



## Central Asia Regional Environmental Hub Newsletter Volume 1, Issue 5 Aug 1-Oct 31

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### **I. Hub Highlights**

#### **The First International 2009 Aral Sea Conference**

The Russian Academy of Sciences in St. Petersburg hosted the First International 2009 Aral Sea Conference on October 11-15, with the participation of leading scientists from Russia, Central Asia, Europe, Israel, and the United States. While some of the scientific community's opinions did diverge, the majority concluded that the current desiccation of the Aral Sea is a man-made disaster caused by the Soviet Union's intensification of "irrigation" (e.g., cotton production in Uzbekistan) in the early 1960s. The Eastern Aral Sea will almost certainly disappear completely by 2010, leaving only the heavily salinated, and rapidly depleting, Western Aral Sea and the recently restored Northern Aral Sea. Kazakhstan's effort to restore the Northern Aral Sea was the positive note in the conference. However, the overwhelming consensus is that this renewal cannot serve as a model to revive either the Western or Eastern Aral Seas. In addition, climate change may have a future effect on the viability of the Aral Sea if the Amur-Darya and Syr-Darya rivers

begin to lose water because of glacier melting. Additional hydroelectric projects may also further reduce water flow, eventually threatening even the Northern Aral Sea. Nevertheless, while donor agencies (including the U.S. government) will still find opportunities to fund various cooperative scientific and humanitarian projects, reviving the Aral Sea will not be among them.

#### **Aral Sea Conference Declaration**

The Conference issued a St. Petersburg "Declaration on The Aral Sea," noting that the Aral Sea has undergone unprecedented shrinking and salinization since the 1960s, with a serious negative impact on the sea and the people living around it. The Aral Sea's current desiccation is almost entirely due to the expansion of irrigation in the sea's drainage basin during the Soviet era that went well beyond the point of sustainability, which led to a marked decline of river inflow to the sea. Global warming, while real, has not been a major cause of the Aral's desiccation since the 1960s but may become more important in the future.



The Conference Declaration states that diverting (e.g. redirecting) Siberian rivers southward to the Aral Sea Basin or pumping water from the Caspian to the Aral are not realistic options for solving water problems in Central Asia because they would be too expensive and complicated, would require complex international agreements, and would have too many potentially serious environmental consequences. It recommended instead that it would be wiser to focus on local and regional solutions to these key issues, such as improved efficiency of water use in irrigation and

efforts to preserve and partially restore remaining parts of the Aral Sea.

The Conference Declaration optimistically states that "reports of the Aral Sea's death are premature." The Small (north) Aral Sea has been partially restored. Although the Eastern Basin of the Large Aral is lost, the Western Basin can be preserved as can major parts of the Syr- and Amu-Darya deltas. The Aral Sea of the 1960s is gone, but it is feasible to preserve a much smaller Aral Sea consisting of two sizable lakes that have ecological and economic value. Furthermore, in the more distant future it may be possible to substantially increase inflow to the sea and restore the Aral close to its former size. This has happened in the past and it could be possible again.

The Declaration concludes by saying that future study of the Aral Sea and surrounding region should be a balance of theoretical and applied science and involve scientists from different disciplines and countries. Special efforts should be made to attract and engage younger generation scientists and researchers to the Aral Sea problems in order to secure long-term scientific commitment and continued international dialogue. The International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea should co-operate with leading scientists all over the World, including Russia.

### **USAID and Russian Federal Forest Agency Award Youth for Forest Projects**

The Russian Federal Forest Agency invited USAID to be a participant and award a special prize during the VI International Junior Forest Contest. Approximately 30 students, aged 13 to 23, from 11 countries gave presentations related to forest projects around the world. An international jury viewed the presentations and awarded the top three prizes to a presentation from Russia and **two from Kazakhstan**. USAID gave a prize to a project that demonstrated the importance of international cooperation in solving an environmental problem. Muzaffar Muhammadiev, a 15

year old **student from Uzbekistan**, received the USAID prize for his presentation and participation in an afforestation project along the southern coast of the Aral Sea. Mr. Muhammadiev's presentation highlighted the need for international cooperation to address the steadily shrinking size of the inland sea.

## **CDC and USAID: Being Prepared for Pandemic Influenza**

### **The Fruit of Years of U.S. – Central Asian Partnership**

This summer, pandemic influenza arrived in Central Asia, first in **Kazakhstan** and then in the **Kyrgyz Republic**. In both countries, the cases were promptly diagnosed at the National Influenza Centers (NICs), reasonable control measures were instituted, and life went on without the extreme reactions seen in some other countries. As of October 1, there have been 17 cases diagnosed in Kazakhstan, all imported, and 3 cases in the Kyrgyz Republic, 2 imported. More important from a disease control perspective is that many suspected cases have been tested and ruled out. Testing to detect pandemic influenza, and to rule it out, sounds like a straightforward public health function to be taken for granted, but it is, in fact, the result of years of U.S. assistance in public health.

In 2005, with highly pathogenic avian influenza A(H5N1) recognized in northern Kazakhstan, CDC and USAID recognized the need to improve pandemic influenza preparedness in the region. Influenza preparedness requires an ability to rule-in and to rule-out influenza infection with accurate and timely testing. In 2005, no country in Central Asia had sensitive and specific tests for influenza. The laboratory investigation of the northern Kazakhstan cases required the assistance of experts from the U.S. Naval Medical Research Unit (NAMRU) in Cairo, Egypt. To fill the laboratory void, CDC and USAID joined forces to improve influenza laboratory diagnostics in all five Central Asian countries. Both CDC and USAID contributed funds for laboratory equipment and CDC's Influenza Division assigned a full-time resident advisor to Central Asia.

For years, laboratory testing for influenza in Central Asia has been performed using classical methods. These methods are not expensive and are familiar to virologists everywhere. Unfortunately, these methods are insensitive, missing more than half of all infections, and not specific, resulting in too many false positives. The technology introduced by CDC and USAID, real time Polymerase Chain Reaction, or real time PCR\* (see note below), is expensive and was unfamiliar but it is much more accurate. Moreover, it doesn't require handling live virus which is an important safety consideration when dealing with suspected pandemic influenza.

At the same time that laboratories were renovated, supplies and flu test kits procured, and lab staff trained, CDC assisted with establishing three sentinel sites in Kazakhstan and two sentinel sites in the Kyrgyz Republic where respiratory specimens are collected for transport to NICs in Almaty and Bishkek. Finally, in early 2009, thanks to hard work by the Ministries of Health of Kazakhstan and the Kyrgyz Republic and partners at WHO, the World Bank, NAMRU, and CDC Atlanta, real time PCR testing began for seasonal influenza. Now, for the first time in many years we have an accurate picture of the influenza viruses circulating in Kazakhstan and the Kyrgyz Republic (mostly seasonal influenza A[H3N2] and seasonal influenza A[H1N1] with

less influenza B). These data, and a sample of influenza virus isolates, are forwarded by the NICs of Kazakhstan and the Kyrgyz Republic to the Global Influenza Surveillance Network (GISN). The GISN is the international body that collects influenza data from around the world and uses it to determine the composition of each year's seasonal influenza vaccine. Developing two fully functional NICs that provide critical data to the GISN is an important achievement, but most gratifying for those of us in Central Asia is the fact that as a result of the years of preparedness efforts, the Ministries of Health of Kazakhstan the Kyrgyz Republic were truly prepared for the surprise of 2009 "swine" influenza A(H1N1) and, as a result, were able to respond promptly and appropriately.

\* (NOTE): Real-time PCR is a highly sensitive and specific technique considered to be the best technique for the initial diagnosis of pandemic influenza. With this technology, Ministries of Health are able to conduct surveillance for influenza: avian, pandemic, and seasonal. In addition, PCR can be used to test specimens from people with influenza-like illness for other causes of acute respiratory disease making studies on the causes of acute viral respiratory infections easier to conduct. Finally, real-time PCR can be used for a wide variety of infectious diseases from Congo-Crimean Hemorrhagic Fever to tuberculosis.

### **USAID Health Outreach Program**

The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) is pleased to announce its new Health Outreach Program. This five-year program will provide technical assistance, training, and direct outreach services to increase access to quality HIV prevention and tuberculosis (TB) prevention and treatment interventions for most-at-risk populations in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. The USAID Health Outreach Program will be implemented under a Cooperative Agreement by Population Services International and its sub-recipients Project HOPE, AIDS Foundation East-West, and the Kazakh Association of People Living with HIV/AIDS. The program will focus on intravenous drug users, sex workers, prisoner, migrants, men who have sex with men, and people living with HIV/AIDS. The program will work to reduce risky behaviors associated with HIV transmission and to increase the use of evidence-based HIV prevention and TB treatment services by these target population groups. The program will also help improve TB case detection among selected target groups as well as enhance the adherence to TB treatment among them.

### **Government Races To Reform Health Care Finance, Yet Preserve Health Policy Reforms**

The Government of Kazakhstan is transferring responsibility for health financing from the "oblast" (regional) to the national level. This "Unified National Healthcare System" aims to guarantee patients' ability to select doctors and health facilities freely, as well as create a competitive and transparent environment for health service delivery. Although the rationale for a more centralized system has some conceptual validity, implementation poses significant risks to the improvement of health sector efficiency, and to the preservation of equal access to health services. Furthermore, these proposed changes represent a potential reversal of the significant progress made in the last five year, much of it financed by international donor investments, that built the capacity, systems, procedures and experience for the decentralized oblast-level health financing system, a system that has matured rapidly.

## **Kazakhstan's Korgalzhyn State Nature Preserve, The Largest Preserve In Central Asia**

Kazakhstan's Korgalzhyn State Nature Preserve, the largest preserve in Central Asia, is a UNESCO heritage site and a key stopping point for birds from Africa, Europe, and Southern Asia. Tengiz Lake, the largest lake in the northern steppes, has salinity levels five times greater than the ocean, but the preserve also has fresh water lakes, crucial for these migratory birds. The preserve protects 321 different kinds of birds, 14 species of fish, and 43 species of mammals, including the near-extinct Saiga antelope. Many experts come to Korgalzhyn to study its ecology and biodiversity. The preserve faces threats from fires, illegal poaching and hunting, and a fragile fresh water drainage system, but a planned dam could help maintain it. The UNDP has an environmental education program, and has asked for U.S. assistance to develop eco-tourism.

## **Environmental NGO "Reflection" Works Inside Eco-School In Central Kazakhstan**

The environmental organization/NGO Otrazhenie (Reflection), physically located in one of 22 "eco-schools" in Kazakhstan, engages in community service projects, works closely with the Temirtau city council, and serves as the city's environmental information center. The school and NGO have combined to promote an "eco-lifestyle," such as recycling, which has greatly improved this industrial city. Students at School 16 teach environmental classes to each other, which motivates them to remain active in later years. Reflection has found financial support from the Kazakhstani government, U.S. Institute for Soviet and American Relations (ISAR), EU, Global Environmental Fund, and the U.S. Department of State.

## **Temirtau Is 'AIDS Capital of Kazakhstan**

Home to AcelorMittal, Kazakhstan's giant steel plant, Temirtau is known as the "AIDS capital of Kazakhstan." An "explosion" of new HIV/AIDS cases peaked in 1997, then dropped, and has since held steady. The local AIDS Center believes that financial difficulties and layoffs following Kazakhstan's independence, a young migrant population without social restraints, and the fact that drugs are cheaper than vodka led to the city's high rate. While no reliable drug-use data exists, the Center estimates that two-thirds of HIV/AIDS cases are drug users or their sexual partners. Many of those who seek counseling and treatment do not work, cannot adapt to societal norms, and need help obtaining government assistance.

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## **II. Other News**

### **Afghanistan**

#### **USAID's Afghan Clean Energy Program**

Two new USAID projects awarded in September 2009, the Afghanistan Clean Energy Project (ACEP, \$83 million over four years) and the Sustainable Water Supply and Sanitation Program

(SWSS, \$52 million over three years,) are bottom-up approaches, asking field-based officers to nominate and prioritize projects to improve rural access to energy, potable water, and sanitation facilities. ACEP and SWSS will design, install and operate renewable energy sources (solar, wind, and micro-hydro), sustainable potable water systems, sanitation facilities and hygiene education. Activities will focus primarily on rural areas, and local communities working with PRT staff will propose project ideas.

### **President Karzai Inaugurates USAID-Funded Kabul Diesel Power Plant**

President Karzai and Energy and Water Minister Ismail Khan presided over the inauguration of the first phase of Kabul's USAID-financed 105 Megawatt (MW) diesel-fired power plant near Kabul on August 5. President Karzai thanked Ambassador Eikenberry, USAID Director Frej, and the U.S. people for the US\$ 300 million plant that, will provide backup power to more than half a million Kabul residents during winter peak use once completed in December 2009. Looking ahead, the Afghan government seeks to diversify their energy matrix to exploit Afghanistan vast hydro and hydrocarbon potential.

### **Progress on Southern Afghanistan's Kajaki Hydropower Plant**

Despite continuing security issues, USAID has completed refurbishing a second hydroelectric turbine at the Kajaki dam in Helmand province. This refurbished turbine and the turbine USAID refurbished in September 2005 has boosted the total power generation capacity of Kajaki hydropower plant to approximately 33 megawatts (MW), of which 12 MW are being transmitted to Kandahar City. Kajaki also provides power to communities in Lashkar Gah, Musa Qala, and Sangin in Helmand Province. Providing power to Helmand and Kandahar is a mission priority, designed to create jobs and erode support for insurgency elements.

### **Progress Toward a Sustainable Timber-Harvest Law**

Embassy Kabul is preparing for the anticipated passage of a new Forestry Law in 2010. The new law is expected to allow a controlled timber harvest, currently banned by presidential decree. The Mission and other donors are prepared to help with local business support, government and community capacity building, and regulatory advice in order to assist the Afghan government create a sustainable industry around this rapidly-depleting natural resource. Under the presidential ban, illegal cutting and smuggling to Pakistan has deforested large swathes of Afghanistan, particularly the eastern provinces of Kunar and Nuristan.

### **Proposed Water Conference, Spring 2010**

Minister of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock Mohammad Asif Rahimi wrote to Embassy Kabul October 22 proposing a Coordination Conference on Water Resources Development. USAID, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, State and USDA will meet with Minister Rahimi in the next weeks to discuss his plans for irrigation projects, while reaching out to other donors and stakeholders. In Afghanistan, many ministries claim responsibility for water issues, including Energy and Water, Rural Rehabilitation and Development, Mines, and Foreign Affairs. Afghanistan shares most of its surface water resources with its neighbors. The Mission core

water group sees potential for multi-donor and inter-ministerial participation in an irrigation-focused water conference, possibly associated with the next National Water Conference, tentatively scheduled for May 2, 2010.

## **Kazakhstan**

### **370,000 Kazakh People Living In Areas Contaminated By Radioactive Substances**

October 15. Trend Daily News. The total number of Kazakh people living in areas contaminated by radioactive substances during the air-ground nuclear explosions in 1949-1965 at the Semipalatinsk nuclear test site, and their descendants is about 370,000 people, Kazakh Parliamentarian, Yerzhan Rahmetov said to Prime Minister Karim Masimov at the parliament. "At present, according to the Scientific Research Institute of Radiation Medicine and Ecology in Semipalatinsk region (which housed the Semipalatinsk nuclear test site during the Soviet years) about 90,000 people living in the area of emergency and maximum radiation risk, as well as their descendants in 1949-1965 need medical treatment," said Rahmetov. "Meanwhile, the possibility of rehabilitation of the injured at the medical clinics of the Scientific Research Institute of Radiation Medicine and Ecology in Semipalatinsk is limited because existing rehabilitation ward for 45 people enables to treat only 1,300 patients per year," said the parliamentarian. Rahmetov recalled that in the summer of this year, President Nursultan Nazarbayev said in his speech at a forum in Semipalatinsk that it is necessary to create a cluster of radiological medicine, which could bring together health centers in Kazakhstan for the diagnosis and treatment of cancer and diseases caused by radiation. "Therefore, I ask you to consider the issue of allocating funds from the public budget for 2010-2012 to the construction of clinics of the Scientific Research Institute of Radiation Medicine with the designed cost of more than 1.2 billion tenge, including costs for design and state examination," summarized Yerzhan Rahmetov.

### **A GMO-Free Kazakhstan**

Svoboda Slova. Yevgeny Klimov, president of the Ecology Culture Integration Fund, wrote a negative article about his meeting with American biotechnologist Dr. Val Giddings, who was invited to Kazakhstan by the U.S. Department of State to "help Kazakhstan with GMO (genetically-modified organisms) legislation." Klimov wrote that nothing could be gained from Dr. Giddings except the promotion of GMO. He suggested that American delegations of advisors interested in GMOs come to Kazakhstan with the aim to build American "democracy" on this issue. The U.S. biotechnological corporation Monsanto owns 90% of all GMOs and, according to Klimov, Monsanto has close contacts with the U.S. government, which helps to lobby for the company around the world. In return, spreading GMOs assures U.S. control over the food sector, as well as huge profits. "Dr. Giddings mentioned the government of Kazakhstan a few times, which makes me believe that he assured somebody there of the benefits of GMOs, and soon we will have new GMO lobbyists in Kazakhstan," said Klimov. (Dr. Giddings was in Kazakhstan in fall of 2008, where he met with NGO leaders, government officials, and journalists.)

### **Foreign Minister Meets With US Deputy Energy Secretary**

October 8. Kazakhstan Newline. Kazakhstan's Minister of Foreign Affairs Kanat Saudabayev met with US Deputy Energy Secretary Daniel Poneman yesterday in Astana. "I had many interesting meetings during my visit to Kazakhstan. I visited Aktau, Atyrau, in particular the Tengiz field. Today, we held meetings as part of the KIOGE oil and gas exhibition", Mr. Poneman said. Tomorrow the US Deputy Energy Secretary together with Kazakhstan's Minister of Energy and Mineral Resources will take part in the sixth session of the council on Kazakhstan-US energy industry partnership. The two sides plan to sign a joint statement on the details of further partnership in nuclear security and atomic energy, oil and gas, electrical power, renewable energy sources and energy efficiency. This will promote the development of a strategic partnership. In 2008, commodity trade between the two countries amounted to US \$2.51 billion, which is 22% more compared to 2007, according to inform.kz.

### **Kazakhstan, US sign Joint Energy Action Plan**

October 12. Kazakhstan Newline. Kazakhstan and the United States have signed the joint action plan for the energy sector during a session of joint Kazakh-US Energy Partnership Commission on Thursday. According to the joint statement of the commission, the joint action plan outlines cooperation between the two countries in nuclear security, atomic energy, oil and gas, renewable energy, energy efficiency and electric energy," according to CA-News.org.

### **Workshop Teaches Latest Info on Multi-Drug Resistant Tuberculosis**

USAID staff participated in a regional workshop on Management of Multi-Drug Resistant Tuberculosis (MDR TB) September 21-24 in Almaty. The workshop was organized by Partners in Health (USA) and KNCV (Netherlands) with financial support from USAID and Eli Lilly. Approximately 40 participants from all Central Asian countries except Turkmenistan attended. MDR TB is the most dangerous form of tuberculosis. WHO identifies Kazakhstan as one of the world's 22 highest-burden countries faced with the prevalence of this deadlier form of TB.

### **Family Physicians Celebrate Their 20th Anniversary**



This year, Kazakhstan marks 20th anniversary since family medicine was introduced in the country. USAID has played a significant role in facilitating the country's transition from narrowly specialized services to family-oriented approach. USAID helped integrate services at the country's first family medicine centers, change related government policies, educate population, and retrain doctors. The postgraduate program USAID helped create at a local medical institute, currently serves as a hub for producing family doctors for the country.

### **Results Of The Ecotourism Project**

Khabar. The Eurasia Foundation for Central Asia (EFCA) announced the results of its ongoing Program for the Development of Ecotourism in Kazakhstan, financed by ExxonMobil Kazakhstan Inc. (ExxonMobil), the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), and the Global Ecological Foundation (GEF). During the last five years, community-based tourism groups have provided services to more than 15,000 tourists and generated more than 60 million tenge of income. Part of this profit is reinvested to support the local environment. “Ecotourism is an excellent example of sustainable economic development. It provides quality jobs in rural communities, it creates incentives for environmental stewardship, it educates Kazakhstanis about the environment, and it keeps tourist dollars in Kazakhstan,” said U.S. Ambassador Richard Hoagland at the press conference summing up the results of the project.

## **Kyrgyzstan**

### **USAID’s HIV/AIDS Prevention Project Has Ended Its Work**



The USAID-funded five-year project “CAPACITY” worked to enhance the local skills for the implementation of HIV/AIDS prevention activities. CAPACITY helped 110 AIDS-service organizations improve their work and raise funds for HIV prevention among vulnerable populations. To model TB/HIV coinfection management, CAPACITY trained over 70 health specialists, helped provide TB/HIV prevention and treatment services to 1,000 citizens, and facilitated HIV counseling and testing for 1,300 people in Osh Province. The USAID-funded project also strengthened the work of a multi-sectoral coordination committee for socially important and highly dangerous infectious diseases. The committee has produced such important documents as the national HIV communication strategy and a national plan for HIV monitoring and evaluation.

### **Kyrgyzstan Confirms First Cases of H1N1**

On August 24, Kyrgyz health authorities confirmed the first cases of H1N1 flu in the country. Two Kyrgyz citizens who had recently traveled to Dubai tested positive for the H1N1 virus. USG assistance provided earlier to support Kyrgyzstan's preparedness for possible Avian Influenza cases should also be helpful in case of a H1N1 outbreak.

## **Tajikistan**

### **USAID/Capacity Opens New Center To Prevent HIV**

Ashgabat, June 23, 2009 – Today, the United States, through the U.S. Agency for International Development’s (USAID) CAPACITY project, jointly with the Ministry of Health and Medical Industry and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), opened a new “Drop-In” Center for HIV prevention among drug abusers in Ashgabat. The new Drop-In Center is based at Health House No. 4 and is an integral part of Ashgabat’s Center for Prevention of Drug Abuse,

Alcoholism, and Mental Disorders. The Drop-In Center will support HIV prevention by providing medical and social services for drug abusers, and conducting educational discussions and consultations. The center will also offer those counseled the opportunity for a shower, doing laundry, and other basic services. Drug abusers will also be able to receive referral for medical treatment. It is the first center for drug abusers in Ashgabat sponsored by USAID through its CAPACITY Project, implemented by JSI Research and Training Institute, a public health research and consulting firm. The CAPACITY project assists the Ministry of Health and Medical Industry of Turkmenistan to develop infrastructure for a large-scale response to the global HIV/AIDS pandemic. It represents a network of organizations working on HIV prevention and one of the many projects that the American people have made possible in Turkmenistan. Since 1993, USAID has been working in partnership with Turkmenistan to improve health care, promote agriculture, and support community initiatives.

### **USAID Helps Tajik Township Install Potable Water System**

Over 3,000 residents in the township of Somoniyon, Rudaki District are enjoying clean potable water again, thanks to USAID support. With the complete breakdown of the Soviet-era water supply system over six years ago, these villagers were forced to use water from open irrigation



canals for drinking, food preparation, and all other domestic needs. Despite all attempts to clean water, the rates of gastroenteritic diseases have sky-rocketed. Last year, USAID's Local Governance and Citizen Participation project provided a \$9,500 grant to the township for the renovation of the water system. The project also trained municipal personnel to maintain the water system and helped educate residents on water conservation, health, and hygiene. The new system provides better access to clean, safe drinking water and has significantly improved sanitation and health.

### **Tajik Leader Bans Incandescent Bulb Sales In Power-Saving Move**

Oct 13. Dushanbe Tajik Television First Channel. Tajik leader bans incandescent bulb sales in power-saving move. Tajik President Emomali Rahmon has prohibited imports and sales of incandescent light bulbs in the country, Tajik Television First Channel reported on 13 October. Rahmon announced this at a government meeting. "As part of winter preparations, more attention was paid to the economical use of water and energy resources. In this respect, Tajik President Emomali Rahmon gave instructions to ban imports and sales of incandescent light bulbs in the country," the report added. Earlier, the Tajik government adopted a resolution to impose a ban on the import of incandescent light bulbs in a move aimed at economical use of electricity.

## **Turkmenistan**

### **USAID Helps Open a Drop-in Center for Drug Users in Ashgabat**

Recently, USAID's HIV/AIDS prevention program "CAPACITY," together with the Ministry of Health and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, opened the first Center for HIV prevention among drug abusers. The Drop-In Center will support HIV prevention by providing medical and social services for drug users, and conducting educational discussions and consultations. The center will also offer those counseled the opportunity to take a shower, wash and iron clothes.

### **Turkmen Deputy Premier Says Gas Supply To China To Start 15 Dec 09**

Sep 18. ITAR-TASS. A solemn ceremony to open the Turkmenistan-Uzbekistan-Kazakhstan-China gas pipeline will be held on 15 December. A Turkmen deputy Chairman of the Cabinet of Ministers, Baymyrat Hojamammedow, who oversees oil and gas affairs, announced this at a government meeting today. According to him, a solemn opening ceremony of another gas pipeline to Iran will be held in the period between 20 and 30 December. "The launch of the two new routes for exporting Turkmen natural gas is a significant success of Turkmenistan's energy strategy," Turkmen President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedow said after the deputy prime minister's report. The Turkmen president noted that cooperation with both China and Iran was long-term and mutually beneficial.

### **Gas Pipeline To China Completed**

Oct 23. ITAR-TASS. Turkmengaz, the state-owned natural gas company, announced that Turkmenistan's 188 km section of the 7,000 km Turkmenistan-Uzbekistan-Kazakhstan-China pipeline has been completed. The company also said that a considerable part of the pipeline runs in the Kara Kum desert, and the most difficult section to build was an underwater pass across the Amu-Darya River.

### **Turkmenistan Intends To Take The Turkmen-Azeri Caspian Boundary Dispute To An International Court Of Arbitration**

On August 4, state-owned Neutralniy Turkmenistan newspaper published an MFA-authored article outlining Turkmenistan's arguments in its dispute with Azerbaijan on the Caspian Sea delimitation issue. The article mentioned the international laws that the Turkmen government refers to in support of its position and specified the government's interpretation of those laws. The analytical article followed-up President Berdimuhamedov's July 24 statement regarding Turkmenistan's intention to take the Turkmen-Azeri Caspian boundary dispute to an international court of arbitration.

## **Uzbekistan**

### **USAID's Project Promotes Agricultural Know-How**

This summer, USAID's AgLinks project became an official participant of an agricultural held in Tashkent by an influential local nongovernmental organization "Social Initiatives Support Fund". At the exhibition, women farmers from various provinces demonstrated their products: fresh and processed crops, dairy products, and handicrafts such as carpets, embroidery or shoes. Among

the participants were women farmers from Payariq and Samarkand districts that had been trained by the AgLinks project in productivity-enhancing agricultural techniques. More recently, Aglinks, in cooperation with Torakorgon District government, Shreder institute, and a local processing company "Torakorgon Shirinliklari" organized an apricot contest in Namangan Province. The contest aimed to identify the best varieties of apricot in the region and share best practices on apricot growing.

### **Uzbekistan Not To Quit Central Asian Energy System**

Oct 09. Dushanbe Asia-Plus Online. Uzbekistan has no intention of withdrawing from the Central Asian integrated energy system, a source at the Ozbekenergo [Uzbek energy] state joint stock company told the Kazakh Telegraph Agency yesterday. The source said the Uzbek side had notified relevant bodies in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan of its intention to discuss changes in terms of electricity transmission to Kyrgyzstan through Uzbekistan's territory. "We want to introduce a payment for electricity transmission to Kyrgyzstan which was earlier flow and free of charge," the source at the Ozbekenergo state joint stock company added. It should be recalled that earlier Uzbekistan [allegedly] told about its withdrawal from the Central Asian integrated energy system. The break-up of the integrated energy system could have deprived Tajikistan of its opportunity to receive Turkmen electricity.

### **The Fifth International Uzbek Cotton Fair**

The Fifth International Uzbek Cotton Fair took place in Tashkent on October 14-15, 2009. This event showcased Uzbekistan as a leading producer and exporter of quality cotton and highlighted recent efforts by the Government of Uzbekistan to strengthen its internal textile industry. The Dubai Cotton Center also had a strong presence at the conference as it seeks to increase its role in the Central Asian cotton supply chain.

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## **III. Regional News Clips**

**Note:** Baktiyor Mukhamadiev's excellent **Weekly Central Asian ESTH News**, sent from our Tashkent office, contains most of the news events that are happening in the region. This section modestly supplements his reporting.

### **Kazakh Leader Proposes Tourism Business At Baikonur Space Center**

October 5. Interfax-Kazakhstan. Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev has proposed developing space tourism at the Baikonur cosmodrome. "It would be a promising area if visits are organized for tourists from various countries to watch the launch of space rockets from Baikonur and learn about land facilities of this space harbor," he said today. He was speaking at the opening of the 18th session of the UN World Tourism Organization's General Assembly in Astana.

### **Kazakhstan, Russia Should Keep Jointly Using Baikonur Spaceport**

October 9. Interfax. The head of the Kazakh National Space Agency (Kazcosmos) insisted that Kazakhstan and Russia continue to jointly use Baikonur Cosmodrome, a spaceport located in Kazakhstan but rented by Russia, and said a suggestion that Kazakhstan would be able to use Baikonur by itself was a "raving mad idea." "The Russian Federation has been and will remain Kazakhstan's general partner in the rocket and space industry and in creating rocket and space complexes. The operation of Baikonur Cosmodrome without Russia is simply unthinkable. And it's about time we forgot about the raving mad idea that we'd be about to cope at our cosmodrome by ourselves. We wouldn't. Nor do we need that," Talgat Musabayev told Interfax. "Russia is apparently interested in Baikonur as well," Musabayev said. "The head of Roscosmos [the Russian Federal Space Agency], Anatoly Perminov, has said directly that the Russian Federation isn't going to ever leave the cosmodrome, not after 2050 either." Baikonur and Vostochny, a spaceport under construction in Russia's Amur region, "will be able to operate simultaneously," Musabayev said. Russia has been renting Baikonur since 1994. The latest lease agreement is to be in force until 2050.

### **Kazakhstan Wants To Increase Stake In Kosmotras**

October 9. Interfax. Kazakhstan wants to become a fully-fledged member of projects to carry out commercial launches using the Zenit and Dnepr launch vehicles from Baikonur, the head of the Kazakh space agency Kazcosmos, Talgat Musabayev, told Interfax. "We have reached a certain understanding [with the government] that we must join these projects. The first serious step has been made. We have recently become a shareholder in the Russian-Ukrainian corporation Kosmotras, the operator of the military-conversion rocket Dnepr," Musabayev said. "We have a 10% stake in Kosmotras and three seats in the board of directors. One of the deputy general directors is a Kazakh representative," he said. Kazcosmos plans to bring its stake in Kosmotras to 33% and be on a par with the Ukrainian and Russian partners, he said, adding that this will give Kazakhstan the equitable right to get dividends from Dnepr launches from Baikonur," Musabayev said. Kosmotras upgrades RS-20 (SS-18 Satan) intercontinental ballistic missiles into Dnepr carrier rockets and uses them to launch small satellites, including from the Baikonur launch pad. Kosmotras carried out ten launches between 1999 and 2008, sending 39 satellites into orbit. One of the launches was a failure.

### **Turkmen Green Activist Sentenced To Five Years In Jail**

Oct 29. [chrono-tm.org](http://chrono-tm.org). The trial of Andrey Zatoka (well-known environmentalist and public activist arrested on 20 October in Turkmenistan) has just ended. The court found him guilty under charges brought against him (deliberately inflicting bodily harm) and sentenced him to five years in prison. This is the maximal term under Article (118 Point 2) of the Criminal Code. Pickets in support of Zatoka were held in Washington yesterday and in front of the Russian Foreign Ministry in Moscow today. Campaigns and rallies to demand release of Andrey will continue.

### **Public Smoking Ban in Kazakhstan Takes Effect, Drinking Age Increased To 21**

October 12. Kazakhstan Newline. As of October 9, Kazakhstan has prohibited smoking in all public places, including schools, hospitals, clinics, cinemas, theaters, circuses, concerts,

exhibition halls, sports arenas, stadiums, night clubs, workplaces, and the entrance of housing entrances, in accordance with changes to the national health code. People will also be restricted from smoking inside airports and railway and bus stations. Smokers will as of now, only be allowed to light up in specially-designated areas. The changed code now also prohibits the sale of cigarettes to persons under the age of 18, and tobacco items will also not be available in shops selling goods for children. The law also raises the legal drinking age to 21. According to the Health Ministry, all fines for violations will be doubled, and violators of the new law can be fined up to \$500. The code was adopted by the parliament and has been signed by the president. It came into force 10 days following its adoption, according to CA-News.org.

### **Ecotourism Is Calling On Kazakhstan**

eTN Global Travel Industry News. Dagmar Schreiber, a German living in Kazakhstan, has devoted the last 20 years of her life to helping rural villages in Kazakhstan to explore opportunities in tourism. Currently, the government does not provide much support for tourism in rural areas, because this does not fit into its picture of displaying Kazakhstan as a modern country. After 20 years of being liberated from the then Soviet Union, Kazakhstan has changed its infrastructure tremendously, however, the first priority has been given to developed areas like Almaty and Astana. The EU and some gas companies had supported ecotourism, but that support is vanishing because of the global financial crisis. Thanks to idealistic people like Dagmar Schreiber, ecotourism is slowly becoming more popular, but it will likely take another 20 years to see any noticeable changes in the rural areas. Kazakhstan, the 9th largest country in the world with only 16 million people, has huge amounts of open spaces. Tourism opportunities abound with visits to snow-topped mountains, deep forests, cool lakes, vast steppes, and rich wildlife. Whether you are seeking relaxation or an adventure, this country provides exhilarating opportunities to experience nature's beauty, but perhaps the most moving experience a traveler can have in Kazakhstan is to actually stay with a family in a rural village. Kazakhstan is a vast country still waiting to be discovered and may be one of last real adventures in tourism. Go and stay with a family and find out for yourself. It is a memorable experience that will better the lives of the people who live there and your own life as well.

### **Kazakhs Hospitalized After Treatment By Folk Healer**

September 24. Radio Free Europe. At least four HIV-infected patients have been hospitalized after being treated by a folk healer in the southern Kazakh city of Shymkent, RFE/RL's Kazakh Service reports. Beyne Karzhaubaeva, a self-professed healer, has been treating HIV-infected patients by giving them injections of cologne. Karzhaubaeva asked her patients to sign a waiver acknowledging that they were willingly undergoing the treatment. Zhanetta Zhazykbaeva, the head of the regional foundation Defense of Children Against AIDS, says the people treated by Karzhaubaeva barely survived. A 7-year-old girl who was treated by Karzhaubaeva was hospitalized with a blackened, swollen hand. Charges have been filed with the local prosecutor's office against Karzhaubaeva for false treatment of patients. Karzhaubaeva says she received permission from an AIDS center in Shymkent to use her treatment with the agreement of the patients, whom she did not charge. She added that she has a "gift from God" and is sure that her patients will be cured as a result of her treatment. All of those treated and hospitalized were infected with HIV/AIDS during the mass HIV infection that took place at a southern Kazakh

hospital in 2007. As a result, 17 hospital workers were sentenced to up to eight years in prison for infecting dozens of children with HIV. Several of the children have since died.

### **Tajikistan Allocates Over 100M Dollars To Build Giant Power Plant**

Oct 20. Dushanbe Tojnews. The [Tajik] state budget has allocated 500m somoni [about 116m dollars] to continue the construction of the country's biggest hydroelectric power plant, Roghun, Tajik Deputy Minister of Energy and Trade Muhammadsharif Haqdodov has told a scheduled news conference. He said 307 or 400m somoni of the funds allocated had been used by now. "Restoration and clean-up work is now under way in the construction of the plant," Haqdodov said. The bed of the River Vakhsh is expected to be blocked in late November, he added. Asked about the total cost of the Roghun hydroelectric power plant's project, Muhammadsharif Haqdodov said: "In all, 2bn dollars will be required to fully inaugurate the power plant's six units."

### **Kazakhstan Will Drastically Change Science Financing; Law On Science Must Be Passed By Yearend, President**

October 13. Kazakhstan General Newswire. The instruments of science financing will be drastically altered in Kazakhstan. "A new science financing system will comprise three elements: basic, program-related and grant financing," Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev said delivering a lecture at the Kazakh National University on Tuesday in Almaty. The basis financing, the president clarified, is aimed at maintaining operation of research institutions, program-related funds will be allocated to work on state programs and the grant financing will be a source of remuneration for a scientist and funds for scientific research. Nazarbayev noted that all types of scientific research would cease to be subjects of state order system financing. The government is looking for ways to involve business community in financing scientific projects. Altering the attitude of scientists to their professional occupation is of no less importance than altering science management, the president said. "All redundant links in scientific studies would be eliminated," he said. "A scientist will directly apply for financing to a special Scientific Council" that will be selecting scientific projects for realization and decide on distribution of grants. "The government practically intends to take every step to encourage the development of science, but all those efforts will be in vain, if no young scientists join the modern scientific research porjetc. I call for current university students to devote their talent to science!" Nazarbaev said. The President also said that a new law on science that is currently in progress would be hopefully passed by January 1.

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### **Central Asia Regional Environmental Hub**

The Central Asia Regional Environment Officer (REO) is responsible for monitoring and reporting on trans-boundary environment, science, technology, and health issues in six countries: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Afghanistan.

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