

December 2016 - January 2017

## Economics

The National Bank of Kazakhstan [announced](#) that new 10,000-tenge (US\$30) banknotes will carry the portrait of the country's long-term President Nursultan Nazarbaev.

Russia and Tajikistan [agreed](#) to maintain air travel between the two countries after a standoff in early November in which Russia threatened to suspend flights to Tajikistan.

The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) will [provide](#) a loan to support a water and wastewater infrastructure upgrade in Kyrgyzstan.

The seventh session of the Kazakh-Israeli commission on trade and economic cooperation was [held](#). The two countries discussed cooperation across economics, health, and information and communications technologies.

Turkmenistan will [host](#) the 28th session of the Energy Charter Conference in Ashgabat in 2017.

Turkmenistan [announced](#) that it had signed a number of key agreements aimed at facilitating the transportation of goods in the Asia-Pacific region, including the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Trans-Asian Railway Network, the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Asian Highway Network, the Intergovernmental Agreement on Dry Ports and the International Convention on the Harmonization of Frontier Controls of Goods.

The Turkmen President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov [visited](#) Malaysia in November to discuss bilateral cooperation across trade and petrochemicals.

Afghanistan and Turkmenistan [opened](#) the first 88km of a 400km railway project that will eventually link the two countries to Tajikistan by rail.

Uzbekistan and Tajikistan [held talks](#) on aviation cooperation, leading to an agreement on the recommencement of flights between the two countries.

Uzbekistan will [receive](#) a US\$154 million loan from the Asian Development Bank to strengthen horticulture development.

## Politics

The Kazakh journalist Bigeldy Gabdullin was [arrested](#) on charges of extortion.

The Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbaev [met](#) with South Korean officials during a three-day official visit to the country.

A Kazakh businessman [received](#) a 21-year prison sentence after being found guilty of extremism, illegal weapons possession and attempting to overthrow the government.

President Nazarbaev [met](#) with the Japanese Emperor Akihito during an official visit to Japan.

The prominent director and actor Tunghyshbai Zhamanqulov [accused](#) the Kazakh Culture Minister Arystanbek Mukhamediuly of corruption. Soon after, Zhamanqulov was detained on suspicion of embezzlement.

The Tajik foreign ministry [withdrew](#) the press accreditation of six RFE/RL Tajik service journalists. The decision purportedly followed the broadcaster's refusal to remove a story about President Emomali Rahmonov's daughter Rukhshona Rahmonova receiving a top government post.

The Kyrgyz parliament [approved](#) a new governing coalition made up of President Almazbek Atambaev's Social Democratic Party (SDP), the Kyrgyzstan party and the Bir Bol (Be United) party, led by the country's previous Prime Minister Sooronbai Jeenbekov. The cabinet is [mostly](#) made up by members of the previous government.

The lower house of the Tajik parliament [ratified](#) legal amendments that prohibit dual nationals from serving in the Tajik security services.

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The Kyrgyz parliament [approved](#) the terms of a referendum scheduled for December 11. The proposed constitutional changes will strengthen the powers of the prime minister.

The independent Tajik Newspaper *Nigoh* [announced](#) on its tenth anniversary that it would be closing down due to a “lack of appropriate conditions.”

The Turkmen President’s son Serdar Berdymukhammedov was [elected](#) to parliament in a by-election.

The Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan [visited](#) the grave of the late Uzbek President Islam Karimov. During his visit, he also met the interim Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyaev and other officials.

President Atambayev [expressed](#) his intention to leave the Kyrgyz presidency when his term expires in late 2017.

The tenth Republic of Korea-Central Asia Cooperation Forum was [attended](#) by delegations from the five Central Asian countries and South Korea.

A Palestinian embassy was [officially](#) opened in the Turkmen capital Ashgabat.

## Security

A Kazakh court [sentenced](#) Ruslan Kulekbaev to death on terrorism charges. Kulekbaev was accused of killing six people after opening fire on the Almaty police department and National Security Committee.

The United States Embassy in Tajikistan [warned](#) that there was a risk of terrorist attacks targeting large public gatherings as well as Afghan-Tajik border crossings.

At least 27 people were [killed](#) in suicide bomb attack at Shi’ite mosque in Kabul.

The Afghan Vice President Abdul Rashid Dostum [denied](#) involvement in the assault and abduction of his political rival Ahmad Ishchi.

A Kazakh court [convicted](#) 29 men on terrorism related charges.

A top Afghan army commander General Mohayedin Ghorri was [killed](#) in helicopter crash in Badghis province in the country’s northwest.

Kyrgyzstan’s State Border Guard Service [fired](#) warning shots after Tajik border guards allegedly breached the Kyrgyz-Tajik Border.

Uzbekistan and Tajikistan [held talks](#) on the demarcation of the Tajik-Uzbek border.

## UZBEKISTAN ELECTS NEW PRESIDENT

Shavkat Mirziyaev was elected president in Uzbekistan’s historic December 4 election. The country’s longstanding ruler Islam Karimov died in September.

Mirziyaev’s election surprised few observers. Mirziyaev is a [regime insider](#), having been prime minister since 2003 and acting president since President Karimov’s death. He instigated a number of reforms during his interim presidency, including reversing some unpopular Karimov policies and instigating a thaw in relations with neighbouring countries. However, many [observers](#) believe these were short-term populist measures ahead of the election that may be reversed.

Almost 88 percent of eligible voters [cast ballots](#) in the election, which was observed by the OSCE and the [Shanghai Cooperation Organization](#). The OSCE [commented](#) after that the election was conducted with ‘a legal framework that is not conducive to holding genuine democratic elections,’ and called for comprehensive reform.

## 2017 ELECTION WATCH

**Turkmen presidential election:** [February 12, 2017](#)  
**Kyrgyz presidential election:** October 2017 ([date not confirmed](#))