

Kyrgyz Leader for Union

By [The Moscow Times](#)

November 23, 2011

The  Moscow Times

BISHKEK, Kyrgyzstan — Kyrgyzstan faces financial hardship and social unrest if it fails to join a Russia-led customs union, the country's acting prime minister said Wednesday.

Omurbek Babanov said Kyrgyzstan's 5.5 million people would be hit by higher fuel prices should the country remain outside the alliance with Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan.

"A social explosion is possible if we don't join the customs union, when tariffs are introduced on fuel products," Babanov said. "It's a necessity for our state." Between 500,000 and 1 million citizens of Kyrgyzstan are estimated to live and work in the customs union states, mainly in Russia and Kazakhstan. Kyrgyzstan's economy survives to a large degree on remittances from citizens abroad, international donors and the production of a single gold mine.

(Reuters)

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