On October 25, President Karimov congratulated Uzbek PAKHTAKOR (cotton growers), with the successful implementation of the cotton plan, which this year amounted to 3.35 million tons. The President said that according to estimates, the total income made off the cotton crop this year will reach 3 trillion 100 billion sum. That is $1 billion 150 million US dollars.

**Syrdarya region**

- 15 October, Yangier district, authorities sent first-year high-school students back to school from the harvest. The students had been picking cotton since early September. The authorities expected International Labour Organization monitors to visit their high school and instructed the students on how to respond to the monitors’ questions for three days prior to sending them back to school. The ILO monitors visited the Construction high school of Yangier on October 22. [Note: Colleges and lyceums in the education system of Uzbekistan are the equivalent of high school in the United States and many European Union; Uzbek children begin at age 15 or 16.]

Media Reports:

**A Farmer Commits Suicide Fearing Arrest**  
18.10.2013

On October 18 Safarboy Karimov, a 38-year old farmer of Yonboshqala, Turtkul region of Karakalpakstan, was found dead. He hanged himself from a tree in his cotton field. The farmer committed suicide after
having been criticized by officials for not fulfilling the cotton quota they assigned him, according to Ozodlik’s sources in Yonboshqala. A leader in his farming community, Safarboy hanged himself from a tree in the field he farmed. Ozodlik sources in Yonboshqala reported that he was insulted and threatened by officials during a meeting 3 days prior to his death.

“Safarboy was harshly insulted and offended at the meeting held by the representatives of the Prosecutor’s Office and Cabinet of Ministers 3 days ago. He did not fulfill the required quota for wheat. Besides his cotton harvest did not reach 40%. There he was told, ‘You didn’t accomplish the wheat plan. If you don’t finish the cotton, then go and kill yourself. Otherwise you’ll get to prison anyways!’ Safarboy was afraid of being arrested, so he committed suicide instead,” said the Ozodlik source. According to law-enforcement officials in Turtkul region, Safarboy Karimov’s body was found at 10 a.m. on October 18 and then sent to Turtkul city for an autopsy. Safarboy Karimov was born in 1975. He was a father of four children.

Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty “Ozodlik,”
http://www.ozodlik.org/content/article/25140979.html

A 16 year old dies in hostel during forced labour at the cotton harvest in Urganch
22.10.2013

16-year old Yuldoshev Erkaboy Shuhratovich died unexpectedly in the barracks during the cotton harvest in Galaba village, Urgench region, Khorezm province, on October 21. Yuldoshev was a 1st-year student at the Urgench Vocational High School. He died in the barracks at 10 p.m., shortly after returning from the cotton field.

In an interview with Ozodlik, Erkaboy’s teacher, who was responsible for 40 high-school students working in the cotton fields of Khayvat, reported that the young boy died of a heart attack.

Ozodlik contacted Erkaboy’s family in Navruz city, Urgench region. His mother Dilfuza Jumaniyozova, age 35, said she had sent him to the cotton harvest safe and sound and was unaware of reasons for her son’s sudden death.

-"I don’t know what happened. Ask the teachers! He died at 10 p.m., and they came at 5 a.m. saying, ‘Your child is dead. He’s in the morgue,’ and ran away. None of them visited us since then. If my child dies, why don’t they call for me right away? Why did they inform us only after my son had undergone an autopsy? Why did they do this to my child?,” said Dilfuza Jumaniyozova.

Sobirjon Masharipov, the director of Urgench Vocational High School, had compelled the students, ages 15-18, to pick cotton and stay in the barracks near the fields of Khayvat, and he refused to talk to Ozodlik. However, one of the school’s teachers gave an anonymous interview to Ozodlik, and reported that the statements signed by Erkaboy and his parents were being brought as evidence against them, to release the administration of culpability for their son’s death.

“When the boy was accepted to high school, he signed an agreement consisting of 7 articles of ‘The Family Code,’ which said ‘I give my full consent to fulfill the following tasks in the Vocational High School...’ There are also tasks related to agriculture. This was signed by his parents. We still have this document,” said the teacher.

16-year old Erkaboy Yuldoshev was the 9th victim of the 2013 cotton harvest reported to Ozodlik.

Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty “Ozodlik”
http://www.ozodlik.org/content/article/25144742.html
Radio Liberty received a letter from students and teachers of the Samarkand Social Economics High School, stating that the first-year students of the high school were sent to pick cotton in place of senior year students and teachers who didn’t go to pick cotton.

In fact, it is not news that the high-school students are being sent to pick cotton. It is well known that even in Samarkand city the most of the high-school students were sent to pick cotton and stay nearby the fields.

At the start of this year’s cotton harvest, the students (ages 15-18) reported that the high-school administration made them write a letter of consent to pick cotton, in order to register with the school. This letter was addressed to the head of the high school. They sent a copy of this letter to Radio Liberty. It stated:

“I ______________________, the student of course # ___ agree to obey all the internal rules and regulations of the college and to attend all the classes.

I also agree to participate in cotton harvesting, the national wealth of our nation and sincerely fulfil my duty in front of my country, my nation and my family. I promise to earn respect of my teachers and administration of the college by my exemplary behaviour. I will follow all the safety rules. If I do not fulfil my the above mentioned promise, I agree to be left to re-take the course and be penalised by all means showed in the law.”

A listener from Samarkand told Radio Liberty that the mayor’s office first sent the second- and third-year students and left the first year students at school. But there are high schools that forced the first-year students to go to pick cotton too.

“Two medical high schools in Samarkand, Siyob Medical High School and Suzangaron Medical High School, are sending their first-year students to pick cotton now. Students are threatened with expulsion. Senior year students pay $300 US dollars and stay back. Maximum 30 percent of the students pay money in order not to go. In order to replace them, the first-year students are forced to go. Otherwise all the first-year students were told that they wouldn’t be involved in cotton harvesting across the region this year,” said the caller from Samarkand.

"We want to write to international organisations!"

Radio Liberty bloggers complained that the student helpers were under greater pressure to fulfil the assigned daily cotton quotas as the harvest is finishing. According to one blogger, the mayor, prosecutor and other authorities were pressuring the students.

"... Students pick cotton in Qorovulbozor district of Bukhara. There is almost no cotton left in the fields. But the mayor and the prosecutor keep demanding cotton from the high-school and university teachers.
Then the teachers demand cotton from us. Mayor and the prosecutor could help us and improve the conditions. But they all think of themselves, their quota and their power. Now they carry us on a bus long distances to pick cotton. We have had enough of everything. Students want to jointly write a letter to international organisations complaining about the mayor and prosecutor...

Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty “Ozodlik”
http://www.ozodlik.org/content/article/25104210.html

In Kasbi district school children were kicked off to pick cotton
4.10.2013

Since October, all higher grade schoolchildren in the Kasbi district were sent to pick cotton. According to Kasbi district officials, children of the 7th, 8th and 9th grades are „helping” to harvest cotton after their classes.

Following a telephone interview with the district administration office, an employee of the administration also confirmed this information to Radio Liberty. They noted that there was an opportunity to make money by involving school children in cotton picking.

“(It started) at the beginning of this month. Not all schools. Only the schools in villages and higher grade school children were involved. Now children will earn some money and help their parents little bit, they have to pay for newspaper subscriptions, for their books and other school needs,” said the staff member of the district administration.

Radio Liberty also spoke with a 7th-grade student, who said that children are taken to pick cotton every 2-3 days (the name and address of the school is withheld for security reasons).

Radio Liberty: Which grades are going to pick cotton?

7th-grade Student: 8th grade is going, 7th grade is also going. Once in two days or once in three days we are going.

Radio Liberty: Do they take you to the cotton fields from school?

7th-grade Student: “Yes, we have our classes and then they take us.”

Radio Liberty: At school how many hours do you study?

7th-grade Student: “2 hours or three hours.”

An official who called himself Shodiyor from Kashkadarya region national education department completely denied that school children are involved in cotton picking:

“No child went to pick cotton, not even after the school hours. We have guarantee letters in our hands. This is completely false information... But teachers and technical staff are going. We have a letter in our hands... this letter says that children are not allowed in agricultural work,” said the assistant of the head of Kashkadarya region education department.

Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty “Ozodlik”
http://www.ozodlik.org/content/article/25126888.html

New foundation for next year’s compulsory cotton harvest?
13.10.2013
The official, state-owned press of Uzbekistan reported that contracts and agreements for the sale of 670,000 tons of cotton fiber were signed with 12 foreign companies during the Uzbek Cotton and Textile Fair held in Tashkent.

According to independent economic observers, it means that more teachers and doctors will be forced to harvest cotton next year with the same aim of decreasing the state’s expenses to produce the cotton.

The Uzbek Cotton and Textile Fair was held on October 17-18 in Tashkent. It is being reported that this year 150 agreements for 670 thousand tons of cotton fiber estimated at $600 billion were signed with 12 foreign and 6 Uzbek companies. These contracts apply to the fiber which is to be collected from the cotton fields next year.

The Uzbek officials do not reveal any information related to the six companies buying the cotton, nor do they talk about rights and privileges given to these companies. Independent observers say that the money for cotton fiber is collected after agreements are signed with foreign companies. And the next year’s harvest should be collected and handed over to these very companies.

Tashkent Fair also turned into a forum on the processing of cotton in Uzbekistan. Previously, Uzbekistan’s Prime Minister Shavkat Mirziyayev said that 70% of the state cotton would be processed in the territory of Uzbekistan by 2015. This plan was announced back in 1995 from the highest levels of government, and as a result of this, cooperation was established between South Korean company “Kabool Textile” and other cotton manufacturing factories in different parts of Uzbekistan.

However, most of the textile companies and factories of South Korea, Turkey or India who came to invest into the manufacture of cotton products in Uzbekistan had to leave the country one by one. So the plan of processing cotton in Uzbekistan remains to be a plan.

It was also announced at the Tashkent Cotton and Textile Fair that, further, the cotton in Uzbekistan will be machine harvested.

BBC
http://www.bbc.co.uk/uzbek/uzbekistan/2013/10/131018_uzbek_cotton.shtml

Uzbek cotton – not just slavery but also a big lie
18.10.2013

The authorities in the city of Jizzakh have been busy creating the appearance that everybody is at the cotton harvest. The city markets appear closed, and car traffic is severely restricted.

Every morning Jizzakh traffic police set up barricades on all central roads within the city. Since they do not actually have barricades, they use cars instead. And since they do not have sufficient cars for their purpose, they have recently been stopping every car in sight and temporary confiscating them on various false reasons related to registration problems, technical issues, or licensing issues.

The traffic police usually open the roads again at around 5pm and let the unlucky car owners pick up their vehicles.

A Jizzakh city resident tells Uznews.net that the charades – no traffic on central roads and no customers at the markets – do not actually mean that everybody is at the cotton harvest.

Traffic now tries to avoid central roads – thousands of cars are now using narrow and poorly-maintained suburban roads to get around blockades.

Another pretense that “everybody is at the cotton harvest” is that the city markets have been made to
appear closed. The sign on the front entrance of one market on October 17 read “Everybody is in the cotton fields,” and the main gate has been locked with a padlock. But that is just for appearance – inside the busy market life goes on as usual. The customers are now using the back entrances of the shops to access the market and make their purchases.

Here the police seem to be on the side of shoppers and merchants, if a customer forgets to close the back door to the store behind them, vigilant police officers do so for them or announce on the center’s intercom system: “shop number 33, close your door.”

Such speak-easy atmosphere can be found at all the city markets in Jizzakh. Everybody is at the cotton harvest!

UzNews