



ASTANA CALLING

A bi-weekly online publication of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan

www.mfa.kz

Issue #7

Tuesday, 27 October 2009



Kazakhstan to Develop Doctrine of National Unity

(President Nazarbayev addresses 15th session of Assembly of People)

Maslikhat Elections Take Place in Kazakhstan

(Nur Otan Party dominates landscape)

Kazakhstan Ranks 76 in Prosperity Index

(Education, health care push ratings up; bureaucracy the other way)

KazAtomProm to Prospect for Rare Metals Together with Japanese Firms

(Signs MoUs with Toshiba, Sumitomo)

Kazakhstan's Oil Industry, 110 Years and Counting

(One of the oldest and largest industries)

Kazakhstan Chooses Speechless *Kelin* as Nominee for Oscars

(A three-some drama from freshman director set in early AD)

Kazakhstan to Develop Doctrine of National Unity

President Nursultan Nazarbayev said common history, common values and common future are the three major factors which unite the people of Kazakhstan, a country of more than 130 ethnic groups and 40 religions.

Addressing the 15th annual session of the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan (APK) on October 26 in Astana, the President shared his vision of a new doctrine of national unity to be developed for Kazakhstan. He said common history, values and future serve as a solid foundation for a young nation's unity today and tomorrow.

The Assembly is a unique consultative body established by the Constitution and designed to represent interests of all ethnic communities in Kazakhstan. The President chairs the Assembly which gives it a unique and powerful status.

This year's session was held under the motto of "National Unity is Our Strategic Choice." Heads of nationwide and regional ethnic and cultural organizations, members of Parliament, high



Rich diversity of the people in Kazakhstan is a source of strength, not weakness, the President says.

Photo by Kazakhstan's Ministry of Culture and Information

ranking government officials, leaders of political parties, religious congregations, NGOs, foreign diplomats, representatives of international organizations, and news media attended the event. It took place in the Palace of Peace and Harmony, a famous pyramid designed by Sir Norman Foster.

In his wide-ranging speech, President Nazarbayev stated Kazakhstan has shaped its own unique model of unity and integrity in an ethnically and culturally diverse society, which has served as the solid foundation for its peaceful and progressive development. Kazakhstan's policies in this delicate sphere draw attention internationally, especially as it prepares for OSCE chairmanship next year.

The President further maintained that keeping national unity would remain one of his strategic priorities. Currently, a "Doctrine of National Unity" is being prepared by the government according to the President's earlier assignment. Once completed, it will be approved by a presidential decree. To strengthen the work on creating the doctrine, the President tasked the government with establishing a working group involving high profile representatives of ethnic communities, NGOs, state bodies, scholars and experts on interethnic relations.

According to the President, the proposed doctrine will be "a coherent program of action for the entire range of interethnic and interfaith relations."

"It is meant as a 'handbook' of Kazakhstan's policy direction for each deputy, manager, scientist and journalist. All policy documents and laws should consult with it, and its provisions should be included in the Country Development Strategy up to 2020," the President noted.

He also stressed the need to develop a civic identity and tolerance through education and the media. In particular, the President proposed to develop and introduce an elective course on the basics of tolerance in schools and universities. Today, 170 Sunday schools operate in the country, where 23 native languages are studied. Four national and 15 regional newspapers are published in various languages. There are also theaters with performances in six languages, the Kazakh, the Russian, the German, the Uygur, the Korean and the Uzbek.

Speaking about the languages used in the country, President Nazarbayev hailed the state's policy aimed at extending the public use of the Kazakh language. He said the government would expand the network of state-run centers for studying this language, support translating products of foreign professional and fiction literature into Kazakh, and encourage its wider presence on TV with the use of relevant technologies, e.g. subtitling broadcasts. The President stressed, however, that progress in this sphere can be achieved without limiting the use of Russian and other languages used by other ethnic groups.

"The development of the state language should not lead to discrimination due to the fact that someone has not learned it yet. Violations of constitutional rights of our citizens are not allowed, they should immediately be prevented by the authorities," the President said.

He urged the country's news media to show maximum responsibility in reporting on race- and ethnicity-related topics. Acknowledging the gradual rise of the role of religions in the modern world as well as in Kazakhstan, the President proposed establishing a special government agency on religious affairs.

Other speakers at the event expressed their support for the President's vision of the doctrine of national unity and urged civil society to discuss the proposed document most widely.

"Whatever nationality you may be – a Kazakh, a Tatar, an Uzbek, or a Pole, there is no difference: Kazakhstan always warmly welcomes all nationalities," Indira Nizamutdinova, a member of the Tatar-Bashkir cultural center in Astana, said.

Maslikhat Elections Take Place in Kazakhstan

Elections to the maslikhats took place October 25 in Kazakhstan.

A maslikhat is a local representative body elected by the population of the administrative territorial units at the regional, city and district levels. In accordance with the Constitution of Kazakhstan they can introduce local regulations and oversee the activities of local executive authorities. Since the May 2007 constitutional reform, oblast maslikhats vet presidential candidacies for akims (governors) of the regions.

A maslikhat is qualified if three fourths of the total number of its members are elected. Since the last nationwide election campaign in August 2007, some deputies left their posts, so elections to replace those ones were held last Sunday.

Elections were held in seven oblasts. Eleven electoral districts chose deputies of the township maslikhats, while 37 constituencies elected their deputies of district maslikhats. Kazakhstan has 16 basic administrative and territorial units: 14 oblasts provinces and two cities of nationwide significance, the capital city of Astana and the city of Almaty, the largest in the country.

One hundred and twenty-nine candidates participated in the elections. Seventy ran self-nominated, 55 people represented the Nur Otan party, two hailed from the Communist People's Party of Kazakhstan and the other two from public associations.

According to the data from the Central Election Commission, out of 200,000 registered voters, 68.7 percent of eligible voters came to polling stations in respective constituencies. Monday evening the secretary of Nur Otan party, Sergei Gromov claimed their candidates won the elections by sweeping all the seats available.

Official results are due by the end of October.



A toddler helps her mother vote in an election in Kazakhstan.

Kazakhstan Ranks 76 in Prosperity Index

A Britain-based Legatum Institute published its third annual Prosperity Index ranking Kazakhstan 76th out of 104 countries in the survey.

The research is based on polled data in areas such as economic fundamentals, entrepreneurship and innovation, democratic institutions, education, health, safety and security, governance, personal freedom, social capital.

Kazakhstan has got its highest rank of 42 in education. The report claimed that though investments in education are not very high, 90 percent of eligible children attend primary schools and 95 percent are enrolled in secondary schools. Girls enroll in school in nearly equal rates to boys, and primary schools have a ratio of only 17 pupils per teacher, which is among the top 30 nations. An average worker in Kazakhstan has 5.7 years of secondary education, ranking the country sixteenth overall.

The country has been ranked high for its health system. Kazakhstan's health infrastructure is strong as the country ranks eighth in the world for the number of doctors, nurses, and hospital beds available per capita. In addition, 97 percent of the population have access to adequate sanitation systems. Still, many people have problems with water quality, almost half of respondents were not satisfied with that, and with very high infant mortality (27 per 1,000 live births).

In terms of safety and security, Kazakhstan ranks 49. Eleven percent of those polled said that had suffered theft in the last year and three percent had been assaulted.

Kazakhstan's economy attracts the 16th highest level of foreign direct investment on this variable, equal to 10 percent of the gross domestic product. Kazakhstan, however, is one of the 20 nations most dependent upon raw material exports. It has one of the 10 highest domestic savings rate of 42 percent.

Entrepreneurship in Kazakhstan is encouraged by low barriers for new business development, with seven procedures required to set up a business. More than 2,500 new businesses were launched in the last recorded year, which places Kazakhstan 67th on this

variable. The value added in the service sector is small at only 52 percent of the GDP, putting the country in the 70th place.

Seventy-four percent of the people are happy with their freedom of choice, which ranks the country 50th overall. Levels of tolerance for outsiders are also above the global average, as 69 percent of the people in Kazakhstan believe their area is a good place for immigrants and 72 percent believe ethnic minorities are welcome.

Eighty-six percent of the people in Kazakhstan say they have family or friends to rely on in times of need, which ranks the country 56th in the world and suggests that social networks are reasonably strong.

The index points out to a number of issues which hold Kazakhstan's Prosperity Index back. Among them are effectiveness of bureaucracy, regulation of investment and competition and the domination of one political party.

KazAtomProm to Prospect for Rare Metals Together with Japanese Firms

Kazakhstan's national nuclear company, KazAtomProm, has signed a number of agreements with Japanese companies Toshiba and Sumitomo to develop rare metals and rare earth metals deposits located in Kazakhstan.

"In Astana, in the course of the 10th joint sitting of the Kazakh-Japanese and Japanese-Kazakh Committees on Economic Cooperation, a number of agreements on economic cooperation was signed to establish joint ventures to develop rare and rare earth metals in the territory of Kazakhstan and further produce respective products," this week's statement from the company read.

KazAtomProm signed a memorandum of understanding with Toshiba Corporation to cooperate in development of rare metals. The Kazakh national company also reached an agreement (a memorandum of understanding and mutually beneficial cooperation) to develop rare earth metals in partnership with Sumitomo Corporation.

Thanks to these two projects, KazAtomProm should be soon able to launch the production of technology-intensive rare-metals products.

KazAtomProm is the national operator of the Republic of Kazakhstan for the production, import and export of uranium, rare metals, nuclear fuel for power plants, special equipment and dual-purpose materials.

Kazakhstan's Oil Industry, 110 Years and Counting

The preparations are ongoing across Kazakhstan to celebrate the 110 years of the nation's oil industry this November.

Back in 1899 the first Kazakh oil was extracted from the Karashungul oil well in the western part of the country. The initial daily production rate was enormous for those days and amounted to 20 to 25 tons.

Today, the country's soil is known to contain 4.6 billion tons, or 3.2 percent of the world's reserves. Around 75 million tons were extracted in 2008, which was 1.8 percent of the global oil production. According to a number of international experts, taking into account the growing rate of extraction and significant amount of explored reserves, Kazakhstan is expected to increase oil production up to 100 million tons in 2015 becoming one of the world's largest oil producers.

In order to stimulate the development of this industry, the government has been improving legislation, promoting international cooperation and working to create a favorable investment climate. This year, taxes on oil exports as well as excess profits tax were lowered, and the government



Pipe dreams come true...
A Kazakh worker helps lay a pipe
for a new export oil pipeline.

Photo by the KazMunayGas
National Company

temporarily established a zero export duty on oil as part of anti-crisis measures.

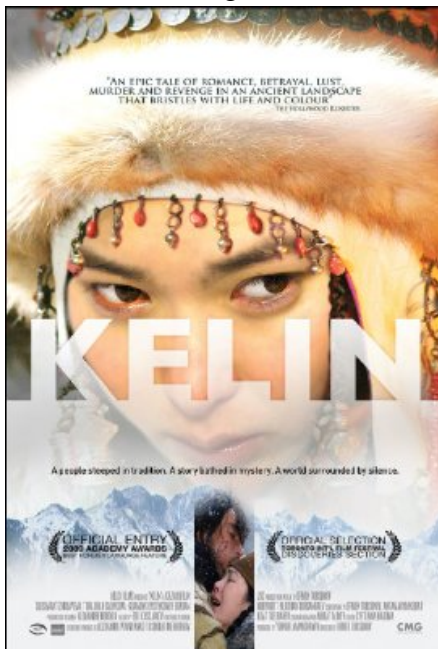
“A consistent government policy aimed at creating reasonable and clear rules for producers of mineral resources, creating a favorable investment climate and promoting international cooperation, can help effectively use our natural wealth, benefiting from the country’s advantageous geographical situation,” Sauat Mynbayev, Minister of Energy and Mineral Resources, said.

Despite significant profits from the industry, one of the largest issues of concern for both the government and companies working in the field is the environment in areas involved in oil and gas production. Dealing with one of the largest problems in the field, the 2005 law “On oil” specifically prohibited commercial development of oil and gas fields without the utilization of associated gas. Companies engaged in commercial extraction of mineral resources are required to present their program for utilization of gas according to the requirements of a special interagency working group. As a result of active joint work of state and companies, from 2006 to 2008 the percentage of flared associated gas in the country declined from 11.6 percent to 5.4 percent. Rational use of available gas resources through its effective utilization will not only contribute to sustainable development of the industry, but also reduce the environmental burden on the economy.

During the years of independence, Kazakhstan’s oil industry has seriously evolved and today, 110 years since its foundation, is asserting itself as a serious player in the global market.

Kazakhstan Chooses Speechless *Kelin* as Nominee for Oscars

In the list of the 65 films nominated for Academy Awards in the Best Foreign Language Film category Kazakhstan is represented by Yermek Tursunov’s *Kelin* (Daughter-in-law), a movie without a single word spoken. It had already been screened at several international festivals receiving serious acclaim of the critics.



A poster for *Kelin*, though silent, is moving like the movie itself.

The film is set in the early centuries AD among the ancient Turkic tribe inhabiting the Altai Mountains. It depicts relations of common nomads, which may seem difficult to understand today but still reflect the essential elements of human behavior.

The film’s plot evolves around a tragic story of a young woman when her father arranges her marriage against her will. The character, for the sake of duty to parents, had to suppress her feelings and marry the man who gave his father a good imbursement. The now daughter-in-law (*Kelin*) is still in love with another man who had no means to pay her father and comes into direct confrontation with his lover’s husband and *Kelin*’s new family.

The movie attracted public attention due to the fact that its characters do not say a single word during the whole story. Everything is explained with the help of sound and gestures.

Initially, there were discussions about whether the movie should be edited for content or not shown in Kazakhstan altogether, since it contains some “explicit sex scenes”. However, in June *Kelin* eventually appeared in cinemas uncut and enjoyed serious success among the country’s cinema-goers.

One of the country’s renowned film critics, Oleg Boretsky commented on the news about the inclusion of *Kelin* in the long list of Oscar nominees in a media interview: “*Kelin* is a very original film, narrated by the pure language of cinema. This beautifully filmed, and clearly told story without words, would be understandable to all the spectators. I’m not ashamed that this picture represents Kazakhstan. I have no doubt that among those 65 nominees you won’t find an analogue of our story, which is told without words,” he said.

Admitting *Kelin* will not be bookmakers' favourite to win an Oscar, Boretsky said the film was "worthy" of being represented at the Cannes Film Festival next May in the category "Un Certain Regard" (A Certain Outlook), in which the "Tulip" (another Kazakhstan film) won a few years ago. "That is a format slightly different from Oscars," he concluded.

Also in the News:

- Two Kazakhstan's opposition parties, the Nationwide Social Democratic Party (NSDP) and Azat (Freedom) Democratic Party declared their previously announced merger complete at a joint congress held in Almaty on October 24. The leaders of new formation, branded Azat NSDP, stated that the party hoped to pass the seven percent threshold at the parliamentary elections due in 2012 and form opposition faction to the governing Nur Otan Party inside the national legislature.
- Kassym-Zhomart Tokayev, the Speaker of Senate (upper house of the Kazakh parliament) is in Moscow for a formal visit on October 26 through 28. On the first day of his trip met his Russian counterpart from the Council of Federation, Sergei Mironov. Tokayev is also due to attend a gathering of an interparliamentary group on bilateral cooperation, meet leaders of Russia's largest religious denominations, and deliver a lecture for students of the Diplomatic Academy in Moscow.

Things to Come:

- Beijing will host a meeting of the Ad Hoc Working Group and the Committee of Senior Officials (CSO) of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA) on October 27 to 29, 2009. Representatives of 20 member states of the CICA will participate. The third CICA summit is planned for the summer of 2010 in Turkey.
- Kazakh-Spanish consultations between foreign ministries of both countries will take place on October 30 in Madrid. Deputy Foreign Minister Konstantin Zhigalov will lead the Kazakh delegation, while State Secretary of Foreign Ministry Angel Lossada will lead the Spanish delegation. The diplomats will discuss regional and international issues, as well as coordination during Kazakhstan's chairmanship in OSCE in 2010 and Spain's presidency in the EU in the first half of 2010. Later, on November 4, Deputy Foreign Minister Konstantin Zhigalov will visit Belgrade for bilateral consultations with the Serbian counterparts.
- President Nursultan Nazarbayev will visit the United Arab Emirates November 1 to 3, 2009 at the invitation of Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi, Deputy Chief of the Armed Forces of the United Arab Emirates Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan. Issues of cooperation between two countries in political, trade and economic spheres will be discussed. Several agreements are expected to be signed as a result of meetings.



ASTANA CALLING is a bi-weekly online publication of
the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan.
Please send your requests and questions to pressa@mid.kz