



## President Visits French Embassy in Astana, Expresses Condolences



President Nursultan Nazarbayev signs the book of condolences at the French embassy in Astana Nov. 16.

By Malika Orazgaliyeva

ASTANA – President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev visited the Embassy of France in Astana Nov. 16 and left a note in the book of condolences opened after the Paris terror attacks of Nov. 13.

Nazarbayev stressed that he came to express condolences on his behalf and that of the people of Kazakhstan, especially taking into account the close relationship between Kazakhstan and France and noting the respect rendered to the Kazakh delegation during the President's official visit to Paris on Nov. 5-6.

He noted that a large number of innocent civilians were killed as a result of the inhumane attacks.

"Today, we are mourning with the people of France. This country is one of the centres of

world culture and history. Consequently, the situation reflects gravely on us as well. These actions do not only make us feel distress and anger, but also call on all humankind to fight against them. Terrorism has no nationality and religion. This is a global disaster. At the recent session of the United Nations, I proposed to organise a forum called 'Islam against terrorism,' as well create a worldwide network to combat this evil," Nazarbayev said.

On Nov. 14, Nazarbayev sent a telegram of condolences to French President Francois Hollande in connection with the tragedy in Paris.

The Kazakh Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) responded to the tragedy and announced that Kazakhstan strongly condemns

the attacks in Paris and finds any manifestation of terrorism unacceptable in a statement on Nov. 14.

"We express our deepest condolences to the French people, to the families and loved ones of innocent people killed in the attacks, and wish recovery to the injured," the MFA statement said.

"Kazakhstan expresses firm support for the efforts of the international community under the auspices of the United Nations in the fight against terrorism and extremism and is convinced that only through the joint efforts of all humanity can we defeat this evil. One of the ways to achieve this goal could be the establishment of a global anti-terrorism network under UN auspices," the statement also noted.

A series of gun and bomb attacks in Paris in the evening hours

of Nov. 13, including at a Cambodian restaurant, a Belgian bar, near the Stade de France stadium where France and Germany were playing a friendly football match and at a concert by an American rock band at the Bataclan concert hall, led to the deaths of more than 130 people and the injury of more than 350 others.

Hollande immediately declared a state of emergency all over France and announced the sealing of French borders to stop the alleged perpetrators, those not eliminated during the hostage rescue operation at the Bataclan, where most of the casualties occurred, from leaving the country.

According to official spokesman of the Kazakh MFA Altai Abibulayev, there were no Kazakh citizens among the victims and injured.

## Kazakh Muslim Leaders Denounce Paris Attacks

By Malika Orazgaliyeva

ASTANA – The Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Kazakhstan condemned the terrorist acts in Paris in a statement issued Nov. 15, reported the official website of the association.

"We strongly denounce the actions of those who organised the terrorist attacks in Paris. We express our deepest condolences to the families, relatives and friends of the victims. We pray for a speedy recovery of the injured," the statement said.

"Islam, which calls upon all mankind and representatives of different confessions for peace and unity, opposes shedding the blood of innocent people. The Holy Quran teaches that killing an innocent person is equal to killing all mankind," the statement also noted.

According to the statement, the association urged the international community and the leaders of world religions "together to do everything possible to eliminate the illegal actions of individuals hiding behind religion."

Kazakhstan's society was shocked by the terrorist attacks that took place in Paris on

Nov. 13. The people of Kazakhstan have expressed their condolences and support to the French people in a variety of ways, including through media and social networks.

Chair of the investment company Smart Investments and former Vice Minister of Agriculture of Kazakhstan Marat Tolibayev wrote on his Facebook page: "I express my deep condolences to the relatives of victims of the terrorist attacks in Paris. I believe in the bravery and greatness of the French people who have survived through many difficult moments in their history. I am convinced that the terrorist attack will not undermine the determination of France to be one of the strongholds of freedom and democracy in the world, as well as one of the most active fighters against terrorism. Hold on, France! We are with you!"

According to The Guardian, the militant group the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) has claimed responsibility for the bloody wave of bombings and shootings across Paris that left nearly 130 people dead and more than 350 wounded. French President Francois Hollande deemed it an "act of war."

## New EBRD Report Predicts Lower Economic Growth for Central Asia

By Michelle Witte

ASTANA – The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) is predicting lower growth for most of Central Asia in its most recent Regional Economic Prospects report, forecasting average growth of 3.8 percent for this year and 3.9 percent in 2016, far below 2014's 6 percent average. Kazakhstan's growth is forecast at 1.5 percent in 2016 and 1.2 percent in 2015, "sharply lower" than the 4.3 percent growth rate in 2014.

"Growth and financial stability in Central Asia in 2015 have been significantly affected by the recession and currency depreciation in Russia and lower prices of oil and

other commodities," the report's Central Asia section reads. "At the same time, [foreign direct investment] and financial support from China and Russia, and to a lesser extent Western investors and [international financial institutions], are increasingly contributing to growth and financial stability in the region. Growth in Kazakhstan, the largest economy in the region, is sharply lower, due to the collapse of the oil price, and to a much lesser extent, the negative effect of an influx of cheap imports from Russia on domestic industries and spillovers of negative investment sentiment from the Russia/Ukraine crisis."

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## Kazakhstan's Largest Transport, Logistics Centre Presented in Astana

By Zhazira Dyussebekova

ASTANA – Kazakhstan's largest transport and logistics centre (TLC) was launched with an official presentation Nov. 12 attended by city Akim (Mayor) Adilbek Dzhakysbekov, Minister for Investment and Development Asset Issekeshiev and Kazakhstan Temir Zholy (KTZ) President Askar Mamin. The event was also attended by representatives of government bodies, distribution and brokerage companies and Kazakh and foreign producers.

Kazakhstan Temir Zholy (KTZ) President Askar Mamin (L) Akim (Mayor) of Astana Adilbek Dzhakysbekov and Minister for Investment and Development Asset Issekeshiev at the launch ceremony for Astana's new transport and logistics centre.

TLCs are a combination of facilities for the storage, processing and consolidation of products for industrial purposes, as well as consumer goods. Located on Karaganda-Astana Highway, the class A TLC is the biggest not only in Kazakhstan, but in Central Asia. Its construction is an important stage in the development of the country's transport and logistics sector, and the centre will provide 850 new jobs.



Minister of Investment and Development of Kazakhstan Asset Issekeshiev (L), Akim of Astana Adilbek Dzhakysbekov and President of KTZ Askar Mamin at the launch of the new transport and logistics centre.

"Today, we are witnessing one of the important events for the development of logistics competence in Kazakhstan. We have opened our transport and logistics centre here in Astana, the main goals and objectives of which are connected with the initiative of the President on the development of transport and logistics competence and on the development of a transit hub in

our country," said KTZ Vice President Kanat Alpysbayev during the presentation.

According to the external and internal terminal network programme, additional TLCs will be constructed in Aktau, Aktobe, Almaty, Atyrau, Kostanai, Pavlodar, Semey and Uralsk. Shymkent TLC will be ready by the end of this year.

"The creation of the TLC internal network in major cities of Kazakhstan will allow us to cover the needs of regions in modern storage facilities at an international level and to create distribution centres covering the regions of neighbouring countries," said Alpysbayev.

He also spoke about the opportunities of the TLC, which will provide comprehensive storage services with a full cycle of multimodal logistics. The facility has dry warehouses with an area of 29,300 square metres, climatic warehouses measuring 13,300 square metres, a 25,000-square metre distribution centre and an area for containers with 70,000 square metres of available space.

The principle of multimodal transportation also applies to the TLC, as receipt and shipment of goods from trains to cars and back have been organised within the hub. Five kilometres of sidings are directly connected to the warehouse.

The automation of the infrastructure accompanies the process in real time. The use of advanced technologies will allow the facility to significantly increase the level and speed of the loading and unloading of goods and process up to 1 million tonnes of cargo per year.

## Tenge Devaluation Benefits Major Kazakh Exporters

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – Kazakhstan's switch to a free-floating exchange rate – and, thus, a weaker tenge – will help Kazakh companies stay competitive against Russia and China, the nation's biggest trading partners, exporters say.

Kazinc sustainable development director Andrey Lazarev is fully supportive of the new monetary policy, based on targeting inflation. He noted the decision by the government and National Bank was absolutely timely and a highly efficient anti-crisis measure in the current situation of the world economy.

"The old monetary policy with the present-day situation in the world economy would create an uneven playing field for Kazakhstan's exporters, and foreign producers would get more beneficial conditions because of the devaluation of their national currencies. Kazakh-

stan's export-oriented companies have gone all out in support of this economic measure, because it provides equality of conditions. The competitiveness of Kazakhstan's products and proceeds from sales in foreign market has increased," he said in a Nov. 6 interview.

Lazarev used Kazzincmash, one of Kazzinc's subsidiaries, as a model.

"The company produces special equipment and spare parts, and as of today it is a profitable company. First of all, it is connected by business competition with Russian companies. The products of Kazzincmash were very competitive before the drop in the exchange rate of the ruble in the domestic market and foreign markets. But after the drop in the exchange rate of the ruble, Kazzincmash products were no longer competitive at all and Russian producers increased the sales of their own products," he said.

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# NATION

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 18, 2015

## President Signs Five New Laws: Local Police Forces to Be Established, Agricultural Lands to be Privatised

By Malika Orazgaliyeva

ASTANA – President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev signed five legislative acts as part of the implementation of the 100-step Plan of the Nation that is the vehicle for enacting the country's five institutional reforms programme Nov.12.

Nazarbayev signed the law "On the commercialisation of scientific and (or) research and development activities," designed to improve the efficiency of the scientific sphere, raise the level of innovation and support the development of high-tech industries in the priority sectors of the economy by stimulating the commercial use of the results of research and development activities, and to attract private enterprise to research projects.

He also signed the law "On amendments to some legislative acts of Kazakhstan on the results of commercialisation of scientific and (or) research and development activities," which will bring the country's legislation into compliance with the new law.

Next is the law "On amendments and additions to some legislative acts of Kazakhstan on the activities of local police services." The law provides for the establishment of local police services and covers preventing violations, protecting public order, preventing and suppressing criminal offences and domestic crime, ensuring road safety and pre-trial investigations, reported Zakon.kz.

According to Zakon.kz, local police services will be created by optimising the structures of bodies within the Ministry of Internal

Affairs (MIA). The new service will be incorporated into a unified system of law-enforcement bodies, and its employees will have the same legal status.

Kazakh Minister of Internal Affairs Kulmukhanbet Kassymov said that the National Commission on Modernisation is finishing its review of the establishment of the local police.

"We carefully studied the experience of foreign countries. There are different approaches. Discussion of the proposed reform is almost completed. Now we are working on the details. I believe that we will create our own Kazakh model of a local police force. I would like to note that we are not talking about full decentralisation of our police force. It is essential to maintain the unity and integrity of the Ministry of Internal Affairs

system," Kassymov said, as reported by Tengrinews.kz.

Kassymov further noted that over the year, local police will be introduced in several cities as an experiment in order to develop the final model.

Local police chiefs will be appointed by regional akims (governors) on the proposal of the MIA in coordination with maslikhats (regional legislatures).

According to Chairman of the Committee for Administrative Police of the MIA Igor Lepekha, local police in Kazakhstan will start work from Jan. 1, 2016. Nazarbayev also signed the law "On amendments and additions to some legislative acts of Kazakhstan on the development of local self-government." Increasing local self-government is intended to expand citizens' independent decision-making on local

matters and give local residents the opportunity to manage municipal property in the interests of all residents of their territory.

The newly-signed law "On amendments and additions to the Land Code of Kazakhstan" will introduce the possibility of selling state-owned agricultural lands into private hands and simplify procedures for changing land-use designations. The law will introduce a new mechanism for the transfer of agricultural lands to private ownership through first English-style auctions and, if those don't produce results, through Dutch-style auctions.

In an English-style auction, the winner is the person who offers the highest price. In a Dutch auction, the auctioneer begins with a high asking price, which is then lowered until a participant is willing to accept it.

### NATIONAL NEWS IN BRIEF

Samruk Kazyna, Kazakhstan's Sovereign Wealth Fund, and United Green Group recently signed an agreement to double the capacity of a solar power plant in the Zhambyl region to 100 megawatts, at a price of \$106 million, Bloomberg reports. The government has set a goal of getting 3 percent of its electricity from renewable sources by 2020 and last year set tariffs for renewable energy. The plant began electricity production this summer.

The Astana Pro Team cycling team has had its WorldTour racing license for 2016 approved by the International Cycling Union (UCI), Velonews reports. Astana was among the 11 teams whose licenses were finalised Nov. 9. UCI had requested that the team's WorldTour license be suspended for 2015 after a series of doping cases, then dropped its case for suspending the license on the condition that an appointed review board monitor the team. Following a four-month review by the Institute of Sport Sciences of the University of Lausanne (ISSUL), Astana received the necessary stamp of approval to race in 2016. Astana general manager Alexandre Vinokourov said it was "a good day" for the team, and that management, riders and staff had all worked hard to improve the team's structure and organisation.

A Bulgarian construction consortium will build the ExpoTown housing complex near the EXPO 2017 grounds following the Nov. 9 signature of a cooperation agreement between the Bulgaria-Kazakhstan Commerce Chamber and ExpoTownSuccess housing cooperative, the Focus Information Agency reports. According to co-chair of the Bulgaria-Kazakhstan Commerce Chamber Ivan Dudin, the consortium will consist of several companies and is expected to collect around \$80 million for the project. There are currently three companies in the consortium, but others are submitting proposals now, he said. The housing complex is not expected to be fully commissioned by the EXPO 2017 opening date.

President Nursultan Nazarbayev of Kazakhstan signed the law "On public councils," a mechanism of implementing the Plan of the Nation, Nov. 9, Kazinform reports. The law will support the 100 Concrete Steps of implementing the country's five institutional reforms project, specifically by strengthening of the role of public councils in ensuring state policy on increasing accountability among state bodies and ensuring participation of social institutions and people in decision-making by state bodies at all levels. The full text of the law has been made available via print media outlets.

A memorial plaque in honour of famous pilot, Air Force Major General Talgat Bigeldinov of Kazakhstan, who was twice Hero of the Soviet Union, was installed on the house where he lived in Almaty Nov. 10, KazakhTV reports. Bigeldinov died last year. Bigeldinov went to war in 1942, flying the IL-2 "flying tank" and making more than 300 combat flights. In May 1945, he was in the ranks of those who marched across Red Square in the Victory Parade in Moscow.

Kazakhstan's first large-scale curling championship was held in the Baluan Sholak Sports Palace in Almaty Nov. 8-14, the Organising Committee for International Sports Events in Almaty reports. The Pacific-Asia Curling Championships is a qualifying tournament for the World Curling Championship in 2016 in Switzerland. Thirteen teams from eight countries (Kazakhstan, Japan, South Korea, China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, New Zealand and Australia) took part in the championship. The competition is held according to the rules of the World Curling Federation. Chief technician for the preparation of ice floes Mark Callan commented during a press conference that the quality of ice in the Almaty competition met Olympic standards.

President of the National Olympic Committee of Kazakhstan Timur Kulibayev met with head of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) Thomas Bach during Bach's official visit to the General Assembly of the ANOC (Association of National Olympic Committees) Nov. 9, Kazpravda reports. The sides discussed the development of sport in Central Asia and in Kazakhstan in particular.

## Health Technology Assessment to Promote More Effective Budgeting, Says Expert

By Zhazira Dyussebekova

ASTANA – A meeting of the council of international experts held Nov. 2-3 at the World Health Organisation (WHO) headquarters in Geneva served as an opportunity to discuss the World Health Assembly resolution on the use of Health Technology Assessment (HTA) for universal health coverage and reimbursement systems. Kazakh Centre for Healthcare Standardisation deputy head Temirkhan Kulkhan was the nation's sole representative at the council.

"Most of the recent technological advances in medical science allow health workers to diagnose and treat disease in a way that was impossible before. Besides the obvious advantages, this development in the industry leads to an increase in expenses, which determines the critical importance of the analysis of that issue in health policy, especially taking into account the limited budget for these purposes," said Kulkhan in a recent interview with The Astana Times. "In the context of the global crisis, the document discussed has a strategic importance for the effective and efficient financing of the health sector in developing countries."

HTA refers to the systematic evaluation of properties, effects and/or impacts of health technology, according to the WHO website. It is a multidisciplinary process to evaluate the social, economic, organisational and ethical issues of health intervention or health technology. The main purpose of conducting an assessment is to inform a policy-making decision.

The National Centre of Healthcare Development's centre for healthcare standardisation compared the technology costs, once implemented, with the benefits to the welfare of the population.

According to Kulkhan, it is much more efficient to carry out a comparative study as a starting point to better understand which technologies work best, which are the most cost-effective and under what circumstances. The study should also assess a wide range of potential benefits outside the clinical or therapeutic benefit, including monetary value, improvements to the quality of care, quality of life, increased health care efficiency and greater opportunities for labour activity after receiving medical care. If such studies show a positive effect on health care costs, they can be used to inform policy makers of the Kazakh Ministry of Health and Social Development, as well as research institutes and scientific centres.

"Comparative research of effectiveness and health technology assessment is used to support the implementation of technologies that have a positive therapeutic effect in practice and present reasonable value for the money. On the other hand, the use of low-performing, outdated technologies should be lowered by reducing their capitalisation or by restrictions on their use. It should be based on evidence-based medicine, combining financial incentives for providers and consumers which can significantly reduce the level of government spending on reimbursement of medical organisations, if such incentives will support the increased use of more cost-effective services," said Kulkhan.

"It is important to carefully monitor the impact of such policy tools to keep track of the optimum financing of the industry without ignoring innovation. In addition, such measures must not run counter to other aspects of health policies and practices that divert a significant part of health care costs, including initiatives to support healthy aging and improve the coordination of care for chronic patients," he added.

## Minister of Agriculture Proposes Measures to Protect Domestic Market

By Zhaniya Urankayeva

ASTANA – The Mazhilis (lower chamber of Parliament) discussed improving the efficiency of subsidisation in the agricultural complex Nov. 9.

Minister of Agriculture Assylzhan Mamytkov said stronger protection measures are needed.

"We consider deregulating prices for food necessary. Unfortunately, today we force agricultural commodity producers to hold prices at the same level for various reasons, although the market there is quite competitive and we completely do not regulate import and trade," the minister said. "As a result, an egg that came out of a factory costing 10-12 tenge (US\$0.03-0.04)

is sold for 20-25 tenge (US\$0.06-0.08) in the store, meaning difference in trade reaches 100 percent and an agricultural commodity producer, having invested so much in labour, has profitability of maximum one tenge (US\$0.003) from a single egg."

Therefore, he said, the country needs amplification measures to protect the domestic market, including controlling and counteracting counterfeit food products.

The minister said one of the key reasons for weak growth is that most of the subsidies – more than 70 billion tenge (US\$227 million) – do not directly stimulate agricultural commodity producers to improve their efficiency and profitability, as high proportion of those subsidies compensate for the lost

profits of agricultural commodities producers at prime cost.

Incentive measures have been identified, including developing agricultural cooperation, promoting effective land tenure and new approaches to financing agricultural infrastructure, establishing market tariffs for water and attracting investment to the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) Concessions programme.

Deputy Chairman of the Agrarian Committee of the Mazhilis Romin Madinov said per hectare subsidisation in the agricultural complex must be saved.

He said that in order to resolve these problems there is a need to explore the possibility of attracting insurance companies for controlling the distribution of subsidies in agriculture.



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# EURASIA&WORLD

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 18, 2015

## EXTERNAL NEWS IN BRIEF

Pakistan and Kazakhstan have agreed to cooperate on energy and communications following a meeting of the Pakistan-Kazakhstan Intergovernmental Commission on Trade, Economic, Scientific, Technological and Cultural Cooperation in Islamabad Nov. 5-6, with a protocol signed by the Minister of State for Petroleum and Natural Resources of Pakistan Jam Kamal Khan and Deputy Foreign Minister of Kazakhstan Askar Mussinov. The sides also agreed to hold a Joint Business Council meeting in the first half of 2016, The Nation reports. In particular, the potential of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) for Kazakhstan was noted. Both sides also agreed to explore ways to increase connectivity to support trade and investment.

Kazakhstan has officially designated Daesh or the Islamic State as a terrorist organisation, Tengrinews reports, citing the Committee on Legal Statistics and Special Records. The committee now includes 17 groups on their official list of terrorist organisations: Al-Qaeda, the Islamic Party of East Turkestan, the Kurdish People's Congress, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, Asbat al-Ansar, Muslim Brotherhood, the Taliban, Boz Gurd, Jamaat Mujahideen of Central Asia, Lashkar-e-Taiba, the Social Reform Society, the East Turkestan Liberation Organisation, Aum Shinrikyo, the Islamic Party of Turkestan, Jund al-Khalifah (Soldiers of the Caliphate), the Islamic State (Daesh) and the Al-Nusra Front.

Prime Minister of Kazakhstan Karim Massimov met Defence Minister of Azerbaijan Colonel General Zakir Hasanov Nov. 5 to discuss bilateral military-technical cooperation, Azer News reports. The day before the meeting, the two countries signed a military cooperation plan for 2016.

Air Astana exhibited at the World Travel Market at the London ExCel Centre during the first week of November along with representatives from the Tourism Department of the country's Ministry of Investment and Development, Travel Daily News reports. Air Astana promoted in particular its new direct route to the Mongolian capital, Ulaanbaatar, as well as its connections to London Heathrow and European destinations.

Chair of Bulgaria's National Assembly Tsetska Tsacheva presented a traditional Bulgarian national costume to the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan's exhibition hall, the Focus Information Agency reports. Tsacheva was in Astana as part of a Bulgarian parliamentary delegation to Astana. There are more than 4,500 ethnic Bulgarians living in Kazakhstan, according to the report. Tsacheva said that Bulgaria was proud to have representation in the APK in the form of APK deputy Oleg Dymov. Dymov was awarded one of the highest state orders of Bulgaria – the Saints Cyril and Methodius State Order of 1st Degree, presented by Bulgarian President Rosen Plevneliev in May.

The introduction of a single currency in the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) is off the current agenda, Press Secretary of the President of Kazakhstan Dauran Abayev said in response to questions during an online briefing Nov. 10. The issue is not being discussed at any level of the trade bloc, Abayev said. Previous to these statements, Chairman of the State Duma Committee on the Commonwealth of Independent States of Russia Leonid Slutsky said that work on a single currency in the union was underway.

On Nov. 10, First Deputy Minister of Defence and Chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Kazakhstan Colonel-General Saken Zhassuzakov met Admiral Jung Ho-sub, the Chief of Naval Operations of South Korea in Astana, Kazakhstan's Ministry of Defence reports. The sides discussed how to strengthen cooperation between the naval forces of South Korea and Kazakhstan, focusing on training personnel from Kazakhstan at South Korean military academies, training special forces units at the training centres of South Korean naval forces and developing military cooperation between the countries' naval forces.

## Nazarbayev, Business Leaders Visit UK, Ink \$5 Billion in Agreements

By Malika Rustem

Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev's visit to London on Nov. 3-4, resulted in agreements worth more than \$5 billion across fields such as energy, pharmaceuticals, aviation and financial consulting. During the visit, the President met with Her Majesty the Queen, Prime Minister David Cameron and business leaders.

The Kazakh President was greeted by Prime Minister Cameron in front of the prime minister's official residence at 10 Downing Street and the sides discussed bilateral economic cooperation, the Syrian war, the conflict in Ukraine, the refugee crisis in Europe and Kazakhstan's progress on political and societal reform, including creating a more permissive environment for nongovernmental organisations (NGOs).

Cameron pointed to deals involving four new gas plants and a steel production facility in Kazakhstan as key components of a widening partnership, suggesting the latter could benefit the U.K.'s own crisis-hit steel industry.

"By bringing together our two diverse economies, broad international cooperation and shared commitment to reform, I believe our relationship can become even stronger," he told the Kazakh leader.

Nazarbayev said that Cameron's visit to Kazakhstan in 2013 has given a good impetus to the strategic partnership of the two countries.

He congratulated Cameron on the Conservatives' victory in the last election.

"You have carte blanche now to carry out completely new policy," said Nazarbayev. "I hope that in this policy there is going to be some place for Kazakhstan."



Queen Elizabeth II of England and the Duke of Edinburgh greet President Nursultan Nazarbayev and Deputy Prime Minister of Kazakhstan Dariga Nazarbayeva at the Buckingham Palace on Nov. 4.

A number of agreements were signed during the meeting, including an agreement between Kazakhstan and the U.K. on mutual legal assistance, a memorandum of understanding between Kazakhstan's Agency for Civil Service Affairs and Anti-Corruption and the Secretariat of the Cabinet of Ministers of the United Kingdom and an agreement on the participation of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in EXPO 2017 in Astana.

In addition, the President of Kazakhstan awarded Cameron with the Order of Dostyk (Friendship) of first degree.

Following the meeting, both sides participated in the opening of the second session of the Kazakh-British Intergovernmental Commission on Trade and Economic Cooperation.

In his speech, the President briefed the gathering on key aspects of modern Kazakhstan's evolution and current economic policy.

Nazarbayev stressed that Kazakhstan is entering a new stage of economic development, highlighting plans to create an International Financial Centre in Astana.

"I think that the participation of British companies in this project will be very important," said the Kazakh leader, inviting British companies to participate in joint projects.

"We are not begging for anything. What we are asking is just, 'come over, do business, earn your money together with us.' We welcome the business and we are creating exceptional conditions for this," he urged.

On the same day, it was announced that The CityUK, Kazakhstan's National Bank and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) also signed a "landmark" memorandum of understanding (MoU).

According to The CityUK, the MoU, which covers all aspects of financial and related professional services, sets out for the first time the ways in which the parties will work to assist Kazakhstan's intentions to develop Astana as an international financial centre.

The Kazakh President also met with CEOs and chairpersons of the world's leading corporations based in London, including Ben Van Beurden of Shell, Sam Walsh of Rio Tinto, Said Darwazah of Hikma Pharmaceuticals PLC, Lakshmi Mittal of Arcelor Mittal steel group and Jacob Rothschild of the J. Rothschild Capital Management.

Following the commission and meetings with business leaders, President Nazarbayev briefed journalists on the results of his meetings. According to him, at this stage of development of bilateral relations, the United Kingdom has already invested \$12 billion in Kazakhstan and there are more than 500 joint ventures between the companies of the two countries. He also said that the business authorities accompanying him to the visit have signed agreements and memoranda amounting to \$5 billion and that the agreements went beyond the commodities sector.

On the first day of the visit, FT.com ran an op-ed by President Nazarbayev, in which he shared his expectations for the visit and vision for areas of common interests with the U.K.

"We have never forgotten that Britain was among the first countries to recognise our independence. We value as well the major role that British companies, big and small, have played in helping modernise our economy and drive our prosperity," the article reads.

Talking about strong links in areas outside of trade and investment, which unite the two countries, Nazarbayev wrote that Kazakhstan remains "a key ally for the U.K. and other coalition forces in Afghanistan," and "stands resolutely together in facing down extremism."

On Nov. 4, Queen Elizabeth II and the Duke of Edinburgh hosted President Nazarbayev and Deputy Prime Minister Dariga Nazarbayeva, who accompanied the President as part of the delegation, for lunch at the Buckingham Palace. He briefed her on the state of bilateral relations and the results of the talks the previous day.

## Nazarbayev Visits France, Improves Business Ties, Addresses 38th UNESCO Conference

By Malika Orazgaliyeva

Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev paid an official visit to France Nov. 5-6 to meet French President François Hollande and hold talks with representatives of French business and political circles, as well as participate in the 38th session of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) General Conference.

Nazarbayev and Hollande discussed the main directions of bilateral cooperation and exchanged views on current international issues. Nazarbayev stressed that Astana and Paris currently have great potential for cooperation in trade, economic, investment, cultural and humanitarian spheres, as well as the aerospace industry.

On behalf of Kazakhstan, Nazarbayev awarded Hollande the state award of the Order of Dostyk (Order of Friendship) of the first degree.

Following the talks, the sides adopted a presidential joint declaration, as well as a joint declaration of the Kazakh Ministry of Education and Science and the French Ministry of Higher Education and Science.

The parties also signed an agreement confirming France's participation in the international specialised exhibition EXPO 2017 in Astana. The two sides also adopted a declaration of intention to cooperate in space between the Aerospace Committee of the Kazakh Ministry of Investment and Development and the French National Centre of Space Research.

Speaking before the heads of major French companies, the Kazakh President underlined existing trade, economic and investment cooperation between the two countries.

"Twenty-four French companies have already implemented projects



President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev (L) meets President of France François Hollande in Paris with their respective delegations.

in Kazakhstan worth more than \$2 billion; 14 projects are in process and 10 are planned to be implemented in the long term. In the framework of my visit, contracts worth more than \$5 billion will be signed," Nazarbayev said.

"France is among the leading economic partners of Kazakhstan. In spite of the difficult external conditions, our mutual trade turnover in recent years remains at \$6 billion. Over the last decade, French business investment in our economy amounted to about \$12 billion. One-hundred and thirty French companies are operating in various industries of Kazakhstan's market," he added.

The head of state mentioned successful joint companies such as Alstom Transport, Eurocopter, PeugeotCitroën and Danone. In cooperation with Airbus Defence and Space, he noted Kazakhstan has launched two satellites for Earth remote sensing and plans to complete the construction of a spacecraft assembly and testing complex.

Nazarbayev noted the positive impact of opening direct flights between Astana and Paris for investment cooperation between the two countries, which took place in March 2015, as well as the introduction of a visa-free regime for short term visits for for French citizens as of July 2014.

He mentioned that contracts are being prepared between the two countries' business circles covering important areas such as the supply of uranium to France, the automobile industry, water supply and waste disposal.

Nazarbayev also highlighted Kazakhstan's work on improving the investment climate and implementing five institutional reforms, the 100 Step Plan of the Nation and Nurlu Zhol programme, as well as preparing for EXPO 2017.

The Kazakh President invited French businesses to actively participate in his country's industrialisation and planned privatisation of large enterprises, as well as in the work of the planned Astana International Financial Centre.

In turn, French company leaders praised the ongoing policy for building a favourable investment climate in Kazakhstan, noting the country has established itself as a reliable partner.

The event was attended by representatives of companies such as Airbus, Alstom Transport, Areva, the Rothschild Group, Soufflet, Veolia Asia and Vicat.

Nazarbayev held separate meetings with PSA Peugeot Citroën Chairman Carlos Tavares, Total CEO Patrick Pouyanné, Aubert & Duval President Georges Duval and economist Jacques Attali.

Nazarbayev spent his second day in France attending the 38th session of the UNESCO General Conference.

"Kazakhstan supports efforts to improve UNESCO's efficiency and to strengthen its credibility, modernisation and adaptation to the challenges of our time. I am confident that UNESCO will continue to be an effective forum for cooperation between states and nations to promote enlightenment,

understanding and peace," he said.

Addressing the gathering, Nazarbayev proposed establishing an international academy under UNESCO on maintaining peace and sustainable development.

"Basing it on best international practices, this academy could develop progressive ideas and practical measures to maintain peace and ensure sustainable development," he said. "Of particular importance is the search for ways of early conflict prevention through the implementation of the UNESCO Culture of Peace Concept."

Nazarbayev also mentioned his nation's international initiatives, such as the 2045 Global Strategic Initiative Plan (a global strategy to eliminate the root causes of wars and conflicts), the Universal Declaration on the Achievement of a Nuclear-Weapons-Free World, which is currently making its way through the UN General Assembly, and a common global network for addressing international terrorism and extremism under the auspices of the UN.

# ECONOMY

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 18, 2015

## Kazakh Senate Passes Law Bringing Astana International Financial Centre Closer to Reality

By Zhazira Dyussebekova

ASTANA – The Kazakh Senate passed a draft constitutional law Oct. 5 “On International Financial Centre Astana.” The bill is focused on establishing the Astana International Financial Centre (AIFC), which will be designed to provide a favourable and attractive environment for those entities working there and to turn Astana into a major financial hub in the heart of Eurasia.

The centre will be under a special legal regime, which will result in the existence of its own legislation, according to the Parliament website. The law will provide for the formation of a special council for the centre’s management designed as a permanent collegial body headed by the nation’s President. In addition to the council, AIFC will have its own committee to regulate the activities of the participants, an administration and a court.

AIFC acts will be based on the

English and Welsh principles and rules of law and standards of the world’s leading financial centres, in particular, the regulations of the Dubai International Financial Centre. The law also outlines goals, objectives and principles of AIFC activity as well as its regulatory principles and the definition of its bodies and their powers.

The bill defines the legal status of the AIFC court as independent and separate from the Kazakh judicial system. Its exclusive purview

will be the consideration and resolution of disputes solely between AIFC participants, taking into account the centre’s acts and existing judicial precedents.

President Nursultan Nazarbayev announced the proposal to establish the AIFC during the Astana Economic Forum in May 2015.

“We have held talks with representatives of the Dubai [International Financial] Centre and agreed that their experience will be completely transferred to Kazakhstan.

Thus, our focus will be based on [introducing] the principles of English law, a preferential tax regime and an independent financial court. We are confident that the Astana financial centre will be the core of the financial infrastructure in Kazakhstan and in the future [will turn into] a financial hub of the whole Central Asian region,” President Nazarbayev said at the time.

The bill now awaits the presidential signature for it to become the law.

### ECONOMY NEWS IN BRIEF

Investment in housing construction across Kazakhstan reached a historic high of 528 billion tenge (US\$1.72 billion) in January-September, 17.4 percent more than in the same period last year, according to Ranking.kz. Growth was observed in 13 regions of Kazakhstan. The Almaty region remains the leader in housing construction investment, and has attracted 109.3 billion tenge (US\$356.76 million) in the first nine months of the year, 15 percent more than last year. The area is also consistently ranked in the top three regions in terms of commissioning after Astana and Almaty cities. Since the beginning of the year, 993,200 square metres of housing have been commissioned in the Almaty region.

The average monthly salary in Kazakhstan in October was 122,422 tenge (US\$401.55), Bnews.kz reports, citing the country’s Committee on Statistics. The unemployment rate among the economically active population was 4.9 percent.

In its November oil market report, OPEC projects Kazakhstan’s oil production to fall by 20,000 barrels a day in 2015, to average 1.6 million barrels per day, the Trend News Agency reports. September production fell by 25,000 barrels per day compared to August, to 1.49 million barrels per day, according to OPEC. This is a three-year low for Kazakhstan and the third consecutive month of lower production, year on year. Output in Kazakhstan’s Tengiz field, a major producer for the country, remained below 0.5 million barrels per day for the second consecutive month. OPEC predicts a further decline in production for 2016, down 30,000 barrels per day for an average of 1.57 million barrels per day, due to a projected lack of investment.

China has lifted restrictions on wheat imports from Kazakhstan, the Hellenic Shipping News reports. An agreement on the subject was reached Nov. 6. Previously, Kazakhstan could export only sacked wheat; now, China will accept wheat in grain carriers and trucks. Limitations on soybean deliveries were also lifted, and China is considering lifting quarantine restrictions for livestock products as well.

Kaspi Bank, one of Kazakhstan’s largest banks, has acquired the status of a bank holding company, Tengrinews reports. The National Bank of Kazakhstan granted Kaspi Bank the new status, and the Kaspi Joint Stock Company became the indirect owner of about 90 percent of Kaspi Bank. The company’s shareholders are currently Chairman of the Board of Kaspi Bank Vyacheslav Kim, Kairat Satybaldyuly, Michael Lomtadze and Baring Vostok Capital Partners, a leading private equity firm in the post-Soviet space.

Kazakhstan’s exports between January-September 2015 fell by nearly half, year on year, from \$62.7 billion in 2014 to \$36.4 billion, the Trend News Agency reports. Imports also fell, from \$32.1 billion for the period to \$25.7 billion this year. Kazakhstan’s current account surplus for the period was \$10.7 billion, 65 percent down from the previous year, when it was \$30.6 billion. This year’s current account deficit for the first nine months of the year was \$4 billion; last year, the figure was \$6.1 billion.

The British Independent Power Corporation (IPC) has signed a memorandum of understanding with KazTransGas of Kazakhstan to invest \$3.1 billion in the construction of 1,500-kilometre gas pipeline and four power plants in the Central Asian nation, Petrol Plaza reports. The project will help bring gas from the western part of the country to Astana and other industrial regions and bring power to eastern cities like Karaganda and Temirtau. The gas project is one of many agreements signed during the visit of President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev to the U.K. earlier this month.

The number of individual accounts involved in transactions on Kazakhstan’s stock exchange increased by 10 percent in October compared to September, Kazakh TV reports. At the end of October, the Central Securities Depository had more than 102,100 individual accounts.

## London Stock Exchange to Help KASE Create Financial Hub in Astana

By Kseniya Voronina

ASTANA – During the official visit of the Kazakh delegation led by President Nursultan Nazarbayev to London on Nov. 3, the Kazakhstan Stock Exchange (KASE) and the London Stock Exchange (LSEG) signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to promote access by investors and issuers to the capital markets of Kazakhstan and Great Britain as well as to promote cooperation between the two countries, according to the KASE press service.

Areas of cooperation include attracting investors and professional participants of the securities market in order to improve the liquidity of Kazakhstan’s shares on the KASE and on the main market of the London Stock Exchange, as well as joint work on the development of activities of the KASE in the framework of creating the Astana International Financial Centre.

The memorandum was signed by head of the LSEG Nikhil Rathi and Chairman of the Board of KASE Yeszhan Birtanov.

“The MoU signed between the Kazakhstan Stock Exchange and the London Stock Exchange Group heralds an exciting new

chapter for Kazakhstan’s capital markets and we are delighted to have been chosen to support KASE in its expansion plans,” Rathi said. “With 17 Kazakh companies already listed in London, the agreement holds huge potential for future business opportunities between our two exchanges and reinforces London’s position as the leading market place for global business. It also reflects LSEG’s commitment to an open access approach, supporting KASE, as it delivers on its ambition to become a major regional financial centre.”

“KASE recognizes LSEG as one of the leading stock exchanges in the world. Closer connections and cooperation between both of our exchanges will support the sustainable development of KASE in light of the focus on development of the International Financial Centre in Astana,” Birtanov added.

The Astana International Financial Centre is expected to start its full operations in 2018 after EXPO 2017. The tight cooperation between LSEG and KASE will help international investment communities discover new opportunities for investment in the Eurasian region, according to the head of KASE.

## Kazakhstan to Establish Islamic Financial Company

By Kseniya Voronina

ASTANA – A special Islamic financial company is to be established in Kazakhstan to issue sukuk, Islamic bonds, according to Interfax.kz.

“The National Bank has developed amendments to the legislation of Kazakhstan with provisions to improve the terms for issuing state Islamic bonds,” the National Bank of Kazakhstan reported.

The amendments ensure the establishment of a Committee of State Property and Privatisation

under the Ministry of Finance as a limited liability partnership for issuing government Islamic securities, granting the company the right to issue state Islamic securities, providing the possibility of the transfer of selected assets of the authorised body for State Property Management through contract sales with the possibility of using the mechanism of direct targeted sales allowing transmission of the company and selected assets under the lease to relevant government authority, binding mechanism of income lease certificates holders,

investors under the lease as well as providing tax benefits.

The relevant bill on amendments and other legislative changes was approved by the Mazhilis (lower chamber of Parliament) and sent to the Senate.

The Ministry of Finance of Kazakhstan also informed that preparatory work for the necessary conditions for the issue of sovereign sukuk is being carried out.

The National Bank previously informed that the Ministry of Finance may issue sukuk in 2015 or 2016 after proper legislation is adopted.

## Tenge Devaluation Benefits Major Kazakh Exporters

Continued from Page A1

The director added that the new currency rate enabled his company to regain its position in the market.

“We are optimistic and hope to get new positions. I can say that the new monetary policy helps Kazzinc to save our production and face all challenges with fewer losses than there could have been. But current economic conditions force Kazzinc to cut costs. The saving has not had an impact on present production activity, safety technology, environment protection and staff salaries,” he said.

The collapse in prices for products manufactured by Kazzinc happened recently and the company has changed its plans for 2016, working on different adaptation measures and trying to ride the storm to maxi-

mum effect. The company’s subdivisions analysed all factors which have an impact on income and the prime cost of its own goods.

Lazarev feels inflation targeting will encourage local producers to increase production volumes and extend their own production capacities, which will lead to a saving or increase in jobs, tax revenue growth and, of course, development of the domestic industry field.

“Of course, it doesn’t mean that everything will be easy and clear, but it is the best case scenario. ‘Weak’ companies or companies which don’t plan their own activity will face big challenges in such conditions, but I consider that such conditions are a good driver for growth and development. Observing financial discipline, monitoring and close control of expenses and

working on profit increase will enable them to develop and increase their efficiency. The really major and competitive companies are distinguished by their ability to plan their own activity for many years to come, and highly-efficient management,” he said.

Kazzinc is a fully-integrated zinc producer with considerable copper, precious metals and lead credits. The company’s core operations are in Kazakhstan, most notably in the East Kazakhstan region. Established in 1997, the controlling block of stock was sold to the private sector and Glencore International AG, the company’s main investor. Kazzinc has significantly increased production capacity and output, seeking to have a stable position among the world’s five lowest-cost zinc producers, according to kazzinc.kz.

## Legalisation Campaign Seeks to Add Revenue to National Budget, Reduce Shadow Economy

By Aiman Turebekova

ASTANA – Kazakhstan launched property and capital legalisation campaigns in September 2014 that are scheduled to run until Dec. 31, 2015. The campaigns include the approval of a law “On amnesty of Kazakhstan citizens, oralmans (repatriated ethnic Kazakhs) and permanent residence holders in relation to legalisation of their property.”

Objects of legalisation include money, securities, participation interest in the charter capital of a legal entity, real estate registered in the name of another person (except for space objects and the linear part of main pipelines), the title of which or related transactions are to be registered according to legislation of Kazakhstan, buildings located within the territory of Kazakhstan that comply with construction rules and regulations, as well as the intended use of occupied land plots owned by the subject of legalisation and real estate located outside the territory of Kazakhstan.

The law was designed to help cut the shadow economy, attract funding and increase investments into the country. Property obtained through criminal practices, including offences against a person, breach of the constitution or human

rights, undermining the foundations of constitutional law and national security, crimes against the government and corruption cannot be legitimised.

The concept of “legalisation” means the transition from illegal to legal status. Since the property was illegal, taxes for it were not paid.

“This measure will be the first step towards the introduction of incomes and expenses reporting for all citizens of Kazakhstan. It will help us fight the shadow economy and bring us closer to the economies of developed countries in terms of transparency. The shadow economy is a major enemy of sustainable economic development,” said Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev.

“We have calculated and evaluated everything. The expected inflow of money and property is 2.2 trillion tenge (US\$7.2 billion),” Minister of Finance Bakhyt Sultanov said.

According to Finance Ministry statistics, 63,039 applications for property legalisation have been filed totalling 614,543,200,000 million tenge (US\$2 billion). In terms of submitted applications, the Almaty region and Almaty are leading the way, followed by the Aktobe region. The Mangistau region is in last place.

The government is providing an

opportunity to legalise property before the introduction of an income and expenditure declaration. Legalisation of property is a procedure of recognition of rights to property derived from a legitimate economic turnover in order to conceal income and (or) not executed in accordance with the laws of Kazakhstan or prepared by an improper person. Thus, the main goal is integration into the economy of additional funds in the form of legalised capital.

Avoiding bureaucracy is one of the benefits of the legalisation process. For instance, many property owners expand their buildings or build new ones without government permission because of officialdom; however, they are not able to sell them or to pledge the property as collateral for a loan. Thus, this is a chance to legalise capital and real estate located within and outside the territory of Kazakhstan to prevent problems in terms of how to manage them.

Many citizens of Kazakhstan wonder whether the legalisation campaign will be prolonged because they understand the importance and timeliness of the process.

Moreover, expectations in terms of legalised capital have not been met, and the legalisation of foreign real estate in general has not hap-

pened: 17 applications have been filed on foreign assets, with only 14 of them regarding real estate because buying property abroad is not prohibited by Kazakh legislation. So the mere fact of the acquisition of foreign property may not be illegal. In addition, having bought real estate abroad, its owner is not required to pay taxes in Kazakhstan. Therefore, the requirement to pay 10 percent to the state budget of Kazakhstan is not lawful.

The period to bring real estate and capital out of the shadows will be extended for a year, until the Dec. 31, 2016. The upper house of Kazakhstan’s parliament (Senate) adopted the relevant bill on Oct. 22.

“In order to stimulate the legalisation process and provide confidence in the campaign, it is necessary to take additional measures and safeguards for the subjects of legalisation,” said Olga Perepechina, deputy of the Senate.

“The first amendment concerns guarantees for the subjects of legalisation. Here we included in the banking and tax legislation rules regarding the prohibition of the provision of information concerning the legalised property. The second change is eliminating the possibility of using information obtained during legalisation as evidence

# BUSINESS

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 18, 2015

## BUSINESS NEWS IN BRIEF

The international innovation forum "Kazakhstan – a new global innovation hub" took place in Almaty Nov. 11–12, Kazakh TV reports. The forum began with a start-up contest in which about 100 of Kazakhstan's inventors presented their developments in energy, information technologies, smart industry and new materials. The forum drew thousands of guests, 40 international experts and representatives of 100 foreign specialised venture capital funds and investors and saw the debuts of hundreds of start-ups from the region and far abroad. The team that won the competition received a prize of \$25,000, and other start-ups got support from investors.

A farm in the Karaganda region will export mare's milk powder to the EU, Kapital.kz reports. The project, part of the Industrialisation Map of the region, plans to produce 10 tonnes of dry powder a year for use in food, cosmetics and pharmaceuticals in Kazakhstan as well as for export. The farm currently has 1,300 horses, whose milk will be freeze-dried on-site.

Tele2 Group and Kazakhtelecom have announced that they will combine their mobile business in Kazakhstan, Businesswire reports. The new joint venture will combine Tele2's existing operations in Kazakhstan with Kazakhtelecom's mobile business, Altel, which is rolling out its 4G network in the country. The new business will have more than 5.6 million subscribers and a market share of around 22 percent. President of Tele2 Group Allison Kirkby noted that the combination would allow their customers to gain access to Altel's 4G network. Chairman of the Management Board of Kazakhtelecom Kuanyshbek Yesseyev said the new business would expand the range of services available for their customers and said he was glad to work with Tele2 as they are "one of the industry leaders in corporate responsibility and corporate governance." Tele2 will retain management control and as part of the transaction, will purchase Asianet's existing 49 percent stake in Tele2 Kazakhstan.

The franchising market in Kazakhstan has approached the \$3 billion mark, Kazakh TV reports. More than 490 companies are active in the country today, including 90 Kazakh projects, which employ about 30,000 people. Catering, clothing and footwear, trade, information technology and service remain areas of focus for the industry. President of the Eurasian Association of Franchising Beknur Kissikov said that Kazakhstan's membership in the Customs Union and accession to the World Trade Organisation have caused franchising in the country to grow, and that Kazakhstan's large cities may soon be saturated with franchises like major cities the world over. The country's Damu Fund, which supports entrepreneurship in the country, is developing a programme to launch next year to support franchising in Kazakhstan with the support of Kazakh banks, Damu representatives said.

Almaty has approved its Comprehensive Plan for Attracting Investments, which aims to draw private and foreign investment to the city, Kapital.kz reports. The plan's goal is to attract 30 foreign investors to the city by the end of 2016, according to the press service of Almaty Akim (Mayor) Bauyrzhan Baibek. The plan includes 28 measures in three sections: creating conditions for investors, attracting investors and post-monitoring. It encompasses measures to identify barriers to investment and conduct research into business opportunities in Almaty. Meetings with foreign investors are a key mechanism of the plan. Over the last three months, the akimat has held about 60 meetings with potential investors from Switzerland, Poland, Germany, Austria, Turkey, Romania, Lithuania and other countries.

Kazakhstan's Senate approved a draft law ratifying a loan agreement between the Kazakh government and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development to improve business competitiveness in the country, Kapital.kz reported. The loan will finance a 11.5 billion tenge (US\$37.7 million) draft programme called "Improving the competitiveness of small and medium-sized businesses" that will also be supported with loans from the national budget.

## PetroKazakhstan Oil Products Modernisation to Ratchet Up Eco-Friendly Production at Shymkent Refinery



Crude Distillation Unit at the Shymkent Refinery.

By Ekaterina Volkova

The transformations taking place at PKOP as part of the Modernisation Project will open up new possibilities, not only for the company itself, but for the region and country as a whole. The production of ecologically friendly gasoline and diesel and the development of new petrochemistry products will have a positive impact on the ecological situation in the region, meet market requirements and have a knock-on effect in terms of the development of related sectors in South Kazakhstan Oblast.

The PKOP Modernisation is a long-term project and has required significant investment since 2000. With that in mind, one of the refinery's achievements to reduce costs and improve refining performance thanks to its implementation of production development programmes; upgrade current facilities and implement state-of-the-art technology. In particular, a number of projects to improve petroleum product quality and range have been completed, for example the replacement of a reforming unit catalyser and production equipment.

Increased repair intervals are key and have warranted a number of projects to improve the reliability of core refining facilities, meaning the refinery no longer has to close for annual maintenance. Every year, PKOP upgrades fire and ecological security. Monitoring underground water in inspection wells close to the refinery and at the Akdala evaporation pond were held. A

project to end underground water pollution has been started.

The Shymkent Oil Refinery Modernisation Project is a massive undertaking that will open a new page in PKOP development. The project was launched in 2011 and is due to be completed by the end of 2017 when refinery output meets global standards. The goals of the project are to:

- restore planned oil refining capacity to 6 million tonnes per year from 5.25
- oil refining depth increase
- improve output quality to Euro-4 and Euro-5 in line with Customs Union technical regulations
- increase product range with high added value products such as propane-propylene (petrochemical raw materials), elementary sulphur and MTBE (the high-octane component of gasoline)
- reduce harmful atmospheric emissions

Refinery capacity has been expanded to focus more on light petroleum products. This is a good way of replacing imports with domestic goods, creating new jobs in Shymkent and further improving the ecological safety of the production process.

The PKOP Modernisation Project has been included in the State Programme for the Accelerated Industrial and Innovative Development of Kazakhstan and is due to cost US\$ 1.8 billion, which will have to be funded from a number of sources, including at the interstate level. To this end, as part of his

May 2014 visit to China, President Nazarbayev signed a Memorandum with the Export and Import Bank of China to open a US\$ 1 billion credit line to realise the Modernisation Project.

As a consequence of the Project, the following six processing units will be built at the refinery:

- 1) isomerisation – 600,000 tonnes a year, licensor UOP, USA
- 2) sulphur production – 4,000 tonnes a year, licensor CPE, China
- 3) sulphur production – 15,000



Modernisation will open a new page in PKOP development.

- 4) catalytic cracking – 2 million tonnes a year, licensor UOP, USA
- 5) gasoline cut cracking hydro treatment – 1 million tonnes a year, licensor Axens, France
- 6) MTBE production – 244,000 tonnes a year, licensor Axens, France

Once upgrade work is complete, the number of processing units will rise from 9 to 15.

A range of technical processes will be introduced such as UOP licensed isomerisation, the alkali treatment of saturated and unsaturated LPG Merox, RFCC catalytic cracking – fuel oil and vacuum gas oil cracking resulting in the generation of high-octane gasoline components. UOP currently licenses over 50% of all RFCC units worldwide.

Likewise, construction and upgrade work will be carried out on the following secondary and existing sections/blocks/units:

- the desulphurisation of saturated and unsaturated liquefied hydrocarbon gases, alkali treatment
- single-point oil loading
- amine regeneration and steam stripping of acid waste water
- C3/C4 splitting and hydrogen treatment

In addition, PKOP will be building new refinery facilities such as treatment facilities, water recycling, LPG storage, nitrogen production, air systems, chemical water and vapour treatment systems, reservoir parks, flare systems, a fire-fighting

system and electricity supply, process control rooms and others.

An important aspect of the Modernisation Project is its ecological component.

Sulphurous gas generated at a number of refinery sections will be recycled at the sulphur production unit into a commercial product – granulated elementary sulphur, which reduces harmful sulphur compound emissions from the flare line to 99%.

Implementation of an airtight petroleum product wagon loading system means wagon loading hatches will be sealed during the loading process, removing hydrocarbon vapour to a recovery system. This also helps reduce pollutant emissions to 450 tonnes/year, and return any trapped hydrocarbons to the production process.

New sealed structures will be built above the ground as part of the upgrade of treatment facilities, which will help improve drainage quality and reduce harmful emissions from treatment facility open surfaces to 1,500 tonnes/year.

And, of course, a key objective of the Modernisation project is to produce motor fuel that meets Euro-4 and Euro-5 standards and that contains less harmful components. For example, gasoline currently produced in Kazakhstan is Euro-2 standard and contains 500 ppm of sulphur, while the new Euro-5 fuel will reduce that figure to 10 ppm. The figures are similar for diesel (which is also currently at Euro-2 levels). As for benzoyl, the figures should fall from the current 5% (volume) to 1% (volume) in the new Euro-5 fuel. All of this means that the air in our cities will be cleaner.

## New EBRD Report Predicts Lower Economic Growth for Central Asia

Continued from Page A1

The EBRD predicts growth in Kyrgyzstan of 5 percent this year and 3.9 percent in 2016; in Tajikistan, 5 percent this year and 4.5 percent in 2016; in Turkmenistan, 8.5 percent this year – the fastest-growing economy in the region – and the same in 2016; Uzbekistan, 7.5 percent this year and 7.2 percent in 2016; and Mongolia, 3.3 percent this year and 5 percent in 2016. Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan's predicted growth is slightly higher than the EBRD's May forecast; the rest of the regional outlook is cloudier than expected in the spring. The report noted that high levels of dollarisation of debt in the region make economies more vulnerable to global market volatility and changes in investor sentiment.

Kazakhstan's lower growth predictions reflect low oil prices, the recession in Russia, the depreciation

of the rouble and subsequent influx of cheap Russian imports, and weakened investor confidence as a result of the ongoing conflict in Ukraine, the EBRD said. The plunge in the price of oil is affecting government revenues and is expected to result in a budget deficit of around 3 percent of gross domestic product for this year, the report reads, saying the government will be relying for funding on the National Fund and the National Pension Fund.

The bank noted that the government's accelerated reform process and stimulus programmes are supporting growth and said that the depreciation of the tenge following the Aug. 20 switch to a free-floating exchange rate would not impact growth; however, the difficult external economic environment will, they said, and growth as a result is not expected to recover much in 2016. Inflation is expected to average 6.8 percent this year.

Overall, growth in the EBRD region remains largely unchanged since the May forecast, the report said. The current forecast has 2015 as the fifth consecutive year of slowing growth over the EBRD's 36-country area of operations, from 4.6 percent in 2010 – 2011 to 0.2 percent this year, the report said. A modest recovery to 1.6 percent for the EBRD region is predicted for 2016. Acting Chief Economist of the EBRD Hans Peter Lankes said, "We may be looking now for something of an upturn in 2016 after five consecutive years of slow-down. But there are significant risks on the downside," according to a press release on the report.

The report notes that the sub-regions of the EBRD are following different trends, with the contraction in the Russian economy (predicted at 4.2 percent this year and 1.2 percent in 2016, a slightly smaller contraction than forecast in May) having a

negative effect on Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia.

Ukraine's economy is expected to contract by 11.5 percent in 2015 – more than predicted in May – before growing again in 2016.

In contrast, growth in other areas is projected to pick up, "as economies benefit from lower commodity prices and a recovery in the Eurozone supported by the quantitative easing programme launched by the European Central Bank," the report says. The exception is Greece, which is predicted to have a recession this year and see GDP fall in 2016.

Growth in the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean region remains 4 percent for this year, with expectations for 2016 downgraded from 4.2 percent in May to 4 percent, based on external challenges. In Turkey, predictions for growth this year remained 3 percent and have been scaled back from 3 percent to 2.8 percent in 2016. Central Europe

and the Baltic states are expected to see growth of 2.9 percent this year and 3 percent next year, growth in Southeastern Europe remains forecast at 1.6 percent this year and has been cut to 1.6 percent for next year, Eastern Europe and the Caucasus on average will contract by 5.1 percent, much more than the 1.5 percent predicted in May, but are expected to grow by 1.4 percent in 2016, more than the May forecast.

The main drivers of this economic outlook are concerns about growth prospects in China and in emerging markets, expectations of monetary policy tightening in the U.S. and quantitative easing in the Eurozone, even lower prices for oil and other commodities, increased geopolitical risks related to conflicts in the Middle East and Ukraine and slowing global trade flows, according to the EBRD.

The bank also counsels that the outlook is subject to major risks, including a sharper-than-expected deceleration in China, stronger-than-expected increases in interest rates in the U.S., increasing political instability and geopolitical tensions and uncertainty in domestic politics in Greece, which could cause turbulence in the Eurozone.

# EDITORIALS

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 18, 2015

## Sport in Kazakhstan: Good for the Nation's Heart and Wallet

Year two thousand fifteen has been one of the most successful years for sport in Kazakhstan. Thousands of loyal fans have been cheering on FC Astana as they have reached the unprecedented heights of competing in the main group stage of the UEFA Champions League. To play through several qualifying rounds, beating all opposition for the right to play alongside the likes of Bayern Munich and Manchester United has firmly placed FC Astana on the European football map.

Holding well-established and world-famous clubs Galatasaray and Atletico Madrid to draws in the Astana Arena are matches that will live long in the memory of those who were fortunate enough to attend.

It is not just on the football field, however, that Kazakh teams are making their mark. The exploits of Barys Astana and Kazakhstan's other teams across the nation are watched by millions of ice hockey fans throughout Europe and Asia. Up to 12,000 spectators are now able to see the action live in the brand new, state-of-the-art Barys Arena.

We all cheer our world-beating elite sports stars on snow, ice, road and grass. It is clear that their success brings benefits to our economy. Whether it is buying tickets at a sports arena, purchasing a team jersey or encouraging global fans to visit Kazakhstan, the power of sport for economic advantage is profound. Add to that the associated employment and advertising endorsement deals, and the benefits of sport are more significant than ever. A recent study has found that sport now accounts for more than 112 billion euros (US\$120.1 billion) annually across the European Union. The potential for even greater growth of this sector in Kazakhstan is clear to see.

The Astana cycling team has long been known throughout the world and has firmly established Kazakhstan as a nation of cycling obsessives. Go outside on a summer's day and see for yourself the increasing number of lycra-clad cyclists speeding along our roads.

This is just one demonstration of how sport in Kazakhstan is far more than a purely spectator pastime. Our successes in sport are inspiring more of us to get involved. Whether it is kids playing football at school or skiers heading to the world-class winter sports facilities near Almaty, the uptake of sport in Kazakhstan is apparent across the country. In fact, as of 2014, Kazakhstan had hosted more than 27,000 sports events, with more than 3.5 million people taking part. That represents around a fifth of the population participating in organised sport.

The exploits of our elite sportsmen and women provokes a fantastic manifestation of national pride and support but despite the widespread coverage that they may receive, this is only the tip of the iceberg in terms of sport's wider benefits.

There is strong evidence to suggest that regular physical exercise can help reduce a whole host of illness and disease. In fact, regular exercise has been found to reduce the risk of heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes, certain cancers, obesity, mental health problems and musculoskeletal conditions. So playing sport brings far more than the enjoyment of being on a football field, ice rink or other environment.

A fit and healthy population needs fewer visits to the doctor, with less need for expensive medicines and, therefore, fewer days taken as sick leave. For Kazakhstan, the benefits of growing sports participation is a great opportunity to give a boost to our nation's health as well as its wealth.

## The Great Gain Not the Great Game: How Kazakhstan is Charting its Own Course in the World



By Ertan Idrissov

It is a sign of Central Asia's and Kazakhstan's increasing role and importance in the world that more and more is written about our region. But what is striking – and at times frustrating – is how reporting and analysis can be distorted to fit narratives which have little relationship to what's actually happening.

It has, for example, become increasingly popular for journalists to see events in our region through the prism of a revival of the Great Game in Central Asia. It is through this narrative of major powers fighting for influence that recent visits by the leaders of China, Russia, India, Pakistan, Japan, as well as the U.S. Secretary of State, are seen.

I can see why this makes a neat headline but that does not make it true. Kazakhstan is not a silent by-stander in anyone else's strategy. We are a country successfully making its own independent way in the world.

We have purposely built good relations and strong economic ties with countries big and small, to the east and west, south and north. We have close links with both Russia and China. Europe is our biggest trading partner and the U.S. our second biggest foreign investor after Europe.

This is not an accident but the result of our multi-vector foreign policy. Our economic progress – which has seen our gross domestic product rise 19-fold since independence – is also based on being open to trade, investment and ideas. This commitment continues, which is why, in the last year, we have helped found the Eurasian Economic Union and become full members of the WTO.

Far from being at the centre of a re-run of the Great Game, Kazakhstan is, if you like, at the heart of what could be a Great Gain for all in terms of regional and global stability and prosperity, and is adamantly promoting this vision for all to embrace. This is why, in the last couple of months alone, President Nazarbayev has held extremely productive meetings with President Xi Jinping, President Vladimir Putin, President Barack Obama, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe – and has had very successful back-to-back visits to London and Paris as well as, for example, to Qatar.

These countries and their leaders all want to strengthen their relationships with Kazakhstan – as we do with them – as a partner and friend. As Secretary Kerry explained, for example, the U.S. is not pursuing a "zero-sum game" in central Eurasia but believes greater engagement by all will benefit all. This is a message which we wholeheartedly welcome and which I hope all those watching and commenting on Kazakhstan will hear.

Curiously, at the same time, we can continue to see the focus, when discussing Central Asia, on how remote the region is. It is again a narrative which neglects how our world has changed. For as economic power shifts eastwards, bringing revived trade links, fast-growing markets and new areas of prosperity, it is not our remoteness but our position at the heart of the new emerging world which is most striking.

It is Kazakhstan's size and unique geography which are enabling us to provide a land bridge linking the economic powerhouses to the east and west. It is an opportunity that, together with our partners, we are working hard to maximise.

New road links will cut by more than half the time it takes goods to be shipped by sea

between China and Europe. Modern rail and road connections – linking to new port facilities on the Persian Gulf – are also providing fresh opportunities for trade and new markets to the south.

These developments form part of the \$9 billion domestic investment in improved connectivity that we are making through the Nurly Zhol – or Bright Path – programme which, through major infrastructure spending, is Kazakhstan's version of the New Deal. More importantly, these connectivity lines will not only serve as transit "conduits" between east and west, north and south, but will come as life-lines for local communities all along the way in terms of creating and boosting local markets, empowering local businesses and private sectors, thus promoting well-being and prosperity, peace and stability in the entire area.

The idea of Central Asia linking east and west and being at the heart of global trade is not new. We have played this role for many centuries. And it was one of the fathers of modern geopolitics – Sir Halford Mackinder – who spoke of our region as the 'Heartland' and predicted as far back as the turn of the last century that the old Silk Road would soon be revived "with a network of railways."

At that time, Sir Halford did not foresee the divisions in our world caused by war and ideology, which put a brake on cooperation in the heart of Eurasia for decades. But as the divisions disappear, his predictions are finally coming true as the ancient Silk Road is rebuilt and modernised. Our geography is now an advantage, not a disadvantage – enabling us not only to boost our economy but provide a wealth of opportunities for the region and wider world. So, the common goal should be to turn Central Asia from being landlocked into being land-linked and a connecting bridge between continents, cultures and trade.

There is, of course, another common narrative when talking about Kazakhstan and Central Asia. It is one that ignores what our citizens have together achieved and focuses instead simply on what more needs to be done. It is a view which suggests Kazakhstan somehow believes that after fewer than 25 years as an independent country, we believe we are the finished product. We do not and we are not.

We know there is a lot more to be done and remain ambitious for the future, including in our commitment to continue democratic reform. We do not claim, as should no country, to be a perfect Jeffersonian democracy. It would, however, be remarkable if we were. Our young nation had no tradition of democracy or democratic institutions to build on and was starting from scratch.

But we are determined to step up the pace of reform, as shown by the comprehensive 100 Concrete Steps reform programme introduced by President Nazarbayev following his re-election in April. These measures focus on human capital development, the enhancement of good governance and the rule of law, cementing transparency and accountability in all layers of the government and society.

Just as outside support has been crucial in driving our economic progress, we want our international partners – both countries and nongovernmental organisations – to help us build our democracy and build our nation. We will continue to be open to dialogue and welcome all constructive dialogue and advice.

But we expect in turn that the achievements of Kazakhstan in creating a prosperous country from the wreckage of the Soviet Union and in building a harmonious society in a population of many different backgrounds in an often-troubled region are not overlooked. It shows, if nothing else, why we are confident that our country will keep progressing.

The author is the minister of foreign affairs of Kazakhstan. This article first appeared in The Diplomatic Courier on Nov. 13, 2015.



### KAZAKHSTAN UNITED FOR GLOBAL SECURITY

THE REPUBLIC OF KAZAKHSTAN IS SEEKING A SEAT ON THE UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL AS A NON-PERMANENT MEMBER FOR 2017-2018. OUR PRIORITIES WITHIN THE UNITED NATIONS REFLECT FOUR PRIMARY ISSUES FACING THE WORLD TODAY: FOOD SECURITY, WATER SECURITY, ENERGY SECURITY AND NUCLEAR SECURITY.

IN THE 23 YEARS SINCE OUR INDEPENDENCE, KAZAKHSTAN HAS WORKED TIRELESSLY TO ADDRESS THESE ISSUES IN OUR OWN COUNTRY AND BEYOND. AMONG MANY OTHER INITIATIVES AND ACHIEVEMENTS, KAZAKHSTAN IS CURRENTLY:



ONE OF THE WORLD'S LARGEST GRAIN PRODUCERS AND WHEAT EXPORTERS. WE HAVE DISTRIBUTED WHEAT AND FOOD TO NATIONS IN NEED.



A CONSTRUCTIVE INNOVATOR IN WATER SECURITY COOPERATION AND TECHNOLOGIES. WE HAVE MADE GREAT STRIDES IN THE RESTORATION OF THE ARAL SEA.



AN ACTIVE SUPPORTER OF DEVELOPING A GREEN ECONOMY AND ALTERNATIVE ENERGY SOURCES THROUGH OUR GREEN BRIDGE INITIATIVE AND AS HOSTS OF EXPO 2017, THEME OF WHICH IS "FUTURE ENERGY".



A GLOBAL LEADER IN NUCLEAR NONPROLIFERATION, DISARMAMENT AND SECURITY, AN INITIATOR OF ADOPTING A UNITED NATIONS DECLARATION ON A NUCLEAR-WEAPON-FREE WORLD AND A SPONSOR OF THE ATOM PROJECT, A WORLDWIDE PETITION CAMPAIGN TO PERMANENTLY END NUCLEAR WEAPONS TESTING.

These issues are complex and interdependent. They require global cooperation and relationship building. Kazakhstan has come a long way in a short time because we know that cooperation is the key to success. We are dedicated to knowledge and resource sharing in order to help make the world a better, more secure place for its citizens.

The achievement and maintenance of international peace and global security are paramount to the success of the planet and its people. In Kazakhstan, we are ready to do our part to ensure that success as a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council.

For more information and a video on Kazakhstan's initiatives, please visit [mfa.gov.kz](http://mfa.gov.kz).



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# OPINIONS

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 18, 2015

## Biofuels and Climate Change: Challenges of COP21

By Demetrio Bueno Carvalho

On the eve of the 21st session of the Conference of the Parties (COP-21) to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), to be held in November-December 2015 in Paris, the debates on the best strategies to mitigate climate change become more intensified. The governments of more than 190 countries will gather in Paris to discuss a new global agreement on climate change, aimed at reducing global greenhouse gas emissions and thus avoiding the threat of dangerous climate change.

In this context, the issue of clean energy acquires special importance, and Brazil, as one of five countries in the world with the highest percentage of renewable energy in its energy matrix, can make an important contribution to the upcoming debate.

All participating countries have



agreed to publicly outline what actions they intend to take under a new international agreement, known as their Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs). On its behalf, Brazil considers bioenergy, including biofuels, an important factor in reducing global greenhouse gas emissions that will form part of the Brazilian INDCs.

Referring to Brazilian experience, in the past 12 years the blending of ethanol with gasoline (anhydrous ethanol) or its use as a pure fuel for automobiles (hydrated) prevented

emissions of more than 300 million tonnes of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) into the atmosphere. Thus, the usage of biofuel derived from sugarcane allowed Brazil to reduce the emission of CO<sub>2</sub> in an amount equivalent to the total annual emissions of Argentina, Peru, Ecuador, Uruguay and Paraguay combined. These figures are equivalent to the total annual CO<sub>2</sub> emissions of Poland.

The Brazilian government promotes best practices in the production and sustainable use of biofuels not only within its own territory, but throughout the whole world. Along with Italy, Brazil co-chairs the Global Bioenergy Partnership (GBEP) and the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO), through which agreements were reached on 24 indicators of sustainability regarding the production and use of modern bioenergy, which were developed with an aim to achieve a balance

between the environmental, economic, and social aspects of sustainable development.

It should be noted that the production and usage of biofuels in Brazil is environmentally-friendly. The areas reserved for biofuels production in Brazil cover less than 10 million hectares, which is equivalent to approximately 3 percent of the country's arable land, or 1.17 percent of its total land mass, and without the expansion into lands inhabited by indigenous peoples.

The Sugarcane Eco-Agricultural Zoning (ZAECANA) programme ensures the environmental sustainability of sugarcane acreage. The Zoning excludes sensitive areas, such as those with native vegetation, the Amazon and Pantanal biomes, environmental protection areas and indigenous lands. Most of the land that is considered appropriate for sugarcane production is currently covered with pasture for extensive cattle raising or is degraded.

Further expansion of sugarcane plantation land is excluded. Much to the contrary: second-generation ethanol or cellulosic ethanol, which is produced from sugarcane straw and bagasse, reached commercial scale this year. The introduction of second generation ethanol will greatly increase production per acreage, from about 40 percent to an expected 250 percent when technology and production methods are fully developed.

Just to have an idea of what this productivity jump would entail, those gains would allow ethanol to replace 10 percent of total world gasoline consumption by 2025, using less than half current global sugarcane acreage.

Cellulosic ethanol is efficient both in terms of acreage and the potential for mitigation of greenhouse gas emissions. Studies conducted in Brazil have demonstrated that, throughout its life cycle of production, transporta-

tion and use, second generation ethanol's carbon footprint is 90 percent lower than that of gasoline per unit of energy generated. In certain circumstances, second generation ethanol production cycle may even result in negative net CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, as it captures more carbon than what is released into the atmosphere.

It is not easy to overcome the challenge of decarbonisation. The transport sector, in particular, poses the greatest challenges in many countries. In the short and medium terms, expanding the uptake of biofuels, by harnessing the enormous potential and efficiency of cellulosic ethanol, is one of the few clean, sustainable, and economically viable solutions for that sector. And it will be a major contribution in the fight against climate change.

The author is the ambassador of Brazil to Kazakhstan.

## Aidyn Aimbetov: Younger Generation Still Interested in Space Exploration

By Anastasia Prilepskaya

Aidyn Aimbetov, Kazakhstan's third cosmonaut and a colonel in the country's Air Force, travelled to the International Space Station Sept. 2 as part of an international crew. He remained in space for 10 days, conducting research.

Our interview with him covers how flights to space impact the human body and what was actually done during his space travel.

Your journey was postponed several times. Please tell us about how your journey began.

First of all, I should mention the person without whom this travel would not have been possible: our President, Nursultan Nazarbayev. His political will, great support and careful attention resulted in the fact that Kazakhstan is one of nine countries in the world that have sent three or more explorers to outer space.

In relation to my preparation for the travel, it took me more than a year. Initially the flight was scheduled to happen on Sept. 3, 2009. However, it was postponed due to financial concerns caused by the world economic crisis. Negotiations over including a Kazakh cosmonaut on the international space crew were constantly held between 2009 and 2015.

On Sept. 12, 2012, I was made "cosmonaut researcher of Kazakhstan." For all these years, I kept my



Kazakh cosmonaut Aidyn Aimbetov

hopes up concerning the flight. And eventually we succeeded, thanks to the decision of our President. An agreement with his Russian counterpart, Vladimir Putin, concerning a Kazakh cosmonaut's flight was reached on May 9 this year.

On June 22, the Joint Committee of the Cosmonauts Training Centre approved my candidature to be part of the crew on the Soyuz TMA-18M. So the preparation began. By the end of July, I got the [necessary] medical assessment. In August, I completed the complex training as a main crew board engineer and after that our crew passed a crediting training on the special training device. Eventually, we were sent to the space port of Baikonur to finish our training.

The space travel started Sept. 2. Our crew consisted of board commander Sergey Volkov, board engineer Andreas Mogensen and myself. Soyuz TMA-18M took off from the launch pad Site No 1, also known as Gagarin's Start, at 7:35 a.m. Mos-

cow time. Automated docking at the ISS happened on Sept. 4.

People who work together on the ISS usually come from different countries and have different attitudes and languages. Please tell us what the relations among your colleagues were like.

If you take a look at our planet from orbit, you won't see borders. The same situation is among the ISS crew: no separations exist. All of us felt a special brotherhood, despite differences in languages and behaviours. Actually, we used our own "galactic language" which consisted of technical terminology, English, Russian and Kazakh words. I remember that when we came back from ISS my first words were half Kazakh, half Russian: "Assalamaleikum, Zemlyane!" ["Greetings, Earthlings!"]

During the flight we conducted physical research. In particular, we examined how zero gravity and radiation influence the human body. We also studied Coulomb crystals, conducting experiments on the features of plasma in a weightless atmosphere under the influence of magnetic fields.

In another research project, we monitored atmospheric changes and conditions of the glaciers in eastern Kazakhstan and studied their melting speed. We also monitored pipelines carrying hydrocarbons and examined the Caspian Sea shelf where there are many suspended wells.

A number of large-scale envi-

ronmental investigations examined conditions of the Aral Sea. There was also an interesting experiment developed by scientists in Kazakhstan, the point was to observe the consequences of consuming different types of food during space flight.

Results of the experiments will be further analysed on Earth; there are still many aspects to complete. The outcome of those experiments, particularly on Coulomb crystals, may prove useful in such areas as electronics, medicine or construction of facilities for flying vehicles.

Would you please share some of your most vivid impressions from the flight?

Of course, the strongest impression is the view of the Earth from the spaceship's portholes. It is a truly magnificent spectacle to watch. I would love to fly again and not only orbit the Earth. If there was a chance, I would love to help build lunar settlements. As you might be aware, there is a Chinese lunar programme, as well as similar U.S. and Russian programmes. Through these programmes, moon settlements are developed and new moon flights are planned. So far Kazakhstan is not part of these programmes, but in the future I think anything is possible.

Another unforgettable experience was the shooting stars. ... When you close your eyes you can see a shower of light flashes, dots and dashes. This effect is caused by heavy charged particles that are part of the cosmic

rays that crisscross the galaxy. When these particles pass through the fundus of the eye through the retina, it is possible to see flashes without opening your eyes. It can only be observed in space.

Many children say they dream of becoming cosmonauts. Was it your dream too?

Yes, definitely, space was my childhood dream. When we were kids, all of us dreamed of being like Yuri Gagarin. He inspired us and paved the way to space for the whole world. Early on at school, I firmly decided to become a cosmonaut. I started to make plans and found out that mostly military pilots with good health travelled to space. I began to actively engage in sports to strengthen my health. In addition, I studied sciences. My favourite school subjects were always physics, mathematics and chemistry.

Of course, after graduation, I never doubted that I would enrol in a military school. I graduated from the Higher Military School in Armavir, Russia, with a degree in command tactical fighter aviation and was qualified as a pilot-engineer. From May 1993, I served in the Air Force of Kazakhstan. I mastered the L-39, MiG-23ML, MiG-27MD, and Su-27 aircraft.

In 1993, I first applied to the cosmonauts group. Then in May 2001, I applied for selection into the first group of cosmonauts in Kazakhstan. ... Then there was the main medical commission in 2002, following which we were approved to train with a group of Russian candidates into cosmonauts, and general space trainings at the Yuri Gagarin Cosmonaut Training Centre.

General space training lasts two years. Upon its completion, the quali-

fication "test cosmonaut" is conferred. Then there is training in a group of specialisations to gain full knowledge of the Russian segment of the ISS. This stage lasts from two to four years. Only after that does one proceed to training as a crew member to work on a specific space programme.

It takes at least eight years to become a professional cosmonaut. In my case, it took 12 years.

How has the world changed for you after this spaceflight?

During spaceflight, many things happen to us that might not be visible from outside. You are going through a re-examination of the true value of life. Many parting wishes from colleagues and relatives, some ideas that seemed profound to me, all came to my mind. You start to re-think all these things when you are in space.

After returning from the flight I feel I became more tolerant. Along with this, I've come to understand that man is just a speck in the infinite universe and we should be more tolerant of each other.

I was also glad to notice that young people in Kazakhstan are seriously interested in the space industry. They often ask me how to become a cosmonaut, where should they study for that, how to become a crew member.

This makes me confident that our younger generation still has a serious interest in this area, and in the future they will be motivated and drive Kazakhstan's space programme.

The article is published in a shortened version. The full version appeared in Kazakhstanskaya Pravda newspaper. It is translated and placed here with permission.

## Turkmenistan's Diversified Export Infrastructure

By Dr. Shirin Akiner

Turkmenistan has huge mineral wealth, including reserves of natural gas that are estimated to be the fourth largest in the world. However, when the country became independent, it lacked an export infrastructure. The existing gas pipelines formed part of the Central Asia-Centre network, which ran from Turkmenistan through Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan to Russia and the other Soviet republics. Consequently, in the early 1990s the main customers for Turkmenistan gas were still former Soviet republics. Most of these new states, especially Armenia, Georgia and Ukraine, were in the midst of a severe economic recession and were frequently unable to meet payments, thereby falling deeply into arrears. By the end of 1995, Turkmenistan was owed close on \$2 billion.

It was against this background that the Turkmen government made plans to create a multi-vectored network of export routes to Europe, the Middle East and South Asia. It was a bold, ambitious idea. The distance to world markets and the technical problems of constructing pipelines across difficult terrain would make such projects inordinately costly. Moreover, political factors, notably U.S. sanctions against neighbouring Iran, and regional instability, partic-



ularly in Afghanistan, would hinder the transboundary transportation of hydrocarbons. In the face of such obstacles, many commentators doubted the feasibility of these schemes. Yet the Turkmen authorities were not deterred: the new pipelines were vital to the country's independence and to its economic development. Moreover, the pipelines were a form of 'energy diplomacy', strengthening ties with regional states and laying the foundations for strategic partnerships. Thus, despite the frustrations of protracted negotiations, memoranda of intent and feasibility studies that were mothballed, and the frequent hiatuses, slowly and determinedly the Turkmen pursued their objectives. The twists and turns that punctuated this process mark the course of Turkmenistan's pipeline strategy, but they also chart the complexities of regional relationships and the changing priorities of international actors.

The Turkmenistan-Iran pipeline was the first cross-border pipeline project to be implemented and, initially, was the Turkmen government's favoured option for an export route. Construction of the first segment commenced in 1994 and the pipe became operational in December 1997. In 2000, a second cross-border pipeline, from Artyk to Luftabad, was inaugurated and in January 2010, a third, much larger pipeline was launched, running from Dovletabat in south-eastern Turkmenistan (a field previously reserved for deliveries to Russia) to Khangiran. These three pipelines together would, at peak capacity, enable Turkmenistan to make annual deliveries to Iran of up to 20 billion cubic metres (bcm).

Another vector of Turkmenistan's energy export strategy was the construction of a Trans-Asian gas pipeline. This project got off to an early start: in 1992, languished until April 2006. On Dec. 14, 2009, in the presence of the Presidents of Turkmenistan, China, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, the formal valve-opening ceremony was held. It was the first phase of what would become a major 'gas corridor' to the east. Over the following years, additional branches were constructed. In 2015, the fourth branch, known as 'D', was nearing completion; initial shipments via this new pipeline

would total 5 bcm, increasing annually to reach 25 bcm within five years. Total Turkmen gas exports to China by 2020 were expected to reach 65 bcm per year.

An even more ambitious scheme was the proposal to construct a pipeline linking Turkmenistan to the Indian sub-continent via Afghanistan. In May 2002 the Presidents of Afghanistan, Pakistan and Turkmenistan agreed to revive the project. The route of the pipeline, eventually named the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India pipeline (TAPI), would extend from Turkmenistan's giant Galkynysh field (previously known as South Yolotan-Osman) to Fazilka on the Indo-Pakistan border – a distance of some 1,800 kilometres. In August 2015, Turkmenistan's state gas company, Turkmenengas, was selected to lead the TAPI consortium. Work was scheduled to begin in December, with a provisional completion date in 2018.

The fourth, and in many ways the most challenging scheme was the construction of a pipeline under the Caspian Sea to deliver Turkmen gas to Azerbaijan for on-shipment via Turkey to Europe. In November 2014, a framework agreement was signed between Turkmenengas and the private Turkish firm Atagas for the purchase and sale of Turkmen gas destined for TANAP.

Turkmenistan's natural gas de-

posits are dotted around the country – an area of over 488,000 sq. km. The export pipelines carry supplies from particular fields to international destinations. However, to realise the full potential of the country's gas resources greater flexibility was required. The new East-West pipeline would unite Turkmenistan's main gas fields into a single gas transportation system, thereby significantly increasing the country's export capacity. In the future, it could ensure stable supplies of gas to the proposed Trans-Caspian subsea pipeline.

In the early 1990s, Turkmenistan's plans for creating a network of export pipelines seemed fanciful: there were too many hurdles to be overcome. By 2015, the picture was very different. Turkmenistan was now recognised as a major source of energy supplies for international markets. Some large-scale pipeline projects had already been implemented, others were moving towards the point when engineering works could begin in the foreseeable future. The most impressive achievement was the launch of the Trans-Asian gas pipeline from Turkmenistan via Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan to China. At the time of writing, it had already been expanded and upgraded several times. The subsea Trans-Caspian pipeline was still under discussion. However, the extension of the Turkmen-Iranian

pipeline complex was beginning to appear more feasible. The nuclear agreement concluded between Iran and major world powers in July 2015 opened the way for the lifting of international sanctions against Tehran. This in turn meant that the Turkmen-Iranian pipeline network could be extended to Turkey and beyond, raising the possibility that Turkmen gas might eventually be transported to Europe overland along this route. Finally, some 18 years after the idea of a gas pipeline from Turkmenistan to the Indian sub-continent had first been proposed, the TAPI project seemed to be making real progress.

The chief success of Turkmenistan's pipeline strategy during these years was to shift the country away from dependency on the needs and whims of a single customer by developing a diverse range of export options. This proceeded in step with the development of massive gas deposits at the Bagtyarlyk territory, Galkynysh and Dovletabat. The combination of these two approaches – pipeline construction and exploitation of hydrocarbon reserves – allowed Turkmenistan to respond more effectively to regional conditions, to global economic crises, and to shifting patterns of global consumption.

The author is a lecturer in Central Asian Studies at London University's School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS). This is an abridged version of the full opinion posted online.

# EURASIA&WORLD

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 18, 2015

## Kazakh PM, FM Address Newly Established Astana Club, Stress Commitment to Win-Win Cooperation in Central Asia

By Michelle Witte

ASTANA – Prime Minister of Kazakhstan Karim Massimov and Foreign Minister of Kazakhstan Erlan Idrissov addressed Nov. 11 the closing session of the first meeting of the Astana Club, a new neutral platform operating on Chatham House rules of privacy for dialogue among business and political leaders and experts on pressing issues in Eurasia.

The two men addressed Kazakhstan's reform progress, the role of China in the country's economic development, plans for privatisation and other topics. Massimov confirmed his country's position on a number of economic and political issues and confirmed that Kazakhstan planned to sign next month an enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) with the EU.

"Here ... we want to create a platform for cooperation on the vast space of Eurasia, a platform of joining efforts, of ensuring the growth of our countries, both political and economic, ensuring the welfare of our peoples," said Idrissov, addressing the session. "We would like to create a platform to join our efforts in countering the threats that are common to us ... We choose cooperation. [Next is] how to find ways and mechanisms to ensure this cooperation and overcome the confrontation mentality – that is a big task and I believe that discussions like yours can provide us food for thought on these matters."

The inaugural club session gathered representatives from 16 countries across Europe, Asia, the Middle East and North America for three days of discussion in Astana. Meeting topics covered Eurasia's development, its importance in geopolitics, imperialism and post-imperialism, geo-economics and regional security.



During his introduction and the subsequent discussion, Massimov confirmed Kazakhstan's view on the Eurasian Economic Union, which he said it sees as purely economic, its interest in bilateral and multilateral cooperation under the umbrella of China's grand One Belt, One Road project, and its hopes to deepen ties with the EU and continue its "special relationship" with the United States. Massimov noted that Kazakhstan would sign next month the Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement with the EU the negotiations on which was concluded in Brussels last fall, which President Nursultan Nazarbayev alluded to in October.

In the final session, participants praised the new club, asked about Kazakhstan's ongoing economic and political development plans and made suggestions.

Western participants including Director of the Centre for Eurasian, Russian and East European Studies at Georgetown University Angela Stent and Secretary-General of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Organisation

for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Spencer Oliver noted the Astana Club's value as a chance for Russia, the U.S. and the EU to discuss their differences on a neutral ground.

Remarking upon the 40th anniversary of the Helsinki Act, a 1975 effort to improve relations between the West and the then-Communist bloc, Oliver noted that the crisis in Ukraine and the ensuing stand-off between Russia and the West made it difficult to consider the anniversary a celebration, making the dialogue platforms like the Astana Club critically important. "Forums like this are an opportunity to discuss our differences over those matters and to determine whether or not the funeral might actually be a resurrection of some kind," he said. Such gatherings "can bring together a lot of ideas and a lot of expertise and brainpower to try to address these problems, and hopefully in the future the Astana Club can become one of those forums where some solutions to the problems that exist can be found and that some differences can be resolved."

Much of the discussion focused on developing the economy of the Eurasian region. "It's good to have this unique place in Astana to talk so frankly and openly about all these global topics," said Stefan Meister, head of the Programme for Eastern Europe, Russia and Central Asia of the Robert Bosch Centre of Germany's Council on Foreign Relations. "It could be really a brand which is needed to build this bridge between Russia, Europe and Asia ... I think this should continue."

Speaking to reporters after the event, Meister said the economic focus of the meeting was a positive sign. "I think the positive side of this meeting is that we focused on geo-economics and not geopolitics, and that we really pointed out that there is a chance here, in Central Asia, to maybe not to focus all the time on what divides us. As a European coming from Germany, we have at the moment this crisis with Russia, Crimea, Ukraine ... I think that's so much dominating all the relations, so much dominating also economic rela-

tions. I think this meeting gives some hope that – we cannot forget about this – but we can shift strongly to economic topics and to economic cooperation and common benefit."

Regarding economic development, Kazakhstan was lauded for taking action to reform during a period of low oil prices, namely with its 100-step Plan of the Nation to implement the five institutional reforms Nazarbayev campaigned on in the spring. Answering questions, Massimov said the three most crucial steps would be enhancing the rule of law, developing the Astana International Financial Centre and the privatisation of national companies, for which it will shift to the OECD classification of foreign direct investment and make other legislative changes.

This privatisation, he said, would be done with the cooperation of international financial institutions to ensure its fairness and transparency. He also stressed that there would be no geographical limits or quotas on investors; rather, he said, Kazakhstan will be looking for which potential partner can bring the best combination of technology and expertise to the country.

Commenting on Kazakhstan bridging East and West, Chairman of the Pakistan-based Burki Institute of Public Policy Shahid Javed Burki counselled participants not to forget to look south to Pakistan, India and Afghanistan. There is a very large, very young population in that part of the world, he said, "and you can expect the young to be both dynamic or disturbed. And it's going to matter for the world which way South Asia goes, particularly Afghanistan." Burki also noted that Pakistan would receive the biggest chunk of Chinese investment in its massive One Belt, One Road initiative – nearly \$50 billion, or one-

seventh of the entire amount. This will also open huge opportunities, he said.

Gary Litman, vice president of Global Initiatives of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, said that the U.S. would also be watching the privatisation process, and urged Kazakhstan to move quickly. While there will be a drawdown in the U.S. troop presence in the region, "there will not be a drawdown in the American commercial presence. We are very encouraged by the promises of [investment] and privatisation processes. All of that will create opportunities for us," he said. He said he hoped for more representation of Kazakhstan's business community at the next session.

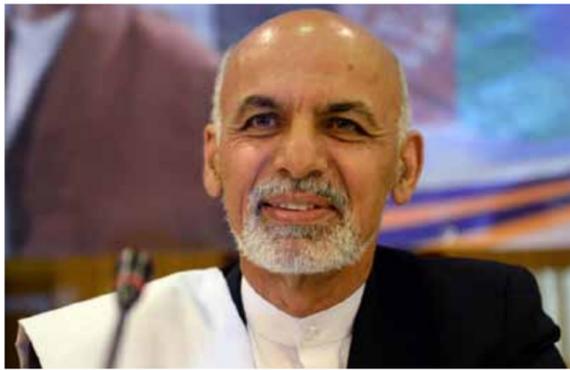
S. Frederick Starr, chairman of the Central Asia-Caucasus Institute and Silk Road Studies Programme of Johns Hopkins University said that Kazakhstan's reform project represents "commendable" activity undertaken in a period of crisis, supporting the security of Central Asia by making it prosperous. The project "is good for Kazakhstan; is good for the region," he said. "It is good for each of our countries and it is good for all of our countries together. So it seems to me very, very important that we each leave here and see what we can do in our own countries to advance this agenda. ... It's in our common interests, and it's the best way to build security. ... We should all together be pushing in that direction."

Idrissov noted that in its quest for growth, Kazakhstan rejects the idea of competition within Central Asia. Kazakhstan, he said, does not celebrate when its growth exceeds the rest of the regions. "Our policy is to make every state in Central Asia prosperous and successful – that will make our region stronger, and will make it more resilient to future challenges, and that is one of our development priorities."

## Afghan President Speaks with Kazakh Journalists before Visit to Astana

By Malika Orazgaliyeva

ASTANA – Khabar Agency reporters visited Kabul Nov. 16 to interview President of Afghanistan Mohammad Ashraf Ghani on the eve of his official visit to Kazakhstan, discussing security, the narcotics trade, his country's economic potential and ongoing reform efforts.



Mohammad Ashraf Ghani

There are several major drivers of insecurity, Ghani said, including targeting by global and regional terrorist groups, and activities of the Taliban.

"Thus, when we have correctly identified the problem, we must carefully consider the process, study it and develop appropriate plans," he said.

"We hope that measures we have taken will change the situation in the country for the winter

period. We stand for a long-term peace. Permanent and stable peace," Ghani explained.

Regarding the narcotics trade that plagues his country, Ghani said development of Afghanistan's agricultural sector, plus efforts to reduce demand, were needed. "Afghanistan needs an agricultural revolution," he said.

Other avenues for economic development include generat-

ing energy, which Ghani says his country has great potential for. Regarding reform, the Afghan president said his government was continuing the reform programme he announced in December 2014, following 100-day programmes.

Concerning security, Ghani informed, the Afghan government detained tens and hundreds of citizens of Uzbekistan, Russia's Chechnya region and Russia proper, Tajikistan and China accused

for terrorist activities in Afghanistan. "These people are not citizens of our country and have no problems with Afghanistan. They have problems in their countries. So, the problem can be solved only through development of a comprehensive regional plan," he suggested.

Talking about his upcoming visit to Astana, Ghani noted that the main goal of the two countries is development of comprehensive economy and trade relations.

"For example, Kazakhstan is one of the major producers of wheat in the region. In the coming five years, unfortunately, we need to import wheat. Thus, signing of the medium-term contract on the purchase of wheat from Kazakhstan is planned," the Afghan President said.

"In addition, Kazakhstan is a major producer of steel. Steel is our main demand in the field of infrastructure construction. Besides, we are interested in Kazakh investments in Afghanistan. We may create conditions for cooperation in various fields with the Afghan state and private companies," he added.

Also, Ghani noted that Afghanistan is grateful to Kazakhstan for providing education to Afghans in Kazakh universities.

"I hope that my upcoming visit to Kazakhstan and negotiations with Uzbekistan, will contribute to achieving a common position on a wide range of issues," Ghani said.



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# Nation & Capital

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 18, 2015

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Moscow Holds Abai Poetry Readings

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SOCIETY

Kazakh YouTube Channel Gains Success

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CAPITAL

Annual Diplomatic Christmas Charity Bazaar Opens Ticket Sales

B8

## Astana Media Forum Holds Talks on Complexities in Reporting on Ethnic Issues



Speakers at the Media Forum of the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan (APK) on Nov. 12.

By Dmitry Lee

ASTANA – The second Media Forum of the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan (APK) on Nov. 12 covered important issues regarding Kazakhstan’s inter-ethnic unity and the quality and competitiveness of the local mass media as well as the popularisation of the Kazakh model of public accord and national unity under the slogan Culture of Peace and Consent.

The capital’s Kazakh Media

Centre gathered foreign and local mass media representatives and political analysts from ethno-cultural associations, including experts from Azerbaijan, Belarus, China, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, the United Arab Emirates, Russia and Turkey.

The event included an exhibition of various newspapers that are published in Kazakhstan, including the Korean paper Koryo Ilbo, which has been publishing for 93 years.

Three panel sessions were held

discussing reporting and blogging and were led by leading journalists and bloggers.

“It is important that the journalists who release information to the masses understand responsibility for their words,” Deputy Dean of the Journalism Faculty of Lomonosov Moscow State University Petr Schultzman said. “When the inter-confessional and inter-ethnic issues are [reported] a simple mistake in a last name may cause scandals and banal human losses.”

The important role of sharing experiences was underlined by Deputy Chair of the APK Yeraly Tugzhanov.

“Today, the world faces certain problems regarding questions of social accord ... therefore, [when] foreign journalists and countries turn to us for an exchange of experience, we accept [their requests],” Tugzhanov said. “Only in the past year and a half, representatives of 15 countries arrived in Kazakhstan including Italy, France and China. [People from] five countries arrived in the past two months [on such missions].”

“The main thing people should be guided by is the ‘doing no harm’ attitude, because speaking out is not shameful, but defending your position and proving its objectivity is the main principle,” Chief Editor of the Kultura Plus Azerbaijani television channel Tofiq Abbasov noted. “Therefore it is necessary, first, to observe the principle of progression, and secondly, to strictly follow precision, objectivity and, in the end, lead your audience not in the wrong direction but in the direction towards justice.”

An inter-ethnic journalism club was proposed to be established in Astana, among numerous other proposals, in order to improve the qualifications of mass media representatives covering inter-ethnic beats.

The event was highlighted by the closing ceremony of the Shanyrak (Top of the Yurt) ethno-journalism contest held throughout the year by the APK.

## Almaty Tech Garden CEO Shares Prospects for Kazakh Startups at Tech Connect Forum

By Kamila Zhumabayeva

ASTANA – Almaty Tech Garden CEO Sanzhar Kettebekov shared the prospects for developing Kazakh startup projects Nov. 12 during TechConnect Astana, the first major tech forum in Central Asia. The event was held at the capital’s Palace of Independence and President Nursultan Nazarbayev sent an address to the participants.

“This forum is a platform to deepen cooperation, as well as a unique opportunity to attract the leading players of the technological business community and a new impulse to develop innovation in the country. I am sure that hosting this event will allow Kazakhstan to position itself as a key technology

hub of the former Soviet Union,” said Nazarbayev in his address, according to Bnews.kz.

The startup battle and research exhibitions were held as a part of the large-scale conference attended by over 2,000 participants, including the founders of 150 local and international startups, 45 speakers, investors and representatives of venture funds. The ASTEX 2015 conference, held within the TechConnect forum, gathered significant data experts from major international organisations and research institutes like EMC, Microsoft, SAP, national IT companies and state representatives, according to the TechConnect Astana press release.

Continued on Page B4

## Media Executive Says Freedom, Diversity of Talents Key for Society to be Creative

By Lyazzat Shatayeva

How do governments encourage creativity to promote innovation-oriented policies? How do businesses advance in technology-driven economies? These questions are frequently asked by Kazakhstan’s private and public sector professionals in the aftermath of the major plunge in oil prices and amid rising economic challenges.

Traditionally, media and entertainment is an industry that stands at the forefront of technological and creative innovation. Media companies need to do more, however, than simply react to today’s challenges. Change is happening quickly and across more dimensions, says Peter Corbett, founder and CEO of iStrategyLabs.

In the span of only a few years, Corbett has built a media agency that has had a large number of massive and highly-successful campaigns. Whether it is an Internet-controlled arcade game for Nickelodeon’s SpongeBob, live streaming interactive games for MillerCoors, Facebook’s Mentions App connecting celebrities with their fans or a cool selfie-mirror, iStrategyLabs creative team has been able to combine inventiveness and technical expertise to devise products that push the boundaries of what’s possible.

iStrategyLabs was named Ad Age’s 2014 Small Agency of the Year, while Corbett has been named one of 100 Tech Titans by Washingtonian Magazine and one of the most influential Washingtonians under 40 by WashingtonLife.

Continued on Page B2

## Nauryz Taikazany Monument to be Constructed on Nazarbayev Street in Kazan, Russia

By Julia Rutz

A monument representing a huge taikazan, or cup, may be constructed on Nazarbayev Street in Kazan, a large port on the Volga River and the capital of the Republic of Tatarstan in Russia. The Nauryz Taikazany project is the concept of Kazakh architect Askhat Bakirov, reported Tengrinews.kz.

“The idea came to me when I was in Kazan on a working visit. I visited Nazarbayev Street and while there I thought that it could be a good idea to construct something symbolising Kazakhstan. A good example appeared to be the famous and the largest taikazan, made in the 15th century by order of Amir Timur, a Turkic conquer-

or remembered for his conquests from India and Russia to the Mediterranean Sea,” said Bakirov.

Kazan is a lovely city where the architectural beauty never fails to astonish any visitor, he added. Moreover, its wedding palace is designed in the form of a taikazan.

To date, the idea has been supported by East Kazakhstan region Akim (Governor) Daniyal Akhmetov, Semey Mayor Ernak Salimov and Semey chief architect Kaldybek Kokilanov. The Tatarstan party, represented by the deputy minister of culture, has also backed the initiative.

The taikazan, with a height of 1.6 metres and diameter of slightly more than two metres, has already been constructed.

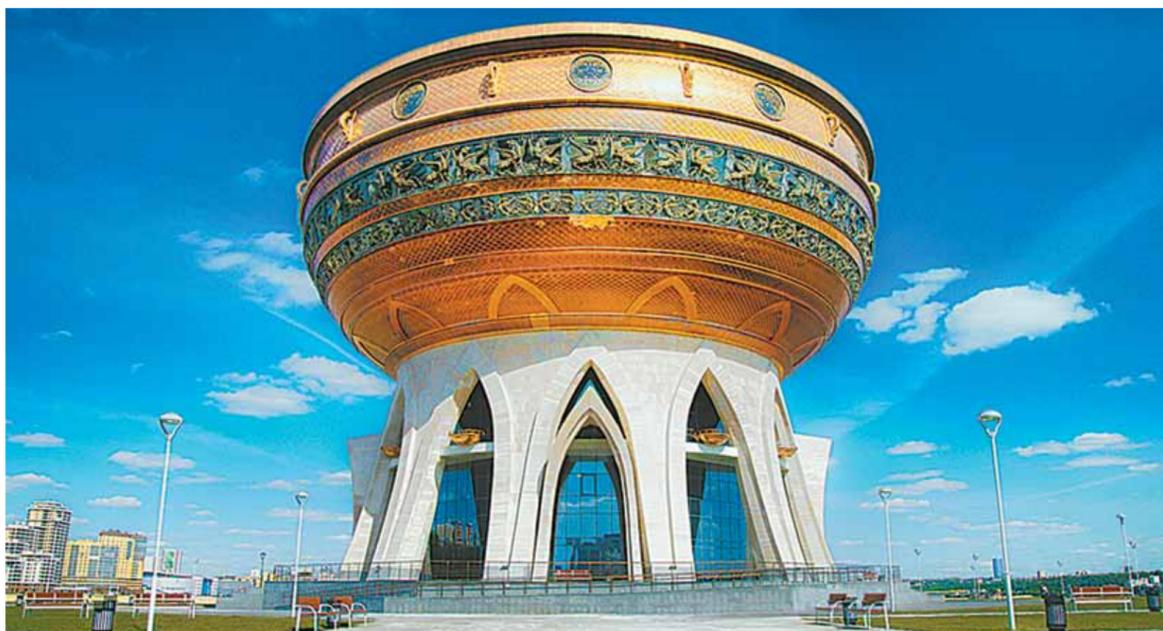
“We made a copy of the real-size taikazan two years ago. It is made of composite materials, which are used in the production of small architectural forms throughout the world,” said the author of the project.

After its creation, the monument was placed in the central square in Semey as a symbol of Nauryz, the spring holiday celebrating abundance and renewed life on Earth. The cup is expected to be presented to Kazan before next year’s festival. The architect also expressed his plans to re-design the entire alley around the monument.

“This gift expresses our gratitude to the Tatar people for their respect and friendly relations with us,” said Bakirov.

The pedestal for the taikazan will be presented on the East Kazakhstan region’s day of culture, to be held in Kazan next spring. Assembling the stand, a project to be funded by the regional administration, will begin shortly.

Named for the Kazakh President, Nazarbayev Street appeared in June after the head of the Kazakh cultural autonomy in Tatarstan Sagit Dzhakysbazev forwarded an official letter to Kazan city hall. In his correspondence, he noted the mutually-beneficial economic and cultural relations between Kazakhstan and Tatarstan, saying the decision to re-name the street will contribute to the further development of friendly relations between the parties.



The kazan-shaped Wedding Palace in the city Kazan.

### THINGS TO WATCH & PLACES TO GO

#### ASTANA ARENA

- November 21 at 3 p.m. Football, Cup of Kazakhstan, Astana VS. Kairat
- November 25 at 9 p.m. Champions League: FC Astana VS. Benfica

#### ASTANA OPERA

- November 21 at 6 p.m. Romeo and Juliette, Ballet
- November 27 at 7 p.m. Abai, Opera
- November 29 at 6 p.m. Beethoven’s Symphony No. 9

#### ASTANA MARRIOTT HOTEL

- November 27 at 7 p.m. Day of Wine by Arba Wine Nuovo

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 18, 2015

# My Brother, Dias Omarov

in People on 9 November 2015

Prominent Kazakh sports journalist Dias Omarov turned 75 in October. The Astana Times offers a short, firsthand essay about this personality prepared by his brother, Timur Omarov, a professor at Kazakh National Technical University.

In the late 1940s and early 1950s in Almaty and throughout the big Soviet country, yard football (played in areas between residential buildings) was very popular. It was the postwar period, when the country had not fully recovered from the devastating effects of World War II and could not provide youngsters with the special conditions for a "happy childhood." We had fun with all sorts of children's games, including, of course, football. There was no problem with football pitches (fields), as we played directly on unpaved streets. At that time, there were few paved streets in Almaty and even fewer cars, so almost nothing disturbed our games.

Our playground was located on Zhambyl Street in the area between Tchaikovsky and Issyk-Kul streets, later renamed Mira (Peace) which now bears the name Zheltoqsan (December). The houses there were built by the Soviet state railway company and were home to our classmates, who with Dias made up our neighborhood team. We mostly played among ourselves, but there were also "away" matches.

I remember two of these matches, one in the courtyard of the houses on Artillery Street (now Kurman-gazy Street) inhabited by families of Academy of Sciences employees.



Dias Omarov

The second match was more memorable, as it took place on a real football field at the Veterinary Institute. I remember Omurbek Bekbosynov, who played brilliantly against us and later became a player for Kairat Almaty (Kazakhstan's top club of the time which played in the top-tier of the Soviet league).

Dias was unquestionably the best player in our neighborhood teams. At the same time he also could act as a coach, defining player's positions on the field and identifying the good goalkeeper in Lenya (Leonid) Samoylenko. He said to me, "You are a defender; your job is to hit the ball away from the gates. Hit it with your foot, cheek, tip, toe, just out of bounds, but do not let it hit the gates."

I remember a funny incident when adult guys passing by invited us to play with them. We were led by our

captain and pretty quickly scored a few goals, so they got angry. They grabbed the ball and looking at us 10-12 year olds offered a "deal:" either we accepted defeat with a score of 1-10 or they would take our ball. The threat of losing the ball was stronger and we accepted their conditions. They were happy, passed the precious ball and left. We then called this pseudo-team "ten-one" and often laughed, recalling how we humiliated them.

The now famous (or infamous) Russian politician Vladimir Zhirinovskiy took part in our games, too, however he did not demonstrate any football talent.

In 1954, youth coaches focused their attention on those playing in courtyards. All the enthusiastic boys were invited to Medik Stadium (later the Kazakh National University Stadium), divided into two teams

and asked to play. We truly enjoyed running on the real football field with a real goal with bars and mesh, not two stones. The game was watched by the talented trainer Kozelko (I cannot recall his name and patronymic). Pretty soon, he called Dias and another boy and drafted them into an extracurricular sports section. Later, I found out that the second boy was Timur Segizbayev (a popular Kazakh player of the 1960s). Then, they both went to Dynamo Almaty coach Petrov. I have often been to the stadium and heard a disgruntled Kozelko saying that the best players were simply taken away from him.

At that time, we often went to the Dynamo Almaty games in the namesake stadium. Even then we knew our idols: Denisov, Karetnikov, Kotlyarov, Chen-Iron, Pisarev, Vasin and others. Our favourite movies were "The Goalkeeper," "The Substitute," and a few other Soviet hits on sports.

A football life of Almaty had already become a notable phenomenon in the 1960s and through the decision of the Soviet Football Federation, Kairat Almaty was invited to play in the top-tier league of the USSR championship. Both Kozelko selections, Timur Segizbayev and Dias Omarov, were in the line-up. I remember how happy they and other young players were. "We play for our own fun, we are given free uniforms and meals, we travel by airplanes and we are even paid salaries!" they said.

In Kairat's first season in the Soviet top-tier league, Segizbayev excelled in the 5th or 6th match of the championship, scoring two goals in the away game against Belarus from Minsk. It was the first defeat for Minsk that season and the first victory for Kairat.

Then was the victory in Moscow, Segizbayev scored twice against the Soviet capital's favourites Spartak, securing Kairat's first notable victory.

Dias, in turn, scored in Vilnius, hitting the net behind the famous Lithuanian goalkeeper of the day, Jonas Bauza. I lived in Leningrad (St. Petersburg) at the time, working as a mechanic in a factory and attending evening classes at the university. My friends and acquaintances were very happy for me and congratulated me as if it was I who scored the goal. They gave me the Soviet Sport newspaper, where a report had been published about the match in Vilnius.

I was also fortunate enough to witness two of Kairat's victories over the local favourites, Zenith in Leningrad. In the first match in 1961, Kairat won 2-1 in front of a 100,000-strong audience. After the match, residents of the city approached our players on Nevsky Prospect (St. Petersburg's main street) with kind smiles and congratulated them on their victory. The second match ended with the score 2-0 in favour of Kairat. My Leningrad friends shared the joy of the victory with me.

I remember very well the impression the stunning architecture of what is undoubtedly one of the most beautiful cities in the world made on the Kairat players. One of the players, Stanislav Kaminski, who walked for hours in Leningrad, said, "I cannot stop looking at this beauty." They were intelligent guys - Oleg Vodopyanov, Bulat Ishchanov, Segizbayev, Robert Antoryan and Vladimir Kiselev. They knew classical music well and many even murmured tunes from Mozart, Beethoven and Tchaikovsky.

Somewhat later, Dias "rescued" a

match in Almaty against Ararat Yerevan. With the score 1-2 in favour of the Armenian guests, he equalised the game by hitting the Ararat goal with a header, even though he was not the tallest player in the penalty area.

In 1965, Dias began working as a sports journalist on Kazakh television and radio. In the course of his work, he met and befriended many of TV's best pundits. Among them were famous Soviet TV anchors including Nikolai Ozerov, Vladimir Maslachenko, Kote Makhharadze, Tengiz Sulkhaniashvili and many others. Dias led the coverage of all Kairat matches and the matches of the World and European Championships. In 1980, he commented on the field hockey tournament matches at the Moscow Olympics.

Former Kairat players sometimes met in our house and they knew our mother well. Antoryan, who often visited our house, enjoyed special favours. Kaminski, who later worked as a coach in Barnaul, admitted that the main thing in his life was Kairat and his real friends were the Kairat players.

The team drew big crowds and brought much joy to the fans, among whom was our father. Once in a meeting, when our forward failed to hit the target a few metres from the gate, he cried out, "There, even Bulebai wouldn't have missed." Bulebai Issabekov, our neighbour, a close family friend and my dad's colleague, was very plump and lived an existence very far from sports.

Dias has remained faithful to football. Despite his age, he participates in tournaments among veterans and recently won a bronze medal in the veterans' world championship in Brisbane, Australia.

Keep it up, brother!

# Media Executive Says Freedom, Diversity of Talents Key for Society to Be Creative

Continued from Page B1

Corbett gave a master class in October to Kazakh journalists and media experts in Astana on producing creative media content and developing products that offer both offline and online experiences for potential viewers and clients. Afterward, he sat down with The Astana Times to share his success story and insight into global media trends.

**What do you think makes iStrategyLabs stand out among other digital ad agencies?**

I think it's the focus on this intersection of online and offline. We build Internet-connected devices and mobile and web applications. But most digital agencies can build web and mobile applications and they can do social media marketing, but they have no idea how to do something in the real world. Then there are agencies called experiential agencies, or production companies; they know how to do things. They can build a stage, they can build a set, they can make a device, but they are not that good with technology. So I thought if I did both of these things which I was very passionate about we would probably



Peter Corbett speaks in Astana.

have this 'killer' combination and that's been our case and our differentiator.

**During your seminar, you talked about creating campaigns that offer a real-time experience. Why is that so important?**

We live in real time. So if you really want to get someone's attention, do something for them that they have to pay attention to right now or they're going to miss it. A lot of our most successful campaigns have been "real-time," things we've done for NBC Universal, MillerCo-

ors, Nickelodeon and a few others. What we've seen is that if we combine that real-time interaction with some form of incentive, we generally have the opportunity to reach millions of people.

**You said you have a creative team. How do you keep them creative and motivated?**

We try to find people that are self-motivated. They want to do something. They are passionate about inventing, making a prototype for a device, designing the interface for a mobile application, producing 15-second videos through animation for Instagram. So it's not a matter of ensuring that they are motivated, they already are; it's the matter of making sure we have the right projects for them to work on. If the project is there, then they just attack it. So part of my job is to make sure we have the right projects.

**How do you create work opportunities and make sure you have the right projects?**

We are really good at marketing, that's why clients hire us, and so we are very good at marketing ourselves. Some of the things we do to

market ourselves is we invent prototypes that would be exciting and then we put them on the Internet as a video and usually a lot of attention is given to them.

We built a prototype for something called a selfie mirror, which is a mirror that when you smile, it does a facial recognition and takes a picture automatically and posts it to your Twitter, Facebook and Instagram accounts. We filmed a 45-second video and in about three days 200,000 people watched it and about 5,000 people emailed saying they wanted to buy one. Now you might ask yourself how you get 200,000 people to watch this video. We know how marketing works. We know how social media works. We inherently understand the language of the Internet. We've actually done big splashy campaigns for ourselves half a dozen times. We usually get coverage in the world's biggest publications, including The New York Times, USA Today, The Washington Post and NPR (National Public Radio). Then our potential clients call us to say "You guys seem to be incredibly creative and inventive. Can we do a project together?"

**Is this your first time in Kazakhstan? What are your general impressions?**

I have been to 60 countries now. I came from Turkmenistan; I had a culture shock coming to Kazakhstan because it was so normal. Coming to Kazakhstan felt great and I felt a sense of relief. "Oh, this is recognizable, this feels European. I understand it's got its touch of Asia." I think that the people here are really sharp. The people I've talked to have a good grasp of the emerging technology and seem to be entrepreneurial. There seems to be lots of promise. Obviously, now the challenge is the devaluation of the tenge and the oil-driven economy.

**What does it take for a society to be creative?**

I think the first thing is it has to have freedom. I know it sounds cliché saying that as an American. But without freedom, creative activity is not going to flourish. Then what you add is the diversity of perspectives, a diversity of talents. It turned out that America had the freedom piece, but it wasn't the most diverse country in the world in the 1700s-1800s. It was mostly European. So

what happened with World War II was probably the best thing that could ever happen for America. We took the best engineering minds of all time over to America in the forties and fifties. That set an incredible base for renaissance of technological development that blasts even today. The next thing you probably need is a big-enough market. You need access to capital and infrastructure. As it turned out, America had all of these things. There are very few places that had all of the things. The places that had most of the things often did not have big markets. The Dutch are incredibly creative. If you go to Amsterdam, they have really great designers and great programmers, but not the biggest businesses in the world because they are a small country. Across Europe, the Europeans are still sort of the Germans only thinking about Germany, the Dutch only thinking about the Dutch, Finns thinking about Finland. So they're not always thinking about the global context. Americans, especially American entrepreneurs, have this natural inclination to think "I want the whole world to use my stuff, not I want all of New Jersey to use it, or all of America." They think "I built Facebook; I want the whole world to use it. I built Google; I want the whole world's information to be connected." So there's this mentality of "globalness," rather than a mentality of "nationalness," that is very American.

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# CULTURE

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 18, 2015

## Moscow Holds Abai Poetry Readings

By Staff Report

The Moscow House of Veterans of Wars and Armed Forces recently held "The Binding Time Thread," a literary and musical evening dedicated to the 170th anniversary of the birth of Kazakh poet, composer and philosopher Abai Qunanbayuli and the 200th anniversary of the birth of Russian Romantic writer, poet and painter Michael Lermontov, reported the press service of the Kazakh Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The festivities were opened by the Minister-Counselor of the Kazakh Embassy in Russia Viktor Temirbayev. He quoted Kazakh writer Mukhtar Auevov, telling the audience about the deep spiritual connection between the two great men of their time.

"Abai used to translate Lermontov's poems with great care and great love. 'The Dagger,' 'I go out on the road alone,' 'The



Gifts of the Terek River,' 'The Sail' and excerpts from 'The Demon' are a few poems to mention, in which the translation is above all others implemented in the Kazakh language," said the Kazakh diplomat, citing Auevov.

Temirbayev drew attention to the fact that denoting 2015 as the Year of Literature in Russia marked a significant expansion of literary contacts between the two countries and the organised event is one of the milestones in the sphere of cultural and humanitarian cooperation.

Merited Artist of Kazakhstan and director of the Mukhtar Auevov Kazakh State Academic Drama Theatre Erlan Bilal noted the importance of such celebrations, especially for those who love Kazakh poetry, among them Kazakh compatriots living abroad.

"Today, the audience enjoyed a theatrical incarnation of the great works of Abai and Mikhail Lermontov. In my opinion, it provides a deeper understanding of the highest level of their poetry. Of course, many people have read poems of these two great poets; however, for the younger generation it is more interesting

to learn poetry in a form of a theatrical performance, feeling the emotions of the actors," he said.

People's Artist of Kazakhstan and Professor of Arts Tlektos Meiramov appreciated the great interest the Russian public had in Abai's legacy and expressed hope the tradition of holding cultural events with the participation of Kazakh artists will continue.

"I think cultural events like this are necessary not only to bring the great heritage of Kazakh culture to the Russian audience, but also to trigger greater convergence between Kazakh and Russian cultures," said Meiramov.

The evening was attended by veterans of the Great Patriotic War and representatives of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) country embassies accredited in Russia, as well as honorable Kazakh guests, university and school students.

The event was organised by the Kazakh National Cultural Autonomy in Moscow and the Memory, two non-governmental organisations and supported by the Kazakh Embassy in Russia.

## Almaty Approves Construction of Modern Art Museum

By Staff Report

ALMATY – Local patrons from the Museum of Modern Art Public Foundation received approval from the Almaty Planning Council for the construction of a modern art museum in the Bostandyk district. The developers say the goal of the project is to increase the city's potential as an international tourist centre.

The building is proposed for a 2.17-square hectare parcel adjacent to the botanical garden in the northern part of Al-Farabi Avenue. The council members noted the museum might serve as a future entrance area to the garden, which currently does not have access to the street, triggering the development of the park as a whole. The developers have also been introduced to several requirements the project should initiate, such as establishing a school-studio of contemporary art within the museum. In addition, the land will be leased without the right of redemption and its use may not be changed.

Almaty Akim (Mayor) Bauyrzhan Baibek noted the significance of the undertaking, which is to be executed in the framework of the recent order of President Nursultan Nazarbayev to strengthen and develop Almaty's status as a scientific, educational and cultural centre, as well as create comfortable living conditions in the urban area.

"It is very important for the city, which we want to make modern and relevant to international standards, to create good leisure conditions for its citizens. We must revive the cultural life of Almaty," said the mayor.

The Museum of Modern Art Public Foundation was created by a group of patrons and acts as a nonprofit organisation aimed at creating a modern art museum in accordance with international standards, noted businessman Serzhan Zhumashov. The foundation hopes to attract one of the world's most renowned architects, Carlos Ferrater of Barcelona, Spain.

The creator of the Office of Architecture in Barcelona (OAB), Ferrater is known for his spectacular approach to unique design and implementing effective techniques using geometric shapes. His bureau has extensive experience in developing museum and cultural centre construction projects. The company has completed several successful buildings, such as the Science Museum in Granada (Spain), El Ter Industrial Museum in Manlleu (Spain), the Confluence Museum in Lyon (France) and the Conference Centre in Castellón (Spain). In 1996, the OAB bureau received the prestigious V Bonaplata Prize from the Catalonia Association of Museums of Science, Technology and Archaeology for its contribution to museum development.

The council also approved construction of the Jubilee land housing complex in the Medeu district commissioned by Kumpolan Development and designed by RSP Architects Planners & Engineers, Singapore and KAZGOR. Great attention will be paid to vertical gardening in an effort to improve the residential apartment buildings. The mayor noted the vital role of international experience to further Almaty's urban development and stressed that each district should incorporate its own unique architectural appearance.



The Science Museum in Granada.

## 'Kazakh Khanate' Series and Film to Be Released during 2016 Nauryz Celebrations

By Kseniya Voronina

ASTANA – The 10-episode "The Kazakh Khanate" cinematic series and a motion picture based on the series will be released during the spring 2016 Nauryz celebrations, said Arman Asenov, producer of "Kazakh Eli," at a recent Central Communications Service briefing.

"We think that a film about nomads is ideally suited for Nauryz. Seventy out of 150 scenes have already been filmed. Except adjusting for weather conditions, shooting is going on with no interference. Apart from a 10-episode series, we are also planning to release a full-length version," Asenov said.

He also said Al-Jazeera Arabic

television and media outlets in Russia, where Nauryz is also celebrated, are interested in airing the series. Negotiations are also underway with Channel One (ORT), NTV and others.

The 150 million tenge (US\$484,207) needed to begin shooting "Kazakh Khanate," was raised through crowdsourcing. Kazakh residents can help finance the project through crowdfunding by going to qazaqeli550.kz.

An unnamed large industrial group is also going to sponsor the project with 500 million tenge (about US\$1.61 million.)

Having undergone several cuts, the estimated budget of the project is 2.16 billion tenge (US\$6.99 million).

According to Khabar news, bat-

tle scenes, legendary historical characters and other breathtaking scenes are being shot in the Almaty region.

Crowd scenes included 300 people and consisted of local residents, military and stuntmen, however, according to historical data, more than 200,000 people actually migrated. Therefore, the director used computer multiplication of the image. Members of the camera crew said that a lot of time was spent on the preparation of horse ammunition, jewelry, weapons, 11 types of costumes and the creation of the scenery, khabar.kz reported.

According to the director, stunt men have a lot of work in this film. For example, the girls who play amazons learned horseback riding

and archery especially for this role. "What had happened 550 years ago was a historic moment when the Kazakh Khanate separated and formed a young state in very difficult circumstances," Production Director Rustem Abdrashev told the Khabar news channel Nov. 5.

A team of writers and playwrights, including Smagul Elubayev and Timur Zhaksylykov, worked on the plot and artistic details.

Historical and fictional literature, including the first part of the "Nomads" novel by Ilyas Yesenberlin, were used when writing the script. The storyline begins with the founding of the Khanate in 1465 by Kerey and Zhanibek khans and continues to 1512, when Kassym Khan came to power.

## Karaganda Attracts International Operetta Stars

By Julia Rutz

The Karaganda Theatre of Musical Comedy was the host Nov. 1 for DosStar, the fifth International Operetta Festival. The event opened with a Russian burlesque performance by the Omsk State Musical Theatre directed by People's Artist of Russia Kirill Sterzhnev.

The audience also enjoyed presentations by Belarusian artists. "The True Story of Lieutenant Rzhnevsky" showed the other side of the title character's identity, as unexpected twists and psychological depth demonstrated the skills of director Susanna Tsiryuk.

The gala and concert introduced a number of artists to the local public. Performers included international competition winners Hannah Okonsky and Lukasz Ratajczak of Poland, Azerbaijani Honoured Artists Nargiz Karimova and Farid Aliyev, Komi State Opera and Ballet Theatre actors Helena Lodygina and Vitaly Gudkovskiy, Stavropol State Operetta Theatre actress Natalya Vinogradova, A. Spendiarov State Academic Theatre of Opera and Ballet soloist and international contest and festival winner Abgar Sargssian of Armenia, Honoured Artist Igor Levenets and national and international competition winner Valerya Tullis from the Kiev National Operetta Theatre, international competition winner Victor Tsirkunovich, Belarus Honoured Artist Margarita Alexandrovich and People's Artist of Belarus Natalia Gaida.

The artists performed not only classical masterpieces, but national hits. Belarusian conductor Nikolai



Makarevich, who is also the winner of the Golden Knight Award, directed the Karaganda Theatre orchestra in a variety of different sounds, capturing the audience in the world of classical music.

"I remember those days when we first met each other, when we were going on tours every year. We were like a family. Therefore, when this communication ended for a certain period of time, it was really hard for me. I am happy that we reunited again," said Gaida.

Karimova noted Karaganda is her second home, as she received her first award in the city.

"We have all known each other for a long period of time and every

year when the time comes to go to the DosStar Festival we look forward to meeting our dear friends," she said.

Karaganda Theatre head Aman-tai Ibrayev said cooperation with foreign theatres will continue developing.

"We have great plans for the future; however, I am not going to tell you about it. All I can say is that next year we are planning to bring a theatrical troupe from Hungary to the festival. There are no boundaries in the world of art, so I think we can do that," he said.

The festival was also supported by Festival of Arts, the Russian nongovernmental fund which ex-

ecutes the intergovernmental programme.

"This programme was initiated by the Ministries of Culture of Kazakhstan and Russia. We organise a series of exchange activities for Kazakh and Russian teams according to it. We have also started to work on next year's events programme," said fund representative Egor Fomin.

Karaganda Theatre, which has presented more than 200 repertoire performances since its inception, is the only theatre in Kazakhstan to work in the operetta genre. The troupe has visited a similar number of cities while touring Russia, China, Ukraine, Belarus and Central Asian countries.

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## Taiburil Scholarship Programme Supports Talented Students, Plans to Expand

By Julia Rutz

The awards ceremony for the Taiburil monthly scholarship winners was held Oct. 31 in Almaty. The programme, supported by second-tier banks such as Kaspi Bank and Kazkommertbank, as well as private sponsors including prominent businessmen Kenes Rakishev, Vyacheslav Kim and Aidan Karibzhanov, is aimed at supporting education, reported Tengrinews.kz.

More than 1,000 applications were received for consideration and each candidate was deserving, said Taiburil Public Association Chairman Olzhas Khudaibergenov. Only 270 grants, however, were available this time.

"We plan to increase the number of scholarships up to 500 for the coming spring semester by involving new sponsors," he added.

Approximately 80 percent of the scholarship winners are girls and the majority study technical professions.

"Knowledge is the most important asset that you can ever have and nobody can take it away from you. That is why it is worth investing time in education in order to acquire new experiences and surround



Photo credit: tengrinews.kz

yourself with people who can teach you useful things," said Kaspi Bank Chairman Michael Lomtadze.

The winners will receive a monthly scholarship of 30,000 tenge (US\$105.98) within five months of the fall semester. In order to participate in the competition, the applicant should be a Kazakh citizen and have a certificate with no criminal conviction. The individual must also have completed at least one semester at a university. The competition is fulfilled on the national scale and potential candi-

dates may not be involved in any other grant programmes in Kazakhstan or abroad.

"This programme gives me the opportunity to fully concentrate on my studies and not think about additional earnings I need for living, as I came from the regions and lack financial support," said Al-Farabi State University fourth-year student Kimbat Almazyzy.

Scholarship recipient Madina Rasulova, a student at Almaty Technical University, said that thanks to the Taiburil scholarship she was

able to use her free time to start learning a second foreign language.

"Such programmes act as a good motivator for students, as it reminds us that there are no limits if you want to grow professionally," she added.

During Taiburil's three-year existence, the association has raised its foundation to 100 million tenge (US\$353,258). The entire amount is allocated for scholarships, while advertisements and public relations campaigns are funded on a volunteer partnership basis with support from tengrinews.kz, forbes.kz, kursiv.kz, vlast.kz and nur.kz.

"I hope the Taiburil scholarship programme continues expanding in the future and those who received scholarships today will come back to us as good businessmen and reliable sponsors. This will be the best approval of the viability of the programme," said Khudaibergenov.

The Taiburil Public Association was established in 2013 to support Kazakh students who are achieving success but face financial hardships. In addition to the monthly scholarship, Taiburil offers full education grants and research scholarships. To date, 655 scholarships have been awarded.

## Four Kazakh Cities Join UNDP-GEF Sustainable Cities Project



By Michelle Witte

ASTANA – The akims (mayors) of Taraz, Shymkent, Temirtau and Lisakovsk cities of Kazakhstan officially signed memoranda of understanding with the UNDP-Global Environmental Facility (GEF) project Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Actions (NAMAs) for Low-Carbon Urban Development at a UNDP-sponsored conference in Astana Nov. 5.

"Sustainable cities means planning, designing and construction with the aim to reduce the impact on the environment, reduce air pollution and reduce greenhouse gas emissions," said Director of the Energy Conservation Department of the Industrial Committee of Development and Safety of Kazakhstan's Ministry of Investment and Development Olzhas Alibekov addressing the conference. He also noted that, given low oil prices and the overall challenging economic environment, the timing is especially good for working on a new platform from which to attract new, energy-efficient and environmentally friendly technology to Kazakhstan.

The project, also called the Sustainable Cities Project, aims to collect 11 cities in total for its pilot programme in Kazakhstan and intends to support the cities as they identify, design and implement NAMAs to guide their development. The NAMAs are expected to take the form of investments in infrastructure supported by capacity building, awareness raising and technical assistance, according to the UNDP. The \$71.3 million project, financed mostly by the government of Kazakhstan with contributions from the UNDP, GEF and other sources, is to help cities carry out integrated municip-

pal planning, create NAMAs and decide on priorities, create and strengthen local institutions and facilitate financing for urban projects by creating funding mechanisms, according to the UNDP.

The project as a whole will contribute to achieving Kazakhstan's voluntary target of reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 15 percent by 2020, while improving urban services and the quality of life of the country's citizens as per the Kazakhstan 2050 Strategy.

The project is the first effort in Kazakhstan to adopt a comprehensive approach to reduce GHG emissions in cities, which project organisers note are among the world's most GHG-intensive.

Alexander Belyi, coordinator of the project, noted that the Sustainable Cities project relates to the objectives of the Nury Zhol economic stimulus programme, which focuses on infrastructure development as a spur to economic development.

"One of the new challenges of the development of the global community, including Kazakhstan, is to make localities sustainable. According to the current economic conditions, the Sustainable Cities Project is very relevant. On one hand, it will lead to the provision of global environmental benefits, including reducing GHG emissions; on the other hand, it will lead to an increase in the quality of life in cities and, in particular, the quality of services provided in housing, public transport and other spheres of the urban economy," Belyi told conference participants.

Following the plenary session and the signing ceremony, participants took part in sessions on financing for low-carbon development, best practices in urban sustainability in Central Asia and the world and field visits to low-carbon initiatives around Astana.

## Packaging Producers Discuss Market Issues

By Yerzat Sergazin

ASTANA – The conference of Kazakh packaging producers held in the capital Nov. 6 included discussions by representatives of domestic businesses who expressed dissatisfaction with the pricing policy for packaging products. The conference was attended by the heads of 50 packaging companies, industry experts and competent experts from Russia.

"The price policy of Russian companies that produce materials for packaging is excessive and in some cases does not match the quality," said Polinvest Director Bauyrzhan Zhussupov.

Kaznex Invest Managing Director Gaziza Shakhanova, representing Kazakh producers, talked about the current situation in the industry.

"The capacity of Kazakhstan's packaging market barely reaches \$700 million. Domestic packaging producers hold no more than 35 percent of the domestic market; the rest is imported mainly from China and Russia. For example, the Kazakh packaging market is about 25 times smaller than the Russian market and our Russian partners

have relatively more opportunities for the development of the industry and its promotion. No one argues with that; the only issue is the price, which is too high," she said.

Shakhanova added that although Kazakh enterprises are able to provide packaging to the domestic market, there are a number of factors that impede implementing this important task.

"One of them is the growing import of polypropylene packaging from China and noncompliance with quality requirements imposed by the technical regulations of the Customs Union 'On the security

of packaging,' as well as problems with the provision of the production with the necessary raw materials. Local businessmen note the high rates of the Common Customs Tariff of the Eurasian Economic Union on polyethylene, polyvinyl chloride and aluminium foil and the high dependence of Kazakh production on Russian suppliers, reaching 70 percent, as well as problems with the provision of regenerated paper and cardboard," she said.

The managing director also noted the packaging industry is not currently recognised as a separate category of economic activity, resulting

in a shortage of state support both in terms of protecting the interests of business and supporting investment projects.

Igor Smirenniy, chief editor of the Russian magazine "Tara I Upakovka" and vice president of the Russian National Confederation of Packaging, noted that Kazakh businessmen have many of the issues as their Russian counterparts. He drew attention to the fact that the functioning of the Eurasian Economic Union should change the situation.

"The main issue is greed for money. The problem is that today's economy is going through hard times and the owners of these enterprises are solving their local problems. They want to earn as much money as they can," he said.

Pira International has forecast that in 2016 the turnover of the global packaging industry will reach \$820 billion, with an annual 3 percent growth achieved by packaging materials including cardboard and hard plastic. The biggest packaging consumers are the United States (\$137 billion in demand), China (\$80 billion) and India (demand will reach \$24 billion in the coming years).



Photo: Kazpravda.kz

Representatives of the packing industry meet in Astana Nov. 6.

## Almaty Tech Garden CEO Shares Prospects for Kazakh Startups at Tech Connect Forum

Continued from Page B1

The Wipon Kazakh startup project, one of 10 finalists from five countries in the startup battle, won the main prize of the conference – \$25,000 – provided by Cross Border Angels, an international investment network, a press release reported.

"We were attracting small and medium businesses that are located in Almaty, where about 4,000 IT companies are located. By consolidating the entire mass, we want to create a new stream of projects that meets the requirements of competitiveness and is capable of working both in Kazakhstan and beyond the country," said Kettebekov.

He described a serious programme to be created in 2016 which will include establishing five technology centres in collaboration with transnational companies to raise the level of competence, where selection of transnational companies will be based on their direct commercial interest.

"In order to ensure the critical

mass of the companies that will grow at the cost of those centres, we are starting the Startup Kazakhstan programme, which is about attracting startups from Kazakhstan and foreign countries to these technology centres. Jointly, we hope it creates a wave of new companies," said Kettebekov.

The end result should lead to establishing 50 competitive new companies.

"Almaty Tech Garden is a brand of the Autonomous Cluster Fund of the Park of Innovation Technologies. If before we relied on the organic growth of these companies, then today we say to accelerate the development and the fulfilment of goals which we have set, two or three new directions that are capable to make significant contributions to the country's GDP should be created. In this regard now, we realised that we need to cultivate startups, meaning to create the environment where the growth of these companies is stimulated," he stressed.

"When a startup company works with a big company that sells ser-

vices to a neighbouring country, it is easier for a startup to go out of a big company. Using the power of transnational companies is needed, as it is very difficult for a young startup company to go out on its own," said Kettebekov.

He emphasised that the strategy on establishing new opportunities for startup companies to go out in new markets is currently being built, as well as the level of competence itself. For example, in order to work with IBM companies, startups must be at the right level.

"Having studied global experience, we chose our own path, which will be constantly changing. This is dynamics and system. We have identified five directions that we see a demand for in the near future, such as new materials and information technologies that are based on fundamental industries. This is our starting point," Kettebekov noted. "Unlike many other countries where developed markets exist, our approach differs seriously because we attempt to stimulate demand for innovations,

which are changing the mentality of companies and an operating procedure."

Demand was always there; the task is to merely consolidate it, said the CEO.

"A city is a good demand. A startup that provides technologies for a smart city is already a specific demand. Of course, these startups are required to produce high quality products, in order for city residents to entrust their lives to them, in some cases," he added. "For a startup, networking and meeting other startup companies is important. Most often one startup company cannot offer a resolution to a big problem, but together in a group they can offer and resolve quite big problems." Forums can be platforms for testing demand and trial and error explorations, he said.

Almaty Tech Garden holds a startup day every three months, where projects are presented.

"There is nothing better than to pitch an investor; that is, as a startup you understand what is in demand and how to sell your-

self correctly. Forming an understanding of a market is the goal of this event," said Kettebekov. "There is a good mix of ages and competence; for example, there are 70-year-olds and first- and second year-students in Almaty and this is a big and a little amorphous mass ... The only thing, if we compare it to Silicon Valley,

where people have work experiences from big corporations, we unfortunately don't have [those] here."

He concluded by saying this difference has to be complemented and compensated by the institute of development, where startups and already-existing incubation companies play their roles.



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# Domestic Alcohol Excise Taxes to Increase by 15 Percent



Photo: kazakhstan.ru

By Zhaniya Urankayeva

ASTANA – The Kazakh Mazhilis (lower house of Parliament) approved on Nov. 11 changes made by the Senate to the Law “On amendments and additions to some legislative acts of Kazakhstan on the issues of taxation and customs administration.” The law has been sent to the President for his signature.

“The Senate has made five amendments to the bill, including one to revise the rates of excise duty on alcoholic beverages, except for cognac, brandy, wines and beer beverages. It should be noted that during the consideration of the bill, the Mazhilis members proposed to freeze rates

of excise duty on alcoholic beverages for the next three years at the current rate, as has been done in Russia and Belarus,” said Mazhilis Deputy Serik Ospanov.

Previously, the government did not support that proposal. But during consideration of the bill in the Senate, the government revised its decision and proposed a 15 percent increase out of an estimated 30 percent in the excise tax on alcoholic beverages instead of the previously proposed 10 percent.

“In order to improve the competitiveness of domestic producers of alcoholic beverages it is proposed to reduce the rate of excise duty only in 2016 from the expected 1,600 tenge (US\$5.16)

to 1,380 tenge (US\$4.45) per 1 litre of 100 percent alcohol, which is 15 percent more compared to this year. In this case, we will have a shortfall in local budgets,” said Minister of National Economy Yerbolat Dossayev during the introduction of the bill in the Senate.

He noted that the government plans to consider in 2016 establishing rates of excise duties on strong liquor for 2017-2019, within the development of the draft law on the reform of tax legislation. The reform of the system of intergovernmental relations and further harmonisation of excise rates within the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) is also planned for 2017.

## Kazakh YouTube Channel Gains Success

By Zhazira Dyussebekova

ASTANA – Saspens, Kazakhstan’s biggest YouTube channel, is the creation of Andrey Burnyakov. The 23-year-old from Karaganda launched his channel in November 2014 and now has more than 840,000 subscribers, mainly children and teenagers from Russia, Kazakhstan and Ukraine.

Derived from the English word “suspense,” Saspens was initially described as a video blog about science, horror stories and curious facts. The website has evolved into informative videos on a range of topics, some mysterious and scary. The most popular videos include the worst five schools in the world, five mythical creatures that may exist, five worst teachers in the world and five craziest Japanese shows.

Burnyakov generates most of

scripts and assemble the videos and he is responsible only for the voice over.

“It started very simply. I opened video and audio programmes, made a scenario and did my first video. I uploaded it, but nobody watched it. So, I decided to develop it and make videos every day and with good quality. The channel gained subscribers very slowly in the beginning, but after some time the pace increased very quickly. Later, it became harder to deal with the advertisers and scenarios. I hired one cutter, later one scriptwriter and one more cutter after some time. An advertising manager was invited later as well,” he said.

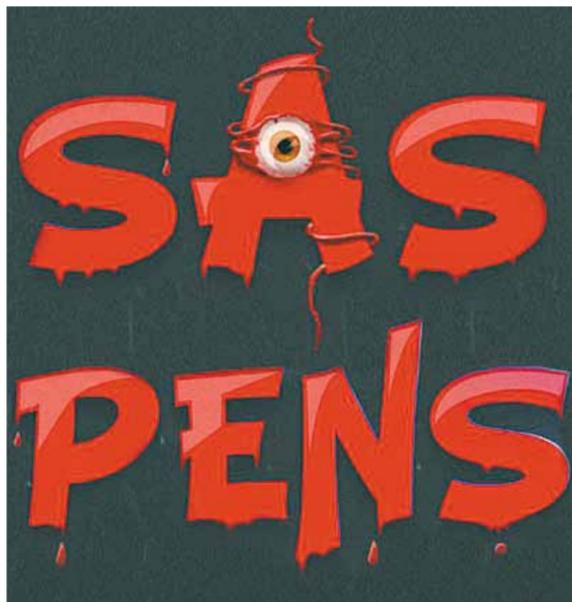
Burnyakov is not planning to connect his life with YouTube, although for now it is his main job and source of income. He typically spends five hours a day on Saspens, adding it is a hobby at the same time.

**BURNYAKOV: “I think that the reason of the success of my channel is that it is connected to modern trends and the fact that it has a big part of the audience in other Russian-speaking countries. People watch online videos because they feel close to the people that create them. It feels like a friend talking to you.”**

the ideas himself and new videos are available almost every day. He has learned which topics are the most interesting to his audience and admits it does not take a lot of time to create new concepts.

When the website was in its infancy, Burnyakov produced everything on his own. Now, he has a team of people who write the

“I think that the reason of the success of my channel is that it is connected to modern trends and the fact that it has a big part of the audience in other Russian-speaking countries,” said Burnyakov. “People watch online videos because they feel close to the people that create them. It feels like a friend talking to you.”



## Kazakh Symbol, the Golden Eagle, Is Critically Endangered

By Julia Rutz

The golden eagle, the symbol of Kazakhstan, is critically endangered. Although the bird was included 30 years ago on the Red List of Kazakhstan, an inventory of threatened species compiled by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the number of birds continues to steadily decline.

To save the predator, scientists have decided to breed the birds in captivity. Employees at Sunkar, Kazakhstan’s only national raptor shelter, recently gave four young golden eagles to colleagues from the Institute of Zoology to be released in the coming days. The birds have been trained in special enclosures how to survive in the wild and now are ready to join their counterparts and increase the natural population, reported 24.kz.

“As we all know, birds of prey are breeding in remote areas far away from cities. It is necessary

to keep birds as close to wild conditions as possible, so our raptor shelter is always quiet. Our fosterlings also require a very high quality of food. There are two ways to release the birds into the wild: small species should be carefully put in the nest, while older birds should be freed and then monitored to estimate their integration in the new habitat,” said raptor shelter head Ashot Anzorov.

According to Institute of Zoology representative Andrey Gavrilov, two main factors were considered when choosing where to release the golden eagles: food availability and quiet surroundings.

“Because of the critical situation and in order to protect the endangered species, we don’t announce the place where golden eagles are going to be released,” he said.

Sunkar was established in 1989 to save the endangered population of falcon baloban (or falco cherrug). The organisation cooperates with German and Austrian colleagues, as well as the Institute of



A golden eagle.

Photo: Rus-ling.com

Zoology and the state wildlife bodies, to involve new technologies and enhance awareness concerning biodiversity among students who participate in biology classes organised at the raptor shelter.

To date, 635 different types of birds, including falcons, vultures and owls, have been released into

the wild. Fifteen golden eagles have been bred in the shelter and then returned to their natural habitat. While there are no guarantees these birds will survive, scientists hope for the best, pointing out that previous times the released species successfully adapted to their new homes.

## Online Registration Opens for Almaty Marathon

By Dmitry Lee

ASTANA – The Almaty Marathon, the annual charity marathon, which is to be held in Almaty Nov. 21 starting from the Park of the First President and finishing at the Central Stadium, has opened online registration at almaty-marathon.kz, Tengrinews.kz reported.

The event is a 42-kilometre and 195-metre marathon.

“Healthy lifestyle enthusiasts of any age or gender or physical shape can participate. The event aims to attract anyone who loves jogging,” Saltanat Kazybayeva, director of the organising committee, said.

For younger runners aged 10-14, who have the privilege to participate for free, there will be a distance of two kilometres. For runners in the age groups 15 to 34, 35 to 49, and 50 and over, there will be a distance of 15 kilometres. All potential runners have to do is read about the terms of the marathon, register online and pay a 1,000 tenge flat fee.

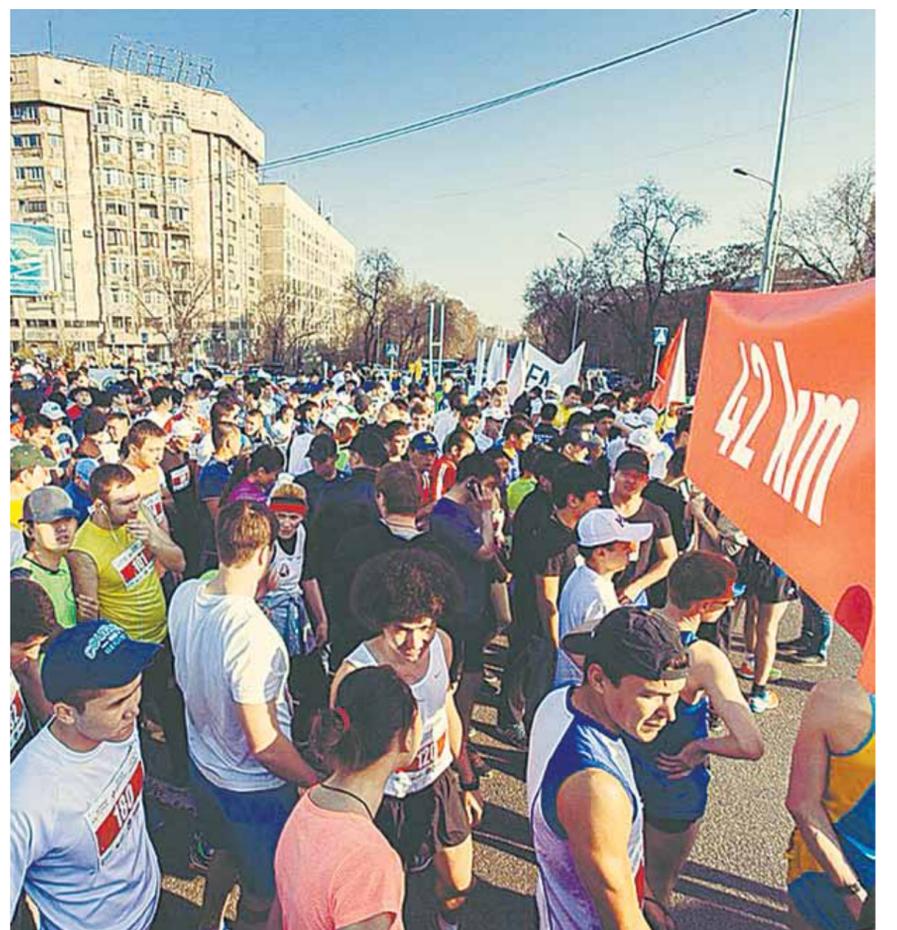
“All the collected funds will be spent on charity,” the official website states. “So besides the main goal, which is to popularise a healthy lifestyle and jogging, the Almaty Marathon also covers some of the important social functions, attracting the community to social obligations, giving every person an opportunity to make a contribution to a benevolent cause.”

In 2012, the funds collected during the marathon in Almaty were spent on a programme of support and rehabilitation of children with cerebral palsy. In 2013, the collected funds were transferred to

the rehabilitation centre Ardi for the construction of a mini-water area to accommodate children with cerebral palsy. In 2014, the raised funds were used for the treatment of three-year-old Darina Lik.

Also, as part of the Almaty Marathon, general sponsor of the event Astana Motors presented the Oncology Department of the Research Institute of Pediatrics and Pediatric Surgery in Almaty

with an ambulance. Earlier in 2015, the funds were spent on the construction of a sports complex for special boarding school No. 9 for children with severe speech disorders.



# TOURISM

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## EXPO 2017 Expands Country Participation List



First Deputy Foreign Minister and EXPO 2017 Commissioner Rapil Zhoshybayev (L) with Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif.

By Aiman Turebekova

A Kazakh delegation led by First Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and EXPO 2017 Commissioner Rapil Zhoshybayev paid a working visit to Jordan Nov. 2, Saudi Arabia Nov. 4-5 and Iran Nov. 9-10, reported the ministry's press office.

Zhoshybayev met with Jordanian Investment Commission Chairman Montasser Oklah, who is responsible for his country's participation in the expo, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates Secretary General Mohammad Yaseen, Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources Secretary General Ghabeb Maabreh and Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities Secretary-General Issa Gammo. During the session, Jordan officially confirmed its participation in EXPO 2017 in Astana. The sides discussed organisational issues in detail and initiated a respective agreement.

Zhoshybayev and Yaseen discussed a wide range of issues regarding the development of Kazakh-Jordanian cooperation and interaction between the Foreign Ministries.

"In terms of the development of relations with Kazakhstan, which is the pillar of political stability and prosperity in Central Asia, Jordan promotes a special and trusting relationship established between the leaders of Kazakhstan and Jordan," said Yaseen.

At the meeting with Maabreh, Zhoshybayev spoke about the exhibition's theme and Kazakhstan's development of green energy. In turn, the secretary-general shared information about the construction of the first nuclear power plant in Jordan, which is implemented in the framework of the national programme to develop renewable energy up to 2020. Jordan was also among the

first countries in the Middle East to begin promoting the use of green technology.

Gammo emphasised an interest in promoting tourism potential, including creating tour packages and the possibility of opening direct flights between the two capitals.

Two days later, Zhoshybayev met with high-level officials of Saudi Arabia, including Minister of Commerce and Industry Tawfiq Al Rabiah, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Prince Turki bin Saud Al-Kabeer and Vice President of the King Abdullah City for Atomic and Renewable Energy Hussain Abulfaraj. He also met the leadership of the chamber of commerce and industry and executives of tourism companies, business structures and organisations that specialise in alternative and renewable energy. The sides discussed issues of cooperating in



Rapil Zhoshybayev (second from left) meets with Secretary-General of the Jordanian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities Issa Gammo (R).

energy, attracting investments and participating in the exposition.

"Kazakhstan and Saudi Arabia have established strong relationships that are open and mutually trusted on the whole range of bilateral cooperation," said Al Rabiah. "Saudi Arabia is going to take part in EXPO 2017. The country's leadership attaches great importance to the upcoming exhibition and the kingdom has something to show the world community on the subject of future energy."

The technical issues of participation in EXPO 2017 and cooperation in the sphere of alternative energy were the main themes of the talks in King Abdullah City. The town's leadership expressed its readiness to sign an agreement with Kazakhstan on cooperation in the sphere of peaceful use of nuclear energy and renewable energy.

The kingdom has made a decision to completely stop using fossil fuels by 2040, incorporating solar energy and wind to replace coal and oil. As a result, \$109 billion will be invested in projects to develop solar energy infrastructure.

The prince noted Kazakhstan's vigorous activity in international organisations, including the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation and United Nations structures. Zhoshybayev expressed his gratitude to the Saudi side for its support of Kazakhstan's candidacy as a nonpermanent member of the UN Security Council for 2017-2018.

Given Saudi Arabia's plans to develop alternative energy, the EXPO 2017 commissioner invited the country's leading enterprises to take part in the exposition. At the end of the event, memorandums on cooperation were signed between Astana EXPO 2017 and the heads of Al Taayar and Vega, leading travel companies in the region.

"Next year, we are planning to in-

roduce a direct flight from Riyadh to Astana to enable people from the kingdom and from Kazakhstan to travel easily and in comfort," said Zhoshybayev.

In Tehran, Zhoshybayev had productive meetings with the foreign minister and other senior officials on the development of economic cooperation and tourist exchanges, as well as with leading Iranian companies working with alternative and renewable energy sources.

During the meeting with Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif, the parties discussed the state and prospects of collaboration between the two countries, bilateral political cooperation and the development of trade-economic, scientific-technical, cultural and humanitarian partnerships between Kazakhstan and Iran.

Tourism development issues, visa regime simplification, the implementation of tourist group visas

and the opening of direct flights between the capitals of the two states were emphasised at a meeting with Deputy Head of the Iranian Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organisation Morteza Rahmani. The parties focused also on implementation of joint projects on tourist group packages and popularisation of Kazakhstan's tourism potential in Iran. Rahmani said Iran has included Kazakhstan in its list of priority countries in the field of tourism.

At the Ministry of Industry and Mines, the sides discussed bilateral trade-economic relations and prospects of cooperation in green energy.

According to its national development plan, Iran intends to produce up to 5 gigawatts of electric power with the use of renewable energy sources. The Iranian government has allocated 500 million euros for this sector from the National Development Fund of Iran.

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Rapil Zhoshybayev (R) with Minister of Commerce and Industry of Saudi Arabia Tawfiq Al Rabiah.

## Kazakhstan Airlines Suspend Flights to Egypt

By Michelle Witte

ASTANA – Kazakhstan has suspended tourist flights to Egypt due to safety concerns following the downing of a Russian passenger plane that killed 224 people Oct. 31.

The Committee of Civil Aviation recommended last week limiting flights to Egypt and for tour companies stop selling packages to the country following a meeting with air and tour companies, the Ministry for Investment and Development announced Nov. 13.

"The committee has made an assessment of the security hazard level of Kazakhstan air companies which are carrying out the flights to the airport of Sharm el-Sheikh (Egypt) in accordance with a standard method of aviation security national rules and risks management system of the International Civil Aviation Organisation. By the

results of the assessment, a high level of aviation security provision hazard was defined for Kazakhstan air companies which are carrying out flights to Egypt," the ministry statement read. It noted that Russia, the U.K., the Netherlands and Turkish Airlines had grounded flights to Egypt.

According to the ministry, around 800 tour packages have already been sold with flights to Sharm el-Sheikh until the middle of January, and there are some 233 people in the Egyptian resort area who arrived there via a Scat Airlines charter flight from Kazakhstan Nov. 7.

Tez Tour Kazakhstan said in a statement to its clients that tourist flights to Egypt had been stopped Nov. 12 by an order from the Civil Aviation Committee, Reuters reported Nov. 13. Scat, the only airliner from Kazakhstan offering charter flights to Sharm el-Sheikh, said it would make a final flight

Nov. 17 to evacuate the travellers it brought on the Nov. 7 flight, according to the same report. Representatives from Scat also said they had received a recommendation to suspend flights from the Civil Aviation Committee.

According to Reuters, Tez Tour shared the communication they had received from the Civil Aviation Committee, which said the committee "strongly recommended" that flights be suspended until the probe of the Russian crash was completed and made public because of the possibility that the Russian crash was the result of terrorism.

Director of the Kazakhstan Tourist Association Rashida Shaikenova told Reuters, "Many tourists have already sold back their holiday vouchers for Egypt. We've already seen a 60-70 percent drop in demand for tourist trips abroad. ... The latest plane crash can make things even worse."

# SPORTS

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 18, 2015

## Barys Makes Progress as KHL Season Enters Second Half

By Ilyas Omarov

ASTANA – Having played 31 games by last weekend, Barys Astana has crossed the half-season mark in the eighth regular season of the Continental Hockey League (KHL).

Only in recent weeks has Barys begun hosting games in its new

arena. Still lacking an official name, it has been nicknamed Barys Arena by sport experts and fans.

Here, Astana's team continued the triumphant march that began with their victory over current Gagarin Cup holders SKA Saint Petersburg on Oct. 28. That success, fans hope, has ended what had been the worst start in the

club's history. Following that victory, Barys confidently defeated Dinamo Riga, 5-1, and Finland's Jokerit, 2-0.

On Nov. 14, Barys hosted Admiral Vladivostok, which is in their Chernyshev division and is a direct rival for a place in the playoffs.

The initiative in the game passed from one team to the other,

as in a Hollywood action film. Barys opened the scoring, but Admiral struck back, making use of a power play. In the second period, the guests took the lead, 2-1. However, Astana's Keaton Ellerby equalised soon; then, a minute later, the hosts were overtaken again. Both sides under- took that in a game that is figu-

ratively worth six points, there is nowhere to retreat. Barys turned up the heat, and Maxim Khudya- kov restored the draw. Finally, luck smiled on Barys, with Kon- stantin Pushkarev passing the puck to Vadim Krasnolobdtsev, who scored the winning goal, making the score 4-3.

It was Barys's fifth win in a

row, four of which were played in the new arena.

After 31 matches, the Astana team is still out of the playoff zone and 10th in the KHL's Eastern Conference. However, the clubs are basically neck-to-neck in the standings now, as Barys stands only seven points behind its second and third-place rivals.



Barys score against Admiral Vladivostok.



## Kazakhstan's Top Skier Eager to Start New Season

By Dmitry Lee

ASTANA – The International Ski Federation (Fédération Internationale de Ski or FIS) World Cup will begin Nov. 27-29 in Ruka, Finland. On the threshold of the new season, The Astana Times interviewed top Kazakh skier and three-time World Cup winner Alexei Poltoranin.

"In general, I feel good. Prior to the World Cup, there will be an FIS start on Nov. 13-15, where many teams will participate. Our team will also go through a draft and we will see the level of preparation [of our athletes]. This year we are not holding World Cup [stages], so I want to have a high-level stable season," he said.

The skier has had prospects since his early years on the slopes. At the 2004 FIS Nordic Junior World Ski Championships in Stryn, Norway, he and his teammates took gold in the 4x10 kilometre relay. Seven years earlier, during the Asian Games hosted by Kazakhstan, Poltoranin won four gold medals at different events in Almaty. He also participated in the Winter Olympics in 2006 (Torino) and 2010 (Vancouver), finishing fifth in the individual and team sprints in the latter.

"For me, skiing is my life. I am grateful to my parents that they helped me find my destiny when

I was a child by giving me to a good trainer, Alexei Nakonechny, who I keep in touch and work with back in Kazakhstan. I am really lucky in life, because I get to do what I love the most," he said.

Poltoranin is currently in the Finnish town of Muonio with his group and the national Kazakh team getting ready for the start of the new FIS World Cup season.

"My Estonian coach, Mati Alaver, who I have been working with for two years and my sparring partner, 2002 and 2006 Olympic Champion Andrus Veerpalu, who I have been training with since the summer until the last starts and who also happens to be my serviceman and test pilot, are also in Muonio," said Poltoranin.

As this article was written the team was working on the basics, like getting used to the snow on the skis, working on speed and keeping in good shape.

"I have three favourite training spots: in the mountains of Ridder, my home town, at the high altitude ski base Ridderhutte where I train two times a year and the Estonian town of Otepää. It is a popular skiing resort, popularly known as the 'winter capital' of Estonia and where I spend almost the whole summer, and the Swiss city of Davos, where I have my final stages of the pre-season," he said.

We asked the skier about his inspiration during challenging times in races.

"In times of hardships I think if I slow down and lose one to three seconds, then have I worked for nothing since my childhood? This is why we are training, to fight for every second, for every place," he said. "My biggest rivalry was in 2013 at the World Championship at a distance of 50 kilometres, where I took bronze. It was a mass start and there were many strong skiers that could win or finish third. During the race there were several crucial moments; I was behind by 15-20 seconds, but then I managed to get closer. Two skiers were way ahead of the group and they had predetermined the first two places, but at the last climb there were three of us left in the fight for the bronze. At the finish line, I realised that I could get the bronze and I did it. It is important to believe in oneself," stressed Poltoranin.

Addressing his fans, he called on everyone to watch the television and root for the national team.

"It helps us. I recommend everyone to start skiing, because it is a healthy lifestyle. Your body muscles are working, including the heart, and most importantly it is not as traumatic as jogging," said Poltoranin.



## FC Astana Fights to Second Consecutive Kazakhstan Championship, Beats Aktobe at Home 1:0

By Dmitry Lee



ASTANA – The Astana Football Club (FC) beat Aktobe 1:0 on Nov. 8 to win its second consecutive national championship in Astana.

FC Astana bombarded Aktobe with attacks from the first minutes of the game in front of the 8,200-person home crowd in a one-sided match, but managed to get only one past Aktobe goalkeeper Stanislav Pavlov.

In the 13th minute, Pav-

lov saved his team twice after 25-year-old striker Bauyrzhan Dzholchiyev attempted to take his goal with a header and Branko Ilic tried to break the tie off the initial rebound.

Numerous attempts were not successful as Astana players continued attacks but kept failing due to a lack of communication – a few seconds too slow, a few metres too wide, finishing off the target or stopped by Pavlov, who was on top of his

game. The first half ended in a scoreless tie.

The second half started in the same fashion. In the 50th minute, Astana Captain Tanat Nusserbayev's header was easily stopped by Pavlov. In the 55th minute, Pavlov once again scooped out a tough header right from under the woodwork and won the ovations of the opposing team's crowd as Astana's Marin Anicic was robbed of a goal and the 0:0 deadlock remained to be broken.

Pavlov's mission was far from over but he'd already established himself as the man of the night as he made tough saves one after another, stopping Dmitry Shomko's attempt in the 73rd minute and, in the 79th minute, rejecting substitute Junior Kabananga.

In the last minutes of the match, in the 87th, when Astana fans were exhausted by false promises of a coveted goal, but still hoped to celebrate a win, Kabananga lifted his team above Aktobe after speeding into the box and re-directing Serikzhan Muzhikov's ball past Pavlov.

The struggle was over, the visiting team had a few attempts at counterattacks but the better team, FC Astana, that night got what they deserved.



Junior Kabananga celebrates an Astana goal during their victory over Aktobe Nov. 8.

# CAPITAL

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 18, 2015

## Astana Residents to Choose Best Health Professionals



By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – The heads of Astana's Health Administration have called on city residents to actively participate in "The Best Doctor" and "The Best Nurse" campaigns. Citizens' opinions will be crucial to determining the best representatives of the profession in May 2016.

The campaign started on Nov. 1 and the Astana Health Administration press service reported that winners will be determined in May. By contrast, health professionals who have patient complaints will be disciplined. The administration emphasises that it pays great attention to the zero tolerance principle in medicine, which is why the single informa-

tional medical call centre (telephone number 13-00 or 96-37-77) operates in the city, fielding calls and analysing individual requests. The centre, launched Aug. 3, operates 8 a.m.-8 p.m., Monday-Saturday.

All complaints accepted from capital residents concerning lines in hospitals, low-grade medical services, improper treatment from

health professionals and violations of medical ethics are analysed by the call centre staff using the Here and Now principle. At the end of each month, the centre's heads and experts discuss the structure of the accepted complaints.

"It is planned that the launch of the call centre will help eliminate long lines in municipal polyclinics and improve the quality of furnished medical services. The informational centre will help Astana residents to check the presence of medicines in city pharmacies and accept their complaints," stated a representative of the Akimat (city administration).

An analysis of the calls showed Astana residents complain about the rude and neglectful attitude of the medical staff. A small quantity of complaints was also reported concerning the quality of medical services. The information was presented at the Coordination Council for Nursing Care Development on Oct. 28, where the problems of nurses' advanced training were discussed.

Thirty-four medical bodies currently operate in the capital, including two city hospitals, two children's hospitals and eight municipal polyclinics. The medical establishments furnish services almost free of charge. Private medical companies are quite developed in the city, too.

Photo credit: dailynews.kz

## International Association of Public Transport Opens Its Liaison Office in Kazakhstan

By Zhazira Dyussebekova

ASTANA – Chairman of Astana LRT (Light Rail Transportation) Talgat Ardan and Deputy Secretary General of the International Association of Public Transport (UITP) Mohamed Mezghani signed an agreement during the Oct. 30 Astana Invest Forum to establish a UITP liaison office in Astana.

"I'm extremely glad that the UITP office has been opened in Astana. This is a great recognition for the city. I thank everyone for the support. Astana officially joins the club of cities where public transport development is given close attention," said Ardan, according to the UITP official website. The office is open but not yet operational.

The office promises to ensure a better connection between public transport peers in the region and potential business partners globally. According to uitp.org, it will also consolidate local knowledge, monitor developments, develop region-specific activities and services as well as advocate for sustainable urban transport in the region and beyond.

"By opening this Astana office, UITP is supporting and accompanying the rapid development of public transport projects in the Kazakh capital and beyond. We shall provide assistance, capacity building, information on worldwide experience and business networking opportunities and promote the promising local developments to the wider public transport community worldwide," said Mezghani, according to uitp.org. The association's office will help facilitate international best practices and provide opportunities for growth.

"UITP is now in the process of

recruiting a permanent staff to be located in Astana in Astana LRT premises. The nominated Head of the Office Yussup Khassiev is still located in UITP headquarters in Brussels but will be present in Astana every month for several days. The office is not operational yet but it should be fully operational by 2016," commented Mezghani to The Astana Times.

Also during the investment forum, a new transport authority was presented for the planning, management and development of transport in Astana under the name ASTRA, which stands for Astana Transport Authority. It will supervise LRT, buses, school buses, city taxis and the parking system.

According to Zakon.kz, Astana LRT presented five new transport projects for the city – urban taxi, school transport, uniforms and technical solutions for the employees of the transport control service. The second phase of the Citybus project was presented as well, including comfortable IVECO Urbanway buses equipped with an electronic fare collection.

UITP (Union Internationale des Transports Publics) is a major international organisation uniting more than 1,300 urban and regional companies from more than 92 countries all over the world. It brings together transport operators of urban and sub-urban passenger traffic, rolling stock manufacturers and research organisations. It was founded in 1885 and it is one of the specialised organisations of the UN. Also, the organisation participates in the development of modern technologies for public transport and gives recommendations for their development and implementation, conducts research and training and programmes.

## Annual Diplomatic Christmas Charity Bazaar Opens Ticket Sales

By Michelle Witte

ASTANA – Astana's annual Diplomatic Christmas Charity Bazaar will have more embassies than ever participating this year – 52 in all – and hopes to top the 19 million tenge (US\$63,490) it raised last year through entrance fees, raffle tickets and sales, says chair of the organising committee for the bazaar Sophia Bakuridze, spouse of Georgian Ambassador to Kazakhstan Zurab Pataradze.

The charity bazaar, held annually in Astana's Radisson Hotel, gathers the diplomatic community to raise money for a variety of individuals and organisations around the country through the 200 tenge (US\$0.65) entrance fee and sales of goods donated by the embassies, mostly representing their traditional products and strengths. Baskets of traditional goods put together by embassies are a standard raffle prize, with larger items sold at the different nations' kiosks at the bazaar.

Last year, funds were distributed to 34 projects, Bakuridze reports, including the Association for Haemophilic Children, active in Astana and other regions; the Society of Diabetic Children; SOS Children's Villages in Al-

maty and Temirtau; the Karitas School; schools for children with disabilities; homes for children; rehabilitation centres; and training centres for women who have experienced abuse, Bakuridze said. Money was also donated to pay for medical treatment and educational fees for individuals in need, she said.

The organisers have tended to focus on supporting the health, education and quality of life of children, Bakuridze said. "We have short-term objectives and we have long-term objectives. The short-term objectives are about providing support to individuals or groups who need urgent care – about medical treatment, or medication or assistance during the winter, like help with heating, food or clothes. The other direction, the long-term objectives, are funding for educational needs, or we take care of special lessons for children with disabilities, or training classes."

The charity committee of the group that organises the bazaar is currently looking for recipients for the new year, Bakuridze said. "We are open for any proposals about any charity or any charity project," she explained. They are looking in particular to expand into the regions as much as possible. Last year, the bazaar fund-

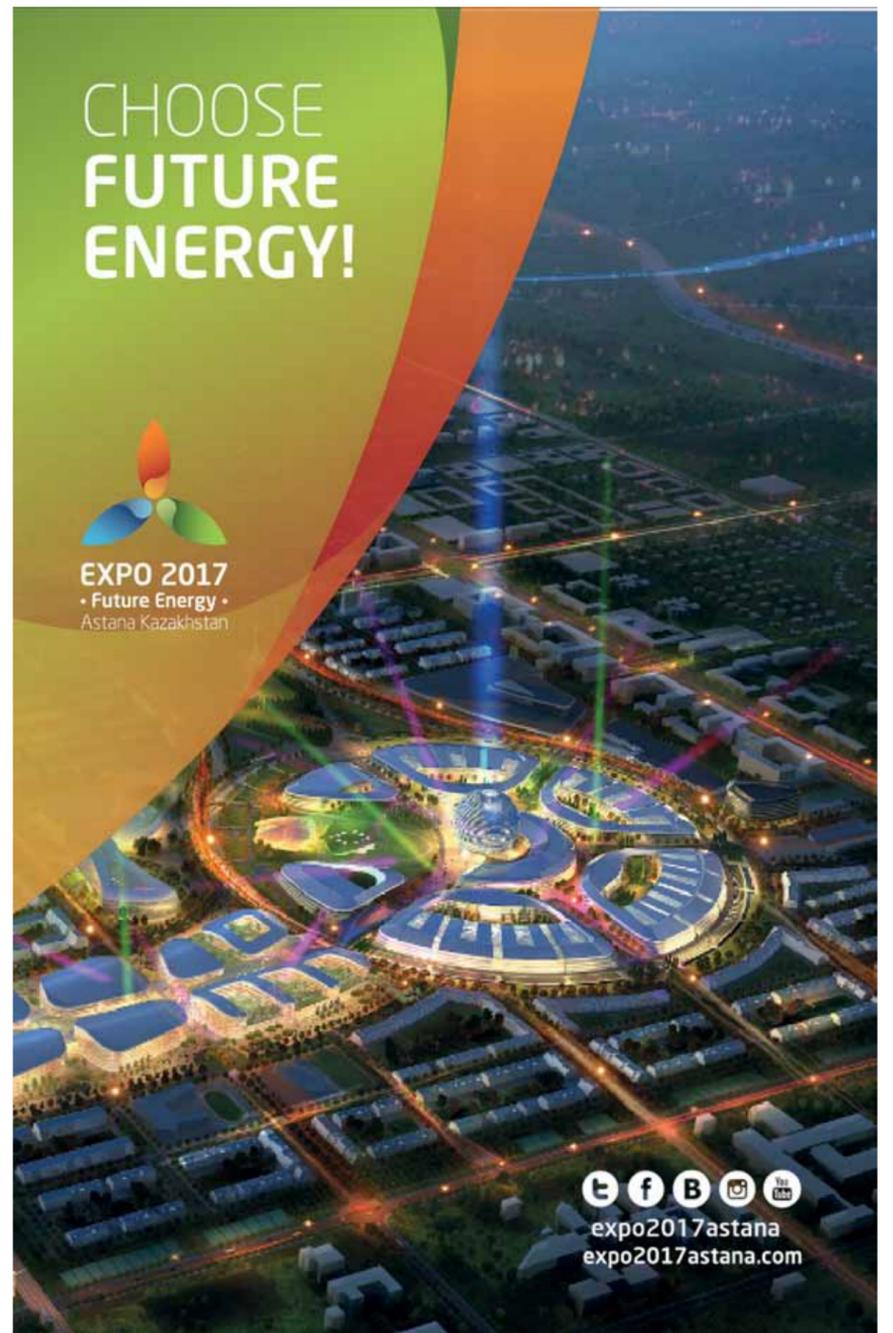
ed projects in Pavlodar, Akmola, Karaganda, Atyrau and Almaty.

Organisations can contact the charity committee online, and the charity committee has also sent request forms to embassies soliciting suggestions as to projects or individuals who are in need of support, Bakuridze said. Organisations can be local or international, she notes, and all organisations are vetted carefully by the group before they are funded.

"The good thing is that our charity committee contains representatives from [all regions of the world]; it's very international," Bakuridze noted. "It's very transparent; the main thing is that it is very transparent. ... We vote, we discuss the pluses and minuses, we go, we see [projects], we see how they work."

Raffle tickets are already on sale and will be sold at Khan Shatyr Nov. 14–15. After that, they will be available until the afternoon of the event. There are 6,000 tickets for sale, and they hope to sell all of them. Bakuridze is enthusiastic about the prizes, noting that in addition to the traditional baskets, they include jewellery, electronic appliances like mobile phones, restaurant gift certificates, and the major prizes like trips to Georgia, Macedonia, Dubai and

the Czech Republic. "We have really good sponsors this year, so it will be really interesting," she said.



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