



NEWSLETTER

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February 18, 2008

№ 3

Azerbaijani President Pays Official Visit to Hungary

President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev pays official visit to Hungary. Mr. Aliyev and President of Hungary Laszlo Solyom today met at the Sandor Palace in Budapest. Opening the meeting, the Hungarian President said they consider Azerbaijan in the Caucasus as a strategic partner and the relations between the two countries develop dynamically. The two sides have signed document on economic, energy and transport cooperation, double taxation and tax evasion.

Azerbaijan and U.S. Concerned About PKK Cells in the Caucasus

Azerbaijan's government has raised concerns with U.S. officials that militants from Turkey's Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) are expanding from northern Iraq into the Caucasus and could be setting up cells in Azerbaijan. Azerbaijani Deputy Foreign Minister Araz Azimov told that the PKK issue was the main focus of his talks on February 14 with visiting U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State on Terrorism Frank Urbanchik. Media reports about PKK's relocation to the occupied territories of Azerbaijan controlled by Armenian armed forces.

Azerbaijan Sells Government's Stake in Mobile Venture

Azerbaijan's Communications Ministry has sold a 35.7 percent stake it owned in Azercell Telecom, the country's largest mobile phone operator. The stake was bought by Fintur Holdings B.V., which had held 64.3 percent in the company before the deal. Fintur Holdings is majority owned by Nordic operator TeliaSonera. Auditors Ernst & Young had valued the stake at \$180 million. Azercell Telecom's networks cover 78 percent of the territory of Azerbaijan and service 3 million subscribers.

Azerbaijan Closes Last Refugees Camps

Azerbaijani Government has closed the last refugees camp, a number of which were created after a big influx of people from Nagorno-Karabakh and other occupied territories in 1992-1994. As a result of the occupation of Azerbaijan territories by Armenian armed forces about one million refugees and internally displaced persons found shelter in many camps across the country. Most were set up in the south and east of the country with the help of the UN agencies, which helped to coordinate the international humanitarian response in Azerbaijan. In 2004 the Government of Azerbaijan has launched a program for accommodation of refugees and IDPs. Later that year, five camps were closed in Bilasuvar district, followed by another four camps in the western districts of Barda and Aghjabadi in 2006. Last September, the government closed the first of two camps in Saatli. With December's closure of the last two camps, some 11,800 IDP families, or nearly 50,000 people, have been resettled. "The government of Azerbaijan is to be congratulated for its substantial efforts to close the tented camps and relocate IDPs to settlements with improved living conditions," UNHCR Representative to Azerbaijan William Tall said. But despite a fast-growing economy and political stability in recent years, the authorities still needs help of organizations like UNHCR in assisting IDPs. "Significant challenges remain in terms of creating communities and employment in the new settlements," Tall said. "It is also equally important for the international community not to neglect the extent of the problem," he added. The final solution of the IDPs problem is based on the return of these people to the place of permanent inhabitation in the framework of a future peaceful settlement of the Armenia-Azerbaijani conflict and the liberation of occupied Azerbaijani territories.

Embassy's Newsletter is compiled from various sources