

# ***THE AZERBAIJANI PERSPECTIVE:***

*News from the Caspian's West Coast*

December 18, 2007 – Los Angeles, California

## ***Railway to Boost Regional Cooperation***

On November 21, Presidents Ilham Aliyev of Azerbaijan, Mikheil Saakashvili of Georgia and Abdullah Gul of Turkey initiated the vital railway link, which will connect the Turkish railway system with the Azerbaijani one via the Georgian territory. The groundbreaking ceremony at the Marabda station in Georgia launched another regional cooperation among the three nations. Upon its completion, the railway will provide a continuous railway connection between Europe and Asia along the historic Silk Road. Azerbaijan has provided Georgia with a \$200 million credit for construction of the Georgian section of the railway.

## ***Pipeline Brings Azerbaijani Gas to EU***

On November 18, President Aliyev joined Prime Ministers of Greece and Turkey, Karamanis and Erdogan, respectively, at the inauguration of the Turkey-Greece gas pipeline. The ceremony, which took place at the Turkish-Greece border and was attended by the US Energy Secretary Bodman, marked the first time the Azerbaijani natural gas has reached the European Union market. Building on the success of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline, Azerbaijan continues to provide the basis for regional cooperation projects.

## ***Baku Hosts Major Telecom Conference***

On November 21-24, the Ministry of Communications and Information Technologies sponsored the 13<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference on Telecom and IT – BakuTel 2007. The numerous international participants were greeted by President Ilham Aliyev, Microsoft Chairman Bill Gates and other international leaders.

## ***In other news:***

\*On December 1, UC-Berkeley hosted the Second Annual Azerbaijani-American Scholarly Forum, which brought together the Azerbaijani community activists, students and scholars from across the United States as well as participants from Azerbaijan. The event was organized by the Azerbaijani-American Council with support from the Azerbaijan Society of America, the FASE/Alumni Network and the Consulate General of Azerbaijan in Los Angeles.

Presenters at the Forum discussed issues as diverse as Azerbaijan's history, literature and economy, regional politics as well as science and community mobilization. In a special address to the Forum participants, Professor Lotfi Zadeh of UC-Berkeley spoke of his vision for Azerbaijan's future. Marking the tenth anniversary since publication of Thomas Goltz's 'Azerbaijan Diary,' the Montana-based author received an award from his grateful readers.

\*According to the statement issued by the Azerbaijani National Security Ministry on December 15, the religious extremists convicted by the court in Baku earlier last week had links to Iran's special services and had undergone special training.

Following vocal protests by the Iranian side, Azerbaijan's Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov met with Iran's Ambassador Nassir Hamidi Zare and provided him with the evidence in the case. "We expect an answer," said Mr. Mammadyarov. "Iran had asked for facts and we have provided them to Tehran."