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Kazakh President 'in German Hospital'

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HAMBURG — Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev has been admitted to a hospital in the city of Hamburg, a German newspaper reported Tuesday.

Mass-circulation Bild said, without identifying its source, that the 71-year-old Kazakh leader had admitted himself to the University Medical Center Hamburg-Eppendorf in Germany. The report said the reason for his admission to the hospital was unknown.

"There is a celebrity patient being closely guarded in the University Medical Center Hamburg-Eppendorf — and according to information obtained by Bild it is Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev who is being secretly treated here," the report said. "It is not known what he is suffering from."

The report sent the cost of insuring exposure to Kazakh assets higher, with five-year credit default swaps up four basis points to 169 bps, according to data from Markit, bucking the overall market trend.

"Kazakhstan is so strategic to Russia, the U.S. and China in terms of energy supply, transit ... that I have some confidence that we would see a pretty smooth transition of power

to someone in the inner circle," RBS analyst Timothy Ash said in a note to clients.

A spokesman for the Hamburg hospital would not comment on the report, and he denied that there was any extra security at the hospital.

"We have no special security measures in place," he said. "But our policy is never to talk about patients, so I can neither confirm nor deny this."

A spokesman for the German Foreign Ministry said he was unable to confirm the Bild report.

Nazarbayev, who has ruled Kazakhstan for more than 20 years, is on vacation, said a government spokeswoman in Astana. She said she had no information on his current whereabouts or the planned date of his return.

The presidential web site, www.akorda.kz, said on July 11 that Nazarbayev was on "a short vacation." It gave no further details.

"I cannot confirm the report," said a spokeswoman at the Kazakh Embassy in Berlin. "He's on vacation, and he could be anywhere in the world."

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