

# AK Party makes inroads in southeastern Turkey

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**It seems this government is really incapable of displaying its achievements in various fields.**

For years we have been stressing over and over again that while we accuse other countries of supporting and sheltering the terrorist Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) we should be doing something ourselves at home to finish off the group.

For years Turkey has been struggling through its military and security forces to contain the PKK menace but it has not been doing enough to win the hearts and souls of our people living in eastern and southeastern Turkey. Once Abdullah Ocalan was caught and put behind bars with the help of the Americans (who today some people in Turkey accuse of giving a free hand to the PKK especially in northern Iraq), the PKK problem stopped being a threat to Turkey and turned into a nuisance. At the time we and even the Turkish military urged the government to take economic and social steps to help end the economic hardships of the masses living in eastern and southeastern Turkey and thus win back their hearts and souls.

The PKK's terrorist campaign and the inevitable "counter-measures" by the security forces clearly alienated the Kurdish masses living in eastern and southeastern Turkey, and some openly turned against the state. We need to win them back and stop the alienation.

Several governments in the past took rather superficial measures to bring some economic relief to eastern and southeastern Turkey but they were all empty gestures.

However, all that is changing. Ever since the Justice and Development (AK) Party came to power, the government has been progressively taking steps to end the economic and social problems of the region in a silent manner.

A village program has been started in the past three years whereby all the needs of the villages and townships are being met. Our recent visit to the region on the way to northern Iraq showed that an impressive program has been undertaken to provide water, electricity and other services to all the villages in the region.

Two years ago there were 115 villages with drinking water in the Diyarbakir province. Today that figure has risen to an impressive 1,150. Several other service projects have been undertaken that have really won the support of the local people. The government has also provided educational grants for 850,000 girls in the area.

As a result, our studies in the Diyarbakir, Sirnak and Mardin provinces show that political support for the AK Party has risen impressively, and a pro-Kurdish local politician told The New Anatolian, "The AK Party will really do well in the November elections and will be a serious rival to the pro-Kurdish Democratic Community Party (DTP)."

All this is good and the AK Party is undertaking an important mission in southeastern Turkey to create peace and stability and make people say, "We are proud to be the Kurds of this country."

However, the AK Party should be able to trumpet its achievements and show the Turkish public that it

deserves another five years in power. If we hadn't studied the situation closely ourselves even we would not have known the facts ...