

# TURKMENISTAN

## CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS

Chronology prepared by Bruce Pannier from Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (www.rferl.org). The OSI Turkmenistan Project expresses its gratitude to Mr. Pannier for generously sharing his work.

### 2006

- Jan. 4, 2006: Kakabai Tekenov, 70, sent to psychiatric hospital after complaining about the human rights situation in Turkmenistan
- Jan. 5, 2006: Forum 18 reports that despite a Saudi government quota of 4,500 pilgrims from Turkmenistan to make the Hajj only 188 will actually do so
- Jan. 11, 2006: IT cites Turkmen president's office as reporting Iran has agreed to pay \$60 per 1,000 cubic meters of Turkmen natural gas
- Jan. 22-23, 2006: Niyazov visits Moscow for talks on gas exports with Russian President Vladimir Putin
- Jan. 25, 2006: Niyazov dismisses Begench Atamyradovas, Minister of Agriculture, replaces him with Yesenmyrat Orazgeldiyev, Shemshat Annagylydzhova appointed Education Minister, Myratberdi Annalyev replaces Alexander Grishin as chairman of the State Customs Service, Grishin appointed deputy chief of the State Fisheries Committee, replacing Toily Komekov, Aganiyaz Akyev appointed chief of administration in Dashoguz region replacing Kakamyrat Annaglychev who faces charges of taking bribes and bigamy
- Jan. 26, 2006: Niyazov orders huge cuts in pensions, tens of thousands lose their right to pensions
- Jan. 27, 2006: Amnesty International releases report on torture and ill-treatment, says of Turkmenistan that "Torture and ill-treatment by police is believed to be widespread and has been used against dissidents, members of religious minority groups and detainees accused of ordinary crimes. The perpetrators routinely go unpunished. The authorities have failed to respond to allegations that some of those imprisoned following unfair trials in connection with the alleged assassination attempt on President Saparmurad Niyazov died in custody as a result of torture and cruel and inhuman prison conditions"
- Feb. 8, 2006: Turkmen Railways Ministry says new 540-kilometer line between Ashgabat and Dashoguz completed
- Feb. 9, 2006: U.S. State Department announces its South Asia bureau has assumed the duties involving the five Central Asian states
- Feb. 10, 2006: President Niyazov says Turkmenistan will during the course of 2006 raise the export price of natural gas to somewhere between \$100 and \$130 per 1,000 cubic meters
- Feb. 12, 2006: Iran agrees to pay higher price for Turkmen natural gas, price is quoted as \$65 per 1,000 cubic meters
- Feb. 13-14, 2006: UAE President Halif bin Zaid al-Nakhayan visits

Feb. 16, 2006: Ashgabat's Makhtumkuli University hosts conference on The Great Leader and the Green Banner 'Pride of the Turkmen Nation'

Feb. 17, 2006: Gazprom chief Aleksei Miller visits

Feb. 19, 2006: Niyazov turns 66, special gold and silver coins minted to commemorate the occasion

Mar. 4, 2006: IT reports Niyazov gives National Security Service control over provincial administrations

Mar. 4, 2006: State television reports Niyazov sacks head of the state-owned Turkmenbashi refinery Amangeldy Pudakov who is charged with entering into unauthorized contracts with foreign oil companies and misappropriation of state property, and Sapar Eldashev, the deputy head of Turkmengaz, who is also charged with misappropriation of state funds

Mar. 6, 2006: OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities Rolf Ekeus visits

Mar. 7, 2006: Police arrest RFE/RL correspondents Meret Khommadov and Jumadurdy Ovezov

Mar. 9, 2006: IFX reports Niyazov relieves Economic and Finance Minister Atamyrat Berdyev of his post and transfers him to another (unspecified) position, deputy Interior Minister Mukhammurgurban Bairamov is dismissed for shortcomings in his work

Mar. 13, 2006: "Neitralny Turkmenistan" reports Turkmen border guards seize more than one ton of narcotics, mostly opium, and arrest smugglers trying to cross into Turkmenistan from Iran

Mar. 13, 2006: President Niyazov calls on country's citizens to plant trees

Mar. 15, 2006: Turkmen National Statistics Institute reports country's population reached 6.786 million on March 1

Mar. 17, 2006: Turkmen authorities release RFE/RL correspondents Meret Khommadov and Jumadurdy Ovezov after warning them not to work for RFE/RL anymore

Mar. 20, 2006: Niyazov says anyone who reads Ruhname three times will go directly to heaven

Mar. 24, 2006: AP reports Turkmenistan signs \$30-million contract to buy earthmovers from U.S. company Caterpillar to help build the artificial lake

Mar. 26, 2006: Turkmen and Ukrainian officials come to agreement for Ukraine to pay off most of its \$169-million debt by August

Mar. 29, 2006: OSCE rotating chairman Karel de Gucht visits, says Turkmenistan needs judicial reforms

Mar. 29, 2006: IT reports Turkmen authorities and UNICEF sign agreement for children in Turkmenistan to receive immunization shots for the period 2006-2009

Mar. 29, 2006: Turkmen National Olympic Committee names President Niyazov to be committee chief

Mar. 31, 2006: AP reports U.S. signs agreement to give Turkmenistan \$450,000 to fight narcotics trafficking

Apr. 2-7, 2006: President Niyazov visits China, signs 8 new agreements including one for the construction of a gas pipeline between Turkmenistan and China

Apr. 2, 2006: Turkmenistan marks national holiday 'A drop of water is a grain of gold'

Apr. 10, 2006: IT reports Niyazov dismisses Gurbanbibi Atajanova as prosecutor general and replaces her with 43-year-old Makhmetguly Ogshukov

Apr. 11, 2006: Former prosecutor general, Gurbanbibi Atajanova, arrested and charged with abuse of office

Apr. 11, 2006: New Russian Ambassador to Turkmenistan Igor Blatov presents his credentials and starts work

Apr. 11, 2006: Dissident Gurbandurdy Durdykulyev released from psychiatric hospital after two years there, Durdykulyev had written to President Niyazov asking permission to hold an anti-government rally

Apr. 25, 2006: Former prosecutor general, Gurbanbibi Atajanova, appears on state television begging President Niyazov for mercy, Atajanova is accused of taking bribes and stealing state property, including 25 cars, 36 villas, 2,000 cattle and 30,000 buckets

Apr. 27, 2006: State newspapers publish Niyazov decree appointing 36-year-old Bagtiyar Khajygurbanov chairman of Turkmengaz

Apr. 27, 2006: Turkmen television reports Niyazov sacks Culture Minister and Teleradio Broadcasting Maral Basimova for polygamy (polyandry), Niyazov names Enebai Atayev to replace Basimova

May 2, 2006: President Niyazov awarded the prize for "service to the Turkic world" for his literary works

May 3, 2006: The U.S.-based Commission on International Religious Freedom releases annual report calling for tougher measures against Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, report says "President Niyazov's monopoly of power and absolute control over Turkmen society render any independent religious activity impossible in Turkmenistan"

June 10, 2006: Forum 18 reports (June 14) a Baptist who is a Russian citizen, Aleksandr Frolov, was deported from Turkmenistan for his religious activity

June 11, 2006: Turkmen border guards shoot dead Uzbek shepherd who allowed his herd to graze on Turkmen land

June 19, 2006: Amnesty International releases statement expressing concern for the fate of Ogulsapar Muradova, aged 58, journalist, her children Sana Muradova, Maral Muradova, Berdy Muradov, Elena Ovezova, aged 41, Annakurban Amanklychev, aged 35, Sapardurdy Khadzhev, aged 47 all detained between June 16 and 19, also detained briefly was Henri Tomassini from the French Embassy and Benjamin Moreau of the OSCE office in Ashgabat on charges of spying

June 20, 2006: President Niyazov says he will not participate in ceremonies marking the 14th anniversary of his election as president

June 20, 2006: Gazprom deputy director Aleksandr Ryazanov says his company has a contract to buy 30 billion cubic meters of Turkmen gas at \$65 per 1,000 cubic meters, Turkmen officials say they want to raise that price to \$100 per 1,000 cubic meters, threaten to cut gas supplies to Russia

June 20, 2006: IT cites President Niyazov's press service as saying Niyazov signed decree that when temperatures hit 45 Celsius or above work at all factories and plants will stop

June 21, 2006: Human Rights Watch calls on Turkmen authorities to release seven people detained between June 16 and 19 (see June 19)

June 22, 2006: Reporters Without Borders releases statement calling for the release of RFE/RL correspondent Ogulsapar Muradova and her three children

June 26, 2006: Kakamurad Ballyev, chief editor of a military newspaper Esger (Warrior) dismissed for "shortcomings in his work and involvement in criminal activities"

June 28, 2006: IFX cites OSCE rotating president, Karel de Gucht, as denying charges against OSCE employee in Turkmenistan Benjamin Moreau

June 29, 2006: Turkmen media reports grain harvest for 2006 is 3.5 million tons, a new record

June 29, 2006: Ukrainian delegation visits for talks on natural gas exports, Turkmen side insists Ukraine pay \$100 per 1,000 cubic meters

July 1, 2006: Ogulsapar Muradova's three children and human rights defender Elena Ovezova are released from detention

July 7, 2006: France-based group Reporters Without Borders organizes demonstration outside Turkmenistan's Embassy in Paris to protest detention of Turkmen rights activists

July 24-25, 2006: Iranian President Mahmud Ahmadinejad visits

July 28, 2006: Local elections held

Aug. 4, 2006: President Niyazov on national television promises ministers a Mercedes for the 15th anniversary of Turkmenistan's independence, promises regional leaders a jeep but says if those regional leaders bring in their cotton harvest early they will also receive a Mercedes

Aug. 4, 2006: Niyazov tells session of cabinet of ministers that a Rukhname University should be built in the next few years

Aug. 13, 2006: Melon Day

Aug. 21, 2006: Chinese delegation visits, agreement in principle reached on Turkmen-China gas pipeline by 2009

Aug. 22-23, 2006: Informal CIS summit in Moscow, Niyazov does not attend, his representative there announces Turkmenistan is downgrading its participation in the CIS to associate status

Aug. 23, 2006: Turkmenistan.ru reports Yarmukhammet Orazgulyev is appointed head of state company Turkmenenergo

Aug. 25, 2006: RFE/RL correspondent Ogulsapar Muradova is sentenced to six years in prison and Sapardur Khajiyev to seven years in prison for illegally possessing ammunition

Aug. 30, 2006: President Niyazov announces an amnesty for Independence Day, some 10,000 prisoners will benefit

Aug. 30, 2006: Turkmenistan's national airline announces it will close its office in Ukraine

Aug. 31, 2006: Kazakh Foreign Minister, Kasymzhomart Tokayev, visits

Sept. 5, 2006: "Neitralny Turkmenistan" reports head of Turkmenistan's chemical industry Suleiman Khanov is sacked and charged with embezzling \$1.7 million, receiving bribes and abuse of office

Sept. 5, 2006: Gazprom agrees to pay \$100 per 1,000 cubic meters of Turkmen natural gas starting in 2007

Sept. 8, 2006: Representatives from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan attend signing of treaty in Semipalatinsk, Kazakhstan declaring Central Asia to be a nuclear-free zone

Sept. 9, 2006: Presidential press service (cited by IFX) says Batyrmukhammet Aymyradov named first deputy Interior Minister; decree also changes the police chiefs in Mary, now Kabul Rakhmanov, and Akhal provinces, now Tangryguly Khojgulyev

Sept. 12, 2006: International academic conference on Rukhnama held in Ashgabat, Niyazov quoted as saying, "We are happy that some 40 peoples of the world read Rukhnama in their native languages, conference marks 50-year anniversary of publishing of first volume of Niyazov's book

Sept. 13, 2006: Naftogaza Ukrainy says it has paid off its debt for Turkmen natural gas

Sept. 14, 2006: Relatives say RFE/RL's Turkmen Service correspondent, Ogulsapar Muradova, has died in custody, relatives say that security officials summoned them to the morgue today to identify Muradova's body

Sept. 15, 2006: U.S. State Department releases annual report on treatment of religious minorities, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan are listed as countries of significant interest

Sept. 18, 2006: IMF publishes its World Economic Outlook that forecasts 2006 GDP growth, forecast shows growth for Turkmenistan (9%), Kazakhstan (8.3%), and Tajikistan (8%), IMF forecasts in 2007 growth will be Turkmenistan 9%, Kazakhstan 7.7%, while Uzbekistan will ascend to the 4th position (among CIS countries) with 7%

Sept. 25, 2006: "Deutsche Welle" reports soldiers out picking cotton and grain in the fields

Sept. 25, 2006: Asia-Plus reports that a new \$50-million gas refinery opens in Lebap province at the Bagaj gas condensate filed

Sept. 27, 2006: Some 20 people protest outside the Turkmen Embassy in Moscow, picket aims to bring attention to the poor rights situation in Turkmenistan including the recent death in detention of RFE/RL correspondent Ogulsapar Muradova

Sept. 29, 2006: China approves construction of a northwestern pipeline to carry Turkmen natural gas exports, pipeline reportedly will run from the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region to Shanghai

Oct. 3, 2006: European Parliament votes against trade agreement with Turkmenistan saying Turkmen government must improve its human rights record

Oct. 3, 2006: Niyazov criticizes officials in the cotton sector, cotton harvest reported to be 677,500 tons or roughly 30% of the 2 million tons plans called for, Niyazov singles out the provincial (oblast/valayat) heads, orders negligent farmers to be stripped of the land under their care

Oct. 3, 2006: Representatives of the opposition-in-exile Republican Party of Turkmenistan meet with German officials in Warsaw and pass a letter to Chancellor Angela Merkel asking German authorities to check on President Niyazov's bank accounts

Oct. 4, 2006: Russian newspaper "Gazeta" reports Niyazov's health failing, paper cites reported heart problems following Niyazov's attendance at the October 2 ceremony honoring the National Security Ministry

Oct. 6, 2006: Ashgabat Turkmen Television First Channel shows footage of Niyazov attending a ceremony, seeking to dispel health rumors about Niyazov

Oct. 9, 2006: Foreign Ministry issues press release condemning the North Korean nuclear test

Oct. 10, 2006: The artificial 11-kilometer long river through Ashgabat, the "Ashgabatka," starts working, costs some \$63 million

Oct. 11, 2006: IFX reports Niyazov decree makes Tumar Mammedov chairman of the state commercial bank "Daykhanbank"

Oct. 16, 2006: "Neitralny Turkmenistan" newspaper reports Niyazov's new book of poetry "Turkmenistan - My Joy" is now available, newspaper says the poems are devoted to the eternal theme of love in the widest sense of the word, and are works created in the best traditions of oriental poetry

Oct. 17, 2006: Turkmen newspapers publish information about the impending annual Independence Day amnesty, 10,056 people will be released including 8 of those convicted and jailed for the reported plot to kill President Niyazov in 2002 after they reportedly repented

Oct. 20, 2006: Reports cite Niyazov as saying his health (heart disease) prevents him from properly observing Muslim fasting practices during Ramadan

Oct. 20, 2006: The 9th Turkmen of the World conference opens in Ashgabat celebrating 15 years of Turkmenistan's independence

Oct. 20, 2006: The "World of Turkmen Fairy Tales" children's amusement park opens in Ashgabat

Oct. 21, 2006: Five new theaters open in Ashgabat, all are featuring plays written by President Saparmurat Niyazov

Oct. 23, 2006: Presidential press service cites German Dr. Hans Meisner as saying Niyazov is in excellent health

Oct. 23, 2006: Reporters Without Borders releases World Press Freedom Index for 2006; Tajikistan ranks 117th, Kyrgyzstan ranks 123rd, Kazakhstan 128th, Uzbekistan 158th, Turkmenistan 167th, ahead of only North Korea

Oct. 25, 2006: Halk Maslahaty meets and rejects any proposal to hold presidential elections, the vote is unanimous and CEC chairman Murad Karyev tells Niyazov "as you see the people are against (holding presidential elections), you are the president-for-life"

Oct. 26, 2006: IFX reports Niyazov sacks Akhal Governor, Amandurdy Myratgulyev, and Balkan Governor, Meretgul Gubyev, for their failures in the cotton harvest

Oct. 27, 2006: Independence Day

Nov. 1, 2006: Niyazov dismisses border guard chief Orazberdy Soltanov and sends him to work in the railway ministry, Bairom Alovov is temporarily made head of the border guard service

Nov. 6, 2006: Transparency International releases its annual 'Corruption Perceptions Index' for 2006; Kazakhstan is ranked 111th (of 163), Tajikistan and Turkmenistan tied for 142nd, Uzbekistan (tied with Belarus) at 151st

Nov. 8-9. 2006: Nikolai Gavrilov, former director of one of the operative departments of the National Security Committee, and his wife killed, Gavrilov was in the anti-narcotics department, Gavrilov allegedly exposed former prosecutor general, Gurbanbibi Atajanova, as being one of the drug lords of Turkmenistan, Gavrilov had recently retired

Nov. 13, 2006: Niyazov appears on state TV threatening provincial heads if they do not sow their fields within 10 days

Nov. 14, 2006: Turkmenistan's official TDH news agency cites Niyazov as accusing regional governors and agriculture officials of falsifying this year's winter grain sowing statistics, Niyazov says he has ordered law-enforcement agencies to launch a probe into the Dashoguz, Lebap, and Mary provinces

Nov.17, 2006: Reports say Niyazov will undergo eye surgery in January

Nov. 28, 2006: CIS summit in Minsk

Nov. 28, 2006: Reports say Niyazov dismisses Lebap Governor Ovezdurdy Chashayev (but makes him chairman of the Galkynysh district) and dismisses Dashoguz Governor Aganyyaz Akyyev, appoints Saparmyrat Ashyrov and Tagaimyrat Mammedov as governors of the Dashhowuz and Lebap regions, respectively

Nov. 30, 2006: Reports say Niyazov dismisses Mary Governor Khojaberdi Byashymov, Turkmenistan's TDH official news agency says Niyazov appointed Mukhammet Gurbannazarov as the new governor of Mary Region

Nov. 30, 2006: IT reports Niyazov orders monthly reports from security structures about the activities of foreigners in Turkmenistan

Nov. 30, 2006: OSCE announces completion of a four-day rights training course for some 30 prosecutors and judges in Turkmenistan

Dec. 2, 2006: Czech military plane returning from Afghanistan detained at Ashgabat airport because of weapons on board, after 14 hours the plane is allowed to continue on

Dec. 3, 2006: Elections held for the first time for city and regional councils, 6142 candidates run for 2640 places

Dec. 6, 2006: Former Turkmen Prime Minister Khan Akhmedov dies, Akhmedov was appointed prime minister in December 1989 and remained in that position until May 1992, he had been in internal exile in the city of Serdar since 2002

Dec. 7, 2006: Niyazov dismisses Minister of Automotive Transportation and Roads Baymukhammet Kelov for serious shortcomings in his work

Dec. 8, 2006: Niyazov attends the official opening of the children's theme park in Ashgabat

Dec. 16, 2006: Democratic Party of Turkmenistan, formerly the Communist Party, marks 15 years of existence, IFX report says there are some 145,000 members of the party

Dec. 17, 2006: Environmental activist Andrei Zatoka detained at Dashoguz airport

Dec. 21, 2006: Turkmen media report President Niyazov has died of heart failure

Dec. 21, 2006: Health Minister Gurbanguly Berdymukhammedov announced as acting president, instead of parliament speaker Ovezgeldy Atayev who constitutionally should have assumed the position of head of state, later Turkmen television announces Atayev has been arrested

Dec. 21, 2006: Turkmen television says acting President Gurbanguly Berdymukhammedov will lead the committee charged with organizing Niyazov's state funeral

Dec. 21, 2006: Global Witness, a London-based group that investigates the role of natural resources in fuelling conflict and corruption, calls on German government to safeguard state funds Niyazov deposited in German banks

Dec. 24, 2006: State funeral for deceased President Niyazov held, his body is laid to rest in the mosque in his home village Gipchak

Dec. 26, 2006: Halk Maslahaty meets and names February 11 as date for presidential elections, also confirms six candidates for the election, the election for head of the Halk Maslahaty will be February 14, session also strikes restriction against acting president running for the presidency in elections, another amendment to the constitution lowers the eligible age for the Halk Maslahaty chairman from 55 to 40

Dec. 27, 2006: Halk Maslahaty issues document stripping parliament speaker Ovezgeldy Atayev of his position as deputy chairman of the Halk Maslahaty and position of speaker of parliament, Atayev faces charges of inciting inter-clan rivalries

Dec. 28, 2006: New law 'On Elections of the President of Turkmenistan' comes into effect 2007

## 2007

Jan. 3, 2007: Acting President Gurbanguly Berdymukhammedov meets with voters, tells them he will restore the 10-year mandatory education system and a five-year higher education system

Jan. 4, 2007: Turkmen newspapers publish comments by acting President Gurbanguly Berdymukhammedov where he pledges to keep prices for gasoline, flour and other basic goods low, he also promises to keep providing gas, electricity and water for free

Jan. 31, 2007: Dashoguz court convicts Turkmen environmentalist and civil society figure Andrei Zatoka on charges including illegal possession of weapons and poisonous substances and sentences him to three years in jail but immediately releases him on parole

Jan. 31, 2007: OSCE election team arrives in Turkmenistan, team will not officially monitor February 11 presidential elections, Ambassador Lubomir Kopaj of Slovakia calls the event "a first step of a renewed dialogue with the Turkmen authorities on electoral processes"

Feb. 2, 2007: Amnesty International releases statement expressing concern for the health of Geldy Kyarizov who was arrested and jailed in 2002, Amnesty says Kyarizov, an internationally renowned breeder of Akhalteke horses, is in extremely poor health and in urgent need of medical treatment, Kyarizov reportedly suffered two heart attacks and a stroke in detention and suffered from pneumonia

Feb. 3, 2007: IFX reports all Turkmen TV channels are running information from the Ministry of Culture on the procedures for voting in February 11 presidential elections

Feb. 5, 2007: "Obshchaya gazeta" reports former deputy prime minister, Yolli Gurbanmuradov, is released from jail, also reportedly released is another former deputy prime minister Dortkuli Aidogdyev

Feb. 7, 2007: Turkmen law enforcement publicly burns 562 kilograms of narcotics

Feb. 8, 2007: Human Rights Watch issues statement saying "a new dictatorship will be consolidated in Turkmenistan by the pro forma presidential election on February 11 unless strong international voices insist on real human rights reform"

Feb. 8, 2007: Amnesty International issues press release with "13 recommendations to the new president of Turkmenistan to address abysmal human rights record"

Feb. 9, 2007: UN delegation arrives in Ashgabat ahead of February 11 presidential elections

Feb. 9, 2007: CIS election monitors announce they received no invitation to come to Turkmenistan and observe presidential elections so they will not send any monitors

Feb. 9, 2007: Delegation from OSCE Parliamentary Assembly in Turkmenistan, meets with candidates in presidential race

Feb. 11, 2007: Presidential elections held, six candidates compete -- acting President and former Health Minister Gurbanguly Berdymukhammedov, First Deputy Governor of Dashoguz Province Amanyz Atajykov, Deputy Minister of the Gas Industry and Mineral Resources Ishanguly Nuryev, Mukhammetnazar Gurbanov, who is head of the Karabekaul district, in Lebap Province, Abadan (Akhal Province) Mayor Orazmyrad Garajev and Turkmenbashi City [Balkan Province] Mayor Ashyrniyaz Pomanov, election is declared valid by 12:00 local time when CEC says 66.38% of voters have cast ballots, final official figures for voting are 98.65% of eligible voters cast ballots,

Feb. 11, 2007: Jose Lopez-Medel, a Spanish MP from the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly visiting Turkmenistan calls the election a "show" and a "farce"

Feb. 14, 2007: Results of presidential election announced, Berdymukhammedov wins with 89.23% of vote, he is followed by Amanyz Atajykov who received 3.23%, Ishanguly Nuryev gets 2.38%, Mukhammetnazar Gurbanov 2.37%, Orazmyrad Garajayev 1.55%, Ashirniyaz Pomanov 1.31%

Feb. 14, 2007: Halk Maslahaty meets, inauguration ceremony takes place shortly after victor of presidential elections is announced

Feb. 14, 2007: Geldimyrat Abilov named head of Central bank

Feb. 15, 2007: President Berdymukhammedov signs decree restoring education system to mandatory 10-years of study with possibility of five years of higher education

Feb. 15, 2007: President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, Goran Lenmarker, says Turkmen presidential elections are an important step forward

Feb. 16, 2007: Reports of first two Internet cafes opening in Ashgabat, Turkmentelkom promises that there will soon be 15 such cafes in Ashgabat and others in all the provinces

Feb. 16, 2007: U.S. State Department calls Turkmen presidential elections a "modest step" forward

Feb. 18, 2007: RIA Novosti reports Rashid Meredov named to be deputy chairman of the council of ministers and Foreign Minister, IFX reports Tachberdi Tagyev named chairman of Turkmengaz, Yusup Ishangulyev named head of presidential apparatus, replacing Mukhammerberdy Byashiyev

Feb. 19, 2007: First Flag Day without President Niyazov

Feb. 19, 2007: IFX reports Khydyr Saparlyev appointed Minister of Education, a post he held from 2004-2005 until he fell into disfavor with Niyazov and was made Ambassador to Armenia

Feb. 19, 2007: President Berdymukhammdov says he will create a state commission to look into the complaints of citizens

Feb. 21, 2007: Khojamyrat Geldymyradov named Minister of Economics and Finances, Esenmyrat Orazgeldiyev remains Agriculture Minister