

May 2016

Economics

China looks set to [replace](#) Russia as Kyrgyzstan's major hydropower investor. The Central Asian state is negotiating with China's state-owned electricity provider to build four new hydropower sites on the Naryn River.

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) expressed [confidence](#) that the long delayed Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) pipeline project remains viable. The project's shareholders agreed to invest US\$200 million in studies and engineering for the US\$10 billion project.

Kazakhstan's sovereign wealth fund is [attempting](#) to reduce its US\$17.3 billion debt.

Uzbekistan's Foreign Ministry [announced](#) that the 2011 deal to create an international transportation corridor from Central Asia to the Persian Gulf came into force on 23 April.

The IMF [updated](#) its regional economic outlook for the Middle East and Central Asia to predict that growth in the Caucasus and Central Asia would slow to a two-decade low.

Mental health officials in Kazakhstan [reported](#) a significant increase in the number of men using mental health services as a result of the country's economic downturn.

Speculation [emerged](#) that Tajikistan might be facing a banking crisis after the country's second-largest commercial bank, Tojiksodirotbank, issued redundancies and forced remaining staff to take unpaid leave.

Kazakhstan [announced](#) that it will boost oil production to 77 million tons in 2016, making it one of the world's top 10 oil exporters.

More than 1,000 people [attended](#) a demonstration in the Kazakh city of Atyrau to protest a government decision to sell land. The protesters expressed concern that the land would be purchased by foreigners.

The Kazakh president Nursultan Nazarbaev [met](#) his Iranian counterpart, Hassan Rouhani, in Tehran on April 11. Following the meeting, the two countries [signed](#) 66 economic agreements with a total value of US\$2 billion.

US prosecutors [demanded](#) that the Uzbek president's daughter, Gulnara Karimova, hand over more than US\$550 million currently held in Swiss bank accounts. Karimova has been implicated in a long-running money laundering investigation.

607 employees were [laid off](#) from the Tajik aluminium producer TALCO because of low global prices.

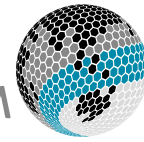
Production [figures](#) from the Kazakh automotive industry fell by 92.2 percent in the first quarter of 2016, in comparison to the same period of time last year.

The Kazakh currency [stabilised](#) in March, although not enough to quell inflation on the price of basic food items, which continued to increase.

Politics

The Kyrgyz parliament [voted](#) for Sooronbai Jeenbekov to become the country's next Prime Minister on April 13. The previous Prime Minister Temir Sariev [resigned](#) two days earlier after allegations of corruption emerged.





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Kyrgyzstan's Supreme Court [indicated](#) that it might review the ruling against the imprisoned human rights activist, Azimjan Askarov. The announcement followed criticism by the UN Human Rights Committee and the OSCE.

President Nazarbaev [met](#) with the Uzbek President, Islam Karimov, in Tashkent on April 15 to discuss regional security and bilateral ties.

The Kyrgyz President Almazbek Atambaev [signed](#) a bill that will see convicted terrorists held separately from other prisoners.

Human rights activists [gathered](#) outside the Kyrgyz parliament in Bishkek to protest a proposed law which would classify NGOs that receive foreign aid as "foreign agents." The proposal was later revised to [exclude](#) the designation.

The Thai Crown Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn [visited](#) Kyrgyzstan on April 7.

Celebrations were [held](#) to mark the sixth anniversary of the bloody 2010 uprising that prompted the fall of the Kyrgyz president, Kurmanbek Bakiev.

The German Foreign Minister Walter Steinmeier [met](#) with the Tajik president, Emomali Rahmon, on April 1. They discussed regional and international issues.

Tajikistan's status as an 'important national interest' for the US will [enable](#) it to avoid US sanctions, despite its track record on religious freedoms. The country is however designated by the US as a 'country of particular concern.'

President Karimov [met](#) with the Russian president, Vladimir Putin, in Moscow to discuss bilateral ties, global and regional issues.

Security

Tajikistan [detained](#) six mosque prayer leaders accused of being members of the banned Muslim Brotherhood.

Residents of Kazhar in southwestern Kyrgyzstan [asked](#) their local council to expel a family from the village after a family member joined ISIS.

Two Kazakh women convicted of drug trafficking in China were [transferred](#) to Kazakhstan, where they will serve their prison terms.

The Afghan Taliban [declared](#) the beginning of the group's annual "spring offensive" on April 12.

Russia and its Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) allies carried out their [first](#) joint military exercises in the Romit Gorge in Tajikistan. The exercises simulated a reconnaissance mission against ISIS fighters plotting to topple a Central Asian ruler.

The CSTO [warned](#) that Tajikistan faces a serious risk of Islamist violence. The organisation announced that plans are in place for a rapid deployment of troops, should the violence eventuate.

Tajik authorities [reported](#) that an imam and four others residing in the Sughd region in northern Tajikistan were jailed on the accusation of being Salafists.

Afghanistan's President Ashraf Ghani [urged](#) Pakistan to fight the Taliban instead of encouraging them to participate in peace talks.

A Taliban [attack](#) on the country's main security agency in Kabul on April 19 left dozens dead and more than 300 people wounded.

The Taliban [appointed](#) the late Mullah Omar's son, Mohammad Yuqub, as the head of the Taliban's military commission. This prompted analysts to predict that the group's internal rifts were being resolved.

The Afghan military [reported](#) that at least 40 insurgents were killed during air raids targeting ISIS in Nangarhar in eastern Afghanistan.

The Uzbek President [called](#) for Afghan peace talks and highlighted the importance of Russia playing a role.

