

March 2017

Economics

Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbaev [revealed](#) a new strategic plan for the Central Asian nation's economic development.

The Uzbek government announced a USD\$2.6 billion plan to [develop](#) the area around the shrunken Aral Sea over the next 5 years.

Tajikistan's national currency dipped again after a [sudden](#) shortage of US dollars in circulation in Tajikistan.

Under a government-initiated draft bill, Kazakhstan's national security committee will [receive](#) more investigative power for suspected cases of corruption.

Kyrgyzstan and the European Union are set to [sign](#) a new cooperation agreement.

Kazakh President Nazarbayev urged weak banks in Kazakhstan to [merge](#) to improve the country's economy.

Kazakh National Bank [announced](#) that Kazakhstan's exports decreased by 19.9 percent in 2016. The National Bank also estimated inflation rates in the country to [decrease](#) to 6.5-7 percent in 2017.

Kazakh President Nazarbayev ordered to [increase](#) oil production during a meeting with Energy Minister Kanat Bozumbayev.

Turkmenistan and Iran will [expand](#) their cooperation in the field of transport, road construction and electric power and gas.

By Presidential decree, Uzbekistan [approved](#) a new strategic action development plan for 2017-2021. The plan will be implemented in five stages and will target five priority areas in an effort to strengthen the role of the Uzbek parliament, civil society institutions and the media, and reform the Uzbek judicial system.

A spokesman from Kazakh's Emergency Situations Ministry [announced](#) that seven Kazakh soldiers were killed in an avalanche in Kazakhstan's southern region of Zhambyl.

At [least](#) 119 people have been killed in Afghanistan after heavy storms and snowfall.

Turkmenistan is [considering](#) joining the World Trade Organization.

Politics

Kazakh journalist and activist Zhanbolat Mamai was [arrested](#) and detained on money laundering charges.

Former Kazakh Deputy Prime Minister Imangali Tasmaghambetov was [dismissed](#) from his post and [appointed](#) Kazakhstan's ambassador to Russia.

Turkmen President Gurbanguly Berdimukhammedov [secured](#) his third round of presidency by gaining 97.69 percent of the vote in February's election.

Alisher Shadmanov was [appointed](#) Uzbekistan's new Health Minister.



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Former Kyrgyzstan Prime Minister Temir Sariiev announced he will run for president in the next presidential election [scheduled](#) for October.

Former Kyrgyzstan Prime Minister Omurbek Babanov will also run for president. He was unanimously [nominated](#) by Respublika-Ata Jurt, Kyrgyzstan's second-largest parliamentary party.

The former mayor of Dushanbe, Tajikistan, Mahmadsaid Ubaidulloev [announced](#) he had given up his position at the city's local parliament. His allies were later [removed](#) from their jobs in government.

The first scheduled flight in 25 years from Tajikistan to Uzbekistan was [cancelled](#) after a sudden decision made by the Uzbek government. Alisher Rustamov, the commercial director of Tajikistan's Somon Air, was later [dismissed](#) over the cancellation.

Russian President Vladimir Putin visited Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan on the 25th anniversary of Moscow's diplomatic [relations](#) with the three Central Asian countries.

Delegates from Turkmenistan and Saudi Arabia met to [discuss](#) expanding bilateral cooperation.

Uzbekistan and Kuwait plan to [sign](#) several documents aimed at developing bilateral cooperation in the field of investment, education and research at the Uzbek-Kuwaiti business forum.

Turkmenistan is set to expand its [cooperation](#) with Palestine and Israel. The Turkmen ministry announced at a meeting with Muhannad Hammouri, charge d'affaires ad interim of Palestine and Ambassador of Israel to Turkmenistan Yitzhak Carmel Kagan.

Security

Kyrgyzstan police [detained](#) eight suspected members of the banned Islamist group Hizb ut-Tahrir.

A US citizen wanted in Uzbekistan on alleged terrorism related charges was [arrested](#) in Georgia.

Russia announced it will host a conference to discuss finding a solution to the Afghanistan conflict. Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov [stressed](#) the importance of the Taliban's inclusion in the talks to ensure constructive dialogue. Representatives from Afghanistan, Pakistan, China, Iran, and India are scheduled to attend.

Six Red Cross aid workers from Afghanistan were killed in an [ambush](#) while delivering humanitarian aid to the northern Afghan Province of Jowzjan.

Afghan President Ashraf Ghani held a phone [conversation](#) with Donald Trump. They discussed the fight against terrorism in Afghanistan.

Turkmenistan [armed](#) two of its naval vessels in the Caspian Sea with new anti-aircraft weapons.

A suicide [attack](#) on the supreme court in Kabul killed at least 20 people and left 41 injured.

Central Asia and international diplomacy

Two rounds of Syrian peace talks have been held this year in Astana, the capital city of Kazakhstan. These talks mark the first time Central Asia has acted as the scene of international diplomacy. They were facilitated by Russia with a focus on re-enforcing and monitoring the nation-wide cease fire mediated in December 2016. The [first](#) round of talks were attended by delegates from the Syrian government, Iran, Russia and Turkey, alongside [representatives](#) of the Syrian opposition. Despite Iran's [opposition](#) to the US attending the talks, the US Ambassador to Kazakhstan attended as an [observer](#). Representatives from the UN and Jordan attended the [second](#) round of talks. No [major](#) breakthroughs or developments were achieved. The venue for these diplomatic efforts is significant in the face of an increasing number of Central Asian nationals joining the fight in Syria.