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*Say It in Kazakh:
Do you speak English?
--- Syz Aglshynsha
soileisesiz be?*

*At an Internet café:
How much is a minute?
--- Bir minut qansha turady?*

*How much to print? --
-Basylym bagasy qansha?*

*Can you help me? ---
Magan komek korsete alasyz ba?*

Candidates Square off in First Ever TV Election Debates

Presidential candidates squared off live on national TV on November 17 for the first time ever in Kazakhstan's history.

Four candidates took part in the debates on Khabar TV, including Yerassyl Abylkassymov, Alikhan Baimenov, Mels Eleusizov, and Zharmakhan Tuyakbai. The debates included presentations of the candidates' platforms, their personal stories, followed by questions and answers between those running for office. The debates took place in a competitive but amicable atmosphere.

Murat Auezov, member of the Public Committee on Election Oversight, said: "Debates are a good format. You can judge for yourself: candidates freely expressed their thoughts. Granted, not all of them are orators, but it is obvious that they spend a lot of time preparing."

On the same day, the fifth candidate, incumbent President Nursultan Nazarbayev, whose approval rating floats at 70 to 75 percent according to various polls, began an official visit to Ukraine. The visit's itinerary includes talks with President Viktor Yushchenko, a speech to the Ukrainian Rada (Parliament), and signing a number of agreements.

CEC Chair: Observers Will Get Vote Count on Spot, Full Results to Be Announced 24 Hours Later

Onalsyn Zhumabekov, Chairman of Kazakhstan's Central Election Commission (CEC), said the CEC will upload voting results district by district on its [website](#) within 24 hours after the vote closes on December 4.

He also stressed observers from foreign countries and international organizations accredited by the CEC will be able to get copies of vote tabulation at each polling station on Election Day.

Zhumabekov spoke about these plans at a November 16 meeting in Astana with Sean Woo, chief of staff of the U.S. Commission for Security and Cooperation in Europe (Helsinki Commission).



Ilya Ilyin, 17-year-old prodigy from Kazakhstan, lifts during the men's 85kg category at the World Weightlifting Championships in Qatar, November 14, becoming the youngest champion in history. Story p.3

The commission is an independent agency of the U.S. Government monitoring the application of the Helsinki Final Act of 1975 in 55 countries which are currently members of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

Zhumabekov pointed out “Kazakhstan is doing all that is needed to ensure the upcoming presidential election is open, fair and transparent.” He pointed out that inviting foreign observers was a commitment to openness in the election. Under Kazakh law, there are no limitations on the number of CEC accredited foreign observers present at polling stations. Also, on Election Day polling stations are open for authorized representatives of candidates, observers from political parties, NGOs, and the news media. Such openness is not something common in all OSCE member countries.

According to a CEC press release, Woo noted the commission’s “important role in ensuring transparency of the election process” and said he hoped the election will become an example for other countries.

Government to Send Election Law Amendment to Parliament

The Government is preparing to send an amendment to the law on elections to Parliament abolishing a ban on public protests following the campaign.

Such expressions of public, group or personal interests and protests following the election campaign, which could influence voters or staff of the election commissions, were outlawed by Paragraph 6, Article 44 of the Law on Elections in April of this year. The ban is supposed to last from the moment the election campaign ends and until results are officially announced.

The monitoring mission from OSCE/ODIHR said earlier in November the provision may hinder freedom of assembly and recommended repeal. On November 11, Kazakhstan’s Central Election Commission asked the Government to seek such action. Zhumabekov, speaking to reporters on November 18, said there are no grounds for keeping the ban in place.

New Pipeline to China Opens December 15

The new 600-mile Atasu-Alashankou pipeline, the remaining link of a much longer pipeline from Western Kazakhstan to Western China, will open on December 15.

Kairat Krymov, Director General of KazTransOil Company, made the announcement while commissioning oil pumping facilities at Atasu in the Karaganda region on November 16. KazTransOil manages all major pipelines for the country and is part of Kazakhstan’s national oil and gas company, [KazMunaiGaz](#).

The pipeline is being built jointly by Kazakhstan and China following an agreement signed in May 2004. Its eastern terminal is Alashankou on the border with China.

The pipeline’s initial throughput capacity will be 10 million tons of oil per year, with the possibility of doubling it. The pipeline is slated to begin carrying oil on January 1, 2006.

Kazakh Teenager World’s Youngest Weightlifting Champion

Ilya Ilyin, a 17-year old prodigy from Kyzylorda in south western Kazakhstan, became the youngest ever world champion in weightlifting during the competition in Doha, Qatar on November 14

Ilyin, who competes in less than 85 kilograms, lifted 170 kg in jerk, and 216 kg in clean, making a combined weight of 386 kilograms.

Before that, Ilyin was the world’s champion among juniors.

Take Democratization Slowly, So That Everyone Wins

This guest column by Dan A. Witt, President of the Washington-based International Tax and

Investment Center and a member of the Eurasia Foundation's board, appeared in Arizona Daily Star on November 12, 2005.

The recent and controversial parliamentary elections in the oil-rich republic of Azerbaijan have raised the stakes for the upcoming presidential election in Kazakhstan, a country of significant strategic and economic importance to both the United States and Europe.

Kazakhstan has been a pioneer in developing pro-Western economic reforms. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the corresponding collapse of the economy, Kazakhstan has developed as a pro-Western, pro-market-oriented state.

Some critics of Central Asia have suggested that "oil is a curse" and does not foster the development of free societies. The elections in Kazakhstan are critical to debunk this "curse myth." Free elections, open societies and big oil can positively mix.

Pro-market economic reforms that welcome foreign direct investment are consistent with freedom and democracy in developing societies. The economic reforms and foreign direct investment in this former Soviet republic have resulted in not only solid economic statistics, but a better standard of living.

The per capita gross domestic product and average monthly wages have grown by 10 percent per year. The World Economic Forum recently ranked Kazakhstan in 61st place among the most competitive nations. Its leaders wish to be in the top 50 in five years.

As novice democracies move forward with political reforms, it is important to recognize that they will not become Western-style democracies overnight. A long view, marking incremental steps, is needed.

The political transition in new democracies is not completed in a decade. Free elections and a free press are long-term goals that have to be broken down into measurable achievements.

Each country has its own ways of reaching these ideals. The people must see a positive trend line and be able to honestly say this election was freer and fairer than the last.

To help promote this positive trend line, Western democracies should distance themselves, or at least not encourage local revolutionaries, as there is now always the risk of such actions leading to bloodshed. Solid, incremental democratic reforms that consistently increase citizen participation are the preferred path.

The Tucson-Almaty Sister City relationship and the universities' student exchange and language programs are examples of involving local citizens to promote democracy.

None of this is suggesting that the United States and Europe should compromise their democratic principles and advocacy for freedom.

But Western leaders must accept that in these emerging democracies some local opposition does not have an equal opportunity to win. Even a free press often has little interest in reporting on opposition. The real challenges come once voting is completed. The reforms - economic, social and political - must continue.

Kazakhstan, and to a lesser extent Azerbaijan, have been local leaders in economic reforms.

These reforms must be complemented and reinforced with political reforms. Doing so will solidify the economic gains, with prosperity for the people to follow.

The West must embrace countries and not alienate them with fair and free election lectures. Doing so will create positive ripple effects to a wider Middle East and beyond.

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News Bulletin of the Embassy of the Republic of Kazakhstan to the USA and Canada
Contact person: Roman Vassilenko
1401 16th Street NW, Washington DC 20036
Tel.: 202 232 5488 ext. 104, Fax: 202 232 5845