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Say it in Kazakh:

At the bank/currency exchange:

Can I exchange US dollars? --- Dollar aiyrbastai alamyn ba?

What is the exchange rate? --- Aiyrbastau bagasy kansha?

Can I open an account? --- Yessep-shot asha alamyn ba?

How can I get a credit card? --- Kredit kartany kalai aluuma bolady?

Shanghai Group to Welcome India, Iran and Pakistan

Leaders of Kazakhstan, China, Russia, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan will meet at the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) summit in Astana on July 5 and 6. Astana will also welcome leaders of Mongolia, already an observer with the SCO, and India, Iran and Pakistan, who will be officially admitted to the SCO as observers. The summit will focus on expanding trade and security cooperation among the group's members.

The SCO came into existence in June 2001, when Uzbekistan was admitted as the sixth member. Before that, since 1996, the five original countries were engaged in major discussions as part of the "Shanghai Five" process on reducing tensions along the former Sino-Soviet border which resulted in considerable confidence building and reductions of troop levels along the border. The group's mandate was extended in 2001 to include cooperation in fighting new threats and trade, economic and cultural exchanges.

Counting the soon to become observers, the new organization will be home to 2.7 billion people and some of the world's largest and booming economies.

Eurasian Jewish Diaspora Offers Help in MidEast Mediation

Alexander Mashkevich, President of the Kazakhstan-based Euro-Asian Jewish Congress, met the leaders of Israel and Palestine Sunday in the Holy Land offering the Diaspora's help in the Middle East peace process.

Mr. Mashkevich, who has been active in promoting better understanding between Jews and Muslims and people of other faiths in Eurasia, offered both Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and President Mahmoud Abbas the experience of the Eurasian Jewish community in helping move the peace process forward. He said one of the venues for greater interaction could be the international Judeo-Muslim dialogue initiated by President Nursultan Nazarbayev of Kazakhstan in early 2003.



Alexander Vinokourov, Kazakhstan's cycling star, will compete again in the Tour de France starting this Saturday. He placed third in 2003 and is considered a top contender along with the six times winner Lance Armstrong of Texas and Jan Ullrich of Germany.

Mr. Mashkevich, a successful entrepreneur who has sponsored the construction of synagogues in Kazakhstan and other countries, told the two leaders the Jews of Eurasia are ready to offer humanitarian, intellectual and financial resources to implement appropriate initiatives.

“Our dialogue initiative with non-Arab Muslims in Central Asia has shown that understanding inter-religious peace in the Diaspora should have a positive effect for communities seeking to settle conflicts in their homelands,” Mr. Mashkevich said.

“Our discussions today have not only helped us learn in greater detail the position of both sides, but also to discuss approaches of cooperation which could be optimal in the current situation,” he noted while in the Middle East. “We are at the very beginning of the road. The understanding we reached has a real chance to turn into concrete programs in the areas of charity, education and investment.”

Foreign Minister Meets U.S. Ambassador, Attends Canada Day Reception

Kassymzhomart Tokaev, Kazakhstan’s Foreign Minister, met U.S. Ambassador to Kazakhstan and attended the Canada Day reception on June 28.

At a meeting with US Ambassador John Ordway, a wide range of bilateral issues and problems of international cooperation, including the reform of the United Nations, were discussed.

At the reception later that day, Canada’s Ambassador Anna Biolik spoke about Kazakhstan-Canada cooperation and announced plans to move the Canadian Embassy from Almaty to the new capital of Astana. Several countries have already moved their embassies to Astana, including Russia and China. The U.S. is scheduled to move into a new building there in 2006. In an interview with *Kazakhstanskaya Pravda* newspaper on the occasion, Ambassador Biolik said “Ottawa views Kazakhstan with its strong political and economic potential as a locomotive for driving Canadian interests in the region... Canada’s only embassy in Central Asia is in Kazakhstan.”

Kazakhstan-Canada bilateral relations have grown in recent years. Bilateral trade totaled CDN\$122 million in 2004. There are 130 Canadian firms doing business in Kazakhstan with investment totaling CDN2.2 billion. A Bilateral Trade Agreement and a Double-Taxation Agreement are in place. During President Nazarbayev’s visit to Canada in June 2003, a Treaty on Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters and a joint plan for an economic partnership were signed.

Candidates Stand for Senate Election in August

Senate Candidates have started to file their intentions to run with the election commissions for the election scheduled for August 19.

There are 39 Senators in the upper house. Each of the 14 regions, and the current and former capitals send two deputies to the Senate, while the President appoints seven others. The election for 16, or half of the elected seats, is held every three years.

During the first week of nominations, 39 politicians filed to run. The keen interest in the political process is shown by the fact that six contenders are vying for each seat in Zhambyl region.

The registration of candidates will close on July 29, and the official campaign will last from July 30 to August 17. The Central Election Commission is planning to announce election results by August 28.

Eurasian Economic Community Creates Bank

Presidents of Kazakhstan, Russia, Belarus, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan, last week agreed to set up a regional investment bank with initial capital of U.S. \$1.5 billion. Kazakhstan and Russia will split the bill for creating the bank.

President Nursultan Nazarbayev of Kazakhstan announced the news following a meeting in Moscow on June 22 of the Eurasian Economic Community (EEC) of which the five countries are members. President Vladimir Putin of Russia said the new bank, to be called the EEC Interstate Bank, should be

operational by the end of this year and will have headquarters in Almaty with a branch office in St. Petersburg. It will be modeled after the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development.

At the meeting in Moscow, the leaders also pledged to continue efforts to create a free trade zone and harmonize customs tariffs.

The EEC is one of the most advanced trade and economic integration initiatives in the former Soviet Union. It has been in existence since the year 2000. Armenia, Moldova and Ukraine are observers.

Government to Limit Expenditures on Self

Prime Minister Daniyal Akhmetov announced expenditures on government structures will be slashed beginning this year, saying current expenses grew “too high” in recent years. He spoke at a government meeting in Astana on June 28.

During the past three years Government expenditures have grown by three percent and today stand at 25.3 percent of total expenditure of the national budget. They “must be cut down,” the Prime Minister said, noting the goal will be to reduce that figure to 23 percent. The figure includes financing for government operations, including salaries and procurement.

The Prime Minister said the Ministry of Economy and Budget Planning will be tasked to limit unnecessary structural expenditures, particularly limiting appropriations by at least the amount of unused resources in any given ministry in any given year.

Things to Watch:

- President Hu Jintao of China will pay a state visit to Kazakhstan July 3 and 4 focusing on trade and economic cooperation. The two presidents are expected to sign a Declaration of Strategic Partnership, and a host of other documents. Discussions will also take place on the construction of the Trans-Kazakhstan narrow gauge railroad from China to the Caspian Sea.
- *Kazmortransflot*, the national maritime company of Kazakhstan, is considering building tankers of 35-60,000 tons deadweight to transport crude across the Caspian Sea, largely from the Kashagan offshore field. The field is the largest oil find in the world in the past thirty years and is expected to begin commercial production in 2008.

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