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SATELLITE PROGRAMS OF AZERBAIJAN

Abstract

The development of the space industry is part of the government's plans to transform Azerbaijan's ICT [Information Communications Technologies] sector into the second largest priority after the oil-and-gas sector," Minister Abbasov told a November 11 news conference.

Azerbaijan has little previous experience in the aerospace industry. During the Soviet era, a few Azerbaijani plants produced equipment for the Soviet Union's space projects, but their facilities are now out-of-date.

How Azerbaijan will manage to develop a competitive satellite program by 2011 baffles one local economist. "The ICT and satellite technologies sectors are notable for really fast technological changes and modernization," commented Natig Jafarli, head of the Society of Azerbaijani Economic Bloggers. "Therefore, for small countries like Azerbaijan, it is very difficult to compete with the world's leaders in the satellite industry – the United States, Russia, the United Kingdom, France, China, and India."

Although officials have talked about promoting Azerbaijan's ICT sector since 2006, "no special conditions for investors" have been set up and "no technological breakthroughs have been made so far," Jafarli said. Internet prices have declined over the last two years, but a tender for the use of 3G frequencies by mobile phone operators was announced only in September, he added.

So far, the scale of Azerbaijan's satellite program is expressed only in general terms. By 2013, the State Program on the Establishment and Development of the Space Industry in Azerbaijan foresees domestic manufacture of satellite parts and the training of "space industry management."