

The Only English-Language Daily in Bulgaria

Sofia, Saturday, January 25, 2014, No.21

Bulgarian BSEC Chairmanship-in-Office Outlines Priorities

Sofia/Istanbul - The Bulgarian Chairmanship-in-Office of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) Thursday outlined its priorities for the January-June period at a meeting at the BSEC headquarters in Istanbul, the Bulgarian Foreign Ministry said.

Under the motto "Better Synergy for Enhanced Competitiveness", Bulgaria will seek to boost multilateral cooperation among BSEC Member States in order to make the Black Sea region more attractive to foreign investors and businesses. Sectoral priorities include promoting interaction in transport, youth and sports, health care, agriculture, IT and communication technology, fight against organized crime and advancing contacts between businesses in BSEC Member States. Public-private sector cooperation in the implementation of specific projects will be paid special attention.

Establishing synergy between the BSEC and other regional cooperation formats will be among the goals of the Bulgarian Chairmanship. The adoption of a pragmatic approach between the BSEC and the European Union, finding the points of convergence between BSEC and EU priorities and identifying specific projects of mutual interest in environment, tourism, education, maritime policy and other key areas will be at the core of the Chairmanship's efforts.

The Bulgarian Chairmanship calendar includes a number of high-level events in various areas of cooperation, such as:

- the 30th Meeting of the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the BSEC Member States;
- a Meeting of Ministers of Transport of the BSEC Member States;
- a Meeting of Ministers in Charge of Youth and Sport of the BSEC Member States;
- a Meeting of the Ministers of Interior of the BSEC Member States.

Bulgarian Foreign Minister Kristian Vigenin on Friday unveiled an exhibition marking the BSEC Bulgarian Chairmanship-in-Office at the Mission Gallery of his Ministry's State Institute of Culture. Attending the ceremony were State Institute of Culture Director Lyudmila Todorova, Diplomatic Institute Director Tanya Mihailova, Sofia University Rector Prof. Ivan Ilchev, exhibition curator Stefan Peykov, and Primorsko Mayor Dimiter Germanov. □

Bulgaria, Turkey to Sign Gas Interconnector Construction Agreement in March

Sofia - In March Bulgaria and Turkey are expected to sign an agreement on the construction of a gas interconnector so that it can become operational two years from now. This transpired at a news briefing held



Economy and Energy Minister Dragomir Stoynev (left) and Turkey's Minister of Natural Resources Taner Yildiz *BTA Photo*

here on Friday by Bulgarian Economy and Energy Minister Dragomir Stoynev and visiting Turkish Energy and Natural Resources Minister Taner Yildiz.

The gas interconnector will have a total length of 114 km and a capacity to carry between 3 and 5 billion cubic metres of gas annually.

Stoynev commented that his session with the Turkish Minister made it possible to talk of genuine diversification of gas supplies to Bulgaria.

The contractor on the Bulgarian side will be the State-owned gas transmission and storage operator Bulgartransgaz. Stoynev noted that picking this company is the fastest way to go ahead with this project.

The cost of the project is yet to be assessed, as is the

Continued on page 2

INSIDE:

- *WSJ on Penal Code Draft* 3
- *Borissov bTV Interview* 4
- *Customs Agency: 2012 Report*..... 5
- *Parliamentary Monitor* 6

GERB Urges Resignation of Deputy Environment Minister, Environment Ministry Political Leadership

Sofia - GERB urges the resignation of Deputy Environment and Water Minister Chavdar Georgiev and the political leadership of his Ministry, GERB MPs Ivelina Vassileva and Stanislav Ivanov said in Parliament on Friday. Vassileva said that Bulgaria is faced with millions of euro in fines after the European Commission took Bulgaria to court for its failure to bring landfills into conformity with EU requirements.

The non-compliant EU Member State pays a lump-sum fine of 700,000 euro with a subsequent fine for each day of non-compliance, potentially reaching millions of euro.

Vassileva recalled that the EC

opened an infringement procedure against Bulgaria in connection with the master plan of Tsarevo Municipality. Ivanov added that under Georgiev as deputy environment minister between 2005 and 2009, the EC suspended payments under Operational Programme Environment over ineligible projects." He is politically convenient, is not an expert, and the whole political leadership should resign with him," said the MP.

GERB warned that Bulgaria could expect more infringement procedures regarding environment.

The opposition reported mass dismissals of heads of the regional inspectorates of the Environment Ministry and dubious political ap-

pointments of people close to the Movement for Rights and Freedoms.

GERB does not rule out a motion of no confidence in the Government over its widely criticized environment policies. However, Vassileva said that the reasons will be specified later.

On Thursday, the For the Nature coalition of environmental organizations and civil groups said that on December 13 Georgiev withdrew an opinion on the need of an environmental impact assessment of the master plan of Tsarevo Municipality and subsequently the Supreme Administrative Court reversed an earlier ruling against the plan, thus paving the way for building development in parts of the Strandja Nature Park. □

Bulgaria, Turkey to Sign Agreement...

Continued from page 1

price of the gas that it will be carrying. Stoynev's only comment was that he expects the price to be reasonable.

"We believe that the interconnector can be built within two years," said the Bulgarian Minister.

He added that a joint venture is to be set up between Bulgaria's National Electric Company (NEK) and a Turkish partner company to streamline NEK's electricity exports to Turkey. The future company will be registered in Turkey.

Stoynev hopes that increasing electricity exports to Turkey will help the troubled NEK improve its financial standing.

In his remarks, Yildiz stressed the strategic importance his country attaches to relations with Bulgaria. He

believes that both countries will be able to capitalize on their strategic geographic location.

"Turkey is beginning to build nuclear power projects and Bulgaria has experience in this field which Turkey could use," Yildiz pointed out.

He stressed the shared support for the South Stream project and the importance of the future Bulgaria-Turkey gas interconnector.

He also said that his country wants to see progress in trade in electricity and that Turkey is ready to buy at least 600 MW, which could increase to 1,400 MW at a later stage.

Asked to comment on his country's plans to build a nuclear power plant near the border with Bulgaria, he said that the Igneada site is one of five options that are being considered.

Later in the day, Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Development Daniela Bobeva and Taner Yildiz concurred that there is untapped potential for the promotion of bilateral trade and economic relations, the Government Information Service said.

Besides energy, they singled out tourism and infrastructure development as the sectors holding out prospects for larger investments and benefits for both countries.

Bobeva, who is Governor for Bulgaria at the Black Sea Trade and Development Bank (BSTDB), emphasized the Bank's untapped potential for promoting regional projects in the private sector and trade between the founding members.

Bobeva recalled that in 2014 Bulgaria will host three major events of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC): the BSEC's regular session; the Annual Meeting of the BSTDB Board of Governors; and the meeting of the Central Bank Governors' Club of the BSEC Member States. She said that these meetings could be used as a platform to present the advantages of BSTDB financing, as well as to encourage businesses from the Member States to implement joint projects. □



Prime Minister Plamen Oresharski and three ministers held a meeting with the mayors of Stara Zagora Region attended by MPs of the Bulgarian Socialist Party. Before that Oresharski met with representatives of the Remotex machine-building company, who handed him a letter asking to help them get long overdue wages and have their company restarted **BTA Photo**

The Wall Street Journal: Bulgaria Faces Criticism Over New Crime Bill Critics Say Criminal Code Bill Restricts Human Rights

Sofia - The Bulgarian government faces criticism over a new Criminal Code Bill which critics say restricts human rights, *The Wall Street Journal* wrote in a story Thursday. The controversial new bill could see the former Eastern bloc member clash with the European Union over human rights, the story says.

The Criminal Code Bill, which is currently being debated by lawmakers in Sofia after being approved by the cabinet last week, would hand the police discretionary powers to prevent crime and public disorder in certain public places.

It would curtail civil servants from criticizing government policies and from participating in protests, and it would encourage people to anonymously report petty thefts and other acts of public disorder. It would also threaten employees of nongovernmental organizations with jail if their activities were found to be serving a foreign country or foreign entity, the story goes.

A clause in the bill to criminalize the taking of photographs of people without their written consent was dropped after a public outcry.

Critics say the legislation will weaken democracy in Bulgaria.

The paper quotes Alexander Kashumov, head legal adviser to the Access to Information Program, as saying that the new legislation is "definitely not intended to strengthen democracy but to restrict it and to replace the democratic right to exchange information with a kind of

censorship".

Kashumov said that in his view the controversial elements of the bill do run contrary to the EU convention on human rights, namely to the guarantees of free speech, the right to public information and freedom of expression.

EU representatives weren't immediately available for comment, but Bulgaria's justice ministry denied that the bill attacks freedom of speech.

"The Ministry of Justice will not comment on political assessments of the document. We are confident that the new draft Criminal Code in its current form is a professional and expert opinion of leading Bulgarian lawyers," the ministry reportedly said.

The story draws a parallel with the situation in Russia and Ukraine. "Russia enacted tough anti-protest laws when President Vladimir Putin started his third term in office in 2012, while Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich enacted anti-protest laws after thousands of people began protesting against his decision in December to opt for closer ties with Moscow instead of signing an association agreement with the EU".

Amanda Paul, Eastern Europe policy analyst at the European Policy Centre in Belgium, comments for the *WSJ* that the EU doesn't have the strength, leadership or leverage to push democratic reforms. She is further quoted as saying that there is a lack of political will in countries east of the 28-nation bloc and that "most of these countries still have leadership with the mentality of the Soviet era". □

Ex-interior Minister Files Libel Action against *Galeria* Paper

Sofia - Former interior minister Roumen Petkov filed a libel action against the *Galeria* weekly. Petkov told journalists that he has pointed out "the lies of the *Galeria* paper and the defamatory nature of some of their allegations".

Galeria Editor-in-Chief Kristina Patrashkova recently announced that she will make public transcripts of a recorded conversation of Petkov with former prime minister Boyko Borissov and former president Georgi Parvanov. Later on, however, Patrashkova admitted to prosecutors that the recordings were not in her possession.

Petkov said he claims 50,000 leva compensation which would go for charity if he wins the case. The former interior minister pointed to Borissov and the Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP) leadership as parties who possibly stand to gain from such scandal. He said that Patrashkova might have been used by the BSP leaders. □



The Sofia City Court held a hearing of a case against former interior minister Tsvetan Tsvetanov (photo). According to the prosecution, in the second half of 2009 Tsvetanov refused to authorize the surveillance of the phone of Orlin Todorov, former police chief in Veliko Turnovo, after the court in Veliko Turnovo had approved six applications for tapping the then intelligence officer Todorov and several underworld figures. Tsvetanov's defence lawyer Hans Peter Uhl, told journalists that his client acted in that manner in order to prevent the frustration of another investigation. The lawyer, however, would not specify which investigation he was referring to

BTA Photo

Ex-PM Offers His Party's Support for Right-Wing Bloc, Calls Belene N-Plant "Failed Project"

Sofia - Former Bulgarian Prime Minister Boyko Borissov offered the support of his GERB Party to the Right-wing Reformist Bloc but said he would put forward his conditions only when the Bloc wins the elections as they hope they would, and ask GERB for their support. In a bTV interview Friday morning, Borissov also discussed the abandoned Belene N-plant project - which he called "a failed project", and the ABV Movement, the political project of former President Georgi Purvanov, which he sees as a serious opponent to his party.

Commenting on his party's attitude to the Reformist Bloc, Borissov said: "I have a wonderful opinion of them. I wish them good luck winning the elections." He said that while he was recovering from a knee surgery, he came to appreciate the importance of crutches. "They have said they don't want to work with GERB, but I offer them to be their crutch. It is very important and they will be unable to walk without one."

"I hear that they will win the elections on their own and only then, maybe, seek our support. When they win the elections and ask for our

support, I will comment," Borissov said, referring to a recent newspaper interview with the leader of the Union of Democratic Forces, Bozhidar Loukarski.

The ex-PM made it clear that he wants to have what he described as "normal relations" with the Right wing and that he is unhappy to see any communication between them and his GERB take place on newspaper pages.

He reiterated his position that ousting the Government of the Bulgarian Socialist Party and the Movement for Rights and Freedoms is a goal shared by all opposition parties. He said, though, that the instruments that have been used so far will not make this happen and the only thing that will work is a landslide victory of the Right wing at the upcoming European Parliament elections.

The Belene project failure

Borissov was asked about the Belene N-plant construction project, which was abandoned by his government and the previous Parliament, after senior BSP member and former interior minister Roumen Petkov told

the press that he recently took a delegation of potential investors to talk to Borissov and he indicated he was ready to support the restart of the project by a private investor.

He told bTV that he had told the US investors that if they bring a project to buy out Bulgaria's Belene debt and the licence to build an N-plant and put it forward to Parliament through the Government, he would support them. "We are speaking of an arrangement where such an investor steps forward, all white and clean, we will support him."

He said, though, that the Belene project has been "a corrupt deal from beginning to end, and it is high time for the prosecution office to have their say".

Borissov reiterated his view of ex-President Georgi Purvanov and his ABV political project as a strong opponent and denied any plans to be a partner with them. He described the ABV's decision to run for the European Parliament on a separate ticket instead of supporting BSP's as "a typical case of a party rift" and "a leadership battle".

"They are a threat for us. Purvanov is a dangerous player for GERB," he said. □

Sofia Appellate Court Acquits Businessman Hristo Kovachki for Second Time in Tax Evasion Case

Sofia - The Sofia Appellate Court Friday once again acquitted energy tycoon Hristo Kovachki, who was charged with tax offences.

Kovachki was found guilty of evading nearly 16.5 million leva in tax by the Sofia City Court, which gave him a three-year suspended sentence with five years' probation in April 2011. In May 2012, the Appellate Court acquitted him, but the judgment was appealed before the Supreme Court of Cassation. In September 2013, the Supreme Court referred the case back to the Appellate Court because of conflicting conclusions and insufficient analysis of the evidence. □

19th Open Doors Fair for Education Abroad

Sofia - The 19th Open Doors Fair for Education Abroad will take place in Sofia on January 25 and 26 and in Varna on January 28, organizers said.

The Fair will showcase language-holiday, school and university-education opportunities in European and American educational establishments. Visitors will receive brochures, presenting the 2014 language programmes in the UK, the US, Germany, France, Italy, Malta, Spain, and Russia.

The second School for Parents will take place within the Fair, aiming to inform parents of youth educational opportunities.

Students will be able to take free tests and receive advice about their choice of career and educational establishment. □

Investment Planning Ministry Launches Update of Housing Policy Strategy

Sofia - The Investment Planning Ministry has started to update the Government's Housing Policy Strategy and to draw up a new housing law, Elza Lekova, Chief Expert at the Ministry's Housing Policy Directorate, told journalists on Friday.

The Housing Policy Strategy, developed in 2004, is outdated and largely unfulfilled, Lekova said. The Investment Planning Ministry aspires to create a new regulatory framework in this domain, she said but did not specify any deadlines.

Lekova was a guest at a news conference given by Habitat for Humanity Bulgaria, the recently established local chapter of a US-based NGO devoted to building simple, decent and affordable housing. The Bulgarian coalition consists of 18 organizations active in the field of housing. It was set up under a one-year, 12,000-euro project supported by the European Economic Area Financial Mechanism 2009-2014, said

Habitat for Humanity Bulgaria National Director Mincho Benov.

According to Benov, the coalition will seek to improve central and local government policies in the field of housing. One problem is that home owners in Bulgaria are often poor people who lack the financial capacity to maintain their housing property in good shape, he said. Other issues include the lack of a home-purchase savings system for credit subsidies; a tiny 3 per cent share of the public sector in the overall housing stock; and an increasing percentage of abandoned housing, which has reached 30 per cent.

Discussing housing rehabilitation, Benov proposed setting up a special fund to support the rehabilitation of homes whose owners cannot afford to pay for the effort. The fund should be run by a not-for-profit organization because commercial interests could distort the logic of initiatives which are inherently good, he said. □

Lv 8 Bln-Plus in Customs Revenue Collected in 2013, Customs Agency Report Says

Sofia - The National Customs Agency has contributed a total of 8,024 million leva to the executive budget last year, it emerged from a report by the Agency's Director Pavel Tonev which is published on its website. This is 115 million leva more than what the Agency collected in 2012.

VAT revenue from imports added up to 3,816 million leva, up by 77.3 million from a year earlier. This is due to the increased quantities of all goods, the report says. Import prices are dropping but at a slower pace than the growth of quantities, which results in higher revenues. Prices of VAT-generating imports in 2013 decreased by an average of 5.8 per cent compared to the previous year. The steepest decline of 6 to 7 per cent is observed in energy products and industrial supplies. In quantitative terms, imports increased by an average of 9.2 per cent, year on year. Physical volumes increased in all groups of goods by between 1 and 18 per cent, and by 30 per cent in

foods and drinks. The total drop in prices reflects on the physical volumes growth.

The National Customs Agency contributed a total of 4,055,800 leva to the executive budget in excise duty revenue in 2013, which is 8.0 million leva more than the previous year. Excise duty revenue generated by fuels accounted for 47.7 per cent of total excise duty revenue, or a total of 1,933,600 leva, which was 6.3 million more than in 2012, the report says.

Last year the Agency seized a total of 489.204 kg and 15,826 tablets of controlled substances and precursors in 94 cases. Customs officers intercepted a total of 179 kg of heroin, which is the most widely trafficked narcotic across Bulgaria's borders.

The largest share of both the number of cases and seized quantities are the so-called designer drugs and more specifically the synthetic cannaboids transported by mail parcels and courier deliveries, the report

says. For the first time last year, the quantities of designer drugs coming from China exceeded /by five-fold/ the traditional European synthetic drugs, such as ecstasy, amphetamines and methamphetamines. Alongside trafficking synthetic drugs, Bulgarian citizens are actively involved in their illegal manufacturing in Central European countries. They provide part of the necessary precursors which are extracted from pseudoephedrine-containing medicines licensed in Turkey. Three attempts to traffic such substances across the Bulgarian border were prevented in 2013, with the quantity seized totaling 108 kg.

The National Customs Agency's report was published on the eve of International Customs Day, marked annually on 26 January by the customs administrations of 179 Member States of the World Customs Organisation to commemorate the first session of the Customs Cooperation Council, held on January 26, 1953. □

Parliamentary Monitor: Friday

Sofia - At its plenary sitting on Friday, the Bulgarian Parliament transacted business as follows:

- elected Ralitsa Agayn and Vladimir Savov as members of the Financial Supervision Commission (FSC) for a six-year term, to succeed Borislav Bogoev and Antonia Gineva whose term expired in the summer of 2013; Agayn will also serve as FSC Deputy Chair; the two new FSC members were sworn in before Parliament; they were nominated late on Thursday by FSC Chair and former GERB MP Stoyan Mavrodiev, and the election was included as an extraordinary item on Parliament's agenda by National Assembly Chair Mihail Mikov; the nominations were approved without a debate within 20 minutes with the full support of GERB and only 30 out of the 87 Socialist MPs voting in favour;

- passed on second reading some of the changes in the Bill on Climate Change Mitigation, establishing a National Expert Council on Climate Change as an advisory body under the Minister of Environment and Water;

- Ratified a Contract for Support Services for the Implementation of a Project signed between the Ministry of Economy, Energy and Tourism and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development in May 2013;

- heard Deputy Prime Minister and Justice Minister Zinaida Zlatanova say during Question Time that the Action Plan for the 2014-2015 period will be updated in February so as to minimize the risk of losing EU resources;

- Foreign Minister Kristian Vigenin expressed the hope that MPs will consult his Ministry before paying visits, such as the one to Taiwan. "I would not qualify it as scandalous, though," said he. Vigenin specified that the Foreign Ministry has not been notified of the visit. He reiterated that it would not affect in no way Bulgaria's relations with China;

- Labour and Social Policy Minister Hassan Ademov confirmed in Parliament that 140,000 job vacancies will be announced in the labour offices during the current year, 6,000-7,000 more than in 2013. Ademov described the European Commission's report on Bulgaria's progress within the Cooperation and Verification Mechanism as "objective and well intentioned." "The steps forward, albeit small, have been taken into account," he noted, adding that the report contains critical remarks as well. □



The tenth anniversary of BTA's first press club outside Sofia was marked in Veliko Turnovo, North Central Bulgaria. BTA Director General Maxim Minchev opened a photo exhibition entitled "Veliko Turnovo and the Region: Ten Years through BTA's Lens" in the patio of the Poltava complex. The pictures on display have been taken by press photographer Valentin Roussanov. Minchev said that the press club hosted more than 800 news conferences in ten years. BTA already has 12 press clubs in Bulgaria, which he said are of benefit to society because they help to make the voice of the regions heard

BTA Photo

Bulgaria among Top Holiday Destinations for Bulgarians in 2013

Sofia - In 2013, Bulgaria remained among top holiday destinations for Bulgarians, an online travel agency found in a poll. Fifty-nine per cent of Bulgarians prefer Bulgaria because of cheaper transport and accommodation. Twelve per cent of tourist would rather holiday abroad, and 29 per cent go on vacations both in Bulgaria and abroad.

In 2013, Bulgarians travelled on holiday mainly to Greece and Turkey, which offer very good value for money. Italy and Spain ranked third and fourth mainly because of opportunities for cultural and heritage tourism.

The lowest price remains a leading factor when choosing a holiday destination. As many as 69 per cent of Bulgarians spent less than 1,000 leva on their summer and winter holiday, and 27 per cent spent less than 499 leva.

Holidaymakers aged between 27 and 40 were the largest spenders with an average of 1,100 leva spent, and most often holidayed abroad.

In 2013, 81 per cent of Bulgarians vacationed in the summer, showed the poll.

Long winter holidays remain unpopular with Bulgarians. Traditionally in winter, Bulgarians prefer weekend holidays. □

Exchange Rates

Sofia - The Bulgarian National Bank sets the rates of foreign currencies against the Bulgarian lev applicable from 5 p.m. on January 24 to 3 p.m. on January 27, 2014. The central rates are used for the purposes of accounting, statistics, customs valuation and remittances. The commercial banks set the exchange rates at which foreign exchange is bought and sold.

January 24 - January 27, 2014			
CURRENCY	ISO CODE	FOR	LEVA
AUSTRALIAN DOLLAR	AUD	1	1.24456
BRAZILIAN REAL	BRL	10	5.92604
CANADIAN DOLLAR	CAD	1	1.29174
SWISS FRANC	CHF	1	1.59581
CHINESE YUAN RENMINBI	CNY	10	2.36183
CZECH KORUNA	CZK	100	7.10565
DANISH KRONE	DKK	10	2.62102
BRITISH POUND	GBP	1	2.35898
HONG KONG DOLLAR	HKD	10	1.84071
CROATIAN KUNA	HRK	10	2.55828
HUNGARIAN FORINT	HUF	1,000	6.39892
INDONESIAN RUPIAH	IDR	10,000	1.1749
IZRAELI SHEKEL	ILS	10	4.09341
INDIAN RUPIAH	INR	100	2.28247
ICELANDIC KRONA *	ISK		*
JAPANESE YEN	JPY	100	1.39523
SOUTH KOREAN WON	KRW	1,000	1.31761
LITHUANIAN LITAS	LTL	10	5.66448
MEXICAN PESO	MXN	10	1.05959
MALAYSIAN RINGGIT	MYR	1	4.26088
NORWEGIAN KRONE	NOK	10	2.33073
NEW ZEALAND DOLLAR	NZD	1	1.18113
PHILIPPINE PESO	PHP	100	3.14341
POLISH ZLOTY	PLN	10	4.64788
NEW ROMANIAN LEU	RON	10	4.30562
RUSSIAN ROUBLE	RUB	100	4.15092
SWEDISH KRONA	SEK	10	2.21757
SINGAPOREAN DOLLAR	SGD	10	1.11666
THAI BAHT	THB	100	4.34764
NEW TURKISH LIRA	TRY	10	6.13344
US DOLLAR	USD	1	1.42897
SOUTH AFRICAN RAND	ZAR	10	1.28522
GOLD	XAU	1 troy ounce	1800.22

**From 01.09.2010 the BNB discontinued the publication of the ISK/BGN exchange rate in relation to the discontinued quotation by the European Central Bank (ECB) of the ISK/EUR reference exchange rate. When the quotation of the ISK/EUR exchange rate by the ECB is resumed, the BNB will resume the publication of the ISK/BGN exchange rate.*

**Today's Observances:
January 25-26**

**January 25
Bulgaria:**

- Radio Day. On this day in 1935 King Boris III issued a decree making radio broadcasting state-owned. The Bulgarian National Radio marks its day.

On this date in Bulgarian history:

1879: Day of establishment of Bulgarian National Bank (BNB). The BNB Articles of Association are endorsed by Prince Aleksandr Mikhailovich Dondukov-Korsakov.

1881: Inauguration of the State Printing House in Sofia.

2009: Bulgaria's largest wind turbine goes into operation in Somovit, Pleven Region.

January 26

The world:

- National Day of Australia: Australia Day (1788);

- National Day of India: Republic Day (1950).

On this date in Bulgarian history:

1979: The Council of Ministers decrees the introduction of Daylight Saving Time in Bulgaria.

2000: bTV is licensed for terrestrial broadcasting within a national range.

2012: Parliament ratifies the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. □

Weather Forecast

January 25: Scattered rainshowers and snow in Northwest, along Danube and in Fore-Balkan. Snow cover will form. Morning temperatures: minus 2 - minus 3 C, up to 5-8 C in Southeast and Black Sea coast. Significant showers in South and East on night to Saturday. Black Sea coast: Strong easterly wind with scattered showers.

January 26: Cold front will continue to set in. Rain in easternmost parts will turn into snow. Blizzards and snow drifts expected. Getting colder, to minus 7 - minus 2C. Highs on Black Sea coast: minus 5 - 0C.

Source: National Institute of Meteorology and Hydrology with Bulgarian Academy of Sciences □

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