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Cumhuriyet: The Prime Minister orders silence in Cyprus. Denktaş is asked not to unveil the content of Cyprus talks, and the press to apply censorship / Denktaş refuses to stop talking

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Vatan: Mafia terror in soccer: Ahmet Çakan wounded by the mafia had fueled three big debates on TV/ Tanker driver who killed nine people on Tuesday has been given 41 traffic fines in five years

Zaman: Erdoğan warns the media to avoid moves instigating the Greek Cypriots / EU court accepts complaint of Turkish company concerning losses inflicted by the customs union / Ten tankers collide on Şırnak-Cizre road highlighting insufficient controls

Dünya: China purchases scrap metal fuelling iron and steel prices / EU Court accepts complaints of Turkish company against the customs union

Today's events

* Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) President Rauf Denktaş and Greek Cypriot leader Tassos Papadopoulos will continue Cyprus talks today.

* Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan will hold meeting with businessmen who will sponsor NATO Summit in İstanbul in June.

* Foreign Minister Abdullah Gül will complete his visit to Moscow.

* French parliamentary delegation will hold contacts with Turkish Industrialists' and Businessmen's Association (TUSIAD) in İstanbul.

* Deputy Prime Minister Abdüllatif Şener attends e-state meeting in Budapest.

* IMF delegation comes to Turkey for the second stage of its seventh review inspection.

* Energy Ministers of Caspian, Central Asian and Black Sea countries and top representatives of state-owned fuel oil and

gas companies from Turkey, Russia, Iran, Kazakhstan, the US, Ukraine, Romania, Azerbaijan, Syria, Afghanistan and Pakistan will come together at a summit meeting in İstanbul.

* State Minister Kürsad Tüzmen visits Ukraine

Please check your inbox around 10:00 for more details in "today's agenda."

CYPRUS

ERDOĞAN ORDERS NEWS BLACKOUT IN CYPRUS

While Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) President Rauf Denktaş is giving to the press daily information about the progress sin Cyprus talks, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan warned yesterday that this might effect negatively the peace process. He asked the Turkish media not to cover each detail about the talks. According to Zaman daily newspaper, Erdoğan stressed that the

media should avoid publications provoking Greek Cypriot reactions.

Cumhuriyet daily newspaper says that the words of Erdoğan were a message to the media and to Denktaş. Radikal daily newspaper in turn says that Erdoğan had sent a message both to Denktaş and Papadopoulos.

Hürriyet daily newspaper reports that Erdoğan had invited the media to show constructive attitudes in the bid for solving Cyprus issue. "We should solve the problem with win-win approach," the Prime Minister said.

Yesterday Erdoğan gave breakfast to editors of national newspapers and TV channels as well as to representatives of some Internet sites.

Hürriyet lists some of the messages issued by Erdoğan:

- Erdoğan complained that the media was creating the impression that there was hostility between him and Denktaş. "We cannot be enemies with Denktaş. We are political kin. We are working hand in hand in this issue," he said.

- We have to focus on the gains of Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) and the interests of Turkey. On 1 May Southern Cyprus will become EU member. If agreement is made before 1 May, Northern Cyprus and Southern Cyprus will have the chance to join the EU as United Cyprus Republic. Cyprus will become a state of the international community. Southern Cyprus will have to share the state with Northern Cyprus."

- There will be two flags, two anthems, and the Turkish language will be used as official language in the EU. The international community will be able to make investments in Cyprus, and various international activities will be held there.

- Erdoğan stressed that the Turkish side should not be the party to leave the table for discussions. If somebody leaves the table it should be the Greek Cypriot side.

- The ideal scenario is the founding of United Cyprus Republic. Then Northern Cyprus will rid itself of the embargoes and will make breakthrough. If bi-zonality and guarantorship are strengthened and if the border line becomes a straighter line, the result will be very favorable for Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC).

Radikal columnist **Murat Yetkin** says that Erdoğan wanted the parties in Cyprus to seal an agreement without the involvement of Turkey and Greece.

Zaman daily newspaper notes that the Press Council had voiced reactions to the call of Erdoğan for declaring news blackout. (Zaman 1,13, Hürriyet, Cumhuriyet 1,8, Radikal 1,6,11, Türkiye 1,13)

DENKTAŞ WILL CONTINUE TO BRIEF THE PUBLIC ON CYPRUS DEVELOPMENTS

Zaman daily newspaper says that Turkish Cyprus leader Denktaş did not see the statements as a message to himself. Denktaş will not keep silence, Cumhuriyet daily newspaper notes.

Radikal daily newspaper says that Erdoğan had been upset by reports that Denktaş would continue to speak out. Erdoğan will make assessments of the situation after the return of Foreign Minister Abdullah Gül to Turkey, Radikal notes.

Vatan columnist **Bilal Çetin** sees the attitudes of Denktaş as a "challenge" for Erdoğan. The observer says that Denktaş was sending referendum-oriented messages to the public, and adds that the tensions with Denktaş would continue to increase. (Radikal, Hürriyet, Cumhuriyet 1,8, Vatan 15)

CYPRUS TALKS POSTPONED BY ONE DAY

Radikal daily newspaper reports that Cyprus leaders had held no unification talks yesterday. The meeting failed when UN envoy Alvaro de Soto asked the parties to prepare a document listing their demands for changes in the UN Plan.

According to Radikal, the Greek Cypriots did not come to the table yesterday. De Soto phoned when Denktas was going back. Denktas had one-and-a-half hour meeting with De Soto.

Greek Cypriot sources are reported as saying that on Tuesday night Turkish Cypriot leader Rauf Denktas had tabled new proposals going outside the framework of the UN Plan. The Greek Cypriots have requested one day delay in the talks to examine the Turkish offers and to prepare their response.

In a press conference yesterday Denktas confirmed the report for the new postponement.

"De Soto called me. He said Greek Cypriot leader Tassos Papadopoulos had phoned to say that the document was going beyond the framework of the UN Plan," he said.

Basing itself on a report in Simerini newspaper, Radikal lists the proposals of Denktas:

- The Greek Cypriots should not be allowed to buy land in the north
- The return of Greek Cypriots to the north should not change the structure of the founding Turkish state.
- Greek Cypriots to migrate to the north should be granted no voting rights.
- The Greek Cypriots should not carry wealth problems to international courts.
- Turkish soldiers should leave the island only after Turkey becomes EU member.

Hürriyet daily newspaper in turn lists the proposals made by Denktas to strengthen bi-zonality in Cyprus:

- the provision for including 24 Turkish and 24 Greek Cypriot representatives in the Senate should be amended
- adjustments should be made in the structure of the presidential council
- the parties should bargain the distribution of territory

Denktas noted that the two EU specialists in the UN delegation should not come to the table for discussions.

TRNC Prime Minister Mehmet Ali Talat in turn is reported by Radikal as saying that the Greek Cypriots were working for the collapse of the timetable for talks. "They object even to the tea and coffee on the table," he said.

Greek Cypriot Foreign Minister George Iacovou on his part said Rauf Denktas was "nervous and indecisive". He noted that the proposals of Denktas were upsetting the basic balances in the UN Plan and that some of the proposals were outside the scope of the plan. (Radikal 1,11)

CYPRUS TURKS WANT EU ACCESSION AND SOLUTION

Yeni Şafak daily newspaper gives extensive front-page coverage to a survey about the attitudes of the Turkish Cypriots regarding Cyprus unification talks.

According to the survey, 61 percent of the Cyprus Turks expect agreement to be worked out at the end of the talks in Cyprus.

55.4 percent of the interviewed believe that the Turkish government had been instrumental in the start of Cyprus unification talks

55.4 percent of the interviewed are convinced that the solution to be reached in Cyprus at the end of the talks would bring lasting peace and stability. 30 percent do not share this view

53 percent of the interviewed said they would vote in support of the agreement at the referendum. 28.6 percent of the interviewed are indecisive, and 18.5 percent are planning to reject the settlement.

Asked about the their views about lasting solution in Cyprus, 58.1 percent of the interviewed say they wanted bi-zonal state. 27.4 percent say that TRNC should remain an independent state.

9.7 percent say that Northern Cyprus should be annexed by Turkey. (Y.Şafak 1.9)

THE GREEK CYPRIOTS WANT TO GAIN TIME, THE TURKISH SIDE WANTS GUARANTEES

Zaman daily newspaper notes that the Cyprus talks had started seven days ago, but so far the leaders had held only three meetings.

TRNC Prime Minister Mehmet Ali Talat is reported as saying it was “strange” that the UN and the EU were remaining indifferent to the delay in the talks despite their warnings that there was very limited time until 1 May.

Zaman says that the attitudes of the Greek Cypriots in the talks were “strange”. Having guarantees EU accession on 1 May, the Greek Cypriots are trying to win time. Talat says that the Greek Cypriots were using every pretext to delay discussions of substantial issues. They will not lose anything if there is no settlement by 1 May. They also know that the Turkish Cypriots will have to make more concessions after 1 May.

The Turkish side in turn is afraid that the settlement reached in the talks might be later annulled by European courts. EU derogations are needed for the implementation of the agreement. The Turkish side wants guarantees that the court will not annul the concessions made by the EU.

The Turkish side has not been contended with the guarantees given by EU Enlargement Commissioner Alvaro de Soto last week. The guarantees for the derogations are the most critical issue for the Turkish side,- as stressed by Denktaş in each statement.

The prevailing view in Nicosia is that neither Denktaş nor Papadopoulos are willing to work out compromise by 21 March. They want to leave the issue to guarantor countries Turkey and Greece. (Zaman)

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

TURKEY AND RUSSIA SEEK STRATEGIC COOPERATION

Today’s papers focus on the contacts of Foreign Minister Abdullah Gül in Russia.

According to Gül, ties between Turkey and Russia could be described as “multi-dimensional partnership,” Zaman daily newspaper reports.

Gül says that this term was used by Russian President Vladimir Putin at their meeting on Tuesday. Diplomatic sources see the visit of Gül to Russia as “a new page in Turco-Russian relations,” Zaman says. According to the paper, the most important result of the visit is that Putin will set a date for visiting Turkey after the presidential elections in Russia on 14 March.

Yesterday Gül met Russian acting Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov, and stressed that recently Turkey and Russia had “rediscovered each other.” Ivanov on his part said that Turkey was seen by Russia as close partner in regional and international issues.

Ivanov said that Putin had welcomed Turkish invitation for visit and that he would soon pay an official visit to Turkey.

Gül told journalists that his contacts in Moscow had highlighted the political will for deepening relations. Ivanov on his part said he was hopeful for the future of political dialogue between the two countries.

According to Zaman, at the meeting Ivanov said that Turkey was good neighbor and reliable partner in international relations. Gül on his part said that Turkey were two important regional countries with deep historical relations.

Radikal daily newspaper lists the messages given by Gül in his statement to Itar-Tass:

- Terrorism undermines stability in the region and Turkey wants to boost cooperation with Russia against terrorism.
- Regional stability should be based on the principle of ensuring the territorial integrity of each country.
- Turkey is against any kind of terror activities.
- Cooperation for regional security will contribute to improvements in the South Caucasus and Central Asia.
- Turco-Russian relations have 500-year past. Turkey and Russia are rediscovering each other in a period of sweeping changes in the world. Turkey and Russia will form regional partnership.
- Turkey is working on proposals linked to Russian high-technology defense system.

Visa problems encountered by Turkish nationals in Russia were also taken up during the contacts of Gül. The Russian side promised to lean on the issue. Ivanov promised to solve the problem as soon as possible, stressing that they were not bad-intentioned.(Hürriyet, Zaman , Radikal)

TURKEY AND RUSSIA AGREE TO COOPERATE AGAINST TERRORISM

Hürriyet daily newspaper says that terror had been main item in the meeting of Foreign Minister Gül and Russian acting Foreign Minister Ivanov yesterday.

During his contacts in Russia, Foreign Minister Gül asked Moscow to add PKK to its list of terror organizations like the US had done. The Russian side said that it was not preparing a list of terror organizations like the US, but ask Ankara for detailed information about PKK. Russia gave the message that it was ready to undertake all moves for preventing PKK activities on its territory if it is given timely information on the issue.

According to Hürriyet, during the contacts of Gül in Moscow Russian officials clearly indicated that Turkey was not seen as a country supporting terrorism because of the Turkish ID documents of some terrorists killed in Chechnya.

Sabah daily newspaper says that Turkey and Russia could establish regional partnership for fighting terrorism.

In a statement to Russian official news agency Itar-Tass Gül said that terrorism was threat to regional stability. "Turkey wants to enhance joint struggle with Russia against terrorism. Turkey and Russia will form regional partnership with Russia," he said. Gül noted that Russia had sophisticated defense systems, and added that Turkey was working on various proposals linked to this issue.

According to Zaman daily newspaper, In response to a question about Chechnya at a press conference yesterday, Gül said the issue had been taken up within the framework of the fight against terrorism. He noted that terror targeting innocent people and civilians could be prevented through international cooperation, and added that there could be no justification for terror. (Zaman , Hürriyet , Sabah)

RUSSIA GIVES BACKING TO CYPRUS SETTLEMENT

According to Radikal daily newspaper, Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov has voiced hopes for working out lasting and fair settlement in Cyprus. He promised to extend every necessary support to the bid for solving the Cyprus dispute.

Gül on his part said the contributions of UN Security Council member Russia to lasting and realistic peace in Cyprus were always awaited by Turkey.(Radikal)

TURKEY SECURES RUSSIAN BACKING IN THE UN

Radikal daily newspaper in turn says that Russia had promised to support Turkey's bid for UN Security Council membership in 2009-2010.

The report in Zaman daily newspaper is more reserved. Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov said that Russia would examine carefully Turkish request for support for in UN Security Council election, Zaman says. (Radikal, Zaman)

ERDOĞAN SENDS MESSAGE OF SECULARISM TO THE EU

Radikal columnist Murat Yetkin draws attention to the words of Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan that he would not to dictate his beliefs to the public.

Erdoğan sees this attitude as expression of secularism, the writer notes.

Radikal daily newspaper notes in its front-page headline that this was a message for the EU. (Radikal 1,6)

GÜL SAYS THERE WAS NO NEED TO DEFEND PALESTINE IN THE HAGUE

Foreign Minister Abdullah Gül said that Turkish decision not to meddle in the case concerning the security wall in West Bank had not been dictated by other countries, Cumhuriyet daily newspaper reports.

Gül released a written statement in connection with allegations that the decision had been adopted as a result of Israeli pressures. He said that the decision for non-involvement was Turkey's own decision.

According to Gül, Turkey has decided not to meddle because its intervention would be "useless". Cumhuriyet says this

explanation was "stunning". (Cumhuriyet 10)

FURTHER READING

DOMESTIC AFFAIRS

TWO SURPRISES ON THE EVE OF THE ELECTIONS

Sabah daily newspaper draws attention to two developments that might have impact on the outcome of the municipality elections.

The mayor of Diyarbakir Feridun Çelik who until now has been a member of DEHAP, is to be an independent candidate in March local elections after a row within the party. Çelik will run against the candidate nominated by DEHAP, and this will increase the chances for success of AKP candidate, Sabah notes.

Cumhuriyet daily newspaper notes that the disagreements in DEHAP were growing.

In Eskişehir the Election Board rejected the request of CHP to accept its candidates on the ground that CHP had filed its application ten minutes after the end of the deadline that expired at 17:00 on 24 February.

Sabah says that DSP candidate Yılmaz Büyükerşen would probably prevail in Eskişehir elections.

Meanwhile, Cumhuriyet notes that while the Election Board had rejected the request of CHP for extending the deadline by ten minutes, it had accepted the delayed application of AKP candidates in Rize-Çayeli.

(Cumhuriyet 1,4,5 Sabah 24)

KEMAL DERVIŞ READIES TO FORM NEW PARTY

Akşam daily newspaper reports that CHP deputy Kemal Derviş was readying to set up a new political party after the local elections on 28 March.

If CHP fails to preserve its positions from 3 November elections, the party will start to debate the leadership of Deniz Baykal.

Derviş reportedly will take advantage of the turmoil in CHP, of the decision of DSP leader Bülent Ecevit to leave politics after the elections and of turmoil in AKP related to the Cyprus policy of the party. Derviş will form a new group parallel to the American left model. Derviş expects to secure the support of 20 deputies from CHP and 50 deputies from AKP.

Derviş will shape his plans in line with the results of the elections on 28 March. Akşam says there were two alternatives for Derviş: CHP leadership or new party. (Akşam 1,13)

DOĞAN HEPER: NO EXCITEMENT BEFORE THE ELECTIONS

Milliyet columnist **Doğan Heper** says there was no excitement about the elections because the outcome was clear. There are no bright names among the candidates, so the voters will determine their positions according to their political preferences. In this case the victory of AKP is certain.

The other parties could form alliances to fight against AKP, but they missed this chance, and AKP candidates will prevail in the polls. (Milliyet 20)

HUMAN RIGHTS

POWELL ASKS TURKEY TO GIVE EMPHASIS TO HUMAN RIGHTS

US Secretary of State Colin Powell has sent a letter to Turkish Foreign Minister Abdullah Gül, Hürriyet daily newspaper reports. Powell applauded reforms carried out to improve Turkey's human rights record, but at the same time complained that the democratic spirit of the reforms was not seen in the implementation.

Powell cited the example of Hacettepe University student Birtan Altınbaş who was tortured to death in 1991. he noted

that the ten policemen responsible for the death of the student should face trial. He expressed concerns that the case might drop from the agenda because of lapse of time.

The police have failed to find three of the policemen charged with torture and to invite them to the court. The charges against the policemen will become invalid in 2006 because of lapse of time.

Sabah commentator Aslı Aydıntaşbaş reports US officials as saying that the goal of the letter was to encourage Turkish officials to tackle problem in human rights.

An anonymous US official is quoted as saying that Turkey has to guarantee a positive report of the EU Commission in October. "This will force even the adversaries of Turkey to give nod to the accession of Turkey," he says. (Milliyet 1,17, Sabah 22)

US REPORT HIGHLIGHTS TROUBLES IN TURKEY'S HUMAN RIGHTS RECORD

Milliyet daily newspaper says that the annual human rights report prepared by the US State Department was containing alarming assessments about the situation in Turkey.

The report says that torture was still widespread in Turkey, and that security officials rarely were punished for torture. The report expresses concern about poor conditions in prisons, and says that unlawful detentions were still frequent practice. (Milliyet 1,17, Sabah 22)

ERDOĞAN PROMISES TO IMPLEMENT REFORMS, BUT HE HARDLY CAN LIVE UP TO HIS PLEDGES

Hürriyet columnist **Şükrü Küçükşahin** says that in meetings with foreign guests Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan was promising to ensure the implementation of EU reforms. Erdoğan stresses that he was personally in charge of the issue.

The writer says that Erdoğan had given such guarantees to Swedish Prime Minister Göran person and to German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder who recently paid visits to Turkey.

Nevertheless, Erdoğan's determination to implement the reforms is not shared by the bureaucracy. Ministers are issuing circulars to generate support for the reforms, but in vain.

On 12 February Interior Minister Abdülkadir Aksu released a circular for bringing to court policemen charged with torture. The circular was released in connection with the failure to find the policemen responsible for the death of Hacettepe University student Birtan Altınbaş. The writer says that earlier Aksu had released two other circulars in the same issue, but had failed to make progress in the issue.

Aksu - like previous Interior Minister Sadettin Tantan – probably is not aware of the fact that one of the suspects was the

adviser of one of the ex-ministers. The same suspect is also father-in-law of the former head of Interior Ministry Strategy Department Dr. Hasan Canpolat. Otherwise Aksu could simply ask Canpolat – now governor of Sivas – to bring his father-in-law to the court.

Another focus of controversy is the suit filed against officials of the Foundation for Human rights who face trial for presenting reports on human rights to UN and Council of Europe representatives visiting Turkey.

The writer says that the next court sitting in the suit for the murder of Altınbaş was scheduled to take place on 5 March. The suit against the officials from the Human rights Foundation is scheduled for 9 March. The court sittings will show whether the efforts exerted by Erdoğan and Aksu have led to any changes in Turkish attitudes towards human rights, the writer says. (Hürriyet 17)

EXCERPTS FROM YESTERDAY'S NTV NEWS BULLETIN

Turkey

- * 4.9 magnitude quake reported off Antalya.
- * Government readies to increase fuel oil prices.
- * Prosecutor files suits against 69 suspects linked to terror attacks in Istanbul.
- * Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan: The goal is unified Cyprus by 1 May.
- * Press Council criticizes Prime Minister Erdoğan for his calls for news blackout in Cyprus.
- * Soccer referee Ahmet Çakar injured in attack.
- * Tanker driver arrested for leaving the vehicle with failed brakes.
- * CHP fails to nominate candidates in Eskişehir.
- * CHP deputy Koç criticizes Finance Minister Unakıtan for \$360 million profits made with the importation of corn on the eve of increase in customs.
- * Vessel carrying illegal immigrants sinks off Ayvalık. 15 illegal refugees killed.

World

- * US helicopter crashes in Iraq. Two people killed.
- * The Turks come fourth in number of applications for asylum.
- * Turkish Cypriot leader Denktaş and Greek Cypriot leader Tassos Papadopoulos postpone the talks.
- * Denktaş: Temporary derogations can be accepted.
- * West Bank security wall condemned in the Hague.
- * European committee for preventing torture asks Turkish government to undertake new measures to guarantee Öcalan's right to meet his lawyers and visitors. Turkey rejects the demands.
- * Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) denounces invitation for joining European Parliament elections extended by the Greek Cypriots to Turkish Cypriots.

- * President of the European Parliament Pat Cox warned that the accession negotiations with Romania might be reviewed.
- * 5,000 Turkmens stage protests against new Iraqi constitution draft in Baghdad.
- * CIA says the autonomous administration of Kurds within the framework of the federal structure would be one of the problems to be encountered by the new Iraqi leadership after 1 July.
- * Israeli army penetrates Ramallah, raids four bank branches in the town.
- * Peres: Israel should withdraw from Palestinian territory.
- * Israeli domestic intelligence chief says the target in November terror attacks in Istanbul was the Israeli Consulate.

Economy

- * Savings Deposit Insurance Fund (TMSF) demands the bankruptcy of Imarbank.

- * Finance Minister Unakıtan: "Rapid privatization will continue in 2004."
- * Independent Industrialists' and Businessmen's Association (MUSIAD) warns the government against new taxes and price hikes on the eve of IMF visit.
- * Tataristan Prime Minister comes to Turkey for Tüpraş selloff.
- * Head of Turco-German Chamber of Trade and Industry: The visit of Schröder has paved the way for the start of accession negotiations and has created new opportunities for the flow of German capital to Turkey.