



NEWSLETTER

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Referendum on Constitution

On March 18, 2009, the referendum on the amendments to the Constitution held in Azerbaijan was aimed at improving and strengthening the constitutional foundations of the state in the light of significant developments which have taken place since the adoption of the present Constitution in 1995. In whole, 41 amendments were proposed to be made on 29 articles of the constitution, concerning particularly procedures of presidential and parliamentary elections, rights of citizens for equality, personal immunity and other freedoms, judicial power and so on. According to the results announced by Central Election Commission, all proposed amendments submitted in 29 paragraphs were overwhelmingly approved by voters. The referendum was observed by 47 thousand local and 177 international observers.

Azerbaijani Deputy Minister Clarifies Azerbaijani Position

Azerbaijani Deputy Foreign Minister Araz Azimov denied that his country's oil-financed military expansion meant the preparation for war to take back the Nagorno-Karabakh region from Armenia. In his interview with Reuters, Mr. Azimov said: "It is good to have a strong army, it's even better not to use it." "We never said and we never say that we shall go to war with Armenia," he stressed. But with Armenia insisting on independence for the region, "I have to say that in all circumstances and by all means we will restore territorial integrity." Mr. Azimov also said Moscow was equipping Armenia, its closest ally in the Caucasus, under cover of restocking its military hardware at the Russian military base in the Armenian town of Gyumri. Both Moscow and Yerevan have denied that Russia is supplying a military build-up to Armenia. Russian Foreign Minister Mr. Lavrov, during his visit to Azerbaijan last week, reiterated this position, saying: "We don't carry out arms shipment which could violate the stability in any region. We

established our military-technical cooperation with Azerbaijan and Armenia on the basis of these principles".

GDP Constitutes 3.9 bln AZN in January-February

GDP in Azerbaijan made up 3.9 billion AZN (standing for Azerbaijani currency – manats, 1AZN=0.80 USD) in January-February, up by 3.4% or 189.8 million manats on the same period last year. According to the State Statistics Committee, per capita GDP made up AZN 447.8 (USD \$556.4). Income of the population surged 20.8% to AZN 3,069,000,000 in January-February. Per capita income increased 19.4% to AZN 356.1. According to the Committee, people spend 75% of their earnings on consumer expenditure, 10.8% on taxes, social insurance and membership fees, 14.2% on deposits and savings.

"The World of Mugham" International Festival

For a week hundreds of peoples from different corners of the world made Azerbaijan's capital their home to enjoy mugham, Azerbaijani folk music included in the UNESCO's world cultural heritage. Held on the initiative of Azerbaijan's First Lady Mrs. Mehriban Aliyeva, the Festival brought together mugham singers from 40 countries. Azerbaijani singer Tayyar Bayramov has won the Grand Prix of the International Mugham Festival by the jury's unanimous decision and was awarded with €20,000. The top three winners of the Festival - Uzbek Yulduz Turdiyeva, Iranian Muhammad Motamedi and Egyptian Mustafa Said were awarded €15,000, €10,000, and €5,000 respectively. The three-day contest featured performances by a total of 20 singers from Azerbaijan, Iran, Syria, Iraq, Morocco, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Egypt, Turkey and Germany.