



Kazakhstan News Bulletin

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Say it in Kazakh:
*Do you play ...? --
- Siz ...
oinaisyzba?*

chess --- shakhmat

checkers --- doiby

*backgammon ---
nardy*

Presidential Election Campaign Heats Up

Kazakhstan's next presidential election, set for December 4, is just weeks away. It will be an important milestone in Kazakhstan's history with implications for the future and the wider region.

In September 2005, Kazakhstan's President Nursultan Nazarbayev declared his commitment to ensuring the upcoming election would be "free, fair and transparent." U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, on a visit to Astana earlier in October, said "with the presidential election in December, Kazakhstan has an unprecedented opportunity to lead Central Asia toward a future of democracy and to elevate U.S.-Kazakhstani relations to a new level."

October 25 will mark the official opening of the campaign. The election promises to be a lively one. Kazakhstan's Central Election Commission has already registered two candidates who met all the requirements, many more are expected. Mr. Nazarbayev and Mr. Zharmakhan Tuyakbai, the leader of *For a Fair Kazakhstan* political movement, are already set for the ballot. Eleven other potential candidates are getting their documents in order including the collection of nominating signatures. Each candidate will need the signatures of no less than one percent of all registered voters in the country.

The 55 member Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) has set up an office in Astana with a staff of 43 long term observers. Four hundred more observers from the OSCE will come to Kazakhstan for Election Day. Thousands of local observers, many from NGOs, will also monitor the election.



President Nursultan Nazarbayev shakes hands with U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice following their talks in Astana on October 13 as Ambassador Kanat Saudabayev (center) and Foreign Minister Kassymzhomart Tokaev (right) look on.

A high level delegation from Kazakhstan is visiting Washington to discuss Kazakhstan's reform agenda, the election campaign and its implications for Kazakhstan and the country's relationship with the world beyond its borders. The delegation will participate in an October 25 conference at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, "The Challenges of Kazakhstan: Regional and Global Impact." (For more information, visit <http://www.uschamber.com/events/ViewEvent.htm?eventID=449>)

Rumsfeld to Visit Kazakhstan

U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld will visit Kazakhstan later this week as part of his eight day trip to Eurasia which started on October 18.

The visit will focus on strengthening bilateral cooperation in fighting new threats to security and stability from terrorism. This will be Rumsfeld's third trip to Kazakhstan since taking office in 2001. He visited Astana earlier in May 2002 and February 2004.

Kazakhstan-U.S. military-to-military cooperation has grown considerably in recent years as the countries became strong allies in the war on terrorism. In 2001, Kazakhstan opened up its airspace for U.S. and coalition aircraft, and more than 1,000 planes have used this airspace as part of Operation Enduring Freedom to defeat the Taliban movement in Afghanistan. In 2002, Kazakhstan offered the Almaty airport, the country's largest, for the U.S. Air Force to use as an emergency landing and refueling site. In 2003, Kazakhstan sent a contingent of army engineers to Iraq who have since destroyed more than 3.5 million pieces of deadly ordnance. Also in 2003, Kazakhstan and the United States signed the first five year program of military cooperation providing for supplies of U.S. equipment such as helicopters and all terrain vehicles to the Kazakhstan military as well as an expanded training program for Kazakh troops.

Kazakhstan's armed forces are undergoing major reforms including changes in staffing procedures and types of armament and equipment they use. Kazakhstan's armed forces are highly professional and currently more than 60 percent volunteer.

Rumsfeld's current trip also takes him to China, South Korea, Mongolia, and Lithuania.

Kazakhstan's GDP Leaps Nine Percent in Nine Months

Kazakhstan's gross domestic product grew nine percent in the first nine months of 2005 as the economy showed strong growth across all sectors.

Prime Minister Danial Akhmetov, speaking at a ministerial meeting in Astana on October 19, said industrial output had gone up 4.2 percent, including a growth of 15.7 percent in machinery building. Investment in fixed capital grew 1.4 times, while foreign trade expanded by 45 percent. Average per capita incomes in January-September were up 21.1 percent, average monthly wages 16.3 percent, and real wages 8.2 percent.

Kazakhstan's Ministry of Economy and Budget Planning had said earlier it expected real GDP to be 8 percent compared to 2004. Currently, the country's Agency on Statistics projects a growth of 8.8 percent year on year. The Prime Minister also said "the Government is working to curb inflation." Inflation in the first nine months stood at 5 percent.

Things to Watch:

- The Venus Express spacecraft, the first mission of the European Space Agency to explore Earth's closest neighbor, will be launched October 26 from the Baikonur cosmodrome in Kazakhstan.

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