
UZBEKISTAN REPORTEDLY OPENS BORDER CROSSING WITH KYRGYZSTAN

- 21.09.2016

Eurasianet, September 20, 2016

In the wake of a fresh boundary dispute, Uzbekistan has re-opened a border crossing with Kyrgyzstan and started allowing the passage of private citizens.

Uzbek news site Anhor.uz reported that the crossing began to operate normally on September 19 following telephone negotiations between the presidents of the two countries.

On the face of it, the move marks another surprising thaw over border issues, which had been strained intensely after a helicopter of Uzbek policeman last month occupied a Kyrgyz telecommunications tower on a disputed mountain and detained four technicians working there. The men have since been released and the telecommunications tower was abandoned by the Uzbek police officers over the weekend.

But Kyrgyz residents living near the crossing in question have told EurasiaNet.org that private citizens have not been able to get into Uzbekistan through that point for many years now, so claims the situation will revert to that before an earlier border dispute in March are highly confusing. The only relatively operational land crossing between Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan is in the latter's Kadamjay district □ a fact that all but cripples trade and communication between the two countries.

Despite the uncertainty, even the news of potential new border crossings is heartening Uzbek exporters, like Tahir in Tashkent.

Tahir exports cherries to China's Xinjiang province and is eager to see the border working efficiently.

Uzbek freight trucks cannot pass through Kyrgyzstan as transit. We load the cherries onto our cars

and drive them up to the border. And then on the Kyrgyz side, we are met by either a Kyrgyz or Chinese-registered truck and we transfer it all from our car. Is this this ridiculous? Tahir told EurasiaNet.org.

Entrepreneurs in Uzbekistan are pinning more hope on the recently opened railway route linking mainland Uzbekistan to the Fergana Valley. This line is supposed eventually to connect into a yet-to-be-built railroad in Kyrgyzstan that would then transport goods to China. And Beijings political and financial heft could overcome border transit issues that countries in Central Asia have unable to solve for themselves.

It requires political will to solve border problems between these two countries, said historian Maxim Matnazarov. And the new president of Uzbekistan well understands this.

Kaynak/Source: