

Tajikistan Sets Referendum Date On Extending President's Term Indefinitely

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Soldiers carry a giant national flag during an Independence Day celebration in Dushanbe, Tajikistan.

Tajikistan will hold a referendum in May on amending the Soviet republic's constitution to allow President Emomali Rahmon to extend his term indefinitely, the state-run RIA Novosti news agency reported Wednesday.

The referendum on May 22 will not list the 41 amendments to the country's constitution, but will simply ask voters to answer a Yes/No question on whether they accept the full package of reforms, the report said, citing parliament speaker Shukurdzhon Zuhurov.

Amending the constitution would allow Rahmon to run for reelection in 2020, after already having competed in elections four times since 1994.

It also lowers the minimum age for presidential candidates to 30 instead of 35, allowing Rahmon's son, Rustami Emomali, to run for his father's position.

The country's Constitutional Court earlier this month ruled that the law limiting presidential

rule to two terms should “not apply to the founder of peace and national unity, the leader of the nation,” the TASS news agency reported earlier.

Tajikistan, a former Soviet republic in Central Asia, adopted its constitution as an independent state in 1994. It was amended in 2003 to extend the presidential term to seven years from the previous five.

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