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**UZBEKISTAN**



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## Highlights

On the eve of the celebrations marking twenty years of independence, the Uzbek authorities are following an open-doors policy, but remaining vigilant. Europe is well represented in terms of Uzbekistan's foreign and economic affairs.

## Internal affairs

The poet and dissident from Bukhara province, Yusuf Djuma, who was arrested in 2007 for protest action against President Karimov, was released from prison. He had been sentenced to five years imprisonment in Jaslyk, one of the country's most notorious prisons, renowned for its ruthless attitude toward prisoners. His daughter said he was tortured in prison.

Rumours and speculation abounded in May and June about the attempts of the political opposition in exile to unite abroad and organize protests in Uzbekistan along the lines of the Arab spring uprising. The opposition, headed by the leader of the Erk party Muhammad Salih, called on the people of Uzbekistan to take part in an act of civil disobedience in central Independence Square. Tension was sparked by the government's efforts to prevent these events.

Students who graduated from university this year were not allowed to celebrate graduation parties. The authorities of the Tashkent-based universities took responsibility for carrying out orders banning graduation parties for security reasons. This decision was perhaps an element of the "being vigilant" policy.

On 23 June ten members of the banned Hizbut Tahrir (HT) Islamic extremist party went on trial.

The HT leaders B. Mahmatov and N. Sahibov were sentenced to seven years in prison and six members to six years. The two youngest members were released but punished with administrative sanctions.

27 June is a holiday for mass media in Uzbekistan. President Karimov congratulated journalists and other media professionals in Uzbekistan, saying: "You, journalists, professionals who lead people to generous goals and live for the sake of interests of people... I regard as my strongest and reliable supporters". He also highlighted the task of further reforming the sphere of mass-media, speaking about the need to reform and develop the sector, particularly the internet, but also referring to recent events in the Middle East and Arab countries, warning that certain destructive forces want to "mislead the youth by using the Internet in their own selfish interests".

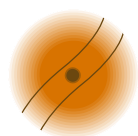
## Foreign and international Policy

On 12 May President Karimov received Spanish MP and former foreign minister Miguel Angel Moratinos. The two sides discussed relations between Spain and Uzbekistan in the political, economic and cultural spheres.

On 16 May a European Parliament delegation headed by Elisabeth Jeggle visited Uzbekistan and met with deputies of Uzbekistan's parliament to discuss perspectives of cooperation between Uzbekistan and the EU, especially in the light of the results of President Karimov's visit to Brussels in January this year. The delegation was informed of all the reforms that are being implemented in the country.

Mark Grossman, the U.S. special representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan, visited Uzbekistan and met with foreign affairs minister Elyor Ganiev. Mr. Grossman expressed America's gratitude for

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Uzbekistan's contribution to ensuring security in, and the reconstruction of, Afghanistan. He also expressed his country's commitment to building a strong partnership with Afghanistan and Central Asia. With allegations concerning a spillover of Arab events into Central Asia, this sign of American support for Uzbekistan was seen a timely message.

On 23 May a very important event took place in terms of EU-Uzbek relations. The first political diplomat from the European external action service, Czech citizen Ondrej Simek, assumed office in Tashkent, beginning the work of the EU delegation. His responsibilities include preparing the official opening of the EU delegation's office this year. In our last analysis we mentioned the dualism of the EU-Central Asian strategy, which wavers between a human rights normative approach and a more realist and pragmatic approach, and which sparked a spate of controversial allegations and media reports relative to the doubtful prospects of the office being opened. The decision to set up the EU delegation in Tashkent was made with a view to helping EU countries to coordinate cooperation with Uzbek partners more efficiently.

## Economy and business enterprise

The presentation of the Uzbek-British joint venture WorleyParsons Uzbekistan Engineering was held in Tashkent on 12 May. The joint venture was established between the British company WorleyParsons, the Uztyazhneftegazkhimproekt institute and the UzLITineftgaz open joint-stock company. It will focus on finding and developing new project ideas aimed at expanding the processing of natural resources through attracting advanced technologies and foreign partners. Its main field of activity will be to work out optimal technical solutions to major high-tech projects in the oil and gas, petrochemical, chemical and energy industries. The scope of the joint venture will also include developing projects on modernization, technical and technological re-equipment of existing production.

Uzfarmprom and Germany's Kruger GmbH signed a cooperation agreement that provides for the construction of a pharmaceutical company in Fergana costing \$25 million. It will produce 2 million vitaminized medicinal preparations per year. Production is scheduled to begin by 2014. Kruger GmbH will invest \$15 million and the remaining \$10 million will be secured in the form of credits from Uzbek banks. Interestingly, the Uzbek government seems poised to attract \$390 million in foreign investment in the next three years. This is a very positive economic asset in the light of the dynamic development of the pharmaceutical industry in the country.

Cooperation has begun between the Uzbek railway company Temir Yullari and the Spanish company Patentes Talgo S.A. In late June it was officially announced that a high-speed railway -the first in Central Asia- would be built and start operating in September, connecting Tashkent and Samarkand. The contract provides for an investment of  $\approx$ 38 million. Spain will deliver a high-speed train called Afrosiyob, whose technical characteristics fully meet modern requirements. The train will cover a distance of 658 kilometres in two hours. The route will subsequently be extended to Bukhara and Khiva. The project is expected to galvanize economic activity in Uzbekistan as well as domestic and international tourism.z

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