



Kazakhstan News Bulletin

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Say It in Kazakh:

Chess --- Shahmat

I like to play chess. – Men shahmat oynagandy zhaksy quoremnen.

Kazakhstan Joins IAEA Safeguards Protocol, Refutes Claims of ‘Unexploded Nuclear Bomb’

Kazakhstan moved to reaffirm its commitment to nonproliferation of weapons of mass destruction last week when President Nursultan Nazarbayev signed into law a bill on February 19, 2007 ratifying the additional protocol to Kazakhstan’s agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) relating to the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty.

On the same day, Kazakhstan’s foreign and energy ministries came out with statements refuting earlier bizarre comments from one of the members of national parliament about the existence of an “unexploded nuclear bomb” at one of the former Soviet test sites in Kazakhstan.

Under the newly ratified protocol, whose full title is the Protocol to the Agreement between Kazakhstan and the IAEA on application of safeguards with a view to Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, Kazakhstan agreed to more rigorous inspections of all nuclear related activities. Kazakhstan signed the protocol in February 2004.

In 1991, Kazakhstan inherited the more than 1,000 nuclear warheads and 100 intercontinental ballistic missiles left behind when the Soviet Union collapsed. The country then decided to terminate its nuclear program, joined the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty as a non-nuclear weapons state and has since then proven itself a strong advocate of nuclear disarmament and nonproliferation.

Ninety countries have signed the protocol, and, with Kazakhstan’s accession, it has already come into force in 63 countries.

In a related story, spokesmen for the Foreign Ministry and the Energy and Mineral Resources Ministry repudiated earlier claims from Tokhtar Aubakirov, a member of the Majilis (lower house of Parliament), about the existence of an “unexploded nuclear bomb” at the former Soviet test site at Azgir in western Kazakhstan. Aubakirov, a former cosmonaut said he had seen a large metallic sphere from space and claimed it contained a nuclear device undermining Kazakhstan’s status as a non-nuclear weapons state since 1995.

The Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources said the sphere, called the Yava installation, “had never been used for testing nuclear weapons, is not a nuclear device, and does not contain any radioactive materials.”



Photo by Vladimir Ziakin, Vremya newspaper

Zhansaya Abdumalik, seven year old chess whiz, contemplates her next move at her home in Almaty. See story p. 4

The ministry further explained the installation had been intended for experiments in high pressure physics in areas such as imitating deep water immersion and production of technical diamonds through explosions of chemical materials. The installation could only sustain the pressure of 180 atmospheres, not millions of atmospheres created during a nuclear explosion, the Ministry added. Finally, the installation was given in repayment of Kazakhstan's debts to an 18-nation Joint Institute of Nuclear Studies headquartered in Dubna, Russia.

In its own statement, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs added, "The Republic of Kazakhstan, having voluntarily renounced the world's fourth largest nuclear arsenal and shut down the nuclear test site, as well as having co-initiated the signing of the Central Asia Nuclear Weapons Free Zone Treaty, is firmly committed to its principled position about the unacceptability of developing, storing and using nuclear weapons."

Yerzhan Ashikbayev, the Foreign Ministry's spokesman, noted, "As a non-nuclear weapons state, Kazakhstan strictly adheres to all provisions of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, as well as other international obligations in nuclear disarmament and nonproliferation. The entire nuclear related activity in Kazakhstan is covered by IAEA safeguards."

U.S. Seeks Closer Cooperation with Astana on Regional Stability and Afghanistan

Richard Boucher, U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asia visited Astana February 26 and 27 for meetings with Kazakhstan's leaders to discuss strengthening ties in regional security, fighting terrorism and restoring peace in Afghanistan.

In two days, Boucher met President Nursultan Nazarbayev, Senate Speaker Kassym-Zhomart Tokayev, Prime Minister Karim Massimov, and Foreign Minister Marat Tazhin.

Speaking at a February 27 news briefing in Astana after his meeting with the President, Boucher said, "We talked about issues of regional stability, our cooperation in security, fighting drug trafficking and terrorism as well as about our support for preserving stability in Afghanistan. I believe our countries have an interest in promoting these issues, and we are looking forward to working with Kazakhstan in all these areas."

Boucher noted Kazakhstan and the United States are strategic partners and told President Nazarbayev about the continuing work to implement the agenda discussed during President Nazarbayev's visit to Washington last September.

Earlier, Boucher and Foreign Minister Tazhin discussed regional integration as well as U.S. participation in helping Kazakhstan develop and diversify its economy and improve the investment climate.

Boucher's visit came only a few weeks after another delegation from the U.S. Department of State led by Assistant Secretary for Economic Affairs Dan Sullivan visited Astana to talk about cooperation in energy and other economic areas.

Kazakhstan, Egypt Draw Closer As another Visit Nears

Kazakhstan and Egypt, two countries with important regional roles in Central Asia and the Middle East are continuing to build stronger ties as their presidents prepare for their third meeting in the last five months.

President Nursultan Nazarbayev will visit Egypt March 11 through 13, and several agreements are expected to be signed then furthering cooperation in trade, industry and healthcare.

Egypt's Minister for International Cooperation Fayza Abul Naga made the news public at a February 26 media briefing in Astana, Kazakhstan's capital, following the fourth session of the

Kazakhstan-Egypt intergovernmental commission.

The Egyptian official said she expected her country's pharmaceutical producers to benefit from upcoming agreements since "medical drug production in Egypt is competitive in terms of both price and quality."

In its turn, Kazakhstan agreed last November to ship 1.5 million tons of grain to Egypt for 225 million dollars. The first shipment of 175,000 tons was delivered earlier this month.

Kazakhstan is also looking at spending one million dollars to help complete the restoration of the Sultan Baybars Mosque in Cairo. Sultan Zahir Baybars, a former Turkic mercenary slave from the Kazakh steppe became ruler of Egypt and Syria in the 13th Century when he and his fellow Mamluk (Arabic for 'obsessed') warriors overthrew the current sultan. He then ruled the dominion as an enlightened ruler, and was responsible for stopping the Mongol Empire's further expansion into the East when his warriors defeated the Mongols in modern day Syria in 1260.

The relations between modern day Kazakhstan and Egypt, while rooted in related history and strong business interests, also have important political dimensions. Both Presidents Nursultan Nazarbayev and Hosni Mubarak are moderate Muslim leaders seeking lasting peace in the Middle East and Asia in general.

At their meeting in Astana in November 2006, one key subject on the agenda was the effort to restart the Middle East peace process. At that time President Nazarbayev said Kazakhstan supported the "peace in exchange for territories" solution offered by Egypt earlier and added, "Despite the distance between Kazakhstan and Egypt, we live in one and the same region. Peace in the Middle East may promote our trade and cooperation. Peace in the region would be beneficial to the entire world."

Kazakhstan, a moderate Muslim majority country, has maintained good relations with both countries of the Arab world and Israel. It has promoted conflict resolution in Eurasia through numerous initiatives including the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA) and the Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions. Among the 18 member countries of CICA are countries and entities such as Egypt, Israel, Iran, and the Palestine Authority.

Kazakhstan Approves New National Security Strategy

Kazakhstan has a new National Security Strategy as of February 21 after it was approved by the country's Security Council.

Berik Imashev, Secretary of the Security Council announced the news after the meeting in Astana and said, "The strategy will have a number of underlying principles, the most important of which are the priority of national interests, preemptive uncovering of potential threats, and the integration of global and regional security systems."

He added the strategy is aimed at "promoting Kazakhstan's interests both in Central Asia and the world."

The document will serve as a basis for "new presidential decrees on the [country's] military doctrine, modernization of weapons systems and coordination among special services in Kazakhstan," Imashev said.

Kazakhstan's Security Council is the highest body overseeing security matters in the country. President Nazarbayev chairs the council which includes leaders of the Government and heads of ministries of defense, foreign affairs, internal affairs and other law enforcement agencies.

Kazakhstan to Host Next OSCE Parliamentary Assembly

Kassym-Zhomart Tokayev, the Speaker of the Senate of Kazakhstan's bicameral Parliament, returned from Vienna last week with important news: Kazakhstan was confirmed as the host country for the 2008 Parliamentary Assembly of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

In Vienna, the headquarters of the OSCE, Tokayev attended the parliamentary assembly for this year.

“Holding the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly in July 2008 in Kazakhstan will help promote the fight against religious extremism, drug trafficking, trafficking in persons and other modern challenges which are facing the OSCE member countries,” Speaker Tokayev said at a joint session of three general committees of the assembly.

Kazakhstan’s vast experience in holding major international events under the auspices of the United Nations, the OSCE, the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA) and others serves as “a guarantee of success of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly on the Kazakh soil,” Tokayev added.

Tokayev also informed his audience about ongoing political modernization in Kazakhstan. He said the powers of parliament are expected to be expanded in the near future, while the role of nongovernmental organizations and news media will be strengthened and other measures will be taken to further democratization in the country.

Almaty Prodigy Stuns Chess World, Sets Eyes on International Arena

Zhansaya Abdumalik, a seven year old prodigy from Almaty, has stunned her parents, other children of her age and then adult competitors with her surprising strength of logic as she kept on winning to become the country’s champion in her age group.

Zhansaya, a kindergartener, is already able to solve complex mathematical problems. When her parents sent her to a local chess club at a tender age of six, they did not expect her to excel so mightily.

In an interview with Vremya newspaper, Daniyar Ashirov, Zhansaya’s father said: “When my wife and I decided to have her do chess, we did not think she will be seriously interested in it. Yet, she liked it, and then began beating all other children. She became the champion of Kazakhstan on her seventh birthday. Now we are invited to go to Turkey for the world championship there and the United Arab Emirates for Asian championship.” He then lamented the lack of sufficient resources for international travel and continued training.

As it happens, Vremya newspaper contacted leaders of Kazakhstan’s chess federation who decided to underwrite Zhansaya’s further chess exploits with two million tenges (US\$1=120 tenge) in sponsorship.

Margulan Seysembayev, chairman of Alliance Bank in Kazakhstan, and Saken Seifullin, chairman of Alliance Polis, the bank’s insurance subsidiary, and at the same time, chairman and vice chairman of Kazakhstan’s chess federation said the money should be enough to cover Zhansaya’s participation in international chess tournaments in 2007.

Things to Watch:

- President Nursultan Nazarbayev will deliver his annual state of the nation address at a joint session of Kazakhstan’s Parliament in Astana on Wednesday February 28, 2007 where he is expected to outline prospects for Kazakhstan’s development for the next decade.
- We still have a few copies available of *Kazakhstan: Reaching for the Future*, a 9-minute video documentary prepared by our Embassy. It tells the story of what Kazakhstan has become in the 15 years of its independence and of the importance of strategic partnership between Kazakhstan and the U.S. The video is available at Youtube [here](#). Those in the United States and Canada who would like to receive a copy on DVD, please contact Roman Vassilenko at numbers below.

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