

TUSIAD Selected News on Turkey

Washington

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Turkey to defend its sea interests, says PM

Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan said Turkey would take all necessary measures to defend its rights over natural resources in the sea during a ceremony to launch Turkey's first domestic warship. The Turkish research ship Piri Reis meanwhile entered block 13 off Cyprus on Tuesday where Greek Cypriots are continuing natural gas exploration with the US company Noble.

Amid rising tensions in the eastern Mediterranean, Turkey's first domestically made warship was formally delivered to the Turkish Navy. Sources added that the Piri Reis was only 60 kilometers away from the Greek Cypriot drilling platform. Erdoğan has already said the Turkish ship will be escorted by the Turkish Navy; the Turkish frigate Yavuz set sail from its Turkish Mediterranean base two days ago to escort and conduct patrolling duties.

"Turkey's interests in the seas reach from surrounding waters out to Suez Canal and Indian Ocean," Erdoğan said adding that Turkey would take all the necessary measures to defend its commercial interests and its rights over the natural resources in the sea.

Despite Erdogan's words, Defense Minister İsmet Yılmaz said tensions were decreasing in the eastern Mediterranean. "After Greek Prime Minister George Papandreou called Prime Minister Erdoğan [Monday] and they talked on the phone for one hour, the tension decreased and things began returning to normal in the eastern Mediterranean," Yılmaz said.

Furthermore, the Turkish General Staff denied news reports that a Turkish seismic research ship exploring gas near Cyprus was harassed by two low-flying Israeli warplanes and a helicopter on Thursday night.

Turkish Vatan daily had published a story on Friday referring to a story by the Greek Cypriot daily Phileleftheros, which argued that Israel boosted its presence in the Eastern Mediterranean as of Thursday night. The report said the two F-15 jets that took off from Tel Aviv flew through the Greek Cypriot and the Turkish Cypriot airspaces, reportedly ignoring warnings from the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (KKTC) officials. Turkey then reportedly sent two F-16 jets to the area to track the Israeli jets, which then returned to Israel. An Israeli military helicopter also flew over the Turkish research ship,

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Piri Reis, as it was in the Aphrodite gas field, off Cyprus' southern coast and adjacent to the larger Leviathan field. The helicopter flew low over the ship for a long time, the report said.

Greek Cyprus has signed agreements to delineate undersea borders in the eastern Mediterranean with Israel, Lebanon and Egypt. A US company licensed by the Greek Cypriot government to drill for gas in the south of Cyprus, Noble Energy, operates with its Israeli partner, Delek. /Hurriyet Daily News & Today's Zaman/

Pro-Kurdish BDP ends boycott, ready to return to Parliament

The pro-Kurdish Peace and Democracy (BDP), which has refused to take the oath of office and assume its seats in Parliament since the June 12 elections, on Wednesday said it will end its boycott on Saturday, when Parliament resumes following summer recess.

The BDP made the decision in a Party Council (PM) meeting held in the predominantly Kurdish province of Diyarbakır on Wednesday. Reiterating that the initial boycott decision by the BDP was a "correct, justifiable and dignified" decision, BDP Co-chairman Selahattin Demirtaş said the BDP felt the need to adopt a new stance and decided to join Parliament on October 1 to "defend peace against war more powerfully." Demirtaş also said the ruling Justice and Development Party (AK Party) was responsible for the recent spike in violence in the Southeast, adding that had the AK Party presented a solution to the boycott issue when it first occurred, the recent deaths could have been avoided.

BDP deputies have refused to take the oath of office and join in parliamentary proceedings in protest of the imprisonment of six BDP deputies as part of the Kurdish Communities Union (KCK) trial. The BDP made the decision to boycott after the Supreme Election Board (YSK) controversially stripped Hatip Dicle, one of the six jailed BDP deputies, of his mandate over a prior terrorism-related conviction after the June 12 vote. /Today's Zaman/

Turkey cancels natural gas contract with Russia

Turkey has decided that it will not renew for another five years a 25-year-old natural gas deal with Russia on the grounds that the energy-rich country's supplier Gazprom has declined to discount the natural gas it sells to Turkey via the Russia-Turkey Western Pipeline.

According to an announcement made by the state-owned Turkish Pipeline Corporation (BOTAS) on Saturday, Turkey has decided to discontinue buying natural gas from Russia next year via the western pipeline due to Gazprom's refusal to reduce the price of natural gas to what Turkey considers a reasonable level. Turkey has been persistent in its demands since Gazprom, Russia's biggest natural gas company, which meets 67 percent of Turkey's requirements, reduced the price of the natural gas it was selling to the Italian Edison company, after a lawsuit last November at the Court of Arbitration in Stockholm.

Speaking to reporters in Ankara on Saturday, Energy and Natural Resources Minister Taner Yıldız said, "Our cooperation with Russia will move forward and grow stronger," emphasizing that cooperation with Russia would continue by means of the Blue Stream

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pipeline on the Black Sea bed Russia supplies 6 billion cubic meters of natural gas to Turkey annually via Ukraine, Bulgaria and Romania through the Russia-Turkey Western Pipeline agreement, which has been in effect since 1986 and is set to expire at the end of December.

Russia has overtaken Germany as Turkey's primary trade partner as bilateral trade is expected to surpass \$40 billion by the end of 2011. As well as a total of more than two-thirds of its natural gas, 20 percent of Turkey's imported oil is provided by Russia. Russia and Turkey also clinched a deal for the construction of Turkey's first nuclear power plant in the coastal town of Akkuyu, in the southern province of Mersin. According to the agreement, the two countries will cooperate in the construction and operation of the power plant. A consortium led by state-controlled Russian builder AtomStroyExport will construct the plant in Akkuyu, paying all of the construction costs for the plant, which is estimated to be some \$20 billion. /Today's Zaman/

EU prepares road map to remove visa for Turks

The European Union for the first time is planning to draw a road map to completely remove visa requirements for Turkish citizens, while in the meantime the union will take steps to ease visa procedures, according to Cecilia Malmstrom, European Commission representative for interior affairs.

The process will start in the fall and will have five steps starting with granting longer visas, then multi-entry visas, then shortening the processing time, then reducing the paperwork required, and then extending again or even eliminating visas for certain sectors.

Turkey's European Union Minister Egemen Bağış on Wednesday participated in a session of the European Parliament discussing the Union's visa regime for Turkish nationals. The EU-Turkey Joint Parliamentary Committee meeting on Wednesday was the first high-level meeting between Turkey and the EU on what Ankara hopes will lead to further negotiations to remove visa requirements for Turks visiting EU member countries.

Bağış denied allegations that a wave of migration from Turkey to the EU would follow visa exemption, saying that a reverse migration was already underway. /Hurriyet Daily News/

Parties get to work on new constitution, PM wants it done by first half of 2012

Turkey's ruling Justice and Development Party (AK Party) and main opposition Republican People's Party (CHP) on Thursday agreed on how the new constitution will be prepared while Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan revealed plans to replace the current Constitution with the new one by the first half of 2012.

Turkey's long-awaited expectations for a new civilian constitution have become stronger than ever since the June 12 parliamentary elections. All of the parties represented in Parliament vowed to draft a new constitution to replace the existing one, which was drafted under martial law after the September 12, 1980 military coup and has long been criticized for failing to respond to today's needs for broader rights and freedoms. The ruling party also vowed to make a new constitution after its election victory based on a

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broad consensus in the Parliament.

As part of its efforts to prepare the new constitution in cooperation with the political parties and the civil society, a delegation from the AK Party visited the CHP on Thursday in a bid to draw a roadmap for the preparations of the new constitution, and the two parties reached an agreement on the method of how to prepare it. Speaking to reporters after the meeting, AK Party's deputy chairman, Ömer Çelik said the two parties had reached an agreement that a reconciliation commission led by Parliament Speaker Cemil Çiçek should conduct the preparations for the new constitution and that the number one item on the agenda for Parliament in the new term should be the new constitution. Çelik underlined that opinions on the content of the new constitution were not discussed during the meeting as it will be the task of the Constitutional Reconciliation Commission to discuss the content of the new charter.

Prime Minister Erdoğan, who on Thursday also commented on the decision of the pro-Kurdish Peace and Democracy Party (BDP) to end its parliamentary boycott and to join in with parliamentary proceedings, said the party can take part in talks on the drafting of the new constitution as long as they form a parliamentary group. Noting that the government had initially requested appointments with the parties that have parliamentary groups in Parliament, he added they can also meet with the BDP if they form a group. /Today's Zaman/

Turkey-US commission to convene in Ankara

The seventh annual meeting of the Turkey-U.S. Economic Partnership Commission will take place Monday in Ankara. The meeting will be organized under the co-chairmanship of Deputy Undersecretary for Bilateral Political Affairs and Public Diplomacy Ambassador Selim Yenel and US Assistant Secretary of State for Economic, Energy and Business Affairs, Jose Fernandez.

A written statement from Turkey's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said Saturday "Mutual development of economic, commercial and investment relations between Turkey and the US and creating new areas of cooperation such as contributing to Istanbul's bid to become a global financial center will be on the agenda of the meeting." The meeting is "also expected to contribute to the future work of the Framework for Strategic Economic and Commercial Cooperation," it said. /Hurriyet Daily News/

TUSIAD Highlights

The Turkish Industry and Business Association (TUSIAD) announced its Vision 2050 Report yesterday at a meeting in Istanbul, where its chairwoman Ümit Boyner took the floor, stressing that Turkey's achievements in economic growth were not fully reflected by its development levels. Boyner said that Turkey, which is now a country that has a say on the global level, could succeed in ranking the 17th largest economy in the world by applying its economic growth target step by step after the unsteady atmosphere of 1990s. Speaking at the meeting, Samuel A. Di Piazza, co-chair of Vision 2050 Project, said that worldwide senior managers considered Turkey as a center of opportunities and that Turkey's performance in the region would determine the foreign direct investment flow. Piazza stated that everything was in place to enable Turkey to take its place in the

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world's top 10 economies, adding that it could indeed become a critical actor of the 21st century. Furthermore, President Abdullah Gül sent a message to the meeting, stressing that development targets should be fulfilled and concrete steps should be taken for the generations of today and the future. Gül added that it was very important for Turkey to head towards a future in line with dynamics of the new world order and that a long-term and realistic road map should be drawn, adding that priorities should be determined correctly and strategies aimed at expanding horizons should be established towards this end. /Turkish Press Review/

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Turkey starts military drill at Syrian border

Turkey will consider more sanctions against Syria as it cannot stand idly by while Damascus shoots demonstrators, the country's prime minister said Tuesday, the same day the Turkish military announced plans to conduct exercises near its southern border. There can be no justification for killing defenseless people, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan said Tuesday in Pretoria at a joint press conference with Deputy South African President Kgalema Motlanthe.

Stepping up pressure on embattled Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, Erdoğan said he would lay out Turkey's plans for sanctions against Damascus after he visits a Syrian refugee camp near the two countries' common border in the coming days.

Turkey has begun partially implementing some sanctions, the prime minister said, but added that it had chosen not to announce them officially because of the urgency of the matter. The plan for more sanctions heralds a further deterioration in the previously friendly relations between Ankara and Damascus since the start of al-Assad's crackdown on protesters. More than 7,500 Syrians have taken refuge in camps established in Hatay, having fled the violence at home.

Turkey's military exercises are likely to coincide with Erdoğan's planned visit to Hatay. The military said in a statement on its website Tuesday that the maneuvers would take place in the southern province between October 5 and 13. Turkey has earlier said it had stopped two ships carrying arms to Syria. The aim of the exercises is to test "the mobilization and the communication between the ministries, public institutions and Turkish army in case of a war," said the military. /Hurriyet Daily News/

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Turkey extends ISAF's command one more year

Turkey said it would extend its command of the Kabul-based International Security Assistance Force, or ISAF, for another year starting November 1.

The decision was announced by the Turkish Armed Forces on Tuesday, the same day Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu met with Marc Grossman, the US envoy to Afghanistan and Pakistan. Turkey took over the ISAF's command first in 2009. The Turkish unit is responsible for security in the capital along with providing health, education and some other infrastructural help to world's one of the poorest countries.

Davutoğlu and Grossman discussed the substance of the upcoming international summit on Afghanistan on November 1 and 2, and Grossman thanked Turkey for its leadership and highlighted the importance of the initiative, sources said. Afghanistan had always been a special place for Turkey, and it would continue to exert every effort to ensure peace and stability in that country, Davutoğlu said, adding that he would do everything in his power for the success of a trilateral summit and for the conference planned to take place on November 2. /Hurriyet Daily News/

Turkey and France to jointly fight terrorism

Turkey and France will establish mechanisms to jointly fight against terror, organized crime, and human and drug smuggling as part of a rare substantive bilateral agreement to be inked Friday, which will be a first of its kind for Turkey. "The agreement has both technical and operational dimensions," French Interior Minister Claude Gueant, who came to Turkey for official talks, told reporters in Ankara yesterday. "We will identify threats common to both countries. And we will move against them together. That would surely require joint operations as well." Gueant met with EU Minister Egemen Bağış and Deputy Prime Minister Beşir Atalay and will hold talks with Interior Minister İdris Naim Şahin today where an agreement will be signed. Gueant will also be received by President Abdullah Gül on Friday. The agreement with France will focus on deepening cooperation on the fight against terrorism, organized crime, drug and human smuggling and illegal immigration between the two countries. It will be as substantive as possible and will also include establishment of mechanisms, officials said. /Turkish Press Review/

Two-day workshop on Arab Spring kicks off in Istanbul

A two-day workshop discussing the latest developments in North Africa and the Arab countries titled "Transition from Dictatorship to Democracy" began in Istanbul on Thursday. The workshop, jointly organized by the Turkish Prime Ministry's Office of Public Diplomacy and the Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding (CMCU) at Georgetown University, is taking place at the Prime Ministry's Dolmabahçe Office. Sixty high-profile participants from Europe, the United States, the Arab world and Turkey are attending the workshop, where the Arab Spring will be discussed extensively. On the first day of the workshop yesterday, Public Diplomacy Coordinator İbrahim Kalın and Georgetown University CMCU founding director John L. Esposito delivered speeches. Speaking to the Anatolian news agency prior to the workshop, Kalın said a new page has been turned in the Arab world and consecutive public revolutions have destroyed many of the myths about Arabs in the minds of the people. "We are just at the beginning of the beginning. Now, dictators are gone, but old structures of the past and main

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elements of the old regime still continue their presence. The change of this will take time." Kalın also dwelled on Turkey's role in these countries' transition to democracy and said recent visits of Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan to Egypt, Tunisia and Libya showed that all the political actors in these countries want to benefit from Turkey's experience of democracy. /Turkish Press Review/

US Vice President Biden to visit Turkey, Greece in December

US Vice President Joe Biden will visit debt-riddled Greece and Turkey, a vital American ally in the Middle East, on a major overseas trip in early December, the White House said on Monday. In Istanbul, Biden will take part in a global entrepreneurship summit, a follow-up event from one hosted by President Barack Obama in April 2010 to connect US business interests and foundations with the Muslim world.

Obama has spent considerable political capital in fostering better relations between Washington and Turkey, which the United States sees as a crucial player in the Middle East and the wider region, including Afghanistan and the Gulf.

Washington has watched with concern as Turkey's once-friendly ties with Israel deteriorated rapidly over Israel's 2010 killing of nine Turkish activists aboard a Gaza-bound aid convoy. The crisis has underscored Israel's growing isolation and the new limits of US influence in the Middle East.

Obama raised the issue in talks with Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in New York on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly last month. "The president emphasized his interest in seeing a resolution of the issues between those two countries and encouraged them to continue working toward that end," White House advisor Liz Sherwood-Randall told reporters after the meeting, saying Obama also underscored the need to calm tensions throughout the region.

Following the meeting with Obama, Erdoğan voiced a variety of common interests such as their two countries' determination to fight the terrorist Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and Turkey's decision to coordinate sanctions against Syria with the US, which emerged as the two leading outcomes of their meeting in New York. /Today's Zaman/

TUSIAD Highlights

TUSIAD-USCC sign Memorandum of Understanding

TUSIAD and the United States Chamber of Commerce (USCC) signed a Memorandum of Understanding on Tuesday, October 4th, 2011 at TUSIAD Headquarters in Istanbul.

The memorandum, signed by Ümit Boyner, Chair of TUSIAD's Board of Directors, and Thomas J. Donohue, president and CEO of USCC, aims to improve economic relations between Turkey and the US through joint events and projects and mutual support of commerce and investments.

TUSIAD and USCC will host a conference in Washington, DC on October 26, 2011 as their first joint event. In this conference, cooperation between Turkey and the US in the areas of international economic, financial, and organizational politics as well as the

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improvement of bilateral trade relations will be discussed. A report that consequently will be published will be shared with different organizations in the US and Turkey.

In addition, with the aim of improving cooperation and collaboration, newly formed "Bilateral Economic Improvement Working Groups" will organize a meeting in October.

"Global Energy Strategy Simulation" Conference

Within the context of our 40th Anniversary, TUSIAD organized a "Global Energy Strategy Simulation" conference on October 6, 2011 at Haliç Convention Center. The event was moderated by Dr. George Friedman, founder and CEO of STRATFOR.

Turkey's Foreign Minister, Mr. Ahmet Davutoğlu, and Energy and Natural Resources Minister, Mr. Taner Yıldız, participated as keynote speakers. Senior participants representing Turkey, USA, Iran, Russia, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Azerbaijan, Germany, and Georgia attended the conference which aimed to create a common vision on the policy options that will affect the future of energy sector.

TUSIAD High Advisory Council Meeting

TUSIAD's High Advisory Council Meeting was held in Istanbul on Wednesday, October 5, 2011 at Haliç Convention Center.

Opening speeches delivered by Mr. Erkut Yücaoglu, Chairman of the High Advisory Council and Mrs. Ümit Boyner, the President of the Board of Directors of TUSIAD, and Mr. Nihat Ergün, Minister of Science, Industry and Technology.

You may click [here](#) to watch the videos of the speeches held in TUSIAD High Advisory Council Meeting.

TUSIAD High Advisory Council Meeting - [Photo Gallery](#)

October 12-17, 2011

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Turkish society now unmoved by EU progress reports

After years of no visible progress in Turkey's long route to the European Union, the release of yearly progress reports, once a source of domestic crisis and labor pains for governments, is now received with feelings of apathy and indifference by Turkish society, a large part of which, for many reasons, does not think accession to the EU is possible or as desirable as it was a decade ago.

The latest of the annual progress reports of the EU Commission evaluating the distance

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TUSIAD Selected News on Turkey

Washington

Turkey has covered or failed to cover within the last year was released on Wednesday, but without the effects the report used to bring about in the country. While the public remained somewhat indifferent to the assessment of the report, the government hailed the positive parts while dismissing the criticism it is already so familiar with.

"One just wonders whether it is the level of support for EU accession that has dropped; what we see may just be an erosion of faith that we ever will become a member of the EU," said Can Baydarol, an academic in the international relations department of İstanbul Kültür University, He also noted that since Turkey was already working on reforms and moving closer to an ideal democracy "for its own sake," the feeling that prevailed in the public was indifference toward the bloc, since Turks increasingly feel that "whatever they do, they will not be accepted into the EU."

Turkey's booming economy, one of the world's most vibrant, is visibly the strongest reason for the country's late-found self-confidence to challenge the union, which recognized in the progress report that Turkey managed its economy well despite the declining trends in economies all over the world. However, this does not mean the country enjoys greater prosperity than European countries. In fact, the Turkish economic boom is claimed to be dependent on the continuation of its accession negotiations with the EU, and the country's charm for investors lies largely with its strong bid at joining the union.

Although the report recognized Turkey's role in some of the most critical matters on the international agenda, the EU Commission voiced discomfort with Turkey's foreign policy and called for its alignment with the EU. Çiğdem Naz, of the international relations department at Yıldız Technical University, pinpointed the reason why the reports are no longer meaningful for Turkey: "There is nothing in the progress report that we do not already know about." Naz also speculated that it might be a deliberate effort by some EU countries to stall the process and frustrate the Turkish public, with hopes that the country would settle for less than full membership.

The EU offers limited explanation as to why Turkey is the only EU candidate country that is not exempt from visa requirements. In the progress report, visa-free travel came up as an issue that must be endorsed, but immediately put on condition that Turkey must first comply fully with the acquis concerning free movement of goods and the customs union. Turkey's reason for not fully adhering to the free movement of goods within the EU points toward the Cyprus conflict again, as the EU views Greek Cyprus as the representative of the island, while Turkish Cyprus is shut out from the rest of the world, except for Turkey.

The Cyprus bifurcation found a large space for itself in the Turkish government's response to the progress report, with the Foreign Ministry reminding the EU Commission that the Cyprus issue and Turkey's EU accession should be kept as separate processes, and with EU Minister Egemen Bağış on Wednesday considering it a "historic mistake" on the part of the EU to back the Greek Cypriot agenda at the expense of damaging ties with Turkey. On individual rights "significant further efforts are required to guarantee fundamental rights in most areas," the report stated, highlighting in particular concerns in the area of freedom of expression. "...The number of court cases against writers and journalists and the still frequent disproportionate website bans raised serious concerns," the report said. Bağış said no journalist was in jail in Turkey for journalistic activities,

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saying journalists do not have criminal immunity just because they are journalists.

Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has slammed the European Union for "slinging mud" at Turkey and disparaged the bloc over its financial woes. Erdoğan ruled out any dialogue with the EU if the Greek Cypriots take over its rotating presidency next year and argued that rectifying injustices against the Turkish Cypriots had now become a "matter of honor" for the bloc. Erdoğan pledged Turkey would stay on the path of reform, but said that abandoning the Turkish Cypriots will "not be the price we pay to overcome obstructions" in the accession process. /Today's Zaman & Turkish Press Review/

Iran trying to break sanctions through Turkey

Iran, suffering from a series of sanctions imposed on it by the UN, is trying to use Turkey to procure materials and goods it urgently needs in its domestic industry, pushing illegal trade with Turkey to \$4 billion, increasing from \$1 billion in 2009. Though most illegal trade comprises items that were not on the list of banned materials, such as tobacco and oil, other items, such as dual-use materials, may be finding their way to Iran.

All sorts of goods are being transported unofficially, says Özcan Alaş, president of the Iran and Middle East Trade Development Association. Textile products, machinery and parts, spare automobile parts and food are all part of the illegal trade allegedly carried out by buses, trucks and other means of transport over the mountains. Talking about the difficulties in which the Iranians find themselves, Alaş says: "They get what they need from Turkey because their other neighbors don't have what they need. You even see big factories having to stop production due to a lack of spare parts, which causes people to suffer."

Alaş also says Iran bypasses embargos over financial transactions. Iranian businessmen do their money transfers the old way, he claims, saying that huge amounts of money are being transferred "a la Grand Bazaar" with money physically moved from the buyer to the seller. "Sometimes a money transfer of \$500 million is performed in just one go. The buying party makes the payment to an intermediary with a commission of 1 or 2 percent and gets the money out of the country," he adds.

According to the officials in the Turkish government, there are also difficulties regarding the items with double uses that fall under the embargo. While Turkey prohibits the exportation of such items in compliance with UN resolutions, European companies could sell them to Iran, an official from the government says. The reason is that sometimes dual-use items may fall into a gray area, and it is difficult to ascertain whether they are in the banned category or not.

Iran and Turkey have a trade volume of nearly \$11 billion, which they hope to bring to \$30 billion. With a young population of over 70 million, Iran has great business potential for Turkey's rapidly growing economy, but because of the sanctions Turkish companies are reluctant to make any major investment in Iran. Still, in an effort to increase trade with each other, the two neighbors are planning to open another customs point at Dilucu-Maku, as part of Turkey's plans to open nine new border gates to facilitate increasing trade with its southern and eastern neighbors. /Today's Zaman/

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Turkey to give military support to Azerbaijan, Yılmaz Says

Turkey is ready to extend support to the Azerbaijani Armed Forces, Turkey's defense minister said in Baku yesterday. "We are ready to support, cooperate and join in production with Azerbaijan Armed Forces," Defense Minister İsmet Yılmaz told journalists after visiting former Azerbaijani President Haydar Aliyev's grave in Baku. "A bilateral strategic cooperation agreement [between Turkey and Azerbaijan] has been signed. Turkish Prime Minister [Recep Tayyip Erdoğan] and [Azerbaijani] President İlham Aliyev have also decided on the establishment of a high advisory council," Yılmaz said. The council will be the basis for relations between the two countries, Yılmaz said, adding that there were good and sound relations between Turkey and Azerbaijan. /Turkish Press Review/

Unemployment in Turkey falls to 9.1 percent

Turkey's unemployment rate fell 1.5 percentage points to 9.1 percent for the period between June and August, according to data published today by Turkey's official statistical agency (TÜİK). The number of unemployed fell by 273,000 to 2.50 million people in the period compared to the same period last year. Urban unemployment fell by 1.7 points to 11.5 percent, whereas rural unemployment fell by 0.8 points to 4.7 percent. The number of employed people increased by 1.47 million people to 24.95 million people during the period between June and August compared to the same period last year. Non-agricultural unemployment fell from 13.6 to 11.8 percent whereas labor market participation rate increased from 50 to 51.2 percent in this period compared to the same period last year, according to TÜİK figures. /Hurriyet Daily News/

TUSIAD Highlights

TUSIAD Press Release on EU's Turkey Progress Report

Following the publication of Turkey Progress Report by the EU Commission, TUSIAD Board of Directors announced that the report provides a roadmap for Turkey to achieve democracy in EU standards and to become a global economic center. Below are some excerpts from the press release:

Turkey's EU candidacy continues to be the strategic priority for our nation's democratic ideals and its sustainable development. At the same time, G20's increasing importance, the rise of the Asia-Pacific region, US-EU economic partnership, natural resources, new energy technology, environmental problems and the demand for democracy of people living under authoritarian regimes will all affect Turkey's roadmap. Especially the adoption of the democratic reforms emphasized in the EU Commission's Report is of critical importance for Turkey. This is why the rewriting of the Constitution, which should be done transparently and be based on social and political compromise, and the establishment of a new constitutional order that supports rule of law, individual and cultural rights and freedoms, and an independent, speedy justice system is so important.

The alignment of legislations with the EU is important for Turkey to become a competitive market economy by enabling the better integration into modern information systems and global trade. In this framework, the chapters that are ready to be opened

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for negotiations should be opened in order to achieve technical alignment more quickly. At the same time, EU should provide similar benefits to Turkey as it has done towards other candidates, such as ease of restrictions on visas, and should take steps in addressing lack of Turkey's presence in EU's free trade negotiations with third countries.

TUSIAD believes that Turkey should continue in the steps toward EU candidacy and supports opening of new chapters for negotiations.

TUSIAD's GÖRÜŞ magazine address Turkish-Israeli relations

TUSIAD's GÖRÜŞ magazine focuses on Israeli-Turkish relations in its October issue titled "Israel-Turkey: Quo Vadis?" and looks at different perspectives of the bilateral relations between the two.

Ümit Boyner, Chairwoman of the Board of TUSIAD, contributed to the issue with an article titled "Where is the Middle East headed, where does Turkey stand?" Emphasizing Israel's need for Turkey's friendship, or at least its good will, Boyner expressed the increasing isolation of Israel in the region. She also stated that without the solution of the Palestinian question or the start of a peace process, the normalization of relations between Israel and Turkey is very hard, adding that only if Israel meets the Turkish demands for an apology and compensation for damages can the problem become manageable.

In addition, Hasan Akçakayalıoğlu, President of Israel Working Group at TUSIAD International, addressed the economic dimension of the relationship between the two.

In the issue, the global economic crisis in terms of Turkey's conformity with global economy, the volatility in the financial markets, and Asia's standing after the global crisis were examined as well.

You can find Boyner's full article [here](#) in Turkish.

October 18-24, 2011

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Atalay: 239 dead, more than 1,300 wounded in eastern Turkey

The death toll in an earthquake which shook southeast Turkey on Sunday has risen to 239 people, with around 1,300 people injured, Deputy Prime Minister Beşir Atalay told a news conference today.

Rescue teams on Monday sifted through rubble of flattened multistory buildings to try to

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reach dozens of people believed trapped beneath after a 7.2-magnitude earthquake struck eastern Turkey, as aid groups scrambled to set up tents, field hospitals and kitchens to assist thousands left homeless. Around 1,275 rescue teams from 38 provinces were being sent to the region, officials said, and troops were also assisting search-and-rescue efforts.

Interior Minister Idris Naim Şahin had said about 80 multistory buildings collapsed in the city of Erciş alone when the earthquake struck Sunday. He said some 40 buildings still had people trapped inside, giving rise to fears that the death toll could increase substantially.

The hardest-hit area was Erciş, an eastern city of 75,000 close to the Iranian border and on one of Turkey's most earthquake-prone zones. The bustling city of Van, about 55 miles (90 kilometers) south of Erciş, also sustained substantial damage. Highways in the area caved in. Residents spent the night outdoors and lit campfires, while the Red Crescent began setting up tents in a stadium. Others sought shelter with relatives in nearby villages. /Hurriyet Daily News/

Turkey launches incursion into Iraq

Turkish soldiers, air force bombers and helicopter gunships launched an incursion into Iraq on Wednesday, hours after alleged members of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) killed 24 soldiers and wounded 18 others in multiple attacks along the border, in the deadliest PKK attack since 1992.

Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan said Turkey had launched large-scale operations, including "a hot pursuit within the limits of international law." Erdoğan canceled a visit to Kazakhstan after the attacks as the chief of the military as well as interior and defense ministers rushed to the border area to oversee the anti-militant offensives.

The new incursion began hours after militants staged simultaneous attacks on military outposts and police stations near the border towns of Çukurca and Yüksekova early Wednesday morning. NTV television reported that Turkish troops had gone some 2.5 miles (4 kilometers) into Iraq and helicopters were ferrying commandos across the border. The incursion for now appears to be limited in scope. Turkey last staged a major ground offensive against Iraq in early 2008.

The militants have lately intensified their attacks in the country's Kurdish-dominated southeast, killing dozens of members of the country's security force and at least 18 civilians since mid-July.

The attacks were condemned by several political figures. "As a friend and ally, the United States will continue to stand with the people and government of Turkey in their fight against the PKK, which the United States has officially designated as a terrorist organization," said Francis Ricciardone, the U.S. Ambassador to Turkey in a statement. "No political cause, and no religion, can justify terrorism." The U.S. currently shares drone surveillance data with Turkey to aid its fight against Kurdish militants and it is engaged in talks with Turkey for possible deployment of Predator drones on Turkish soil after the U.S. leaves Iraq, according to the Turkish government.

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Erdoğan indicated that Turkey was expecting "active cooperation" from the international community in its fight against the militants. /Hurriyet Daily News/

Syrian opposition seeks closer ties to Turkey in Ankara meeting

Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu met with a delegation from the anti-regime Syrian National Council (SNC) last Monday, in Ankara's first public contact with the council in what is seen as a move to strengthen the group's standing as Syria's official opposition movement.

During the meeting Davutoğlu told the delegates from the SNC, which represents a diverse set of opposition voices within Syria, that they should continue using peaceful means in their anti-regime efforts. The "Syrian opposition, which works for a democratic order based on protection of fundamental rights and freedoms" should seek their goals through "legitimate and peaceful means," Davutoğlu told the council members. The foreign minister also denounced Syria for the Saturday killing of Ziad al-Obeidi, a well-known activist who helped organize peaceful demonstrations in Syria.

The meeting between Davutoğlu and the SNC followed an emergency meeting of the Arab League over the weekend, during which a bloc of countries led by Saudi Arabia attempted to suspend Syria's membership and recognize the SNC as the legitimate government of Syria. When the measure failed, members instead agreed to host talks in Cairo between the SNC and Syria's President Bashar al-Assad.

On Monday, SNC members stated that the regime would likely abstain from the Cairo meetings, a sign of Damascus's ardent refusal to talk with a council it has warned other countries against recognizing. The SNC was formed in İstanbul on October 2 after months of negotiations among a wide range of resistance groups, including the Muslim Brotherhood, leftist secularists, Syrian Christians, Kurds and Arab nationalists. The council claims it must be recognized internationally as the legitimate voice of the Syria people and an official alternative to Assad's Damascus regime.

The council's meeting with Davutoğlu is one of the largest steps yet in its bid for such recognition, and council members promise that the Monday talk will be followed by further meetings both with Ankara and the Arab League. Members are also seeking to elect an official leader to head the SNC, and hope that a current round of meetings in İstanbul will produce a new leader in the coming week. Although official recognition for the opposition has not been forthcoming, Turkish officials have indicated that they will continue to maintain close contact with the council. Syria's opposition movement is likely to see the high profile meeting as a sign of the council's growing legitimacy in the international community. /Today's Zaman/

Turkey hosts 11 Palestinian exiles

Eleven Palestinian exiles have arrived in Ankara as Israel freed hundreds of Palestinian prisoners as part of a historic swap deal it made with its deadly rival Hamas, following years of negotiations to see a single Israeli sergeant return safely back home. Turkey received 11 Palestinian ex-prisoners shortly after midnight on Tuesday in line with an agreement the opposing sides managed to reach through the reconciliation efforts of Egypt, Turkey and Germany. Meanwhile, Turkish senior sources acknowledged that the

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11 Palestinians had been taken to the headquarters of the National Intelligence Organization (MIT) following their arrival at Ankara Esenboğa Airport, and had a medical examination at the MIT building. It has also emerged that MIT officials will remain in constant touch with the Palestinian exiles in the following days and receive counseling on their experiences of being held in Israeli prisons. The sources separately noted that there were no violations of the law regarding the deportation, since the Palestinians were given their Palestinian passports back in Egypt to enter Turkey, but although they are now inside the country, it would not be feasible for the exiles to travel freely due to concerns over their safety. Whether the deported Palestinians would like to remain in Turkey is another question the officials raised, as they noted, "It will not be possible to keep them using force if they want to leave," in which case officials of the concerned parties will be contacted to review the conditions. /Turkish Press Review/

TRNC, Greek Cyprus cancel military exercises

The Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) and the Greek Cyprus administration have again decided not to hold military exercises this year due to ongoing peace negotiations. The Greek Cypriot Ministry of Defense announced on Monday that its annual war games have been canceled again this year to avoid ratcheting up tensions amid ongoing talks to reunify the ethnically divided island. The ministry said in a statement on Monday that the decision to call off this week's three-day maneuvers was made even though Turkey hasn't said whether it will also cancel a military exercise it holds jointly with the TRNC. The ministry said it expects Turkey to follow suit. TRNC presidential spokesperson Osman Ertuğ, in a written statement released yesterday, said the TRNC had decided not to hold the Toros military exercises this year in order to hold UN-led reunification talks between Greek and Turkish Cypriot leaders. /Turkish Press Reviews/

Third seismic ship sets sail for east Med, minister announces

A new Turkish seismic research ship is scheduled to set sail for the Mediterranean to explore for sources of hydrocarbons on Monday, Turkish Energy and Natural Resources Minister Taner Yıldız announced over the weekend.

Turkey has hired a new seismic research ship for oil and gas exploration, and the ship is scheduled to leave for the eastern Mediterranean on Monday, Yıldız announced. Opposing claims that Turkey only had one research ship in the eastern Mediterranean, Yıldız said there were two Turkish ships -- the Piri Reis and another ship -- which have currently been conducting research off the coast of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC). Yıldız explained that the confusion surrounding the existence of a second ship was related to the exploration activities not being "overly publicized" to avoid pressure being put on the international company Turkey hired the ship from. Yıldız further clarified that the ship that was expected to set sail on Monday would be the third and that it was hired from a Norwegian company. /Today's Zaman/

TUSIAD Highlights

TUSIAD has started an aid initiative to help the victims of the Van earthquake. In a letter to TUSIAD members, Ms. Ümit Boyner, the Chair of the TUSIAD Board of

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Directors, expressed her condolences to the victims and called on TUSIAD members to make contributions for a disaster relief fund to be collected in an account at Türkiye İş Bankası between October 24 and November 7. She stated that all aid funds collected will be transferred to the Ministry of Disaster and Emergency Management to help their efforts in the area.

October 25-31, 2011

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- Turkey puts more pressure on Europe to curb PKK activities
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Foreign aid pouring into Turkey

Turkey's request for aid to help in the aftermath of the deadly October 23 earthquake in the eastern province of Van has received a tremendous response, with over 12 countries immediately offering help. Ukraine, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, Kazakhstan, Egypt, Israel, Switzerland, Azerbaijan, Ireland, Japan and Belgium, Qatar and Jordan have all officially offered aid.

The Turkish government had not readily accepted search-and-rescue teams from foreign countries in the wake of a magnitude 7.2 quake in the eastern province of Van because it wanted to test its own capacity to respond to such a disaster, a government minister has said. However, Ankara accepted many offers of help two days after the quake when it became apparent that quake victims were in need of immediate shelter as winter closes in. Countries, including Israel and neighboring Armenia, then sent tents and prefabricated houses to help victims. The United States also said on Friday it would supply tents, containers and prefabricated housing.

As search-and-rescue efforts have come to an end, shelter remains the main problem for survivors of the quake. Overseeing the relief efforts, Deputy Prime Minister Beşir Atalay said 35,000 tents had been handed out so far—about 3,500 of which were sent by other countries—and there was no shortage. But people have complained that distribution was chaotic, tents were looted, and some were sold by profiteers on the black market. "From now on we are determining the need for tents according to our nightly visits and not according to the people's demands," Atalay said. /Hurriyet Daily News & Turkish Press Review/

Turkey puts more pressure on Europe to curb PKK activities

The reluctance of many European countries to move against terrorist Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) activities on their soil continues to be a major concern for the Turkish government, which has been increasingly vocal in its demand for quick action to curb financial and logistical support to the outlawed organization.

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The PKK continues to operate in such countries as Germany, Austria, Belgium, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Finland, the UK, France and Italy. Though it has been experiencing hard times recently due to operations launched against the terrorist organization in some European countries (like the arrest and then conditional release of several PKK leaders in Belgium, the ongoing judicial process against the PKK in France and the ongoing case into the PKK-affiliated ROJ TV in Denmark), the PKK continues to raise funds and find new recruits in others without any major difficulty, analysts say. Especially in Germany, the PKK operates freely, runs public campaigns, courts politicians and collects money for terror attacks against Turkish military, police and civilian targets in Turkey.

The latest criticism on the issue came from Parliament Speaker Cemil Çiçek, who lashed out at German authorities for turning a blind eye to PKK terror activities in Germany. Last month Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan also accused a number of German funds of funneling money to the PKK through loans offered to municipalities run by the pro-Kurdish Peace and Democracy Party (BDP), the political wing of the PKK. At the 2011 Bosphorus Conference in Istanbul two weeks ago, Turkey's EU Minister and chief negotiator Egemen Bağış also urged Europe to take more concrete steps against PKK terror. He asked European countries to work together with Turkey to combat terrorism, adding, "What al-Qaeda is to the West, the PKK is to Turkey."

Separate reports by EU's police agency, Europol, Federal Office for the Defense of the Constitution, and the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution in Austria, have all found PKK involvement in activities such as drug smuggling, human trafficking and money laundering. They have found that the main aim of PKK activities in Europe is to finance the administrative units of the terrorist organization and win new members. The reports also have drawn attention to PKK's "double strategy" of resorting to violence in Turkey while seeking legitimacy abroad with a pro-peace attitude. /Today's Zaman/

US moves to sell gunships to Turkey

The Obama administration formally notified the US Congress on October 28 of an unusual proposal to take three AH-1W "SuperCobra" attack helicopters from the US Marine Corps inventory and sell them to Turkey. The deal, valued at up to \$111 million, would boost Turkey's self-defense as well as regional security and its ability to operate with US forces and other NATO members, a Pentagon notice to lawmakers said. Ankara has been seeking the helicopters to replace those lost in its long struggle against outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). Turkey last week launched air and ground assaults on PKK bases in northern Iraq, vowing to exact "great revenge" after 24 Turkish troops were killed on October 19 in one of the deadliest attacks in years. Under the administration's plan, the Marines would get two new, late-model Textron Inc Bell AH-1Z SuperCobras in exchange for the three, twin-engine AH-1W aircraft that would be transferred to Ankara. The Pentagon's Defense Security Cooperation Agency said the sale's effect on US Marine Corps "readiness" would be mitigated by using the proceeds for the Corps' SuperCobra upgrades program. Such sales from the US military's current inventory are extremely rare. The United States and Turkey have a long tradition of military cooperation, both bilaterally and inside the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Turkey already uses the AH-1W helicopter, the backbone of the US Marine Corps attack helicopter fleet, having bought 10 of them in the 1990s. The proposed sale would enhance its ground defense capabilities, said the notice, which is required by law and

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does not mean a sale has been wrapped up. Turkey also would get seven General Electric Co T700-GE-401 engines, six installed on the aircraft and one spare as part of the proposed deal, the security agency said. /Hurriyet Daily News/

New Turkish, Azeri deal boosts Nabucco hopes

Turkey signed an agreement with Azerbaijan on Tuesday to supply natural gas to the much-discussed Nabucco pipeline project, which will transport Caspian gas across Turkey to Eastern European. The Şahdeniz II agreement was signed between the energy ministers of both countries in Izmir with the participation of Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Azeri President İlham Aliyev during their first High Level Strategic Cooperation Council meeting. "The details of the agreement will be revised by our energy ministers," Erdoğan told reporters at the press conference, but said he was expecting the completion of the pipeline's construction between Turkey and Azerbaijan next year. Turkey will buy 6 billion cubic meters of gas from Azerbaijan and will help with the transfer of another 10 billion cubic meters of natural gas to Europe via the Nabucco pipeline.

The first council meeting between Turkey and Azerbaijan focused on economic issues, but the two regional allies also signed agreements on communications, encouraging investments, police force education and family and social policy. The agreement would make Azerbaijan one of the most important gas suppliers to the European continent, Aliyev said while hailing bilateral cooperation with Turkey. Ahead of the council meeting, Erdoğan delivered a speech at the groundbreaking ceremony of the Aegean Refinery in Aliağa and said Turkey and Azerbaijan shared the same views on the Cyprus and Nagorno-Karabakh issues, the same ideals on bringing peace to the Caucasus and the same approach to terrorism. "No country should forget that one day, they will also become the target of the terrorists they are tolerating or turning a blind eye to," Erdoğan said, urging regional countries to fight against the threat. /Turkish Press Review/

US delegation to visit Turkey

US Department of State Spokesman Victoria Nuland said at a press conference yesterday that a delegation from the US would visit Turkey in order to boost cooperation in the combat against terrorism. Nuland said that an inter-institutional delegation under guidance of the US Department of Defense was set to visit Turkey to hold bilateral contacts, as US President Barack Obama had mentioned to Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan over a phone conversation, stating that the delegation chaired by Ambassador Alexander Vershbow, the US Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs, would discuss the ways to boost cooperation in the combat against terrorism. During Q&A, Nuland reiterated that Secretary of State Hillary Clinton had called Foreign Minister to express her condolences and stressed the readiness of the US to offer assistance to Turkey following October 23's devastating earthquake in the eastern province of Van. /Turkish Press Review/

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TUSIAD Highlights

A delegation of the TUSIAD Board of Directors, led by the Chair Ms. Ümit Boyner, completed a three-day visit to the United States, aiming to strengthen Turkish-American political, economic and social relations.

In what was one of the highlights of the visit, Boyner and Brookings Institution President Strobe Talbott signed an agreement between TUSIAD and Brookings to create a "TUSIAD Senior Fellow" chair and a "TUSIAD US-Turkey Forum" under the Brookings' Turkey Project.

In addition, TUSIAD held its first joint event with the US Chamber of Commerce since they had signed a Memorandum of Understanding last month. The event was held at the US Congress and focused on US-Turkish economic relations and areas of further economic and commercial cooperation at bilateral and global levels.

During their visit, delegation members have also met with representatives from the US Department of State, the National Security Council, OPIC, and EX-IM Bank, had a meeting with the Editorial Board of Wall Street Journal, and attended a luncheon hosted by the Council on Foreign Relations in New York.

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