



PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS IN UZBEKISTAN

From the end of 2014 to the first half of 2015 Uzbekistan has been in the process of conducting regular electoral campaigns. First round of parliamentary elections to the Legislative Chamber of the Oliy Majlis was held on December 21, 2014. There was also a need for the second round of elections in 22 districts, where none of the candidates received required votes to be elected. So, re-elections to the lower house of Parliament were held on January 4, 2015.

Also, on December 21, 2014 elections were held for the local Kengashes (Councils) of deputies. These elections of Kengashes had great deal of importance for the upper echelons of state power in Uzbekistan because the local councils of deputies could elect 84 over 100 members of the Senate, which was also reformed according to the results of elections held on January 13-14, 2015. The President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, by presidential decree, approved the remaining 16 members of the Senate on January 20, 2015. One of those 16 members, namely Nigmatilla Yuldoshev, former Minister of Justice, was elected as Chairman of the Senate of the Oliy Majlis on January 22, 2015.

Central Election Commission of Uzbekistan has announced that next presidential election of the Republic of Uzbekistan will be held on March 29, 2015. Traditionally, Uzbek parliamentary elections have sufficiently high level of voter turnout, despite the fact that the elections are considered valid if at least 33 percent of people voted in accordance with the Law on "Election to the Oliy Majlis of the Republic of Uzbekistan" (Art. 44).

There are three key features of the elections to the Legislative Chamber of the Oliy Majlis:

- Starting 2009, 15 seats (10%) in the Legislative Chamber are reserved for the Ecological Movement of Uzbekistan (in accordance with the Law "On elections to the Oliy Majlis of the Republic of Uzbekistan") (Art. 1);
- Candidates to deputies could be nominated only by registered political parties (Art. 20) despite the existence of majoritarian system in single-member districts (Art. 1);
- Percentage of all deputy seats occupied by women should not be less than 30% (Art. 22)

The absence of the dominant party could be called the most important characteristic of the Legislative Chamber of the Oliy Majlis. As none of the political parties could not take more than 50% of the seats in the Legislative Chamber, policy decision-making process is based on establishing alliances and reaching compromises. Obviously, a dominant political party is not a necessary condition for the current political system of Uzbekistan. However, in the medium term perspective Uzbekistan will strength the implementation of the policy of governmental system changing, held since 2010, towards the presidential-parliamentary form.

In general, the main trends of the parliamentary election campaigns held between 2004-2015 are as follows:

- Steady weakening of the People's Democratic Party positions and strengthening positions of the Democratic Party "Milliy Tiklanish";

- Appearing to be a new leader among political parties, the Liberal Democratic Party for the period between 2004-2014 has strengthen its role in the Uzbekistan party system and usually holds the largest number of seats in the Legislative Chamber;
- Significant increasing role of the Ecological Movement of Uzbekistan (EMU) for the period between 2010-2014. After creating wide network of representations at both local and national levels, EMU initiated a number of projects, which have been supported by the government and the whole society.

Since 2000 Uzbekistan's government scrutinizes the results of the parliamentary elections in order to make clear which party is able to conduct the election campaign more effectively. It has become a normal practice that Islam Karimov is nominated as a candidate for presidential elections on behalf of the political party which could take the most seats in Parliament. For example, in 1999 Karimov was nominated as candidate of the National Democratic Party "Fidokorlar", which held 13.77% percent of all seats in the Oliy Majlis. But in 2004, The Liberal Democratic Party had the largest number of seats (41 out of 120) and Karimov chose to be this party's candidate for the presidency during the elections in 2007.

According to the statistical data, the Liberal Democratic Party has taken the largest number of seats (52 out of 150) during last parliamentary elections. So, it was already announced that Karimov was registered as a candidate of this party for the presidential elections in 2015.

Politics, Foreign Affairs and Security

- The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly announced that the issue of increasing the number of the OSCE Minsk Group co-chairing countries (adding Germany and Turkey) would be on the agenda again.
- Negotiation teams from Iran and the EU members of the Group 5 + 1 held a round of Iranian nuclear talks on January 29 in Istanbul.
- As a result of the meeting in Brussels, the European Union announced the continuation of existing sanctions against Russia, but the bloc was unable to agree on measures to impair the Russian economy.
- The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) has decided not to restore Russia's voting rights until April.
- The Ukrainian government has decided to introduce a high alert warning throughout the country and asked for additional military assistance from its partners, including NATO member countries.
- Ukraine's parliament, the Verkhovna Rada, approved a declaration recognizing Russia as an aggressor country.
- Deadly clashes raged in east Ukraine between separatists and government forces after the frailer of peace talks in Minsk between the members of the Contact Group on Ukrainian crisis.
- Russia hold a meeting with representatives of the Syrian opposition and the government for consultations on settlement of the conflict in Syria.
- China has purchased six battalions of Russian-built S-400 surface-to-air missile systems to enhance its air defense capability.
- After the failure of international efforts to secure Kenji Goto release through a prisoner swap, the Islamic State militants said they had beheaded a second Japanese hostage.

Economy, Finance and Energy

- Turkey has become a chairing country of the G20 forum for the first time in the forum's history. The country plans to hold the first meeting of the G20 energy ministers.
- The Cabinet of Ministers of Uzbekistan adopted a resolution. According to the resolution, the country's industrial enterprises must reduce the production cost by 10 percent in 2015.
- The dollar rose to 69.29 rubles after S&P rating agency announced Russia's downgrade to speculative grade "BB+". The euro rose to 77.89 rubles.
- The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) of China announced that the profits of Chinese industrial businesses hit 6.47 trillion yuan (\$1.05 trillion) in 2014, up 3.3% year on year. The growth rate was 8.9% points lower than that of 2013.
- After the meeting in Ankara between the head of Gazprom and Minister of Energy and Natural Resources of Turkey, the parties have defined the route of the Turkish stream pipeline along the bottom of the Black Sea.
- The EU Economic and Financial Affairs Council has approved granting Ukraine €1.8 billion as macro-financial assistance by the European Commission.
- UK oil and gas giant BP has formed an alliance with America's Chevron and ConocoPhillips to push forward the development of the Tiber and Gila fields in the Gulf of Mexico.
- According to a SWIFT statement, the Chinese yuan has become the world's fifth most used payment currency. China's currency has been outrunning both the Canadian and Australian dollars since November.
- The World Bank approved a \$24 million Energy Sector Development Policy Operation for the Kyrgyz Republic.

- Ukraine and China signed an agreement on economic and technical cooperation worth \$8 million.

Society and Culture

- Kazakhstan regional authorities started to resettle people from the village of Kalachi located in Akmola region due to an outbreak of sleeping sickness.
- According to the World Health Organization (WHO), the number of people killed by the Ebola virus has reached 8,795.
- Delegations from all over the world came to Oswiecim to attend commemoration events on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the liberation of prisoners of Auschwitz-Birkenau Nazi concentration camp.
- Cuba's President Raul Castro has demanded that the United States return the US base at Guantánamo Bay, lift the half-century trade embargo on Cuba and compensate his country for damages before the two nations re-establish normal relations.
- Twenty-seven delegates of the PACE have signed a motion imposing a moratorium on fracking across Europe.
- NASA scientists have finalized plans to build a revolutionary space telescope capable of producing images a thousand times sharper than that of the Hubble Space Telescope.
- Russian Sports Minister Vitaly Mutko announced that the budget spending on preparations of the 2018 FIFA World Cup would be cut by 10%.
- Proton-M carrier with Breeze-M booster and the UK Inmarsat communication satellite was launched from Baikonur.