus, and clothing to Europe," Issekeshov said. He said Kazakhstan exported its products to 105 countries before the state industrialization. "Now we export non-raw products to 122 countries," Issekeshov said. He said today export contracts amount to \$1 billion.

Kazakhstan's GDP to grow by 6.5 percent in 2012: EBRD

KAZINFORM - Kazakhstan is likely to see its gross domestic product (GDP) grow by 6.5 percent this year, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) said.

"Our latest forecast for Kazakhstan's GDP growth is 6.5 percent, but this is subject to the condition that the Eurozone crisis will not worsen," said Nina Omes, head of EBRD's Central Asia Department, when presenting an EBRD report on Central Asian economies, Xinhua reports.

"Kazakhstan is relatively isolated from Europe, which is an advantage for the country. The only thing that can make a strong negative impact on Kazakhstan is a sharp decline in oil prices," Omes said.

Kazakh FM meets Mayors for Peace representatives



Kazakh Foreign Minister Yerzhan Kazykhanov met with the representatives of the European delegation of the international organization *Mayors for Peace* led by Ypres Mayor Luc Dehaene.

The activities of Mayors for Peace aims to develop solidarity of the peoples in the struggle for nuclear-free world by strengthening the connections between cities.

EU project held conf on prospects of Public Private Partnership in Kazakhstan

KAZINFORM - The project of the European Union (EU) on promotion of public-private partnership in Kazakhstan held a conference on March 14, 2012 in Astana. Conference participants discussed the achievements of the project and public-private partnerships (PPP) development perspectives in Kazakhstan.

The conference was attended by the representatives Kazakhstan PPP Center, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Economic Development, as well as representatives of the National Institute for Health Development, World Bank, IFC and ADB, the press release of the EU Delegation to Kazakhstan reads.

The EU project was launched in October 2010 to assist the Government of the RK in its initiatives of reform and modernization of PPP mechanisms in order to achieve greater efficiency and transparency of the system.

The beneficiary of this project is the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade (MEDT) and Kazakhstan Public-Private Partnership Center, task force of the Government in evaluation of PPP projects and provision of methodological systematic support to development of PPP and concession.

The project on "Promotion of Public Private partnership in the Republic of Kazakhstan" is funded by the European Union totalling 1.6 million EURO over the course of 18 months, starting in October 2010.

N. Nazarbayev invites Kyrgyz President to pay official visit to Kazakhstan



KAZINFORM - President of Kazakhstan met today with President of Kyrgyzstan Almazbek Atambayev on the sidelines of the EurAsEC Interstate Council meeting in Moscow.

Nursultan Nazarbayev underlined the importance of the development of bilateral relations between Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. President noted the growth of trade turnover between the countries, increase in Kazakhstan's investments into Kyrgyz economy.

President Nursultan Nazarbayev invited Kyrgyz President to pay an official visit to Kazakhstan to debate a wide range of cooperation issues between the two states.

Atambayev, in turn, expressed his gratitude for the invitation noting that Kyrgyzstan highly appreciates prospects for the formation of the investment fund initiated by Kazakhstan.

20 March 2012

CSTO countries to discuss efficiency of OSCE/ODIHR election monitoring

KAZINFORM - The State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation will host a meeting of the heads of parliamentary delegations of the member-states of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) in the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (PA), BelTA learnt from CSTO Press Secretary Vladimir Zainetdinov.

The meeting will be held on 20 March and will discuss a single position on the OSCE reforms and completion of the OSCE institutional and legal formation as a full-rate international organization. The participants will also discuss draft resolutions "Freedom of movement in the OSCE region" and "Efficiency of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) in election monitoring".

CSTO Secretary General Nikolai Bordyuzha will take part in the meeting. He is set to inform the heads of parliamentary delegations of the CSTO member-states in the OSCE PA about the CSTO current activities and events dedicated to the 20th anniversary of the CSTO and the 10th anniversary of the CSTO.

New comprehensive Eurasian Union treaty to be signed by January 1, 2015



KAZINFORM President Dmitry Medvedev said he expects a new comprehensive Eurasian Union treaty to be signed by January 1, 2015, according to Itar-Tass.

"We believe that a comprehensive treaty on a new union should be drafted and signed by January 1, 2015," Medvedev said after a summit of the Eurasian Economic Community (EurAsEC) on Monday, March 19.

He said that little time is left and, as an example, mentioned the European Union that took years to create.

Medvedev stressed that all summiteers were interested to ensure that "integration proceeds by predictable scenario" and cited all leaders as agreeing that "we should form the Eurasian Economic Community by 2015".

The Eurasian Economic Community consists of Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. Armenia is an observer. The Supreme Eurasian Economic Council includes Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan.

Nazarbayev signs decrees on opening of embassies in Finland, Brazil

KAZINFORM Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev signed decrees on opening of the embassies of Kazakhstan in Finland, Brazil and raising the diplomatic mission in Norway to embassy rank, according to official reports.

KazMunaiGas is suggested oil exploration at Mexican Gulf in Cuba

CA-NEWS (KZ) - KazMunaiGas might start oil exploration at Mexican Gulf in Cuba, Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Ambassador of Cuba Abelardo Hernandez Ferrer Fabio said at the meeting with Kazakh Minister of Foreign Affairs Erzhan Kazykhanov, BNews.kz reported.

"Mexican Gulf is divided into three parts, where the U.S. and Mexican side have oil. We also consider oil existence in our part, but we do not have needed technology," the Ambassador added.

"Therefore, we would like large oil companies such as KazMunaiGas to become interested in exploration procedures on our territory," Ferrer suggested.

21 March 2012

Kazakhstan launches high-speed communication cable production



KAZINFORM Kelsis has launched high-speed UTP cable production, the Kazakh National Innovation Fund said.

According to the report, the first batches have been already supplied to customers. The company plans to reach full production capacity by late 2012.

The high-speed cable production project was approved in 2009 by a decision of the general meeting of the Delta Technology venture fund's shareholders, Trend reports.

The National Innovation Fund's share is 49 percent. The total project cost is 793.15 million tenge. UTP cable can transmit data up to 1 Gb/sec.

According to the report, only one plant in the CIS can produce similar quality products. There is the only measuring laboratory at the plant in Kazakhstan. There is only one such a laboratory in the CIS.

The planned production capacity is 33 000 km of UTP cable in a year.

30 March 2012

Film from Kazakhstan named Best Foreign Drama at International Family Film Festival in Hollywood



CA-NEWS (KZ) - "Anshy bala" (A hunter boy) film of Shaken Aimanov "KazakhFilm" JSC was named the Best Foreign Drama at the International Family Film Festival in Hollywood, reported Kazinform with reference to the Kazakhfilm's press service.

The festival was held March 21-25 at Raleigh Studios. The aim of the festival was to create peaceful global family through search and screening of interesting stories by directors and companies of the whole world. "Anshy bala" narrates the story of a city boy who spent his vacations at his grandfather's aul (village) in the steppe. Picture comes in June 2012.

EBRD buys stake in Kazakh grain and oilseed firm

CA-NEWS (KZ) - The EBRD has reaffirmed its commitment to food security in the region with a US\$ 45 million equity investment in KazExportAstyk, a company well-positioned to expand its production of grain. JSC Holding KazExportAstyk – or KEA – is a large agro-industrial holding, the third largest grain producer. It is fully integrated with its own grain terminals, flour mills and long-term land usage agreements. Among the grain enterprises in the country, KEA has complied with international audit standards for the longest period of time.

Kazakhstan is one of the countries with the biggest potential to increase food production globally. "Food producers in the EBRD region, particularly in Kazakhstan, have great potential, but they need more options to access financing. To increase productivity, Kazakhstan needs more investment. This can mostly come from the private sector, and the private sector is precisely what the EBRD is supporting with this and other transactions", said the EBRD President Thomas Mirow.

The EBRD's investment will consist of an equity investment via subscription to newly-issued share capital of KEA worth US\$ 45 million. The proceeds of the investment will allow KEA to strengthen its balance sheet structure and position it better for future strategic growth.

Gilles Mettetal, the EBRD's Director for Agribusiness, said: "KEA is an exceptionally well-managed company. We have had the chance to get to know the business since we provided the company with a US\$ 35 million loan in 2009. This gave us the confidence to step up our engagement now and become a long-term strategic investor."

Since the beginning of its operations in Kazakhstan, the EBRD has invested around €4 billion in over 140 projects in various sectors of the Kazakh economy. Through its investments, it has mobilised additional investments in excess of €6 billion, with about 60 per cent of the projects being investments into the development of the country's private sector.

2 April 2012

Kazakhstan enters list of 22 most developed countries that perform open-heart surgeries

CA-NEWS (KZ) - The National Science and Cardiac Center of Kazakhstan held the first unique surgery on implantation of an artificial heart, the National Medical Holding said.

"Device of the latest generation (Heart Ware) was implanted in the clinic in 2011. So, Kazakhstan entered the list of 22 most developed countries, performing open-heart surgeries," the statement said.

The Center has implanted seven different devices that support circulation as of today. This year, the Center plans to implant 30 similar devices.

The National Science and Cardiac Center in Astana is member of the National Medical Holding. Currently, the clinic is the leader in the Central Asian region.

4 April 2012

Population of Kazakhstan to increase by 2 million people by 2020

CA-NEWS (KZ) - Population of Kazakhstan will increase by 2 million people, so it will reach 18.7 million by 2020, Chairman of Kazakh Statistics Agency Alikhan Smailov said at the governmental meeting in the Mazhilis.

As a result of steps to stimulate birth and reduce mortality population of country made 16.7 million people as of January 1, 2012. It grew 10.6 percent, or by 1.8 million people, compared to 2000.

5 April 2012

Unemployment rate in Kazakhstan is announced

CA-NEWS (KZ) - The Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of Kazakhstan said that a total of 36,600 unemployed people were registered by state-run employment agencies as of the end of 2011, the Statistics Agency reported.

The number of actually unemployed people made up 473,000, with the unemployment rate standing at 5.4% (0.4% lower against the end of 2010). The share of men in the figure stood at 43.3%, with women accounting for the other 56.7%. The share of the unemployed aged 15-24 in the overall figure made up 12.2% (58,000 people).

The number of the employed made up 8,300,000 people aged 15 and over (68%), with slightly over half of them – 4,300,000 - being men.

Hired personnel made up 5,600,000 (67.2% of all the employed), 172,000 up against 2010, with the self-employed making up 2,700,000 (over 32%).

6 April 2012

Imported goods to be cheaper after Kazakhstan's accession in WTO

CA-NEWS (KZ) - Kazakhstan's entry into the World Trade Organization will result in imported goods prices cut, Eurasian Economic Commission Minister of Trade Andrey Slepnev said. Slepnev met with Economic Integration Minister of Kazakhstan Zhanar Aitzhanova and Head of National Welfare Fund "Samruk-Kazyna" Umirzak Shukeev in Astana.

Russia is planning to become a member of the organization in September 2012. According to him, the WTO membership provides a number of positive changes for its member-countries.

"This cut in prices is explained by lowering of protective tariff barriers. The total level of customs rates will reduce by 1.5-1.7% when Russia enters the WTO and it will lead to imported goods prices cut. Entry into the WTO will have similar consequences," Slepnev said.

Earlier, Zhanar Aitzhanova said that Kazakhstan would supposedly become the WTO member in the middle of 2013.

09 April 2012

Armand Assante's Dialogue from the Steppes bests in the American Film Festival

Dialogue from the Steppes movie, dedicated to Kazakhstan and directed by Armand Assante, famous Hollywood actor and director was named the best short documentary in Gasparilla International Film Festival in Tampa, Florida, Tengrinews.kz reports, citing Liter.kz.

Dialogue from the Steppe is a 27-minute documentary about Kazakhstan through a foreigner's eyes.

Kazakhstan completes last bilateral talks prior to its planned accession into the WTO

Prior to its accession into the WTO, Kazakhstan has completed bilateral talks with Saudi Arabia on access of goods and services to the Kazakh market, Newskaz.ru reports.

Ms. Zhanar Aitzhanova, Kazakh Minister for Economic Integration, elaborated that Kazakhstan "has yet to further multilateral talks on Kazakhstan's external trade policies".

"Multilateral talks are still under way on a so-called transition period to support the share of Kazakhstan-made goods purchased by O&G companies and national companies in other realms.

Russia has extended its transition period until 2018 to support its car-making industry”, Ms. Aitzhanova said at the time.

Another issue to be settled is a possibility to apply export duties on commodities.

According to her, if Kazakhstan manages to complete all the negotiations by the end of 2012, the actual accession can only take place mid-2013.

Kazakhstan is ahead of Russia and Ukraine in happy countries rating

Columbia University's Earth Institute made a list of the happiest countries and commissioned it for the United Nations Conference on Happiness. The the World Happiness Report ranks the happiness of the world's nations based on a “life evaluation score” that is a number between 0 and 10 that measures several factors including health, family and job security, and social factors like political freedom, social networks and lack of government corruption.

Northern European countries turned out to be the happiest countries in the world according to this score. Denmark is the leader of the rating. Norway, Finland, the Netherlands and Switzerland follow it. Sweden, New Zealand, Australia, Ireland are also in the Top 10. The U.S. is ranked 11th. Kazakhstan is in the 59th place and it is ahead of Lithuania (60th), Belorussia (62nd), Estonia (72nd) and Russia (76th). Uzbekistan is ranked 79th, Ukraine is ranked 91st and Latvia is 116th.

African countries Togo, Benin, Central African Republic and Sierra Leona turned out to be the unhappiest countries of the world. The total of 156 countries are rated in the report.

Kazakhstan increases investment in neighboring states

News analysis by Nicklas Norling (CACI Analyst/UNIVERSAL)



WASHINGTON, DC - Prudent economic management and oil wealth have transformed Kazakhstan from a net recipient of FDI into a major foreign investor of its own. By the end of 2011, Kazakhstan's stock of cumulative foreign investment abroad topped \$16 billion, ranking the country among the 50 largest FDI senders worldwide, only slightly below Turkey's equivalent figure of \$18.5 billion.

Even if the financial crisis temporarily interrupted these flows, falling to \$1.2 billion in 2008, they had recovered by 2010. An impressive economic growth, averaging around 10 percent annually since 2000, has accompanied Kazakhstan's emergence as a global investor.

Neighboring Central Asian states stand out as some of the main beneficiaries of these Outward Foreign Direct Investment (OFDI) flows, even if Kazakhstan's investments are now global. For example, between 2004 and 2007, Kazakh investments in Kyrgyzstan increased from \$16

million to \$133 million, translating into a total stock of OFDI worth \$475 million – 40 percent of total foreign investment in Kyrgyzstan. Gold mining, sugar processing, a cement plant, highways, and tourist resorts, among other sectors, were the targets of these investments. These expanding ties were manifested in the establishment of a Kazakh-Kyrgyz investment fund in 2011. In fact, Kazakhstan was the largest foreign investor in Kyrgyzstan for years, even if recent Russian and Chinese investments may have overtaken the first and second positions.

By 2008, an additional \$100 million had been invested in Tajikistan, most of it in banking, but investments have expanded since then into light industry, the food industry, energy, non-ferrous metals, the financial sector, telecommunications, and metals mining. The establishment of the Kazakh-Tajik investment fund in 2010, containing at least \$80 million, is a further manifestation of the regional scope of Kazakhstan's investments.

As regards Russia, Kazakhstan's OFDI here totaled a sizeable \$715 million between 2004-2008, most concentrated in Russian banking, construction, and energy. Perhaps most significantly, Kazakhstan's total OFDI to Georgia exceeded \$2 billion in 2008, making it one of the largest sources of foreign investment in the country.

Turning to Europe, Kazakhstan's largest investment to date is its \$2.7 billion acquisition of Rompetrol in 2007. The purchase of Rompetrol, a Romanian refining and petroleum company, represented Kazakhstan's first major non-CIS [Commonwealth of Independent States] investment and indicated Astana's desire for "vertical integration" in the European oil market. Kazakhstan's investments in Europe are set to expand further with the signing of a \$4 billion "trade and economic deal" with Germany in March 2012, including "a partnership on raw materials, industry, and technology".

Kazakhstan's burgeoning oil wealth is fueling this growing stock of foreign investments. Modeled on Norway's Oil Fund, the National Oil Fund of the Republic of Kazakhstan was valued at \$36 billion in April 2011 and \$43.7 billion in February 2012, much of it invested in sovereign debt securities and other foreign portfolio investments, as well as infrastructure and real estate. However, President Nursultan Nazarbayev now seems intent to invest more of these funds in Kazakhstan, as expressed in his State of the Nation Address in January 2012 – a recommendation that also has been issued by the IMF.

Four main implications can be derived from Kazakhstan's growing OFDI:

First, Kazakhstan contributes to the economic growth and welfare of its poorer former Soviet neighbors, in particular Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, but also others, not least Georgia.

Second, Kazakhstan's investments will spur competition in the host countries, improve efficiency, and ultimately benefit local competitiveness.

Third, OFDI also involves direct benefits to Kazakhstan. The exposure of Kazakhstan's companies to European and international competition will enhance efficiency, give ready access to the "know how" of more advanced countries, and create new areas of competitive advantages.

Fourth, Kazakhstan's National Oil Fund – a backbone in the country's OFDI – will create a buffer to international shocks and diversify the country's wealth.

April 11, 2012

Central Asian economic growth will continue, ADB report says

Central Asia's economic growth will "keep the momentum" at 6.1 percent in 2012 and 6.2 percent in 2013, a report released by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) on Thursday said.

Kazakhstan is expected to record moderate growth in 2012, due to ongoing stresses in the Eurozone which will negatively impact the Central Asian economy. However, the ADB is confident that the economy will grow at a quicker pace in 2013 once the global economy regains its strength.

Government programs to expand the economy into non-extractive sectors should bolster the economy further, while Kazakhstan's growing integration with Russia and Belarus as part of the customs union should expand trade, the ADB said.

However, Kazakhstan's economic growth will still be hampered by continuing struggles in the banking sector, which took a hit in the 2009 global financial crisis.

In Kyrgyzstan, the economy is still in the recovery stages following 2010's deadly ethnic violence, with all sectors witnessing growth.

The Tajik economy, while experiencing growth in several sectors, should not lean on remittances to remain afloat, the ADB report states.

The ADB predicts that Tajik economic growth will decline to 5.5 percent in 2012 before growing to 6 percent in 2013.

In Turkmenistan, increasing gas exports caused economic growth to remain in the double digits, and is likely to continue through 2012. However, the ADB stressed the importance of diversifying the economy to decrease the reliance of the state on the gas industry.

The biggest challenge facing Uzbek President Islam Karimov's administration is ensuring private sector growth.

12 April, 2012

Kazakhstan launches a website to promote its People's IPO Program



Kazakhstan has launched a website to promote its People's IPO Program, bnews.kz reports.

President Nazarbayev instructed the Government to launch Initial Public Offerings (IPO) for common people. The program is known as People's IPO. According to President Nazarbayev, the IPO for the general public will enable citizens to purchase shares of the largest Kazakh companies, giving them a new tool for investments and savings.

The newly launched www.halyk-ipo.kz provides recent news on the Program, informing visitors on the participating companies and securities market basics.

13 April, 2012

President of Kazakhstan is on state visit in Indonesia

CA-NEWS (KZ) - President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbaev was on a state visit in the Republic of Indonesia.

The Kazak President met with Coordinating Minister for Economy of the Government of Indonesia Rajas Hutt. Nazrbaev also got acquainted with an exhibition of the leading manufacturers in Indonesia.

Nazarbaev met with Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono. The bilateral documents were signed.

Over half a million left Kazakhstan for other countries for permanent residence in the recent decade

Over half a million people left Kazakhstan for other countries for permanent residence from 2001 to 2011, Newskaz.ru reports, citing Alikhan Smailov, Head of the National Agency for Statistics.

“For the period under review Kazakhstan accommodated 608 000 newcomers, with 668 000 people leaving for other countries for permanent residence. Since 2004 Kazakhstan has seen annual migration surplus; however, if we take the whole decade the migration balance made up minus 59 000 people”, he elaborated.

Crude and gas production and exports figures announced

In January and February 2012 Kazakhstan exported 12.576 million tons of crude oil and condensed gas, 24.3% up against the like period of 2011, the National Agency for Statistics reports.

According to the Agency, the figure totaled \$10.433 billion in monetary terms, 62.7% up against the like period of 2011.

For the period under review Kazakhstan exported 737 000 tons of petroleum products (3.4 times up) worth \$426.8 million (4 times up). Imports of petroleum products for the period made up 393 000 tons (55.2% up) worth \$275.5 million (39.9% up).

Exports of natural gas for the period made up 4.042 billion cubic meters (42.5% up) worth \$377.8 (34.4% up). Imports of natural gas for the period totaled 776.2 million cubic meters (24.4% down) worth \$54.1 million (27.5% down).

Crude oil production for the period amounted to 11.183 million tons (0.3% down against the like period of 2011), with condensed gas production standing at 2.138 million tons (0.7% down) and natural gas production standing at 6.916 billion cubic meters (3.5% up).

Kyrgyz Republic

The Public-Private Partnership Center will be created in Kyrgyzstan.

15/03-2012, Bishkek

“Public-private partnership is an alternative way to attract investments, said Prime Minister Omurbek Babanov. - We should determine what facilities we include and for what form of cooperation. Entrepreneurs themselves can also say that they are ready to invest”.

He noted that public-private partnership practice works all around the world, since “the peculiarity of the Law on Public-Private Partnership is that employers do not pay for the property to the state, and invest directly in the development”.

Minister of Finance Akylbek Zhaparov explained that the Law on Public-Private Partnership can not be considered separately. “We need an inventory of movable and real property of the state. We must immediately put the task of improving the position of Kyrgyzstan in the ranking of global competitiveness,” the Minister stressed and reminded that our republic was at the end of the list.

The Ministry of Finance has already developed the statute on the management of public-private partnership financial risks. “This law can annually give up to 30 thousand work places. And the first step is to create a public-private partnership center as a part of the Ministry of Economy and Antitrust Policy,” Akylbek Zhaparov believes.

Temir Sariyev, head of the Ministry of Economy and Antitrust Policy, said that ADB was interested in promoting this type of partnership in Kyrgyzstan and initiated a forum on this issue. Kyrgyzstan will be able to present infrastructural facilities for implementation within the framework of public-private partnership.

Topographers of Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan determine the border between the countries

15/03-2012, Bishkek

A regular meeting of working topographic groups on delimitation and demarcation of the border line of Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan was held in Isfana city of Batken province. The REGNUM News Agency reports citing the Spokesperson’s Office for the Embassy of Tajikistan to Kyrgyzstan.

According to the sources, the sides made field survey in the areas of Ovchi-Kalach (Eski-Oochu) and Kostakoz (Borborduk) of Bobozhon Gafurovskiy district, Sogd province of Tajikistan bordering with Luailyak district, Batken province of Kyrgyzstan to determine the state border grade line.

As it was reported earlier, the issues of border delimitation and demarcation were discussed by the Tadjik – Kyrgyz intergovernmental commission in Dushanbe in February, 2012. As of today about 50 percent of the border between two countries that in whole amounts to over 900

kilometers have been determined. The sides have not been able to reach consensus on some of the most contentious areas for twenty years of independence.

Japan to grant \$5M to Kyrgyzstan for schools and kindergartens repair

16/03-2012, Bishkek

Japan will grant \$5M to Kyrgyzstan for schools and kindergartens repair. Education and Science Ministry press service reports.

According it, the project will be realized by UNICEF with assistance of the ministry for 2 years. It is planned to rebuild 38 schools and 12 preschool institutions during this period. The basic accent is being made in Osh, Batken and Jalal Abad provinces. Besides, the project is aimed on friendship and tolerance strengthening between children.

The necessary agreement will be signed on March 19, 2012.

Businessmen of Kyrgyzstan and Turkey sign an agreement on cooperation

19/03-2012, Bishkek

Businessmen of Kyrgyzstan and Turkey signed an agreement on cooperation. The ceremony took place today at the Kyrgyz-Turkish Trade and Investment Forum.

The Turkish Confederation of Businessmen and Industrialists (TUSKON) headed by Ryzanur Meral intends to cooperate with the Kyrgyz Association of Young Businessmen. Besides, TUSKON signed an agreement on cooperation with the Kyrgyz-Turkish Society of Businessmen. Sides hope for further progress in relationships and implementation of plans.

Kyrgyzstan plans to implement more than 50 investment projects at \$8.7 billions

19/03-2012, Bishkek

Kyrgyzstan plans to implement more than 50 investment projects at \$8.7 billions. Such forecasts were presented by the National Institute for Strategic Researches at the Kyrgyz-Turkish Trade and Investment Forum.

As noted it is planned to attract most investments (\$7.5 billions) into development of the power industry in Kyrgyzstan. It is supposed to construct the chain of power plants on Naryn River and the thermal power plant at Kara-Keche coal minefield. One has to attract over \$763 millions som into mining industry. Besides, investments are needed for development of agriculture and reconstruction of highways and airports. In particular, \$118 millions are needed for Osh airport.

Some Turkish businessmen are afraid of investing in the economy of Kyrgyzstan - Sahabettin Harput

19/03-2012, Bishkek

“Some Turkish businessmen are afraid of investing in the economy of Kyrgyzstan,” governor of Bursa province Sahabettin Harput stated at today’s Kyrgyzstan-Turkey Trade and Investment Forum.

According to him, Bursa province is an engine of Turkish economy. Engineering industry and textile industry are flourishing here. "We have to join efforts to develop the economies of two countries. Businessmen are afraid of corruption and unstable situation in Kyrgyzstan. It makes us glad that definite measures are taken against this. But it is necessary to make the laws work. Entrepreneurs are interested in collaboration, but it is important for them to know what risks exist in the Kyrgyz Republic," Sahabettin Harput said.

Kyrgyzstan Prime Minister Omurbek Babanov offers Turkish businessmen to create a gold processing center

19/03-2012, Bishkek

Kyrgyzstan Prime Minister Omurbek Babanov offered Turkish businessmen to create a gold processing center. He voiced the statement today at the Kyrgyz-Turkish Trade and Investment Forum.

According to him, Kyrgyzstan has many gold minefields that are needed to be developed. "Turkey has huge gold processing experience therefore we would create a joint center. Regions of the republic are also rich with natural resources that should be developed to raise their economy," Omurbek Babanov said.

Kyrgyzstan guarantees Turkey safety of investments – Temir Sariyev

19/03-2012, Bishkek

"Kyrgyzstan guarantees Turkey safety of investments," Kyrgyz Minister of Economy and Antitrust Policy Temir Sariyev stated at today's Kyrgyzstan-Turkey Trade and Investment Forum.

According to him, Turkey occupies the highest position in terms of growth of the economy. "The development of two countries is impossible without businessmen support. The Government carries out economic reforms and reduces government intervention in the activities of entrepreneurs. We decided to cut the number of inspections and inspecting agencies that hinder business development. Our priority sectors are hydropower engineering, gold mining, textile industry and agriculture. We want Kyrgyzstan to be known as a country producing high-quality products. That is why we should cooperate with Turkey," Temir Sariyev explained.

Omurbek Babanov: All necessary conditions for Turkish investment are created in Kyrgyzstan

19/03-2012, Bishkek

"All necessary conditions for business activity are created in Kyrgyzstan," announced Prime Minister Omurbek Babanov on today's Kyrgyz-Turkish Commercial and Investment Forum.

According to him, few days ago Finance Police has been disbanded and another checking body is established. "In addition, visa-free regime is established with Turkey. We created all necessary conditions, you only need to invest and open new enterprises in Kyrgyzstan," said Omurbek Babanov.

Kyrgyz President flies to Moscow to participate in EurAsEC work

19/03-2012, Bishkek

Today the Kyrgyz President flies to Moscow to participate in EurAsEC work. The heads of states – members of the Eurasian Economic Community (EurAsEC) will discuss issues for further integration in Eurasian space.

The Presidents of Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, as well as the leaders of Armenia, Moldova and the Ukraine that have observer status in the community will participate in EurAsEC session.

This is the first meeting in such format after on January 1, an integrated association of former Soviet republics - the Common Economic Space of Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan started working.

“A forthcoming meeting has a great importance for the further course of the Eurasian economic integration. It is expected that the leaders of states will take decisions, clarifying the contours of the future of regional integration processes,” the message of the Spokesperson for Russian leader Dmitry Medvedev says.

The Kremlin expects the summit participants to take decision on the basic principles of the draft treaty providing for the EurAsEC reorganization into a new integration association. This agreement was reached at the previous summit, in Moscow on December 19, 2011.

It is assumed that issues of launch of the Eurasian Economic Commission - a supranational body, which started managing the integration processes in the format of the “group of three” Russia - Belarus – Kazakhstan that created the Customs Union and Common Economic Space on February 1, will be considered at the session.

The meeting’s participants will also discuss such aspects of integration as the unification of the passport and visa control in the states - members of the Customs Union, aimed at ensuring free movement of citizens in the territory of three countries.

Recall, the treaty establishing the EurAsEC was signed in Astana on October 10, 2000 and entered into force on May 30, 2001 after ratification by all participant-states. The members of the Eurasian Economic Community since its inception are five states - Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. The Ukraine and Moldova have the status of EurAsEC observers since May, 2002, Armenia – since January 2003. The Interstate Aviation Committee (IAC) and the Eurasian Development Bank have the observer status as well.

Three of the EurAsEC members – Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan founded Customs Union that implies the rejection of most of the duties and other restrictions in mutual trade, as well as the unification of the rules of trade with third countries. Since January 1, 2012 the group of three countries created the Common Economic Space - virtually a common market with free movement of goods, services, capital and labor, harmonization of legal norms, implementation of coordinated fiscal, monetary, money-and-credit, trade and customs policy.

The organization’s leaders think that joining of other countries, including EurAsEC partners – Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan the integration structures of Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan, is

possible, but link it with preparedness of their economies to meet the requirements of the existing legal framework.

German Development Bank to allot €10 millions to Kyrgyzstan for reforming public health system

24/02-2012, Bishkek

German Development Bank will allot €10 millions to Kyrgyzstan for reforming public health system as the Kyrgyz Minister of Health Dinara Sagynbaeva said at the round table conference “Public Health System Reforming: Lessons and Prospects”.

According her, the Swiss Government will allocate annually around € 3 millions for a program implementation. “The World Bank is ready to give \$24 millions. Initially the project needed over KGS 700 millions but to calculate his second draft – without donors’ funds. The third version of the program is calculated on drawing state budget’s funds that are estimated at KGS 500 millions,” said Dinara Sagynbaeva.

World Bank to allot \$13M for support of Kyrgyzstan’s financial sector again

20/03-2012, Bishkek

World Bank reports that will give \$13M for support of Kyrgyzstan’s financial sector again.

World Bank’s board approved \$7.15M loan and \$5.85M grant in framework of the republic’s financial sector development.

As World Bank representatives note, the project will promote the national financial sector stability and increasing of access to financial services. As political cataclysms of 2010 provoked financial instability, caused fall of the largest bank of the republic and created aggressive environment in other several institutions. In common it influenced on access to financial services and increasing number of so-called troubled loans.

“Rates of financial penetration of loans and deposits in Kyrgyzstan is lowest among contries of Europe and Central Asia and lending rates are highest which an obstacle for private sector development is,” said in World Bank report.

As noted, the project also strengthens regulation and legal control codes, supports Kyrgyzpochtasy (Kyrgyz Mail) for widening of its financial services, deposits mobilization and Ayl Bank through opening of credit line for its liquidity.

It is offered to change mortgage register in sphere of using movable property as sterling mortgage.

World Bank also notes that a part of population living in province and arduous villages will get an access to financial services through new local post offices. They can use its property as a mortgage for loan.

Starting from 1992 total sum of financial aid for Kyrgyzstan is more than \$1B: 45% of the sum is grants, 55% - concessional loans with 0.75% of payment rate for service. Loans are given for 40 years with 10-year moratorium.

A meeting of Presidents of Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan takes place in Moscow

20/03-2012, Bishkek

A meeting of Presidents of Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan took place in Moscow. Recently Nursultan Nazarbayev held a meeting with Almazbek Atambayev within the framework of the EurAsEC session.

“The heads of states discussed the current level and prospects of bilateral relations between Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, as well as the integration processes in the Eurasian Space,” the message of the Spokesperson for Kazakh leader reads.

Reportedly, “Nursultan Nazarbayev invited Almazbek Atambayev to visit Kazakhstan this year to discuss issues of further strengthening of cooperation between two countries”.

Nursultan Nazarbayev emphasized the importance of bilateral relations between Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. It is noted that now there is a growth of trade turnover between the countries, and increasing of the amount of Kazakh investments in the Kyrgyz Republic. He also mentioned the necessity to accelerate the previously adopted common solutions. “We are willing to consider all the issues of the Kyrgyz side to the extent possible. We are interested in peace and development of fraternal Kyrgyzstan,” Kazakh President said.

Almazbek Atambayev in his turn thanked his interlocutor for invitation having noted that Kyrgyzstan appreciated the prospects of forming an investment fund initiated by Kazakhstan.

“You always help us and we are very grateful. A set of issues was resolved during the visit of our Prime Minister to Kazakhstan. I gratefully accept your invitation,” Almazbek Atambayev said.

Recall, the Eurasian Economic Community (EurAsEC) session was held in Moscow yesterday. The Presidents of Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, as well as the leaders of Armenia, Moldova and the Ukraine that have an observer status in the community participated in the EurAsEC session.

Three of the EurAsEC members – Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan founded Customs Union that implies the rejection of most of the duties and other restrictions in mutual trade, as well as the unification of the rules of trade with third countries. Since January 1, 2012 the group of three countries created the Common Economic Space - virtually a common market with free movement of goods, services, capital and labor, harmonization of legal norms, implementation of coordinated fiscal, monetary, money-and-credit, trade and customs policy

Kyrgyzstan will hold media forum of Turkic language-speaking countries

27/03-2012, Bishkek

Kyrgyzstan will hold media forum of Turkic language-speaking countries. It was announced to journalists by Information and Press Main Department of Turkey (IPMD) Murat Karakaya.

According him, it is planned to hold the event in autumn of 2012. Earlier such forums were held by Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan. “Kyrgyzstan is a special country to us. It can be proved by number of visits of other countries leaders. And we are planning to pay further attention to Kyrgyzstan,” said Murat Karakaya.

He noted, there 3K news (most of them are local) and 3.5K magazines in Turkey. In addition, 250 channels and 1K radio stations are working in the country. "Also we have 4-5 big media holdings. These newspapers reflect whole specter of political views. Zaman newspaper has the highest covering in 1M copies. The rest have covering in 500K," he added.

The IPMD Head stressed that news agencies are working on commercial basis and it is disadvantageous to connect some news paper with a public official. "One of the main aim of news agencies is to gain money. The other two aims are: advertisement and covering increasing," noted Murat Karakaya.

Iraq intends to open an embassy in Kyrgyzstan

27/03-2012, Bishkek

Iraq intends to open diplomatic missions and embassies in Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Armenia. The Journal of Turkish Weekly quotes Iraqi Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Ambassador to Kazakhstan Sabir Raja Abboud al-Moussaoui as saying.

"I wrote a letter to the leadership of Iraqi Foreign Ministry on the necessity to establish diplomatic relations with Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan and Armenia and opening our embassies and missions there," said Abboud al-Moussaoui.

Iraqi Ambassador to Kazakhstan underlined that rebuilding relations with Central Asian republics is necessary as they have historical and cultural community with Iraq.

"Khorezm, Bukhara, Samarkand have historical significance for Iraq. If Muslim countries in the Middle East and Central Asia unite, then we will become a major economic force," said Abboud al-Moussaoui.

Turksoy: Kyrgyzstan can not propose to include the Epic of Manas in the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage List

28/03-2012, Ankara

"Kyrgyzstan can not propose to include the epic trilogy of Manas, Semetei, Seitek in the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage List," deputy secretary general of Turksoy Firat Purtash commented upon the initiative of Kyrgyz Parliament deputies.

According to him, Kyrgyzstan needs to ratify the Convention on Cultural and Spiritual Heritage adopted in 2006 to include the trilogy in UNESCO List.

"Our organization fully supports zeal of the Kyrgyz authorities, but it is impossible," Firat Purtash stressed.

Recall, Karganbek Samakov, MP and interdepartmental working group's chairman, told 24.kg news agency that Kyrgyzstan would propose to include an epic trilogy in the UNESCO Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage.

He noted that a commission has worked for a year, studied and prepared all necessary materials to register the epic in this list. "Minister of Culture and Tourism Ibragim Dzhususov signed all necessary documents: nominations file (dossier), 10-minute film and pictures of manaschi. The

documents were sent to the central headquarters of the organization in France by UNESCO representative. Then they will go to the UNESCO Committee for Intangible Spiritual Heritage. There they will be considered till June and will be laid before the Committee that includes 24 states by November, 2013. The decision on Kyrgyzstan will be made by a majority of vote," the people's deputy said.

Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan are most economically active among CIS countries

30/03-2012, Bishkek

Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan are most economically active among CIS countries. Such information was presented by Analytic Information Service of WOC (World Organization of Creditors) which had made analysis of basic economic achievements and problems of 2011, and prospective dimensions of 2012.

According it, high rates of Turkmen growth are connected with realization of big state projects on building and growth of gas export to China.

WOC also note economic growth in Kyrgyzstan and Azerbaijan.

"Forecasting growth in CIS countries of 2011-2012 have high level. In common, GDP growth of CIS countries was more than 4 per cent in 2011. The tendency remains in 2012," noted WOC president Robert Abdullin.

According WOC forecasts, only Belorussia will face a GDP decrease in 2012. It is connected with economic crisis which the country has been facing since 2011.

Kyrgyzstan President to U.S. Assistant Secretary: After summer 2014, a center for civilian cargo transportation without military component must be established at Manas airport

02/04-2012, Bishkek

After summer 2014, a center for civilian cargo transportation without military component must be established at Manas airport. This was stated today by the Kyrgyz President Almazbek Atambayev to U.S. Assistant Secretary Robert Blake.

Recall, U.S. Assistant Secretary for South and Central Asian Affairs arrived in Bishkek to discuss issues of further cooperation between Kyrgyzstan and the U.S.

"Kyrgyzstan is interested in long-term, partnership and friendly relations with the U.S.," the presidential press-service quotes Almazbek Atambayev as saying.

According to its information, Robert Blake highly appreciated role of Kyrgyzstan in Central Asian region, especially in question of restoration of peaceful life and economic recovery in Afghanistan, expressing gratitude from the U.S. leadership to Almazbek Atambayev.

"Sides discussed also issues on trade-economic cooperation, creation of favorable investment climate, rendering assistance in fight against threats and challenges of present-day world such as terrorism, extremism," the press-service makes more exact.

Experts: Relations between Kyrgyzstan and Azerbaijan enter in new stage after 20 years of stagnation

02/04-2012, Bishkek

Relations between Kyrgyzstan and Azerbaijan enter in new stage after 20 years of stagnation. Such conclusions were made by Azerbaijani experts after official visit of Kyrgyz President Almazbek Atambayev in Baku.

“It is true, a new chapter has been opened in expansion of cooperation between two culturally and historically close countries. Such conclusion can be made by recent events development between Baku and Bishkek. The most important event is Kyrgyz President visit to Azerbaijan,” reports international news agency Trend.

According Trend, “a package of documents have been signed. Their realization can bring large profit both countries in economy and culture. There are good conditions for cooperation enhancing which can be strengthened by economic aspect and common Turkic roots of two peoples”.

“Probably, one of the most important points of the cooperation today is energy sector – basic for Azerbaijani economy and problematic for Kyrgyz. Petroleum derivative production in Kyrgyzstan was practically stopped and today Bishkek have to seek importers of this strategic commodity among its neighbors in Central Asian region. Azerbaijan has been a possible alternative importer of the fuel for Kyrgyzstan but high cost of transportation and, as the result, economic inexpedience,” Trend reports.

According the news agency observer, “a conceptual solution of such problem can be an agreement on building oil refinery of SOCAR (state-owned oil company of Azerbaijan) on Kyrgyz territory. The recent negotiations have confirmed again the bilateral intentions to cooperate in this dimension”.

“If SOCAR oil refinery will be built Kyrgyzstan can cover fuel requirements and diversify energy import by buying products from the future oil refinery. Besides fuel production on Kyrgyz territory is very important step in development of the republic. As for Azerbaijan the oil refinery opening will give an opportunity to find new markets,” stresses the observer.

“It seems that Kyrgyz-Azerbaijani relations activization after a long period of time will be long and productive in all dimensions and will be profitable for all countries,” forecasting the experts.

Mongolia and Kyrgyzstan will gain from experience exchange in natural resources sphere – Ts.Elbegdorj

03/04-2012, Bishkek

“Mongolia and Kyrgyzstan will gain from experience exchange in natural resources sphere,” the President of Mongolia Ts.Elbegdorj said at the meeting with the Kyrgyz President in extended format.

According him, Mongolia attracts big interest of major powers because it is among top ten countries with rich subsoil resources. “We put our national interests before all else, we are striving to bring them in concordance with investments and we want to have many enterprises

in Mongolia. The parliamentary government is our advantage when they approach us on investments in natural resources. I tell them these issues are not only within my competence but within competence of the Parliament and my people,” said Ts.Elbegdorj.

He noted also that Mongolia accumulated great experience in use of natural resources as well as in development of legal framework.

A Kyrgyz-Mongolian business forum attended by 55 Mongolian businessmen opened in Kyrgyzstan

03/04-2012, Bishkek

A Kyrgyz-Mongolian business forum attended by 55 Mongolian businessmen was opened in Kyrgyzstan. The event attracted over 100 Kyrgyzstan’s entrepreneurs from the spheres of construction, agriculture, communications, tourism and other industries.

Businessmen plan to extend economic cooperation and consider the proposals to supply equipment for mining industry, as well as in agriculture and energy.

As Mongolian Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade Zandanshatar Gombojav noted the current trade and economic turnover between Mongolia and Kyrgyzstan that is \$1.9 million following the results of 2011 does not reveal a full potential of two countries.

According to the Ministry of Economy and Antitrust Policy of Kyrgyzstan, in 2011 exports to Mongolia totaled \$ 1.4 million having decreased by 30 percent compared to 2010. Imports - \$ 0.4 million by importation of meat and sand.

“These datas are very scant. We should brisk up the activity of the intergovernmental commission,” Zandanshatar Gombojav added.

Bilateral negotiations are planned during the forum.

A meeting of delegations of Kyrgyzstan’s Osh province and Uzbekistan’s Andijan province held after a 10-year break

04/04-2012, Bishkek

A delegation of Kyrgyzstan’s Osh province headed by Governor Sooronbai Zheenbekov was with a working visit in Andijan province of Uzbekistan on April 3. The Spokesperson’s Office for the Osh regional state administration informs.

Reportedly, the sides discussed the issues concerning bilateral relations and signed an agreement on the operative decision of emerging issues. A bilateral commission was created during the meeting.

As noted, there were no such meetings between two provinces during the last 10 years.

Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan are going to solve problems of Barak enclave together

05/04-2012, Bishkek

Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan are going to solve problems of Barak enclave together. It was announced by Osh province Local Administration press service.

According it, on April 3 the governor met with head of Andizhan town (Uzbekistan) and discussed a problem. "Currently the transition through the enclave is open from 8 am up to 8 pm. which makes some difficulties for Kyrgyz – they can't take their vegetables with them. Now, the problem with 309 tons of raw cotton import has been resolved. Besides, it is necessary to install about 1300 km of power lines in the enclave," explained the press service.

As noted, the governor of Kyrgyz and Uzbek border provinces decided to establish commission which will include 6 people from each part in order to research problems and gives recommendations.

Kyrgyzstan going to study the experience of Malaysia for the development of market economy

06/04-2012, Bishkek

Kyrgyzstan is going to study the experience of Malaysia for the development of market economy. Vice Prime Minister Zhoomart Otorbayev stated at today's meeting with Ambassador of Malaysia to the Kyrgyz Republic Abdul Aziz Harun.

He told the diplomat that the Government began extensive work to improve an investment climate to attract direct investment from foreign countries and expressed hope that businessmen from Malaysia would actively work in Kyrgyzstan.

Zhoomart Otorbayev noted the Government is interested in more intensive cooperation with Malaysia in political, trade and economic, cultural and humanitarian spheres, and underlined the need to hold a session of the intergovernmental commission.

Abdul Aziz Harun said that the leadership of Malaysia welcomes the reforms initiated to improve the investment climate. According to him, Malaysian investors are interested in Kyrgyzstan's market. In particular, the opening of air traffic on routes Kuala Lumpur - Bishkek - Moscow and Kuala Lumpur - Bishkek - St. Petersburg, tourism, the introduction of the Islamic finance and insurance principles, halal industry.

Park dedicated to first president of Azerbaijan Heidar Aliev will be built in capital of Kyrgyzstan

09/04-2012, Bishkek

The park is planning to be built on Baytik Baatyr street, southward of Tokombaev street – Orto Sai forest zone. South district of Kyrgyz capital with population in 100 thousand people will be the main frontage from mountainous side of the city. This is a residential area with large-scale tasks on verdurization, recreation and sport activities. Its ecologic component will be added with Heidar Aliev's park. This new zone will be defined as historic and cultural park. Later, a

monument of the national leader of Azerbaijan will be fixed up. Also there will be laser fountain and other small architecture and park objects”.

Kazakhstan invests \$1 billion in Kyrgyzstan for six years

10/04-2012, Bishkek

Kazakhstan has invested \$1 billion in Kyrgyzstan for six years, Tengrinews.kz news agency quotes the Kazakh Ministry of Economic Development and Trade as saying.

“Kazakhstan has invested around \$1 billion in economy of Kyrgyzstan for 2006-2011. In this period staff of the government machine was reduced by 20 percent, new evaluation methods of state agencies are implemented, licenses are reduced as well as state services,” the Kyrgyz Minister of Economic Affairs and Antitrust Policy Temir Sariev said during official meeting with the Minister of Economic Development and Trade of Kazakhstan.

According to Temir Sariev, the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Antitrust Policy of Kyrgyzstan has worked out many draft laws including creation of the State Development Bank. “The State Development Bank will allot funds for implementation of priority-oriented state programs,” he summed up.

The meeting of Ministers of both countries took place in Astana. They discussed major directions of economic growth, set priorities of further interaction and cooperation. Temir Sariev underlined significant role of Kazakhstan, as the trade and economic partner, in the foreign trade system of Kyrgyzstan as well as fast-moving development of trade and economic relations between two countries. Finally, Ministers noted constructive course of cooperation between two countries thanking to friendly relations.

Kyrgyzstan to take part in the XV Eurasian Economic Summit

11/04-2012, Bishkek

The well-known public figure, founder of the Aitysh Fund, filmmaker Sadyk Sher-Niyaz will participate in the XV Eurasian Economic Summit in Turkey as a speaker on April 11-13. The chairman of the Vagfa Turkish Fund Akkan Suver reports.

According to him, the summit organized by the Center for Strategic and Social Research of the Marmara Group with the support of Vagfa Fund will be held in Istanbul and Izmir cities. The representatives of 50 counties will participate in a meeting. Sadyk Sher-Niyaz will conduct the meeting of cultural and educational issues section.

Reportedly, the issues of collaboration in political, social, economic and energy sectors will be discussed. An intercultural dialogue will take place.

Iran intends exporting gas to Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and China through new pipeline

13/04-2012, Bishkek

Iran intends exporting gas to Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and China through new gas pipeline. The Spokesperson’s Office for the Iranian Embassy to Kyrgyzstan informs.

Reportedly, according to the agreement reached by the heads of the counties interested, a new pipeline for energy resource transportation will be constructed from Iran to Tajikistan through Afghanistan and then to Kyrgyzstan and China.

As noted, the parties have been discussing the implementation of projects on electricity and water transportation from Tajikistan to Iran through Afghanistan for several years. It is reported, the system will be constructed after completion of negotiations.

Turkey

Turkey's Investment Incentive Package Gets Mixed Reviews

The new investment incentive package -- announced last week by Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan -- has sparked optimism among businesses. However, economists argue the extent to which it will attract investment to underdeveloped regions is ambiguous, and that it might cause unfair competition and budgetary imbalances in the short-term.

The investment incentive package aims to reduce the country's current account deficit -- which hit a dangerous level of 10% of GDP in 2011 -- and increase investment in underdeveloped areas in order to lower income disparities between regions.

It plans to achieve these goals by strengthening the investment-production-employment and export chains, encouraging production of intermediary goods for import-dependent sectors and transforming the export sector from labour-intensive to technology-intensive product groups.

The investment incentives package includes four major categories: general incentives, regional incentives, large investment incentives and strategic investment incentives.

The government has determined six regions in accordance with their socio-economic development, with the first region including the most developed provinces and the sixth group underdeveloped regions mainly in the southeast and east.

The main incentives will be value added tax (VAT) rebates, VAT exemptions of investment expenditures up to 60%, custom duty exemptions, and social security premium support up to 12 years.

Depending on the region, free land, tax deductions up to 8% from the current effective rate of 20%, and loan rate support of 3 to 7 percentage points are also included. Incentives vary in quality and amount according to different regions, with the sixth region being subject to most attractive incentives.

The main advantage of the investment package -- compared to previous ones -- is that investors who make a strategic investment will be able to deduct some portion of their investment expenditures from their taxable income, according to Altug.

He says another advantage is that tax cuts would begin with the initial investment. Previous packages allowed the cuts to occur only after the investment was made.

This investment package also defines strategic sectors such as mining, iron and steel, chemicals, textile, automobile and agriculture. Other strategic sectors are defence, aviation, space, pharmaceuticals, education, maritime, railway and tourism.

Although the energy sector will not be directly supported -- which is forbidden by EU regulations -- energy usage in strategic investments will be supported and investments in iron, lignite and any other mining sectors will have incentives. 14/04/2012

Turkish Premier Says Syrian Democratic Transformation Should Be Completed Smoothly

Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan said democratic transformation process in Syria should be completed.

"The democratic transformation process in Syria should be completed smoothly in the shortest possible time," Turkish sources quoted Erdogan as saying in a meeting on Friday with Saudi King Abdallah bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud in Riyadh.

Sources said the meeting between the Turkish premier and the Saudi king underlined the importance of the protection of Syria's territorial integrity and unity, adding that Erdogan had stressed the deployment of a UN observer mission in Syria in line with a peace plan by international envoy Kofi Annan was of utmost importance.

Sources said Turkey and Saudi Arabia were in accord over the Syrian issue, adding that the two countries also agreed that Syrian regime should not be allowed to use the Annan plan as "a delaying tactic."

Sources also said Erdogan and King Abdallah discussed relations in depth as well as regional and international developments and ways to further improve bilateral cooperation and political dialogue and relations in the context of multi-national organizations such as the Arab League, Gulf Cooperation Council and Organization of the Islamic Cooperation. 14/04/2012

Head of Turkish Community in Germany Asks President to Promote Solving Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict

Hakki Yalcin, the head of the Turkish community in Germany, has sent a letter to President Joachim Gauck, requesting to assist in the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, the Turkish newspaper Gazete24 reported.

"Around 1 million people with the status of IDPs are located in different cities of Azerbaijan as a result of the Armenian occupation of 20 percent of Azerbaijani territories. These people cannot return to their homeland for about 20 years" Yalcin said.

As stated in the letter, Armenia, which still has not fulfilled the four resolutions adopted by the UN Security Council, continues its occupation of Azerbaijani lands, contrary to all legal standards.

Yalcin also said in the letter that the government of Azerbaijan has been trying to find a political solution to this problem for 20 years, but the war seems inevitable unless things change.

He also expressed his willingness to meet with German President to discuss Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. 12/04/2012

Turkey Proposes to Create Silk Road Railway

Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan at a meeting with Chinese businessmen proposed to create the Silk Road railway, which would connect Turkey and China, the Hurriyet newspaper reported on Thursday.

"It is necessary to turn the historic Silk Road into a railway which will unite the people who live along the route from Turkey to China," Erdogan said.

According to the PM, the necessary potential there to implement this project. The railway would contribute to the development of trade turnover between the countries which will be included in this project.

"It will be an important regional project that will revitalise the economy," Erdogan said.

Erdogan's proposal is aimed at creating a developed and large scale network of trade and transit relations between South and Central Asia and Europe. In total, 28 countries would take part in the project. The total length of the new route, often called the 'Silk Rail Road', should reach 81,000 kilometres. 12/04/2012

Turkic Business Council Intends to Create Single Textbooks for Four Countries

It is planned to conclude important agreements in culture and education at the summit of the Turkic Business Council, to be held in Bishkek in August, the Zaman newspaper quotes the Council Secretary General Halil Akinci as telling journalists.

According to Akinci, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Turkey and Kyrgyzstan signed an agreement on the establishment of the Turkic Business Council, which brings together countries with a total population of 103 million people and economy estimated at \$1.287 trillion, in Nakhchivan in 2009.

"We intend to work on creating a single alphabet and convergence of languages of the Council member countries. Specialists are working over it," he said.

Akinci also said work is underway to create joint textbooks on history and other sciences for these countries. 12/04/2012

Tension at Turkish Border Turns World Focus on Syria

The world's eyes turn to the Turkish-Syrian border as key figures come to Hatay amid hectic diplomacy on the Arab republic and the Annan plan's deadline.

International envoy to Syria Kofi Annan said there should be no preconditions to halting the violence in Syria and appealed to all sides to comply with the truce deadline of April 12 at 6:00 a.m. Eastern European Summer Time (EEST).

"I again appeal to the Syrian government and the Syrian parties to cease violence in accordance [with] the plan," he said at a news conference held at the airport in the Hatay province of southern Turkey, where he visited Syrian refugee camps. "I believe there should be no preconditions for stopping violence."

Annan said yesterday the U.N. Security Council would take up the issue and was expected to write a letter to the Security Council yesterday.

"On the question of whether the plan is succeeding or failing, I believe it is a bit too early to say that the plan has failed. The plan is still on the table," he said at the joint press conference with

Turkish Deputy Prime Minister Beşir Atalay. "We still have time between now and the 12th [of April] to stop violence," he said.

Annan said he had seen many refugee camps before and the Syrian refugee camps in Turkey are some of the best. The number of Syrian refugees staying in Turkey has reached 24,288 according to AFAD.

Atalay said the U.N. Security Council should step in and fulfill its responsibilities if the Syrian regime does not cooperate with the implementation of the peace plan. Annan said there is an increasing flow of people from Syria to Turkey, which points to an escalation of violence or another issue. Annan said this flow of people over the border cannot be explained with anything else.

Annan said he had information that the Syrian military was withdrawing from some areas but moving to others not previously targeted. He appealed to all sides to stop the violence.

Activists who supply much of the information coming from sites in Syria such as Homs, Hama and Idlib say attacks by the Syrian army have not diminished. The main Syrian opposition group estimated that some 1,000 people have been killed in regime attacks in the week leading up to Tuesday's withdrawal deadline. Fighting on Tuesday claimed the lives of at least 29 civilians and 11 regime soldiers, activists said.

U.S. senators John McCain and Joe Lieberman also visited a tent-site in Hatay yesterday and talked with Syrians who had fled to Turkey from Syria. Lieberman and McCain met with Syrian National Council leader Burhan Ghalioun on April 9 and also with Free Syrian Army leaders in Hatay, according to Lieberman. He said the two groups told them it was an unfair fight. "They don't have the weapons Assad has they said," Lieberman said, adding that the anger they have about the killings Assad conducted was deep. McCain said they met with Turkish President Abdullah Gül but did not discuss the details of the needs of Syrian opposition in Turkey. McCain said SNC and FSA have almost no division in their stances on the issue. "See you in Damascus next year," McCain said.

US presses UN Security Council ahead of Syria report

The United States said yesterday that it hoped the UN Security Council would consider action if Annan concludes that Syria's government broke troop withdrawal commitments. White House spokesman Jay Carney said Washington was waiting for Annan's assessment of the situation, but so far had only seen evidence of further "brutality and aggression" from President Bashar al-Assad's forces. "We would certainly hope the UN Security Council would evaluate the situation in Syria if in fact Annan finds that the Assad regime has not abided by its own commitments to begin withdrawal by today," Carney said.

Carney, speaking aboard Air Force One, said the US would work with its partners and other nations in the aftermath of Annan's letter to decide what the next steps to take are regarding Syria. 11/04/2012

Special Envoy for the United Nations and the Arab League Arrives in Turkish Hatay

The Special Envoy for the United Nations and the Arab League Kofi Annan arrived in the Turkish province of Hatay to get acquainted with the situation of Syrian refugees accommodated in the country, TRT Haber said.

Yesterday the Syrian army opened fire on opposition activists who tried to flee to Turkey. Two Syrians were killed and 11 people injured as a result of the incident on the border between the two countries.

According to recent data, the number of Syrian refugees in Turkey has exceeded 25.000.

Syria has been covered by anti-government speeches for more than year resulting in violent clashes. According to UN figures, the total number of victims in the country exceeds 9000. In turn, the Syrian authorities say of those killed in clashes there were over 2000 soldiers and police officers against whom there are well-armed militants. 10/04/2012

SOCAR Turkey Energy: Petkim Privatisation Becomes Strategic Issue in Azerbaijan-Turkey Cooperation

Turkey and Azerbaijan are strategic partners having many large scale projects, including the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars pipeline, the development of the Shah Deniz gas condensate field, Trans Anadolu project (TANAP) and SOCAR Turkey Energy, executive director Kenan Yavuz said at a forum in Baku today. The forum is dedicated to the creation of a new complex for oil and gas processing and production of petrochemical products in Azerbaijan.

"The privatisation of Petkim is a strategic issue in the cooperation between the two countries," he said. "Azerbaijan is an active investor in Turkey through the privatisation of Turkish petrochemical complex Petkim."

Earlier on March 30, SOCAR Turkey Enerji A.Ş and SOCAR International DMCC OGG acquired 10.32 per cent stake in Petkim, increasing its stake to 61.32 per cent. Some 38.67 per cent are in free circulation on the Istanbul Stock Exchange.

The Petkim Petrokimya Holding manufactures plastic packaging, fabric, PVC and detergents. It is the only Turkish producer of such products and exports a quarter of its production.

Speaking about the Shah Deniz field second stage development project which will transport gas to Turkey and Europe, Yavuz said that this project will further strengthen the position of Azerbaijan and Turkey.

He also stressed the importance of the Star Refinery construction project worth \$5 billion in Turkey. This project has great importance for both Turkey and the entire region and will bring additional revenue.

The total capacity of the refinery will reach 10 million tons and oil products produced at the plant are designed to meet the needs of Petkim and the Turkish domestic market.

The alliance between SOCAR and Turcas Petrol /Injaz projects resulted in them winning a tender

in 2008 to buy a 51 per cent stake in various chemical projects worth \$2.04 billion. Now Turkey imports 70 to 75 per cent of its chemical products. Investments in the development of Petkim will reduce that figure by 30 per cent. 10/04/2012

Turkey Negotiating with Three Countries to Build Nuclear Power Plants

Turkey is negotiating with three countries on three different models to build nuclear power plants, the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources of Turkey Taner Yildiz, Anatolia agency reports on Tuesday.

The minister did not specify with which countries Turkey is negotiating. Turkey and China signed an agreement on the peaceful use of nuclear energy. Previously, such an agreement was signed with South Korea and Russia.

The agreement creates a framework for cooperation, including in the construction of nuclear power plants in Turkey. It will also promote cooperation in the peaceful use of nuclear energy in compliance with the non-proliferation regime and promotion of Russian nuclear technology in Turkey.

Russia ratified the intergovernmental agreement with Turkey on cooperation in the construction and operation of Turkey's first nuclear power plant at the Akkuyu site in late 2010. 10/04/2012

Turkish Premier Calls For Greater Cooperation With China

BEIJING (AA) - Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Tuesday said Turkey and China should join forces for greater cooperation.

"As the two countries that built great civilizations on the opposite ends of the Asia, Turkey and China could create a fresh synergy to develop intense cooperation in economy, international politics, and social and cultural life," Erdogan told Turkey-China Economic and Trade Cooperation Forum meeting in Beijing as part of his visit to China.

Erdogan said Chinese investments in Turkey remained fairly low over the past decade, pointing out that Turkey offered great opportunities for foreign investors especially with the latest economic stimulus package.

The Turkish premier said Turkey was gateway to European markets, adding that a four-hour flight from Istanbul, Turkey's major commercial hub, gave access to 50 countries and a vast geography that housed one-fourth of the global trade.

"Our doors are wide open for Chinese businesspeople. We are offering strong support for strategic investments such as defense, aerospace, technology, transportation and textiles. I am hoping that Chinese investors will show interest in our stimulus package," Erdogan said.

Erdogan said Turkey and China could also cooperate in the construction sector which he said saw the two countries shared the top two spots among the biggest construction companies in the world with 54 Chinese and 33 Turkish firms.

Erdogan said Turkish-Chinese trade volume in 2011 was 24 billion USD, however, added that only a ten percent of the total figure constituted Turkey's exports to China which equaled 2.5 billion USD.

"We need an urgent solution to that disparity. And businesspeople will have a big role to play to that end," Erdogan said.

Erdogan also said Turkey and China had agreed to increase their bilateral trade volume to 50 billion USD in 2015 and to 100 billion USD in 2020. 10/04/2012

Turkey Mulls Formula For Visa-Free Europe

Turkey anticipates that a meeting on April 26 with the European Union's Internal Affairs Commission will yield progress on visa liberalization.

"Turkey's putting initials to [not adopting the accord but agreeing to the text] a readmission agreement in return for an E.U. statement authorizing the European Commission to begin discussing visa exemption for Turkish nationals," could be a formula to pave the way out of the longstanding deadlock, according to a Turkish official.

Ankara steps up pressure

Turkey has stepped up pressure on the E.U. in a bid to ensure that the European Council gives the go-ahead for talks on a visa-free travel regime for Turkish nationals. Previous initiatives failed last year when the European Council asked Turkey to sign a readmission agreement, saying they would return to the visa issue later. After negotiations on the simultaneous timing of signing the readmission agreement, the parties agreed on a formula which would be a step toward removing visa requirements for Turkish nationals. A verbal statement authorizing the European Commission to start talks with Ankara on visa exemption would be a step forward, despite the possibility that some E.U. member states may stir up trouble later.

"If some member states, such as Austria, Germany and France, which objected before, reject the visa agreement, then Turkey will not be required to adhere to the readmission agreement, since it would only be approving the text of the agreement," the official said.

Meanwhile, Turkey's EU Minister Egemen Bağış said yesterday the current one-year visa granted to Turkish businessmen in Romania will be extended to five years. Bağış expressed his hope that decisions would be made about visas during April 26 meeting. Visa-free entrance to the Schengen zone for Turkish citizens would be mostly in the interest of Romania, Greece and Bulgaria, he said. 06/04/2012

PM: Turkey Makes Every Effort for TAP Project Implementation

Turkey, like Azerbaijan makes every effort for implementation of TAP gas project, Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan told journalists, the Zaman newspaper reported on Friday.

"Turkey is ready to use its full potential for implementation of TAP project," Erdogan said.

He said after the implementation of the project on the Turkish territory the next step will be its

implementation in Italy. Its transportation to Albania may be the next phase after transporting gas to Italy.

TAP is one of the projects of the Southern Gas Corridor, designed to transport gas from the Caspian region via Greece and Albania and across the Adriatic Sea to southern Italy and further into Western Europe. Gas produced within the second phase of the Azerbaijani gas condensate field Shah Deniz is regarded as the main source for TAP. 06/04/2012

Ministries Join Forces For Science Attachés Abroad

Turkey will appoint science attachés to its embassies abroad, and assign volunteer science and technology representatives, Science, Industry and Technology Minister Nihat Ergün told reporters yesterday.

“We’ll open the first science attaché’s offices at the consulates in San Francisco and Boston in the U.S., Japan, and Berlin, Germany and then later in Los Angeles, London, Beijing, Seoul, Moscow, and India,” Ergün said.

Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu and Ergün signed a “diplomacy protocol” yesterday to ensure efficient cooperation between the two ministries.

Ergün said Turkey needs to integrate its work in science and technological fields with other countries.

“The attachés will facilitate activities such as reporting scientific and technological developments, developing areas of cooperation between Turkey and other countries, and meetings at which Turkish and foreign academicians and businessmen can network.” The science and technology representatives would work voluntarily to represent promote Turkey and develop networking relationships, he added.

Integral part of diplomacy

“We will be able to closely monitor any kind of development in science in any part of the world through scientific diplomacy,” Davutoğlu said. The new attachés will be an integral part of diplomacy, he said.

Turkey should use the information it obtains for commercial purposes, and raise total research and development expenditure to 3 percent of the gross national product, Ergün said, noting that science and technology are crucial to achieving the country’s target of having \$500 billion in exports and becoming one of the 10 largest economies in the world by 2023, in celebration of the 100th anniversary of the founding of the republic.

“We want to establish relationships with countries around the world based on a win-win approach and mutual benefits. We want to have a say in the world via trade, diplomacy, and cultural and scientific achievements, the elements of ‘soft power,’ not via military force and imperialism,” Ergün said.

Turkey will also launch a Science and Technology Council in order to bring the public and private sectors together in Turkey and abroad in the fields of science, technology, and innovation, Ergün said. 05/04/2012

Turkey in 2nd Spot with Growth

Turkey grew 8.5 percent in 2011, posting the second biggest growth rate in the world after China, according to official figures. However, the 5.2 percent growth in the fourth quarter hints at a slowdown, economists say.

The Turkish economy grew 8.5 percent in 2011 overall, and 5.2 percent in the last quarter of the year, according to figures released yesterday by the Turkish Statistical Institute (TÜİK), hinting at a slowdown in the economy.

Turkey's 2011 Gross Domestic Product (GDP) was recorded at 1.2 trillion Turkish Liras, or \$772.2 billion, while per capita income came in at \$10,444.

The reason behind Turkey's robust growth was "confidence and stability," according to Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan.

Turkey grew the most after China last year and that with this level of growth there would be even more foreign direct investment as the current amount was insufficient, Erdoğan said in Ankara.

"Turkey's 8.5 percent 2011 growth rate is a very positive result when you see that so many countries in Europe are struggling to even achieve 1 percent growth," said Deputy Prime Minister Ali Babacan yesterday.

The country will grow 5 percent by the end of 2012, according to Economy Minister Zafer Çağlayan.

The results for the last quarter of 2011 show that the economy is experiencing a soft landing in a balanced fashion according to the government's targets, Finance Minister Mehmet Şimşek told the Anatolia news agency. "While there is a slowdown in the growth of consumption and investment, the effects of our foreign trade on growth have been positive." Şimşek said that in the first half of 2011, foreign trade had pulled Turkey's growth down to 5.2 percent, it increased growth by 1.9 percent in the second half of the year. Şimşek expects to see 4 percent growth in 2012.

Number 3 in fourth quarter

"With these growth figures, for the fourth quarter we are number three in the world and probably number two in the world for the year as a whole after China," added Turkey's Industry Minister Nihat Ergün, who also predicts 4 percent growth for 2012.

Özgür Altuğ, chief economist at BGC Partners, however, expects only 2 percent growth in 2012. When looking at the details of the growth data revealed by TÜİK, Altuğ, said in an investor note that "When we look at growth figures for the fourth quarter of 2011 by sector, we see that the manufacturing (5.2 percent year-over-year growth), construction (7 percent), agriculture (6.7 percent), transportation (6.8 percent), and health (7.8 percent) sectors were the chief factors

behind growth in the fourth quarter, while we should note that growth in all sectors was significantly lower compared to previous quarters.”

“Despite the rise in consumption, imports contracted in the fourth quarter. The rise in consumption was 3.4 percent, while it stands at 5.2 percent for the private sector, but imports contracted by 5 percent,” Gülay Elif Girgin, economist at Oyak Investment, told Reuters.

“This is intriguing. We continue to foresee a 2 percent contraction in GDP for 2012, and foreign trade data for January and February support this. In line with global liquidity conditions, we will see a slowdown, a contraction this year,” she said.

Oil prices slow adjustment

“The problem with the Turkish economy is that it’s mainly consumption-based, so you want to have a re-balancing of the economy. In the latest figures you see some of this rebalancing, as the contribution of consumption to growth has decreased, but high oil prices are slowing down the adjustment process,” added economist Emre Deliveli. 03/04/2012

Minister: Turkey to Replace Part of Iranian Oil Imports by Libyan Oil

Turkey intends to replace part of imported Iranian oil by the Libyan oil, TRT Haber TV channel quotes Turkish Energy and Natural Resources Minister Taner Yildiz as saying on Friday. Yildiz said Libyan oil will be imported by Turkish company Tupras.

"Turkey will import one million tons of oil from Libya at the first stage," Yildiz said. Turkey took such a step for diversification of sources of energy resources supply to the country. Earlier, Turkey has repeatedly stated that it will continue purchasing Iranian oil, despite the EU and U.S. sanctions against Iran.

In 2010, Tupras bought 7.41 million tons of Iranian oil, which makes almost 38 percent of the oil processed in the amount of 19.6 million tons by the company last year. 30/03/2012

Turkish Cypriot Leader Expresses Readiness To Negotiate Every Issue In A Conference

LEFKOSA (A.A) - The president of Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) expressed on Thursday readiness to negotiate every issue related with Cyprus question in a multilateral conference.

President Dervis Eroglu wrote a letter to United Nations (UN) Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, and said he expected the UN to hold a multi-lateral Cyprus conference.

"I am ready to negotiate very issue in the conference," Eroglu wrote in his letter.

Eroglu and Greek Cypriot leader Demetris Christofias met at the buffer zone in Lefkosa. This was the last meeting of the two leaders before UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon's Special Advisor for Cyprus Alexander Downer presents a report on Cyprus to Ban.

The meeting of the leaders ended, but their envoys continue negotiations at the buffer zone. UN executives are carrying out a shuttle diplomacy between the two delegations. Parties will try to prepare a "common document" on property issue.

After Eroglu-Christofias meeting, Downer told reporters that there was no other planned meeting between the two leaders from now on, and whether or not to meet again was something the leaders would decide.

Downer said they were ready to host a meeting in case leaders demanded.

Alexander Downer is expected to present his report to Ban on Friday, and meet the secretary general on April 19.

Ban and Downer will discuss recent stage in ongoing Cyprus negotiations, and decide on further steps to be taken.

In case Downer prepares a positive report, Ban is expected to call for a multilateral meeting at the end of April or beginning of May.

TRNC frequently says pursuing Cyprus talks after July 1 will be meaningless as Greek Cypriot administration will undertake the rotating presidency of the European Union after that date.

Turkish Cypriot party supports a multilateral meeting on Cyprus issue, while Greek Cypriots are against such a meeting before they reached a consensus on "internal issues".

Cyprus talks began in September 2008 between former president of TRNC Mehmet Ali Talat and Greek Cypriot leader Christofias. Eroglu who was elected president in April 2010 continued on talks with Christofias as of June 2010.

Cypriot parties are discussing Cyprus issue under the topics "governance and share of power, the EU, economy, property, land and guarantees".

Eroglu and Christofias also held tripartite meetings under the chairmanship of Ban for five times so far. 29/03/2012

Number Of Syrian Citizens Living In Turkey Reaches 17,655

ANKARA (A.A) - Turkish Prime Ministry Disaster and Emergency Management Directorate (AFAD) said on Wednesday that the number of Syrian citizens who fled to Turkey reached 17,655.

AFAD said that Syrian citizens living in Turkey were provided with lodging, food, health services, security, social activities, education, religious services, translation services and communications.

AFAD said 366 Syrians entered Turkey on Wednesday as 12 Syrians returned home.

Up until today, 32,218 Syrian citizens entered Turkey. To date, 14,563 Syrians returned to Syria on their own will. Currently, 10,921 Syrians stay in Hatay province, 2,385 in Gaziantep province (Nurdagi-Islahiye) and 4,294 in Kilis province, AFAD stressed.

2,150 Syrian children receive pre-school, elementary and high school education in 68 classes formed at the tent sites in Hatay.

Syrians are provided meal three times a day, AFAD also said. 28/03/2012

All Nations Should Focus On Establishing Nuclear Security And Safety, Says PM Erdogan

SEOUL (A.A) - Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan said Tuesday that all nations in the world should focus on establishing nuclear security and safety.

Speaking at a working lunch attended by 53 world leaders as part of the Nuclear Security Summit in Seoul, Erdogan said that, as leaders, they had a responsibility to make sure the public opinion had confidence in supporting nuclear energy production.

To reach such a goal, a transparent and open approach is necessary in all dimensions of nuclear energy, Erdogan stressed.

In the upcoming term, we need to make sure that nuclear security and safety standards are consistent with precautions to be implemented, Erdogan noted.

All experiences concerning nuclear safety and security must be shared so as to benefit the international community, Erdogan said.

The Fukushima incident following Chernobyl and Three Miles Island accidents reminded us about the importance of nuclear security, Erdogan also said. 27/03/2012

Timetable Unveiled for Turkey's Defense Boost

Turkey's Undersecretariat for the Defense Industry has disclosed a new five-year strategic plan, which finalizes completion dates for key projects including Turkish-made tanks, aircraft, satellites, destroyers, and helicopters, in a bid to lift the country's defense industry into a higher league.

Altay, the Turkish-made tank project, will be complete by the end of 2015, the plan says. The first Turkish destroyer will be delivered in 2016. Atak, an attack helicopter, and Anka, an unmanned aerial vehicle, will be delivered in 2013 and 2014 respectively.

More than 280 projects have been carried out since 2011, according to the new 2012-2016 strategic plan. The total value of the contracts the undersecretariat signed last year was about \$27.3 billion.

The plan envisages Turkey's defense industry entering the top 10 worldwide within five years. The total turnover target for defense and aerospace industry exports for 2016 is \$2 billion, out of an overall industry turnover of \$8 billion, according to the plan.

Turkey will establish liaison offices in the Middle East, the Far East, the U.S., the Caucasus-Central Asia, and in Europe (EU-NATO). The undersecretariat will encourage collaboration between prime contractors, sub-industries, and small and medium enterprises, with universities and research institutions improving the technological base.

The Turkish government will support the establishment of testing and certification centers that meet international standards, in order to meet non-military and non-public sector demands. A land vehicle test center, a high-speed wind tunnel, an aerial vehicle flight test field, a missile systems test field, a satellite assembly center, and an integration and testing center will be among these facilities, according to the strategic plan. 27/03/2012

Education Bill Set to Hit Floor Amid New Debate in Turkey

The university entry exam will be scrapped and that the thousands of private teaching centers that prepare students for the exam would be closed, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has said.

“Those centers will either turn themselves into high schools or will be shut down. We do not want people to spend their scarce [financial] resources on that,” Erdoğan told reporters accompanying him on a flight to Seoul on the weekend.

Erdoğan also emphasized the need to boost vocational education, pointing to European countries, where he said up to 70 percent of the students attend such schools.

“We’ll allow organized industrial zones to open vocational schools. The kids will both study and do internship. They may earn money as well,” he said.

The distance learning option in a controversial education reform bill has been designed for the girls of conservative families, Erdoğan said despite previous denials on the matter from officials.

“Particularly in the southeast, families refuse to send their daughters to school after they enter adolescence. Distance learning is for that. The [bill] would open the door for home study,”s. Officials had previously said the home study option after eight years of regular classes would be available only to limited groups like students with disabilities or prodigies.

The bill, expected to be put up for debate in Parliament tomorrow, has attracted pointed criticism on the grounds that it would undermine the schooling of girl.

Travel ban

The ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) has imposed a travel ban on its lawmakers from tomorrow until April 5 to ensure full attendance in the parliamentary debate on the education bill.

“No one will leave Ankara. Parliament will be working even during nights until the laws are passed. Despite all the opposition’s obstructions, the people are awaiting the [education bill],” senior AKP deputy Oğuz Kağan Köksal said. The legislative drive will also target the adoption of a bill on trade unions, he added.

Ahead of his visit to Seoul, which will be followed by a trip to Tehran, Erdoğan urged his lawmakers to stand firm on the bill and ensure that it is approved in his absence.

Infuriated by the bill, the main opposition Republican People’s Party (CHP) is scheduled to hold a rally at Ankara’s Tandoğan Square tomorrow.

Meanwhile, the head of Parliament’s Education Commission, Nabi Avci, has said the education bill will pave the way for the reopening of the secondary stage of foreign-owned schools like Robert College or St. Benoit. Such schools would be allowed to hold their own exams to select students, he said.

The bill calls for three, four-year tiers of mandatory education, but has been criticized for permitting the introduction of vocational schooling – especially religious education – after four years, as well as the home study option after eight years. The exclusion of preschool from the 12-year compulsory program has also been widely criticized. 26/03/2012

Turkey Prepares to Send Water to Turkish Cyprus

Turkey plans to complete a drinking-water pipeline to tackle water shortages in Turkish Cyprus by March 2014, Waterworks Minister Veysel Eroğlu has said.

The underwater pipeline may even be extended to the Middle East, to Gaza in particular, he said, referring to a never-realized “Peace Water” project dating back to the second half of the 1980s, daily Akşam reported on March 23.

The four-phase project kicked off with the groundbreaking of the Anamur Alaköprü Dam in the southern province of Mersin, which is directly across from Cyprus on the Mediterranean coast.

The Geçitköy Dam groundbreaking ceremony, the second phase of the project at the other end of the pipeline in Kyrenia, will be held March 30, the minister said. The other two phases involve the construction of land facilities and the 80-kilometer pipeline. The total pipeline will measure 107 kilometers from one dam to the other.

The pipeline will provide 75 million cubic meters of water per year to Turkish Cyprus, while the cost of the project will be 850 million Turkish Liras, the minister said.

With this project Turkish Cyprus will not have a water shortage problem until 2060, he said.

“We have plenty of water. If there is peace on the island, we can transfer enough water to the Greek side as well. Do not worry, we [will] transfer to Greek Cyprus,” he said.

“We have other [water] projects. We do not want the Middle East, Gaza to stay without water,” he said.

The idea of extending water pipelines to the water-poor Middle East was first floated in 1986 by then-Prime Minister Turgut Özal. Pre-feasibility studies envisaged water transportation from Turkey’s southern Seyhan and Ceyhan rivers to Arab countries. The idea was to build two water pipelines on land through Syria, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, even reaching the Gulf countries of Bahrain and Qatar.

In another push to realize the Peace Water project, facilities were built in the southern province of Antalya in 1998 to sell water from the Manavgat River to Israel, Jordan and Lebanon. The project, however, was not activated due to a lack of demand. 24/03/2012

Turkey to Supply Railway Equipment to Turkmenistan for North-South Project

The Ministry of Railway Transport of Turkmenistan will sign a contract with the Turkish company Net Yapı ve Ticaret Mühendislik Mimarlık Müşavirlik Limited Şirketi, the official Turkmen source said.

The contract will be signed according to the order of President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov to further develop the industry and bring into line with international standards the Gyzylgaya-Bereket-Etrek railway, which is part of the regional North-South project, which involving neighboring Iran and Kazakhstan.

This is a contract for the purchase of equipment for power supply systems, alerts, links with length of 131 km between the Buzhun and Serhetyaka stations. Under the conditions, Turkish company will be engaged in design and implementation of construction works on this site, power transmission line (110 kW) with a length of 234 km between the stations Gyzylgaya, Buzhun and Garnyyaryk, transformer stations (110/10 kW) at Buzhun and Garnyyaryk stations, as well as design and construction at the Serhetyaka station of ring depot for maintenance of locomotives and wagons.

The document instructs to begin work in March, 2012 and commission facilities with full readiness in March, 2013.

"Among the primary challenges facing the transport system of the country is increase in volumes of freight and passenger rail transportation, as well as improvement of the quality of public services", Berdimuhamedov said at a recent government meeting.

North-South project is implemented on the basis of the intergovernmental agreement signed in 2007 between Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Iran.

The new route will open the European and Asian countries way to Central Asia and the Gulf by the shortest and economically advantageous route. On the other hand, a similar opportunity will appear for transit of goods from of in South and Southeast Asia, from the shores of the Indian Ocean to the countries of Northern and Eastern Europe - through Iran, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan and Russia. 24/03/2012

Bulgaria to Discuss Short Pipeline Construction with Turkey

Bulgaria and Turkey will discuss the opportunities to construct a short pipeline connecting two countries' domestic gas networks during Bulgarian Prime Minister Boyko Borisov's visit to Ankara next week, Hurriyet Daily News reported with the reference to diplomatic sources.

According to the source, the project envisages the transportation of Azerbaijani gas to Bulgaria in emergency cases, as an alternative to Russian gas. The source added that Bulgaria has already reached a preliminary agreement with Azerbaijan to buy at least one billion cubic meters of gas annually.

It is planned that the length of the proposed pipeline will be about 80 kilometers, and it will be laid from Turkey's northwestern Thrace region to Bulgaria's southern city of Haskovo.

The source said that the talks on this issue are still at an early stage, but a memorandum of understanding could be signed during Borisov's visit if progress is achieved.

Azerbaijan and Turkey are currently considering the construction of the pipeline from the eastern border of Turkey to the country's western border - Trans Anatolian Pipeline (TANAP). It is expected that the initial capacity of a pipeline will be 16 billion cubic metres per year. Some 6

billion cubic meters of the volume will be allocated to Turkey, while the rest will be transported to Europe.

Azerbaijan and Turkey have already signed a memorandum of understanding to establish the consortium that will build TANAP for gas supply from Shah Deniz gas field to Europe through Turkey. The parties involved in the project intend to resolve all issues on this gas pipeline in 2012. They also plan to commence construction immediately to complete it by late 2017.

Azerbaijan and Turkey are going to sign an intergovernmental agreement on TANAP next week.
17/03/2012

12 Turkish Troops Killed in Kabul

Turkey suffers its worst military disaster in Afghanistan as 12 soldiers and at least two Afghans are killed when an army helicopter crashes outside Kabul.

Turkish military helicopter crashed into a house near the Afghan capital on March 16, killing 12 Turkish soldiers on board and two girls on the ground, Turkish and Afghan officials said. The mishap was by far the deadliest incident involving Turkish soldiers in Afghanistan, where they have a noncombat role.

“The cause of the accident will become clear after an inspection by expert teams,” the General Staff said in a statement on its website.

The Sikorsky helicopter, which plunged down at 10:25 a.m. local time, belonged to the Turkish Armed Forces and was serving under the Kabul regional command as part of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), it said.

In a written statement, the Turkish Foreign Ministry said Turkey’s assistance to the Afghan people would continue and would therefore carry on the memories of the martyrs forever. “The significant and selfless work of the Turkish Armed Forces in Afghanistan is always appreciated by our people and state,” it said. This statement has been interpreted that the tragic incident would not end Turkey’s contribution to the international community’s effort to provide security and rebuild the war-torn country.

Two of the dead Turkish soldiers were identified as Air Maj. Şükür Bağdatlı and Cartographer Maj. Mithat Çolak. The dead include nine commissioned officers - including four majors and a lieutenant - as well as two noncommissioned officers and a sergeant, according to military sources, who noted that four of the dead were from Ankara. Their bodies are expected to be flown to Turkey today after a ceremony at ISAF. The crash in the Hassian Khail area of Kabul’s Bagrami district came amid growing unease among NATO partner countries about the Afghan war.

ISAF said earlier that the cause of the crash was still unknown but that there had been no reports of insurgent action in the area. Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu, however, said a technical hitch appeared to have caused the crash and that the helicopter plummeted while attempting to make an emergency landing.

“The pilot made a very serious effort to escape [the residential area],” he said.

Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan said the chopper was one of two helicopters that had taken off from a location north of Kabul and added that five or six people were also killed on the ground. Defense Minister İsmet Yılmaz said the outcome of the investigation would be revealed to the public.

President Abdullah Gül phoned Chief of General Staff Gen. Necdet Özel to extend his condolences.

“Turkey will continue to support the brotherly Afghan people,” Gül said separately in a written message.

Erdoğan and main opposition leader Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, meanwhile, also issued messages of condolences.

The helicopter clipped one house and then crashed into another, said Sayed Qayum, an Afghan resident who witnessed the aircraft go down. The crash blew several large holes in the three-story brick house that was hit. Parts of the building were scorched black by fire, and wreckage of the helicopter was scattered outside.

The Afghan Interior Ministry said the two people who were confirmed killed on the ground were young girls while a woman and another child were wounded, the Associated Press reported.

The crash was the deadliest in Afghanistan for NATO forces since August, when 30 American troops died when a Chinook helicopter was apparently shot down in Wardak province in the center of the country.

Turkey’s mission in Afghanistan is limited to patrols and its soldiers do not take part in combat operations. It has more than 1,800 soldiers serving in the country, most of them around the capital. Unlike other NATO countries, public opinion in Turkey has been less critical about having troops in Afghanistan due to their non-combat role. Likewise, there is much less resentment among Afghans over the Turkish presence due to the countries’ shared religion and the historical links between them.

In 2009, two Turkish soldiers, one of them a colonel, were killed in a traffic accident in northern Afghanistan. 17/03/2012