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Prof. Maral Meredova*

Highlights

The formation of a new Cabinet of Ministers was completed in March, with the majority of its members being young leaders, their average age 46. The number of women in the government has also been increased.

Foreign and international policy

Forums and meetings with foreign delegations were among the most important international events in Turkmenistan. On 6 March the co-chairman of the Turkmen-British Trade and Industry Council Ronald Nash held meetings with government officials and members of the foreign affairs ministry and some departments of the oil and gas industry. The talks focused on Turkmen-British cooperation and the implementation of bilateral agreements.

A delegation from Finland headed by Nina Vaskunlahti, director general of the foreign affairs ministry's department for Russia, Eastern Europe and Central Asia visited Turkmenistan to discuss the ongoing development of the partnership between the two countries.

U.S. cooperation

A wide range of issues of bilateral partnership in political, economic, social and humanitarian spheres was discussed during political consultations between Turkmenistan and America in Washington, with particular focus on cooperation in the energy sector. The parties also discussed joint efforts to combat international terrorism, transnational organized crime and drug trafficking. During the visit the Turkmen delegation met with members of the Turkmen-American Business Council and the heads

of several leading U.S. oil companies.

A U.S. delegation, headed by State Department representative Susan Johnson Cook then flew to Ashgabat to discuss the involvement of American businesses in Turkmenistan, supplies of new technologies and investment opportunities.

Official visit to Belarus Republic

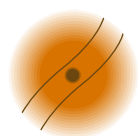
President Berdimuhamedov paid –an official visit to the Belarus Republic resulting in the subsequent creation of a business council to implement joint business projects. Agreements on academic and scientific cooperation were also signed.

Cooperation with Russian regions

Turkmen-Russian trade cooperation is in progress within the framework of Turkmenistan's partnership with the regions of Russia, the Astrakhan region and Tatarstan. During a meeting at the foreign affairs ministry, Denis Afanasyev, minister of international and foreign economic relations of the Astrakhan region, highlighted the intention of the largest regional enterprises in the fields of industry, construction, energy, and shipbuilding to develop mutually beneficial cooperation with Turkmenistan partners.

The further intensification of Turkmen-Russian cooperation was discussed with a delegation from Tatarstan at a meeting in the foreign affairs ministry. Rustam Minnikhanov, the President of Tatarstan, took part in the Days of Culture of Tatarstan and in the celebrations of the national holiday of Turkmenistan. Various projects spearheaded by Tatarstan were launched in the fields of energy, engineering, oil and information technology.

*Specialist in Central Asia and Caucasus economies.



President Berdimuhamedov and Russia's State Secretary—deputy minister of foreign affairs Grigory Karasin held a meeting in Ashgabat on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations and the 10th anniversary of the signature of the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation.

Turkmen-Ukrainian relations

Fuel and energy, transport, communications, urban development and agriculture were the topics discussed at a meeting with the Ukrainian delegation headed by deputy foreign minister Victor Maiko. The main issue was the participation of Ukrainian partners in the implementation of certain national programmes.

Turkmen-Kazakh consultations

Turkmen-Kazakh consultations between the foreign ministries of both countries took place in Turkmenistan, continuing the topic of diplomatic relations with CIS countries. During negotiations with a delegation headed by Kazakh deputy foreign minister Amangeldy Zhuma-bayev, issues of mutually beneficial partnership in trade and economy, energy, agriculture, transport and communications, and humanitarian cooperation were discussed.

Turkmen-Uzbek business forum

Fuel-energy, transport and communications sectors were singled out as some of the most promising directions for the partnership between Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan at the Turkmen-Uzbek business forum. The Uzbek delegation was headed by Elyor Ganiev, minister of foreign economic relations, investment and trade. The 7th regular meeting of the joint Turkmen-Uzbek commission for trade and economic, scientific-technical and cultural cooperation took place in Ashgabat during the visit. The partners exchanged views on the problems of Turkmen-Uzbek cooperation.

Asian countries in Turkmenistan

Officials from the foreign affairs ministries of Turkmenistan and Afghanistan negotiated a number of issues. The delegation from Afghanistan was led by deputy foreign minister for political issues Jawed Ludin. During their negotiations the partners discussed the current status and prospects of bilateral relations in the economic sector, transport and communication, fuel and energy sector, humanitarian sphere and sports. Mention was made of the construction of the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India pipeline and Atamyrat-Ymamnazar-Akin-Andkhoy railway plus the increase of electric power supply to Afghanistan as major projects in the implementation phase.

The export of electrical energy to Pakistan via Afghanistan was also on the agenda of the joint intergovernmental Turkmen-Pakistan commission. The meeting was attended by Hina Rabbani Khar, Pakistan's foreign affairs minister. The implementation of the TAPI project was a particular topic of discussion. The next meeting of intergovernmental commission will be held in the capital of Pakistan in 2013.

New joint projects were launched within the framework of Turkmen-Chinese strategic partnership. In March, a delegation headed by Qian Naychen, deputy director of the department for Eurasian countries of the international department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China paid an official visit to Turkmenistan. The delegation was received by the leaders of the Political Council of the Democratic Party and the officials of the Institute of Strategic Planning and Economic Development of Turkmenistan.

Another Chinese delegation headed by Hu ??Gang, chief engineer of the Industrial Corporation "The Great Wall of China", was received by the governing body of Turkmenistan's communications ministry. Discussions covered the further development of the



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mutually beneficial partnership between the two countries in the sphere of high technology and telecommunications. The Chinese expressed their readiness to share their experience in modern space technology with their Turkmen colleagues. During the visit the delegation was also received by officials from the ministry of petroleum and mineral resources.

International organizations

Sergei Belyaev, the head of OSCE Centre in Ashgabat, completed his mission in Turkmenistan, and at a meeting with President Berdimuhamedov exchanged views on the prospects of further developing the constructive dialogue between Turkmenistan and OSCE. The energy sector, socio-economic and humanitarian spheres, the fight against international terrorism and transnational crime were identified as the prior thrusts of mutually beneficially cooperation.

A delegation of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) headed by consultant Kimberley Bulkley visited Turkmenistan where it was received by officials of Mejlis (the Turkmen Parliament) and the foreign affairs ministry. The delegation held talks at a number of national ministries and departments.

Internal affairs

Turkmenistan is working on establishing the Agrarian Party and the Party of Entrepreneurs.

Ashgabat hosted a regular meeting of the Interstate Commission for Water Coordination (ICWC). Experts discussed issues of joint management of trans-boundary water resources in Central Asia.

A meeting with Professor Barbara Kaim, a famous Polish archaeologist, became a notable event in the field of cultural co-operation. She has been at the head of a joint Turkmen-Polish archaeological expedition in the ancient Serahs oasis in the southeast of the Akhal velayat (Akhal region) for 15 years.

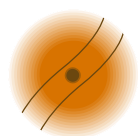
The international conference "Turkmenistan - UN: 20 years of cooperation" dedicated to the 20th anniversary of Turkmenistan's UN membership was held at the foreign affairs ministry. Miroslav Jen?a, the Special Representative of UN Secretary-General and Head of the UN Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia, underlined in his speech that the Centre is currently making efforts to monitor and analyse regional problems, and is directly involved at the same time in various activities aimed at Central Asia development.

In recent years, cultural and scientific exchanges between Turkmenistan and Iran have become more dynamic. The Days of Culture of the Islamic Republic of Iran were held in Turkmenistan within the framework of international cultural cooperation. The events were attended by Mohammad Hosseini Seyed, minister of culture and Islamic guidance, who arrived in Ashgabat heading an Iranian delegation of art people.

Economy and business enterprise

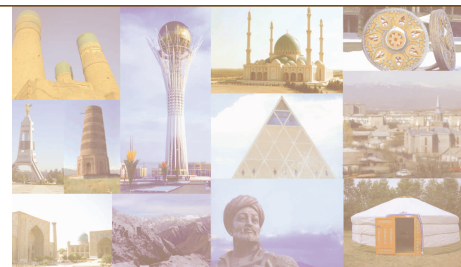
Turkmen governors summed up the work of the branch ministries for the first quarter of this year and discussed a number of priority areas of the Turkmen economy. As compared with the same period of last year, GDP rose 10.4%, capital investment increased by 63.4% and foreign trade turnover by 56.4%. More than 1,500 facilities with a total value of about \$32 billion are being constructed in Turkmenistan. The construction of social facilities totalling about \$700 million is scheduled to take place.

Within the framework of Turkmenistan partnership with the European Union, Berlin hosted the international conference "Turkmenistan-Europe: prospects for cooperation" organized and held with the participation of the ministry of petroleum and mineral resources and the Chamber of Commerce of Turkmenistan. Numerous bilateral meetings took place between the leaders of the fuel and energy



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complex of Turkmenistan and the heads of the well-known foreign oil companies to discuss the problems of increasing challenges in the realm of investment policy and the growing prospects of energy sector development.

More than 100 leading companies took part in the second U.S. Business Exhibition in Ashgabat.

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