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Kazakhstan Seeks to Attract Foreign Brands Exiting Russia

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Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev. **Vladimir Smirnov / TASS**

Kazakhstan must work to accommodate the hundreds of international businesses that have left Russia over its invasion of Ukraine, the ex-Soviet republic's president said Thursday.

Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev has walked a diplomatic tightrope since the start of the war in February, maintaining close ties with Moscow while refusing to recognize the independence of Kremlin-backed separatists in eastern Ukraine.

In what Moscow could interpret as an unfriendly move, Tokayev proposed creating "favorable conditions" for the nearly 1,000 foreign companies that have suspended operations in Russia.

"We're witnessing a global struggle for investment capital. One out of two of the nearly 1,400 major foreign companies has suspended operations or left the Russian market entirely," he said at a government session.

"The government should create favorable conditions for their relocation to Kazakhstan. This

will give us a good opportunity to increase production," Tokayev said.

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He noted that his previous order to draft a list of investment projects in the manufacturing industry has stalled in the government.

"There are essentially no new projects."

Kazakhstan has been accused of accommodating Russia's so-called "parallel imports" scheme that allows imports of foreign brands without the approval of trademark owners.

A U.S. Treasury and Commerce Department list of at least 18 countries that are known to have shipped goods to Russia and Belarus in violation of Western sanctions includes Kazakhstan and four other ex-Soviet republics.

Kazakhstan earlier in July drafted a law banning the transportation of goods under Western sanctions to Russia and Belarus.

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