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Say it in Kazakh:

Do you like sport?

--- Sporttyñ

shugyldangandy

zhaksy koresizbe?

...boxing? ---

boks;

...wrestling?---

qures; ... cycling?

--- velosiped;

...fishing? ---

balyk aulau?

Drug Abuse “Colossal Problem” in Kazakhstan, PM Says, As UN Reports High Opium Production in Afghanistan

Prime Minister Daniyal Akhmetov said the growing drug abuse in Kazakhstan has become a “colossal problem” in recent years, and the Government must take immediate measures to combat it and the drug trafficking.

Akhmetov, speaking at a September 20 Cabinet meeting in Astana, said the key problem for Kazakhstan given its geographic location is the increased drug trafficking across its territory from Afghanistan through Central Asia to Russia and Europe.

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, all five Central Asian countries have been plagued by an increase in drug trafficking. Illicit production and the consumption of unprocessed drugs (raw opium, cannabis) have long been a part of everyday life in the region, since conditions are very favorable for the cultivation of the opium poppy and cannabis. However, the past decade has seen the commercialization and rapid spread of drug trafficking, as well as related money laundering and corruption.

Also on September 20, Antonio Maria Costa, the head of the U.N. Drug Control Agency said the United Nations has recorded the first notable decline in poppy cultivation in Afghanistan since the fall of the Taliban, but drug production remains high due to favorable weather. Costa presented a new U.N. report on the drug situation in Afghanistan, calling the decline “the best drug-related news” since the Taliban ouster in 2001.

According to the U.N. report, Afghan poppy cultivation dropped by 21 percent in 2005 compared to the previous year, but production dropped only slightly from 4,200 tons in 2004 to 4,100 tons. “What counts, of course, are tons of production, not hectares of cultivation,” Costa said.

Costa noted Afghanistan remains the world’s largest opium supplier with 87 percent of the world market. The opium economy makes up 52 percent of Afghanistan’s gross domestic product, and 11 million drug addicts worldwide use Afghan heroin, he explained.

One third of the Afghan drug traffic reaches Western markets through the so called northern route, via Central Asia and Russia, and another two thirds arrives via Pakistan and Iran, UN’s drug czar said.



England’s Sam Osbourne makes a swing at Kazakhstan Open, the first professional golfing tournament in the country. See story on page 3

In fact, Kazakhstan's media reports routinely on seizures of northern bound drug shipments coming from Afghanistan. Official statistics put the number of drug addicts, mostly heroin users, at 50,000 in Kazakhstan today. This is a recent phenomenon. Five years ago there were just a handful of heroin addicts.

At the Astana meeting, Akhmetov said a special presidential decree is being prepared which aiming to strengthen the country's defense against the drug menace and the accompanying threats of organized crime.

Kassymzhomart Tokaev, Foreign Minister of Kazakhstan, earlier said the failure of international forces to curb Afghanistan's soaring poppy production threatens to destabilize the entire Central Asian region and could bankroll a new generation of terrorists. He urged closer international cooperation in fighting drug production and trafficking.

In addition to threatening the countries of Central Asia, there are growing indications that Afghan drug trafficking is being used to finance terrorist operations in Iraq.

In a recent letter to U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, as reported by The Washington Times on September 19, Rep. Henry Hyde (R-IL), Chairman of the House International Relations Committee, said "we know that illicit drugs fuel and finance terrorism in Afghanistan, where the opium and heroin in the region originates. It passes out through terrorist-controlled areas, is taxed by them, and helps finance and arm our terrorist enemies."

Rep. Hyde's letter referred to the seizure earlier this month of 44 pounds of Afghan produced heroin in the Shi'ite city of Karbala, Iraq. Last year, The Washington Times quoted a Polish general in charge in southern Iraq as saying his troops had seized bags of heroin during military operations there.

Kazakhstan Joins Anti-Nuclear Terrorism Convention

President Nursultan Nazarbayev signed a decree September 15 allowing Kazakhstan to join the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism. The decree went into immediate effect. The Decree will ensure Kazakhstan's participation in the international struggle to prevent, suppress and liquidate world terrorism.

Foreign Minister Kassymzhomart Tokaev, in New York for the 60th UN General Assembly, signed the convention on behalf of Kazakhstan on September 16.

Nine Candidates Stand for President

A total of nine people are currently running for President of Kazakhstan in election now set for December 4.

As of September 22, all of them passed a Kazakh language exam required by law and administered by the Central Election Commission. The exam assures candidates' full use of the state language of Kazakhstan. All nine are men.

A total of twelve candidates submitted their documents for registration. One woman candidate, Maya Karamayeva, failed the language exam and could not be registered as a candidate. Two more candidates are still waiting to pass the exam, one of them is a woman.

Candidates include the incumbent President, Nursultan Nazarbayev; Majilisman Yerassyl Abylkassymov, member of the Communist National People's Party; Zhaksybai Bazilbayev, leader of *Alfa* public movement; Mels Eleusizov, leader of the *Tabigat* environmental organization; Senator Ualikhan Kaisarov; Salim Oten, president of a private firm; Baltabai Rakhimzhanov, President of *KazAgro*, the National Farmers Association, and Zharmakhan Tuyakbai, Chairman of *For Fair Kazakhstan*, the Bloc of Democratic Forces. Nomination of candidates will be open until October 3.

Thousands of Students Celebrate First Flag Day

More than 10,000 students gathered in Astana on September 20 for a rally, "This Is Our Flag," to

celebrate the blue and gold flag of the country.

“This action will help raise a patriotic spirit, and our country’s future depends on that,” Byrganym Aitimova, Minister of Education and Science, said at the rally. “Today, the flag and our coat of arms are recognizable throughout the world, and we should be proud of that.”

The rally culminated with a giant flag of 200 square meters flown into the bright Astana sky on two aerostats. The flag will then fly across the country and will finally be presented to President Nazarbayev.

This is the first such event in Kazakhstan’s history. Its organizers hope the day will become traditional and will be celebrated annually.

European Golfing Challenge Tour Opens in Kazakhstan

The European Challenge Tour is making golfing history this week with its first tournament in Kazakhstan. It is the first professional golf tournament in the country’s history.

The Kazakhstan Open is being played at the Nurtau Golf Club, in Almaty, Kazakhstan from September 22 through 24.

Nurtau Golf Club was opened by seven time European Tour Order of Merit winner Colin Montgomerie of Scotland, who played with President Nursultan Nazabaev on the golfer’s visit to the country in 2003.

The Kazakhstan Open carries a prize fund of €250,000 (more than US\$300,000). More than 100 players are taking part in the tournament from more than 20 countries.

England’s Sam Osborne, atop the leader board currently, said: “The course here in Kazakhstan is very good. The greens are a good speed and I think it’s a great course... I didn’t have that many expectations when I found out I was coming here to be honest. I didn’t know what to expect from the golf course. We heard a rumor that the course was not that good but that has turned out to be just a rumor and we have been made to feel very welcome.”

Things to Watch:

- The Embassy has established a hotline for Kazakh nationals resident on the Gulf Coast as Hurricane Rita moves closer. The hotline number is 202 232 5488, ext. 122, and mobile phones: 202 550 9617 and 202 299 4042.
- U.S. Secretary of Defense is due to visit Kazakhstan in October 2005. The news was announced by Kazakhstan’s Ministry of Defense on September 22 following a meeting between the Minister of Defense and the U.S. Ambassador to Kazakhstan.
- Anvar Saidenov, Chairman of Kazakhstan’s National Bank, will attend the International Monetary Fund/World Bank annual meetings in Washington, DC, September 24-25. The meetings’ agenda will include prospects for the world economy and related monetary policies. Kazakhstan has been a member since 1992.
- The newly revamped website of the President of Kazakhstan at www.akorda.kz was officially opened on September 21. The website is in Kazakh, Russian and English and offers an extensive amount of both background information and current news. Since August 24, when it was informally launched, the website received 10,000 hits and 500 messages for the President.
- U.S. space tourist Gregory Olsen is getting ready to blast off to the International Space Station in from Baikonur cosmodrome in Kazakhstan in October.

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