**A New and Modern Kazakhstan**

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President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, the vibrant and forward-looking leader of a new Kazakhstan, has presented a plan of political reformation in the country during his State of the Nation address at the Parliament. President has proposed to create a new administrative structure sanctioned by the legislature where Kazakh will receive more opportunities to participate in state affairs rather than a centralised strong president with unlimited powers.

In his address, President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev has outlined a road map for the country to move ahead with plans related to governance and other matters of national ethos. While reiterating the fact that the country has long come out of post-1991 instability, which necessitated the president with absolute powers but with the changing time, the political landscape should change according to the modern-day realities.

President Tokayev was elected in 2019 when President Nursultan resigned from his office after three decades of rule in Kazakhstan. The premise of this new reform plan is to change the absolute or “super presidential” powers held by the Nursultan to change into decentralisation of power. It is the plan of creating a “New Kazakhstan: The Path of Renewal and Modernization,” where the President does not wield “super presidential” powers whereas sovereignty belongs to the Kazakh people.

President Tokayev declared that the concentration of power within one authority is a fundamentally flawed plan and reiterated to move away from this practice. In this regard, President Nazarbayev resigned from his seat of Presidency, party leadership and chairmanship of Kazakh Security Council.

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President Tokayev, a reformist personality, outlaws the practice of absolutism in the country and acknowledged the changing political landscape in the country, region and beyond. He termed the political reforms as the base of socio-economic reforms in the country and a watershed moment in the life of the Kazakh people. But he was right to fear the consequences of any impulsive and wrong decision during political modernization.

It is worth mentioning here that these reforms are introduced in the backdrop of political instability in Kazakhstan earlier this year. Additionally, the reforms were introduced around the third anniversary of the resignation of President Nursultan. Thus, President Tokayev termed political stagnation of thirty years a reason for the political turmoil of January 2022.

In the backdrop of these developments, it was deemed necessary to let go of absolute powers and give people their true representation in the election process as the reforms focus on cutting down the powers of the presidency, transforming legislature, electoral system, party system, and the election process.

The further expansion of reforms would focus on human rights, social institutions, civil society and media freedom. In line with the decentralization of powers, President Tokayev presented a detailed overview of changes intended in administrative structure to make room for local governments and devolution of power.

The new reforms would attempt to decouple the state executive office and party leadership. The future presidency of Kazakhstan would neither hold absolute powers nor have political civil servants appointed at the President’s discretion.

The reforms plan further delves into elections of local bodies and specifies indirect election of regional akims. It is worth mentioning here that urban akims were directly appointed by the president previously but new reforms would require an election to reach the office.

These are very positive steps in the right direction to empower the local strata of society and give them a voice in state affairs. The reforms plan is refreshing and promising given the recent political instability because it will bring long term stability. At times when there is war in the immediate neighbourhood Ukraine, Kazakhstan is focused on its people and future.

All these steps are intended to create national unity and harmony to prevent socio-political and class conflict in Kazakhstan. In this regard, the incumbent President took the plea to bring every individual under the flag of sovereignty and enable everyone to contribute in shaping the new future of New Kazakhstan.

Kazakhstan is the largest economy of Central Asia and has recently passed through a pandemic that also needs serious attention and national focus. President Tokayev is committed to directing the country on the path of growth by vigorously implementing the National Development Plan 2025. It is the political stability, public participation and economic growth which can put Kazakhstan on the way of development and participate in expanding regional energy, goods and services trade.

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