



# Kazakhstan News Bulletin

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## 15 Years of Independence Celebrated in Kazakhstan

Fifteen million people in Kazakhstan celebrated the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of independence on December 16. Major festivities with concerts and fireworks took place across the country as it celebrated its independence during a four day long weekend.

President Nursultan Nazarbayev addressed his people on the occasion in a major speech. In it, he said, “The main result of our clear strategy of actions, the selfless work and the broadest support of our compatriots is the arrival the real nationhood of Kazakhstan.”

The President listed four major areas of “impressive successes” the country had achieved in fifteen years, including:

- Kazakhstan became one of the most dynamic countries in the world with an annual economic growth of 9-10 percent for the past seven years;
- Kazakhstan’s security was ensured through both development of a modern military and diplomacy, through the renunciation of nuclear weapons and the pursuit of numerous international initiatives such as the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA);
- The development of a “Kazakhstan’s model” of development which takes into account the country’s ethnically and religiously diverse population and provides for the modernization of the country and the strengthening of the institutions of democracy.
- The construction of a new capital city of Astana which became “the symbol and pride of a new Kazakhstan.”

*Key excerpts of the speech in English will be available on the Embassy’s web site shortly.*



Photo by Megapolis newspaper

**Two Kazakh models Assel and Aliya stage a demonstration in favor of eating meat, and not lettuce. They were countering a demonstration by PETA.**

**See story on page 3**

## **Kazakhstan and China Chart Cooperation for 21st Century**

Presidents Nursultan Nazarbayev of Kazakhstan and Hu Jintao of China held talks in Beijing on December 20 resulting in signing of numerous agreements including the strategy of cooperation between Kazakhstan and China in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and the concept of bilateral economic cooperation.

A total of ten documents were signed as a result of the visit including agreements on the border regime between Kazakhstan and China, mutual acceptance of educational diplomas, and customs control over energy resources.

The two countries also amended an agreement regulating the cross-border trading center at Korgas (Korgos). China is already one of Kazakhstan's main trading partners, and according to forecasts bilateral trade should reach 10 billion dollars by 2010.

The two governments also signed a memorandum of intentions to join their two railroads. The two countries have been using different size gauges for their railroads, because Kazakhstan's is wider than the international standard, and have been switching platforms at border crossings for more than a decade now. This has worked well so far but is not as convenient as having the same size gauge.

"Kazakhstan is interested in strengthening strategic partnership with China in different spheres, and we see a similar interest from China," President Nazarbayev said in a meeting with Chinese scientists and analysts in Beijing on December 21.

President Nazarbayev's state visit to China is the final foreign policy trip of an extremely active and very successful year for Kazakhstan's leader which he himself termed "a breakthrough year in foreign policy." The President visited Washington, Moscow, London, Brussels, Amman, Tashkent, and other capitals, and took part in the G8 summit in Saint Petersburg.

## **Nazarbayev "Deeply Saddened" with Niyazov's Demise**

President Nursultan Nazarbayev of Kazakhstan, while on a state visit to China, sent a letter of condolences on December 21 to the Turkmen people on the death of President Saparmurat Niyazov of Turkmenistan.

President Nazarbayev said he is "deeply saddened by the untimely demise" of President Niyazov who was "an outstanding representative of the Turkmen people, a far-sighted politician who had tirelessly worked for his Motherland."

President Nazarbayev said President Niyazov "had played a key role in establishing and strengthening of the independence of Turkmenistan and the development of the country's economic potential."

Kazakhstan shares a 235-mile mostly desert border with Turkmenistan, and the two countries have shared history and culture. Both countries also border the mineral rich Caspian Sea.

## **Vinokourov's Team Fired Up to Compete in '07**

Alexander Vinokourov's team, *Astana*, was registered for Pro Tour competitions by the International Cycling Union (UCI) on December 20 clearing the way for it to compete in Tour de France and other international contests in 2007.

Vinokourov, the star of Kazakhstan's cycling and heavily favored to win the 2006 Tour de France had to miss the Tour because his former team Astana-Wurth was pulled out of the race after suspicions some Spanish riders, not Vinokourov, might have used banned substance.

Vinokourov and three other Kazakh riders from Astana-Wurth then pulled out of that team and set up a purely Kazakh team, with just Astana, Kazakhstan's capital, in the name.

Also in 2006, Vinokourov got some consolation after the non-participation in Tour de France, cycling's biggest event of the year, when he won the Vuelta multi-day race in Spain later.

The last hurdle for *Astana*'s registration as a professional team was cleared on December 20 when the team's manager provided guarantees for 12 million euros (approx. 15 million dollars) needed for its participation in international contests in 2007. The license from UCI spans four years.

The first training session for *Astana* is set for January 5 on Majorca, and the new team will be officially presented in Astana later in January.

## **Kazakh 'Lamb Ladies' Respond to British 'Lettuce Ladies' with Gusto**

Two Kazakh models Assel and Aliya staged a counter-demonstration on Almaty's main square on Independence Day urging their compatriots to reject calls from foreigners to go vegetarian and to continue eating meat.

This was a response from Megapolis, one of Kazakhstan's leading newspapers, to a protest by two People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) activists earlier in the week who sported lettuce bikinis and bras and called on Kazakhs to reject horsemeat, or any other meat for that matter. (See *Kazakhstan News Bulletin*, December 15.)

"Lettuce is for goats" and "Meat helps us study and live" read the banners of Assel and Aliya who made their point by wearing sheep skins. People around them were gleaming at their sight and cheering them up.

"I saw those British ladies on TV, and they were so pale... Who cares about what we eat? We have such a climate that we simply must eat meat! Meat helps us grow!" said Professor Madeniet Kobdikov of a Kazakh college who was on the square to join in the December 16 festivities.

"One should not exclude meat altogether," said Professor Olga Bagryantseva of the Kazakh Academy of Nutrition in Almaty. "Meat has protein, and protein has eight irreplaceable amino acids which play a major role in the life of a human and must definitely come from food because they are not produced by the body. Those who are vegetarians need to very carefully select their food so that it does provide them with the necessary proteins."

"In fact, there is such a thing as an ideal standard of protein. Horsemeat and beef are 90 percent close to this standard. So, indeed a Kazakh's body is predisposed to eating meat, and the complete renunciation of meat can have negative consequences," she explained.

People do love their meat in Kazakhstan, as U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Mike Johanns noted recently. There is even a popular joke the Kazakhs love to tell their foreign guests which goes like this. They first ask: "Did you know that Kazakhs are the second in the world in terms of meat consumption?" This usually invites a moment of puzzled silence followed by a natural question: "Who's first?" "Wolves," goes the answer to the belly laughs of everybody in the room.

### **Things to Watch:**

- The ruling Otan party will hold its congress on December 22. Earlier in 2006, two other large parties, Asar and Civic, merged with Otan, strengthening its clout as the country's dominant political party and its positions in the Parliament where it now holds a lion's share of the seats.
- The Ecotourism Information Resource Center, a project of Kazakhstan's Tourist Association, is looking to promote ecological tourism to some of the pristine and beautiful sites in Kazakhstan. Those interested can visit their website at [www.ecotourism.kz](http://www.ecotourism.kz) for more information.

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*The Embassy wishes our readers happy holidays and a very good new year! You'll see us in the new year.*

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