

TUSIAD Selected News on Turkey

Washington

March 2011

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Gül Emphasizes Democratic Transition in Egypt Talks

Turkey's President Abdullah Gul stated after meeting Egypt's military rulers on Thursday he was convinced the army was serious about piloting a democratic transition following the uprising that toppled Hosni Mubarak. "I have closely observed that Marshal Tantawi and his friends have seen the expectations and demands of the Egyptian people and youth and they say they will do what is needed in a short period of time," Gul said after meeting Mohammed Hussein Tantawi, head of the military council that took charge in Egypt. "We believe that this process of transition should end in a way to satisfy all the expectations of Egyptian people. Egypt should switch to a democratic, parliamentary and constitutional system and Egypt should become the strongest state in the region and its people the happiest people, after the process is over."

Gul arrived in Cairo as Egypt's Prime Minister Ahmed Shafiq resigned and a former transport minister was picked to appoint a new government after pro-democracy activists demanded a purge of Mubarak's old guard from the cabinet. Shafiq was appointed prime minister by Mubarak in his final days in office before he was ousted on February 11 after an 18-day popular uprising which shook the Middle East. There have since been protests and political pressure for Shafiq to step down.

Non-Arab Turkey, a stable and vibrant economy, is often held up in the West as an example of how democracy can flourish in the Muslim world. Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan's AK Party, widely expected to win a third term in power at elections in June, has moved from its Islamist roots into an electable mainstream party, operating within a secular constitution.

Gul also said Islamic countries needed deep-rooted reforms. "In order for a country to be strong it is not enough to have a strong army. You need a strong political system supported by the people and participatory democracy and a strong economy," he told a news conference at the Turkish embassy in Cairo. Gul, who was accompanied by Turkey's Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu, held talks with leaders from a wide spectrum of Egyptian political groups, including Mohammed Badie, leader of the Muslim Brotherhood, Egypt's best organized political force. Among other leaders he was expected to meet were political reform campaigner Mohamed ElBaradei and Arab League Secretary General Amr Moussa, who has yet to make a formal decision whether he will run for the Egyptian presidency.

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Gul said the people he met told him that Turkey was a "great source of inspiration" for its political and economic reforms, and that Turkey could share its experience with Egyptians. In Turkey, the military establishment has ousted four governments since 1960, and has acted as a final arbiter of power in a parliamentary system that has prevailed since the 1950s. Reforms aimed at winning European Union membership have curbed the generals' power in recent years, and Turkey has become a bigger player in the Middle East, emboldened by its booming economy and a more Islamic identity under Erdogan's AK Party. /Sabah/

Turkey Warns NATO Action in Libya could be Counterproductive

A possible NATO operation in Libya could be counterproductive as it could undermine the Libyan people's support for a revolt against the North African country's long-time leader, Muammar Gaddafi, a senior Turkish official has said. "We need to be extra cautious on this," Selim Yenel, deputy undersecretary of the Foreign Ministry, told a panel discussion in Washington on Wednesday. "The people of Egypt and Tunisia can take pride in the fact that the change in their countries was thanks to them. Any outside intervention in Libya, on the other hand, could prevent the Libyan people from having the same pride," Yenel was quoted as saying by Anatolia news agency.

Yenel's remarks came after Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu made clear that Turkey was opposed to foreign military action in Libya, where Gaddafi's brutal response to the revolt against his rule have led to fears of bloodshed and a humanitarian crisis. The U.S. has repositioned its warships closer to Libya and said no option was off table. Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan had earlier stated that a NATO operation in Libya would be "nonsense" because Libya is not a threat to any NATO country. Davutoğlu said Turkey was opposed to outside military action because no Libyan group is in favor of such an intervention. But critics say dismissal beforehand of any foreign military intervention in Libya could be risky because it is not clear yet how the situation will evolve and whether it will turn into a humanitarian crisis.

Yenel noted there were many opposition groups in Libya which are united in opposing Gaddafi but called for caution as it was not clear how things will develop after Gaddafi's possible departure. He also said Turkey and the U.S. were in close coordination regarding developments in Libya.

Erdoğan's recent remarks on Libya have led to confusion about the Turkish stance. The prime minister appeared to suggest that Turkey was against a set of sanctions passed by a unanimous vote on Saturday at the UN Security Council against Libya, saying sanctions would hurt the Libyan people. But Davutoğlu later explained Erdoğan's remarks came prior to the sanctions decision at the Security Council and were meant to voice Turkish opposition to any sanction that could have impacts on the Libyan people who are already suffering from hardships.

In a statement released on Thursday, the Foreign Ministry declared the UN sanctions decision was binding for all countries, adding that Turkey hoped it would help resolve existing problems regarding the situation in Libya. It also reiterated that the Libyan people should not be hurt by the sanctions. "We believe that all measures should be taken to ensure that the people of Libya do not suffer during the implementation of these

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sanctions," the statement said. It also argued it is important that the international community display "the same constructive, consistent and principled stance" that it displayed during revolts in Tunisia and Egypt. "Encouraging a political solution that will meet the legitimate expectations of the Libyan people is essential." /Today's Zaman/

International Groups Condemn Turkey's Detention of Journalists

International media watchdog groups called Friday for the immediate release of several Turkish journalists detained Thursday as part of a controversial coup probe, saying Turkey is "intimidating and threatening" the press. "Actions like this have a strong chilling effect on media freedom. It clearly illustrates the need for Turkey to reform its media laws," Dunja Mijatovic, media representative of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, or OSCE, said in a statement. "The detained journalists should be immediately released without any conditions." "I call on the Turkish authorities to stop intimidating and threatening journalists," the OSCE's Mijatovic said in her statement. "This unprecedented conduct by the authorities violates basic OSCE media freedom commitments. It targets and suppresses differing and critical voices," she said.

The European Commission is following the recent police actions against journalists with concern, commissioner Stefan Fule stated Thursday. "The commission has, in its progress report [on Turkey], highlighted the high number of court cases against journalists and undue pressure on the media, which undermine freedom of the press in practice. Turkish law does not sufficiently guarantee freedom of expression in line with the European Convention on Human Rights and the European Court of Human Rights." Freedom of expression and freedom of the media are fundamental principles that should be upheld in all modern democracies, Fule declared. "As a candidate country, we expect Turkey to implement such core democratic principles and enable varied, pluralistic debate in public space... Turkey urgently needs to amend its legal framework to improve the exercise of freedom of the press in practice and in a significant manner."

Journalists Nedim Şener and Ahmet Şık were among a group of people detained Thursday after having their homes raided in connection with the alleged Ergenekon coup plot. The incidents follow on the heels of the arrests of Soner Yalçın, Baris Terkoğlu and Baris Pehlivan from the dissident online news portal Oda TV. The raids have fueled accusations of a campaign to bully government opponents, drawn U.S. criticism and sparked an outcry over press freedom in EU-aspirant Turkey.

The International Press Institute, another Vienna-based media watchdog, also expressed its concern about the arrests. "No journalist should face arrest, charges, imprisonment or any other form of harassment or intimidation for doing their job - which can include expressing critical views," IPI director Alison Bethel McKenzie said in a statement. "We urge the authorities to release all of the journalists imprisoned because of their work. A flourishing, diverse, critical media is a cornerstone of any healthy democracy." Şener, one of the journalists detained Thursday, is an investigative reporter for daily Milliyet and was named a "World Press Freedom Hero" by IPI last year.

U.S. State Department spokesman P.J. Crowley said Thursday that the United States had concerns about trends in Turkey and would monitor ongoing arrests of journalists there, the Associated Press reported. He urged for "any investigations or prosecutions proceed

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in a transparent manner." "We will continue to engage Turkey and encourage an independent, pluralistic media," Crowley told reporters. "It is critical to a healthy democracy." /Hurriyet/

Israel, Turkey Should Stop Blame Game, Says Israeli Official

Israel and Turkey should stop blaming each other for a series of diplomatic rows and should begin focusing on fixing their problems, Israel's deputy foreign minister argued Tuesday. Good relations between the two countries are not only in the interests of Turks and Israelis, but also of the entire region, Deputy Foreign Minister Danny Ayalon said during a speech to a think tank in Brussels.

Tension between Turkey and Israel had not developed out of Israeli actions, Ayalon stated, adding that Israeli government wanted to see Ankara developing a fairer and more balanced line. The deputy minister also said Turkey and Israel should stop blaming each other and see what issues could be mended in their relations. He added that the Israeli government would be pleased to continue good relations with Turkey.

Already shaky Israeli-Turkish relations deteriorated last year after Ayalon publicly snubbed the Turkish ambassador to Israel, refusing to shake the envoy's hand and seating him on a lower chair than his own. Relations then reached a nadir after the killing of nine Turks in an Israeli raid on Turkish ships carrying humanitarian aid to Gaza.

The two countries are very much alike because of their "fight against terrorism," Ayalon said, adding that Turkey would act just like Israel to prevent terrorist attacks on its people. Turkey has suffered a lot from the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, and other internationally listed terrorist organizations, Ayalon noted, adding that Turkey would be the first to understand that Israel should defend itself against Hamas. Ayalon said there was no possibility of an Israeli siege on Gaza at the moment and Israel is not conducting mass punishment on Gazans because it is making a distinction between the people and Hamas militants, describing the fighters as terrorists. /Hurriyet/

Turkish PM Makes EU Plea, Fuels Integration Debate in Germany

Turkey's prime minister Monday made a passionate plea for his country's accession to the European Union as he opened a trade fair in Germany, which is opposed to Ankara joining the 27-nation EU. Speaking in the presence of Chancellor Angela Merkel, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan said that recent unrest in the Arab world had proved the importance of having Turkey on board given its strategic geopolitical position. "The events in the Middle East and Africa have drawn everyone's attention to Turkey's importance. Turkey can communicate with East and West and with North and South. Turkey is a country that really knows its neighbors," he said. "We expect that populist policies are not pursued in Europe in terms of our accession, and we expect a long-term perspective."

Turkey and the EU are at an impasse in talks over Ankara's bid to join the bloc, which have faltered largely due to deadlock over the divided island of Cyprus. Erdoğan has been especially vocal in recent days, suggesting Turkey's patience with Brussels may be running thin. Germany, together with France, opposes Turkey's accession and advocates

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what has become known as a "privileged partnership" for the sizable nation, an idea Ankara flatly rejects. Merkel made no mention of Turkey's EU ambitions in her own speech.

"Of course there are some who doubt the benefit of Turkey joining the EU, but they should look at the attitude of Turkey just recently because that is a very good lesson for them," said Erdoğan. He added that as Turkey grows closer to the EU, public opinion in European countries, including Germany, would move in the favor of a closer relationship. Merkel and Erdoğan were opening the CeBIT, the world's largest high-tech fair, expected to have welcomed around 350,000 visitors last week. Turkey is this year's "partner country" at the fair.

Earlier in the visit, Germany and Turkey crossed swords over the language spoken by the large Turkish minority in Germany as a debate over integration continued to rage in Europe's most populous country. Erdoğan fanned the flames when he told members of Germany's 2.5-million-strong Turkish minority that their children should learn Turkish ahead of learning German. "Our children have to learn German, but first they must learn Turkish," Erdoğan said in a speech in the western city of Duesseldorf late Sunday.

Later Monday, Merkel responded, saying Turks had to learn German in order to be able to contribute to society. "The German language is so important in order to have an opportunity to participate in social life in Germany," she said at the trade fair in Hanover alongside Erdoğan. "We want our citizens with a Turkish background to make a contribution to society and to participate in its wealth," added the chancellor to sustained applause.

Merkel's comments followed a more robust response from Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle who insisted that "children who grow up in Germany have to learn German first of all... If they don't speak German they will fall behind at school and will have fewer chances than the others later on. The German language is the key to integration," said Westerwelle.

Erdoğan caused a similar storm in nearby Cologne in 2008 when he said that assimilation, which he defined as a person being "forced" to abandon their culture, was a "crime against humanity." Germany has been wracked by a debate on immigration since last August, when a member of the central bank sparked outrage by saying the country was being made "more stupid" by poorly educated and unproductive Muslim migrants. The banker, Thilo Sarrazin, resigned but his book - "Germany Does Itself In" - flew off the shelves to top bestseller lists, and polls showed considerable sympathy for some of his views. /Hurriyet/

Austerity Protests Turn into anti-Turkey Campaign in Northern Cyprus

Another rally in Turkish Cyprus on Wednesday has added fuel to a squabble between Ankara and Turkish Cypriots who claim to be the victims of an austerity package, which includes salary cuts of up to 40 percent. Anti-Turkey slogans and placards have become conspicuous above all else during the protests, irking Ankara, but experts claim the growing dissent in Turkish Cyprus is only about the economic package, not Turkey's ties with the country.

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Turkey's chief EU negotiator Egemen Bağış said Turkey has always worked to maintain the prosperity and security of Turkish Cypriots and that the country would never abandon Turkish Cyprus, describing Wednesday's protests as the "game of several minority circles." Bağış told reporters in Lisbon that Turkey is saddened by the anti-Turkey slogans used during the protests and noted that Turkey would never abandon Turkish Cyprus, adding that relations between Turkey and Turkish Cyprus are distinct from other relationships.

Some 30,000 Turkish Cypriots participated in a peaceful protest on Wednesday in Turkish Cyprus against an austerity package they say Turkey has forced their government to accept. Most opposition parties and labor unions have supported the demonstration, protesting private and public sector salary cuts. Turkish Cypriot trade unions have vowed to fight the austerity package, which includes rolling back entry level salaries by 40 percent, taxing pensions and cutting the taxable income threshold from 17 percent to 10 percent. Union leaders said the package also foresees selling off state enterprises to private Turkish business interests. Protesters held placards that read "This country is ours, we will govern," and "Take your package back, get packing," demanding Turkey avoid imposing its package on Turkish Cypriots.

Wednesday's rally comes in the wake of another protest on January 28 that badly strained relations between Turkish Cypriots and the Turkish government, after some present held banners telling Turkey to "go to hell." Although the offensive banners were condemned as the work of a small, leftist fringe group, Turkish Cypriots were infuriated at Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's suggestion that they were overpaid ingrates weaned on Turkish taxpayers' money.

The \$4 billion economy of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (KKTC), under a trade embargo since a Turkish military intervention in 1974, relies on some \$600 million of financial aid Ankara provides annually. The rally is supported by the main opposition Republican Turkish Party (CTP), the Communal Democracy Party (TDP) and the Democratic Party (DP). Turkey's Freedom and Solidarity Party (ÖDP) is also backing the demonstrations. The Freedom and Reform Party (ÖRP), represented in the Turkish Cypriot parliament, is not participating in the rally.

The island's Greek Cypriot leader, Dimitris Christofias, has denied accusations by Turkey that Greek Cypriots are fomenting dissent in Turkish Cyprus. "Turkish Cypriots are indignant about the oppression they are under," Christofias told The Associated Press. "Turkish Cypriots feel like the rug is being pulled from under them." Turkish Cypriots also fear that they are being squeezed economically as a wave of Turkish immigrants, unable to make enough money in Turkey, pour into the tiny country. /Today's Zaman/

TÜSIAD Highlights

With a view to drawing attention to youth unemployment, one of Turkey's most important issues, TÜSIAD has initiated a project called "These Young People Have the Potential". The project will seek to cooperate with university student clubs so as to find solutions to the problem of unemployment through the entrepreneurial perspective of university youth.

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The project will kick off with competition on "Employment and Technology" where good ideas for employment will compete. The competition will be organized with the contribution of student clubs in Middle East Technical University (ODTÜ) and Bilkent University. Young contestants that receive an award in the project competition will be granted opportunities such as professional training, internships, and counseling services from TÜSİAD members.

A press conference was held on the 3rd of March 2011, Thursday at Istanbul Swissotel to provide comprehensive details about the "These Young People Have the Potential" project. TÜSİAD's Chairwoman Ümit Boyner, Project Coordinator and TÜSİAD member Metin Akman, and members of the Project Preparation Group, comprised of ODTÜ and Bilkent students, took part in the press conference. For more information please visit www.bugencilikteisvar.com.

In addition, TÜSİAD President of Board of Directors Ümit Boyner made a statement for Women's Day on March 7th. She discussed the current status of political and social life in Turkey and efforts to promote gender equality, as well as women's role in the economy and workforce and its potential to increase development levels and social welfare in the country. The full text of the statement can be found [here](#) (Turkish).

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Davutoğlu Calls for New Greek-Turkish 'Paradigm'

Turkey does not perceive Greece as a threat and expects its Aegean neighbor to take a similar position after decades of antagonism between the two countries, the Turkish foreign minister said Tuesday. "We need a new paradigm in Turkish-Greek relations, a paradigm under which we can build a future together," Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu told reporters while visiting Greece for preparatory talks for the upcoming Turkey-Greece High Level Strategic Council meeting, which will be held in Istanbul in July.

During his visit, Davutoğlu held meetings in Athens with Greek Prime Minister George Papandreou and Foreign Minister Dimitrios Droutsas. Prior to the meeting, Davutoğlu voiced Ankara's expectation for a "peaceful style" to dominate bilateral relations between Ankara and Athens. Speaking to reporters on his way to Athens, the foreign minister said he would emphasize this paradigm in his talks with Greek officials. "We should evaluate our common history not in a confrontational way, but rather in a peaceful fashion," he stated.

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Citing "complicated problems and prejudgments" coming from the past, Davutoğlu said both countries should "show the will to solve the problems, such as the Aegean dispute, step by step." If the status quo is maintained, the confidence problem between the two countries cannot be solved, he argued, adding that Turkey wants the situation to be changed in a positive direction. "We want a new framework for cooperation in mutual agreement. There is also a new approach on the Greek side too. We are determined to use this atmosphere."

Mentioning the "positive momentum" in relations, Davutoğlu said their target was not only having good relations between governments, but also people developing friendships and neighborly relations. "Come to Turkey as if it was your home, have Turkish friends," he said, addressing the Greek people. "We offer the same for Turkish people," he added. Davutoğlu described the new paradigm Ankara wants to establish with Greece as "a paradigm that has no secret agendas, concerns or distrust."

Regarding the dispute on Cyprus, Davutoğlu expressed Ankara's discomfort with the course of the negotiations between Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots. "We want to turn the Eastern Mediterranean into a basin of peace as soon as possible," he stated, adding that it was unfair to block Turkey's membership in the EU due to political problems on Cyprus.

Greek minister Droutsas reaffirmed that the negative rapport in bilateral relations had been overcome and said Greece aimed to develop further relations "in line with a framework respecting national territories," a reference to the territory dispute in the Aegean Sea between Turkey and Greece. Citing the military flights over Aegean Sea that have caused problems between Ankara and Athens, Droutsas drew attention to "some negative interventions from political or some other circles" and said those interventions should be avoided. Athens and Ankara also plan to cooperate over humanitarian aid to Libya, Droutsas highlighted following his meeting with Davutoğlu. "We share the same concern over the situation in Libya and our common observation is that the situation cannot, and should not, continue," he said.

Asked about the problems of the Turkish-Muslim community in Greece, Droutsas dismissed the problems and said Greece respected the rights of all its citizens. Greece is "a model state" in this manner, he said. He added that Greece dismissed the reciprocity principle on minority issues and that no third-party should interfere in the internal affairs of Greece.

Following his meetings in Athens Davutoğlu visited Thessaloniki, Xanthi and Komotini on Wednesday and met with members of Greece's Turkish minority. /Hurriyet/

Transformation in Mideast a Necessity, Turkish FM Says

Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu, who addressed the 6th edition of Annual Al Jazeera Forum on Sunday, said that change and transformation in the Middle East was a social necessity, adding, "no leaders should think that they could rule forever." Davutoğlu took the stage at a session on "Winds of Change in the Arab World" and spoke to an international audience of journalists, analysts, academics, intellectuals, traditional and new media experts, activists and bloggers, as well as leading thinkers and strategists.

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Davutoğlu said that the theme of this year's Al Jazeera Forum "Has the Future Arrived?" overlapped recent developments in the Middle East, declaring, "yes, the future has arrived." He stated that democracy has been delayed in the Middle East for years due to several reasons but history should now become normalized. "Everybody deserves democracy. People's demand should be respected," he said. "Young people and the people of the region do not want a luxurious life. They just want to see respect."

Davutoğlu urged leaders of the region to respect change, adding, "no leader should think that they will be there forever, we must trust our nations." The foreign minister also argued that legal status of states and territory should not be changed during the transformation process in the Middle East. "We are already divided enough. We need more unification and more unity now," he said. "There should be regional ownership. No foreign intervention. This is our region." Davutoğlu also called for a new UN system based on justice in which Mideast countries could make greater contributions. /Today's Zaman/

Turkey, UAE Send Relief Convoy to Libya

The first ships carrying humanitarian aid to crisis-hit Libya as part of a joint operation by Turkey and the United Arab Emirates have set sail from southern Turkey, the Turkish Foreign Ministry said Saturday. A cargo ship and a roll-on/roll-off ship carrying humanitarian aid departed from the southern province of Mersin and are expected to reach Benghazi, Libya, on Monday. The ships contain 32 tons of medicine, 388 tons of food, 2,000 tents, 20,000 blankets, 72 tons of water, two mobile kitchens and a mobile oven, the ministry said, adding that a 13-member Turkish Red Crescent team and a 16-member team from the Gulf state are also on their way to the North African country.

Turkish officials meanwhile said a prospective no-fly zone over Libya, which has been suggested as a way to prevent leader Moammar Gadhafi from staging air raids against opposition fighters, should only be implemented by the UN Security Council, rather than by NATO. "A no-fly zone decision should be made by the UN Security Council," a Turkish Foreign Ministry official told reporters on Sunday. "The demands of rebels should [also] be taken into account since some of them want international intervention while others don't. What regional actors say is also important, such as the Arab League's call Saturday for the imposition of a no-fly zone."

With UN Security Council members discussing the outline of a potential resolution on imposing a no-fly zone, Turkey has been cautious about the idea of an intervention. Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan said recently that Ankara opposed any NATO intervention in Libya. "NATO is not an appropriate mechanism [for imposing a no-fly zone] since it has no legal basis to make such a decision," another diplomatic source stated. "We have come into conflict with the U.S. on a NATO intervention in Iraq before." The framework for a UN no-fly zone decision should be well prepared and should be in accordance with international law, the source said, adding that an illegitimate intervention could be subject to an International Criminal Court investigation in the future.

Ankara has been in contact with opposition groups in Libya, along with "all other parties," the Foreign Ministry official went on, adding that Turkey has continued to communicate

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with the Gadhafi administration via the Turkish Embassy in Tripoli and the Libyan Embassy in Ankara. Such contacts have been made to coordinate evacuations and provide humanitarian aid rather than discuss political issues, the source explained. /Hurriyet/

Ankara, Baku Urge Staged Settlement to Karabakh Dispute

A multi-staged approach that includes the gradual withdrawal of Armenian troops and the reopening of the Turkish-Armenian border is being proposed by Turkey and Azerbaijan to resolve the dispute over Nagorno-Karabakh. The status of Karabakh, an Azerbaijani territory occupied by Armenian forces, would be defined at the final stage of the plan, said Azerbaijani Deputy Foreign Minister Araz Azimov. "This is the only single instrumental approach if anyone is really interested in solving the Karabakh issue," Azimov told reporters during a trip to Ankara late last week.

The Azerbaijani official's talks in the Turkish capital, which focused on the details of the two countries' new cooperation plan as well as the Karabakh negotiations, preceded an expected trip this week by Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan to Moscow. Russia, along with the United States and France, is co-chair of the Minsk Group conducting negotiations between the presidents of Azerbaijan and Armenia for a settlement to the Karabakh problem. The last round of talks between Armenian and Azerbaijani leaders took place in Sochi on March 5, with the assistance of Russian President Dmitry Medvedev.

The plan, which Ankara and Baku shared with international actors in the Minsk Group, is based on an understanding aimed at bringing normality to Armenia in its relationship with Turkey and Azerbaijan. It also seeks to engage Armenians of Karabakh in normal life within the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan. "Legality has to be established. Normality has to be brought back and only after that can we decide on a status with the participation of both communities of Nagorno-Karabakh: the Azerbaijani and Armenian communities," stated Azimov. "It probably sounds familiar if I say 'bi-communal model' - two communities voting on the issues of common life within the principles of the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan. Would Armenia benefit from that? Of course, yes."

The first stage calls for Armenia to withdraw troops from five of the eight occupied territories, Akdam, Fuzuli, Cebrazil, Zengilan and Kubatli. The initial phase also would include the opening of the Armenian-Azerbaijani border. "Relations [between Azerbaijan and Armenia] should be normalized, international forces should come in, guarantees should be given and rehabilitation should start," Azimov said. The opening of the sealed border between Turkey and Armenia is also considered part of the first stage. "It is a staged approach where every stage is based on the previous one. We cannot start cooperation without the reestablishment of territories, we cannot re-establish housing without the Armenian withdrawal from the territories," said Azimov.

After the conclusion of the first stage in five years, Armenia would withdraw from the remaining regions, the Armenian population of Karabakh would be provided with security guarantees and preparations for the return of Azerbaijanis to Nagorno-Karabakh would start. When the parties consider it possible and affordable, they will discuss the status issue, the deputy foreign minister said. Asked about the timeframe for discussions on the

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status of Karabakh, Azimov said, "God knows." But he believes economic cooperation between the Azerbaijani and Armenian populations in the Karabakh region - provided by guarantees, legality and an established system of self-rule - would be quite a substantial breakthrough.

Since 1992, the Karabakh dispute has been institutionalized and everyone has their own agenda, Azimov stated, noting the exception of some declarations emphasizing peace and stability in the Caucasus. "Only a few countries are really interested in settling the issue. I think Turkey and Azerbaijan are among them," he said. /Hurriyet/

Ankara Blasts Critical EP Turkey Report

The Turkish Foreign Ministry harshly responded to the European Parliament's (EP) 2010 progress report on Turkey, which contained criticism concerning press freedoms, fair trials and prolonged periods of detention in Turkey. On Wednesday the ministry released a statement in which it said the report contains elements that are one-sided, incompatible with the truth and that cannot be accepted by Turkey.

The report was approved by the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the EP on Wednesday. It welcomed constitutional amendments enacted after the September referendum but at the same time contained criticism about the lack of improvements in the Ergenekon and Sledgehammer coup cases as well as the recent arrests of some journalists as part of the Ergenekon investigation.

The report stated that the arrest of renowned journalists such as Nedim Şener and Ahmet Şık may lead to a lack of confidence in other trials. Şener and Şık were arrested along with five other individuals last week as part of the Ergenekon investigation. They are accused of membership in a terrorist organization. According to the report, the EP will closely monitor the trials of journalists.

The Foreign Ministry statement noted that Turkey expects the EP to be fair and objective in its evaluation of Turkey. According to the statement, the progress reports should be prepared in a manner to urge negotiating countries to take required measures for full membership in the European Union.

In its report, the EP also pointed to the lack of "suitable conditions" for a fair trial, including prolonged periods of detention. "Ongoing investigations into the Ergenekon and Sledgehammer coup plans should prove the strength of democratic bodies as well as the independent and transparent conduct of the judiciary," the report stated. /Today's Zaman/

In Poll, Turkish Outlook More Positive on U.S. and EU

A survey conducted by British broadcasting establishment BBC and Globescan reveals that the Turkish public's perspective of the U.S., France, Britain and the EU has increased in positivity in comparison to last year. The survey, which was conducted between December, 2010 and February, 2011 by telephone and in person surveys of 28,000 people in 27 different countries, measures the negative or positive impressions of a

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number of states in the international arena.

Even though Turkey's opposition of the United States persists, the percentage of those who expressed negative sentiments has dropped by 21 points, bringing the previous 70 percentile figure down to 49 percent. The number of individuals to express a positive outlook of the U.S. has increased by 22 points, to 35 percent.

The survey also showed that 46 percent of Turks had positive things to say about the European Union, whereas only 29 percent had negative comments. The number of those with positive views of Britain has increased by 23 percent, while the number of those who found France positive doubled, increasing to 36 percent. According to the survey, the number of people who considered Iran favorably has also increased to 36 percent. Israel is the most negatively perceived nation by the Turkish public with 77 percent expressing negative sentiments. Only nine percent had a positive outlook on Israel.
/Sabah/

TUSIAD Highlights

A TUSIAD delegation led by Mr. Haluk Dinçer, Vice President of TUSIAD and President of the Parliamentary Affairs Committee, and including Mrs. Nur Ger, President of the TUSIAD Gender Equality Working Group and its members Meral İnci Zaim and Esin Gural Argat held talks in Ankara today, addressing the issue of women's representation in parliament.

The delegation met with AKP Deputy Chairman and Political and Legal Affairs Chairman Abdulkadir Aksu, CHP Secretary General Bihlun Tamayligil, MHP Law and Electoral Affairs Deputy Chairman Faruk Bal, and BDP Women's Advocate Sukran Dikmen with the goal of ensuring equal participation of women in political decisions and increasing female participation in parliament in the general elections on June 12. During the talks, the general election process as well as the political parties' policies on women's education programs, employment, and combating violence against women were discussed.

March 15-21, 2011

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Erdoğan Criticizes Gaddafi, Calls for Swift End to Operation in Libya

Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has criticized Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi for ignoring Turkey's advice that he hand over leadership and said Western attacks on Gaddafi forces should end as soon as possible so that stability could be restored in Libya. Erdoğan, addressing a gathering in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, appeared to agree on the

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necessity of foreign military intervention -- which he once fiercely opposed -- lamenting that a revolt against Gaddafi has not resulted in a peaceful transition, similar to what happened in Tunisia and Egypt. "I wish the situation could have been resolved without getting to this point," Erdoğan told the Jeddah Economic Forum on Sunday.

"We have given advice [to both Gaddafi and the rebels]. We wanted Libya to decide on its fate without bloodshed. We wish Libya had transitioned its reform process like Tunisia and Egypt did. Unfortunately, this has not happened and the situation has come to a highly undesirable point." The prime minister appeared to put the blame on Gaddafi for this, saying the Libyan leader ignored Turkey's advice to listen to the demands of his people and withdraw from leadership. "We told him that he should respect the people's will and that this [conflict] should end. Unfortunately, he brought the situation to this point," Erdoğan stated, referring to his conversation, apparently with Gaddafi, which he said took place on March 1. "Unfortunately, we could not succeed. Now, I hope the latest developments will bring a swift end to this era of brothers killing each other and the will of the Libyan people will rule Libya."

Erdoğan earlier rejected the idea of foreign intervention in Libya and called a possible NATO role as "nonsense," insisting that the Libyan people should decide their own future. As a way to end the crisis through change within Libya, he advised Gaddafi to appoint a political figure with broad public support. Asked whether Gaddafi should step down from leadership, Erdoğan said: "We have passed that point. Gaddafi is contradicting himself. He said he was not officially the leader of Libya. What is expected of a person who is not officially in charge is to hand over [the administration of] Libya to a person who has an official leadership position... Of course, now we want the military intervention to end and stability to be restored as soon as possible in Libya," the prime minister highlighted. "We are not pessimistic. We should never lose hope. We can stop the unending bloodshed and tears in this region. Believe me, we can do this."

Opposition leader Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu also endorsed strikes on Libya, saying the operation is legitimate due to a UN Security Council resolution authorizing the use of force against Gaddafi forces. "Libya should become a democracy as soon as possible," said the Republican People's Party (CHP) leader, adding that he agreed with the government's position on the issue.

In a statement released late on Saturday, the Foreign Ministry said Turkey will make the necessary and appropriate national contribution to implementing the no-fly zone over Libya and measures to protect civilians. "Within that framework the necessary preparations and studies are being made by civil and military authorities in co-ordination," the statement added, giving no further detail. Foreign Ministry officials declined to comment on what contributions Turkey would be willing to make, stating that it was too early to discuss what actions could be taken and emphasizing that Ankara would make its decisions based on the situation, which at the moment is still very fluid.

How Turkey decides to act is important especially given prospects that NATO might agree to get involved. Ankara is not against implementing a no-fly zone -- its opposition is limited to a ground operation, which is not mandated by the UN resolution -- and says it will not block any NATO decision to use the alliance's assets to implement the no-fly zone decision. But it is reluctant at the moment to join any NATO operation to this end.

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Turkish officials declined to comment on whether and how Turkey would join a possible NATO intervention, saying the extent of the NATO action is not yet clear. Several NATO members have indicated they would not participate in aerial attacks, pointing out that the alliance is already heavily engaged in the war in Afghanistan.

Meanwhile, Davutoğlu met late on Friday with Nasser al-Mani, a member of the interim administration formed in Benghazi after the popular uprising against Gaddafi. Al-Mani, who left after his talks, said he had meetings with Turkish officials at the invitation of the Turkish government and informed them about the current situation in Libya and the ordeal faced by the Libyan people in the eastern and western regions of the country. "We saw Turkey's will to help the Libyan people. Talks are still underway. I hope we can find a practical solution at the end of these talks and we can see positive steps for a solution to the tragedy in Libya," he said. /Today's Zaman/

Turkey Steps Up Diplomacy to Resolve Bahrain Crisis

Turkey, which has emerged as an intermediary in the spat between Iran and Saudi Arabia after the latter's intervention in Bahrain, has submitted a set of proposals in an effort to soothe tensions. Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu continued with his telephone diplomacy and spoke Wednesday with his counterparts from Iran, Saudi Arabia and Bahrain, diplomatic sources said. Sources declined to comment on the content of the Turkish-led proposals but said the foreign minister warned his counterparts not to exacerbate the delicate issues in the Middle East.

The foreign minister cited the two major problems in the region: the attacks targeting Christians in Egypt and Iraq and the division between the Sunnis and Shiites in Yemen and Bahrain. He warned his counterparts about the dangers of a sectarian clash in Bahrain and lent full support for the continuity of political reform in the country. "We are closely following the developments in Bahrain," a written statement released by the Foreign Ministry on Thursday said. The ministry described the escalating tension between the parties in the country - which has occurred despite the ruling kingdom's calls for dialogue - as an "unfortunate development."

The international spat emerged when Iran, which sits across the Persian Gulf from Bahrain, criticized Saudi Arabia's decision to send more than 1,000 troops to Bahrain at the request of the country's Sunni rulers. In protest, it summoned the Saudi Arabian ambassador for consultations. In its diplomatic contacts with the countries involved in the spat, Turkey warned Iran not to become involved in the issue in Bahrain and asked Saudi Arabia to soon return to the status quo, emphasizing its hope that the military presence of Saudi Arabia in Bahrain was a temporary measure.

Davutoğlu's diplomatic contacts came on the heels of his telephone conversations with Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Salehi and Saudi Arabian Foreign Minister Saud al-Faisal. The latter visited Turkey on Thursday for a meeting with Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, who returned from Russia the same day.

In addition to the Saudi Arabian forces, the United Arab Emirates has sent 500 policemen to Bahrain and Qatar has said it would also send police. The Turkish Foreign Ministry said the deployment of forces of the Gulf Cooperation Council in Bahrain at the request of the

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kingdom's calls increased the sensitivity of the situation even more. The ministry noted that Bahrain took such a measure as a sovereign state, but expressed concerns that the deployment escalated tension between the security forces and the protestors, weakening the ground for dialogue.

It warned all the parties concerned to avoid violence and act with common sense and urged the Bahrain administration to lend an ear to its people's "legitimate expectations and demands for reform and democratization" and to take all necessary measures to prevent bloodshed. The ministry also called on opposition groups to reciprocate with good intentions to the administration's initiative for reform and dialogue. /Hurriyet/

Turkey Helps Free Guardian, New York Times Journalists in Libya

Libya released four New York Times journalists on Monday, nearly a week after they had been captured by Libyan forces while covering the conflict there, the Times said, although three journalists for other outlets remain missing. The four were at the Turkish embassy in Tripoli and would be sent home within hours, Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu told reporters in Ankara. The Times journalists are two-time Pulitzer Prize winner and Beirut bureau chief Anthony Shadid, reporter and videographer Stephen Farrell and photographers Tyler Hicks and Lynsey Addario.

"We are grateful that our journalists have been released, and we are working to reunite them with their families," the Times said in a statement. "We have been told they are in good health and are in the process of confirming that. We thank the Turkish, British, and U.S. governments for their assistance in the release. We also appreciate the efforts of those in the Libyan government who helped secure the release this morning."

In addition on Wednesday, Turkish President Abdullah Gul helped obtain the release of a correspondent for Britain's The Guardian after he was arrested in Libya. The newspaper assigned its Iraqi correspondent Ghait Abdulahad to cover developments in the country, but Abdulahad was arrested soon after arrival. Gul told the Foreign Ministry to contact Libyan authorities after The Guardian asked him to mediate. A senior Turkish diplomat confirmed that London and the British newspaper called on Gul after Abdulahad's arrest. Turkey has been representing British interests in Libya since democratic protests turned into a violent conflict about a month ago. Alan Rusbridger, the Guardian's managing editor, thanked Gul for his help.

Turkey will also now represent the United States in Libya, including acting as consular officers on behalf of U.S. citizens in Libya and looking after American diplomatic facilities in the country, senior State Department officials told CNN on Sunday. Although the United States has not formally suspended ties with Libya, the U.S. State Department shuttered its embassy earlier this month and withdrew all of its diplomats from the country. /Sabah, Turkish Press Review, Hurriyet/

Russia, Turkey Take Final Steps toward Visa-Free Regime

The final official step in the process of introducing a visa-free regime between Black Sea neighbors Russia and Turkey has been taken during Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's three-day visit to Russia last week. In January Turkish and Russian officials

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signed in Moscow a readmission agreement in a step towards a visa-free travel regime between their countries. With the foreign ministries of the two countries having now completed all necessary bureaucratic procedures, the two sides exchanged notes, which paving the way for 30 days of visa-free travel within a 90-day period for the citizens of both nations. The implementation will commence around 30 days after the exchange of notes, on April 20.

During Erdoğan's visit, the second meeting of the High-Level Cooperation Council between Russia and Turkey -- an intergovernmental cooperation mechanism -- was held with Erdoğan and Medvedev co-presiding the meeting. Russia and Turkey agreed last year during Medvedev's May visit to launch the High-Level Cooperation Council and held the first meeting then. Accordingly, Medvedev and Erdoğan will meet annually to review ties. While in Moscow, Erdoğan will also held talks with his Russian counterpart, Vladimir Putin, and addressed a meeting of the Turkish-Russian Business Forum. On Wednesday evening he proceeded to Kazan, the capital of Tatarstan, a federal subject of Russia.

Ahead of the visit, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov praised Turkey's democratic maturity, when he spoke of the latest upheavals in a number of North African and Middle Eastern countries. Experience shows very clearly that Islam and democracy can live together and Turkey is the best example of this, Lavrov said in an interview with a Russian radio station. Arguing that the upheavals in a number of North African and Middle Eastern countries are not related to "radical Islamists," Lavrov said people in those countries have been asking for democratic changes in regimes, but not the implementation of Sharia law. "Radical Islamist powers," in every country might be willing to use these upheavals in their own interests, Lavrov noted. "However, despite this, the situation should not be dramatized. Experience has shown that Islam and democracy are quite compatible with each other. Turkey is the best example for this."

Erdoğan's visit coincides with the 90th anniversary of the Treaty of Moscow, signed on March 16, 1921, a pact concluded in Moscow between the government of the Turkish Assembly -- before the Turkish Republic was founded in 1923 -- and the Soviet Union. /Today's Zaman/

Turkey, Afghanistan, Pakistan Begin Trilateral Military Exercise

A Turkey-Afghanistan-Pakistan military live exercise on urban warfare began in Istanbul on March 19 and is ongoing until March 26. The three decided to hold joint exercises at the conclusion of the 5th Trilateral Summit in December 2010. The exercise constitutes one of the tangible results of the Trilateral Summit process, which was initiated in 2007 and has become since then an increasingly important platform for dialogue and cooperation among the three countries on a wide range of issues, said a written statement released by the Foreign Ministry. "We are convinced that the exercise will contribute to the stability and development of the region by bolstering solidarity and the culture of collaboration among the three countries," it said.

An international distinguished observers day will also be held in Istanbul on March 25 as part of the exercise. The observers day represents the importance attached to transparency as well as the confidence in the level of cooperation attained among the three countries, according to the ministry. /Hurriyet/

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TUSIAD Highlights

TUSIAD will come together with Turkish political party leaders before the June 12 general elections for "The Political Party Leaders - Meeting Series." The series of meetings will serve as a chance for business leaders to exchange views with the main political parties on their plans, programs, goals and policies. TUSIAD will also prepare a comprehensive and up to date report on the business world's expectations for the post-election period, which will be made available to the public.

The first meeting will take place with Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, leader of Republican People's Party (CHP), on March 24 at the Sabancı Center in Istanbul. TUSIAD members as well as representatives from the Turkish Enterprise and Business Confederation (TURKONFED) have been invited to attend.

TUSIAD will continue the program with meetings including leaders from the Justice and Development Party (AKP), Nationalist Movement Party (MHP), and Peace and Democracy Party (BDP) in the coming days.

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Ankara Sends Naval Forces, Will Assume Control of Benghazi Airport in Libya Mission

Turkey is assuming control of the Benghazi airport and sending naval forces to patrol the corridor between the rebel-held city and Crete, as it prepares to join a London meeting on the international response to Libya. Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan said Monday that Turkey would take control of the airport in order to coordinate humanitarian assistance to the crisis-hit North African country as part of the multinational task force now under NATO command. "Turkey said 'yes' to three tasks within NATO: the takeover of Benghazi airport for the delivery of humanitarian aid, the task about control of the air corridor and the involvement of Turkish naval forces in the corridor between Benghazi and Crete," Erdoğan told a news conference at Ankara's Esenboğa airport before departing for neighboring Iraq.

NATO member states reached a consensus last week on leading Libya operations under the alliance's command. The Turkish Parliament passed a motion Thursday authorizing the country's military to participate in the international force in Libya and the government to make a "multi-dimensional contribution." Turkey has pressed for broad-

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based participation in the Libya mission - including the Arab League, the African Union and the Organization of the Islamic Conference - to secure a peaceful transition in Libya and meet the legitimate needs of the Libyan people, Erdoğan stated. "We have never been and will never be a country that would fire on and bomb conflicting sides in Libya."

Turkey will be represented in an international conference about Libya set to be held Tuesday in London. Erdoğan said Turkey's insistence on ensuring broad-based participation in the summit was acknowledged. "Thus NATO will not be left alone in Libya," he highlighted. The London conference is expected to discuss the situation in Libya and take stock of the implementation thus far of UN Security Council Resolutions No. 1970 and 1973. The meeting is expected to establish a contact group of nations. Though it is not yet clear if Turkey will join this grouping, a Turkish diplomat noted such mechanisms are sometimes useful - as in the case of Kosovo - and that Ankara would evaluate the situation if it were asked to participate.

Once-reluctant Turkey is now taking a critical role in NATO operations in Libya, pledging five vessels and one submarine to a NATO patrol mission to enforce a UN arms embargo against the regime of Moammar Gadhafi. Additionally, Turkey's NATO base in the Aegean province of İzmir was selected as the center for operations monitoring the no-fly zone in Libya following the lifting of Turkey's previous opposition to any kind of NATO involvement in the North African country. /Hurriyet/

Turkey Urges Reforms in Syria, Dispatches Intelligence Chief

Amid ongoing unrest, Turkey is increasing communication with Syria and advised the government to "positively respond" to people's demands for reform, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan stated Monday before leaving Ankara for a visit to Iraq. "We advised Mr. Assad that responding to people's years-old demands positively with a reformist approach would help Syria to overcome the problems more easily," Erdogan told journalists.

Erdogan said he talked to Syrian President Bashar al-Assad twice in the last three days and spoke of Turkey's "sensitivity" on events in Syria. "We have a border of 800 kilometers (with Syria) and we have family relations. We cannot remain silent." He stated that Assad did not say "No" to his calls for reform and he expected Assad himself to publicly announce reform plans in Syria "either today or tomorrow."

Erdogan further explained the chief of the National Intelligence Agency of Turkey (MIT), Hakan Fidan, visited Syria Sunday for talks, and that Turkey was closely watching developments in the country. Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu also spoke to his Syrian counterpart following Erdoğan's phone conversation with al-Assad, telling Syrian Foreign Minister Walid al-Mouallem that Turkey was ready to contribute to the reform process, diplomatic sources said.

Syria has been shaken by two weeks of anti-regime protests, forcing Syrian authorities to announce on Sunday they would end decades of emergency rule in the country, in place since the Baath party came to power in March 1963. /Anatolia.com Inc., Hurriyet/

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Turkey Says Gulf Troops in Bahrain Must be Temporary

Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu has insisted that Gulf troops in Bahrain must be temporary, saying it is important that political transformation take place without any foreign intervention. Saudi Arabian troops, along with forces from other Gulf countries, rolled across the causeway into neighboring Bahrain two weeks ago to buttress the embattled Sunni royal family against protests by the island's Shiite Muslim majority.

Bahraini Foreign Minister Sheikh Khaled bin Ahmed al-Khalifa, speaking at a joint news conference with Davutoğlu late on Tuesday, argued that foreign forces are only there to "protect state organs" and would be there for a "very limited" time. Davutoğlu said he is pleased to hear this. Al-Khalifa paid a two-day visit to Turkey last week "to thank Turkey for its fair behavior and position" regarding recent unrest in the region. He held talks with Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan on Wednesday.

Davutoğlu warned against sectarian clashes in the region, claiming they would harm the entire process of transformation. He noted that the civilian death toll and sectarian clashes are "unacceptable" for Turkey. The foreign minister emphasized it is very important that the civilian population be protected and that civilians and security forces do not confront one another. "We hope that stability, territorial integrity, sovereignty and a strong economy will be sustained," said Davutoğlu. Al-Khalifa said Bahrain consulted Turkish officials to see how to position "[the] country against looming sectarian clashes, not only in Bahrain but in Iran and other parts of the world." He added that it is necessary to reach a strategic agreement in order to take steps in that direction.

Turkish President Abdullah Gül on Wednesday also warned against Sunni-Shiite clashes in the region, saying that such a "lack of foresight" in the Islamic world would exhaust both people and resources. The foreign minister of the United Arab Emirates, Sheikh Abdullah Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, also held talks with Erdoğan and Davutoğlu in Ankara on Wednesday. The UAE is a member of the Gulf Cooperation Council and also sent troops to Bahrain at the request of Bahrain's Sunni government. /Today's Zaman/

Ankara Seizes Cargo of Iranian Plane Bound for Syria

Turkey has confiscated material from an Iranian cargo plane which was illegal under United Nations sanctions on Iran, a Turkish Foreign Ministry spokesman stated on Tuesday. The plane had been forced to land at Diyarbakir in southeast Turkey on Saturday night while en route from Tehran to Syria amid suspicions that it was carrying weapons or bomb-making material, according to media reports. It was the second such incident in a week.

Turkish media reports said boxes on the plane contained rocket launchers, mortars, Kalashnikov rifles and ammunition, although there was no official statement on the cargo. "During routine controls it was determined that there was illegal material on the plane which fell within the scope of UN sanctions imposed on Iran and this material was confiscated," the spokesman said in a statement. "The plane was allowed to leave Turkey and return to Iran today [Wednesday] without the illegal material," he added. Media reports stated that seven people from the plane had been detained, but Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu told reporters there had been no arrests.

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Two weeks ago another plane was similarly forced to land at Diyarbakir but departed the following day after a search squad trained in chemical, biological, radioactive and nuclear cargo found nothing illegal. Turkish media suggested the planes may have been stopped at the request of the United Nations to investigate whether they were carrying nuclear material. The UN nuclear watchdog is probing allegations of covert nuclear activities in Syria. Iran and Syria, close allies, deny ever harboring nuclear weapons ambitions. /Sabah/

Gül Highlights Turkey-Africa Ties, Eyes \$30 Billion in Trade in Visit

Turkey is determined to develop relations with Africa based on friendship, equality and cooperation, Turkish President Abdullah Gül declared Thursday as he addressed Ghana's Parliament. Noting that he was paying the first-ever visit on the presidential level from Turkey to Ghana, Gül noted Ghana was the first country in sub-Saharan Africa to declare independence, in 1957, making it a model for other African nations. "Turkey is determined to develop relations with Africa on the basis of friendship, equality and cooperation," Gül said. "Turkey had been implementing an opening policy toward Africa since 1998 that aims to diversify and deepen political, military, economic and cultural cooperation." The Turkish president said this policy included health, agriculture, irrigation, energy, education and regular humanitarian aid.

There are broad areas of cooperation between rapidly developing African countries and Turkey, the 16th-largest economy in the world and the 6th-biggest in Europe, Gül said. He added that Turkey had strengthened ties with Africa thanks to the activities of nongovernmental organizations and Turkish International Cooperation & Development Agency, which has carried out projects in 37 African countries. Turkey's 22 embassies in Africa will increase to 32 next year, Gül highlighted. "Turkey's new representation openings in Africa have showed the importance [we] attach to relations with African countries."

Before leaving for Africa, Gül told journalists that Turkey targets a trade volume of \$30 billion with African countries in the next few years. He noted Turkey's trade with African countries totaled \$5 billion in 2003 and reached \$16 billion in 2010. "But it is not enough. Our goal is to make it 30 billion in a few years," he said. According to the president, trade volume between Turkey and Ghana, which was \$27 million in 1998, almost reached \$300 million in 2010. Following his visit to Ghana, the Turkish President traveled on to Gabon in Gül's fourth tour of sub-Saharan African countries. /Hurriyet/

Turkey Launches Airstrikes in Northern Iraq

Turkey has reportedly launched airstrikes against the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) in northern Iraq as clashes resurfaced between the terrorist group and the Turkish military, Iran's state-run Press TV said on Sunday. Press TV cited a report by Iraq's Aswat al-Iraq news agency, which quoted eyewitnesses as saying Turkish warplanes pounded Nirwa Rikan, east of the town of al-Imadiya, last Saturday. It was not clear whether the attack resulted in any casualties.

The airstrikes come after the PKK declared two weeks ago an end to its unilateral ceasefire, accusing the government of not responding to their demands for an end to the

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prosecution of elected Kurdish mayors and for improvement of prison conditions for the group's imprisoned leader, Abdullah Öcalan. Clashes with the PKK generally increase in the spring, which brings warmer weather to the mountains on the Iraqi border where the group is active. The PKK declared a unilateral truce in August last year and later extended it until the Turkish national elections, now set for June 12, to give the government space to resolve the conflict. The PKK stated after it called off the truce last month that it would not attack Turkish targets, but would take a more "effective" defensive posture. /Today's Zaman/

Turkey's F-35 Order on Hold over U.S. Refusal to Share Technology

Turkey announced on Tuesday that it is putting the planned purchase of 100 F-35 fighter jets from the U.S. on hold because the Pentagon refuses to share the source code used in the software designed for the aircraft as well as the codes that might be used externally to activate the planes. Following a meeting of the Defense Industry Implementation Committee (SSIK), Turkish Defense Minister Vecdi Gonul said that the negotiations over the F-35 procurement tender had not yielded "satisfactory results." He added, "We will evaluate the order in the next meeting, in light of the progress made in the talks by then." He said much ground had been covered in the talks in terms of technology sharing, but this was not enough for Turkey to accept the jets.

Gonul also said the costs of the project had risen but that the Turkish side had failed to secure the source code and the remote flight codes for the planes for which it will be paying \$16 billion. Without the source code, Turkish engineers wouldn't be able to make any changes to the software that operates the jets. The external flight codes are equally important, if not more so, as they can be used externally to navigate the jets. /Turkish Press Review/

TUSIAD Highlights

On Tuesday, March 22, TUSIAD's High Advisory Council Meeting was held with a special session on the "Five Dimensions of Making a New Constitution." Mrs. Ümit Boyner, the Chairwoman of the Board of Directors, and Mr. Erkut Yücaoğlu, the Chairman of the High Advisory Council, made opening speeches.

Following the speeches, TUSIAD announced the results of a series of roundtable meetings, held between November 2, 2010 and March 1, 2011, that brought together a group of academics and opinion leaders to discuss five fundamental areas to address in rewriting Turkey's Constitution, including the reform process, basic principles, rules, and institutions, freedom of conscience and religion, identity, and the separation of powers. The results have been compiled by Dr. Ergun Özbudun and Dr. Turgut Tarhanlı in a report entitled "Five Dimensions of Making a New Constitution." You can access the full report (Turkish) by clicking [here](#).

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