

Transdnestr Votes for Leader

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The  **Moscow Times**

Moldova's breakaway Transdnestr region voted for a president Sunday with its veteran leader pitted against a Moscow-backed candidate in an election whose outcome could be key to progress in talks to settle the territory's status.

Igor Smirnov, a 70-year-old Russian who has ruled the territory of 500,000 people for 20 years and is running for a fifth term, billed himself as the most reliable defender of its independence and its aspiration of uniting with Russia.

Moscow has urged Smirnov to step aside in favor of new ideas from parliamentary speaker Anatoly Kaminsky, 61, seen as the strongest of five candidates running against Smirnov.

Kaminsky's own party is close to that of United Russia and he has drawn heavily on his ties with the Moscow ruling elite in his campaign.

(Reuters)

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