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Putin Arrives in Kazakhstan for CSTO Security Summit

By AFP

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Vladimir Putin and Kazakhstan's President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev. **kremlin.ru**

Russian President Vladimir Putin arrived in Kazakhstan on Wednesday for a two-day visit aimed at strengthening ties with Central Asian countries amid tensions over the war in Ukraine.

While Kazakhstan is a member of the Moscow-led CSTO security alliance, President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev has expressed unease about the Kremlin's full-scale invasion of its neighbor, which he has refused to publicly endorse.

In an article for the pro-Kremlin Izvestia newspaper ahead of Putin's visit, Tokayev reiterated his support for "peaceful dialogue" without directly mentioning Ukraine.

Meanwhile, Putin praised Kazakhstan's "shared cultural, spiritual, and moral values" in an op-ed for a state-run Kazakh newspaper, pledging to further develop "friendly and allied

relations" with Astana.

Russian state media broadcast footage of Putin's arrival in Kazakhstan's capital, where trade and energy cooperation are expected to dominate discussions.

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Recent months have seen friction in the two countries' relations, with Moscow banning certain Kazakh agricultural exports and Kazakhstan declining to join the BRICS economic bloc in September.

Expanding BRICS has become a key pillar of Russia's foreign policy, with Putin positioning the group as a counterweight to what he views as Western global dominance.

Ukraine is expected to be a central topic during Thursday's summit of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), where Putin will join leaders from other member states to discuss security issues. According to Russian state-run news agency TASS, the discussions will include Ukraine's use of long-range Western-supplied missiles to strike Russian territory.

Armenia will be notably absent, having suspended its CSTO membership over dissatisfaction with Russia's lack of support during its recent clashes with Azerbaijan. Kremlin aide Yuri Ushakov has said Armenia remains a "fully-fledged member" and could return at any time.

Putin and Tokayev will also focus on economic and energy cooperation, including the potential construction of Kazakhstan's first nuclear power plant, for which Russia's state-owned Rosatom is a leading contender.

Kazakhstan, which accounts for 43% of global uranium production, does not currently operate any nuclear reactors. Putin emphasized that Rosatom was "ready for new large-scale projects with Kazakhstan."

Several bilateral agreements are expected to be signed during the visit, and both leaders will address the media later on Wednesday.

Putin's visit highlights the strategic importance of Central Asia to Moscow, as the region remains one of the few areas where the Russian leader continues to maintain regular diplomatic engagements since the full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

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