
Other News: Region

Turkish pipeline ablaze after blast

press tv - 3/7/2010

Iraqi workers repair a damaged pipeline in 2004.

An explosion has blown up a section of a pipeline carrying oil from Iraq to southern Turkey and set it on fire.

The blast occurred on Saturday near the town of Midyat in the southeastern province of Mardin, but the cause is still unknown, Turkey's Anatolia news agency reported.

Firefighters have arrived on the scene, but the fire is still raging, according to the latest reports.

The 970-kilometer (600-mile) twin conduit pipeline begins in Iraq's northern oil hub of Kirkuk and ends in the port of Ceyhan on Turkey's Mediterranean coast, from where the crude is shipped to world markets by tanker.

Last year, the pipeline carried 167.6 million barrels of oil, according to Turkish government statistics.

Over the past few years, the pipeline has been targeted several times by the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), which has been waging campaign for self-rule in Turkey's mainly Kurdish southeast for 26 years.

The PKK militants launch their attacks from Iraq's Qandil Mountains in the areas under the control of Kurdistan Regional Government President Massoud Barzani. Israel and Israeli firms are also operating in the Qandil mountain range.

U.S. CONSIDERS AZERBAIJAN AGGRESSOR

/JULY 5/news.am/

The U.S. has once again made it clear that the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict by means of war is unacceptable, Manvel Sargsyan, an expert for the Armenian Center for National and International Studies (ACNIS), told NEWS.am. According to him, Hillary Clinton's visit pursued an aim to show that the U.S. stance remains unchanged.

As to tougher actions against Azerbaijan as an aggressor, Sargsyan noted that Washington is not seeking an asymmetric approach. "It is a state position. The EU makes strongly worded statements, calling our territories 'occupied' and offers certain programs to get solution, whereas the U.S. does not make precise proposals, insisting that countries themselves reach an agreement. The expert also noted that Section 907 of the Freedom Support Act still exists. According to him, the fact that the bill was adopted by the U.S. Congress and was in effect for a rather long period proves a certain attitude of the U.S.

"Though it is waived, no one canceled it, and the Congress can put it into force any time," he concluded.

Section 907 of the Freedom Support Act was approved by the House Committee on Foreign Affairs on August 11, 1992.

Under the document, the U.S. restricted assistance to Azerbaijan "until the President determines, and so reports to the Congress, that the Government of Azerbaijan is taking demonstrable steps to cease all blockades and other offensive uses of force against Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh."

On October 24, 2001 the U.S. Senate adopted a waiver of Section 907.

AZERBAIJAN HURT, HUMILIATED AND BETRAYED, EXPERT SAYS

/JULY 6/news.am/

The recent act of sabotage by Azerbaijan, killing 4 Armenian soldiers is a kind of message not to the Armenian side but Washington and Ankara, said the director of the Armenian Center for National and International Studies (ACNIS), Richard Giragosian speaking at round-table discussions today.

According to him, Azerbaijan did everything to destabilize the situation in the region on the eve of Hillary Clinton's visit to show Washington that it is hurt. The expert noted that Baku has realized that acts of sabotage is the best way to undermine Armenian-Turkish reconciliation process, as they show Ankara Azerbaijan's concerns over ongoing processes.

"Baku is aggrieved at OSCE Minsk Group and wants to shift talks on Karabakh to another format. Thus, Azerbaijan is angry with everyone: Ankara, as feels betrayed, Washington - as considers it is underestimated by the White House," the expert stated.

Richard Giragosian considers that Azerbaijan should be informed of the fact that sabotage and war will not promote its image in the eyes of world community. According to him, the Russian-Georgian August war has demonstrated that military approach is not the best solution to the conflicts.

TURKISH FOREIGN OFFICE ORDERS REOPENING OF BORDER?

/JULY 6/news.am/

The Turkish Foreign Office ordered Kars Governor Ahmet Kara to provide information on the state of Armenian-Turkish border, land communication between the two countries as well as on how much time the infrastructure renovation may take.

Haberler reports the Governor admitted the fact that three relevant documents are to be sent to the Turkish Foreign Office within a month. Also, Ankara has to try to placate Azerbaijan, as the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict has not yet been resolved. Kara reported that specialists went to the Akyaka. If the two sides reach an agreement, the infrastructure will be restored within a month. According to him, in contrast to Armenia, the Turkish communication infrastructure is in an excellent state. Specialists will try to calculate the expenses on a checkpoint at the Armenian-Turkish border and set specific terms, he said.

NEW STAGE OF FORCED ISLAMIZATION OF ARMENIANS UNDERWAY IN TURKEY: EXPERT

/JULY 6/Panorama/

A new stage of forced Islamization of Armenians has started in Turkey and it is done in two ways, though, in both cases the immigrants are obliged to take Islam, expert of Turkish studies Ruben Melkonyan told reporters Tuesday.

He noted mixed marriages as the first option: "Turkish media often publish materials, like: "The Armenian bride adopts Muslim", "Armine becomes Nejmie". The second case regards the Armenians who have settled there and want to make business and for integrating into and being accepted by the Turkish society, they undergo Islamization.

U.S., RUSSIA, DO NOT MEET AZERBAIJAN'S EXPECTATIONS ON KARABAKH, SAYS ANALYST

/JULY 7/hetq.am/

The Armenian Center for National and International Studies (ACNIS) held two presentations on Tuesday and Wednesday, July 6 and 7, providing an assessment of the Azerbaijani armed forces and an update on current developments in Nagorno Karabagh.

The opening session of these two related presentations offered an objective analysis of the current state of the Azerbaijani military and an assessment of the threat of war in the region, with ACNIS Director Richard Giragosian presenting a new report on the Azerbaijani armed forces.

The July 6 presentation included a detailed report on various aspects of the Azerbaijani armed forces, ranging from Azerbaijan's combat capabilities to the deeper problems of corruption within the Azerbaijani ministry of defense.

The second session, held on July 7, was opened by ACNIS Administrative Director Karapet Kalenchian and focused on recent developments related to the Nagorno Karabagh conflict. Speaking to over sixty participants,

including the Brazilian and Indian ambassadors, as well as officials from the Council of Europe, the European Union and the OSCE, ACNIS Senior Analyst Manvel Sargsian gave the first presentation. Sargsian explained that "the essential thing in the normalization process of the Karabagh conflict were US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's statements made in Yerevan, and specifically her point that it is not the US who can resolve this conflict." According to the analyst, "Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin also recently made a similar declaration," which he said "allows us to conclude that outside powers do not justify Azerbaijan's expectations toward the resolution of this matter." The second speaker, ACNIS Director Richard Giragosian, presented an updated analysis of recent developments. Each of the presentations was followed by a series of questions and answers, and featured a lively exchange with the audience.

TURKEY DOES NOT WANT TO KICK THE BALL

/JULY 8/news.am/

There will be no specific movement in the Armenian-Turkish reconciliation process by this September, Ruben Safrastyan, the Director of the Institute of Oriental Studies, told journalists on Thursday. According to him, Turkey's ruling elite is not interested in the early normalization of diplomatic relations with Armenia.

"The recent visit of Secretary Clinton to the South Caucasus indirectly proves that U.S. is discontent with Turkey's policy on Armenia. The phrase 'ball is in Turkey's court' voiced by Clinton should be considered as such," said Safrastayan, adding that Turkey in its turn tries to buy time. "Turkey carries out Genocide denial policy and hopes that it will once again manage to agree with U.S. and avoid a conflict," he noted.

"U.S. is satisfied with the position of the Armenian authorities who are ready to constructive talks based on the previous arrangements and is discontent with Turkey's actions. Secretary Clinton's visit to the Genocide memorial is a clear message to Turks, saying U.S. can review the attitude toward the Armenian Genocide," Safrastyan stated.

CLINTON'S REGIONAL VISIT WAS A YELLOW CARD FOR TURKEY

/JULY 9/PanARMENIAN.Net/

U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's regional visit was a yellow card for Turkey, according to Hayk Babukhanyan, chairman of Constitutional Right Union.

"Turkey understood that it can't kill two birds with one stone, aspiring both after leadership in the Islamic world and EU membership," he told journalists in Yerevan.

"Clinton's visit to the Armenian Genocide Memorial was a clear message to Ankara," Babukhanyan said.

Asked about possibility of resumption of hostilities in Karabakh, he said unexpected war can't be ruled out but is unlikely.

"The conflict will remain frozen, as the only way is war, which is not beneficial either to Azerbaijan or international actors," he added. Babukhanyan predicted change of power in Turkey and Georgia, after what transit of energy resources and railways will be put into operation throughout the region.

TURKISH BUSINESSMEN FEAR AZERBAIJANI BOYCOTT

/JULY 9/news.am/

Armenian and Turkish intellectuals and businessmen participated in the "Turkey-Armenia Policy Discussions" event held in Istanbul. The list of participants also included media representatives and former civil servants from Armenia.

The participants noted that economic relations is a key to the improvement of Armenian-Turkish political and social ties, Hurriyet Daily News & Economic Review reported.

However, Armenian intellectuals suppose that Turkey has to make some steps to improve relations. "If we do not face our histories and create common values, we will not be able to create a common future between the Armenian and Turkish societies," said the former Armenian Ambassador to Syria Davit Hovhannisyan.

In his turn Noyan Soyak, the Turkey representative of the Armenian Industrial Businessmen's Association stressed that the relations between the countries should be open, adding that many businessmen use "raw materials coming indirectly from Armenia, as they fear mentioning the fact openly because they risk an Azerbaijani boycott."

The Armenian participants also planned to visit Turkish parliamentarians on Friday, the source says.

Mass arrests have started in Tartar

/JULY 9/Azadliq, Azerbaijan/

The law-enforcement agencies have decided to punish local people for conflicting with people from Sotlanli

Mass arrests have started in [Azerbaijan's] Tartar District following clashes between internally displaced persons from the village of Sotlanli in the [Armenian-controlled part of the Azerbaijani district of] Agdam and local people. Local people have told Azadliq about the incident.

According to the people, the law-enforcement agencies intend to punish local people whereas people from the village of Sotlanli are the ones who are to blame for the clashes. It is planned to arrest even those locals who were injured during the clashes and are currently receiving medical treatment at hospitals. One of them, Rovsan Pasayev, was arrested yesterday for two months. People say that Rovsan Pasayev was actively involved in the battles for [Azerbaijani breakaway region of] Nagornyy Karabakh. He was severely beaten and received serious injuries in a clash with people from Sotlanli. He is a victim in this case. However, he was the first to be arrested by the law-enforcement agencies. According to the local people of Tartar, the wave of arrests will continue: "Because the district leadership protects the people from Sotlanli."

Post-Soviet bloc plans to establish joint military holdings

/JULY 2/ RIA Novosti/

ZHUKOVSKY - The Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) countries plan to develop a system of interstate holding companies for the production of military equipment, the CSTO Deputy Secretary General said.

"The CSTO plans to follow a common military-technical policy... to establish a system of interstate holding companies for the production of military products," Vladimir Semerikov.

He said an agreement on establishing the intergovernmental corporation Razvitiye (Development) was concluded on Thursday.

Head of Federal Service on Military and Technical Cooperation Vladimir Drozhkov said the integration of the military enterprises may include establishing joint enterprises, which would attract workers and resources.

Erdogan and Turkish army have agreed on closing Dink's case

/JULY 9/Tert.am/

Turkish authorities, part of the army in favor of the status quo and the judiciary want to conceal those responsible for the assassination of Hrant Dink, former chief editor of an Istanbul-based bilingual daily Agos, reports local Turkish news agency ANF, citing the Dink family's lawyers Fethiye Cetin and Gurai Dag.

Mentioning that the revelation of those responsible for the killing of Hrant Dink is hampered both by political authorities and judicial system, Cetin said that the case has been sent to the European Court of Human Rights, and they are waiting now for an answer. Dag in turn said that the court wants to close down the case as soon as possible.

`What they want is to sentence the three suspects and in that way close down the case without disclosure of the main [people] responsible.' Further ANF mentions that the next court hearing on Dink's case will take place on July 12.

Three and a half year has passed now since the killing of Dink, but no serious progress has been made so far.

GEORGIA PROMISES TO RETAIN CONTROL OVER GAS CONDUIT TO ARMENIA

/JULY 12/EurasiaNet/

Georgia's Minister of Economic Development today repeated earlier assurances that Tbilisi does not plan to sell off the trunk pipeline that feeds natural gas from Russia to Armenia via Georgian territory. The state may offload only a minority share -- 15 percent tops -- but would retain the controlling stake in the North-South pipeline, Economic Development Minister Vera Kobalia said.

The removal of the pipeline from Georgia's list of strategic property last week sparked concerns both in Georgia and Armenia about the line's future. Critics at home fear that Russia's Gazprom, which controls Armenia's domestic gas infrastructure, may purchase the pipeline -- a sale that would give the Kremlin a tool to pressure Tbilisi and expand its regional clout, they fear. Some commentators in Armenia, which receives most of its gas supply via the Georgian pipeline, have raised concerns about Azerbaijan taking a piece of the action.

Georgian government officials have promised not to sell the pipeline to Russia, but the opposition has requested the government to seal that promise in writing. Kobalia did not name potential buyers.

Security of strategic Turkish websites on Israel's hands

/JULY 8/World Bulletin/News Desk/

Security of many strategic Turkish websites are on Israel's hands, a report said on Monday.

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Website of Turkish aid group or IHH was blocked during and after the deadly Israel attack on Gaza aid ship that 9 activists were brutally killed on May 31.

"The Internet security company Check Point, which blocked the IHH website after the Israeli attack to the Mavi Marmara Ship, is updated from Tel Aviv," Turkish daily Star reported.

According to the report, the company also provides Internet security services for many strategic bodies in Turkey, especially for the Turkish Army and some banks.

The Israeli company that based in Tel Aviv apparently retains the Network and Information Security Systems of many critical institutions in Turkey. Companies all over the world that uses Check Point's security products, as well as institutional and individual Internet users denied entry to "ihh.org" address after the Israeli attack to Mavi Marmara. The company put the IHH site the category of "hate speech" during the raid.

The characteristic of the Check Point gadget is to take secure website information from Israel by updating network and information.

The state-own and public institutions that use the Check Point productions in Turkey are:

The Central Bank, The Agricultural Bank, Vakifbank, Halkbank, Eximbank, Turkish Land Forces Command and all of its units, presidency, Prime Ministry, The National Education Ministry, Health and Justice Ministries, Student Selection and Placement Center, University of Kocaeli.

The United States administration blocked Check Point's attempts to buy American Snorts that develops security production because of national security in 2006.

The gadget and its system, which are out of the Turkey's control, establish a connection with a password to the center in Israel and then it carries out updating. This only center provides all the routings.

<http://www.worldbulletin.net/>

Internet group sues Turkey over Google restrictions

29/06/2010

ANKARA, Turkey -- A Turkish internet rights protection group filed a lawsuit against the state Monday (June 28th) over restricted access to Google services. In 2008, Turkey banned access to Google's video sharing platform YouTube due to materials deemed offensive to Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, the founder of the Turkish Republic. Insulting Ataturk is a crime in Turkey. According to the Internet Technologies Association, the YouTube ban caused illegal restrictions on other Google services, such as Google Maps and Google Analytics. "Millions of internet users and thousands of companies who use Google services have been harmed," said the association. Last year, the same organisation filed a lawsuit against Turkey at the European Court of Human Rights over the YouTube ban. (Reuters - 28/06/10)

http://www.setimes.com/cocoon/setimes/xhtml/en_GB/newsbriefs/setimes/newsbriefs/2010/06/29/nb-01

Turkey inches forward in EU bid

Wednesday, 30 June 2010 11:34 UK

By Jonathan Head

BBC News, Istanbul EU concerns about Turkey have made its accession progress slow

Turkey is due to open a new chapter in its negotiations to join the EU, but a long-running dispute over Cyprus means other chapters are blocked. Candidate countries have to open and then close 35 chapters of talks bringing their own laws and institutions in line with the EU's.

The opening of Turkey's 13th chapter - on food and veterinary safety - may turn out to be the last.

Cyprus joined the EU in 2004, but Turkey backs its breakaway north.

The northern part of the island is still governed by an unrecognized administration.

The Greek-Cypriot government vetoed a plan to allow the Turkish part to trade with EU member states. Turkey retaliated by blocking access to its ports for Cypriot ships, which led the EU to freeze eight negotiating chapters.

Settlement needed

Together with France, Germany and Austria, Cyprus is blocking all but three of the remaining chapters and Turkish officials say they expect even those three will also be blocked.

That means Turkey's troubled candidacy cannot move forward unless there is a settlement of the Cyprus conflict and that prospect still looks remote. Croatia started its EU negotiations at the same time as Turkey. It expects to close all 35 chapters by the end of this year and become a full member in 2012.

Turkish officials insist EU membership is still their primary foreign policy goal, but they complain that they face far more obstacles than other countries.

Opinion polls here suggest the Turkish public is increasingly pessimistic about their country's chances of being accepted by the EU.

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/world/europe/10458435.stm>

Turkey Asks US to Quickly Deliver Attack Helicopters

Thursday, July 1st, 2010 - by Asbarez

ANKARA (AP) - The Turkish defense minister has asked the United States to speed up the delivery of new attack helicopters to fight the Kurdistan Workers' Party in Turkey's mountainous southeast.

Vecdi Gonul said Wednesday that Turkey asked the U.S. to deliver the Super Cobra helicopters this year, a year ahead of schedule. The Kurds have dramatically escalated their attacks this month. Nineteen soldiers and 21 Kurds died in clashes last week. Gonul says Turkey asked for several attack helicopter gunships but U.S. Congress only approved two. Today's Zaman newspaper said Turkey had asked for nine. Human rights groups frequently express concern that Turkish civilians are caught in the middle of the conflict, sparked by ongoing efforts by the Turkish government to force the country's 20 million impoverished and oppressed Kurds into submission.

Pak-Iran-Turkey railway line to connect Pakistan with Europe

Islamabad, July 1, IRNA--Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Thursday said that Pakistan-Iran-Turkey Railway line would connect Pakistan with Europe. Qureshi told reporters in the city of Multan that the railway line is an important project, which will promote trade activities in the region. The President of Turkey is expected to visit Pakistan soon to discuss the project, he said, and expressed the hope that talks on this project would move ahead. He said the project promises maximum benefits for all stakeholders.

He said that issues relating to dissimilarities in gauge of Pakistan and Iran railway line and purchase of new locomotives and coaches are needed to be addressed.

Qureshi said Pakistan want huge investment to upgrade its railways infrastructure.

To a question he said Pakistan and Afghanistan will soon finalize a new transit trade agreement, which will allow the landlocked neighbouring country to import through Pakistan. The new agreement will replace the 1960s similar transit agreement.

He hoped that the new Afghan Transit Trade Agreement would be finalized within next 30 to 45 days and experts from both countries will meet in Islamabad to finalize the deal.

Turks among top sources of new EU citizens

/JULY 7/Hürriyet Daily News/

Turks were among the top nationalities to acquire citizenship in the European Union in 2008, according to a survey by Eurostat, the EU's statistical office.

After Moroccans, Turks were the second largest nationality to acquire EU citizenship during the year, Eurostat said in its statement released Tuesday.

The largest groups to acquire citizenship of an EU member state in 2008 were citizens of Morocco at 64,000, Turkey at 50,000, Ecuador at 27,000, Algeria at 23,000 and Iraq at 20,000.

France granted 45 percent of all the EU citizenships acquired by Moroccans, Germany 49 percent of those acquired by Turks, Spain 93 percent of those acquired by Ecuadorians, France 88 percent of those acquired by Algerians and the United Kingdom 44 percent of those acquired by Iraqis.

Citizenship to 696,000 people

Some 696,000 people acquired citizenship in one of the 27 EU member states in 2008, down from 707,000 in 2007. The new citizens in 2008 came mainly from Africa with 29 percent of the total number of citizenships acquired. Non-EU Europe comprised 22 percent of the citizenships acquired, Asia contributed 19 percent and North and South America totaled 17 percent.

Citizens of one of the 27 EU member states who acquired citizenship in another member state accounted for 8 percent of the total.

The highest number of citizenships granted in 2008 was by France at 137,000 persons, the U.K. at 129,000 and Germany at 94,000, which together accounted for over 50 percent of all citizenships granted by the EU member states.

The highest number of citizenships per resident foreigner was granted by Sweden and Portugal. When compared with the population of each member state, the highest rates of citizenship granted were recorded in Sweden with 3.3 citizenships granted per 1,000 inhabitants, and Luxembourg with 2.5. The EU average was 1.4 citizenships granted per 1,000 inhabitants.

Turkish key constitutional reforms annulled by court

/JULY 7/bbc.co.uk/

The court said the remaining reforms would go to a referendum Turkey's Constitutional Court has annulled key parts of a package of government-backed constitutional reforms, reports say.

The court rejected an opposition appeal to scrap all of the measures, and said the remaining elements would be put to a referendum as planned.

The court annulled changes which would curb the power of the judiciary and the army, AFP news agency said.

The ruling AKP says the reforms are necessary if Turkey is to join the EU. But the nationalist opposition and senior judges are against measures they say would threaten the independence of the courts.

There is a gulf of mistrust between the AKP and the two secular opposition parties, the CHP and MHP, says the BBC's Jonathan Head in Istanbul.

The CHP believes the AKP has a hidden agenda to weaken the secular system and promote Islamic values.

The AKP says it is challenging an authoritarian system, which restricts individual rights and compromises Turkey's candidacy for the European Union.

Each side believes its vision for a more democratic Turkey is threatened by the other side.

Turkey's highest courts - which see themselves as guardians of the secular values that were at the core of the political system established by Turkey's founding father, Mustafa Kemal Ataturk - have repeatedly clashed with the AKP over the proposed reforms.

The package of reforms was passed by parliament after a marathon session in May, but not by the two-thirds majority which would have avoided the issue going to a referendum.

The current constitution dates back to 1982, and was drafted after a military coup.

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/world/europe/10547710.stm>

EU imposes flight ban on Iran Air over safety

/JULY 7/Tert.am/

Most of Iran Air's jets will be banned from flying to the EU because of safety concerns, the European Commission says. The ban affects Airbus A320, Boeing 727 and 747 jets - two-thirds of Iran Air's fleet.

The Commission said the ban was on safety grounds, and was not related to sanctions imposed on Iran because of its nuclear programme, reports BBC News.

Iran has denied a claim that its planes are being prevented from refuelling at some foreign airports. Earlier an Iranian aviation official had accused the UK, Germany and the United Arab Emirates of refusing to supply fuel for Iranian airliners.

But a foreign ministry spokesman said on Tuesday that "no such limitation has been imposed." And the UK, Germany and UAE all denied the claim.

Last week the US approved new sanctions on Iran over its nuclear programme. Tehran says its nuclear industry is for peaceful purposes, but Western powers fear it is trying to develop a bomb.

A US ban on spare parts for Iranian jets has hit Iran Air's maintenance operation, the Associated Press news agency reports. On its updated blacklist of airlines banned from the EU the Commission now includes Blue Wing Airlines from Surinam.

Two Indonesian airlines - Metro Batavia and Indonesia Air Asia - were removed from the list.

Iran plans to launch new satellite in August

/JULY 7/RIA Novosti/

The Iranian telecommunications minister announced plans to launch a new domestically-developed satellite into orbit at the end of August, the Mehr news agency said Wednesday.

"The Rasad 1 satellite will be launched into space by an Iranian carrier rocket during the government week," Reza Taghipour, who is also the administrator of the Iranian Space Agency, was quoted as saying.

The so-called government week, which marks the achievements of the Iranian Cabinet, is celebrated at the end of August.

Iran has made significant progress in developing its space industry since the launch of its first commercial satellite, Sina-1, into orbit on board a Russian carrier rocket.

Iran's first research satellite, Omid (Hope), designed for gathering information and testing equipment, was orbited in February 2009 and successfully completed its mission on April 25 the same year.

Since launching the Omid, Tehran has unveiled three new satellites (Tolou, Mesbah II and Navid) and one carrier rocket.

Western powers suspect Iran of using its space program to develop its ballistic missile capabilities.

Iran successfully launched last year an upgraded Shahab-3 ballistic missile as part of a Navy exercise, dubbed Great Prophet 3, in the Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz.

With a reported range of 2,000 kilometers and armed with a 1-ton conventional warhead, the Shahab-3 puts Israel, Turkey, the Arabian peninsula, Afghanistan and Pakistan within striking distance.

Some Western and Russian sources claim that Iran may be currently running a program, dubbed Project Koussar, to develop a ballistic missile with a range of 4,000-5,000 km (2,500-3,300 miles).

Georgia to teach schoolchildren new anti-Russian textbook

/JULY 7/RIA Novosti/

MOSCOW - Georgian schoolchildren will receive a new history schoolbook on 200 years of Russian occupation by the beginning of the new school year, the Russian Vremya Novostei daily reported on Wednesday.

In April 2010, Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili created a special commission to investigate debatable aspects of Russian-Georgian historic relations. The commission came up with the idea to publish an "occupation textbook."

The textbook was prepared by the Georgian Foundation for Georgian Studies, Humanities and Social Sciences and will be introduced under a reform to the country's educational system, a Georgian newspaper reported.

Long-standing tensions between Russia and the former Soviet republic of Georgia turned violent during a five-day war in August 2008, when Tbilisi attacked South Ossetia, where most residents are Russian passport holders, in an attempt to bring it back under central control.

After Russia recognized the independence of South Ossetia and other former Georgian republic, Abkhazia, Tbilisi declared the two republics "occupied territories" and severed diplomatic ties with Russia.

However, Saakashvili recently said the country is ready to develop ties with a "modernized Russia."

"We have no interest in confrontation with Russia. We are ready for dialog with them, including the [current] Russian leadership. We recognize them as partners in talks," the Georgian president said in late June.

Professional historians have already split over the "occupation schoolbook" issue. A Georgian historian, Professor Simon Maskharashvili, said the new textbook is important to "debunk the ugly myth that Russia is our friend."

If Russia "returns territories" and there is no threat of new armed confrontation, Georgia should renounce the textbook, he said.

On the other hand, Manana Nikolaishvili, head of the Georgian League of

Education, noticed that Georgia in the past had already been subjected to Persian, Turkish and Mongolian occupation. If following historic truth, a manual on each of these occupations should be written, not only on recent events, she added.

"The Georgian authorities have no common position on [relations with] Russia: one time they say they want dialogue with Russia, and then they introduce [Russian] occupation studies at schools," another Georgian historian, Zurab Bragvadze, said adding that the move would certainly have a negative impact on bilateral relations.

Russian State Duma Deputy Chairman of the Committee on Information Policy Vladimir Medinsky in an interview to Komsomolskaya Pravda daily slammed the current Georgian history textbooks, emphasizing that their authors misrepresent Russian-Georgian history and distort objective historic facts in favor of the political environment.

Medinsky said that first-grade textbooks cite a state act on Georgia's independence from the Soviet Union on April 9, 1991. The text states that "...in February-March 1921, Soviet Russia occupied the Georgian state through armed aggression and then followed by annexing it."

"Where is the logic? Do they really want to raise a generation that will consider Russia a monster?" Bragvadze queried. "Years later, today's Georgian schoolchildren will have to develop relations with Russia," he noted.

PACE fail to reach consensus over Russia-Georgia dossier
/JULY 2/ RIA Novosti/

The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe has not yet reached a consensus on the Russian-Georgian dossier, the Assembly's President Mevlut Cavusoglu said on Friday.

The dossier was one of the main issues on the agenda at the recently-held PACE summer session.

"The chairman of the [PACE] monitoring commission is currently working on the Russian-Georgian issue," Cavusoglu said.

PACE has discussed reports on the consequences of the August 2008 Russian-Georgian war at least five times since October 2008, when the assembly asked Russia to reverse its recognition of the former Georgian republics of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, but did not support radical proposals to deprive Russia of the right to vote.

Russia recognized the independence of the two republics following the five-day war in August 2008, which started when Georgia attacked South Ossetia in an attempt to bring it back under central control.

Both Russia and Georgia are being monitored by PACE to ensure their compliance with commitments under the French-brokered ceasefire agreements.

Clinton foretells Georgia's golden age of prosperity

/JULY 5/RIA Novosti/

TBILISI - Georgia has reached significant progress in developing democracy over the last twenty years and the country could see a new golden age of prosperity, democracy and progress soon, U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said on Monday.

Clinton arrived in Tbilisi on Monday during her trip to Eastern Europe which started on July 1.

"The United States supports the Georgian people, we support Georgian democracy and we are going to do everything we can to further those values," she said.

A golden era could start for Georgia soon, Clinton said at a meeting with Georgian women and urged them to participate in forging this time of "democracy, prosperity and progress."

She emphasized that strengthening ties with Europe and NATO is vital for Georgia.

Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili said Georgia's independence is a U.S. achievement.

"We have very close partner relations. We feel [U.S.] President [Barack] Obama and Secretary of State Clinton's constant wonderful support. U.S. support was very important for Georgia's independence. They assisted us with the development of democratic processes," he said at a joint briefing with Clinton.

This is especially correct taking into account the critical situation, which broke out during the August attack of 2008 when president Obama supported Georgia's sovereignty," Saakashvili said.

"Georgia is an optimistic-minded country and in spite of occupation and constant dangers we see economic growth...We are continuing integration into Western European space and we will never wander off the path of democratic and social transformation," the Georgian president said.

BP committed to Azerbaijan

/JULY 7/UPI/

BAKU, Azerbaijan - British energy company BP is committed to exploring the vast natural resources available in Azerbaijan, state oil executives said. Embattled BP chief Tony Hayward arrived in Azerbaijan this week to discuss operations in the energy-rich country.

Hayward during his visit met with the top executives at the State Oil Co. of Azerbaijan Republic. Rovnag Abdullayev, the head of the state-owned SOCAR, said Hayward expressed his commitment to work in his country, the Trend news agency reports.

Hayward, he said, "noted that the company remains committed" to energy projects in the country "and will do everything for their further development."

BP is active in the development of the giant Azeri-Chirag-Guneshli oil complex in the Caspian Sea and the Shah Deniz gas field. It also serves as the operator of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline, one of the longest in the world.

WILL GEORGIA SELL ALSO ITS NAVIGATION SYSTEM?

Tert.am

14:24 13.07.10

Georgian parliament has removed air traffic and air control measures off the list of those facilities that are not subject to privatization, reports local Georgian newspaper Rezonansi, adding that the corresponding bill may this week be adopted by the parliament.

Levan Vepkhvadza, the Deputy Chairperson of the Georgian parliament and opposition representative, told the newspaper that Russia will pay ten times more for the Georgian navigation system to have a direct communication with Armenia.

The opposition thinks that Russia will buy also the gas pipeline that carries the Russian gas to Armenia via Georgia.

Earlier Georgia announced about its intention to sell the gas pipeline that carries Russian gas to Armenia. This has roused discontent among Armenians who are fearful that an Azerbaijani company might buy it and use as leverage to exert political concessions from Armenia.

Reversely, according to local Russian daily Vzgliad Georgian Minister of Economy and Sustainable Development Veronica Kobalia had said earlier that Georgia does not intend to sell all the shares of that gas pipeline to Russia but only 10-15 per cent of the shares.

Interestingly, Kobalia also mentioned that the deal might be made only after 2-3 years time.

CINEMATOGRAPHY MAY END ARMENIA-TURKEY CONFLICT, SAYS TURKISH FILM-DIRECTOR

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The Armenia-Turkey conflict is based on fear, German film-director of Turkish descent Fatih Akin told a press conference today in Yerevan.

"I have made that clear [for myself]. The point is that the fear that comes forth while casting a look at the truth must be surmounted.

Films, music, literature can take by your hand and lead you in dark rooms," said he.

Akin is sure that films can be important tools in the Armenia-Turkey conflict.

"Cinematography has such power that is needed to overcome that fear," noted Akin, adding he hopes that time would come soon.

Saying that that fear has destroyed several souls in Turkey, Akin went on telling journalists that his parents were born in Turkey.

"I do not feel like making a tragedy out of what problems did I face due to my Turkish identity," said he, highlighting the fact that all his films except Soul Kitchen touch upon those topics.

Further he said he looked at Turkey as an outsider.

"I have tried to understand Turkey. By shooting Crossing the Bridge I thought I understood [the essence of Turkey], but life shows that I have not understood it completely."

ERDOGAN KEEPS DEMANDING APOLOGY FROM ISRAEL

PanARMENIAN.Net
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Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan reiterated Turkey's expectations from Israel for the May 31 raid on Gaza-bound aid flotilla in which eight Turks and an American of Turkish origin were killed, the Anatolian Agency reported.

"We have three expectations from Israel. We demand an apology, compensation for the families of victims and an end to Gaza blockade," Erdogan told a joint press conference in Serbia.

"We will be a close follower of our expectations until the end," Erdogan said.

Erdogan also accused U.S. administration of standing aloof from the death of a 19-year-old American citizen, Furkan Dogan.

"It is meaningful that the U.S. administration is not interested in death of American citizen Furkan Dogan just because he is of Turkish origin. We expect U.S. administration to follow it," he said. "The U.S. administration remains silent on the issue."

Upon a question on terrorism, Erdogan said, "I'd like to reiterate my call to EU member countries. Terrorism is not a problem of only Turkey. Terrorism is a trouble for humanity."