



## President Addresses First Joint Session of New Kazakh Parliament, Sets Priorities



President Nursultan Nazarbayev (at the speaking rostrum) addresses the first joint session of the Senate and the Mazhilis on March 25.

By Malika Orazgaliyeva

ASTANA – Following the election of Members of Mazhilis in the March 20 nationwide vote, Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev addressed the first joint session of the Senate and the Mazhilis of the 6th convocation March 25.

“Kazakhstan meets the 25th anniversary of independence with the newly elected parliament. Three parties and nine members of the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan (APK) won the recent elections. I congratulate all of us with the victory in the elections held in conditions of fair competition, as well as the new deputies with the status of parliamentarians,” he said.

Nazarbayev recalled that the 25th anniversary of Kazakhstan’s independence coincided with a difficult period of the global crisis. The new composition of the parliament starts its work in particularly difficult circumstances. There is a multi-dimensional and multi-level crisis across the world. Unpredictable world trade and financial markets negatively affect the economy of Kazakhstan. Various social problems grow even in relatively prosperous countries, he noted.

Nazarbayev announced important tasks for the parliament. “Firstly, it is necessary to adopt a unified tax and customs code, which will ensure transparency in all financial procedures.

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## Exit Poll Says Nur Otan Wins Overwhelmingly as Mazhilis Retains Previous Makeup



By Galiaskar Seitzhan

ASTANA – President Nursultan Nazarbayev-led Nur Otan Party won 82 percent of the popular vote in the parliamentary election in Kazakhstan, according to exit poll results announced at midnight on March 21.

The survey also showed the ruling party will be opposed by the same parties in the new convocation of the Mazhilis (the national legislature’s lower chamber) as it was the pro-business Ak Zhol Democratic Party and leftist Communist People’s Party again barely crossed the seven-percent threshold and will again take small share from the 98 seats available for party nominees.

Turnout reached 77.1 percent, the Central Election Commission announced earlier, less than two hours after the polling stations closed in the country’s west.

Yulia Kuchinskaya, head of the Astana-based Institute of Democracy sociological survey company, which held the survey at 750 polling stations across a sample of 75,000 people polled, announced the results during the press conference held immediately at midnight.

According to those results, the Ak Zhol Democratic Party won 7.22 percent of the popular vote and the communists gained 7.17 percent. The agrarian Auyt People’s Democratic Patriotic Party received 2.05 percent, while the Nationwide Social Democratic Party attracted votes of 1.21 percent and the newcomers, centrist

greens Birlik (Unity) grabbed meager 0.35 percent. This outcome is basically a virtual repetition of the previous parliamentary election in January 2012, which ended with very similar results.

Turnout, however, proved stronger this time setting a new record in the country’s electoral history and beating the result from four years ago when 75.45 percent of registered voters showed up at the polls.

Yulia Kuchinskaya, head of the Astana-based Institute of Democracy sociological survey company

According to Kazakhstan’s Central Election Commission Chairman (CEC) Kuandyk Turgankulov, regionally, the highest turnout was registered in the Almaty Oblast with more than 90 percent of the registered voters casting their ballots during the day. Traditionally, the least active is the city of Almaty where turnout was only 34 percent, while the capital city of Astana had a slightly lower than average rate of 74.65 percent of attendance.

Initial official results were expected before March 21 at the CEC press conference in Astana. Results of the elections to maslikhats (local councils) took several days longer to confirm throughout the country.

Also on March 21, the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan, a constitutional body designed to reflect interests of the country’s ethnic community associations held its session and elected nine more deputies and thus completed drafting the new composition of the Mazhilis of 107 members.

## Central Election Commission: Ruling Party Wins Landslide Again

By Galiaskar Seitzhan

ASTANA – Kazakhstan’s governing party, led by President Nursultan Nazarbayev, won another massive victory while other parties from the legislature’s previous roster also retained their presence in Mazhilis (lower house of Parliament), according to the Central Election Commission (CEC) results of the March 20 parliamentary election.

According to data announced by CEC Chairman Kuandyk Turgankulov at a press briefing in Astana on March 21, the election

resulted in the following distribution of a popular vote:

Nur Otan Party – 82.15 percent  
Ak Zhol Democratic Party – 7.18 percent  
Communist People’s Party – 7.14 percent  
Auyt People’s Democratic Patriotic Party – 2 percent  
Nationwide Social Democratic Party – 1.18 percent  
Birlik Political Party – 0.29 percent.

The results, which were close to exit poll projections made by Astana-based Institute of Democracy

pollsters the night after the election, meant that, apart from Nur Otan, only right-of-the-centre, pro-business Ak Zhol and the Communist People’s Party running on a traditional Marxist Leninist platform succeeded in overcoming the seven-percent threshold and will again serve as a parliamentary opposition. The other three parties will need to prove their viability in the five years before the next scheduled election.

Final CEC results were announced on March 22. The turnout was earlier announced to have made 77.1 percent.

Also on March 21, the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan (APK) held a special session to choose its representatives in the parliament. A secret vote at the session resulted in electing nine deputies representing various ethnic community associations, which will now join their counterparts from party ranks in the new convocation of Mazhilis. Kazakhstan’s Constitution guarantees the APK nine seats in the parliament’s lower house to ensure the country’s ethnic diversity is reflected in the national legislature.

## Nazarbayev Casts Vote in March 20 Election, Admits Possibility of Redistribution of Power

By Zhazira Dyussebekova

ASTANA – The President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev took part in the elections to Mazhilis (lower house of Kazakh parliament) and maslikhats (local legislatures) on March 20. He also answered questions of local and foreign media immediately after he cast his vote at a polling station in Astana.

“Today’s elections to the Mazhilis and local representative bodies are a very important milestone in the modern history of Kazakhstan. More than 9 million citizens will vote in the elections in nearly 9,900 polling stations in Kazakhstan and around the world. Preliminary elections are being held on the initiative

of the parliament of our country with the awareness that all areas of our lives are being renewed. We are overcoming the crisis tendencies, and it requires new, trained and knowledgeable deputies [members of Mazhilis and maslikhats],” said Nazarbayev.

He also noted that he used his constitutional right and performed his civic duty through the participation in the elections, like millions of compatriots across the vast Eurasian nation.

“Today, starting from the early morning Kazakh citizens are actively participating in the voting by coming to the polling stations with their families and children. It symbolises the trust of our citizens to the state, including the legislature. I am sure we will choose the parliament,

which our country needs now,” he added.

During the briefing Nazarbayev said that, according to the law, the parliament has full power to monitor the work of the government, including control over budget spending. “Also, after the adoption of laws the parliament should ensure [oversight over] how these standards are being implemented,” he stated.

Nazarbayev mentioned current executive bodies and their work as well.

“I want to remind that last year the government has changed after the presidential election. Its current composition has developed anti-crisis programmes and laws for the implementation of the five institutional reforms, work on which is being

carried out now. I think that the composition of the government was chosen wisely. It employs educated, young, multi-lingual professionals. I think that we should allow them to finish what they have undertaken,” he added.

One of the questions was related to the possible changes in country’s political system. The President replied by saying that “the basic law [the Constitution] was adopted by the people in a referendum, and, if necessary, changes will be made by them. It can be about the distribution of power between the President, parliament and government. These changes will depend on the situation in the world and within the country. If people want it, we will seriously think about it.”

## 116 Passengers Survive Controlled Crash Landing at Astana International Airport



Read the full story on Page B2.

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# NATION

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 30, 2016

## New Speaker of Mazhilis Elected, Reshuffle in Executive

By Aiman Turebekova

ASTANA – Former Akim (Governor) of Atyrau region, member of Mazhilis elected from the Nur Otan Party list Baktykozha Izmukhambetov was elected Chairman of a new convocation of the Mazhilis (lower house of Parliament), the chamber’s press office reported March 25.

Born in 1948, Izmukhambetov is a graduate of the Ufa Petroleum Institute. Following a career in oil and gas industry, from 2006 to 2012, he served as Minister of Energy and Mineral Resources of Kazakhstan. In January 2012,

he was elected deputy of the fifth convocation of the Mazhilis of the Kazakh Parliament.

The deputies also elected Gulmira Issimbayeva of the Nur Otan Party and Vladimir Bozhko, elected from the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan, as new deputy speakers of the chamber.

The new appointments in the legislature were accompanied by a reshuffle in the executive branch. The same day, President Nursultan Nazarbayev signed a decree appointing Kanat Bozumbayev the Minister of Energy of Kazakhstan and relieving him of his previous post as the Pavlodar region’s governor. Prior to that, from No-

vember 2009 to December 2013 he worked as Akim (Governor) of the Zhambyl region. Previously, he held various positions in national companies, the Ministries of Energy, Industry and Trade as well National Economy. The new minister was born in Almaty in 1969. Earlier, Vladimir Shkolnik was relieved from the post of the Minister of Energy by a presidential decree.

Furthermore, former Akim (Mayor) of Pavlodar city Bolat Bakauov was appointed Akim (Governor) of Pavlodar region. He graduated from the Kazakh Institute of Law and International Relations, specialising in jurisprudence and later the International Acad-

emy of Business, Economics and Business management. He was a deputy of the Pavlodar regional maslikhat from 2003 to 2007.

Izmukhambetov’s previous post of the Akim of the Atyrau Oblast is now occupied by Nurlan Nogayev who was moved over from a similar position in the West Kazakhstan Oblast. There he was replaced by Altai Kulginov who previously worked as Akim (Mayor) of the regional capital, Uralsk, and who is a graduate of the Bolashak presidential scholarship programme.

Deputy of the Mazhilis Zagipa Baliyeva was appointed by the presidential decree Kazakhstan’s Commissioner for Children’s Rights

(Ombudsman). Baliyeva’s career included work as Minister of Justice in 2015-2009, Chairperson of the Central Election Commission of Kazakhstan, Deputy of the Supreme Council of Kazakhstan in early 1990s as well as other appointments.

The post of Commissioner for Children’s Rights was established by the decree of the President of Kazakhstan in February this year in order to improve the national system of protection of children’s rights. The main objectives of the Commissioner are to guarantee the rights and legitimate interests of children, as well as the restoration of their violated rights and freedoms in cooperation with state and public institutions.

### NATIONAL NEWS IN BRIEF

Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev signed decree No. 68 on the convocation at the 24th session of the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan (APK), reported the Akorda press service. APK members will gather for a session at the Palace of Peace and Harmony in Astana April 26 under the theme “Independence. Accord. Nation of Common Future.”

As one of Asia’s leading boxing nations, Kazakhstan selected its top nine individuals for the upcoming International Boxing Association (AIBA) Asian and Oceanian Olympic qualification event, to be held in Qianan, China, reported inform.kz. The team consists of three women and six men who all have the chance to qualify for the Rio 2016 Games. Kazakhstan worked well in the AOB, WSB and APB events in 2015 and four of its boxers have already qualified. Berik Abdрахmanov, Vasily Levit, Daniyar Yeleussinov and Birzhan Zhakypov are waiting for their teammates to join them on the Olympic squad.

Astana authorities plan to allocate 100 million tenge (US\$288,500) this year to construct a monument dedicated to the 25th anniversary of Kazakhstan’s independence, reported Kazinform. Deputy Akim (Mayor) Andrey Lukin announced the news, according to Kazinform, adding the round square next to the Triumphal Arch will also be redeveloped.

National-style clothing is becoming more and more popular among Kazakh people, reported Kazakh TV. A growing number of women across the country have started using national elements in their wardrobes and dress making shops to create Kazakh traditional clothes combining modern comfort and domestic flavour. National-style clothing designer Man-shuk Botabai said she always liked to sew and continued even when studying in London. She noted she creates models referencing her roots, because they are beautiful. Botabai studied different courses with different experts and accumulated work experience. Only then did she decide to establish her own business. Any dress created by Botabai combines functionality and traditional notes. Like hundreds of years ago, such dresses are not only beautiful and comfortable, but mysterious and unique. Botabai dreams that every woman in Kazakhstan will wear them.

A camel milk production company was opened in Kyzylorda region, according to Khabar TV. New technologies used at the enterprise made it possible to increase the shelf life of the product, which in turn enables it to supply the product to all regions of the state. The new technologies and pasteurisation process allow the company to increase shelf life from one week to a month. Camel milk is very healthy, because it contains large amounts of calcium, ferrum, magnesium, phosphorus and zinc. Biological Sciences Doctor Aliya Serikbayeva reported that different dairy products can be produced using camel milk, such as yogurt and ice cream. The products contain probiotic products which help an organism to maintain normal digestion, prevent infections from developing and protect against many dangerous diseases. Director Sabyr Yermakhanov said their camel milk has a 6 percent fat content, which is a very high figure.

A charity ball for children with disabilities was held in Astana, reported Kazakh TV. The Volunteers Club and Assyl Bala Association organised the event with real celebration. Kazakh show business stars and professional actors took part in the ball, entertaining the boys and girls, and the children danced and played with their favourite characters. Assyl Bala Association honorary member Zagipa Baliyeva said the children’s parents also need to feel their youngsters are the same as others. She wants the children to know they are citizens of the country and have equal rights.

## Foreign Observers Note Good Preparedness, Voters’ Interest in Elections

By Kamila Zhumabayeva

ASTANA – Foreign observers from Austria, Italy, the UK, Serbia, Bulgaria and Lithuania all agreed that there were no breaches observed, voting sites were well arranged and people were “tuned” for voting during the nationwide poll in Kazakhstan on March 20. The presence of large numbers of young people was surprising for them.

Walter Schwimmer, an observer from Austria and former Secretary General of the Council of Europe, expressed his hope these elections will contribute to a further democratic development in Kazakhstan.

“The EU is interested in the development of democratic processes in Kazakhstan. I see that Kazakhstan has already made a big step ahead since obtaining its independence 25 years ago,” Schwimmer told journalists in Astana.

“Everything was very well prepared at polling stations, there were no breaches... Rules and reg-



Observers from the United Kingdom James Lewis (C) and Alan Spence (R).

ulations for conducting elections are being precisely and clearly abided... It is very important that the voting secrecy is also being obeyed,” he noted.

“Kazakh citizens participated in the electoral process from the very beginning of operations of polling stations,” stated Senator of the Italian Parliament and member of the Italian delegation to the NATO Parliamentary Assembly Franco

Panizza. “This shows citizens’ interest in the election.”

The observer mentioned a high level of election arrangements, particularly at voting sites. According to Panizza, all conditions were made for voting of persons with disabilities, for example.

Observers from the United Kingdom, Alan Spence and James Lewis also said they had witnessed no cases of infringements during

the voting in the current elections.

“People voted with high activity, and we have not noticed any irregularities. Everything is going well,” said Spence.

“We were at the voting procedure here and we monitored the electoral process when people gave their votes, and this process, as far as we have seen, corresponds to the legislation,” noted Lewis.

“I am impressed by the activity of the voting by Kazakh citizens. I saw how young people vote, as well as people of older age, and I was very impressed because we do not have such a high [voting] activity in Bulgaria,” former minister of regional development of Bulgaria, Desislava Terzieva said.

A lawyer by profession, Terzieva stressed the legal aspects.

“I have read your Constitution and the legal procedures under which the elections must be held. I have not seen any complaints and any tension at polling stations visited,” she stressed.

Deputy of the National Assem-

## International Observers Commend Kazakhstan’s Election as Transparent

By Zhazira Dyussembekova

ASTANA – On the day following the poll itself, foreign observers from various countries continued to share their impressions of the March 20 election. Most of them indicated the prevalent characteristics were good organisation, high voter turnout and people’s willingness to express their opinion.

Bundestag (German Parliament) Foreign Policy Advisor Andreas Jahn was in Kazakhstan for the first time. He visited the city’s polling station number 120, noting the procedure he witnessed was fair and transparent.

“It was very interesting to observe the voting process and we were waiting for the upcoming results with the others. As I can observe, the election process was intense, a lot of people were involved. We also assisted in the counting of votes at the end of the day,” he said.

Jahn has previously been an election observer in Albania, Togo, and Uzbekistan.

“Each country has its own features. I was only in Astana. I cannot tell what was happening outside of Astana, but with regard to the process here, I think, that people were committed to the election, I can say that there was a large turnout. I think people really wanted to express their opinion,” he concluded.

International Tax and Investment Centre President and an United States international observer Daniel Alan Witt said he considered himself a veteran of the Kazakh election observation.

Witt said it was the sixth election he observed in the country, both presidential and parliamentary, and he noted a remarkable growth of Kazakhstan.

“Being here as observers, my team and me observe the elections



Members of the election observation mission of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Turkic-speaking Countries (TurkPA).

not like the others. We are not technical experts, we have been working with you since 1991 and see great steps forward that are made by your country [towards the democratic development],” he said speaking to Kazakh media on April 21.

Witt also congratulated Kazakhstan with the successful election, which he called a positive step in strengthening democracy. According to him, seeing three generations of voters from our family coming to the polling stations at 9 in the morning really impressed him. “People went to vote for their [future],” he added.

The Jamestown Foundation Senior Fellow Vladimir Socor said that the election showed Kazakhstan’s growing political maturity.

“We have visited more than 30 polling stations in different parts of your city [Astana]. We were able to talk with the voters, with the representatives of polling stations inside and outside of the stations. In our opinion, the elections were held successfully,” he said.

Former U.S. Congressman Don Bonker, who represented Washington State, expressed his thoughts about his role.

“We see that the people of Kazakhstan are committed to democ-

racy. I can confirm that the elections were efficiently and well organised,” he said.

As a former chairman of the Congressional Human Rights Foundation, Bonker noted he thought Kazakhstan was building a solid foundation in regard to the conducting elections.

“People use their right and it is very important. It is important that you are moving in the right direction with regard to reforms in relation to the market economy and the principles of democracy,” he said.

Centre for International Governance Innovation Senior Fellow and formerly Canadian ambassador to Kazakhstan Margaret Skok, who also served as an observer, commended the level of attentiveness of elections commissions members.

“Yesterday [March 20] I visited 12 polling stations. The elderly, the children came together with adults, and children helped to throw ballots into the boxes. I was impressed by an elderly man, whom I asked why he came to the elections at that age. He said that he wanted to influence the outcome – both at the local level and the regional. I also want to note that members of the election commission were very well prepared; they knew their job well,” said Skok.

Austrian politician and former President of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Parliamentary Assembly Wolfgang Grossruck agreed with his colleagues.

“We are encouraged by what we saw during the elections. We have already been to your country, we have big experience, and we are seeing good progress in holding and preparing for the elections. Yesterday [March 20] we visited several polling stations. I can confirm that the vote at the polling stations was very well organised and meets the highest quality standards. We should also mention the members of the Central Election Commission; all of them were very well trained and prepared.”

“I think my colleagues will agree that the development of the electoral process in your country is moving for the better,” he said.

Representatives of the Turkic-speaking Countries (TurkPA) also shared their opinion on the event.

“The early parliamentary elections, as well as the elections to the local representative bodies (maslikhats), are in full compliance with the national legislation of Kazakhstan and international electoral standards,” said Haluk Ipek, head of the election observation mission of the Turkic-Speaking Countries Parliamentary Assembly (TurkPA) and member of Turkey’s Grand National Assembly.

According to the organisation’s mission, all the conditions for voting were created for the country’s citizens. The observers also noted the process was organised at a very high technical level.

“During visits to the polling stations no violations were detected. For this reason, we believe that the election was conducted objectively and openly, transparently and in a democratic manner,” said Ipek.

The director of the Institute of CIS and Eastern Europe countries, the President of the International Centre for the Study of Electoral Systems Alexander Tzinker from Israel noted the work of Centres for Services for Population (mainly known in Kazakhstan under their Russian acronym – TSONs) during the election.

“I would like to note TSONs. It is a great advantage because they allowed your citizens to quickly solve problems in those cases when a person does not appear on the registered voters list at a particular polling station. In other countries in cases like this people should go to courts, sometimes they are able to vote only on the second day. It is not so difficult procedure, but sometimes people are not willing to go through bureaucratic delays and they decide not to vote this time. And TSONs services helped to save votes,” said Tzinker.

Several Kazakh public associations have already made their reports.

Echo, a non-governmental organisation, stated the election was held according to Kazakh legislation and declared authorities ensured suffrage.

“An analysis of the results of the elections to the legislative bodies in 2012 and 2016 shows positive dynamics in the improvement of regulatory and legal framework, procedure and organisation of the elections,” stated its report.

The Youth Informational Service of Kazakhstan (League of Young Voters) detected several infringements, but recognised the election as valid.

“During the observation a positive trend was revealed, such as the perception of local observers by election commissions. The number of violations of their rights was substantially smaller as compared with the results in 2012. Also, technical equipment areas were improved: video surveillance was working in many areas, and comprehensive information on the electoral procedures was available as well,” according to its report.

EXTERNAL  
NEWS IN BRIEF

The Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) should be at least as good as the European Union (EU), President of Belarus Alexander Lukashenko said as he met with Chairman of the Board of the Eurasian Economic Commission Tigran Sargsyan on March 24, BelTA reports. The Belarusian leader said that there is no turning back, that it is necessary to improve the EAEU and that the union should be as good as the European Union. He emphasised that the EAEU has achieved a lot, but there are many drawbacks and pending issues that remain to be solved. He said that all parties, from the Eurasian Economic Commission to the presidents and prime ministers, will have to do their best to advance the Eurasian Economic Union to a new level.

Astana International Airport is strengthening security measures after the terrorist attacks in Brussels, Kazakh TV reports. Additional security measures were introduced at all airport terminals in the state. Astana airport staff are working in special vigilance mode. Head of the Public Relations Department of Astana International Airport Lyudmila Kopeichuk said that the number of staff in screening and security services was increased, security measures have been tightened and airport personnel have been instructed to be more vigilant.

First Deputy Prime Minister of Kazakhstan Bakytzhan Sagintayev participated in the Boao Forum for Asia in China, Primeminister.kz reports. He stressed that the Boao Forum for Asia would contribute to deepening interaction and searching for new ways for economic recovery. He highlighted that Asia is turning into the main platform of global international relations and Kazakhstan is ready to play the role of bridge between Europe and Asia due to its unique location. According to Sagintayev, the main thing is the similarity of the goals of Kazakh and Chinese state programmes initiated by Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev and Chinese President Xi Jinping. He said that the programmes will provide opportunities to strengthen cooperation and fully use the potential of the countries of this region by means of the revival of the Great Silk Road.

A major contract for the supply of kurt and kumys (Kazakh national dairy products) to China was concluded by a farm in Pavlodar region, Kazakh TV reports. The Kazakh national products have successfully passed laboratory tests in China. As of today, they are being sold in supermarkets of Astana and Moscow. Technologist of the farm Mahbul Azamat said their company produces two kinds of kurt: a sweet kurt suitable for the tea-table and a traditional, sour kurt. Ancient Kazakh recipes are used in production. Head of the farm Toleu Kushmanova said Chinese businessmen were immediately interested in her products. She thinks they liked naturalness of the products.

The eclectic American cappella group The Exchange plans to visit three cities in Kazakhstan (Astana, Kyzylorda and Almaty) for the first time, Kazinform reports. The tour starts March 28 and ends April 5. This programme is the part of the U.S. Department of State's American Music Abroad series and represents one of the premier cultural events in the U.S. mission to Kazakhstan's year-long campaign to celebrate the 25-year anniversary of U.S.-Kazakhstan relations.

The Astana EXPO 2017 National Company took part in the Moscow International Travel and Tourism Exhibition, "Travelling and Tourism," which was held from March 23 through March 26 in Moscow, the press service of Astana EXPO 2017 informs. Representatives of the company held presentations of EXPO 2017 tourist products for big Russian travel agencies. The presentations focused on tours to Astana and to EXPO 2017. Bilateral meetings with national and regional tourist departments and companies, as well as travel agencies and organisations from Russia and the Commonwealth of Independent States, were also held.

# President Addresses First Joint Session of New Kazakh Parliament, Sets Priorities

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Secondly, the adoption of the code 'On Subsoil and Subsoil Use' will accumulate all the rules governing relations in this sphere into a single legislative act. Thirdly, changes into the current legislation on electric power industry are needed. Fourth, in the framework of the second phase of the reforms in the antitrust sphere, the changes and additions to the legislation on competition are required. Fifth, legislation on the subject of the further transfer of government functions into a competitive environment should be modernised," Nazarbayev said.

In addition, the President expressed confidence that the deputies of the Mazhilis will continue the tradition of constructive cooperation in the legislative process with the Senate of the Parliament.

"An important task is to develop a perspective plan of legislative work for the entire period of the new Mazhilis office. I want to emphasise the general political role and responsibility of both chambers of the parliament in the current conditions. It is necessary to strengthen inter-party cooperation of parliamentarians and achieve coordinated work of all the factions and deputy groups. An important task is to take an active part in the international inter-parliamentary community. I am sure that the new deputies will quickly join the work, whereas the former members will ensure the continuity and fast transition to the new approach," Nazarbayev said.

Addressing the participants Naz-

arbayev noted that since Jan.1 Kazakhstan lives in the new legal and institutional environment, which was formed through the adoption of 59 laws and 400 regulations. The things that were only plans yesterday now become a reality while every Kazakh citizen has similar opportunities to those that the most developed countries provide, he said.

"The national legislation in the sphere of economics and labour relations was fundamentally transformed considering the interests of business development. The most favourable conditions and incentives are created for the domestic large, small and medium-sized businesses, including farmers and agricultural enterprises. In the next 10 years it is planned to create 660,000 new job places, including 70,000 in the processing and innovative sectors," Nazarbayev informed.

"The national economy has been given new investment dynamics. According to the [World Banks] 'Doing of Business' research, our country is ranked 41st among 189 countries of the world. In the ranking of efficiency of labour market, Kazakhstan is ranked 18th place among 140 countries. We opened a 'green corridor' for foreign investors. Strategic investors from Germany, Italy and China have been drawn to the agrarian sector," the President stressed.

According to Nazarbayev, as part of the global logistics the multimodal Eurasian transcontinental corridor is being formed in Kazakhstan. The logistic zone of Kazakhstan in the Chinese port of Lianyungang will

increase the flow of goods through the territory of Kazakhstan by seven times. The European Commission has lifted all restrictions on "Air Astana" airline's flights to the EU countries.

"Today we started realisation on the new state healthcare programme. The uniform system of realisation and commercialisation of scientific projects is created based on the new Law. Five domestic scientific developments are being commercialised. Six colleges of Kazakhstan were granted a total amount of KZT 425 million by the World Bank for modernisation. It is an important step towards implementation of the project 'Free Professional Educations for All'," Nazarbayev said.

In his words, starting from the next year step by step the country will begin to introduce trilingual system of education. By 2020 a full transition to 12 years education will be provided. In addition, each graduate will have a chance to master the first working qualification free of charge.

"Twenty intellectual schools were constructed in Kazakhstan. It is a very important impulse in school education. The new content of education, which has gone through probation, gave good results. This year it is planned to introduce it for the first grades in other 30 schools. However, this work goes too slowly. What has already successfully passed approbation in intellectual schools has to be introduced across the country during three-four years. I instruct the Ministry of Education and Science to ensure this functioning," Nazarbayev said.

# Kazakhstan Ready to Be 'Transit Bridge between Europe and Asia,' Top Official Tells Asia Forum



By Aiman Turebekova

ASTANA – First Deputy Prime Minister of Kazakhstan Bakytzhan Sagintayev said during the March 24 Boao Forum for Asia (BFA) that "Asia is turning into the main platform of global international relations and Kazakhstan is ready to play a role of a transit hub between Europe and Asia due to its unique location."

Sagintayev said the forum, titled "Asia's New Future: New Dynamics, New Vision" will deepen cooperation in the subcontinent and seek new forms and avenues for economic recovery.

The forum's goals are similar to those of Kazakhstan's Nurly Zhol programme and China's One Belt, One Road initiative, he said, adding the similarities will strengthen cooperation by means of the revival of the Great Silk Road.

The Kazakh First Deputy Prime Minister also stressed the importance of innovation in science and

technology and invited participants of the forum to EXPO 2017 and the Astana Economic Forum to be held May 25-26.

During Boao Forum, Sagintayev met with Prime Minister of China Li Keqiang, President of the Asian Bank for Infrastructure Investments Jin Lique, Chairperson of the Board of Director of CITIC Construction Hong Bo and Governor of Shaanxi province Lou Qinqian. The sides discussed developing a multilateral strategic partnership between Kazakhstan and China.

BFA is a respected platform for leaders in government, business and academia to promote regional economic integration and bring Asian countries closer to their development goals.

This year, BFA celebrated its 15th anniversary and held about 80 sessions covering a wide range of issues, including macroeconomics, Internet plus and entrepreneurship.

# OSCE, PACE Observers Note Progress in Kazakhstan's Mazhilis Election, Point Out Areas for Improvement

By Dmitry Lee, Galiaskar Seitzhan

ASTANA – Observers from three Western institutions, the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE/ODIHR), the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (PA) and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), found Kazakhstan's Parliamentary election of March 20 was "efficiently organised with some progress noted," the three election monitoring groups announced in a joint press release and press conference the day after the vote.

Some specific areas assessed positively were the inclusive nature of candidate registration, the invitation of international observers in an open and unrestricted manner, unrestricted campaigning opportunities for all participating parties, and a calm and free atmosphere during the voting process.

At the same time, there were a number of critical points in the three missions' preliminary conclusion, which reflect long-term scepticism among the OSCE's electoral monitoring experts.

"It is clear that Kazakhstan still has a long way to go towards fulfilling its election commitments although some progress was noted," said Marietta Tidei, special coordinator and leader of the short-term OSCE observer mission.

"The ruling party [Nur Otan] had a clear advantage over others in these elections and while the parties were generally able to campaign freely, genuine political choice remains insufficient," she added.

The Central Election Commission (CEC) of Kazakhstan has released preliminary data showing a hugely dominant victory by Nur Otan with 82.15 percent of votes, with the runner up Ak Zhol party



L-R: Head of the OSCE PA delegation, Norwegian member of Parliament Geir Joergen Bekkevold, Special Coordinator and Head of the short-term OSCE observer mission Marietta Tidei, Head of the PACE delegation, member of the Spanish Parliament Jordi Xucla, Head of the OSCE/ODIHR long-term election observation mission Ambassador Boris Frlec.

getting only 7.18 percent and the Communist party 7.14 percent of votes. These three political parties will now fill the seats of the lower chamber of the Kazakh Parliament, the Mazhilis.

The CEC also stated that it is preparing a comprehensive proposal of amendments to the country's election law to be considered in 2017 with a view to addressing previous OSCE/ODIHR recommendations. In general, Kazakhstan's laws regulating elections aim to provide for fundamental civil and political rights. The law also provides opportunities for voters and parties to bring complaints about the electoral process before courts, higher-level commissions and prosecutors. The few complaints filed during this election were promptly addressed by courts and prosecutors.

In a positive development, candidate registration was inclusive and six parties contested the elections, the statement of preliminary findings and conclusions by the OSCE PA noted, and state-run media in the country made efforts to meet the requirements for equal access.

"The CEC operated in a professional manner. Its sessions were

open to and regularly attended by observers, media and political party representatives," the preliminary statement said. "The election law aims to ensure party representation in election commissions but does not provide for an enforcement mechanism."

Around 9.7 million voters were registered to vote, including 14,013 abroad. Interlocutors generally did not express concerns about the accuracy of the voter register. All citizens over 18 years of age have the right to vote, except those declared incompetent by a court or those serving prison sentences, irrespective of the gravity of the crime."

According to the statement, "candidate registration was inclusive and the CEC registered all 234 candidates nominated by the six parties by the legal date of Feb. 19."

Candidates were generally able to campaign freely throughout the country and activities increased in the last two weeks prior to the election.

The statement also noted that the new requirement for the CEC to publish the total amount of funds received and spent by each party twice a month during the cam-

paign was a positive development.

The statement called out a lack of mechanisms to support more diverse participation in governance, including by women. "The law doesn't provide for a gender quota or other temporary special measures to enhance participation of women in elections. Overall, 47 out of 234 candidates on party lists or 20 percent were women," the statement said.

The election day was efficiently organised; however, in general, the international observers noted some errors and irregularities.

"The observation and assessment of these elections has identified significant shortcomings, including the restriction of fundamental civil and political rights, the lack of genuine political choice for voters, the lack of pluralism of opinion in the media and serious procedural irregularities on election day," said Boris Frlec, head of the OSCE/ODIHR long-term observation mission.

On Election Day, the three institutions deployed some 359 observers, including 282 long-term and short-term OSCE/ODIHR observers, a 64-member delegation from the OSCE PA and a 13-member delegation from the PACE.

A more open political environment is needed in the country to achieve democratic stability, according to head of the PACE delegation, member of the Spanish Parliament Jordi Xucla, who also noted improvements during these elections.

"I observed the elections in Kazakhstan before, in particular during previous 2012 parliamentary elections, and I can say with full confidence that this election has been marked by progress," he stated.

Xucla commended that on Election Day the citizens of Kazakhstan made their choice in a calm and free atmosphere.

According to the Spanish MP, this election campaign also showed that Kazakhstan needs a more open and competitive political environment, which is a key condition for long-term democratic stability. The legal reform should be carried out in close cooperation with the Council of Europe's Venice Commission, of which Kazakhstan is a full member.

"I welcome the political will and related statements by the Kazakhstan authorities to continue comprehensive reforms of the legal framework, and I hope that the anticipated 2017 reform process will result in significant improvements," he added.

Xucla said he was overall "positively impressed with this election".

"I believe that the people of Kazakhstan have spoken their mind," Head of the PACE delegation concluded.

Head of the OSCE PA delegation, Norwegian member of Parliament Geir Joergen Bekkevold, had recommended pursuing comprehensive legal reforms to show commitment to democratic elections.

"For the authorities to fulfil their stated commitment to holding democratic elections, comprehensive legal reform is required, including reforms related to restrictions on voting rights and the freedoms of assembly and expression," said Bekkevold.

"Specific progress in these areas will go a long way towards ensuring greater political pluralism, and I stand ready to work with my colleagues in the newly elected Parliament to support this process."

ECONOMY

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 30, 2016

Government Allocates Additional \$4.2 Billion to Develop Transport Infrastructure

By Azamat Syzdykbayev

According to the Ministry for Investment and Development's Committee on Highways, 1.5 trillion tenge (US\$4.2 billion) has been allocated to support domestic transport. It has allowed Kazakhstan to enter the World Economic Forum global competitiveness ranking and climb 30 positions up, reaching the 58th place in the past year in this category.

"Currently, six international transport corridors are functioning on the territory of Kazakhstan, including North, South and Central corridors and TRACECA (Transport Corridor Europe-Caucasus-Asia). In order to improve the competitiveness of these corridors, we mostly focused on development of the transport infrastructure," explained Head of the Transit Development and Transport Logistics Department Dauren Sabitov.

He also recalled Centre-South, Centre-West and Centre-East roads, which being internal routes, partly compose the international transport corridors. Their reconstruction will contribute to the development of international transport.

Furthermore, the Western Europe-Western China highway

project will help reduce transcontinental transportation terms by 10-12 days and provide better integration of Kazakhstan into the transit networks of China, Russia and the Middle East. Another transport project the country is now participating in is the Silk Road Economic Belt, which should create a bridge between Europe and Asia.

"We work on the creation of safe and efficient transport routes. Several facilities constructed during the past years allowed us to reduce the distances in the East-West direction. For instance, the Zhezkazgan-Beineu railroad reduced the distance by more than 1,000 kilometres," said Sabitov.

The transport infrastructure in the west of the country is also under development. In particular, the construction of the ferry complex has begun at the Kuryk sea port. The Aktau International Sea Port is going to be further expanded.

"The Aktau port is the key transport point not only for West Kazakhstan, but for the whole country. In 2015 we have completed its northern part expansion and built three cargo berths with a total capacity of 3 million tonnes. The plan is to increase the port's capacity to 21 million tonnes," concluded Sabitov.

World Bank to Allocate \$100 Million for Labour Market Development

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – The World Bank and the Kazakh Ministry of Health and Social Development launched a project for the development of professional skills and stimulation of job creation. The project is scheduled to be completed by June 2020.

This is one of the World Bank's major social projects in the country. The international financial institute has allocated \$100 million with \$37 million co-funding from the Kazakh government, reported Inform.kz.

"The project reflects the growing change in Kazakhstan's approach to the knowledge-based economy. It is important that the country is aware that human capital and skills should become the main driver of growth and competitiveness of the economy," said Senior Director for Education at the World Bank Group Claudia Costin during the opening ceremony.

The project will provide training opportunities to the unemployed, self-employed and employed workers who need training.

"The project focuses on the improvement of public employment services as well as the increase of the capacity of training centres and institutions for the implementation of the skills development programme in line with labour market demand. It is expected that improvement in the labour market will contribute to the rise of employment and a reduction in unemployment periods," the press release from the Kazakh Ministry



of Health and Social Development reads.

The improvements in the relevance of technical and vocational education, higher education and labour training programmes are also foreseen due to this initiative. The national qualifications system will be aligned with the needs of the labour market focusing on the professional and educational standards and curricula as well as the system of evaluation and certification.

The organisers intend to attract representatives of the private sector during the identification process of training needs and the development of skills for improved productivity.

"It is assumed that ensuring access of the working population to training opportunities will give economic benefits for companies that will be able to boost their profits by having more productive labour force and for the unemployed and the self-employed, who will increase their chances of getting a job," the ministry said in a statement.

The Kazakh Ministry of Health and Social Development will implement this project in close cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Science and National Chamber of Entrepreneurs.

Kazakhstan among Top Five Countries with Most Investment from China in 2015

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – Kazakhstan was among the top five countries that drew the largest Chinese investment in 2015, reported the Xinhua news agency with reference to the Chinese Ministry of Commerce.

"Last year, an initial stage of the implementation of the One Belt, One Road strategy was launched. The statistics of the Chinese Ministry of Commerce shows that the investment of Chinese enterprises in 49 countries as part of this strategy amounted to \$14.82 billion in 2015;

that is 18.2 percent higher than a year before. Basically, the investments were directed to Singapore, Kazakhstan, Laos, Indonesia and Russia. Thailand also entered this list," according to the news agency.

In the context of the development of production facilities, Kazakhstan was mentioned in the government's report represented to the Premier of the State Council of China Li Keqiang at the opening of the annual session of National People's Congress, according to Inform.kz.

Li Keqiang called the Kazakh-Chinese partnership a model for

regional industrial and production capacity cooperation at the 14th session of the Council of Heads of Government of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation on Dec. 15, 2015.

The annual session of the National People's Congress, the supreme legislative body of the country, is the most important internal political event of the year in China. After a report about the government's work, about 3, 000 deputies will consider the draft outline of the 13th five-year plan, which defines socio-economic development for 2016-2020.

Italy to Export More Brands to Kazakhstan

By Zhazira Dyussembekova

ASTANA – Over the last two years, Italian export to Kazakhstan increased 64 percent, according to acting Honorary Consul of Italy in Almaty Pietro Calà, reported Kapital.kz. The country plans to expand its exports to Kazakhstan in the near future by bringing more brands.

Italy is second in imports from Kazakhstan among European countries. First place belongs to Germany. The trade turnover between Kazakhstan and Italy amounted to \$17 billion in 2014 and \$16.2 billion in 2013. During 2015, it amounted to \$9.3 billion due to the much lower prices for commodities which make up the main staples of Kazakhstan's

exports. In fact, Kazakhstan's exports of raw materials make up the lion's share of the bilateral trade.

According to Calà, 50 percent of imported Italian goods are machinery and equipment; about 20 percent goes to clothing and footwear. "The remaining percentage we relate to food. This is a very important sector for us. It takes 10 percent of the production as a whole, and if we add agriculture, there will be 14 percent," said Calà.

He also added that the prices for Italian goods have not risen in Kazakhstan, even despite the fact that the Kazakh economy is facing hard times with the devaluation of national currency and the growth of prices for European goods.

"Some of our importers reduced



Pietro Calà

their profits to maintain trade turnover. We can see this by the fact that the price of the Italian pasta has not increased twice," Calà noted.

He mentioned the implementation of big Italian projects in Kazakhstan. "The largest pasta maker Pasta Zara will build a plant here. Inalca is also interested in opening a factory; it specialises in meat products," he said. The relevant agreements were signed during EXPO 2015 in Milan.

Photo credit: Kapital.kz

ECONOMY NEWS IN BRIEF

Kazakhstan has resumed electricity exports to Russia, Bnews reported. The Ekibastuz GRES-2 second power unit was launched March 17 and Kazakhstan started its electricity supply to the Russian power system. The volume of exported electricity in 2016 is expected to reach 1.8 billion kilowatt hours. Samruk-Energo Chairman of the Board Almasadam Satkaliyev said Ekibastuz GRES-1 and GRES-2 will export electricity due to government support. Decisions made by Kazakh state bodies correspond to international practice, and the nation stimulates and promotes the export potential of the electric power industry, he explained. Mutually beneficial agreements between the major subjects of the wholesale electricity market in Kazakhstan and Russia will provide foreign exchange earnings, additional production volumes, services and income. Kazakhstan's electricity supply was stopped because of the devaluation of the Russian ruble against the Kazakh tenge in November 2014.

The Damu Fund approved a new programme of small and medium enterprise support, according to Kazakh TV. It provides prime lending and uses factoring as an instrument to create alternative funding for the companies. One of the project's objectives is to attract business people with receivables and who are in need of funds. According to the programme, the maximum lending is 150 million tenge (US\$434,000) for 36 months. The maximum interest rates range from 2-2.5 percent depending on the type of factoring transactions.

Limited liability companies are proving to be more resistant to the crisis in Kazakhstan than individual entrepreneurs. In one year, the total number of small and medium-sized enterprises in the state decreased by 2 percent, whereas a 53-percent growth was recorded the previous year, according to Kazakh TV. The greatest reduction of 5 percent among individual entrepreneurs was observed between January 2015 and January 2016. The number of farms showed a less-significant reduction of 3 percent. The larger market participants showed resistance, growing by 19 percent.

Kazakhstan and Belarus signed a protocol March 16 amending the agreement to avoid double taxation, according to the Kazakh Foreign Ministry press service. The protocol between the two governments on amendments and additions to the agreement between the countries for the avoidance of double taxation and prevention of fiscal evasion with respect to taxes on income and property dated April 11, 1997, was signed by Kazakh Ambassador in Minsk Yergali Bulegenov and Belarusian Minister for Taxes and Duties Sergei Nalivaiko. Bulegenov emphasised the protocol aims to further effective cooperation between the countries' tax authorities.

The National Bank has kept the base rate of deposits in national currency at a level of 17 percent. Second-tier banks can freely reduce or increase the percentage by 2 points, according to the National Bank press service. Profit rates on standing facilities remain at 19 percent on liquidity provision and 15 percent on liquidity taking. The deposit dollarisation process has been halted in Kazakhstan's financial market, the regulator says. The National Bank plans to continue taking measures to improve public confidence in the tenge and make the next decision concerning the base rate on May 5.

More than 7 trillion tenge (US\$20.2 billion) were invested in the fixed capital of Kazakh companies in 2015, reported Kazakh TV. Companies in the mining industry are the leaders, as their share of enterprises in the total volume of capital investments increased from 30.3 percent to 32.6 percent. Transport and storage sectors are in second place. Real estate businesses are ranked third, ousting the processing industry from the position. Over 800 billion tenge (US\$2.3 billion) was invested in development projects. The investment volume in fixed assets in January-February amounted to 601.9 billion tenge (US\$1.74 billion), a 4.1-percent increase compared to January-February 2015.

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# BUSINESS

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 30, 2016

## BUSINESS NEWS IN BRIEF

State-owned oil and gas company KazMunayGas is not planning to buy BG Group’s share in the Karachaganak project in north-western Kazakhstan, according to Forbes.kz. CEO of KazMunayGas Sauat Mynbayev said that Shell is the potential buyer. Karachaganak Petroleum Operating B.V. is a consortium of companies that joined to develop the Karachaganak oil and gas field. BG Group holds 29.25 percent, ENI 29.25 percent, Chevron 18 percent, Lukoil 13.5 percent and KazMunayGas 10 percent of the shares in the consortium.

Kazakhstan’s President Nursultan Nazarbayev visited the UPNK-PV company in Pavlodar, where he was introduced to the activities of the petroleum coke calcining plant, according to Kazinform, and met with the company’s employees and representatives of small and medium-sized businesses. Nazarbayev highlighted the importance of industrial development in the state. UPNK-PV plans to export some of their products to Russia and China. Nazarbayev also reviewed the operations of the State Programme of Accelerated Industrial and Innovative Development (SPAIID) in Pavlodar and the region’s special economic zone. As of today, four companies operate in the special economic zone in Pavlodar. The government is going to put into operation a number of new facilities to produce agrochemical products and lubricants, as well as a chemical and metallurgical complex.

Production of poultry meat in slaughter weight is expected to increase to 196,000 tonnes and it is expected that egg production will reach approximately 5 billion units in this year, Kazakh TV reports. Experts said state support for entrepreneurship has increased business activity. The volume of subsidies has increased by more than 18 times since the state support programme was launched. In 2015, 9.7 billion tenge (US\$28 million) was allocated for egg production, in comparison with 6.7 billion tenge (US\$19.4 million) in 2014. The state provided 8.4 billion tenge (US\$24.3 million) for poultry meat production in 2015, more than the 7.1 billion tenge (US\$20.5 million) of 2014. In 2015, Kazakhstan’s National Fund subsidised the purchase of feed grain.

The Renault and Nissan companies opened a sales and service centre in the North Kazakhstan region on March 18, with North Kazakhstan Governor Erik Sultanov taking part in the opening ceremony, Kazinform reported. He congratulated the residents of North Kazakhstan and said that the opening of new enterprises and facilities is always important for the region, because new jobs are created and budget revenues are increased. Director of SK Holding Company Sergey Korelchuk highlighted that the level of service in his company complies with international standards and the centre’s personnel will take special training. The construction of the sales and service centre was 100 percent financed by private investors and it is expected that it will create 72 jobs.

Kazakhstan’s market of consumer crediting is becoming more risk-averse, Kazakh TV reported, and is focusing on low-risk products such as consumer loans secured by real estate. According to experts from the Ranking.kz analytical centre, the growth rate of this segment decreased to 1.8 percent in 2015. Last time such a contraction was reported was five years ago. Experts attribute this to several factors: the overall tightening of regulation covering second-tier banks in the consumer finance sector, as well as the fact that every financial institution builds its own relationship with its borrowers. Chairman of the People’s Bank of Kazakhstan Umut Shayakhmetova said that retail lending in the consumer sector was tightened on Jan. 1. Some things were emasculated, such as mortgage loans, and the risk of weighing on them on the contrary decreased. She considers that consumer loans risk of weighing on the contrary has grown, respectively, the pressure on the capital has increased. But the regulator cancelled the norm – an increase of not more than 30 percent of the portfolio.

By Zhazira Dyussembekova

ASTANA – Nurzhas Makishev, an angel investor born and raised in Kazakhstan, has invested his own money and funds he’s raised in more than 50 different start-up projects, including Lyft, Beepi, Sproutling, Ripple Labs and many others. One of his more recent projects is the Kazakh website Choc-olife.

Now, Makishev is living and working in the United States. After finishing high school, he became one of the first Kazakh students to receive a scholarship and studied in the famous Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). According to Forbes.kz, there he was able to create his first peer-to-peer start



Nurzhas Makishev up project, which compared scientists working in the same fields

through analysing their work with a special algorithm.

From childhood, Makishev was interested in mathematics, and has won international maths Olympiads. He was also always interested in technologies and innovations and economics and finance. Makishev didn’t stop with his bachelor’s degree: he went on to earn an MBA degree from the Wharton School of Business at the University of Pennsylvania and a master’s degree from the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard.

He started working during his first year at MIT, and since then has added companies including J.P. Morgan, Oracle, Google and Venrock to his portfolio. He has worked in different positions: analyst, product strategy manager, in-

vestor and others, according to his LinkedIn profile. Today, he is an advisor at the Harvard Innovation Lab, a mentor at the Alchemist Accelerator, independent director at the Bank Service Bureau of the National Bank of Kazakhstan and a researcher for the Cyber Security Project at Harvard’s Belfer Centre. All of this is in addition to his main occupation of venture partner and early stage investor.

Makishev also has contributed to Kazakhstan’s start-up industry. He was a mentor in the first Start-up Weekend in Astana in 2012 and has given lectures on venture investments for Astana Innovations. He was also an adviser to the National Agency for Technological Development for initiatives in Silicon Valley.

## Almaty to Host Large Tech Business Startup Marathon

By Kamila Zhumabayeva

ASTANA – Tech Garden’s Startup Day will be held in Almaty March 30-31 as part of the Eurasian Skolkovo Tour, the event’s organisers said. The tour will include seminars, mentorships and pitch presentation contests, with the best projects to be presented at Startup Village in Skolkovo.

“The southern capital, with support of Almaty Tech Garden autonomous cluster fund and Kazakh Ministry of Investment and Development, has for the second year in a row already received the most wide-scale project of CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States) in search of the most prospective innovation projects and developing the competency of beginning startup teams,” noted the press release, according to Kapital.kz.

Similar to last year, Almaty Management University will be



the general partner of Skolkovo Tour 2016, which will take place on the campus. The 2015 Startup Tour attracted more than 500 young Kazakh entrepreneurs and scientists.

Young scientists, startup teams and students participating in the contest will have an opportunity to win tickets to Startup Village, the

biggest yearly startup conference in Russia. The event will be held June 2-3 at the Skolkovo Innovation Centre, reported the website.

The best “start uppers” will be able to participate at Startup Village without demonstrating additional expertise. Moreover, they will be included in an Almaty Tech Garden acceleration programme

and can rely on an investments provided by subsoil users.

The contest programme has five key directions – biological and medical technologies, biotechnologies in agriculture and industry, industrial technologies and materials, power engineering and energy efficient technologies and information technologies, according to Kapital.kz.

The Startup Tour is searching for innovative solutions in demand in highly-technological markets, as well as assisting young developers in planning their own development strategy, according to the press release.

“Forming innovative communities where everyone in one way or another is related to innovations, such as employees of scientific research institutions, students and lecturers at universities, entrepreneurs, people who represent small, medium or large high-tech business, venture investors and au-

## Aktobe Region Investment Opportunities Presented to Diplomatic Business Club

By Zhazira Dyussembekova

ASTANA – Developing Aktobe region as an investment destination was the theme of the March 28 Diplomatic Business Club meeting. The event, held in the capital’s Rixos Hotel, was initiated by the region’s akimat (administration) with support from the Kazakh Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The aim of Aktobe – Investments and Development was to present the region’s \$11.2 billion investment projects in the food, mining and chemical industries, metallurgy, and hotel business. The region plans to launch six more projects this year, including cement, nickel and solid waste processing plants.

“Now, the Prime Minister has opened a new council on investment under the government in our country for arranging new meetings with the foreign business community. We are ready to respond quickly to any questions which will be arising. In its turn, the Ministry of Investment will ensure this council works effectively and responds to new challenges. An important mo-



ment of a new beginning is that we have introduced the new positions of an investment advisor/councillor to the embassies. They, the investment advisors, will be working with investment portfolios. In addition, we will have investment councils to begin working in all areas which are in close contact with the Ministry of Investment and Development. This is our new approach,” said Foreign

Minister Erlan Idrissov in his address to the foreign ambassadors and businessmen.

He also noted establishing the Diplomatic Business Club under the auspices of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Kazakhstan’s National Chamber of Entrepreneurs became a recognisable platform. It is offering the Kazakh side an opportunity to bring information about the most

attractive projects to the diplomatic corps, whose members inform their capitals on a permanent basis.

“Today, together with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan and the Business Club, we are presenting Aktobe region’s investment opportunities to all the ambassadors and heads of international organisations. Here are some of our projects and here are the heads of enterprises, businessmen who will present their projects to representatives of diplomatic missions... We hope that this will be the impetus for investment in our region,” said Aktobe region Akim (governor) Berdybek Saparbayev.

He also noted the region is taking measures to create a favourable investment climate. Due to the transport potential, presence of a rich mineral resource base and availability of basic resources, the region has great potential to develop the mining and chemical industries, metallurgy and agriculture, according to the press release.

It added Aktobe region’s delegation met this year with the leading representatives of business circles

With his great store of knowledge, Makishev became an angel investor in 2012, when he invested his first \$10,000 in the Pintrips company, reported Forbes.kz.

“Of course, that was a small amount of investment, but for me it was the most important and deliberate investment,” he said in an interview with Forbes.

Since then he has been investing and attracting funds for many projects. The Lyft project he invested in is now worth \$2.5 billion, according to experts. Promising ones like Robinhood, Luxe and Zoomcar already have attracted more than \$100 million, reports Forbes.kz.

He also stated that he is sure that in the future, most of the world’s biggest corporations will belong to information technology companies. Today the top three are already Apple, Alphabeth (Google) and Microsoft.

An angel investor or angel is a wealthy person providing funds for a business start-up, usually in exchange for convertible debt or ownership equity.

thority, would be an important task of Startup Tour,” added the press release.

A significant part in this year’s programme will be allocated to educating young entrepreneurs. The array will include practical classes and trainings as well as mentoring sessions, meetings where startups can create a suitable business model in collaborative, practical work with a team of experts and get tips for attracting investment.

“Conducting the Eurasian stage of Startup Tour is becoming a kind of tradition. This year, startups in Kyrgyzstan will be presented along with Kazakhstan’s projects,” noted Almaty Tech Garden Director General Sanzhar Kettebekov, according to Kapital.kz. “It is good that the contest’s scale is growing and we can tell with confidence that Almaty is becoming a place of attraction due to such events and may become a regional startup hub in the nearest prospect.”

in China, Croatia, Finland, Iran, Poland, Slovakia and Turkey. The heads and representatives of diplomatic missions of the Czech Republic, Finland, Germany, India, Indonesia, Norway and Sweden have visited the region.

During the event, members of the Diplomatic Business Club and the Aktobe region administration agreed to establish a permanent working group consisting of responsible embassy and administration employees. The team will be under the supervision of the region’s deputy governor, who will monitor the progress of the investment projects.

Based on the results of the last five years, Aktobe region is second in the country in terms of attracting foreign investments. The region has trade relations with 100 countries and the total foreign trade volume reached \$3.7 billion, 84 percent of which represents exports of Aktobe goods and services.

The event included a question and answer session, where all interested members of the Diplomatic Business Club had the opportunity to discuss specific details.

## Iranian, Russian Companies Seek Cooperation with Kazakh Gold Affinage Plants

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA - A trial delivery of gold from Iran and Russia has been delivered for refining to Kazakhstan. It is expected to increase supplies if the parties reach an agreement on price.

Tau Ken Altyn, a subsidiary

company of the national mining company Tau Ken Samruk, will process four tons of Iranian and Russian gold by the end of this year, said the head of the company Meiramgali Tleuzhanov at a briefing at the Central Communication Service (CCS).

“Earlier, some Iranian companies collaborated with the U.S.

companies in terms of gold refining. Currently, they are working with us. I think our company offers suitable and economically advantageous conditions for them. We signed the contracts for processing two tons and 200 kilograms of gold with the Iranian companies and one ton and 800 kilograms with a Russian

company Polymetal,” said Tleuzhanov.

In November 2015, Mazhit Turmagambetov, chairman of the Board of Tau Ken Samruk, announced a trial supply of gold from Russia and Iran in December. He noted that Russian companies come to our gold processing market because the Kazakh refiner-

ies “give an adequate price and are willing to work under tolling scheme.

Meanwhile, the technological capabilities of three Kazakh refining plants, including Tau Ken Altyn, Kazzinc and Balkhash mining and metallurgical plant, allow processing of 130 tons of gold.

EDITORIAL&OPINION

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 30, 2016

Parliamentary Election Yields No Surprises, Represents Vote of Confidence in Country’s Direction

For those hoping for political drama, Kazakhstan’s March 21 parliamentary elections were a major disappointment. The new parliament, when it meets again, will be similar in make-up to the one it replaced. Three parties will once again be represented with the Nur Otan party in the majority.

But this continuity does not mean the election was irrelevant. Kazakhstan is at crucial point in its development. Serious questions are being asked as it is buffeted by global economic storms as to whether the dramatic progress of the last two decades can be sustained.

These forces have already had a significant impact, as they have had on many other countries, on government revenues and growth prospects. They have led to stark warnings from within and outside the country and from friends and critics alike that Kazakhstan has to adjust quickly to this new reality.

It was these challenges and the steps already set out to ensure Kazakhstan comes through these difficult times unscathed, which formed the clear backdrop to this election campaign. As The Astana Times has said, no attempt was made to hide the difficulties ahead from the public, ensuring that the country understood what was at stake. This may have contributed to a turnout of more than 77 percent, a record for parliamentary elections in Kazakhstan.

Against this backdrop, the election result can be seen as a vote of confidence in the leadership, the direction of the country and the policy responses agreed to chart Kazakhstan through this difficult environment. It was recognition that the country has no choice but to continue on its modernisation path.

The new parliament has a heavy responsibility. Its task is now to work with the government to enact legislative reforms to deliver the ambitious economic and social programmes which have been set out. It is a comprehensive package that aims to spur the economy and protect the vulnerable in the short-term while providing the platform Kazakhstan needs to prosper.

These foundations include a diversified economy, first-

class infrastructure, an entrepreneurial culture, highly skilled workforce and a modern, responsive civil service that works effectively to serve the public. They also require robust, effective political institutions and a healthy and democratic political process.

This is another reason why the election should not be dismissed. As Foreign Minister Erlan Idrissov said over the weekend, Kazakhstan’s political system after just 25 years as a modern, independent country is still not fully developed. There is more to do, but March 20, 2016 was another step in the right direction.

This is also the view of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) monitoring team in their assessment delivered the day after the elections. Although they identified major areas for improvement, they also noted progress since the last parliamentary election four years ago.

They welcomed the open way that international observers were invited to watch the campaigns and voting. The elections were also praised as was the inclusive nature of candidate registration and the work of the Central Election Commission. On election day itself, the monitors who were invited to watch voting at polling stations across the country said citizens made their choice in a calm and free manner.

But, particularly at the local level, shortcomings and irregularities were identified. While the OSCE recognised that six parties contested the elections, they believe more must be done between electoral campaigns to ensure political plurality, including strengthening media freedoms and ensuring civil and political rights are guaranteed. These concerns, as the OSCE hoped, will be taken into account when Kazakhstan’s electoral law undergoes major revisions next year.

Overseeing these reforms will be just one of the major tasks in front of the new parliament. On the economic, social and political front, the decisions taken over the next few months will have a profound impact on Kazakhstan’s future and the lives of our citizens. We wish the new parliament members well in their work.

Kazakhstan Can Be Proud of the Way It Conducted Elections

By Erlan Idrissov



I am proud of Kazakhstan for the way we have carried out these parliamentary elections.

I want to extend compliments to the more than 10 election observation missions from the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE): Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE/ODIHR), the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), the Parliamentary Assembly of the Turkic Council (TurkPA), the Parliamentary Assembly of the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) and other observers for again accepting our invitation to monitor the election.

The invitation was a sign of Kazakhstan’s continued determination to ensure that elections are free and fair. I thank the electoral bodies and government agencies for all their hard work and close cooperation.

We welcome the assess-

ments of the electoral campaign by the monitoring missions from the CIS, the OSCE and other organisations.

The OSCE was clear that the election was well organised and professional. They gave a positive view of the technical work of the Central Election Committee (CEC) in registering voters and candidates. It noted that the CEC has held regular open sessions on preparations for political parties, citizen and international observers and the media. Our Constitution guarantees freedom of expression and prohibits censorship, which was reflected in the OSCE’s assessment.

Observers from the CIS acknowledged that the election was held freely, with a high turnout and in full accordance with the Constitution of Kazakhstan. The high turnout was also recognised by other international observers who

noted that a large number of people voted.

Furthermore, experts of the mission and the International Institute for Monitoring of democracy, parliamentarianism and observance of electoral rights of CIS IPA concluded that the electoral legislation of Kazakhstan complies with the universally recognised norms of international law. Observers praised the transparent and open manner of these elections.

We are a young country and we know our political institutions are still developing. Election observers play an important role in helping our progress. We will, of course, be studying the international observers’ assessments and recommendations.

I am confident the results of the election accurately reflect the will of the people. Now, the new parliament can concentrate fully on navigating the country through the current challenges and towards prosperity and growth.

I would also like to thank the observers from all missions for their partnership, which helps to improve and develop the electoral system of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

The author is Foreign Minister of Kazakhstan.

Nuclear Security Summits Leave Massive Legacy But Work Must Be Continued

Our world, despite the worrying increase in tensions in recent months, has come a long way from the darkest days of the Cold War. Only the most pessimistic of minds believes deliberate nuclear war between East and West is now possible. To those who lived through those very dangerous times, this is a massive step in the right direction.

Sadly, however, this does not mean the nuclear threat has disappeared. There remain other potential regional flashpoints, which we must work harder to defuse. The agreement over Iran’s nuclear programme – in which Kazakhstan played a part – shows what can be achieved through patience, courage and commitment on all sides.

But as fears of nuclear war between states ease, they have been replaced by a more unpredictable but no less terrible danger. It is the risk that such weapons or the material to make them could fall into the hands of extremist groups – and the knowledge that they are seeking them – which is ringing alarm bells across the globe.

While we have seen welcome reductions in nuclear weapons in recent years, there remain 16,000 warheads, enough to destroy the world many times over. An even greater concern is the 2,000 tonnes of plutonium and highly enriched uranium held in hundreds of sites, not all of them fully secure, across the world.

It is the very real risk of this material falling into the wrong hands that led to U.S. President Barack Obama to say in 2009 that nuclear terrorism was the most immediate and extreme threat to global security. His intervention and personal commitment saw the first Nuclear Security Summit to counter this threat held in Washington a year later.

The high-level meeting – and subsequent summits in Seoul and The Hague – paved the way for an unprecedented international focus on securing vulnerable nuclear materials and improved co-operation to crack down on illegal smuggling operations. While there is much work to be done, these efforts have seen the removal of highly enriched uranium and plutonium from 12 countries and more than 20 nuclear facilities as well as improved security at sites around the world and enhanced efforts to seize and prevent the trade in illegally trafficked material.

This is just as well. Even since 2009, we have seen the emergence of more extreme groups with greater resources and ambitions and a terrible appetite for death and destruction. It is all too clear that if they were to obtain or build nuclear weapons they would not hesitate to use them to cause maximum casualties.

It is against this background that the fourth Nuclear Security Summit is taking place in Washington this week. It will bring together the leaders of around 50 countries as well as

international organisations to build on the progress made and put together new plans to tackle the threat we face.

Given Kazakhstan’s outstanding contributions to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev is likely play an active role again at the meeting as we have since he was invited to participate in the first summit in 2010. The Kazakhs’ determination to do all they can to reduce the threat of nuclear weapons has helped define this country ever since it gained independence nearly 25 years ago.

There is no secret why this issue is so important to the Kazakh people. Over four decades, nearly 500 nuclear explosions were carried out at the Semipalatinsk test site within our borders, often with the minimum of protection.

The result has been lives lost, a legacy of chronic health conditions and terrible and continuing environmental damage. No other country has suffered as badly from the peacetime impact of nuclear weapons.

It was why, even before independence, President Nazarbayev took the historic decision on Aug. 29, 1991 to close the Semipalatinsk site. Months later, the Central Asian country voluntarily renounced what was then the world’s fourth largest nuclear arsenal. Over the next 10 years, Kazakhstan worked with both the U.S. and Russia experts in a model of international partnership to secure material from the Soviet nuclear programme under the famous Nunn-Lugar Cooperative Threat Reduction programme.

Nazarbayev has continued to show a strong lead, through example, commitments and campaigning, in international efforts to prevent nuclear proliferation, to end nuclear testing and to increase co-operation over nuclear safety issues. This includes agreeing to host the International Atomic Energy Agency’s Low-Enriched Uranium Bank, which will enable countries to develop civilian atomic programmes without having to build facilities to enrich uranium and the creation of a Central Asian Nuclear-Weapons-Free-Zone.

In the long run, however, the best route to removing the threat to humanity that nuclear weapons pose is to move towards a nuclear weapons-free world. This week’s summit can, through practical measures and improving confidence, help lay the groundwork to bring this ambition closer.

The summit will be the last to be chaired by President Obama whose personal commitment has been so important to countering the threat from nuclear terrorism. But it must not be the end of the global effort. All countries and all our peoples have a critical interest in preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons and doing everything we can to keep them out of the hands of those who wish us all evil.

## 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 24 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).

OPINIONS

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 30, 2016

Kazakhstan Intends to Continue Strategic Partnership with US, Ambassador in Washington Says

By Mukash Rasulkhan

As announced earlier by Kazakhstan's Foreign Ministry press service, President Nursultan Nazarbayev this week will take part in the Nuclear Security Summit in Washington, DC. The fourth summit of heads of state, prime ministers and heads of nuclear security organisations aims at revitalising the activities of the existing multi-lateral structures to ensure the safety of vulnerable nuclear materials in order to stave off nuclear smuggling and deter, detect and disrupt nuclear terrorism attempts.

Ambassador of Kazakhstan to the United States Kairat Umarov shared with The Astana Times what can be expected from the upcoming fourth and final Nuclear Security Summit.

*Mr Ambassador, can you please share your view on what is the rationale behind the U.S. initiative to convene such summits on nuclear safety?*

The commitment of U.S. President Barack Obama to non-proliferation is well known. Speaking in Prague in 2009, he called nuclear terrorism "the most immediate and extreme threat to global security." The following year, the first Nuclear Security Summit was held in Washington in order to draw the world's attention to the threat of nuclear terrorism at the highest level. More than 50 heads of state participated in the summit, which is the largest number of participants since the formation of the UN. This was followed by two more summits: in Seoul in 2012 and in The Hague in 2014. The same year in Berlin, the U.S. President officially announced plans to host the fourth and final Nuclear Security Summit in 2016.

*What is the benefit of holding the summits? Are there any tangible results from the meetings?*

Following the summits, countries and multilateral organisations made dozens of commitments. The parties have achieved tangible results in improving the security of materials and strengthening international institutions supporting nuclear safety. Many member states voluntarily made commitments to take specific measures to strengthen internal nuclear safety, as well as raise the level of global security through bilateral or multilateral mechanisms. According to research institutions, 95



Kairat Umarov

percent of the commitments made in Washington in April 2010 had already been implemented by 2014.

At this point, I would like to specifically highlight the significant contribution of President Nazarbayev and the country as a whole in this process. In November 2010, co-chairmen of the bilateral Energy Partnership commission, Minister of Oil and Gas of Kazakhstan Sauat Mynbaev and U.S. Deputy Secretary of Energy Daniel Poneman, announced the "safe closure" of the industrial nuclear reactor BN-350 in Aktau city, where plutonium had been produced. The completion of this programme is one of the significant highlights of the 15-year track record of strategic partnership between the two countries in reducing nuclear threats around the world. The amount of plutonium transported to safe storage was sufficient for the production of more than 70 nuclear weapons. This project involved hundreds of Kazakh and American scientists, engineers and safety, security and transportation experts. In 2010 alone, 12 shipments containing spent fuel in special transportation and storage containers were conducted from Aktau over a distance of more than 3,000 kilometres to eastern Kazakhstan. In the framework of the first summit, recognising the significant achievements of Kazakhstan in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation, President Obama rightly called Kazakhstan a world leader in this field. Thanks to the proactive position of our President, we remain recognised today as a global leader in the field of non-proliferation.

During the Seoul summit, the agenda was advanced by focusing the international community's attention on the requirements to develop effective national and international measures to strengthen nuclear safety. On the sideline of the summit, presidents of three

countries – Nazarbayev, Obama and Dmitry Medvedev of the Russian Federation – adopted a joint statement regarding the successful cooperation at the former Semipalatinsk nuclear test site, which was closed exactly 25 years ago on Aug. 29, 1991. They announced the completion of long-term cooperation to effectively lock down the tunnels in the Degelen mountain range, where underground nuclear tests took place, and described it as a bright example of effective trilateral collaboration.

The Hague summit built on the achievements of the previous two summits in 2010 and 2012 and focused on achieving three main objectives: reducing the number of dangerous nuclear material in the world; increasing safety of all nuclear materials and radioactive sources and improving international cooperation.

*What should the world expect from the 2016 Washington Summit?*

It is expected that the 2016 summit will lead to a more sustainable model for a stronger security architecture effectively promoting key objectives of the summits interacting with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and other relevant organisations.

The Washington summit will focus on the promotion of tangible improvements in the field of nuclear safety and strengthening its global architecture based on international standards and strengthening the credibility of the implementation by countries of nuclear safety requirements and leading to a reduction in the global stock of nuclear weapon materials.

And again, Kazakhstan will come to the summit with an impressive track record of achievements and new initiatives, among which the most important for the international community is the international Low-Enriched Uranium Bank in Ust-Kamenogorsk.

*Why is the current fourth Nuclear Security Summit in Washington the final one? Will there be other summits on nuclear themes at U.S. initiative?*

The convening of the Nuclear Security Summit has been a personal initiative of President Obama, for whom the current year will be the final year of his presidency. The

question whether similar summits will be convened in the future depends on the decision of the new administration in the White House. Currently, the United States is undergoing significant changes in its domestic politics. Now, the election campaign in the United States is going into a more active phase and has identified the main favourites of the race from the two parties. The visit of President Nursultan Nazarbayev to Washington in these conditions will re-emphasise the continuity of the strategic partnership between the two countries in the field of nuclear security and Kazakhstan's leadership in the global anti-nuclear movement.

*Could you elaborate on what Kazakhstan brings to the upcoming Nuclear Security Summit in Washington?*

The visit of our President to Washington will allow Kazakhstan to reconfirm its commitment to non-proliferation and international security, to share experiences and vision for finding solutions to issues of the physical protection of nuclear materials.

Fifty-two heads of state and international organisations are invited to the summit. As I mentioned, Kazakhstan is coming to the summit with impressive achievements, both in terms of global cooperation in the nuclear field and in the context of the bilateral strategic partnership with the United States. Even a short list of successful joint projects with the U.S. indicates a breakthrough in this area. These include the conversion of WWR-K reactor of the Institute of Nuclear Physics of Kazakhstan to the low-enriched uranium, the creation of the Nuclear Safety Centre, and the construction of the Central Reference Laboratory in Almaty. The Obama administration has supported a number of Kazakh peace initiatives, including through signing of the Protocol on Negative Security Guarantees to the Central Asian Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty concluded in 2006.

*How do experts and officials in the United States assess the establishment of the Low Enriched Uranium (LEU) Bank in Kazakhstan?*

The signing of the agreement between Kazakhstan and the IAEA in August 2015 on the establishment of the LEU Bank in our country was highly regarded by the international

community and, in particular, the United States.

Recently, on the eve of our President's visit to Washington, U.S. Congressmen Dana Rohrabacher and Alcee Hastings made statements into the Congressional Record. Both congressmen underlined the historic decision of President Nazarbayev to unilaterally renounce Kazakhstan's nuclear arsenal and establish the unprecedented LEU Bank in our country that provides a secondary market for low-enriched uranium. In the United States, they understand and appreciate that the LEU Bank guarantees all nations access to peaceful nuclear power and, more importantly, rules out the rationale for developing nuclear enrichment technologies of their own.

During the Nuclear Industry Summit to be held on the sidelines of the Nuclear Security Summit, it is expected that Kazakhstan and KazAtomProm will be awarded for implementing the initiative on the establishment of the LEU Bank in Kazakhstan.

*How does the United States assess the role of Kazakhstan in addressing the Iranian nuclear issue?*

The role of Kazakhstan and our President in the launch of the Iranian nuclear negotiations and in the implementation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) has been repeatedly recognised by President Obama and U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry in various public statements.

On Dec. 28, 2015, the U.S. Department of State released a statement by Secretary Kerry, in which he thanked Kazakhstan for its role in the shipment of nuclear material out of Iran. The statement also noted Kazakhstan's contribution by hosting of early rounds of negotiations that "led to the successful conclusion of the JCPOA. Let us recall that on Dec. 27, 2015, in coordination with P5+1, Iran, the IAEA and the UN Security Council's relevant structures, Kazakhstan supplied Iran with 60 metric tonnes of natural uranium as compensation for the removal of low-enriched uranium from that country. We are convinced that this will strengthen the non-proliferation regime, the realisation of the legitimate rights of states to develop peaceful nuclear power and have non-discriminatory access to nuclear fuel.

*How do you assess current bilateral relations with the U.S.?*

Relations between Kazakhstan and the United States over the last few years have gained strategic character and reached a level of mature partnership based on personal respect and mutual understanding of the leaders of our countries.

This year is a jubilee of our bilateral cooperation: in 2016, we celebrate the 25th anniversary of establishing diplomatic relations between Kazakhstan and the U.S., which was among the first countries to recognise our independence.

2015 was a successful year in terms of bringing our strategic partnership to a new high level. Last year, the Presidents of Kazakhstan and the United States held a meeting on the sidelines of UN General Assembly in September 2015. In April 2015, we had Prime Minister Karim Massimov's visit to the US. In November 2015, a historic visit of Secretary Kerry to Kazakhstan and Central Asia took place, where a new mechanism of cooperation between Central Asian countries and the U.S., C5+1, was launched.

*In conclusion, could you mention the prospects for the development of bilateral relations between Kazakhstan and the U.S. in the near future?*

We intend to continue our mutually beneficial and fruitful strategic partnership with the U.S. Kazakhstan has always been an active supporter of nuclear security worldwide. We will continue to maintain a keen and multifaceted dialogue with our American partners on a wide range of issues.

High dynamism in relations between our countries enables us to actively cooperate not only bilaterally, but also on the regional and international issues of mutual interest.

The U.S. appreciates our balanced and multi-vector foreign policy, good relations with our neighbours in the region and beyond, as well as large-scale and strategic vision of global issues. And the upcoming summit, to which Kazakhstan brings a solid record of completed projects and tangible contribution to the common cause of strengthening international security, is a testament to this.

Kazakhstan is a leader in the process of nuclear non-proliferation. This is already a widely recognised fact.

Another Positive Step toward Building Permanent Democratic Institutions

By Vladimir Socor, Richard Weitz, and Daniel Witt

Kazakhstan held pre-term parliamentary elections on March 20, 2015. The Nur Otan governing party and five other parties entered their lists of candidates for the Mazhilis. Elections to local Maslikhats (elective councils) at all levels were held simultaneously with the parliamentary elections.

Our election observation group met, ahead of the voting day, with senior-level officials of the Central Election Commission and of the National Public Commission for Election Monitoring. The latter is a politically neutral association of non-governmental organisations, accredited as election observers at all levels at which electoral commissions operate.

We observed the voting at more than 30 polling stations in Astana, and the ballot-counting at several stations. We engaged in conversation with precinct electoral commissions' chairs and members, with election observers, and with some voters, inside and outside the polling stations.

We assess these parliamentary elections, on the whole, as a further advance in Kazakhstan's work to build the institutions of representative government while continually

improving its democratic electoral procedures (see below).

The Electoral Landscape

Nur Otan and five other parties with their distinct profiles and programs, ranging from moderate left to centre-right, competed for the Mazhilis's 98 elective seats, on the basis of the proportional system. The threshold for representation is seven percent of the votes cast. Nine additional Mazhilis seats are allocated ex officio to the Assembly of the Peoples of Kazakhstan. Simultaneously, 10,825 candidates (some two thirds of whom were self-nominated, and about one third nominated by political parties) competed for 3,035 seats on the Maslikhats of all levels.

Voter turnout, preliminarily reported at 77 percent (two percent higher than the turnout for the 2012 parliamentary elections) is lower than the turnouts recorded in presidential elections. Kazakhstan's 9.8 million registered voters increasingly regard multi-party elections as regular, unexceptional events.

As could be expected, voters showed their preference for the Nur Otan party by an estimated majority of 80 percent of the votes cast. This preference reflects the high approval rating of Nur Otan's chairman, President Nursultan Nazarbayev, based on his long-standing performance,

with confidence that Nazarbayev is the leader who can steer Kazakhstan through the current global and regional crises.

Our own observations as an independent group focused both on procedural aspects and on institutional implications of these parliamentary elections.

Procedural Aspects

At all the 30 plus polling stations that we visited we ascertained a well-organised, efficient, transparent balloting process. The balloting and vote-counting procedures that we observed were orderly and transparent.

This being our third election observation visit to Kazakhstan from 2012 to date, we notice continuing advances in the professionalism of electoral commissions responsible for administering the elections at the precincts' level.

There were no signs of governmental mobilization of voters to turn out to the polls. Nor did the authorities attempt to create a festive atmosphere around these elections or near the polling stations that we visited. The atmosphere inside and outside the polling stations was that of a normal, well-accustomed, tranquil political process and routinised technical procedures. This sense of normalcy about elections is a sign

of Kazakhstan's growing political maturity as a state and society.

In the context of normalcy, voter turnout will objectively amount to less than the 90 percent level traditional in Kazakhstan. A turnout in the range of 70 percent to 80 percent, if it remains at this level in future elections, will still be a real achievement, undoubtedly reflecting a high civic consciousness among Kazakhstan's voters, and convincing to the world, by comparison with the normal voter turnouts of 40 percent in the United States or 50 percent to 60 percent in Western Europe.

Each electoral cycle in Kazakhstan marks some notable advance in terms of openness. After the 2012 parliamentary elections had replaced the single-party Mazhilis with a somewhat more pluralistic one, the 2016 parliamentary elections featured the first-ever televised debate among all participating party leaders. On March 16, leaders of the six parties on the election ballot debated the issues before the nation on the main public television channel, in a dignified and mutually respectful manner.

As in previous elections, Kazakhstan invited international observers again in large numbers to the 2016 parliamentary elections, encouraging the observers to fan across the country. Notwithstanding traditional criticism from some Western organisations, Kazakhstan's authori-

ties maintain full openness to international observation of elections in the country. As reported, more than 900 election observers from international organisations and 154 foreign journalists were accredited by Kazakhstan's authorities to monitor and report on these parliamentary elections.

Institutional Implications

The parliamentary elections of January 2012 had replaced the single-party Mazhilis (in which NurOtan held all 98 elective seats) with a somewhat more pluralist Mazhilis. Exit polls on March 20, 2016 seemed to presage the same composition for the newly elected Mazhilis, with the Ak Zhol Democratic Party (centre-right) and the Communist People's Party (moderate left) slightly surpassing the seven percent threshold and retaining their parliamentary seats, while Nur Otan retains its super-majority.

These elections have seen the emergence of a centre-right to moderate left spectrum of parties in Kazakhstan. This, too, is a hallmark of progress at the institutional level. Some of these parties seek to represent specific interests (Ak Zhol the medium-sized and small business, Aulay agrarian interests), while Nur Otan as an all-people's party acts as the mainstay of stability, which in turn forms the prerequisite to reforms.

The threshold of seven percent has been criticized as too high by some observers, but it does seem appropriate for Kazakhstan at this stage in its political development. The threshold is designed to prevent a proliferation of immature parties

beholden to individual personalities and pursuing group interests or sectional agendas. (Similar considerations have led Turkey, for example, to set the threshold at 10 percent). The threshold helps to prevent fragmentation in the Mazhilis and to avoid the need for coalition governments --- a situation that has in other post-Soviet countries impeded their reforms.

Speaking ahead of the 2015 presidential election, President Nazarbayev suggested that a transfer of some powers from the presidency to the parliament and government will come into consideration, apparently in the new legislative cycle that begins with these parliamentary elections.

However, the presidential institution will remain as heretofore the guarantee of the country's political stability, as well as the main source of strategic planning and reform initiatives.

These elections have produced a new parliament with authority to enact reforms that would enhance the performance of Kazakhstan's public administration, strengthen rule of law, and promote government accountability and transparency.

We assess the parliamentary elections just held as fully and unequivocally successful, another positive step toward building permanent democratic institutions in Kazakhstan.

**Messrs. Socor, Weitz, and Witt are long-time observers of Central Asia, and were independent international observers of Kazakhstan's parliamentary elections.**

EURASIA&WORLD

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 30, 2016

Secretary of State Shares Country's Gender-Sensitive Policies with UN Commission on Women



Gulshara Abdykalikova

By Malika Orazgaliyeva

Kazakhstan's Secretary of State Gulshara Abdykalikova told the March 14-15 60th session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women that her country's women-oriented and gender-sensitive policies enable women to succeed at the national level.

According to the Kazakh Foreign Ministry's press release, Abdykalikova said during the session, dedicated to "Women's empowerment and its link to sustainable development," that President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev pays great attention to the political leadership of women, their contribution to the economic growth and prevention of gender violence.

Kazakhstan, as a member of the UN, advocates for gender equality and empowerment of women throughout almost all of the issues and processes on the agenda of the organisation. Kazakhstan has been a member of the Commission on the Status of Women several times and is a member until 2018.

Abdykalikova addressed the commission in her capacity as Chairperson of the National Commission for Women, Family and Demographic Policy under the President, focusing on the structural causes of gender inequality and discrimination, putting forward gender-responsive state policies and programmes. In light of the newly adopted 2030 development agenda, Abdykalikova shared the goals of the country's gender-sensitive policies.

The Kazakh delegation also met with UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon and Under-Secretary-Generals, Executive Director of the UN Women Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka and Administrator of the UN Development Programme Helen Clark. The delegation also met with Executive Secretary of Inter-American Commission on the Status of Women Ambassador Carmen Moreno, as well as Ban Soon-taek, spouse of Ban Ki-moon, who is an advocate for the protection of women's rights and their empowerment. The sides expressed a desire to expand cooperation.

On 14 March, Abdykalikova and Permanent Representative of Kazakhstan to UN Ambassador Kairat Abdрахmanov hosted a Ministerial Working Luncheon with the theme "Gender and Family Demographic Policy of Kazakhstan: Growth, Reforms and Sustainable Development," with the participation of ministers and ambassadors from Africa, Europe, Asia and Latin America.

During the event, around 40 high-ranked representatives learnt about the country's gender-responsive policies, including those related to capacity building for women in rural areas in the fields of political participation and economic, social empowerment and education. Participants expressed their intention to strengthen bilateral and multilateral cooperation in the area of women's empowerment and protection of the rights of women and girls, reinforcing mutual commitments for their advancement worldwide.

Earlier, Abdykalikova held several meetings with government officials and business leaders in Washington, D.C. on March 10-13.

At the meeting with Deputy Secretary of State for Civil Security, Democracy and Human Rights Sarah Sewall, Abdykalikova discussed bilateral and multilateral cooperation.

Abdykalikova also spoke at the Woodrow Wilson International Research Centre, a leading U.S. research institution. She emphasised the strengthening of national unity, inter-ethnic and inter-confessional consent in Kazakhstan and talked about the training of Kazakh specialists abroad in the framework of the Bolashak programme. During the event, which was attended by over 100 representatives of U.S. academic and public institutions, as well as students of the University of Washington, Abdykalikova answered questions concerning the efforts of the Kazakh government to expand the economic and political empowerment of women.

Abdykalikova also took part in a gala reception of the international non-governmental organisation Global Partnership Vital Voices and attended the awarding ceremony of the Global Leadership Award.

Abdykalikova met with President of the Global Summit of Women Irene Natividad and discussed strengthening the role of women in the socio-economic development of countries, raising their status and enhancing their participation in decision-making.

Kazakh-US Security Cooperation Discussed at Conference in Astana Think Tank

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – The military cooperation project for 2016-2017 has been developed between the Kazakh and American armed forces, according to the President of the Kazakh Ministry of Defence Centre for Military and Strategic Studies Kozykorpesh Karbuzov.

"We have developed a common approach to defence planning and military cooperation between Kazakhstan and the U.S. for 2016-2017," he said. The comments were made March 18 during "Contemporary U.S. Foreign Policy and its Realisation in Central Asia," an international conference held in the city.

Karbuzov noted Kazakh-American military relations for the next two years will be aimed at peace-keeping, armed forces professionalisation and enhancing military education.

"We plan to improve the teaching methods of the military educational institutions of Kazakhstan and promote the development of the non-commissioned officers corps. At the same time, we are going to continue working on language learning. In the near future, the exchange of cadets of military educational institutions of Kazakhstan and the United States is planned as well," he added.

Karbuzov indicated the two nations have already held their first joint event, a seminar on improv-



Richard Weitz

ing the methodology of cadet training. He also highlighted the importance of Steppe Eagle, an international special tactical peace-keeping exercise coordinated with the participation of both nations' Armed Forces.

"The U.S. stands for security in the Central Asian region," said Hudson Institute (U.S.) Centre for Political-Military Analysis Director Richard Weitz.

The think tank was founded in 1961 for research and analysis. As such, Weitz is an independent scholar and his comments represent the institute, not the American government.

"Another important point is that Central Asia after the collapse of the USSR has not become an object of contention between Russia and China. Today, we are seeing greater cooperation between the two countries, which is very good because it allows you to avoid conflicts in the region," he said.

Weitz added Kazakhstan and the United States have built fairly strong diplomatic relations.

"Kazakhstan has succeeded in the

construction of a multi-vector policy. The Kazakh government is developing a variety of tools to combat corruption. And this is the main kernel, the 'heart' of Kazakhstan's policy, which is very important," he added.

Weitz noted the American sanctions policy has been very effective throughout the years and although it is currently used in relation to Russia, the policy negatively affects many Central Asian countries. He added the American government must work on the policy to prevent such adverse effects.

"We have evidence that even those people who are watching Russian and foreign channels believe that Russian TV channels are more believable. I am not an expert in this area, but I believe that this is a problem. I do not know how it happened. Maybe you need more open space for the mass media, which will be attended by Western, European and Russian TV channels. People will have equal access to the mass media and have an opportunity to choose and make conclusions, getting information from several sources," he said.

Obtaining information about the event or the country from different sources will allow Kazakhs to form an objective opinion.

"Every citizen should be able to choose what media to watch and use. For example, there is state and independent media in the U.S. and information provided by these media often differs," said Weitz.

Almaty, China Representatives Discuss City-Country Relations

By Julia Rutz

An official meeting with a Chinese delegation from the Hubei province headed by Vice Governor Gan Zhunkun was held in the Almaty city akimat (administration) on March 15, reported the press service of the city administration.

Both sides noted potential for bilateral cooperation in industry, trade, innovation, culture and education. The Kazakh side emphasised that relations between the two states have been stable for a long time.

Almaty hosts 69 joint and more than 170 Chinese enterprises. Thanks to their contribution, the

trade turnover for January 2016 between Almaty city and China reached \$100 million. Gan Zhunkun also mentioned the trade train, which connects China and Europe passing through Kazakhstan.

Among possible spheres of cooperation, innovation and new technologies were agreed to be the most promising. China has constructed 130 high-tech parks since 1991 and can offer experience on developing these spheres in Kazakhstan.

The Chinese delegation was invited to participate in the 1000-anniversary of the establishment of Almaty and Unverside 2017.

On March 17, Almaty Akim

(Mayor) Bauyrzhan Baibek met another representative of the neighbouring state, Chinese Ambassador to Kazakhstan Zhang Hanhui to discuss the investment climate in Almaty, its tourism potential and further cooperation with China.

The ambassador noted the high interest of his country to cooperate in transport infrastructure projects and the Smart City construction. It was also agreed that Chinese representatives will participate in celebrations dedicated to the city's establishment.

Baibek also noted the State Programme for Almaty Development 2020, which highlights the attraction of foreign capital to the city.

Cuban Ambassador: Kazakh President's First Official Visit to Havana Will Strengthen Ties

By Dmitry Lee

ASTANA – Kazakhstan and Cuba are about to witness a historic moment: Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev will pay his first official visit to Havana on April 2-3.

"We will meet the President not only as the head of state, but also as a friend of the Cuban people," said Cuban Ambassador in Kazakhstan Carlos Valdés in an exclusive interview with The Astana Times.

The ambassador stressed Cuba was one of the first countries to recognise Kazakhstan's independence; however, this will be the Kazakh President's inaugural trip to the island nation.

"No doubt this visit will serve as an important step in strengthening the bilateral relations in such areas as politics, economy and culture," he said.

The visit will also include meetings between the countries' foreign ministers.

"[Senior officials] will sign a memorandum of understanding



Carlos Valdés

(MoU) on cooperation in the fields of labour, employment and social protection," said Valdés.

As the third Cuban Ambassador in Kazakhstan, he has continued the topic of cooperation between the two countries and highlighted the importance of high-level diplomatic and political cooperation.

"Kazakhstan is very interested in the leaps Cuba made in the sphere of medicine. For the biggest part [it has been] in biotechnological products, vaccines and medical services in general, although the turnover

between our countries has a lot of room for improvement," he said.

The ambassador added Cuba is becoming an attractive destination for Kazakh tourists.

"About 2,000 Kazakh citizens visited Cuba in the past two years. To add to that, in 2014 the two countries signed a MoU in the sphere of education and science and physical culture and sports. In 2015, the countries signed a visa-free traveling agreement which is still the process of coming into force.

"Cuba is a famous Caribbean tourist destination, with its various sightseeing spots, excellent climate, gorgeous beaches and hospitable people. Over a million tourists already travelled to Cuba in just the first three months this year. Many people speak Russian, so for the Kazakh tourists this can be helpful," said Valdés.

Thawing of US-Cuban Ice

In his interview, the ambassador also answered some questions

about recent historic moments in Cuba.

"[United States President Barack] Obama's visit to Cuba was undoubtedly an important moment in the process of restoration of diplomatic relations between the two countries, which began on December 17, 2014," he said.

Obama was met with characteristic Cuban respect and hospitality.

"Nevertheless, although we recognise the efforts of Obama's administration, there is still a long way to go in the normalisation of these relations," he added.

Valdés reiterated a comment made several days earlier by Cuban President Raul Castro in Obama's presence.

"The blockade is the most important obstacle to our economic development and the welfare of the Cuban people; thus, its removal is essential for the normalisation of bilateral relations. In order to move towards normalisation, the illegally-occupied territory of the Guantanamo naval base must be returned.

"Also, other policies against

Cuba must be stopped in order to have normal relations between Cuba and the U.S. To do this, the Cuban people should follow and must not be demanded to abandon their destiny, free and sovereign, that saw a lot of sacrifices," he said.

EXPO 2017 and Personal Thoughts on Kazakhstan

Cuba officially confirmed Nov. 15 it would participate in EXPO 2017 in the capital.

"Cuba pays due attention to the expo theme, as our nation strives to change its current energy matrix and wants to produce 24 percent of its energy from renewable resources by 2030.

"I have absolute confidence that Kazakhstan has great potential and will comply with all requirements during the organisation of this world event and no doubt will provide all the necessary conditions for international visitors to make the expo a success," he said.

The ambassador underlined he

feels at home in Kazakhstan despite the huge climate difference.

"I'll tell you frankly and have repeated this several times: I feel at home in Kazakhstan. Despite the significant differences in the two climates, I feel very well in Kazakhstan. When it's cold, you just need to dress warm. Low temperatures are compensated by the warmth of human relations, kindness and hospitality of the people of Kazakhstan."

"I have many friends in Kazakhstan and have good relations not only with the Kazakh officials, but with ordinary citizens," he said.

Valdés added he enjoys the capital.

"I really like Astana. When I presented my credentials to President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev, I personally told him 'It's amazing what has been done to build a modern and beautiful city in a short period of time in the middle of the steppe.' It is amazing! I said that Kazakhstan has a lot to be proud of and the new capital is one of those reasons.

"I am sure that the Kazakh President's visit to Cuba will bring Cubans and Kazakhs closer together and will strengthen the historic bonds of friendship that unite us," he said.

PEOPLE

Our Unity Is Our Strength,  
Says Chairwoman of Veteran  
Organisation on Election Day

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CULTURE

Kazakh Pop Music Experiencing  
Heyday

B3

SPORTS

Arlans Secure WSB Playoff Spot  
with 5-0 Thrashing of Puerto Rico  
Hurricanes

B7

Third-Year Medical Student Wins  
Kazakh Arui 2016 Beauty Contest



Almira Akhatova

By Kamila Zhumabayeva

ASTANA — Twenty-year-old Almira Akhatova from the Atyrau region, who is a third-year student of the capital's Medical University, won the final Kazakh Arui 2016 beauty contest held March 16 in Astana. Big career possibilities open for winners of such beauty contests, producer Bayan Yessen-tayeva says.

"Winning was not easy, I was selected first out of 600 contestants and then out of 21 participants of the contest, each of whom deserves the title of a beauty queen," Akhatova said in an interview after the results were announced. "Intuition told me that I will be able to win this contest, but I did not believe it till the end; I really wanted to and am wholeheartedly glad about winning."

Continued on Page B5

Francophonie  
Week Introduces  
Kazakh Audiences  
to French Culture

By Zhazira Dyussebekova

ASTANA — In Kazakhstan and across the globe, the French-speaking world marks International Francophonie Day on March 20 with events intended to cover "all the diversity of the French language," organisers at the French Alliance say.

In Kazakhstan, Francophonie Week events are taking place this spring in Astana, Almaty, Shymkent, Karaganda and Ust-Kamenogorsk. Most of the events are being held in the capital and Almaty.

Over 40 events were planned for the whole period (March 7–April 23) and all of them are dedicated to the "vivre-ensemble" ("live together") theme. According to organisers, the expression, by Roland Barthes, was chosen to recall the connection between society, language and communication, which is the basis of the notion of culture and which serves as a barrier against the terror intended to be sown by the attacks in Paris last November.

Continued on Page B3

Hazrat Sultan Mosque  
Launches Online, 3D Tour

By Staff Report

The Hazrat Sultan mosque in Astana has introduced a virtual tour on its website [www.muslim.kz/ru/virtual-tour](http://www.muslim.kz/ru/virtual-tour). The option offers virtual guests 3D panoramas of what is inside the biggest mosque in Central Asia.

The name of the mosque, which was first opened in July 2012, means the Holy Sultan and was proposed by Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev. During the opening ceremony, the head of state presented a full set of a well-known Silver Quran and made it available to the public. The same present was later given to the Moscow Cathedral Mosque at its opening in 2015.

The Silver Quran was created in 2010 by the Moscow Mint of the Ministry of Finance of Russia. The holy book appears to be the absolute copy of the Uthman Quran manuscript dated from the seventh century. The book is made of the highest 999 probe of silver and incorporates 162 pages. This is the biggest manuscript preserved to modern times. Several pages of the



similar manuscript are represented in Medina, Saudi Arabia; Cairo, Egypt; Istanbul, Turkey and London, Great Britain.

The original copy is the property of the Russian Federation and is stored in St. Petersburg's Institute of Oriental Manuscripts of the

Russian Academy of Science. The Institute was established by Russian Emperor Peter the Great and was named the Asian Museum.

Vivaldi's Masterpieces to Be  
Performed at Astana Opera

By Zhaniya Urankayeva

The masterpieces of great Venetian composer, conductor and violinist Antonio Vivaldi will be performed in the Baroque Hall of the Astana Opera Theatre on March 29. The concert is organised as part of the Music Salon programme, which has recently gained big popularity in Astana.

"The success of the Eight Seasons of the Year music concert, which also included Vivaldi's famous 'Four Seasons', showed the popularity of this composer among our audience," said Conductor Abzal Mukhitdinov.

He also stressed that the concert programme is focused on soloists so that each musician can demonstrate their talents and virtuosity.

Vivaldi became famous during his lifetime and was widely recognised throughout Europe. From the huge creative heritage of the composer, which has about 700 music pieces, the most vivid musical compositions were selected for the concert. Most of the compositions will be performed on the Astana Opera stage for the first time.



Abzal Mukhitdinov

"All the selected works carry a huge charge of positive energy. The composer Vivaldi is the founder of the instrumental solo genre of concerts. The programme of the evening will include his concertos for violin and orchestra, for guitar and orchestra, for bassoon and orchestra, for flute and

orchestra and 'Concerto Grasso' in D minor," said Mukhitdinov. The main performers will be the Astana Opera Chamber Orchestra under the direction of the honoured worker of Kazakhstan Abzal Mukhitdinov; soloists and laureates of international contests like Aizada Kaponova (soprano), the

first violin and concertmaster of the orchestra Kalamkas Zhumabayeva, as well as Aigerim Yergaliyeva (violin), Alexey Kosyrev (flute), Asset Neldibayev (bassoon) and Alibek Akhmalishev (guitar).

The concert begins at 7 pm. The ticket price starts from 1,000 tenge (US\$2.9).



Bojan Z and Julien Lourau

Central Asia  
Fashion Show Spring  
2016 Showcases  
150 Brands from  
16 Countries

By Marina Mihailova

ALMATY — More than 150 brands from 16 countries, including Germany, Italy, France and Spain, were presented at the recent Central Asia Fashion Show 2016 international fashion exhibition at the Atakent exhibition complex in Almaty. "This is quite a successful and efficient event. We meet a considerable amount of our clients from

Almaty and other cities of Kazakhstan exactly here," said Garo Suzmeyan, representative of a Turkish company. "Our clients come to visit the company's stand two times a year, resolve business issues, make an order or preorder of a collection. Fashionable orders and cat walking, which improve every year and attract the interest of visitors, provide a special mission for our work with our contracting authority."

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THINGS TO WATCH &  
PLACES TO GO

SULTANS RESTAURANT

March 31 at 8 p.m.

Fryday Business Class. Capital's networking get-together.

ASTANA OPERA

April 1 at 7 p.m.

Abai. Opera.

April 3 at 6 p.m.

La Bayadère. Opera.

April 8 at 7 p.m.

From France with Love. Piano concert, Célimène Daudet.

April 10 at 6 p.m.

Magic of Barroco. Concert, Alfiya Karimova.

KAZAKHSTAN SPORTS COMPLEX

April 2 at 11 a.m.

Light it up blue. Autism Speaks flash mob.

CONGRESS HALL

April 11 at 7:00 p.m.

Operetta

# 116 Passengers Survive Controlled Crash Landing at Astana International Airport

By Kamila Zhumabayeva

ASTANA – A Bek Air Fokker-100 plane with 116 passengers en route from Kyzylorda (South Kazakhstan) to Astana made an emergency landing at the Astana International Airport on March 27 after its landing gear failed to deploy. None of the passengers or five-member crew were injured.

After attempting to fix the problem in flight, the plane made a controlled crash landing an hour behind its 9:45 a.m. arrival time, skidding on shields until it came to a stop. The runway had been covered in foam to prevent a fire and fire engines had been deployed to the runway, according to Forbes.kz. The plane had minor damage and will be repaired, said a Bek-Air company representative.

The commission of the Ministry of Investment and Development launched an investigation and passengers on the flight have the right to make a complaint to the prosecutor's office and authorised bodies, Adilet Toktamysov, representative of Kazakhstan's main transport prosecutors office announced.

The Fokker 100 aircrafts have been temporarily banned from use in Kazakhstan in the wake of the ac-

cident, Kazakhstan's Ministry of Industry and Development Committee for Civil Aviation announced. Bek-Air has eight Fokker 100 aircrafts and had been the only airline in Kazakhstan flying the Fokker 100.

Commander Dmitry Rodin and co-pilot Vadim Smerechansky will receive state awards for landing the plane safely and saving all passengers and crew on board, Minister of Investment and Development Asset Issekeshv announced on Facebook.

"To be honest I didn't think of it in a so much heroic way as media presents it now. We are always trained for this type of situations and I think that everything went fine. It is mandatory for the aircraft to be inspected before every flight," Rodin told the Khabar television channel in its Betpe-Bet programme, adding that it was not possible to detect the problem before it was time to land.

"Everything was well when we were flying from Astana to Kyzylorda. This issue occurred on the way back to Astana. ... You can reveal an obvious issue, but when there is a concealed defect it is impossible," the commander explained in the interview.

Rodin has been flying planes for 35 years and has had flights cancelled due to mechanical issues.

# Our Unity Is Our Strength, Says Chairwoman of Veteran Organisation on Election Day

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – March 20 was a special day for the Kazakh citizens as they exercised their right to participation in governing their country.

On this day, Sagilya Yessenzholova, chairwoman of the local primary veteran organisation came among the first voters to the polling station number 150 in Kazakhstan's capital city of Astana.

A stockbreeder by profession, Yessenzholova has a total work experience of 42 years, including 20 years as a milkmaid at farm and 22 years as a forewoman at dairy farm.

"Although I am retired, I try to be well-informed of the latest events because I am not indifferent to the fate of my native land. Our independence and our achievements are the most essential things. I fully support this idea and came to vote with my family," said Yessenzholova in an interview for this story.

In 1976, she was a delegate of a Soviet Union communist party's congress in Moscow. Four years later, she was elected a deputy of the Supreme Council of the Kazakh Soviet Republic. A year later, she was decorated with the Soviet Union's highest awards, the Order of Lenin and the Star of Socialist Labour Hero.

According to Yessenzholova, the political right of every citizen is to participate in elections. "I have three children, five grandchildren and six great-grandchildren. Our children are our future. I wish my children and Kazakhstan have a



Sagilya Yessenzholova (R)

prosperous future and stability," she explained her motivation to vote.

"I told my children that a nationwide election is important encouraging them to vote for the party that will best represent their interests. People have the right to make their own choices and decisions. A government must create laws that will protect us and ensure our rights. These days, people are free to choose whom they want to support. Personally I voted for one particular party as well as my family. I am confident that the decisions taken will contribute to the nation's bright future."

"I noticed that despite the early morning, a lively, bustling atmosphere reigned at the polling station. People presented their documents to the election commission and were introduced to the voting conditions before walking confidently to the voting booth. People were in a good mood. There was a long queue but people remained calm and waited for their turn," said she.

Yessenzholova has always been involved in social life. Being a member of the city veteran organization and Presidium office of the public association of veterans, she has a lot of duties and responsibilities

she attends different meetings and events with students.

"I hold talks with the youngsters about the work experience and how young people should behave. I admire our current young generation. They are more educated and creative than we might imagine. In our time, there were no cell phones, no television and the Internet at all. At the same time, it is necessary to properly raise the children at home and at school. Public organisations also should promote among the youth the universal values, love for the motherland, and instil a sense of patriotism and a love for work," she said.

A large poster for 'The ATOM Project' featuring a woman and a child walking away from the viewer on a path through a field of yellow flowers. The text on the poster reads: 'THE ATOM PROJECT', 'NUCLEAR TERRORISM. THE THREAT IS REAL.', 'DENY THEIR CHANCE TO DESTROY OUR LIVES.', 'SIGN ON FOR A NUCLEAR WEAPONS FREE WORLD.', and 'TheATOMProject.org'.

# CULTURE

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 30, 2016

## Kazakh Opera Star Mukhamedkyzy Performs Concert Dedicated to Nauryz

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – A concert by Kazakh opera star Maira Mukhamedkyzy was held at the Astana Opera House on Nauryz March 22 in Astana. The singer who has performed on the world’s largest stages in Beijing, Hong Kong, Paris, Istanbul, New Delhi, and Seoul, presented a musical programme entitled “Shyrkar Anym – Astana Koktemi” (A Song I Sing – The Spring in Astana).

The performance featured the works of prominent composers, including Verdi, Massenet, Kalman and Offenbach. Kazakh folk and modern songs, arias and duets from the operas of Zhubanov and Khamidi, Rakhmadiyev, and Mukhamedzhanov were presented in the second part of the concert.



Maira Mukhamedkyzy

Honoured artist of Kazakhstan, laureate of the 11th International Tchaikovsky Competition and State Prize winner, Mukhamedkyzy performed with colleagues

including Honoured Worker of Kazakhstan and Honoured Artist of Tatarstan, tenor Nurlan Bekmukhambetov, Honoured Worker of Kazakhstan, mezzo-soprano



Performers in action during the concert at the Astana Opera House.

Dina Khamzina, tenor Medet Chotabayev, baritone Sundet Baigozhin, tenor Ramzat Balakishiyev and baritone Talgat Galeeyev. Mukhamedkyzy has been sing-

ing for 20 years and media describe her voice as fresh and beautiful with a delightful oriental charm.

“This concert is important because it gives a start of my new career path.

I want to thank all the people who worked with me, helped me, supported in difficult times. I sang all the parts I dreamt of. But I still have a big dream to give a concert in such theatres as Covent Garden and the Metropolitan Opera,” she said in a statement before beginning the show.

In 2015, Mukhamedkyzy was invited as a leading soloist to Kazakhstan’s major opera house and debuted in the premiere of “Abai” last September.

“I got a second wind after joining the Astana Opera House team. To perform for the Kazakh audience is a dual responsibility. You need to show everyone what you can do and everything should be at a high level. I worked hard with my accompanist Yelena Sakhno, trained my vocal skills and studied the nuances. I wanted the audience to be pleased with a show,” she said.

The ballet soloists, choir and symphony orchestra of the Astana Opera House under the guidance of Honoured Worker of Kazakhstan Abzal Mukhitdinov and Chief Choirmaster Yerzhan Dautov also participated in the concert.

## Francophonie Week Introduces Kazakh Audiences to French Culture

Continued from Page B1

This year’s programme is the result of the work of diplomatic missions of a number of member-states of the Organisation Internationale de Francophonie (Armenia, Belgium, Lebanon, Egypt, and Switzerland and France), the entire staff of the French Alliance and resource centres, students and the Association of Teachers of French in Kazakhstan.

A number of events have already taken place. In the beginning of March, choreographers Hela Fattoumi and Eric Lamoureux showed their pieces “Husais” and “Solstice” in Astana and Almaty, as well shared their great experience in master classes for choreography students.

The Stabar Group, which mixes jazz, swing and salsa, also performed for audiences in Astana and Almaty on March 12 and 13.

The eighth national competition of Francophone songs is now underway, with semi-finals being held in different cities. It is organised by the Culture Department of the French Embassy in Kazakhstan, the network of French Alliances and Kazakhstan’s Association of Teachers of French with the support of the Foundation of the First President of Kazakhstan. The grand finale will be held in Almaty on April 9. There are two

categories for performers – Francophones and non-Francophones. Winners of the first category get a fully-covered trip to France and the winner of the second will get a round-trip plane ticket to France.

A cycle of poetic meetings is part of the programme as well. Most of the meetings have already passed, but for those who are interested, there is a chance to visit the last one. On April 9, the French Alliance in Astana will host the last poetic meeting at 4 p.m. (24 Tashenov Street, 4th floor).

People in Astana and Almaty will have an opportunity to enjoy piano concerts by outstanding musician Célimène Daudet in Astana at Astana Opera April 8 and in Almaty at the Kazakh National Kurmangazy Conservatory April 12.

According to web sources, born of two cultures, French and Haitian, Daudet is performing all over the world – Algeria, Canada, the United Kingdom, Russia and elsewhere. She has won several international piano competitions, such as the International Competition Jean Francaix, the International Competition in Val d’Isere, the European Competition in Paris and the International Forum of Normandy.

Other events coming up in April are the 15th Almaty International Jazz Festival on April 7, featuring the duo of Bojan Z and Julien

Lourau. Then there is the opening of the Dessins en Liberté Exhibition by Institut Français and Courrier International at Nazarbayev University on April 11 at 12 p.m. There will be a Week of Francophone movies April 1–7 in Astana and from March 28–April 1 in Almaty, as well as more contests and exhibitions.

For detailed information visit [www.ambafrance-kz.org](http://www.ambafrance-kz.org), where the whole programme can be downloaded.

The French Alliance in Astana was opened in 2005 and is supported by the Embassy of France.

The French Alliance was created to spread the French language and Francophone culture in Kazakhstan. It aims to assist cultural dialogue between Kazakhstan and France by organising linguistic, scientific, cultural and other kinds of exchanges.

Today, the alliance offers French language courses at any proficiency level, preparation for international language courses, individual lessons and other services.

The centre also has a media library, where visitors can read books, listen to music, play board games or prepare for exams. It has more than 4,500 books, a dozen different French newspapers and magazines, more than 700 movies and around 550 CDs of audio materials.

## Kazakh Pop Music Experiencing Heyday

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – Sitting at the core of mass culture, various genres of popular music attract different age groups. In Kazakhstan, pop culture depends enormously on mainstream television and radio station ratings. At the same time, there are a wide range of so-called toi music artists, those who perform at the tois [large events like weddings or birthday parties].

### Television and Radio Station Formats

Local television and radio channels support cultural heritage preservation and the continuity of generations by broadcasting old and new songs of artists who began their careers ten or more years ago and delight audiences to this day. Nurlan Abdullin, Dilnaz Akhmadiev, Roza Rymbayeva, Nagima Yeskaliyeva and Musicola band are among the many artists heard over the airwaves.

The creative works of gifted musician Batyrkhan Shukenov occupy a special place on the country’s musical stage because he is a true legend of Kazakh pop culture.

Gakku TV music editor Emil Dosov noted a repertoire of new Kazakh singers and groups signals a nascent trend in the industry influenced by the world music tendency to meet sophisticated audiences’ expectations.

“We support the artists of the modern pop scene and music of the past epoch, the music that was popular in the late nineties and early 2000s. At present, Ninety One’s song Aiyptama (Guilty) has topped the Gakku chart for 20 weeks. They perform Q-pop style, the so-called Qazaq pop. They are promoting this sub-genre and consider this is the future of Kazakh music. Q-pop style origins come from Asian pop music like K-pop and Japanese pop,” he said.

Former KeshU band singer and actress Zhanar Dugalova won over the audience by her unique way of performing. She was twice named Singer of the Year and won the Turkvision 2014 Song Festival international contest, receiving the title Golden Voice of the Turkic World. Unlike other popular so-



Nurlan Abdullin

loists, she writes, performs and produces her own songs and is considered to be an absolutely independent artist. She manages the entire process related to her promotion and video shooting. Her compositions are heavily influenced by indie pop style.

“The hip hop genre is extremely popular among our young people. Currently, the talented songwriter and performer Jah Khalib is recognised as one of the best beatmakers and producers of Kazakhstan’s hip hop. His songs received the attention of the leading Russian and Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) radio stations. His album sold out well on iTunes,” said a music expert.

Galymzhan Moldanazar, who found fame through a YouTube channel, made a real breakthrough in the techno pop and synthpop genres. Talent, persistence and hard work helped him to become a successful project without producers and an advanced recording studio.

Almaty-born Aikyn Tolepbergen started his career as a SuperStar.kz participant. He was unexpectedly eliminated in the final stage and fans made a real rally to support him. Instead of just enjoying popularity among (mostly female) audiences, he has been continuing to write new songs in collaboration with acclaimed musicians and toured the country. Last year, he received the Best Performer prize at the Eurasian Music Awards and the Astana Zhuldyzy (The Star of Astana).

### People’s Choice

Despite the fact that toi music is not a format of many television and radio channels, people have a special feeling towards the artists whose dance songs conquer the heart and literally light the fire. Toi music, traditionally performed during events,



Kairat Nurtas

is characterised by non-complicated lyrics and catchy rhythm.

Kairat Nurtas is a people’s choice undoubtedly leader. He ranked third on last year’s Forbes list of wealthiest Kazakh artists and sportsmen with a net worth of \$2.5 million. He released ten albums, launched his own clothing line and made a film about his life.

Last year, big concerts dedicated to the 10th anniversary of his music career were held in the city and Almaty featuring renowned Kazakh and Russian singers.

Many young artists such as Yernar Aidar and Toregali Toreali are trying to copy Nurtas’ style of performing to replace an “idol in glasses.”

Akylbek Zhemenei’s Kyzyl Orlik (Dried Apricot) is the most frequently played song at Kazakh festive events. A professional dombra player, Zhemenei has been steadily releasing song after song and participated in a reality show.

Despite the popularity of the Western music industry, a significant portion of young Kazakh people prefer local artists.

“I am a huge fan of breakdance and hip hop. Due to this, I love listening to Ga Gudda Jazz, Jah Khalib and Ghetto Dogs. Now, I am studying abroad and sometimes I listen to MuzArt and All Davai bands when I miss my family and home,” said 20-year-old student Adlet Zhanalin.

Astana resident Zhanna Raiymbekova, 27, feels contemporary Kazakh artists have moved to a new level in performance, song writing and video filming.

“I admire popular vocalists who constantly improve their style of singing and experiment with their vocal and scenic images, like Makpal Issabekova and Orda band. But, to me, Batyrkhan Shukenov remains an incredible and favourite musician. His songs written in the Kazakh language are full of love, optimism and harmony,” she said.

## Central Asia Fashion Show Spring 2016 Showcases 150 Brands from 16 Countries

Continued from Page B1

Central Asia Fashion Spring is one of the most influential and successful fashion exhibitions in our region. The event recommends itself as the only specialised event on Kazakhstan’s fashion retail market to which reputable leaders and beginning players of this market show an interest. Central Asia Fashion Spring participants have an opportunity to announce about their product and show it to a professional audience.

The exhibition serves as a platform for discussing the most topical issues of the fashion industry, the establishment of business relations and the introduction of best business resolutions. Clothing manufacturers, both renowned and beginners, participate every year. Buyers, designers, distributors, wholesalers, owners and fashion business holders from all countries

of Central Asia, including Kazakhstan are the exhibition’s main visitors.

Miss Kazakhstan 2015 Aliya Mergembayeva was a special guest of the exhibition and took part in its ceremonial opening.

Men, women and children’s clothing, shoes, accessories and fur products of the Winter-Fall 2016/2017 season were shown at the fashion exhibitions.

“The participation programme of German companies in Central Asia fashion [industry] is supported by the government,” Renate Schimkoreit, consul general of Germany in Almaty noted. “This indicates that German companies have a big interest in Kazakhstan’s fashion market and we hope that in the future this will lead to a new productive stage in developing partner relations between our countries.”

Worldwide known Carlin Inter-

national Groupe (France) participated in the exhibition for the first time. In forecasting fashion trends, its experts discussed fashionable trends for the next two years, new expectations and the mood of buyers and detailed forecasts on silhouettes, prints and fabrics for the 2017 spring-summer season.

“France participates in exhibitions held in Kazakhstan always with big pleasure. A promising market of your country not for the first year demonstrates high tempos of growth and presents a big interest for foreign investors,” stressed Fabris Raul, representative of Didier Parakian French brand. “Participating in this fashion exhibition allows us to examine demand on import products in Kazakhstan and the whole Central Asian region in more detail, establish useful contacts not only with local businessmen but also with representatives of other foreign companies.”



Zhanar Dugalova



Roza Rymbayeva

# Country’s First Ammunition Factory Launches Operations

By Aiman Turebekova

ASTANA – On March 14, Kazakh Minister of Defence Imangali Tasmagambetov took part in a ceremony marking the launch of construction of the first cartridge-manufacturing plant in the Sary-Arka special economic zone (SEZ) in Karaganda city, reported the press office of the Kazakh Defence Ministry.

The plant will produce the most popular 5,45×39 mm, 7,62×54 mm, 9×18 mm and 9×19 mm calibre handgun cartridges, which are widely used in the Kazakh Armed Forces. The product is expected to meet national security require-



Photo credit: mod.gov.kz

ments and reduce small arms ammunition stockpiles in the country.

“The ammunition factory will create a constant demand for a supply of materials in the region for years to come. Consumption of brass alloy alone in the amount not less than 300 tonnes per year will revitalise the work of highly specialised companies in the region. In the form of taxes, even with the SEZ regime, Kazakhstan’s cartridges factory will pay more than KZT 680 million (US\$1.97 million) per year to the budget of the region and this is the most modest predictions,” said Tasmagambetov.

The territory of the SEZ has improved infrastructure facilities,

such as road and rail transportation that makes it possible to connect inside networks to off-site engineering highways as well as to export goods by road and rail to arms depots in any region of Kazakhstan. The SEZ has 26,000 square meters of construction area, which is projected to be completed by December 2017.

Starting this production will allow Kazakhstan to become a cartridge-manufacturing country. Nowadays, Kaztechnology negotiates on the export of plant products. During the Kadex-2016 exhibition, it is planned to sign a number of product export agreements.

The plant will use local raw materials to produce ammunition for Kazakhstan’s Armed Forces, which will reduce dependence on imports.

Canadian company Waterbury Farrel will provide equipment for the production of cartridges in the amount of 30 million pieces per year. The plant’s equipment complies with international quality standards using innovative technologies. Installation and commissioning will take place in 2017 and be combined with training of personnel. In addition, the defence ministry predicts the operation will create 164 jobs.

# Nation’s Most Popular Cars

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – Big city streets are full of beautiful brand new and luxury cars. The growing wealth of many Kazakh citizens is not hidden and can be easily seen on the road. But like every other country, Kazakhstan has models that are widely used and have become so popular they can be named the “people’s cars.”

With a territory measuring 2.7 million square kilometres, Kazakhstan occupies ninth place in the world in area. Citizens living in this huge nation use vehicles which must be fuel efficient, warm in severe winters and cool in hot summers and durable and comfortable also on lower-quality roads. As a result, the people’s choices are not based on beauty or speed performance, but hard math. Sometimes, such math leads to real love.



Mercedes S-Series W140 (Boar), the best car in the world according to many experts, has too many fans to be destroyed and is usually overhauled. The model with 12 pistons and a six-litre gas engine is the most desirable.

and used because of their owners’ low income, but some belong to real fans that use them as the second or third family car. They take care of their technical conditions and accept all their disadvantages and merits. BMW and Mercedes Benz fan clubs are the most popular.

pricey in the state. The people’s love is based on availability of spare parts and moderate price.

## New Discovery from Korea

Beginning in 2010, when importing used cars from Europe and the United States became less profitable, Kazakh citizens started to look for budget-priced new cars which were good enough to substitute for used models. Hyundai and Kia did their best to satisfy the demand. Of course, Accents and Rios were much smaller and less comfortable than used German or Japanese cars, but they were brand new with warranties and became bestsellers too.

## From Russia with Love

The first vehicles were delivered to the Kazakh steppe from Soviet car producing plants. One hundred percent of the vehicles owned by Kazakh citizens were produced in neighbouring Soviet states or Soviet allies. They were not perfect, but Kazakh citizens didn’t have a choice. Even after the collapse of the Soviet Union, when the local automobile market was filled with other brands, Russian cars were not only popular, but the most popular in the country. There are many reasons: low cost for new cars with warranties, low cost for spare parts, ability to overhaul, simple construction with a minimum number of electronics, high off-road performance and good heaters. The Russian Lada is currently the number one model in Kazakh new car sales.

high-quality service. The Japanese brand captured Kazakh hearts with its Land Cruisers, which are considered to be un-destroyable and able to move in any condition with a high level of comfort. The characteristics make them popular and



Audi 100 (“Hundred” or “Herring”) – extremely durable and stable on the highway.

## German “Tanks”

German World War II tanks aren’t used in Kazakhstan, but the so-called old representatives of Audi, BMW, Mercedes Benz, Opel and Volkswagen still crisscross the



The Niva was the first SUV in the world. Lada started to produce the SUV without a chassis frame and four-wheel drive in 1977, 17 years before Toyota began manufacturing its RAV4. Extremely cheap, light and durable, the fuel-saving SUV with great off-road performance is irreplaceable in Kazakhstan with its territory and low-quality roads in the regions. The Lada has been produced in East Kazakhstan since 2003.

state. They were imported 10-20 years ago and 99 percent were approximately 10 years old when they arrived. It is unbelievable, but these 20-30 year old monsters were made of thick steel (some have galvanised bodies and don’t rust at all) in the Golden age of German automobile manufacturing and are still alive. It seems they are eternal. All are distinguished by excellent repair capability and sturdiness. One can often see how these German “tanks” show no damage after road accidents with up-to-date cars, while the newer models need to be evacuated.

Any BMW (called Bumer or Bekha) is enjoyed by a driver in spite of its age.

Most of these vehicles are bought



Audi 80 (“Barrel”) has an almost-completely galvanised body and doesn’t rust.



Mercedes Benz E-Class W124 (Donkey) – gives a comfortable and smooth ride.



Hyundai Accent is one of the cheapest cars in the market.

# Eurasian Group Improves Social Sphere in Kostanai Region

By Julia Rutz

The Eurasian Group (ERG) concluded a memorandum on social projects realisation March 15 with the Kostanai region akimat (city administration). The document was signed by board chairman Aldiyar Kaztayev and regional akim (governor) Arhimed Muhanbetov.

The event was also attended by the ERG Board of Managers Chairman Alexander Mashkevich, kazpravda.kz reported. He noted despite the current difficulties facing the mining sector, the enterprise is completing the tasks outlined in the Nurlı Zhol New Economic Policy, announced by Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev in November 2014.

“We continue supporting a good partnership with the akimat of Kostanai region, where we have the mining giant in the domestic industry – the Sokolov-Sarybai ore mining and processing enterprise. We also continue supporting social projects for the region, so each paragraph of the signed memorandum has been carefully reviewed and is aimed at improving the social well-being of the inhabitants of the area,” he added.

The total amount allocated by ERG in the framework of the memorandum has grown substantially this year to 1.3 billion tenge (US\$3.8 million). As in previous years, the funds will cover the most important social projects, particularly those aimed at improving and developing the infrastructure. Examples include



repairing the Sokolov station penstock and reconstructing Arkalyk city stadium.

“I would like to mention that the Eurasian Group, going through this challenging time, has nevertheless saved jobs. We have also discussed the issue of raising the salaries for employees working for the enter-

stanai region, as well as purchasing equipment for communal needs in Rudny, such as rehabilitation equipment for children with cerebral palsy, an ambulance and necessary equipment for Rudny’s maternity hospital, colleges and institutes. ERG also renovated schools and recreation centres in

## During the last five years, The Eurasian Group subsidiaries have allocated more than 103 billion tenge (US\$301 million) to provide social protection and for sponsorship and charity purposes.

prise. This is an important component of the corporate responsibility, which generally affects the social well-being of people,” said Muhanbetov.

During the last five years, ERG subsidiaries have allocated more than 103 billion tenge (US\$301 million) to provide social protection for workers, as well as for sponsorship and charity purposes. The enterprise recently financed refurbishing the engineering and communication networks in Ko-

Rudny, built a fitness centre in Kachar and allocated funds to improve Arkalyk.

ERG dates to 1994 and has become one of the world’s leading players in the mining sector. The enterprise manages such companies as Aluminium of Kazakhstan, Eurasian Energy Corporation (EEC), Kazakhstan Aluminium Smelter (KAS), Kazchrome, Shubarkol Komir, the Sokolov-Sarbai Mining Production Association (SSGPO) and Transcom LLP.

# Plant Announces Readiness to Develop Sea Bottom Mines

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – A Kazakh plant is ready to launch the production of sea bottom mines at the request of the country’s Armed Forces. The Ziksto company plans to develop and produce four prototypes in the first stage.

Sea bottom mines are a kind of sea mines installed on the bottom of the sea, which are triggered by exposure to magnetic, acoustic or physical fields when a ship passes over it, according to Inform.kz.

“The concept for the protection of the Caspian Sea from landing of an imaginary enemy has been discussed. The samples, which our factory produces can be used for it. Initially, we will develop and adapt them. Sea mines will be used for the protection of the Caspian Sea off the coast after the testing,” Director of Ziksto Valery Spitsin



Photo credit: inform.kz

said.

The plant management and the command of the Kazakh Naval Forces had already negotiated whether it is possible to produce sea bottom mines for testing and create the regulations for its use.

If a positive decision is reached, the company will work on final-

ising the product for future mass production.

In 2015, the management signed a contract with Russia for the supply of two samples of mines as a result of cooperation with the Kazakh Ministry of Defence and Kazakhstan Engineering.

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# Third-Year Medical Student Wins Kazakh Arui 2016 Beauty Contest

Continued from Page B1

The final contest’s participants consisted of 21 girls between the ages of 16-22 from Kazakhstan’s different regions. The contest’s “Vice Miss” was 18 year-old Sabina Tenbai from Astana who is a first-year student of Eurasian National University. Astana Ballet artist, 22-year-old Ayaulym Makumova from Astana won second place.

Knowing Kazakh traditions and the Kazakh language as well as the literature and history of the Kazakh nation were among the basic conditions for participating in the beauty contest. Akhatova impressed the jury and the audience with her memory as she recited Abai Kunanbayev poems by heart.

Akhatova received a crown made of gold, a pendant and a dress from

designer Aida Kaumenova. However, the possibility to establish a career in show business is the main award for a winner.

For example, Gulnaz Zholanova who won this contest in 2014 is now a host of the Aiyel Syry (Women’s Secrets) talk show on Eurasia One Channel, according to the news website. She also starred in the Kustar Ani (Singing of Birds) film dedicated to Kazakh composer Nurgisa Tlendiyev, which was released in 2015.

The national style beauty contest was held for the third time in the capital. The jury consisted of Yesentayeva, honoured artist of Kazakhstan Maira Muhammedkyzy, head of Astana’s culture department Bolat Mazhagulov, Kaumenova and others.

The contest consisted of three stages. Participants walked a run-

way in evening outfits from Kazakh designers during the first stage. Ladies demonstrated the ease of gait and the ability to present themselves and their outfit to the public during this phase.

Ladies demonstrated their talents during the second stage and had to respond to questions about Kazakh national traditions, customs and other topics and provide detailed explanations to topics during the third stage, the news agency reported. Contestants sang, danced, read poems and monologues in the course of the contest.

A big part of the event was allotted to performances by Kazakh artists, such as Nursultan Kurman, Kamshat Zholdybayeva, Toregali Toreali, Erke Esmakhan, Aikyn and bands such as KeshU, Alau and others.



# Kazpochta Introduces Online Money Transfers

By Kseniya Voronina

ASTANA – Kazpochta has introduced online money transfers allowing Kazakh holders of Visa payment cards to carry out money transfers through the Salem, Tenge! system to get cash in any branch of Kazpochta, the company recently announced.

“Now clients of the company can carry out money transfers from a payment card to any department of Kazpochta throughout entire Kazakhstan,” the press service of the national post operator reports. “To receive money apart from having an identity card, a client has to have a 15 digit code and a code word, which a sender of the money transfer must note.”

This service will be available for MasterCard payment cards this year.

The Card2card classic service with the help of Visa2Visa and MasterCard2MasterCard money transfers is being introduced for all



Kazakhstan’s holders of cards with the international payment system.

Services can be used via the Post.kz mobile app as well as the transfer.post.kz website. Users must register, log into their accounts and select the relevant item from the menu “card to card” or “from card with receiving cash.” A user can receive letters with electronic copies of receipts when indicating an email address in the profile.

The minimum amount for one

transfer is 500 tenge (US\$1.44) and the maximum is 1 million tenge (US\$2,884), according to Kazpochta. The transfers are instantaneous and the minimum 300 tenge (US\$0.86) commission is charged to the sender.

Universal Postal Union noted this payment option as a successful example of the transformation of inside-country monetary transfers into a digital form.

# National Guard Saves Nearly 100 Trapped on Snowy Roads

By Yerzat Sergazin

The soldiers of the Aktoobe regiment of the Kazakhstan National Guard rescued 96 people trapped on snowy highways, reported the press service of the National Guard. Because of the heavy weather conditions in the Khromtau and Kargalinsk districts of the Aktoobe region, public transport, lorries and passenger cars got stuck in snow.

In order to help people left on roads, personnel and equipment of military unit 6655 were mobilised. The military also organised an evacuation point for victims. According to the press statement, the rescue team consisted of six soldiers, including two drivers,



headed by the chief of the battalion Captain Nuraly Seitalin. Another emergency rescue team on Ural 4320 heavy vehicle from the regional centre were saved and provided with food and shelter.

As stated in the announcement,

the rescue operation lasted all night. As a result the timely response, people at a distance of 72 kilometres from the regional centre were saved and provided with food and shelter.

# Plastic Surgery Growing in Expertise, Popularity

By Kamila Zhumabayeva

ASTANA – Plastic surgery in Kazakhstan is well developed and becoming more and more popular and affordable. Eyelid surgeries lead the list.

The prevalence of the procedures was discussed by Dr. Daniyar Baibosunov, a plastic surgeon at Arumed Clinic of Aesthetic Medicine and Plastic Surgery in Almaty, in an interview with The Astana Times. He noted procedures are well developed compared to nations such as South Korea.

“Plastic surgeons go to different countries to exchange experiences, most frequently to South Korea. The latest workshops and presentations were organised in London. Thus, I believe plastic surgery in Kazakhstan is on a high-enough level,” he said.

The tendency towards plastic surgery is more common not only in Kazakhstan, but around the world.

“More people want to have plastic surgery, often not only once,” noted the doctor. “People were more afraid before, while now plastic surgeries have become more affordable with cheaper prices and an increasing number of surgeons providing such services. The tendency is growing despite crises throughout the world.”

Women chose plastic surgery more than men do, he added. Approximately 4 percent of the clinic’s patients are foreign, far fewer than the number of local clients.

“Currently, about 95 percent of women and 5 percent of men do plastic surgery in our clinic. Approximately 10 years ago, there was only 1 percent of men who did plastic surgeries,” said Baibosunov.

A specific surgery that changes the look of Asian eyelids by forming a fold is very popular among the country’s regional residents.

“Girls do eyelid fold surgeries very often, but lately guys do them

often, too. Like in Korea, there are a lot of girls in Kazakhstan who have narrow eyes. Turkey, for example, has a lot of people who become bald, thus hair transplant is a leading surgery there,” said Baibosunov.

Lipo filling (fat transplantation) is the second most popular type of plastic surgery, followed by breast enlargement. Clients who want to look like certain celebrities and completely change their looks constantly come to the country’s clinics.

“There have always been people who want to imitate celebrities, now and in future, too. They come with photos; yet such surgeries just might turn out well in some patients, while they might not in others,” noted the doctor.

Plastic surgeons can correct particular problems requested by patients, but not everyone is a candidate to go under the knife. Those with certain mental problems and those who do not perceive themselves as they are should not consider a procedure, according to data on Nespi.kz. Sometimes the surgeries have inadequate results.

“A surgery can, for example, be well done but something might be incomplete. A second corrective surgery will be done in such a case

after some time has passed, usually after six months,” said Baibosunov.

Traumatologists rather than plastic surgeons should be consulted regarding issues about height, he added. If a patient is young, growth hormones can be prescribed, noted Nespi.kz. Leg length can be increased with a special device, a long and painful procedure which only a handful of people would dare to endure.

Breast enlargement is the most expensive surgery in Kazakhstan due to the high cost of implants, while plastic inserts in ears or eyelids can be cheaper, reported the website. Baibosunov believes plastic surgery in the country is not expensive; on the contrary, he considers it to be cheap.

“I believe the price is not high, considering the time and money a plastic surgeon spends to prepare for one surgery,” he said. “An eyelid surgery costs about 120,000-140,000 tenge (about US\$350-400), which is not a lot for this complexity and a surgeon’s skill. The same surgery will cost about \$4,000 in South Korea, for example. I believe that we have very liberal prices that Kazakhstan’s middle class residents can afford.”

# New Dating App Popular Among Kazakh Singles

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – A mobile application for online dating has exceeded the WhatsApp and Instagram applications on the number of downloads at the local branch of the app store. The Blindime application, after launching at 10 p.m. on March 14, was downloaded by 1,685 users within two hours. It was then downloaded 10,018 times in the next three days, ensuring the project a top five ranking on the Kazakhstan App Store, ahead of such applications as WhatsApp, Instagram, Periscope and MSQRD, reported Forbes.kz.

Currently, more than 5,200 users are registered in the Blindime database and more than 4,300 people are using the programme at least once a day.

“The application works as a closed club where membership is provided for Instagram subscribers whose accounts should have no less than 250 users. This allows us to protect the audience from fake accounts and carry out an initial analysis of a random selection of matchmaking,” project founder Bakytzhan Dos said.

Currently, membership is free, but the developers expect to launch a premium version of the Blindime application.

The application receives the user’s information including gender, age, geographical location and popularity of an account. Based on this data, the system provides potential partners in 15 seconds. Then, a user has 90 seconds of live streaming video chat to impress a potential partner and “to receive



Blindime mobile application

a like.” The users who get mutual likes are able to exchange text messages in a single chat or to chat off-line. According to the application developers, the live video is

not stored ensuring the confidentiality of communication.

In the near future, the application will be launched for Apple customers in Russia, the U.S. and China.



The upper and lower blepharoplasty and facelift

Photo credit: Forbes.kz

Photo credit: Daniyar Baibosunov

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 30, 2016

# Kazakhstan Offers Plethora of Trekking Options



By Zhazira Dyussebekova

ASTANA – It is spring, just the right time for planning new destinations to breathe fresh air and finally spend more time outside. With its vast territory, Kazakhstan offers numerous opportunities for almost any kind of tourism. Trekking lovers are able to find new routes for themselves as well. Trekking is believed to have been created by ancient people when they discovered new areas. These days some people do not think of it as a type of vacation, but as a sport. Yet for others, it is a great way to spend time out-

doors, test their endurance and restore both moral and physical powers. The sport is a combination of hiking and walking, lasting a few hours or a few days. Trekking is mainly about ascending and stepping through mountainous areas and watching, enjoying and getting to know “untouched” nature. The more adventurous a person is, the riskier paths he can choose. Physical condition and previous experience matters. Trekking does not require specialised, complicated equipment – an individual just needs a good pair of shoes and a good mood. Well, maybe something to eat and



a first aid kit in case of emergency. The activity is done by small groups of six to twelve people or fewer headed by a guide. The route should be chosen in advance. The Almaty-based Trekking Club offers tours lasting one to nine days in the North Tian Shan area. An ascent of the 3,550-metre Manshuk Mametova glacier is a one-day trip lasting about five-six hours and available year round. The cost for a group of three or fewer is US\$150, including transport service to and from the starting point and guide services. “The glacier originates on the slopes of the Manshuk Mametova

Peak and slides down in a quaint form of a fantastic waterfall. The climb routes up the rocky walls of the surrounding peaks and is popular with climbers of high qualification. Here, you come across the starting point of one of the most difficult climb routes in the mountains of Zailisky Alatau,” according to the company website. Some tours are available June-October, such as the three-day tour of the historic monuments of the Turgen ravine. The route goes through places differing in height from 1,800-3,000 metres. “This short but informative journey gives an opportunity to

see a number of unique historic monuments representing different stages of development of the human race alongside most beautiful natural phenomena such as waterfalls, moraine lakes and magnificent rocky canyons and all this in three days,” according to the website. The Trekking Club offers multiple opportunities for visitors, including two-days treks to the Bolshoi Almatinsky Peak via the waterfalls (1,500m-3,862m) promising seven waterfalls along the way, and a nine-day tour of the Northern Tien Shan. The company website, [www.trekkingclub.kz](http://www.trekkingclub.kz), offers detailed in-

formation in English and a photo gallery. Morena.kz offers journeys lasting two-seven days. The top destinations include tours to the Aksai Lake gorge, Talgar Peak mountain valley, Talgar pass and Turgen and Issyk gorge lakes. For more information, visit [www.morena.kz](http://www.morena.kz). Both companies have similar routes and services. Of course, trekking can be done without guides or groups, but it is all about safety and a well-thought-out journey. The adventure lets a person enjoy the time with nature as much as possible, while getting to know interesting facts about the places visited.

## Barsakelmes Nature Reserve Added to UNESCO World Network of Biosphere Reserves

Staff Report

ASTANA – Located in the Sahara-Gobi Desert zone of the Aral Sea basin, the Barsakelmes Nature Reserve was added to UNESCO’s World Network of Biosphere Reserves (WNBR) during a meeting of the International Coordinating Council of the Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme of UNESCO in Lima, Peru on March 18 and 19, according to [unesco.org](http://unesco.org). “The Aral Sea region is a priority area for wetland conservation and several bird migration routes converge over the region. The territory of the proposed biosphere reserve is a valuable site to preserve the biodiversity of the Aral Sea. It numbers approximately 2,000 species of invertebrates, 30 mammal species, 178 bird species, and 20 reptile species. The reserve also includes four nomadic Kazakhs medieval archaeological sites that were part of the Silk Road,” according to UNESCO’s website. The Barsakelmes reserve was founded in 1939 in what is now the modern Kyzylorda region. “Barsakelmes” means “if you go there, you are not coming back” in Kazakh. There are several legends connected



to the name. One of them related to the fact that back in the days before the Aral Sea started to shrink, there was an island there and during the winter people used go to there in search of food and there was no way back from the island during the spring when everything melted down. Twenty sites have been added to the World Network of Biosphere Reserves, including Monts de Tlemcen in Algeria, Beaver Hills and TsáTué in Canada, Lake Bosomtwe in Ghana, La Hotte in Haiti, Agasthyamala in India, Balambangan in Indonesia, Hamoun in Iran, Collina Po in Italy, Belo-sur-Mer – Kirindy-Mitea in Madagascar, Isla Cozumel in Mexico, Atlas Cedar

in Morocco, Gran Pajatén in Peru, Albay in Philippines, Fajás de São Jorge in Portugal and others. Kazakhstan’s other five reserves have been added to the WNBR in recent years. Korgalzhyn, which is located in the north central part of the country, entered the list in 2012, Alakol (desert zone of Eurasia in the central part of the Alakol intermountain depression) in 2013, Ak-Zhayik (the delta of the Ural River on the coast of the Caspian Sea) and Katon-Karagai in the East Kazakhstan region in 2014. And last year, the Aksu-Zhabagly reserve (the north-west of Talasskiy Alatau and the south of Karatau in the West Tien Shan) joined the list.

## Tour Agencies: Kazakhs Travelling Less Overseas, More across Kazakhstan



By Kamila Zhumabayeva

ASTANA – Kazakhs are tending to take fewer trips overseas due to decreased purchasing capacity due to devaluation of the national currency tenge and the fact many destinations have become less desirable. As travel agencies attempt to develop and promote the country’s own tourism, much work needs to be done by the government, said Meridian Travel & Tourism Director Tatyana Vertey. “Decreased purchasing capacity has definitely affected Kazakhstan’s residents travelling too far abroad. People travel less now, however, clients are gradually starting to come back and purchase travel packages,” she added. Egypt, Sri Lanka, Thailand and United Arab Emirates (UAE) are among the spots currently in high-demand. “All destinations have ‘dived’ because of the national currency’s [devaluation]. Less people travel to Europe compared to UAE, Thailand or Sri Lanka. Europe has a different type of recreation and is more expensive from an economic point of view,” said Vertey. Overseas resorts in UAE, India (Goa) and Sri Lanka are currently less expensive locations for residents. Georgia is also a popular spot. The company tries to develop

and offer tours across Kazakhstan, although Vertey noted it needs government support. “There are certain gaps in Kazakhstan’s resort recreation such as service, accommodations and so on. First of all now, we need help from the government in this regard,” said the director. “From our side, we will be promoting and selling tours directly to and across the country, will be offering travelling to citizens of Kazakhstan and also plan to invite foreigners and show the country to them.” More offers and special deals are available compared to last year. People travel less and companies keep acclimating to new situations. “We will adapt to any conditions. Those people who flew for vacationing and who could afford to do it two or three times a year, they will be travelling once a year now,” said Vertey. “There are such clients and we will adapt to the current condition we are in now, will be developing and promoting tourism in Kazakhstan,” she said. Despite complicated situations in outbound tourism, Kazakh tour operators and agencies are trying to promote and develop internal tourism both for citizens and foreign tourists. Russians have started vacationing more in Kazakhstan and the country is slowly coming closer

to a being popular tourist destination. “I can’t tell exactly now, we have to see when the travelling season starts. Vacationers usually travel in summer... I hope there will be sales due to the situation that has unfolded... However, I don’t see active travelling now,” said Bakhyt Nusipbayeva, director of Aktau-based tour operator Kurorty Gruzii. Her company has been operating for three years and particularly sends tourists to Georgia, which currently affords a rather inexpensive vacation. The company plans to develop internal tourism in the future. “I always tell people I know to come and see Georgia, the beautiful sites it has apart from the sea. This year’s vacation is very cheap, too,” said Nusipbayeva. Georgia also presently has a currency devaluation. “Prices depend on the dollar, we do exchange of currency. Of course, the dollar in Georgia went up and the costs of a travel package went up as well. “People who always vacationed and know how to do it, they will always be vacationing in my opinion. I can’t tell now because we have seasonal work, especially during the summer period... I don’t know what the situation will be this year, we are waiting to see as well,” she added.

## EXPO 2017 Tourism Products Presented at Russia’s Leading Tourism Industry Event

By Aiman Turebekova

ASTANA – The Astana EXPO 2017 National Company presented to major Russian travel agencies a portfolio of EXPO 2017 tourism products at the March 23-26 XXII International Exhibition MITT in Moscow. The products included tours of Astana and admission to the expo. This year’s exhibition was conducted under the theme “Travel and Tourism” and was attended by

2,000 companies from 192 countries and regions. In 2015, MITT was attended by 32,162 people from 79 regions of Russia. The exhibition attracts world leaders in tourism and offers the opportunity for market leaders to display their products on the eve of tourist season. During the event, EXPO 2017 company representatives also met with national and regional offices of tourism and tour operators of Russia and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and signed

agreements with tour companies, including an agreement with ITravel. The Russian National Exhibition Rating was created in 1994 and developed by the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of the Russian Federation and the Russian Union of Exhibitions and Fairs with Russkom IT Systems – the official exhibitions auditor in Russia and the CIS, authorised by the Russian Union of Exhibitions and Fairs and accredited by UFI, the Global Association of the Exhibition Industry.

SPORTS

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Arlans Secure WSB Playoff Spot with 5-0 Thrashing of Puerto Rico Hurricanes

By Anuar Abdrakhmanov

The World Series of Boxing (WSB) title holders Astana Arlans secured a spot in the WSB playoffs on March 26 in Petropavlovsk with a 5:0 victory over the Puerto Rico Hurricanes 5:0.

The Arlans now have 12 points and are in second place in group D behind newcomers the Uzbek Tigers.

The Arlans fighter Samat Bashe-nov won the first bout by default after the Caribbean team arrived in Kazakhstan without their boxer in the weight category up to 64 kilo-grams – Jean Carlos Riviera.

In the opening bout of the even-ing, Mardan Berikbaev in the up to 49 kg weight category, won a con-fident victory against John Ortiz 3:0 (50:44, 50:44, 50:44).

After that, Nursultan Koshegu-lov in the weight category up to 56 kg defeated Edgardo Rolona 3:0 (48:47, 49:46, 49:46). So with the default, Kazakhstan secured the victory after only two fights.

Next in the ring were heavy-weights Yerkin Mukhamed-zhan and Ivan Rosado. The fight ended almost immediately with Mukhamedzhanov awarded a TKO 14 seconds into the second minute.

Rounding out the match against the Hurricanes were Abylkhan Amankul and Raul Sanchez. The Arlans also won that bout 3:0 (50:45, 49:46, 49:46).

“I evaluate our performance to-night as a good one. We have fully complied with our tasks. On behalf of the boxing club Astana Arlans and the Presidential Professional Sports Club Astana, I want to ex-

press our gratitude for the support that our fans felt tonight,” said the club’s General Director and Olympic Champion Serik Sapiyev following the match in Petropav-lovsk, an administrative centre of the North Kazakhstan region.

“Before the match, some suggest-ed the Puerto Rico Hurricanes are an outsider in our group, and fights with this team will be easy for our boxers. But the fighting showed the opposite. In WSB, this season there are no weak opponents. ... In general, I think that our boxers were able to meet the expectations of the boxing fans and the coaching staff,” added Astana Arlans Head Coach Nurlan Akurpekov.

The Arlans’ next match will be April 2 in Ust-Kamenogorsk against the first-ranked Uzbek Ti-gers.



Afghanistan Confirms Participation in Winter Universiade 2017

By Aiman Turebekova

ALMATY – Athletes from Bamyan province in Afghanistan will take part in upcoming sport-ing event in Almaty, according to the Organising Committee for the Winter Universiade.

“We expect a high-level Winter Universiade,” shared Waheedullah Hameedi, secretary general of USF of Afghanistan. According to him, there are three athletes expected to take part in the games – one man and two women.

“Most people know that the Bamyan province of Afghanistan is a place of international winter competitions. We managed to se-lect the delegation from Bamyan

city to take part in the Universia-de.”

The delegate said that the “Win-ter Universiade is a great opportu-nity for us to take part in the sec-ond largest multi-sporting event in the World after the Olympic Games” and wished good luck for all participants.

Almaty will host the Winter Universiade from Jan. 29 to Feb. 8, 2017 and will become the first city to host the Winter Universiade in the Commonwealth of Inde-pendent States. Competitions will be held in eight venues in 12 dis-ciplines. As of March 10, 55 coun-tries had confirmed their partici-pation in the Winter Universiade 2017.



Great Steppe Once Again Calls Brave Knights to Battle

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – Knights wearing ancient armour and holding heavy swords and shields walk in the centre of the city. Is it a dream? No, it is the Blade of Steppe, an event organised by Temir Tumen club where gathered knights from various nations to fight and learn who is the strongest and bravest in the Kazakh steppe.

“We invited many clubs to take part in the event and all clubs of Kazakhstan for the Blade of Steppe tournament. The movement started nearly 15-18 years ago. Now, we have approximately 100 fighters in our country. The movement is still growing and we do our best to organise new clubs and add more participants. This is a mix of sport and an additional course of history, plus some elements of ancient life and culture,” said Temir Tumen President Evgeniy Suhotin.

Held for the third time in the capital, the tournament organisers indicated it will become a tradi-tion. The event involved more than 80 participants from Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Ukraine and Uzbekistan. This battle is a team sport, with fighters from different states unit-ing for one team.

Becoming a reenactor involves more than merely buying ancient armour and weapons. The ranks are filled with those who know and love history and are club members. Not everyone can join, however, because members must be disciplined and in good physi-cal shape. Men weighing 80 kilo-grammes or more are preferred, as the armour weighs 35 kilo-grammes and more and not every-body is able to fight while wear-

ing it. Heavyweight fighters stand tall and have better wrestling op-portunities. The movement has hundreds of clubs and millions of members. Different clubs hold events inviting other clubs to their country to share the experience of fighting and creating ancient ar-mour and weapons.

“The organisation and hospital-ity of the Blade of Steppe is so high that in a few years it can become a great tournament, where teams will strive to participate and win. Well done! Astana is a beautiful city with Asian luxury. It was good training before other events and I liked that fighters would fight and travel such great distances. Twen-ty-three hours in bus is a lot! Thank

you very much! Waiting to meet you at Ledovoye Poboishe (Bat-tle on Ice) tournament in Russia,” said knight Alexandr Buzdalov.

Victor Derkach, one of Russia’s best fighters, echoed his com-ments.

“Thank you very much, dear or-ganisers of the event! Your event becomes better and better every year. I was glad to see the number of participants and the quality of the organisation. Everything was really great. The organiser sup-plied us with everything which was necessary for the event. The fighters were much better than last year and I hope that this trend will continue. Everybody was happy to feel the emotions and even being

beaten. I hope that you will invite us next year, too,” he said.

Temir Tumen member Dmitry Gorelik noted the tournament is fun because it so different from his typical routine.

“It may be some way to get away from everyday office life. Now when the fighting ended, I must shave and get back to my of-fice. It is also an attempt to edu-cate children who are addicted to computers nowadays about a de-sire to fight, a passion for the sport and its history. Our club is called Temir Tumen, which means an iron squad, and the reconstruction we have is the beginning of the Kazakh Khanate,” he said in an in-terview on Kazakh TV.



National Football Team Beats Azerbaijan in a Friendly

By Anuar Abdrakhmanov

The Kazakh national team beat their Azerbaijan counterparts 1-0 in a friendly match played April 26 in Antalya, Turkey. Midfielder Maksat Baizhanov kicked the win-ning goal.

The Kazakhstan Football Fed-eration entrusted the leadership of the country’s main team to two home-grown professionals – Tal-gat Baisufinov and Nurken Maz-baev, a well-known former player and one of the best strikers in the history of the Kazakh league. Team Azerbaijan is now run by a well-known former Croatian play-er, World Cup 1998 bronze medal holder Robert Prosinecki.

The game began actively and Kazakhstan took the lead in the eighth minute. Serikzhan Mu-zhikov earned a corner kick and in the subsequent rally, Baizhanov headed the ball into the net behind Kamran Agayev.



The Azeri players kept losing the ball in the middle and very rarely threatened their rival’s goal. Closer to the middle of the first half, they managed to improve their play and give Kazakh goalkeeper Stanislav Pokatilov a few nervous moments. Azeri players Araz Abdullayev and Zaur Ramazanov were especially

zealous in their attacks. Later, the Kazakh team again dominated on the pitch but could not covert into scoring goals.

The second half saw a fairly high pace, with dangerous mo-ments emerging constantly in front of both teams’ goals. In a memorable episode, Baizhanov

had a particularly-threatening strike, but Agayev salvaged his team. Meanwhile, Azerbaijan’s counter-attacks were success-fully repelled by Kazakh defend-ers led by Yuri Logvinenko and Samat Smakov. A few strikes from Namik Alaskarov were also blocked.

Baizhanov, the first half’s hero, was replaced by Islambek Kuat during the mid-match break. The latter won a good number of physical confrontations, helping veteran defender Smakov. Team Azerbaijan’s Kazakh-born striker Dmitry Nazarov, who plays for the Karlsruher SC Second Bundesliga side, tried to find his teammates at the opponent’s half through long passes and volleys. In one mo-ment, Ruslan Gurbanov failed to hit the ball following an excellent pass from Asif Mammadov.

Alex Shchetkin failed to score lat-er from what looked like a brilliant position to hit the net. The Kazakhs

could again have doubled their ad-vantage, but Gafurzhan Suyum-baev’s strike lacked precision and the crossbar saved the Azeris.

create danger in front of the oppo-nents’ goal,” the head coach Baisu-finov commented on the outcome. Kazakhstan will visit Team Geor-

**BAISUFINOV: “The team performed well and complied with our tactical setup. I am glad the players gave their all at the pitch today and tried hard to create danger in front of the opponents’ goal.”**

The final whistle fixed the victo-ry for Kazakhstan’s national team. Baizhanov spoke after the game with The Astana Times

“Everything went well. We scored on an early goal, as planned. The match was a difficult one. But most importantly, we managed to play well and won.

“The team performed well and complied with our tactical setup. I am glad the players gave their all at the pitch today and tried hard to

gia March 29 in another friendly match. The game will be played at Boris Paichadze Dynamo Arena in Tbilisi, which in August hosted the Union of European Football Asso-ciations (UEFA) Super Cup con-tested by two Spanish clubs – FC Barcelona and Sevilla FC.

Team Kazakhstan will entertain a few more friendly matches be-fore starting qualifications for the World Cup 2018 Sept. 4 at a home pitch against Poland.

# Why Are Astana’s Fitness Clubs Premium? Are They Worth the Money They Charge?

By Dmitry Lee

ASTANA – People need to have a choice between essential and overly-luxurious that adds up to the value. By trying to draw the line among luxury, comfort and the basics, The Astana Times will try helping readers choose the right premium fitness club for leisure and workout sessions.

Fitness clubs in the city can be costly, or rather less-than-flexible in price. Annual fees for the least expensive membership cards start at around 300,000 tenge (~US\$870).

Clubs mostly offer one-year memberships and often are not very accommodating with short-term travellers, although they constantly offer various discounts.

The six-month membership prices are typically not a good deal, in most cases amounting to more than half of the yearly price. Yet when there is no choice, people take them. Some clubs don’t even offer monthly options and those that do ratchet up the prices to over US\$100.

## Winox

Winox offers the only RealRyder indoor cycling bikes in the city. The yearly membership card gives full access to the gym and over 60 group programmes with famous instructors in belly dancing, combat, kinesis, Pilates, swimming, yoga, Zumba and many other activities. The membership card is also loaded with discounts from 10-20 percent at restaurants such as La Belle, Rabiya and Uzbekistan, access to Hoist, Paramount and Technogym, Legend Fitness gear, a dry cleaning service and spa, fitness café and sports boutique.

The club is near Astana Mall, at the intersection of Mailin Street and Tauelsizdyk Avenue, about a 15-minute taxi ride from the centre of the left bank.



It focuses on all levels of possible goers and especially on kids, who have the fifth floor to themselves.

Special features: The club currently offers the only RealRyder bikes in the city.

Verdict: Yes, only if you have the money. Overall, Winox has a lively vibe with its modern high-tech environment. It has a professional staff, high-quality and well-maintained simulators and gear that’s all new, saunas and a perfectly-maintained, crystal-clear 9-by-25 metre swimming pool. The club is a good fit for professional athletes, as it offers a huge variety of simulators that could satisfy almost anyone’s needs. Parking is not too problematic, as Astana Mall is just a minute away.

Address: 32 Tauelsizdyk Ave. (near Astana Mall, intersection of Mailin Street and Tauelsizdyk Avenue).

Price table:

One-year membership: 440,000 tenge (~US\$1,270).

Six-month membership: 286,000 (~US\$827).

There are numerous discounts available for holidays and seasons – call for special offers.

## World Class

World Class is a Russian-based outlet with numerous clubs scattered throughout most of the Commonwealth of the Independent States (CIS) countries. The five clubs in Kazakhstan are in Ak-tobe, Almaty, Astana, Atyrau and Karaganda. World Class would be perfect for business people who frequently travel around the CIS on short-term trips and who want to stay fit.

A one-year membership gives holders the privilege of four visits a month at any club in its CIS chain. Card holders also receive a 10-15 percent discount at various partner stores and restaurants like

Japanese Restaurant Yakitoriya, Mega Sport, Shokoladnitsa and Tutti Frutti Frozen Yogurt.

The club basically has the works, offering group programmes, employing professional instructors and outfitted with world-famous simulators and tread mills, different types of saunas, a spa and 8.5-by-25 metre swimming pool.

Special features: flexibility to travel. World Class needs to keep up with the times and stay on par with its gear to fend off its competitors. Other than that, it is perfect for business travellers and anyone who wants to stay fit.

Verdict: World Class is definitely worth the money. During rush hour, however, it might be a challenge to reach. It is located near the Radisson Hotel, along Sary Arka Avenue, which gets packed from 5:30 p.m. until about 7 p.m. and even later on Fridays. Parking might also be a problem.

Address: 1 Zhenis Ave.

Price table:

One-year membership: 280,000 tenge (~US\$ 809).

Six-month membership: 246,000 (~US\$ 711).

The club offers up to 20-percent discounts, but deals may be random. Call for prices and instant discounts.

## Fitness Palace

While Fitness Palace might be the largest and swankiest club in the city, it certainly has a lot of competition in terms of the price-quality margin difference.

In terms of special features, it has the capital’s third-largest swimming pool at 15-by-25 metres and the largest, 1,500 square metres, in terms of total area of the aqua zone. The club is 10,000 square metres and boasts a 200-space parking area and somewhat-convenient location across from Khan Shatyr Mall. Fitness Palace also offers the only two squash courts in the city. As for the rest of gear, be sure it is all new, well-maintained and up-to-date. With more than 50 group programmes, four different types of saunas and 11 shower cabins (also the largest in the city), it is spacious. If you like comfort and space, this is for you.

Verdict: The right question would be – are you thinking about working out or are you just looking for the status and prestige of the club. Holders of this premium card are also entitled to regular discounts up to 10 percent at its spa and restaurants like Armau, Brewery, Grammy and Kiku Matsuri. The problem is – they’re all in one complex in Fitness Palace.

Address: 3 Turan Ave. (across from the Khan Shatyr Mall).

Price table:

One-year membership: 550,000 tenge (~US\$ 1,590).

Six-month membership: 350,000 (~US\$ 1,012).

There are numerous discounts available for holidays and seasons – call for special offers.

## Life Fitness

Life Fitness offers group programmes similar to the other clubs. It is also well-maintained, which is anticipated from a premium club, has new gear and a long swimming pool, which is a bit tight at 7-by-25 metres.

Although the management positions the club as a family getaway in the city, it doesn’t offer a flexible pricing policy. It is located right in front of Abu Dhabi Plaza, which is under construction on the left bank.

The membership card also gives a 7-percent discount at Luxury House, a boutique with designer names such as Armani and Versace, and a 10-percent discount to its spa.

Verdict: Maybe. Because in the price range, there may be better options.

Address: 2 Turkestan Street (across from Abu Dhabi Plaza, close to Nazarbayev Intellectual School).

Price table:

One-year membership: 430,000 tenge (~US\$ 1,265).

No 6-month membership cards.

There are numerous discounts available for holidays and seasons – call for special offers.

## Fit Nation

Fit Nation is located in the central park, which is a bonus in the summer, as an evening promenade wouldn’t hurt after a workout. It also offers a variety of group programmes and has a 12-by-25 metre swimming pool.

Special features: It is probably the only club that gifts five free visits with a yearly membership. The others offer three visits.

Verdict: A good swimming pool, friendly staff, good variety of group programmes and low price compared with other premium clubs. Yes, it is worth the money.

Address: 4 Turan Ave. (inside the central park).

Price table:

One-year membership: 280,000 tenge (~US\$ 809).

Six-month membership: 182,000 tenge (~US\$ 526).

There are numerous discounts available for holidays and seasons – call for special offers.

# Kazpost Opens Second Self-Serve Centre in Astana

Staff Report

Kazpost recently announced the opening of its second automated postal service point in Astana. This is a new self-service format to send and receive packages.

According to the Kazpost press statement, the opening of the second point was dedicated to the Nauruz celebrations. By the end of the current year, one more is planned to be established in the city. The same service centres will be opened in Almaty and Karaganda. In the regions, this service will be introduced during 2016 and

2017. The monthly volume will be 8,000 packages.

The post centres are located on 37 Beibitshilik Street and 37/9 Turan Avenue next to the Khan Shatyr shopping mall. Both centres operate from 8 a.m. until 8 p.m., also on the weekend.

In order to receive small packages, parcels and packages, a customer should enter the tracking number of the package or a mobile phone number in a special terminal installed in the post centre. This terminal identifies the requested package and provides the number of the stand, row and cell where the package is to be found. After

that, a client just goes into the hall to the required stand and takes the package off the shelf.

It is also possible to independently send the package to any location in Kazakhstan. To do so, a customer should buy special packaging with the tracking number, the price of which is already included in the delivery charge, and register the package with the help of the terminal. After the registration is completed, a customer should press the “Send” button and get a check. The registered package should be left on the shelf for its further transportation.

