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In this issue:

Massimov Tapped to Develop Strategic Plans

Kazakhstan to Process Uranium in Partnership with Japan, Potential Seen to Become World's Largest Uranium Producer

Kazakhstan Welcomes Uzbekistan into Economic Group

Congress Could Vote on Trade Agreement with Kazakhstan This Year, USTR Portman Says

Kazakh Teenager Voted Miss Teen Universe 2005

**Say it in Kazakh:
At a hotel:**

At which hotel shall we stay? --- Biz qai qonaq uiine tusemiz?

I want a hotel not far from the city center? --- Magan kala ortalygyna zhakyn qonaq ui kerek.

I want a single room (a double room). --- Magan bir oryndyk (eki oryndyk) bolme kerek.

Show me my room please. --- Bolmendi korsetip zhiberinizshi.

Massimov Tapped to Develop Strategic Plans

Karim Massimov, named Deputy Prime Minister of Kazakhstan last week, has been tapped to spearhead development of strategic plans for the country. The appointment is designed to speed Kazakhstan's progress toward joining the list of the world's 50 most competitive countries.

President Nursultan Nazarbayev announced the news at a January 23 session of the country's cabinet saying "strategic planning by the Government should be the top priority."

The President said Massimov would oversee "a bloc of strategic issues including the development of programs and their improvement." The new Deputy Prime Minister will "coordinate the actions of all agencies in developing programs, make decisions on their realization and oversee their implementation," the President said. He added that "Massimov grasps international economic trends, has actively participated in developing a program for Kazakhstan's joining the 50 most competitive countries, and understands the essence of this goal and methods for achieving it."

Massimov, 40, has already served as Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Transport and Communications in the past. Just before his appointment last week, he was the President's Assistant for Foreign and Economic Affairs, and in the 1990s he served as chairman of two large private banks. He holds a Ph.D. in economics and attended universities in Moscow, Beijing and Wuhan (China), as well as Columbia University in the United States. In addition to Kazakh and Russian, Massimov speaks English, Chinese and Arabic.

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Karim Massimov

Kazakhstan to Process Uranium in Partnership with Japan, Potential Seen to Be World's Largest Uranium Producer

KazAtomProm, Kazakhstan's national atomic company has established a joint venture with two Japanese firms to extract and process uranium in Kazakhstan and market it in Japan and elsewhere.

The move brings Kazakhstan a step closer to its goal of becoming the world's largest uranium producer within the next five years.

Mukhtar Dzhakishev, President of KazAtomProm signed the agreement with Japan's Sumitomo Corporation and Kansai Electric Power Corporation in Astana on January 23. The new joint venture, known as Appak LLP, will develop the Mynkuduk uranium mine in South Kazakhstan and process uranium into pellets for peaceful nuclear energy plants at the Ulba Metallurgical Plant in Ust-Kamenogorsk in East Kazakhstan.

KazAtomProm, Sumitomo and Kansai will have joint ownership in Appak with 65%, 25% and 10% respectively. The partners are investing US\$100 million as startup capital. Appak is expected to start pilot uranium production as early as 2007 and launch full scale commercial production of up to 1,000 tons per year by 2010. The lifetime of the joint venture is to be 22 years with a total production of 18,000 tons. KazAtomProm expects the uranium mining project to recover expenses by 2013. Expected profits by then would reach US\$830 million.

Speaking at the signing ceremony, Dzhakishev explained the reasoning behind the joint venture: "As for extraction of uranium through the in-situ leaching method, there's nothing Kazakhstan can learn – the method *was* developed by Kazakhstan. That is why Japanese technology is expected to be introduced at the stage of processing the raw uranium into refined uranium to be delivered to nuclear power plants in Japan and other countries."

The joint venture reflects a continuing expansion of KazAtomProm's international presence. Last year, it signed an agreement with a Chinese company to market processed uranium there.

KazAtomProm's uranium output was 4,300 tons in 2005, a 30 per cent increase compared to 2004. The company is planning to increase its annual production to 15,000 tons by 2010 making Kazakhstan the world's largest uranium producer. Kazakhstan's uranium ore reserves are estimated at 1.5 million tons, or almost 20% of the world's total. Kazakhstan also boasts large petroleum reserves.

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) forecasts a shortage in the world uranium market by 2010. The IAEA said the market supply would have a deficit of up to 16,000 tons by 2015.

KazAtomProm, established by the Kazakh Government in 1997 through the unification of all uranium and rare metals production facilities, produces natural uranium, nuclear fuel for peaceful uses, products and byproducts of beryllium, tantalum, niobium and alloys.

Kazakhstan Welcomes Uzbekistan into Economic Group

President Nursultan Nazarbayev said Uzbekistan's accession to the 5-year-old Eurasian Economic Community (EurAsEC) is a "landmark event giving us a great chance to create a large market".

Uzbekistan joined EurAsEC at its summit meeting in Saint Petersburg, Russia, on January 25. The country joined Kazakhstan, Russia, Belarus, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, the five older members of EurAsEC, the most advanced organization in the former Soviet Union in terms of synchronizing trade and tariff regulations. The move effectively signals the merger of EurAsEC and the Organization of the Central Asian Union (OCAU).

President Nazarbayev, attending the St. Petersburg summit, met with Russia's President Vladimir Putin and welcomed the new member to EurAsEC and OCAU.

The Kazakh leader believes that "with the will of the presidents and actions by the governments, we have the chance to create a most powerful community." Speaking at the January 25 summit, President Nazarbayev praised EurAsEC for the creation of "a market of countries with a population totaling 250 million people," and proposed creating an economic committee within the Community.

EurAsEC was conceived in Astana in 2000 and has since become instrumental in promoting trade among its member states, all former republics of the Soviet Union.

The OCAU, a grouping of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, has been in existence under different names since 1994, but never gained much traction. Last year, Russia joined the

OCAU. This means that with Uzbekistan's accession to EurAsEC the two organizations completely overlap.

New voting arrangements will come into being in EurAsEC because of these changes. Russia will have 40 percent of the vote, Kazakhstan, Belarus and Uzbekistan will each have 15 percent, while Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan will split the remaining 15 percent. Uzbekistan will need to sign and approve more than 20 agreements before the summer, and more than 40 agreements before the end of 2006 to fully integrate with the Community.

Kazakhstan has long pursued a strategy of greater regional integration as the most assured way to promote development and prosperity in Central Asia and beyond. President Nazarbayev has pushed the idea of a Eurasian Union since the mid-1990s stressing the potential for growth through such an organization, modeled on the European Union.

At the St. Petersburg summit, Kazakhstan and Russia signed a protocol finalizing the delimitation of the North Caspian seabed and completely clearing the way for oil and gas exploration there. The two countries also agreed to set up a joint group to explore prospects for joint development of peaceful nuclear energy.

Congress Could Vote on Trade Agreement with Kazakhstan This Year, USTR Portman Says

U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) Rob Portman said on January 20 that the U.S. Congress could face votes this year on trade agreements with Kazakhstan, as well as Russia, Ukraine, Vietnam, Peru and Oman.

The United States could wrap up bilateral negotiations soon with Kazakhstan, Russia, Ukraine, and Vietnam on their bids to join the World Trade Organization (WTO). All of these countries are subject to a Cold War trade law known as Jackson-Vanik, which means Congress would have to vote on the accession agreements.

The Jackson-Vanik amendment, introduced in 1974 to punish the former Soviet bloc countries for restrictions on mostly Jewish emigration, has become outdated and irrelevant in the 14 years since the collapse of the Soviet Union.

As reported by Reuters, Portman said, "We're hoping even in the short legislative time available during an election year to also move those agreements through the process."

Earlier this week, President Nazarbayev said Kazakhstan's joining the WTO is a top priority expressing hope negotiations with Kazakhstan's key trading partners could be completed as soon as this year. The President praised Harvard educated Deputy Trade and Industry Minister Zhanar Aitzhanova as the lead negotiator for Kazakhstan and pledged full support for her.

Kazakh Teenager Voted Miss Teen Universe 2005

Sixteen year old Olga Takhtadzhieva of Almaty won an international beauty contest last month and was crowned Miss Teen Universe 2005.

Takhtadzhieva won the contest in Antalya, Turkey, on December 17, 2005. Earlier in 2005, she won Miss Fashion TV in Singapore, and a Grand Prix as the Contest's Best Face. After that she worked as a model for Pierre Cardin during a show in Vietnam.

Takhtadzhieva is a freshman at an Almaty linguistic college. In an interview with Kazakhstan's Vremya (Time) weekly newspaper, she said she "would love to devote her life to the fashion business."

Things to Watch:

- Kazakhstan's Foreign Minister Kassymzhomart Tokaev will participate in the upcoming

international conference on Afghanistan scheduled for January 31 and February 1 in London. More than 50 nations will participate in the conference, which will be held under the patronage of British Prime Minister Tony Blair and Afghan President Hamid Karzai. The conference is expected to produce an Afghan Compact, an aid agreement between Afghanistan and the international community.

- Kazakhstan plans a second major airline to compete with Air Astana in both domestic and regional service. The Prime Minister has instructed the Ministry of Transport and Communications to develop a proposal.

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