



Senate Speaker Tokayev addresses Munich Conference, urges security cooperation



Chairman of the Senate Kassym-Jomart Tokayev (second from right) addresses participants of the Munich Security Conference on Feb. 18.

By Galiaskar Seitghan

ASTANA – Chairman of the Senate of the Parliament of Kazakhstan Kassym-Jomart Tokayev told a panel discussion at the Feb. 18 Munich Security Conference that it is important to build reliable and friendly relations between the countries of Central Asia and Eurasia and the rest of the world.

Tokayev also told the panel that the Chinese One Belt, One Road initiative offers great opportunities for regional economic cooperation, including for the growth of transit potential and creating new industrial capacities in Eurasia.

The panel was part of the annual conference, which this year attracted around 600 guests, including more than 30 heads of state and government, as well as members of parliaments, ministers, senior diplomats, generals and experts.

Kazakhstan takes 42nd place in Heritage Foundation's World 2017 Index of Economic Freedom

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – Kazakhstan took 42nd place on the 2017 Index of Economic Freedom published by The Heritage Foundation, Washington, DC-based think tank.

The report indicates Kazakhstan's economy has substantially benefited from increased openness and flexibility during the past decade and emphasises the country continues to maintain its ownership in key enterprises, particularly in the energy sector.

The regulatory framework has undergone a series of reforms and the private sector now faces fewer constraints, although there is still much room for institutional reform.

The total value of exports and imports equals 53 percent of the GDP and the average applied tariff rate is 3.3 percent.



Forum addresses national gender equality achievements and challenges

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – Empowerment of Women in the Corporate Sector, an international forum held Feb. 10 in the capital, highlighted the involvement of women in Kazakh business.

mission for Women, Family and Demographic Policy and Parliament, heads of state bodies and national companies, foreign ambassadors, representatives of international and non-governmental organisations, as well as Kazakh and foreign experts attended the forum.

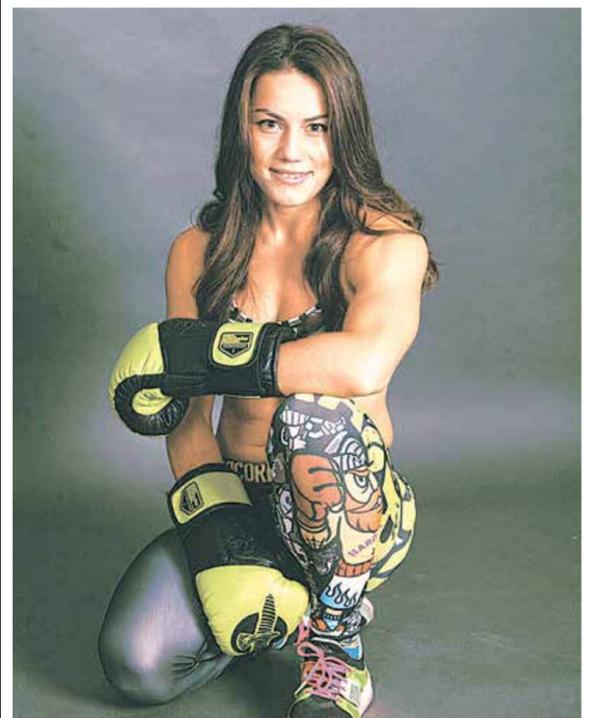
Kazakhstan offers 'Astana platform' as venue to resolve conflicts beyond Syria

By Alisher Nuraliyev

NEW YORK – Kazakhstan believes the Astana platform, which recently demonstrated its usefulness in talks on Syria, can be used more widely as a venue for efforts to help resolve other conflicts.

man Vassilenko, Kazakhstan's deputy minister of foreign affairs, said: "The position of my country regarding conflicts in Europe that, unfortunately, continue to take place without durable solutions, is well known.

Pro boxer Firuza Sharipova fights her way to top



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NATION

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 22, 2017

Security forces arrest 15 suspected extremists in Almaty operations

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – The Kazakh National Security Committee (NSC) in cooperation with Almaty police shut down two suspected radical groups and arrested 15 suspected religious extremists in special operations conducted Jan. 13-24 in Almaty city and the Almaty region, the NSC announced in a press release in mid-February.

Nine of those arrested are suspected members of terrorist organisations. Six are persons suspected of individual terrorist activities. Charges included promotion of terrorism, preparation for participation in terrorist activities, incitement to religious hatred and illegal possession of weapons.

The National Security Committee and police also confiscated five grenades, extremist literature from terrorist organisations and literature in electronic format.

The National Security Committee reports it is continuing efforts to thwart extremist activity and that its January operations helped increase security for Universiade 2017.

Sergei Shveikin, deputy chief of the Anti-Terrorist Centre of the Kazakh National Security Committee said Jan. 31 that in 2016, the Kazakhstan National Security Committee prevented numerous violent extremist acts, according to Interfax-Kazakhstan.

"In the last year, we faced a difficult situation in Kazakhstan. It

revealed a problem of so-called single-Jihad. In 2016, in Kazakhstan 12 violent extremist acts were prevented at the early stage of preparation and 182 persons convicted," he said.

Shveikin said three people were convicted for financing terrorism, emphasising that they were members of international terrorist organisations.

"We have arrested and handed over five foreign extremists to other partner states. Also, the Kazakh National Security Committee contributed to the arrest of 14 members of international terrorist organisations," he added.

Eight people were killed in terrorist attacks on a military unit and two weapons shops in Aktobe on



Photo credit: Viasat.kz

June 5, 2016. Twenty-nine men were convicted in connection with the attack. Seven were sentenced

to life in prison and two received 25 and 22 years of imprisonment, among lesser sentences.

Information society expansion puts growing pressure on nations, says Kazakh expert

By Azamat Syzdykbayev

ASTANA – Information density has increased tenfold over the past two years, Astana International Finance Centre Managing Director Sayasat Nurbek told a recent forum in Astana focusing on Modernisation 3.0: A New Stage of Economic and Political Development of Kazakhstan.

Nurbek spoke about the main challenges facing society and said his vision is congruent with American sociologist Alvin Toffler's opinion.

"Toffler predicted the problems that we face today, including transition from one formation to another, the transition to an information society in the 1980s. The



Sayasat Nurbek

traditional model of the state is under pressure, both internal and external. The external pressure caused by large global trends is strengthening the role of technol-

ogy and information. The internal pressure is caused by a change in values. Society starts to shift to the post-modern and individual values. As a result, a request for

an inclusive society and the inclusion of large social groups in the political decision-making process and others appear," he said.

The return of populism is also inevitable, said Nurbek. An information society begins to put pressure on the political systems as a whole. This causes insecurity in a great number of people. Then comes the request for simple and clear truth and some political forces and individuals start to use it.

The expert highlighted the negative impact caused by the introduction of different kind of technological know-how on the market.

"New technologies go forward and most of the world's population simply stops to absorb them

because they do not have time for. New terms, such as 'Digital Aborigines' and 'Destructive Technologies' have appeared. Jack Ma precisely differentiated the technological revolution with a cycle of about 50 years. The technologies are established in the first 20 years and the next 30 years these technologies are applied throughout the society," he said.

"Automated processes gradually lead that person to becoming unnecessary in market. For example, German brand Adidas brought shoemaking production back to Germany. The reason for the relocation of the company was the introduction of complete robotics and automated processes. They will not create a single new job in the country," he said.

President says small business burdened by too many regulations, directs large-scale review

By Dmitry Lee

ASTANA – President Nursultan Nazarbayev recently instructed the government together with the Atameken National Chamber of Entrepreneurs and the General Prosecutor's Office to conduct a large-scale revision of the number of supervisory functions regulating small business. He gave the organisations one month to present their findings.

The directive follows a report

indicating that in the first nine months of 2016 there was a decrease in the percentage of goods and services from small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

"The number of SMEs has decreased 7 percent, while the number of employees decreased 3 percent. The mountain in labour gave birth to a mouse. How are they supposed to grow with constant increasing regulatory burden on business? Over the past ten years, the number of annually adopted

legal acts has increased more than fourfold. Who creates them? Six thousand different acts that govern business and the general population were adopted last year. In general, 61 departments with controlling and monitoring functions are operating in the country; 45 central, 16 in the regions," the President said.

He also questioned why more burdens haven't already been lifted on small business as a result of previous government efforts.

"The government reported that the scheduled inspections are cancelled and that it had implemented the new risk management system, the state body is using electronic format. We have reduced the number of civil servants. Why are officials still sitting in the same places, where are the reduced numbers? What a wonderful self-reproduction! The inspectors are being reduced yet the number of officials isn't reducing. What a miracle!" Nazarbayev said.

The president used dental clinics as an example of a small business and said too many regulations govern the development of such enterprises.

"There are private dental clinics with their own patients. But why aren't there other developments in different directions such as traumatology, gynaecology? (Because) it is impossible to open a private clinic. Why? It's in our hands. Who is doing this? Where is the 'fifth column' sitting? Inside the government? We say one thing, then make a decision, eventually we do everything in a completely different way. According to Atameken, business people are faced with more than 28,000 requirements," Nazarbayev said.

Justice Ministry amends administrative code to humanise laws

By Dana Omirgazy

ASTANA – The Kazakh Ministry of Justice, in cooperation with non-governmental organisations and the Atameken National Chamber of Entrepreneurs, has developed a draft law "On introducing amendments to the Code of Administrative Offences," Justice Minister Marat Beketayev announced at a Feb. 10 enlarged board meeting devoted to the results of 2016 and priorities for 2017. The amendments urge cutting penalty rates.

Justice Ministry Legislative Department Director Darkhan Igembayev sat for an interview with The Astana Times to talk about the amendments and main provisions of the legal document.

"The department started elaborating amendments in 2014. Over this period, experts have carefully studied the law enforcement practice of the Code of Administrative Offences and efficiency



Darkhan Igembayev

of the introduced provisions. A working group, consisting of representatives of state agencies and non-governmental organisations, as well as Kazakh citizens, was involved in writing amendments to the code, ensuring the objectiveness of the procedure," he said.

The Justice Ministry fully supports and adheres to the policy of humanising administrative laws highlighted in President Nursultan

Nazarbayev's address to the nation published Jan. 31, he added.

"Penalty rates for small businesses were reduced up to 50 percent. In addition, the document suggests reducing penalty rates by 30 percent under mitigating circumstances. This provision applies for legal entities according to 1,018 elements of administrative offences, which make up 89 percent of the total elements of the

code applicable to legal persons," he said.

"In addition, there is a proposal to introduce a summary procedure institute in respect of minors, officials and legal entities allowing them to pay 50 percent of the fine rate within seven days. This provision will also apply to administrative offences fixed by special technical equipment operating in automatic mode," added Igembayev.

The Ministry legislation department determined the necessary steps toward humanising legislation on administrative offences. The draft law envisions relief from administrative liability for the offender in the case of a minor offence, expansion in the number of articles imposing administrative penalty and reduction of almost all traffic penalties. In recent years, the Administrative Code has undergone frequent amendments aimed at improving administrative law.

"The Administrative Code is subject to frequent amendments. Thus, in 2001 the document was

altered more than 180 times. The new Administrative Code of 2014 underwent 55 amendments to different laws. The analysis showed that frequent changes in the rules of the Administrative Code are caused by both objective and subjective reasons. The former, in particular, implies a vast array of legal relations regulated by the Administrative Code. Accordingly, the dynamics of social relations is reflected in the legislation on administrative offences. In other words, the adoption of new legislation or amendments to sectoral legislation providing for the establishment of prohibitions, restrictions and obligations objectively implies the need for changes and amendments to the Administrative Code," said Igembayev.

Amendments to the code are expected to increase the efficiency of rights protection and freedoms of citizens, as well as the consolidation of legality while considering cases of administrative offences. Igembayev emphasised the procedure of imposing administrative penalties would take into account the individual characteristics of the offender, his or her capabilities of preventing new offenses and feasibility of their execution.

The draft law will be submitted for consideration by the lower house of Parliament in June.

NATIONAL NEWS IN BRIEF

Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev signed a decree Feb. 7 to change the borders of Astana and include 8,719 hectares of Tselinograd district in Akmola region into the capital, reported Akorda. The annex to the decree specifies 7,300 hectares are located to the southeast of Astana and close to the capital's international airport and part of the land is situated in the Talapker and Kabanbai Batyr rural districts. In addition, 959 hectares are located on the southwest border of Astana including the area of the Kabanbai Batyr rural district, 460 hectares are on the city's northwest border and two kilometres are to the left across the Astana - Kokshetau route.

A smart healthcare system has been introduced in Astana, reported Khabar.kz. The Unified Medical Information Call Centre service is operated 24 hours a day, enabling citizens to get information on all health issues and schedule an appointment by phoning 103. "An electronic patient medical record project was introduced to deal with heavy workloads. This will greatly improve the quality of care provided and remove paper documents in all the city's hospitals," said Astana Akim (Mayor) Asset Issekeshiev at a Feb. 16 reporting meeting with the population. The system will monitor and provide preventive measures, taking into account citizen's individual characteristics from birth.

The Mizam wholesale trade centre was opened Feb. 17 in Almaty, reported Kapital.kz, offering agricultural producers the opportunity to sell their products without intermediate parties. "A new project on the implementation of foodstuffs is based on the experience of foreign countries, in particular Rungis, the world-famous French market. One of the Mizam's concepts is to work with direct suppliers to eliminate the stage of mediation and as a result, significantly reduce the price of the goods," according to a statement. The project is implemented through public-private partnership and was constructed entirely with private investment. The centre cost 3.1 billion tenge (US\$9.7 million) and created about 2,000 jobs.

Kazakhstan Temir Zholys plans to increase transit container traffic from China to the European Union in 2017 by 2.2 times compared to 2016, according to the company's release. Passenger traffic totalled 18,057,000 passenger-kilometres in 2016. The growth of passenger traffic is planned due to the introduction of new routes and EXPO 2017. The company's net income amounted to 28 billion tenge (US\$87 million), with operating profit of over 90 billion tenge (US\$281 million) in 2016, it added.

The Mangistau region designer union opened recently, according to Kapital.kz. The association aims to unite all local fashion designers, protect the rights and interests of manufacturers and provide them with social and other guarantees necessary for their professional activity. "We supported the initiative to create the association. Grouping entrepreneurs is important in the globalisation era. The association will carry out its budget from private contributions of members of the association that are obliged to pay certain fees," said regional Chamber of Entrepreneurs head Olzhas Karzhauov.

A meat processing plant with a 75-percent investment from Iranian partners was launched Feb. 9 in the Sairam district of the South Kazakhstan region. The plant covers an area of 15 hectares and plans to create 350 jobs, reported Kapital.kz. "Various incentives for the effective development of small and medium-sized enterprises and favourable conditions for investors are provided in the country. We will reduce administrative barriers to increase the availability of the necessary information. Iran has great potential in the agricultural sector. I am convinced that the joint projects in this area will give good results," said South Kazakhstan region Akim (Governor) Zhansait Tuimebayev.

EURASIA&WORLD

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 22, 2017

EXTERNAL NEWS IN BRIEF

Kazakhstan and South Korea have been long-time strategic partners and the countries continue expanding cooperation in various industries. A Kazakh delegation recently visited South Korea to learn more about the country's successful experience in the political, socio-economic, cultural, humanitarian and scientific spheres. South Korean experts shared their knowledge and experience in the construction of residential housing and organised a seminar in Seoul. Currently, there is a specialised fund that certifies all the activities of construction companies so the companies would attract investors. Today, Kazakhstan is using the South Korean housing guarantee system, which has been in use since 1993 in Korea. In addition, the South Korean underwater association and the Kazakh-Korean Centre have signed a memorandum of cooperation. As part of the agreement South Korean experts will train Kazakh specialists to use effective methods of cleaning water ponds and rescue people from drowning.

Kazakhstan is increasing export volumes, Kazakh TV reports. The list of goods shipped abroad is diverse and includes industrial production and consumer goods and food. Companies are becoming more and more export-oriented. The Pavlodar free economic zone is one such example. The petroleum coke calcination plant exports goods to Russia's Aluminum Company and a number of Chinese enterprises. In total, eight plants are operating in the Pavlodar's special economic zone, 15 more will be launched in the near future. All of them will use advanced innovative technologies. Kazakhstan's manufacturing plant of military products shipped first thermal imaging devices to Turkey. The company signed a \$6 million contract last year. Along with the military equipment, road construction enterprises are increasing export volumes. The local company Tengiz Plus enterprise is expanding production of traffic signs. Tengiz Plus has made over one million road signs in 16 years.

The Latvian business community is studying Kazakhstan's special economic zones, export and investment potential, Khabar Agency, country's top broadcasting station reports. Latvia arranged a meeting between Latvian business people and representatives of KAZNEX INVEST. The Kazakh delegation explained country's policy of attracting foreign investors and the benefits the state offers for them, such as the tax exemptions and customs incentives.

Astana recently hosted a business forum where the Czech and Kazakh business circles discussed profitable joint projects and met potential customers, Kazakh TV reports. The sides also discussed mechanisms to improve trade between the two countries. The Czech delegation consisted of representatives of some 25 companies engaged in the production of vehicles, fertilisers, pharmaceuticals, supply of information and communication technologies. Kazakhstan exports products of the oil and gas industry, the chemical industry, in particular, yellow phosphorus and metals to the Czech Republic, whereas the Czech Republic supplies Kazakhstan with home appliances, sewage treatment and cars. At present, 185 joint ventures involving Czech capital are registered in Kazakhstan. In total, Czech business people invested about \$186 million in Kazakhstan over 10 years. Nevertheless, the parties intend to expand the economic cooperation.

Last year Iran and Kazakhstan have concluded dozens of agreements worth at least a billion of dollars, Kazakh TV reports citing Iranian ambassador to Kazakhstan Mojtaba Damirchilu at a reception dedicated to the National Day of Iran, and the 25th anniversary of establishment of diplomatic relations between Kazakhstan and Iran. According to the diplomat, Kazakhstan and Iran cooperate in mining, agriculture, transport and logistics. Mutually beneficial economic cooperation has a great potential. Besides the two countries have established strong cultural ties. The National Museum in Astana hosted an exhibition of Iranian miniatures and shape poetry recently, for instance. The two nations' cultural ties can be traced back many centuries and are set to expand as diplomats are planning to organise a number of interesting events in the near future.

Second round of Syrian talks in Astana adopt mechanism to monitor ceasefire

By Aigerim Seisembayeva

ASTANA – Another two days of talks on strengthening the ceasefire regime in the nearly six-year-old Syrian conflict ended Feb. 16 in Astana with the adoption of a document to formalise monitoring of the ceasefire.

The document will guide the activities of a joint operational group to be formed by Russia, Turkey and Iran that was agreed to be set up during the earlier meeting in January in Astana. The document is also meant to guide confidence-building measures among the opposing sides.

The parties also agreed during the talks to continue discussions of a mechanism to exchange corpses and prisoners, including women and children, said Russian Foreign Ministry Special Envoy for the Mideast Settlement and Director of the Department of the Middle East and North Africa Sergei Vershinin during a Moscow-Damascus-Astana teleconference following the talks.

The meetings were meant to also create a positive momentum in support of Feb. 23 peace talks in Geneva.

In addition to representatives of the trilateral monitoring group, the Feb. 15-16 meetings were attended by the Syrian Arab Republic's delegation headed by Syria's Permanent Representative to the UN Bashar al-Jaafari and the Syrian armed opposition delegation representing nine groups and being headed by the political leader of Jaish al-Islam Mohammad Alloush. Representatives of the United States,



Jordan and the UN attended the talks as observers.

Kazakh Deputy Foreign Minister Akybek Kamaldinov opened the talks' plenary session expressing Astana's hopes that the meetings on Syria would make a tangible contribution to the UN-led Geneva process and ultimately result in a comprehensive peace agreement on Syria.

"Kazakhstan, as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council for 2017-2018, will make every effort to address issues of regional and global security. In this regard, we are prepared to further contribute to the process of Syrian settlement," Kamaldinov said.

He highlighted that all the meetings in Astana were held in a con-

structive manner, and showed the importance of the Astana platform created with the support of President Nursultan Nazarbayev.

In a press briefing following the end of talks, Al-Jaafari emphasised that Damascus is committed to taking all steps to comply with the ceasefire regime in order to stop the bloodshed.

He said Turkey "cannot be fanning the flames and extinguishing them at the same time." Al-Jaafari accused Turkey of continuing to facilitate the entry of "tens of thousands of mercenaries" to Syria and said the talks ended without a final statement because of the late arrival of the Turkish delegation and the Syrian opposition.

Alloush, in his turn, said all op-

position groups represented at the talks would as well take measures to support the shaky truce.

Despite the objections of the Syrian armed opposition concerning Iran's participation, the decision to establish the joint Russia-Turkey-Iran group was approved.

"We also discussed mechanisms to establish control over the ceasefire regime. Russia mentioned a brief document in response to the document that we presented," Alloush said at a press conference.

The head of the Syrian armed opposition emphasised his delegation's commitment to acting in the interests of the people of Syria, who have suffered a lot over the six years of the conflict.

Head of the Russian delegation

and Representative of the Russian President on Syrian settlement Alexander Lavrentiev noted that "the Astana platform is not confined to military matters on Syria, the parties might as well engage more closely with political issues."

He also stated that there were two more documents that hadn't been signed in Astana. One of them sets the procedures of identifying and preventing violations and provides for sanctions against violators of the truce. The other deals with areas that are under the control of moderate Syrian armed opposition groups that have signed the Dec. 29 ceasefire agreement. Lavrentiev said both documents might be adopted within less than a month.

The Feb. 15-16 talks followed two previous rounds of Syria negotiations in Astana. The first meetings were Jan. 23-24 and were the first to include both the Syrian government and the Syrian armed opposition. Representatives from Russia, Iran and Turkey also attended as well as representatives of the UN and the United States who attended as observers. The trilateral group, as well as observers from Jordan and the United Nations, met again Feb. 6 to discuss mechanisms to monitor the ceasefire.

The Russian delegation's Vershinin said the Astana meeting was "another important step" towards bringing the end of the conflict closer.

Al-Jaafari also said that the Geneva meeting "needs to take into account the Astana-1 and Astana-2 results and resolutions so that they become a basis for the work in the upcoming meeting."

Kazakhstan offers 'Astana platform' as venue to resolve conflicts beyond Syria

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That is why we believe the Astana platform can serve as a much-needed venue for restoring confidence and reconfirming commitment to basic principles of international law and respect for the national interests of the parties involved."

The European security environment has changed dramatically in recent years, he said. The conflicts, threats and instability on the continent are impacted by contemporary security challenges, such as unconventional terrorism, irregular migration, organised crime, including arms and drugs trafficking as well as trafficking in persons. "Last but not least, there's the expanding atmosphere of fear and distrust," the diplomat added.

In his address to the 70th session of the UN General Assembly in 2015, President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev said: "Humanity needs to move from a focus on routine conflict prevention and post-conflict rehabilitation to a new development strategy

which would make such conflicts senseless."

"To this end, Kazakhstan has consistently advanced an international agenda that seeks to help solve conflicts before they arise, and, if that is no longer possible, to mediate between conflicting parties with the aim of creating conditions for lasting peace," Vassilenko explained, citing the results of several international meetings in Astana and Almaty on the Syrian conflict and Iran's nuclear programme.

Kazakhstan's approach based on seeking mutual understanding and restoring trust among nations, was, perhaps, most notable during its chairmanship in the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in 2010, he said.

"At the Astana Summit of the OSCE in December 2010, all of its participating states re-committed themselves to 'the vision of a free, democratic, common and indivisible Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian security community stretching from Vancouver to Vladivostok, rooted in agreed

principles, shared commitments and common goals.' That commitment is as critical and relevant now as it was then," the Kazakh deputy foreign minister stressed.

According to him, peaceful solution of conflicts in Europe requires practical action at several levels: between major powers, regionally and locally. It is also important that the Security Council as well as other partners redouble efforts to forge political agreements, taking advantage of even the narrowest openings to find opportunities for compromise, as a matter of priority.

"Bringing an end to the conflict in eastern Ukraine should be our utmost common priority. Our President has consistently worked to help put an end to hostilities contributing to the eventual conclusion of the Minsk Agreements," Vassilenko said, adding that Kazakhstan considers those agreements the only viable, existing mechanism for solution of the conflict in a peaceful way.

He also said Astana welcomes the most recent announcement on Feb. 18 of an agreement to imple-

ment the cease-fire in that three-year-old conflict which has seen one of its deadliest flare-ups in recent weeks.

"It is of special importance for our multi-ethnic country that Ukraine remains sovereign, stable and independent with diverse multi-ethnic and multi-confessional society, in which all human rights are upheld," Vassilenko continued. "We believe full-fledged normalisation of the situation in that country can only be achieved with economic recovery. We, therefore, call for establishing confidence-building measures in the economic dimension."

He also outlined Kazakhstan's positions on the situation in Georgia and the Nagorno-Karabakh issue, as well as on Cyprus and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

According to Vassilenko, two documents from President Nazarbayev will guide Kazakhstan's work at the UN Security Council over the next two years, the Policy Address from January 2017 and the Manifesto, "The World. The 21st Century."

In the policy address, the Ka-

zakh leader said progress through preventive diplomacy, democratic processes, arms control, confidence and security-building measures, the promotion of human rights and security in the economic and environmental dimension lie at the heart of Kazakhstan's vision for effective global security and safety. And the manifesto, which is an official document of the UN Security Council, sets out a step-by-step plan for ending conflicts and violence at regional and global levels.

"We fully support the agenda and priorities of UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on prevention of conflicts, which is more effective than crisis management. My country stands united with the international community in efforts to strengthen the work of the United Nations and the Security Council. We support member states to constructively transform conflict into peace, advance security and development, protect human rights, and promote the rule of law," Vassilenko stressed.

Kazakhstan 'strongly condemns' North Korean ballistic missile launch

By Alisher Nuraliyev

ASTANA – Kazakhstan "strongly condemns" the ballistic missile launch conducted by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) on Feb. 12 as "a blatant violation of the relevant UN Security Council resolution, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Astana said in a statement on the same day.

"Being, together with Japan, the co-chairman of the 9th Conference

on Article XIV of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), as well as the chairman of the Hague Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation, Kazakhstan believes that extremely irresponsible actions of the DPRK have a negative impact on the nuclear disarmament process and pose a threat to both regional and global security, undermine the efforts of the vast majority of countries in the world in ensuring a nuclear weapon-free future," the ministry said.

"Kazakhstan is firmly convinced that the key to global security is a nuclear weapon-free world, and stands for complete prohibition of nuclear testing all over the world," the ministry said. It further called on the DPRK to return immediately to the negotiating table in the six-party format with the participation of China, Russia, the United States, the Republic of Korea and Japan, and to abandon completely its nuclear weapons aspirations.

In 1991, at the break-up of the Soviet Union, Kazakhstan inher-

ited part of the former Soviet nuclear weapons arsenal, at that time the world's fourth largest. It then renounced that arsenal and shut down the former Soviet nuclear test site at Semipalatinsk where, from 1949 to 1991, more than 450 nuclear tests were conducted resulting in contamination of large areas of land and harmful consequences for health of more than 1.5 million people.

Since independence, Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev has made campaigning for a global

nuclear disarmament a key staple of the country's foreign policy. In addition to creating, together with Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, the Central Asian Nuclear Weapon Free Zone (CANWFZ), Kazakhstan has also launched an international awareness campaign, The ATOM (Abolish Testing. Our Mission) Project whose online petition for the early entry into force of CTBT has already been signed by more than 300,000 people in more than 100 countries around the world.

ECONOMY

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 22, 2017

Nurly Zhol programme created 100,000 jobs in 2016

By Zhaniya Urankayeva

ASTANA – More than 100,000 jobs were created as part of the Nurly Zhol programme in 2016, said Minister of National Economy Timur Suleimenov at a Feb. 14 governmental meeting. The programme is designed to spur economic growth, particularly in the construction in transport, housing and social sectors.

“At the end of the year, 469.6 billion tenge (US\$1.46 billion) or 99 percent were disbursed on target transfers. The incomplete budgeting was caused due to savings on public procurement,” said Suleimenov.

Last year, 151.3 billion tenge



Timur Suleimenov

(US\$471 million) was allocated for the road sector development with full disbursement of funds. The construction and road works were completed on 611 kilometres of roads. As a result, the Astana – Temirtau, Almaty – Kapshagai and Astana – Petropavlovsk roads were opened. This year, the work in this direction will be continued,” the minister said.

Engineering and communication infrastructure were provided for housing projects in all regions of the country and 2,208 kilometres of engineering networks were constructed. The supply of infrastructure to the business projects as part of the Business Road Map programme 2020 is also underway.

“The development of infrastructure in the field of education is of special attention. The total elimination of emergency schools and three-shift learning will be provided by 2018. Currently, 52 objects including 35 schools and 17 kindergartens were opened,” he said.

In 2016, 739 billion tenge (US\$2.3 billion) was allocated for the implementation of the Nurly Zhol programme. As a result, it has had a positive impact on economic growth and GDP growth amounted to 1 percent.

In 2017, 387 billion tenge (US\$1.2 billion) was allocated for the initiative to ensure economic growth with an expected contribution to GDP growth of 0.5 percent.

ECONOMY NEWS IN BRIEF

Pension assets of Kazakh citizens may be managed by private and foreign companies, according to National Bank Chief Daniyar Akishev, reported khabar.kz. He noted proposals were submitted to the government for consideration. Single Accumulative Pension Fund (SAPF) management, established in 2013, will undergo certain changes. Previously, pension assets were managed by private pension funds and pension asset management companies. Due to negative returns, however, assets were gradually transferred to SAPF. Meanwhile, experts say the decision to transfer pension asset management to private companies is the best option.

All Kazakh banks will undergo stress tests until the end of 2017 to determine the range of exogenous driver scenarios that may break the bank, according to khabar.kz. Experts are presently discussing how the test results would be used. An independent international financial institution was reported to conduct stress tests of the country's second-tier banks. Earlier plans were to carry out stress tests of second-tier banks until the end of 2016. Kazakhstan, with a population of over 17.7 million, has 34 second-level banks. According to 2016 results, Halyk Bank of Kazakhstan has the largest volume of assets, followed by Qazkom and Tsesna Bank.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has published a final statement following the official visit to Kazakhstan, reported khabar.kz. According to IMF experts, measures were taken by Kazakh authorities contribute to the country's economic recovery. Last year, the growth rate showed a 1-percent positive trend caused by increased oil production and support measures under the Nurly Zhol programme. National Bank actions have stabilised markets and restored confidence in the national currency, IMF experts believe. The growth is expected to continue, recovering in both 2017 and the medium term. Economic growth rate is supposed to reach 2.5 percent in the current year and GDP growth, excluding oil, to reach 4 percent by 2021.

Sales of state-owned property brought 37 billion tenge (US\$115.4 million) to the national budget, or 16 percent less than the previous year, reported ranking.kz. The second wave of privatisation, launched in 2014, raised 44 billion tenge (US\$137.24 million) that year and 44.3 billion tenge (US\$138.12 million) in 2015. Activity in sales of state assets, however, is expected to increase dramatically in the coming years. According to the targets set for the Kazakh government in the President's address to the nation, reduction of the state's share in the economy should give a new impetus to economic growth up to 15 percent of the GDP.

Minister of National Economy Timur Suleimenov presented January's economic results, reported abctv.kz. Kazakhstan's economy is expected to grow by 2.5 percent. The short-term economic indicator of six basic industries also showed a fairly steady growth at 3.8 percent in the context of sectors: manufacturing (4.9 percent), agriculture (1 percent), construction (7.1 percent), trade (8 percent) and transport (3.5 percent). The volume of retail trade in January increased 3.5 percent totalling 557.4 billion tenge (US\$1.74 billion). The volume of wholesale trade amounted to 1.122 trillion tenge (US\$3.5 billion), or 99.2 percent against the same period in 2016. Investment growth in fixed assets was another positive factor of the previous month.

Between October and December 2016, the number of employees amounted to 6.4 million, or 74.6 percent of the total employable population in the economy, reported dknews.kz. The volume of self-employed people is 2.2 million or 25.4 percent, according to the National Economy Ministry statistics committee. According to statistics, different areas of Kazakhstan's economy employed 8.5 million people or 66.6 percent of the population aged 15 years and older. Of these, 52 percent (4.4 million) were men and 48 percent (4.1 million) were women.

National Bank to continue floating exchange rate, other inflation control measures in 2017

By Mikhail Maksimov

ASTANA – In 2017, the National Bank of Kazakhstan will continue its policy of a free floating exchange rate, its strengthening of the base rate on the real sector of economy and will retain principles of inflation targeting, Daniyar Akishev, chair of Kazakhstan's National Bank, announced recently.

“Last year was a difficult one. It was the first year after high turbulence across the financial landscape. Therefore, the bank had a number of difficult tasks which needed resolving in a short period of time. First of

all, reducing inflation. In our view, it is not simply a tribute to theory that a low inflation is an important macro economic index. It is indeed the main figure of social well-being of citizens that lies on the base of efficient activity of the National Bank and its monetary policy,” Akishev noted.

Stabilisation of inflation expectations is another important aspect, according to him. Polls conducted by specialised companies demonstrate a significant reduction of a share for those who expect high growth of prices. The chairman assured that the impact of transferring a change in the currency exchange rate into

domestic prices has been overcome. “Now we will have to work further within standard instruments of monetary policy,” the head of the bank said.

The third important aspect is the real impact of the base rate on the currency market. All rates in the currency market depend on the National Bank's base rate.

“Liquidity granting or withdrawal by the National Bank automatically takes place in any amounts a financial market participant can be eligible for. This means that with the National Bank's involvement in the market, price for tenge

forms, which then transforms into the cost of credit resources for a real sector of the economy,” Akishev continued.

“Basic areas of monetary policy for year 2017,” published in December of 2016, contain the basic priorities of the National Bank.

According to the head of the bank, maintaining the regime of a free floating exchange rate is the first priority while following principles of inflation targeting and keeping inflation at 6-8 percent corridor is the next priority.

Increasing the impact of the base rate via the credit channel on

the real sector of economy is the bank's third priority.

Akishev stressed that the National Bank will continue operations on the currency market and most of the tasks will be fulfilled in case of favourable situations on external markets.

“The main focus will be on continuing information campaigns on openness, awareness-raising activities on all areas and comprehensive expanding published information and statistics. Various forms of information delivery depending on the audience, both for wide public and experts, investment banks and analysts will be elaborated,” he said.

Bank mergers: expert opinion and outlook for 2017

By Dmitry Lee

ASTANA – Since the fall, the country's major banks have continued to announce their intentions to merge. The latest, regarding Tsesna Bank's plan to buy out Bank CentreCredit shares, is a move that has spurred numerous controversies and discussions.

Rumours of a possible merger between Qazkom and Halyk Bank broke off in November and KazInvestBank lost its license a month later. In January, Qazkom representatives admitted they were engaged in talks about a possible merger with Halyk Bank, followed by the move by Tsesna Bank to buy out Bank CentreCredit's shares. At the same time, President Nursultan Nazarbayev publicly encouraged the National Bank to use rigid

means towards weaker banks in times of survival.

“Only four banks hold 80 percent of bank assets in the country. [This comes] in a world struggling with crisis – major corporations merge, such as Exxon and Mobil, Shell and British Gas, for instance. The shareholders put up their own money if they want to save the banks. There is no alternative way to save them. The economy doesn't need them; hence, they do not have the right to live,” said the head of state, encouraging the National Bank to bold moves.

“When assessing the financial stability of banks, one of the most important indicators is the debt to equity ratio (financial leverage D/E),” economist Timur Abilkasymov told tengrinews.kz. “The higher the ratio, the lower the financial stability.

A very low index indicates a bank's slow business activity.”

He added as of Jan. 1, the following banks had high financial leverage: ATF Bank (16), Bank CentreCredit (12.8), Tsesna Bank (11.6), RBK (11.4), Qazaq Banki (10.5), Sberbank (10.2), the Bank of Astana (10.2), AziyaKredit Bank (10) and VTB Kazakhstan (9.8).

Abilkasymov believes that to improve the stability of the financial data, banks must increase equity and reduce the share of loans overdue more than 90 days to below 10 percent. According to the National Bank of Kazakhstan, VTB Kazakhstan has 16.1 percent of non-performing assets, ATF Bank (12.1), Sberbank (9.2), Bank CentreCredit (8.9), Kaspi Bank (8.7), Halyk Bank (8.6), AziyaKredit Bank (8.3), Eurasian Bank (7.9), ForteBank (7.5), Qazkom

(6.3), Tsesna Bank (4.2), RBK (4.2), Bank of Astana (4.03) and Qazaq Banki (2.8). In general, for the year the country's banks have improved the performance of the share of loans overdue more than 90 days.

Abilkasymov believes the mergers are a necessity for Kazakhstan's banks and for economic stability.

Astana Best Consulting Group economist Arman Baiganov feels the recent situation with the national currency, namely the devaluation and the free-floating policy, has left many banks in a difficult situation.

Smaller banks are now coerced into merging, he added, as they find it difficult to vie with larger local competitors, not to mention Russian banks, which are in better shape thanks to the country's slightly improved economic situation.

Tsesna Capital Chairperson of the

Board Samat Balkenov thinks these mergers might leave foreign banks in troubled positions, as their market share would be significantly less and the competition for each customer will be tougher.

“Based on the statistics from the National Bank, as of Jan. 1 there are six second-tier banks out of 33 in total with the share of loans and payments overdue more than 15 percent – people need to pay attention to them in the first place. In this case, of the six banks four have foreign participation – Zaman-Bank (44.9 percent), National Bank of Pakistan in Kazakhstan (33.1 percent), VTB Bank Kazakhstan (22.7 percent) and Sberbank (17.9 percent),” he said.

BRB Invest Director Galim Khunsainov earlier told the media that at the present time, Kazakhstan simply doesn't have the market for 30 banks.

Accounts Committee not content with implementation of People's IPO programme

Staff Report

ASTANA – The Accounts Committee for control over execution of the national budget audited the Samruk Kazyna Sovereign Wealth Fund and identified a number of violations related to the budget programme's target indicators. The findings were reported by accounts committee member Aigul Mukhametkarim at a meeting in Astana early in February.

The so-called People's Initial Public Offering (IPO), with lead times between 2011 and 2015, was approved by government resolution in 2011. The main purpose was to help the fund's subsidiaries and affiliated companies go public. The programme was to offer Kazakh citizens the opportunity to purchase shares of leading domestic firms, which in return can be a positive situation for the country's securities market.

“In the fourth quarter of 2014, due to lack of preparation for placement of stocks on the market the target indicators of the programme were changed and the implementation duration was prolonged until 2022. The entire programme has become unprofitable; no central

executive authority has checked the effectiveness of its implementation. As a result, the target indicators set in the framework of the People's IPO programme have not been fully achieved,” said Mukhametkarim.

Consulting service expenses related to placing shares on the stock market and the awareness-raising campaign in 2011-2015 amounted to 2.2 billion tenge (US\$6.8 million). Mukhametkarim noted the results of consulting services cannot be used in implementing the next phase of activities scheduled for 2018 as they will no longer be relevant.

The main purpose of the programme, giving access to common citizens to owning shares of the republic's largest companies, has not yet been fully achieved. Most of the shareholders are eager to sell stocks rather than buy new shares. Since the shares were initially placed on the securities market, the number of private shareholders in KazTransOil and KEGOC has decreased.

Samruk Kazyna acting managing director of finance and operations Yernar Zhanadil does not agree with the audit committee's assessment.

“The effectiveness of the compa-

nies going public cannot be assessed in strict terms of planning. This pro-

cess is very sensitive to even the slightest fluctuations in the market

and expectations of the investors towards regulatory requirements. Therefore, the government resolution highlighted the list of candidate companies going public and terms of placement of shares on the stock market are indicative,” he said.

The results of the audit will be submitted to the government and head of state in May.

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Mobile device versions are available in AppStore and PlayMarket. Also available in Windows and as a web version.

You can run an application webpage by following the link: <http://bit.ly/28PkZza>

BUSINESS

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 22, 2017

BUSINESS NEWS IN BRIEF

Leroy Merlin, the French network of construction hypermarkets, is seeking to offer long-term cooperation to Kazakh suppliers, according to kapital.kz. The retailer held a business forum Feb. 16 in Almaty to meet local producers ready to cooperate with the company. The concept involves producing and selling goods manufactured in Kazakhstan. Sixty percent of products offered by the hypermarket will be produced by local companies, ensuring the development of mini-production in Almaty and Almaty region. The first hypermarket is expected to open in the city in 2018. Leroy Merlin is a French-headquartered home improvement and gardening retailer serving countries in Europe, Russia, Asia, South America and Africa. The company was founded in 1923 and currently ranks first in Europe in terms of turnover.

Damu Entrepreneurship Development Fund funded more than 10,000 businesses during the last year, reported kapital.kz. According to the concessional financing programme, 7,053 projects worth 336 billion tenge (US\$1.05 billion) were supported through second-tier banks. Overall, Damu Fund supported 10,186 projects worth 650 billion tenge (US\$2.03 billion) in 2016 and 2,029 projects worth 282 billion tenge (US\$882.6 million) received subsidised loans. Loan guarantees were granted for 1,104 projects worth 32 billion tenge (US\$100.16 million) and 12 projects were able to open franchises under the programme with a loan amount totalling 516 million tenge (US\$1.61 million). Franchises were opened in areas such as professional, scientific and technical activities, wholesale and retail trade, motor vehicle and motorcycle repair and education.

A processing plant to decontaminate and recycle old cars will be built on the territory of Saryarka special economic zone in Karaganda, reported kazinform.kz. The announcement was made at a meeting of the council for improving the investment climate in the region, where the participants signed two memoranda to implement the investment projects, according to the governor's press service. Construction will start in March, creating approximately 70 new jobs, and the project cost is 3.4 billion tenge (US\$10.64 million). The Kazakh government launched a pilot programme for recycling old cars in November and the plant will be the first in the country.

Toll roads will bring 30 billion tenge (US\$93.9 million) annually to the Kazakh national budget, according to Vice Minister for Investment and Development Roman Sklyar, reported inform.kz. "By 2020, there are plans to gradually introduce the toll collection system on 6,000 kilometres of roads, including 700 kilometres in 2017," he said. The toll system will be introduced on sections of the Astana-Temirtau and Almaty-Kapshagay highways this year at national budget expense, he added, and operate on the Almaty-Khorgos road using a loan from the World Bank. The system is expected to be launched in test mode in November.

The Samruk Kazyna Sovereign Wealth Fund concluded 610 new long-term contracts with Kazakh manufacturers in 2016, reported abctv.kz. There are presently more than 1,900 agreements totalling 1.7 trillion tenge (US\$5.32 billion), according to the fund's press service. Long-term contracts are an effective tool to support Kazakh business, providing suppliers with guaranteed orders from national companies for 10 years and allowing them to plan production and business processes in the long term. In total, national companies and businesses signed 91,000 contracts in 2016. Entrepreneurs from Almaty and Astana hold the major share of contracts with Samruk Kazyna. Last year, suppliers in these cities concluded more than 18,600 and 13,200 agreements exceeding 686.4 billion tenge (US\$2.15 billion) and 1.8 trillion tenge (US\$5.63 billion), respectively.

Kaznex Invest reveals top four sectors for international investors

By Dana Omirgazy

ASTANA – Kaznex Invest national export and investment agency and leading global strategic management consulting firm McKinsey & Company have determined the four most attractive sectors for foreign investors in short and medium terms, said Kaznex Invest Chairperson Borisbiy Zhangurazov on his Facebook page Feb. 10. The areas are food manufacturing, the chemical industry, machinery and retail trade.

"Over the past few years, Kazakhstan's economy has been growing at a record pace leaving behind the countries of Central Asia, Russia and the European Union, slightly lagging behind only China," noted the Kaznex Invest report.

According to the release, more than 20 million hectares were devoted to agricultural crops in 2015. Approximately 50 varieties of crops grow in Kazakhstan.

The same year, Kazakh consumption of agricultural and food products totalled in excess of \$35 billion. On average, consumption grew at an annual rate of more than 5 percent (2010-2015) with imports remaining high.

The main food products consumed by Kazakhstan's population are dairy products, flour and cereals, meat products, fresh and processed fruit and vegetables, fats and oils. Analysts note only 25 percent of agricultural products grown in Kazakhstan undergo further processing; the majority of processed foods are imported.

The nation's location between some of the largest importers of agricultural and food products, like Russia and China, makes the country more attractive for investors. Foreign direct investments in the agriculture and food industry have grown significantly, totalling more than \$1.3 billion during the past five years.



The chemical industry was also reported to be attractive for foreign investors due to a rich resource base and proximity to large growth markets, particularly China, Russia, Turkey and Iran.

"Access to low-cost feedstock with a high content of ethane (10 percent) and high demand for petrochemical products in neighbouring countries make investments in this segment attractive. In addition, Kazakhstan is one of the key sources of hydrocarbons to the world economy, ranking 16th in the world by production volume in 2015," outlined the report.

The Kazakh mining sector is a demand driver for bulk and specialty chemical production, said analysts. According to expert projections, given the positive global outlook for the mining industry, the demand for industrial chemicals will increase. Meanwhile, the growth dynamics of foreign direct investments in chemicals indicates the sector's increased attractiveness for foreign investments.

Kaznex Invest and McKinsey analysts believe machinery to be another promising Kazakh sector. In 2015, market size amounted to \$14.7 billion, although the sharp decline in 2014 and 2015 was largely due to the devaluation of the national currency.

"There is a considerable potential for import substitution in the machinery market, where import share has remained consistently high (80-85 percent) in the last five years," noted the release.

Specific machinery products, such as agricultural tractors, have also shown significant growth in line with the entire Kazakh machinery market. In 2015, the share of foreign direct investments in the nation's machinery sector against total machinery sector production amounted to 10 percent, note analysts. In recent years, more than 30 international investors from the USA, France, China, South Korea and other countries have invested more than \$1.5 billion in Kazakh machinery sector projects.

The fourth most important sector of Kazakhstan's economy is trade. Its share in the country's GVA (Gross Value Added) is growing steadily, accounting for 18 percent in 2015.

"The young and employed population of Kazakhstan creates a buoyant demand for modern trade formats in all product categories," said the release.

Kazakhstan's trade sector consistently attracts foreign direct investments. During the last five years, international investors have invested more than \$12 billion in the area.

Kaznex Invest is Kazakhstan's investment promotion agency and unified coordination centre for developing special economic zones. It supports foreign companies and private investors interested in setting up business in Kazakhstan and serves the existing foreign investors helping them to expand and develop their business.

Forum addresses national gender equality achievements and challenges

Continued from Page A1

"Much depends on SMEs headed by women. Participation of women leaders in social processes have a positive impact on the quality of administrative procedures and increase competitiveness. Women should also take part in the creation of innovative start-ups as one of the drivers of the knowledge-based economy," she added.

Women-owned business is supported through national programmes and agreements between the government and international development institutions including the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), World Bank and UN Women.

"A model of gender relations has a significant effect on the stability of the family according to the international practice. The higher level of gender equality leads to greater responsibility, parity and fulfilment of domestic, economic, moral and educational functions by family members," said Abdykalikova.

More than four million families currently reside in Kazakhstan and the nation has conducted systematic work on creating the necessary conditions to strengthen them. The family and gender policy up to 2030 was adopted by a presidential decree.

"The proportion of women totals 27 percent in the Mazhilis (lower house of Parliament), whereas it stood at 10 percent in 2006. According to the World Economic Forum, Kazakhstan took 48th place among 144 countries on women in Parliament in 2016," said the Secretary of State.

There is also a growing tendency of women's involvement in industrial production, the oil, gas and energy sector and innovation and infrastructure development, especially in top management. The share of female employment in the oil and gas industry accounts for 18 percent, the nuclear industry, 22 percent, and the electricity industry, 27 percent. Approximately 340,000, or 30 percent, of the nearly one million people working in heavy industry are women.

EBRD has supported the way the Kazakh government provides equal rights and opportunities for both men and women in the economy and in society at large. According to EBRD's Chief Counsellor for Social Issues Michaela Bergman, the private sector is a great catalyst for promoting economic growth.

"We work with our clients to see how we can increase the number of women in the workforce and then also to increase the number of women in decision-making roles. We worked with the Almaty Bus Company, where we found there were no women because of a regulation that prevents women from



Gulshara Abdykalikova

being bus drivers. We worked with the client and the government to see how we can get a desperate dispensation from that regulation. In Kazakhstan, there are 255 types of jobs that women cannot do because of legislation and some of these legacy laws probably need to be reviewed," Bergman told The Astana Times.

Extensive research shows that diversity in decision-making and risk are good for a company, because differing views result in an approach that is not as uncertain.

"Women provide a different point of view, different approach. Women are a good way of increasing the diversity in decision-making roles and therefore it will be good for businesses to have more women in decision-making roles. We are trying to promote women in non-traditional areas of work, for example in oil or mining and in other areas because they are poorly represented everywhere in the world. We think that working in Kazakhstan, which has a huge sector on this area, will be a very good role for the rest of the world," she said.

EBRD Director in Kazakhstan Janet Heckman said the bank welcomes the Kazakh 2030 concept on gender and family.

"It is a very contemporary document of women's involvement in industrial production, the oil, gas and energy sector and innovation and infrastructure development, especially in top management. The share of female employment in the oil and gas industry accounts for 18 percent, the nuclear industry, 22 percent, and the electricity industry, 27 percent. Approximately 340,000, or 30 percent, of the nearly one million people working in heavy industry are women. EBRD has supported the way the Kazakh government provides equal rights and opportunities for both men and women in the economy and in society at large. According to EBRD's Chief Counsellor for Social Issues Michaela Bergman, the private sector is a great catalyst for promoting economic growth.

Issues on protecting the rights and interests of women entrepreneurs, experience in promoting women in non-traditional sectors, gender aspects in the corporate and private sectors and gender-sensitive planning were also discussed as part of the roundtable meeting.

Kazakhstan takes 42nd place in Heritage Foundation's World 2017 Index of Economic Freedom

Continued from Page A1

The foundation considers economic freedom as the fundamental right of every human to control his or her own labour and property, reporting that "in an economically free society, individuals are free to work, produce, consume and invest in any way they please. In economically free societies, governments allow labour, capital and goods to move freely and refrain from coercion or constraint of liberty beyond the extent necessary to

protect and maintain liberty itself."

Hong Kong, Singapore and New Zealand took the first three places, respectively, and are considered to be nations with the highest economic freedom index. Kazakhstan belongs to the moderately free group of countries along with Japan (40th place), Poland (45th place), Belgium (49th place), Turkey (60th place) and Kuwait (61st place). It has significantly higher positions in comparison with countries such as Belarus (104th place), China (111st place), Russia

(114th place) and Ukraine (166th place).

Experts highlight economic freedom provides more prosperity and its ideals are closely related to human development, healthier societies, cleaner environments, increasing per capita wealth, democracy and eliminating poverty.

The Heritage Foundation has provided the analysis in a clear and user-friendly style for more than 20 years. Offering new resources for users, the think tank gives opportunities for both research and education.

New online store seeks to change Kazakh attitudes towards e-commerce

By Lyazzat Shatayeva

ALMATY – Two young Kazakh entrepreneurs have launched a home appliances and electronics store called Talapai.kz, which they hope will improve the quality of Kazakhstan's e-commerce industry.

"Our main mission is rather grand; it is to develop the intellectual capital of our country. We were concerned that there were very few successful online stores that were entirely designed and implemented in Kazakhstan. All the known e-commerce businesses were created in other CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States)

countries. We wanted to change that. That's the kind of wrong mentality and thinking that has gotten us into this business," Diyar Doskhozhayev, co-founder and CEO, told The Astana Times.

The online store, founded by Doskhozhayev, 29, and his partner Rauan Karabay, 34, offers household appliances, HVAC equipment, laptops, computers, tablets, smart phones, audio and video equipment directly from well-known manufacturers. The company has direct agreements with the manufacturers who provide guarantees on the products. The young team also continuously scrutinizes its range of products and pricing by analyzing the

latest trends in the electronics market and looking at competitors' offers.

They have also established the infrastructure to deliver to all parts of the country, including warehouses in Almaty, Astana, Aktobe, Karaganda and Shymkent. Talapai customers can purchase online, pay cash on delivery or purchase items on loan and instalment payments. And the company offers a customer service centre offering information on every item in the catalogue.

"Our customer is used to seeing, touching and testing the product before buying. On top of that, most of our people have negative associations with on-

line sales. They have had the bad experience of dealing with low quality and the unreliability of online purchases. To change these attitudes, we have introduced the concept of an 'online market'," said Doskhozhayev. "Our customer is our main priority. We want to provide the customers the most accommodating, informed and secure shopping experience possible."

The two entrepreneurs had the idea of an online business in 2012. They both worked for Samsung and had a good understanding of the market. Then the idea seemed a pipe dream. A few years later, the two friends met again and decided it was about time they turned the

idea into a real project. So they not only established the company in Kazakhstan, but are now trying to build on the country's rich history and culture.

"Talapai is a Kazakh word, which can be interpreted as a buzz, stir, boom. In the old times, the Kazakh khans used to give away their belongings to the common people. This would make lots of buzz with crowds of people trying to take home just about anything they managed to grab. There is also a traditional Kazakh bone shooting game called Khan Talapai, which is lots of fun. We find the word suitable to our mission. We're trying to create a good buzz," Doskhozhayev explained.

EDITORIAL & OPINION

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 22, 2017

The importance of dialogue on Syria, however difficult

Ending conflicts is always difficult, pain-staking work. Shattered trust has to be slowly restored before any progress can be made. Space must be allowed for grievances to be aired and overcome. Small building blocks have to be put in place on which the larger platform for peace can be securely laid. Guarantors to ensure the agreement reached will not be breached are often required.

The more savage the conflict and the more parties involved, of course, the greater the challenge. So there should be no surprise that progress towards a deal to end the fighting in Syria has been so hard. It is not just the ferocity of the civil war and its impact on millions of people which make any resolution so difficult. There are also many different groups with different objectives involved in the fighting – who, in turn, are receiving moral and physical support from outside the country's borders.

Syria's nightmare is made much worse because of the involvement in the civil war of extreme terrorist groups. The danger their ambitions cause regionally and globally have added to the urgency to finding a new future for Syria that will allow everyone to work together to counter this threat.

Finding a lasting solution to such a devastating, long-running and complex conflict is going to take time, patience and a huge amount of effort. It will need negotiations to take place at different levels to help overcome both practical difficulties as well as to shape a wider framework for the country's future.

It is against this difficult background that the progress being made in continuing talks in Astana on Syria should be judged. Just the fact that the initial talks last month were the first involving the Syrian Government and armed opposition was an encouraging sign. We saw, too, tangible results with Russia, Iran and Turkey – with the support of the United Nations – agreeing mechanisms to monitor, maintain and strengthen the desperately-needed ceasefire.

Over the last few days, we have seen high-level teams from the three guarantor countries meet in Astana to try to find solutions to the inevitable flash-points and problems that have emerged. They have also worked to find how humanitarian relief can more quickly and securely reach the millions who need it. The involvement of Jordan, which has provided a safe haven for hundreds of thousands of Syrian refugees and is a major voice for moderation and peace in the region, is another important move in the right direction.

The hope is that this progress and the follow-up meeting in Astana of the so called joint operational group scheduled for Feb. 15-16 will create the conditions for the launch of the next round of the full Geneva peace talks. These must be held under the auspices of the UN and must involve a wider range of countries.

There is, of course, a long way to go. No one should be under any illusions of just how difficult it will be to reach a lasting, comprehensive agreement. There are many, many obstacles to be overcome before we see a stable and peaceful future for Syria in which all its people can share – a future which requires the threat from violent extremism to be extinguished. But thanks to what has come to be termed as the Astana process, hope is increasing that this might be possible.

This progress has earned praise for Kazakhstan from commentators. The Times of London went so far as to say that Astana has now "taken an unlikely new role at the centre of a new world order." But this role is not a surprise to Kazakhstan's international partners. It is the product of our country's long-standing commitment to dialogue and peace and the good relations we have forged across the international community.

This has already seen Kazakhstan's mediation help reduce the intensity of the conflict in Ukraine as well as defuse tensions between Russia and Turkey – an essential precondition for finding a peaceful future for Syria. It was a powerful reason, too, for the country's historic election to the UN Security Council. It is why, despite the challenges ahead and the inevitable setbacks, Kazakhstan will need to continue striving for peace and working to heal divisions in Syria and throughout the world. It is a role that has never been more valuable.

Parliamentarism is pillar of democratic state

By Sergey Malikov

Hayk Babukhanyan, chairperson of the Armenian Constitutional Rights Union Party, deputy of the Armenian National Assembly and deputy chairperson of the Commonwealth of Independent States Inter-parliamentary Assembly (CIS IPA) commission for science and education, recently spoke with The Astana Times concerning the Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev's latest initiative of a constitutional reform.

As you are aware, the Kazakh political leadership has plans to introduce amendments to the constitution in order to launch systematic transfer to a model with stronger elements of parliamentarism. President Nursultan Nazarbayev recently made the announcement and the provisional commission has already submitted proposals on the first stage of the necessary public procedures. Considering the legal traditions of the CIS, do you feel this is a timely initiative for Kazakhstan?

I am aware of political development trends in your country and I am interested in them, particularly regarding amendments to the constitution of Kazakhstan, and this is natural since our two countries are members of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and the EAEU (Eurasian Economic Union). I took a close look at the address of Nazarbayev on this significant matter and at the draft law on introducing amendments to the constitution of Kazakhstan. The point of the issue is about redistribution of authorities between branches of the government, which corresponds to the democratic principle of separation of powers. The President is delegating a number of his current powers to the parliament and the government, thus strengthening the parliamentary control and influence of the legislative body on social and political processes in the society.

Speaking about timeliness, it is up to the individual country to decide the very fateful moment to undertake reforms in the governance system to increase its effectiveness. The choice of time for reforms of a state structure depends on trends of social relations development in a country and on challenges faced by a society. Kazakhstan, in 25 years of independence, has achieved remarkable successes in the relations, development of social relations, culture and education; therefore, if Nazarbayev initiated a transfer of a portion of his



Hayk Babukhanyan

powers to the parliament, government, the judiciary and local government at this point in time, then there is a necessity to undertake reforms.

Following the collapse of the USSR, adoption of a presidential form of governance was a common trend among the CIS countries at the early stage of development. Somewhere, this kind of presidential hierarchy was more peremptory, somewhere less; however, a presidential form of governance was the closest one to the legal traditions in the post-Soviet space for newly-independent countries without an experience in parliamentarism, a multiparty system and state governance with divided branches of government. Within the last 25 years, reforms of governance systems towards strengthening the parliamentarism had also been the common trend for the CIS countries; as a result, political systems appeared to be more flexible.

In your opinion, are there any specific features of Armenian parliamentarism which determined the earlier launch of such reforms in comparison to other EAEU states, including Kazakhstan? It is no secret the closest political cooperation takes place within integration associations. Would the transit to a different model bring fluctuations to the uniformity of the union's single economic life?

Armenian parliamentarism was established at the time of the first republic in 1918. However, the peculiarity of Armenian parliamentarism is the fact that Armenian parliamentarians had worked in the parliaments of many European countries, as well as Russia, Turkey and other countries, long before. This was the case during 20th century; the same is now, and consequently the work of Armenian parliamentarians in various countries is surely helping us.

The constitution of Armenia of 1995 provided a strict pyramid of the presidential form of governance. However, after 10 years – in 2005, Armenia conducted a con-

stitutional reform; as a result, part of the presidential powers was delegated to the parliament and government. Those reforms and current processes in Kazakhstan have something in common; at that time, Armenia had become a country with a semi-presidential form of governance. Armenian society had always considered itself as a part of European civilisation with a tradition of freethinking and other democratic institutions. Already in 2015, the need in the promotion of civil liberties and strengthening of parliamentary control led to the need of a new constitutional reform. In addition, it should be noted that the concept of democratic institutions' development within the semi-presidential form of government could create certain situations which would negatively affect the internal political stability of the country. All these things brought us to the constitutional reform, according to which Armenia became a parliamentary republic and now we experience the transition process towards the new form of governance.

As for certain disharmonious interrelations within the EAEU caused by dissimilarities in the forms of governance of the participating states, I think that there are only protocol issues and nothing more. Some distinctions between the state administration systems of the EAEU member countries existed even before our reform. The majority of the states had the presidential form of government, while Armenia – semi-presidential, but these differences did not have any impact on our joint work. Moreover, there are many examples of other integration communities; for instance, the European Union, where countries with various forms of governance work effectively. When it comes to integration, the most important is the desire of our peoples and an efficient policy of all branches of power that is aimed at integration.

What would you recommend to Kazakh partners with regard to future reforms, taking into account the ongoing constitutional transformations in Armenia and the growing parliamentary electoral campaign in accordance with the new system?

Undoubtedly, the enforcement of parliamentarism and political institutions is one of the pillars of a democratic state. Although Armenia is still in the transition period towards the parliamentary model, however, those advantages achieved by the country due to the constitutional reform are already seen. The role of the parliament

in state governance has been significantly increased and this trend is still growing. The role of political parties has been enhanced; civil liberties are more tangible and more affordable for our citizens. Regarding the pace of such reforms, it is necessary to keep in mind the specificity of each country. Therefore, both artificial delays and attempts to outrun the natural course of the society's development are dangerous for this process. Pulling reforms and revolutionary changes too quickly may cause totally reverse effects. Instead of democratic institutions – chaos, instead of effective management – backlash, instead of economic improvement – havoc. It happened already when ultraliberals applied the method of shocking therapy in the post-Soviet space under the orders of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and other western structures. Thus, any reform should be interpreted carefully and unhurriedly. Nevertheless, I think that in this case this advice is not relevant for Kazakhstan, since the whole history of Kazakhstan's political and economic system reforms evidences the accuracy and precision of all steps.

What is the most important area of interparliamentary cooperation between our countries in the context of the reforms?

The cooperation between our legislatures is carried out mainly through the Interparliamentary Assembly of the CIS countries. This is a very important and effective structure for legislation harmonisation in the CIS countries; however, the essential priority area should be both the promotion of bilateral Armenian-Kazakh interparliamentary interrelations and inter-party contacts. Moreover, we have to intensify through our parliaments the mutual relations between different segments of our societies: intellectuals, academia, students, etc. Armenians and Kazakhs are brotherly nations; we have the rich and warm-hearted common history during the USSR period. It was created by our grandparents and parents and the mission of our generation is not only to preserve, but also to pass it to our youth, who did not witness the Soviet Union.

I would like to use this opportunity to thank the President of Kazakhstan for the high level state award I received on the eve of the New Year, as well as to express gratitude to the Kazakh Embassy in Armenia headed by Ambassador Timur Urazaev for active collaboration with the parliamentary structures of Armenia.

KAZAKHSTAN. 25 YEARS OF NUCLEAR RESPONSIBILITY.

From the horrors of 40 years of nuclear weapons testing to today's call to eliminate the threat of nuclear terrorism, Kazakhstan's 25 year journey from Soviet-era survivor to champion of nuclear responsibility is as remarkable as it is inspiring.

On August 29, 1991, President Nursultan Nazarbayev decreed the immediate closure of the Semipalatinsk Nuclear Test Site, after the city and its people suffered more than 450 nuclear tests conducted there by the former Soviet Union. Since then the President has called on the world's leaders to follow Kazakhstan's example as a leader in global nuclear responsibility.

On August 29, 2012, President Nazarbayev put forward another initiative, The ATOM Project (Abolish Testing. Our Mission.), to galvanise global citizens to take resolute action toward a more peaceful future—one that is safe for all.

Honour the memory of victims of nuclear testing in Kazakhstan and elsewhere around the world by joining us in our quest for a nuclear weapons free world!

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OPINIONS

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 22, 2017

A continent of hope

By António Guterres

Far too often, the world views Africa through the prism of problems. When I look to Africa, I see a continent of hope, promise and vast potential.

I am committed to building on those strengths and establishing a higher platform of cooperation between the United Nations and the leaders and people of Africa. This is essential to advancing inclusive and sustainable development and deepening cooperation for peace and security.

That is the message I carried to the recent African Union Summit in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia – my first major mission as United Nations Secretary-General.

Above all, I came in a spirit of profound solidarity and respect. I



am convinced that the world has much to gain from African wisdom, ideas and solutions.

I also brought with me a deep sense of gratitude. Africa provides the majority of United Nations peacekeepers around the world. African nations are among the world's largest and most generous hosts of refugees. Africa includes some of the world's fastest growing economies.

The recent resolution of the political crisis in the Gambia once again demonstrated the power of African leadership and unity to overcome governance challenges and uphold democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

I left the Summit more convinced than ever that all of humanity will benefit by listening, learning and working with the people of Africa.

We have the plans in place to build a better future. The international community has entered the second year of implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, an all-out effort to tackle global poverty, inequality, instability and injustice. Africa has adopted its own complementary and ambitious plan: Agenda 2063.

For the people of Africa to fully

benefit from these important efforts, these two agendas need to be strategically aligned.

It starts with prevention. Our world needs to move from managing crises to preventing them in the first place. We need to break the cycle of responding too late and too little.

Most of today's conflicts are internal, triggered by competition for power and resources, inequality, marginalisation and sectarian divides. Often, they are inflamed by violent extremism or provide the fuel for it.

The United Nations is committed to working hand-in-hand with partners wherever conflict or the threat of conflict endangers stability and well-being.

But prevention goes far beyond focusing solely on conflict. The

best means of prevention and the surest path to durable peace is inclusive and sustainable development.

We can speed progress by doing more to provide opportunities and hope to young people. More than three out of five Africans are under 35 years of age. Making the most of this tremendous asset means more investment in education, training, decent work, and engaging young people in shaping their future.

We must also do our utmost to empower women so they can play a full role in sustainable development and sustainable peace. I am pleased that the African Union has consistently placed a special focus on gender equality and women's empowerment.

I have seen it again and again:

When we empower women, we empower the world.

I travelled to Africa as a partner, friend and committed advocate for changing the narrative about this diverse and vital continent. Crises represent at best a partial view. But from a higher platform of cooperation, we can see the whole picture – one that spotlights the enormous potential and remarkable success stories in every corner of the African continent.

With that perspective, I have no doubt we can win the battle for sustainable and inclusive development which are also the best weapons to prevent conflict and suffering, allowing Africa to shine even more vibrantly and inspire the world.

The author Secretary-General of the United Nations.

Constitutional reforms should recognise important role of political parties

By Riccardo Pelizzo

One of the giants of political science, Maurice Duverger, once observed that knowing political parties was more important than knowing a constitution to understand politics.

This observation was, to some extent, due to the fact that most of the Western European constitutions that Duverger had in mind paid little to no attention to political parties. The Italian Constitution, in 1948, was the first Western European Constitution to recognise the role that political parties play in a political system. Article 49 of the Italian Constitution established that "All citizens have the right to freely associate in parties to contribute to the democratic processes through which determine national policy."

In 1949, Article 21 of the German Basic Law also recognised the importance of political parties for the proper functioning of a political system. But in addition to recognising parties' role, as the Italian Constitution had already



done, it established more precise provisions with regard to the parties' internal functioning and organisation, to their relationship with other parties, to their commitment to democracy and national integrity, and to the transparency of their finance.

While Article 49 of the Italian Constitution and Article 21 of the German Basic Law were very innovative and, in some respects, revolutionary when they were introduced, most democratic constitutions now understand

that properly functioning systems need political parties and that political parties' role in democratic life needs to be secured by proper constitutional dispositions.

For example, Article 5 of the Constitution of Benin disposes that parties contribute to the expression of suffrage and that they must respect the principles of national sovereignty, democracy, territorial integrity and the secular nature of the state.

Similar provisions can be found in Article 13 of the Constitution of Burkina Faso, in Articles 75, 76, 77 and 78 of the Constitution of Burundi, in Article 3 of the Constitution of Cameroon, in Articles 13 and 21 of the Constitution of the Central African Republic, in Article 57 of the Constitution of Cape Verde, in Article 4 of the Constitution of Chad, Article 6 of the Constitution of Comoros, in Articles 51, 52, 53, 54 and 55 of the Constitution of the Republic of Congo, Articles 6, 7 and 8 of the Constitution of the Democratic Republic of Congo, Article 6 of the Constitution of Djibouti,

Article 9.1 of the Constitution of Equatorial Guinea, Articles 1.13 and 6 of the Constitution of Gabon, Articles 25.1 and 60.2.b of the Constitution of the Gambia, Articles 55 and 6 of the Constitution of Ghana and so on.

Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev, recently announced that after serving the country so well for 21 years, the Constitution needs to be revised to serve Kazakhstan well for many years to come. Two of the most commonly discussed changes concern the delegation of power to local authorities and a strengthening of the Parliament. These measures are important because decentralisation and a stronger Parliament can improve the representativeness, responsiveness and accountability of the Kazakh political system – thus improving the quality of Kazakh democracy and securing its long-term sustainability.

Yet, constitutional reformers also need to include some dispositions to provide political parties with proper constitutional recog-

nitition. These dispositions need to acknowledge the simple fact that political parties are already important in Kazakhstan. The political life of Kazakhstan is already influenced and shaped, to a considerable extent, by the presence of political parties. Hence, the constitutional revisions need to codify into a formal document, the Constitution, what is already an established practice and in order to do so the Constitution will have to go beyond the existing dispositions concerning political parties.

The 1995 Constitution speaks of political parties only in three articles. Article 5.4 mandates that foreign parties cannot operate in Kazakhstan and that Kazakh parties cannot receive financial support from foreign sources. Article 23.2 specifies that members of the military, of national security and the judiciary cannot join political parties, while article 44.3 establishes that the President appoint a Prime Minister after a consultation with political parties.

Important as these dispositions

may be, they fail to acknowledge the real contribution of political parties to the political life of Kazakhstan. Political parties in Kazakhstan participate in the political life of the country, they contribute to the dissemination of political information, they contribute to the political education of the population, they are instrumental in the formation and in the expression of the political will, and they also participate in the orientation of the state. Political parties in Kazakhstan already perform these tasks and constitutional amendments need to be designed and introduced to acknowledge their important contribution.

With these kinds of changes and amendments, the new Constitution will better reflect the political life of the country and will be better equipped to serve Kazakhstan well into the future.

The author is Associate Professor and Vice Dean for Academic Affairs at Nazarbayev University

Marathon 2010: Kazakh diplomat's book reflects on OSCE chairmanship experience

By Galiaskar Seitghan

ASTANA – Last month the Almaty-based Institute of World Economics and Politics presented a new book by Talgat Zhumagulov, a Kazakh diplomat, which describes the activities of the nation's foreign service during the historic chairmanship of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) in 2010.

According to a description by the publisher, "the modern history of Kazakhstan is still waiting for its historian but the evidence of direct participants of the events is of interest already today."

Having read the 320-pages volume titled "Marathon 2010", The Astana Times decided to approach the author and ask him a few questions about the fruit of his effort.

How was the idea of "Marathon 2010" conceived?

The idea of writing a book came up in the early days of January 2011, right after the completion of the chairmanship. The book's core content emerged during the subsequent year based on fresh memories and intensive interviews with colleagues. Great encouragement came from Kairat Abdrakhmanov (then Ambassador in Vienna, now Kazakhstan's Foreign Minister). I guess, if the book were started today, it would be very difficult to retrieve many valuable details from anyone's memory. However, only years later it became possible to pre-



Talgat Zhumagulov

pare the whole material for publication.

Speaker of the Senate Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, who stayed at the forefront of preparation and execution of the chairmanship, in his foreword stressed Kazakhstan's commitment to the OSCE and the importance of further in-depth study of the Organization's ever-evolving phenomenon.

"The legacy of the Astana Summit and Kazakhstan's chairmanship may become a distinct subject of a comprehensive analysis in academic and diplomatic circles," he said.

I hope "Marathon 2010" will be a part of this subject.

What in your view is the main legacy of Kazakhstan's OSCE chairmanship for both the country and the organisation?

First of all, the chairmanship work showed that Europe matters greatly for Kazakhstan, especially in terms of security, devel-

opment and values. The years of nationwide preparation and carrying out of the chairmanship had strengthened the Europe-oriented political involvement of the Kazakh society.

Secondly, according to many experts, Kazakhstan succeeded in drawing Europe's considerable attention to Central Asia.

Thirdly, the management of such a large and complex organisation had enormously strengthened Kazakhstan's diplomatic capacity. It was a great school for foreign affairs professionals at all levels.

I think the organisation itself had experienced a large ascent during the Kazakh leadership. At the very outset President Nursultan Nazarbayev made it clear that Kazakhstan would put forward an ambitious agenda and revitalise all the areas of OSCE's work. The President's swift actions during the political crisis in Kyrgyzstan, the chairmanship's comprehensive and all-engaging dialogue on European security, the reinvigorated negotiating formats on protracted conflicts, promotion of values of tolerance and non-discrimination and many other activities got strong support and high appreciation from participating states.

And yes, the first OSCE Summit in the 21st century, with the adoption of the very substantial and far-reaching Astana Commemorative Declaration "Towards a Security Community," is the most valuable legacy. It incorporates huge multilateral

diplomatic and expert work and is still to be assessed adequately.

What role do you see for the OSCE now and in future?

As I see it, the OSCE has two unique features. First, it is the only multilateral platform for dialogue on the most pressing security issues in Europe. Second, it provides practical toolkits for conflict prevention, management and resolution, all of which proved to be relevant in the Balkans, Georgia, Nagorno-Karabakh, Transnistria, and recently in eastern Ukraine.

These two features define the OSCE's indispensability today and for years to come.

Do you get the sense that the Spirit of Astana, coming from the OSCE summit and the Astana Declaration, are still relevant for the body?

Kazakhstan's idea of the OSCE Summit in 2010 was gigantic at first sight, but its substantive basis mainly derived from the OSCE's lessons and insights from previous chairmanships, specifically the Finnish and the Greek.

We didn't say we would invent a bicycle. We said, "we are starting a 'Corfu Process'," (named after the Greek island where its first meeting took place and set forth in the 2009 OSCE Athens Declaration on security dialogue). So, continuity is crucial to this organisation.

Kazakhstan swept everybody into a tough yearlong series of intensive all-encompassing mul-

tilateral negotiations and innumerable bilateral talks with each of the 56 members. Thus the "Spirit of Astana" is a spirit of the OSCE's commonness, which for the first time was reflected in the notion of the "Trans-Atlantic and Eurasian Security Community" of the Summit Declaration.

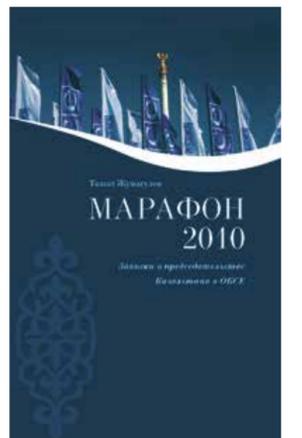
It seems to me that the Astana Declaration was significantly ahead of its time. By today the participating states have not even begun proper implementation of this Summit level document. Yet it contains specific instructions and unique commitments.

How can people get hold of your book? Do you foresee a translation into English?

The book was supported and published by the Institute of World Economics and Politics (IWEP) under the Foundation of the First President of the Republic of Kazakhstan – Leader of the Nation. The IWEP is the only place to purchase the book thus far. My understanding is that there are some complexities in promoting it to the bookstores. I hope the issue will be resolved soon.

An English translation is an excellent idea. I think it is quite feasible and necessary work to do. The OSCE stories of 2010 can be very useful for future chairmanships, participating states' diplomats and all those who study the issues of international security.

The name of the book hints at your hobby of running mara-



thons. What does it give you? Do you see marathon running gaining in popularity in Kazakhstan?

The word "marathon" was used repeatedly by OSCE diplomats in Vienna as a description of the Astana Summit preparation process. In a way, this was an endurance race for many people involved. I thought it would be an interesting title for the book.

As for the athletic marathon, it has gained a huge popularity in Kazakhstan in recent years. The cities of Almaty and Astana host their own 42.2-kilometre races annually. In terms of organisation, the Kazakh mass marathon events are no less efficient and comfortable as compared to the world's major city races. And in terms of the beauty of running routes they certainly have no rivals.

EURASIA&WORLD

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 22, 2017

Day of gratitude – a celebration of Kazakhstan’s multiethnic society

By Dmitry Lee

ASTANA – The Day of Gratitude was celebrated for the first time last year. President Nursultan Nazarbayev established the holiday for people of different ethnic groups living in Kazakhstan to rejoice and celebrate their co-existence as one whole nation.

“Some 800,000 Germans, 102,000 Polish, 550,000 of ethnic groups from the Caucasus and about 100,000 Korean families from the Far East arrived in the Kazakh steppes,” said Nazarbayev during the 22nd session of the Assembly of People of Kazakhstan (APK) in April 2016.

“They were unloaded from cattle wagons, where livestock had been transported, in the open steppe and villages with nothing but small bags and sacks in their hands. Only Kazakhs were living in the steppes back then and only they could accept these newly-arrived people. Kazakh families, themselves living in dire conditions after the [second world] war, accepted these people in their adobe-built houses. I am not telling this because I learned it from some history book; our family, living in a small two-bedroom adobe-built house of 10 square metres each, sheltered a family with three children.”

The Day of Gratitude is celebrated March 1 – the day APK was established in 1995. Konstantin Kim, Korean Ethno-Cultural Association (ECA) Press Secretary and Chief Editor of “Koryo Ilbo,”



a newspaper about the local Korean community in Kazakhstan, talked about the significance in an exclusive interview with The Astana Times.

“However, as for the Korean ECA, back in 2012 upon the Ko-

rean ECA’s initiative in the town of Usttobe [in the Almaty region], we erected a memorial as a gesture of appreciation and gratitude on behalf of all the deported nations,” he Kim.

“The President said we must

thank one another – our colleagues and neighbours – and appreciate being able to live in the multi-ethnic, bonded environment. But as for us, the deported nations, we must thank Kazakhs for accepting our ancestors on their land, for

sharing their houses and for helping us survive in the harsh times. Today, all the conditions for all the nations living in Kazakhstan have been created for them to thrive and live in. Mind you, out of 130 ethnic groups more than 60 were de-

ported; this gratitude is the gesture of thanks to the Kazakh nation as a whole,” he added.

The ECA holds events at the Usttobe memorial every year.

“We often talk to the youth – arrange meetings between the younger and older generations. The veterans speak about what this hospitality meant for them; they explain to the younger generations why this day is so important today, what the Kazakhs have done to help people survive, how we, together, have been building the independent state and that this is our shared history, so the youth would feel the importance of this history and would contribute to the development of the future Kazakhstan,” said Kim.

A similar memorial was built in Uralsk in 2012, he noted.

“It was also erected at the initiative of the Korean ECA. The Korean association has felt this duty before as well and to demonstrate this gratitude erected these memorials for the next generations to remember our history,” he said.

“Certainly, there is no way we could pay Kazakhs back what they have done for all nations that have been forced to relocate; there isn’t enough money or treasures in the world. Nonetheless, we must remember this token of life and praise it; to stay united, to preserve peace, as that’s what is making us continue thriving in our country. It is a good thing we now have this holiday. It is a symbol of friendship and it’s a true national holiday,” he added.

Spanish ambassador praises relationship on 25th anniversary of bilateral ties

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – Spanish Ambassador to Kazakhstan Pedro Jose Sanz Serrano praised the relationship between Kazakhstan and Spain Feb. 11 on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of bilateral relations.

“We have had many visits and both embassies, Kazakhstan’s in Madrid and Spain’s in Astana, have been always active, having good relations with authorities,” said the ambassador. “In 2009, our states signed a strategic relationship document, which is a kind of privilege, because we don’t have such documents signed with all countries. I could name it a milestone in the bilateral relationship. In 2010, Spain supported Kazakh-



Pedro Jose Sanz Serrano

stan’s chairmanship in the OSCE.” He also addressed ongoing efforts to increase bilateral trade.

“In 1996, total trade turnover between Spain and Kazakhstan amounted to eight million euros. We reached the peak in 2013 with

297 million euros worth of Spanish exports to Kazakhstan and 1.6 billion euros in Kazakh exports to Spain. Later, we didn’t reach such numbers. In 2015, we had almost 1.2 billion euros in trade turnover from both sides. Last year, the number decreased even more, reaching only 682 million. The decrease is probably connected with currency devaluation,” he said.

“There are many different sectors in which our countries cooperate. Spain imports different raw materials, including oil and metals from Kazakhstan. Kazakhstan imports clothes, construction materials, machinery and spare parts for the machinery. For example, Talgo railroad cars and Airbus planes,” the ambassador said.

“Of course, this isn’t enough. Much more should be done. I think that we should have more business. For instance, we could have more Spanish goods represented in local supermarkets,” he added.

The ambassador also emphasised that participation in EXPO 2017 is considered a top priority for him this year. He said, “We aspire to have a great pavilion there, much visited to promote our technologies and cultural wealth among people of Kazakhstan,” he said. “This year, Spain’s participation in the Expo will become one of the milestones of our relationship.”

The Spanish ambassador also noted that Madrid has supported

Kazakhstan’s membership on the UN Security Council from the beginning. He also said bilateral cultural exchange is an important part of the relationship.

“Cultural exchange between the states is another of our priorities. We try to promote that with our possibilities, supporting the new Romance Studies Centre in Al Farabi [Kazakh National] University in Almaty. I found that really many people in Kazakhstan want to study Spanish. Especially, young people. The embassy is cooperating with Abylai Khan [Kazakh University of International Relations and World Languages] and Eurasian National University as well,” said the ambassador.

He added that he believes the

Spanish and Kazakh people have much in common.

“You like music as Spanish people do. You like parties and we do. We are very far away. That is true. But only geographically. Not in the heart. There are many things that are similar in our countries,” he discussed.

“It is only my personal feeling, but I know that our people both like communicating with family members. I mean getting together, have lunches and dinners. The sense of family is very similar in our both countries,” he said.

The Spanish embassy in Kazakhstan annually celebrates the National Day of Spain, a holiday shared with the Spanish speaking countries in America, on Oct. 12.

Kazakh government services app receives award at World Government Summit

By Aigerim Seisembayeva

ASTANA – Kazakhstan’s eGov.kz mobile application was named the best “one stop shop app” in the first World GovTechioneers competition at the February 12-14 World Government Summit (WGS) in Dubai.

The Android, iOS and Windows phone app was launched in late 2014 and offers 86 e-services, including a “Mobile Personal Cabinet” where a citizen can view his/her personal data from national databases. It also offers a map of government services, such as notaries and kindergartens, and allows users to make suggestions to improve public services. The app had more than 1.6 million users at the end of 2016.

The World GovTechioneers competition was launched in December 2016 to encourage global government entities to enhance their services, implement smart government initiatives and develop partnerships to identify innovative solutions



to challenges facing the world. The contest received thousands

of nominations since its launch. The competition includes three

main categories: Blockchain Virtual GovHack, Best m-Government Service, and Best Emerging Technologies in Government. It highlights leading projects in the fields of robotics, artificial intelligence, drones, statistical data, nanotechnology, autonomous cars, block chain transactions, virtual reality, and 3-D printing.

The winners of the World GovTechioneers Race, selected by an impartial judging panel, were awarded on the third day of the WGS, Feb. 14.

Kazakh Minister of Information and Communications Dauren Abayev, who headed the country’s delegation to the summit, accepted the award presented by Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the United Arab Emirates and Emir of Dubai.

“This is a deserved award for our team of highly skilled professionals, who put a lot of effort into this project. It’s also an incentive to develop the industry,” Abayev said.

Also at the summit, Abayev discussed Kazakhstan’s experience in the field of digitalisation and the “Digital Kazakhstan” programme with the Minister of Economy of the UAE Sultan bin Saeed Al Mansouri. The sides also discussed the hub Astana plans to create within the Smart City project and agreed to cooperate in the technology sector to develop digital transformation.

Abayev also discussed cooperation and progress in modernising public services, procedures simplification and public services management with UAE Minister of State for Happiness Ohoud Al Roumi.

The WGS 2017 attracted more than 4,000 people from 139 countries and featured 150 speakers over 114 sessions.

The attendees included leading figures from the public and private sectors globally, ministers, decision makers, chief executive officers, innovators, officials, entrepreneurs, academics and university students.

President of the World Bank Jim Yong Kim, Prime Minister of Bhutan Tshering Tobgay and UAE Minister of State for Tolerance Lubna Khalid Al Qasimi delivered keynote speeches at the event. The summit attendees were Uber CEO Travis Kalanick and Tesla CEO Elon Musk.

Issues like the end of globalisation, how technology is breaking borders, treating extremism and the source of nuclear energy were key topics discussed during the summit. Participants of the three-day event shared best practices in government agencies’ work and talked about their vision of the future government.

The WGS included participation of seven world and international organisations who are also strategic partners of the summit, including the International Monetary Fund, the United Nations, UNESCO, Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the World Economic Forum.

Nation&Capital

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 22, 2017

PEOPLE

Local designer participates in prestigious UK emerging designer exhibition

B2

CULTURE

Kazakh DJ signs contract with Armin Van Buuren

B3

SPORTS

Astana Arlans beat Russian Patriots, Uzbek Tigers in WSB kickoff

B7

Almaty festival seeks to cultivate performing arts culture

By Dmitry Lee

ASTANA – The fourth annual International Festival of Performing Arts Otkroveniye (Russian for Revelation) kicked off Feb. 1 in Almaty and had its last performance on Feb. 13.

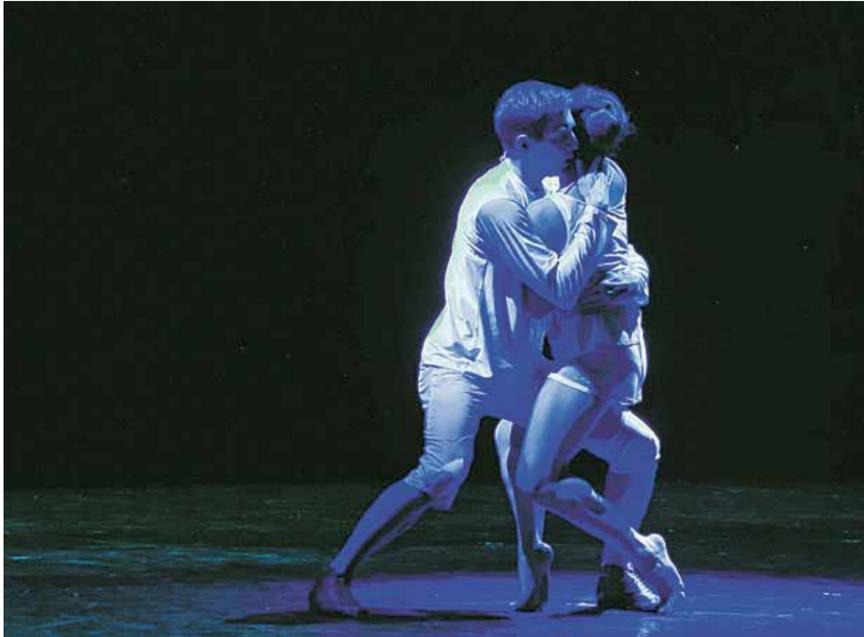
According to festival Producer and Director Olga Sultanova, this year the organisers invited 19 foreign guests, including critics, theatrical producers and experts. They have given positive feedback about their experience.

“The foreign guests already left a few days ago and some of them had already posted their thoughts about the festival on social media,” Sultanova told The Astana Times. “But our guest programme is ongoing, a troupe from Armenia staged a show (Feb. 11 at 7 p.m.) and on Feb. 13 a Russian troupe closed the festival,” she added.

The organisers, according to Sultanova, tried to demonstrate that theatre is not only drama.

“Theatre also includes plastique spectacles, documentary theatre, inclusive theatre, while opera and ballet could also be included. That is why we would like to continue expanding the programme every year. Also, we want the artists to be able to exchange their experiences with their foreign colleagues, as this cultural exchange is priceless,” Sultanova explained.

The hosts of the theatrical event are also hoping to attract young people aged 16 to 25 years to the theatrical arts. They will



also strive to bring together all the theatres in the city and to create joint projects.

This year the festival also hosted two educational programmes, which included lectures and master classes from foreign guests and a book presentation “Anthology of Contemporary Finnish Drama,” which was introduced by Nadezhda Simakina, coordinator of the international projects at Adelfa Agency.

An inclusive theatre labora-

tory – accessible by all regardless of physical limitations, language or background titled “Literal action” was held Feb. 3-11 with the support of the Soros Kazakhstan Foundation.

“Both our partners and us understand that such projects and global changes on the level of state policy in relation to people with mental disorders are less effective without the support of the masses,” Saule Mamayeva, coordinator of the youth programme at Soros Ka-

zakhstan, told the media prior at the start of the festival.

“Without our adequate response and desire to live, to work with people with mental disorders [they will not have these opportunities]. Seeing them on stage and in film, applaud them, it is equally necessary to them and to the broader population. So we were incredibly excited when Olga (Sultanova) came to us with a proposal to support the idea of the inclusive theatre.”

Kazakh athletes placed fourth following three days at Asian Winter Games in Japan

By Anuar Abdrakhmanov

SAPPORO – The VIII Asian Winter Games are taking place in Sapporo, Japan between Feb. 19 and 26. This Asiad, as the games are also known, is the first since the 2011 Games held in Almaty and Astana, where Team Kazakhstan won a record number of medals, beating the traditional leaders of the Asian winter sports – Japan, China, and South Korea.

Kazakh athletes, among others, took part in the opening ceremony of the games on Feb. 19. Five-time national champion in cross-country skiing Yerdos Akhmediyev carried the Kazakhstan’s banner at the opening Parade of Nations.

One-hundred-sixteen athletes are taking part in the Asiad. Team Kazakhstan will compete in numerous events. Kazakhstan’s most decorated athletes in Sapporo include Denis Ten (figure skating), Dmitry Reiherd, Julia Galysheva



(freestyle) and Galina Vishnevskaya (biathlon).

“The Asian Games are one of the season’s key competitions for our country. Following the Winter Universiade in Almaty where our athletes showed excellent results, we understand that some of the athletes might be tired. Our delegation stays positive, and we hope for many great wins at the Asian Games,” said Chairperson of the Sports and Physical Education Committee at the Ministry of Sports and Culture of Kazakhstan Elsiyar Kanagatov.

Continued on Page B7

Astana’s Uber drivers find flexibility, income

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – Uber has become very popular in the Kazakh capital, offering high quality service, safety and affordable prices and the opportunity to have a part time job for those who want to earn money using their driving skills and own vehicles at any time of the day or night.

“I had to work as unofficial taxi driver for years, but it never was my main job. I used the job to make both ends meet when I had financial problems. I am a self-employed entrepreneur for more than 10 years and, basically, I can say that my small company is quiet successful. But, sometimes, when we don’t get enough orders and I have to fulfil my obligations, paying rent for my office, taxes and salaries to my employees, I do work as a taxi driver. In such hard times, I used to work

as an official taxi driver and it helped me to solve my problems,” said Merkhata Bayangazin, 35, a businessman from Astana in an interview with The Astana Times on Feb. 2.

Uber was the first international taxi company represented in Astana and now it competes with Yandex taxi, which was the second. Two major companies have big fleets of cars and offer quality conditions not only for clients, but also for taxi drivers.

“The only thing I didn’t like in the job is that it isn’t safe. Of course, the job had many other disadvantages, such as necessity to drive across the streets to find clients, but the worst is that nobody can guarantee that you will be safe and come back home to your children each day. Everybody knows that working as a taxi driver, especially late in the evening or at night, is dangerous,” Bayangazin said.

“Uber, Yandex and any other official taxi services give you an opportunity to earn and do it safely. The first one is a very flexible system, where you can start working any time of the day and night and finish any time as well. I really like that. As I already had a business, it was extremely easy to start working in Uber. Of course, you need to have a middle-aged or better a new, well maintained and clean car, all your documents, including your car insurance have to be valid and that’s it. Go to the Uber office, download their mobile application and start working,” he added.

“Usually, I start working at 9 p.m. and it takes me two hours to make 3-5 trips and get back to my home. I specially choose this time, because I work from 9 am till 6 pm. After work I go home and have some rest and have a dinner with my family. At 9 pm

traffic isn’t heavy and all my trips don’t take too much time. I don’t work everyday, but I do that very often and sometimes it is very profitable to work on weekends: traffic isn’t heavy at all and Uber pays more. My salary isn’t so high and I have a real estate mortgage. So there is no great choice for me,” said Sayat Aitanov, 26, a sales manager from Astana.

“I have many friends and relatives working in Uber. Some of them are young ladies. I like the job, but I can surely say that the money I earn in the taxi service isn’t easy. Also, you have to understand that using your own car for this job will decrease its life cycle. So, if I have a possibility to have another job with the same flexibility and opportunities, I would change it. But now, I even can’t imagine, what company can offer me that,” Aitanov said.

Freelancing in Kazakhstan: both stepping stone and ultimate prize

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov



ASTANA – The rise of the internet has given new opportunities to people who don’t want to have bosses and work in offices from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. It is now the age of the freelancer.

For some, it’s a precarious life. For others, this is a pinnacle of achievement, considering that they work only when they need to or want to.

“I worked in a trade company for four years as a staff system administrator. I didn’t like that job and I always wanted to schedule my work myself, be independent – and I definitely didn’t like to report to my boss. The last one was a pain in the neck. That is why I decided to start working as a freelancer.

Continued on Page B2

Prime Minister addresses concerns about EXPO costs

Staff Report

ASTANA – Prime Minister Bakytzhan Sagintayev recently responded to concerns over the high cost of hosting EXPO 2017.

“We will host the expo for three months. I understand that a lot of skeptics speak out about why we have spent so much money. Thirteen billion tenge (US\$ 40.5 million) was allocated for the Universiade. Taking into account that we were able to save 4 billion tenge (US\$12.4 million), Almaty has had a big effect from the Universiade. The expo will have a huge impact not only on Astana, but the entire country,” the head of the government said during a recent government meeting.

He also expressed confidence the expo would be held at a high level.

“Now we must work together to make sure the country’s next land-

mark event is held at a high level. I think it will be organised at a respectable level,” he added.

Sagintayev thanked the organisers of the Universiade and local athletes.

“The Ministry of Culture and Sport must make timely payments to the winners and prize-winners of the Universiade, as well as their coaches. They must prepare the corresponding resolution, without delay, and submit it to the prime minister’s office. The ministry, together with the Almaty akimat (mayor’s office) must address the further use of the sports facilities that were built (for the Universiade),” said Sagintayev.

In addition, he instructed the akims (mayors) of Astana and Almaty to share their experience in hosting such major events. He said Almaty’s experience in dealing with post-event use and repurposing of the facilities will be beneficial for Astana.

THINGS TO WATCH & PLACES TO GO

ASTANA OPERA

- February 21 at 7 p.m.** Light breathing, QUICONTE quintet
- February 24 at 7 p.m.** Romeo and Juliette, musical
- February 26 at 6 p.m.** Piano through ages, concert by Daniyar Yessemkhanov
- March 3 at 6 p.m.** Petite Messe Solennelle, concert
- March 4 at 6 p.m.** I Hear the Music of Love Again, concert
- March 5 at 6 p.m.** A Friendly Family of String Instruments
- March 5,7 at 6 p.m.** Swan Lake, ballet

KAZGUU

- February 26 at 6 p.m.** Tango, tango in Astana

GALLERY NIGHT CLUB

- March 3 at 6 p.m.** DJ Mix, concert

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 22, 2017

Local designer participates in prestigious UK emerging designer exhibition

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – Kazakh designer Ruslan Kim showed his ready-to-wear collection at the International Fashion Showcase exhibition (IFS) initiated by British Fashion Council and British Council as part of the London Fashion Week Feb. 17-21.

IFS is a series of fashion-installations that demonstrate the works by beginning and ambitious designers from 26 countries and present their vision of the national modern culture.

Founder of the Ruslan PAN-AMA brand, Kim graduated from Instituto Marangoni Fashion School in London. He had internships at Tom Ford, Stella McCartney, Alexander McQueen and Damir Doma and collaborated with British Vogue.

After the release of his first collection at the Mercedes-Benz Fashion Week Almaty 2014, Kim was recognised as one of the most promising designers in the country.

"I presented this collection at

the Vogue Fashion Night Out Almaty 2015. The collection is inspired by women of Paris. I wish that our young girls and women also master this minimalist style with charm and light frivolity," Kim told The Astana Times.

The collection represents modern, streamlined shapes with a crucial wearability, designed to make a new generation of successful, cosmopolitan women look confident and on trend across the globe.

The collection is currently presented only at Sprezzatura boutique in Paris with prices ranging from 35,000 (US\$108) to 200,000 tenge (US\$619).

Kim said that many local designers also face challenges in terms of production and the size range.

"I buy fabric abroad. We don't have a cheap price range because tailoring services and fabrics are expensive. I don't want to make clothing for a cheap price as this affects quality," he said.

Kim was selected by the IFS jury among other candidates

nominated by Kazakh experts and leading magazines in the field of fashion. The participation of the designer was supported by the embassy of Kazakhstan in London.

Designer Assel Nusipkzhanova presented her brand Assel at the exhibition in 2016.

This year, the exhibition, titled Local/Global, will be at the IFS Somerset House Museum with a focus on the interconnection of local and global phenomena in the world of fashion. Fashion is influenced by the environment, including nature, climate and cultural memory, social and historical changes that affect the forms of expression, performance techniques and materials. The characteristics of each country are a source of different ways to design and to produce outfits and the individual aesthetics of each culture is one of the dialects of the global fashion language.

The event is an important part of the London Fashion Week and promotes the role of fashion in contemporary culture.



Ruslan Kim



Freelancing in Kazakhstan: both stepping stone and ultimate prize

Continued from Page B1

To be honest, I was afraid to leave my job in the company, because it had obvious advantages, such as a guaranteed salary and free lunches. And I had many friends there," said Kalibek Kuanyshyev, a 31-year-old freelancer from Astana, in an interview Feb. 8.

"It took me approximately one and a half years to get 15 to 20 loyal customers and decide to quit. At first, I rented a small office, but I understood that there is no need to have an office, because most of my clients worked with me from different cities and even different states. And local clients didn't come to my office often. Usually, they came to get documents. I realised that working from home would save me money and I started to send all documents to my clients using Kazpost," he said.

Later, I made sure that it was the right choice and I was able to travel around the country. I used the opportunity of office-free life to travel abroad and work from Thailand. Besides, I met many freelancers and traders in Thailand and I know that there are many of them in India. Unfortunately, life there isn't so cheap after the tenge devaluation, but I hope to try living there again if our national currency grows or I start earning in U.S. dollars or euros," Kuanyshyev added.

"I want to warn everybody: freelancing isn't heaven. I always thought I was a realist and I thought I understood everything and could plan my life. But I was wrong and I was too optimistic when I decided to quit my job and start working as a freelancer. I didn't know how many challenges I would have to face, how many problems I would have to solve. So, if you have decided to become a freelancer, you should understand that the absence of a boss and employer means that you have to be a boss and employer for yourself. Literally, you have to do everything your boss or employer does: manage you, find orders, control your operation, pay taxes and bear all expenses. It is not easy! And that isn't for everyone," he said.

"So, what do we eventually have? I would say that a freelancer has freedom, but a very limited freedom. I do not regret that I changed my life. I think that it was definitely the right choice, but I see many people leaving freelance work and deciding to find a job working for 'the man.' And I don't judge them, because the

life of a freelancer is full of risks and uncertainty. You never know if you will have an order today or not. Will you get good payment for your work or not? Now, after I have been working as a freelancer for five years, I understand that working in a big company at a good position isn't a bad choice. Freelancing gave me great opportunities: great working experience with different clients; I met different people and learned to cooperate with them; I had to organise myself and learn how to advertise my services," Kuanyshyev concluded.

"I was born and lived in a village. I went to university in Ust-Kamenogorsk and lived there for four years. After I graduated with a translator's degree I tried to find a job in the city, but my efforts were not successful. Nobody wanted to hire a graduate without work experience, in spite of the fact that I was good at translation," said Angelika Balashova, a 28-year-old project manager from Ust-Kamenogorsk, in an interview Feb. 9.

"I moved to my parents' house and had to live in the village again. Of course, living in such a small population centre was torment after entertaining life in the city. I tried to find a job for many months, but it is very hard if you don't live in the city. I couldn't afford to live there without a job, but I needed to live there to get a job. It was a vicious circle," Balashova said.

"Eventually, I found a translation agency in Ust-Kamenogorsk that had a vacancy for freelancers and I was happy to start working via email. In one year the agency offered me the position of project manager and staff translator and I moved to the city and began to work in their office," she said.

"I am sure that the freelance experience was extremely important and useful for me. At first, it was a great opportunity to get work experience and earn money. Secondly, freelancing was a stepping stone for me that helped me get a staff position in the company," Balashova said.

Freelancing is quite popular in Kazakhstan and is becoming even more so as even large companies strive to save money and hire experts only when they really need them. Having such experts on staff is of course more convenient, but it is much more expensive.

Freelancers in Kazakhstan are usually registered as self-employed entrepreneurs and pay quite low tax rates.

'Technovation Challenge' seeks to build new generation of women leaders

By Lyazzat Shatayeva

ASTANA – Technovation Challenge is bringing together young girls from across the country to learn to solve real-world problems through technology.

Founded in San Francisco, the annual international competition for girls aged 10-18 was introduced in Kazakhstan in 2016. Shortly after attending the 2015 TechWomen programme, Diana Tsoy launched Technovation Challenge in her home country and became the programme's representative in Almaty. This year, Gulshnar Salpykova, a TechWoman herself, joined the initiative and helped expand the programme.

"Our mission is to inspire and teach young girls to address real life challenges through technology, namely through development of mobile applications. We want to encourage them to pursue their

ambitions in entrepreneurship and programming," Salpykova told The Astana Times.

The programme offers girls the opportunity to emerge as tech entrepreneurs and leaders. The teams, supported by mentors, build mobile apps and develop business plans to launch them.

"The participants will identify a problem in their community and then be challenged to solve it. Not only will they come up with interesting ideas, but they will actually implement them, learn to pitch them and be able to commercialise their projects in the future," she added.

The programme representatives and mentors are adult professional women, industry leaders and entrepreneurs who have volunteered their weekends to help a new generation of female leaders.

"The most rewarding part is seeing how the young girls get excited about what they are doing.

Not only do they learn new skills, but they also build confidence that they can be part of a solution that affects and benefits many. Seeing young girls empowered, their horizons broadened, their aspirations getting bolder is motivating both for me and the mentors," said Salpykova.

This year, the organisers are targeting girls from public schools, especially those from underrepresented communities.

"We are dedicated to lifting up those young girls who do not always have access to information, encouragement and leadership tools," she said.

Eighty teams of three-five girls from every part of the country have entered the competition. The teams are currently working on creating solutions in education, healthcare, reducing poverty and promoting equality and peace.

The teams will compete in junior and senior categories, with 13

teams representing the capital in the semifinals in April. A local panel of judges will choose the two leading teams who will later enter an international online contest. In June, 12 teams (six in each category) among hundreds from 78 participating countries will receive a sponsorship to enter the finals in San Francisco.

Even though the programme was only introduced recently, the Kazakh tech-savvy girls have already demonstrated good results.

Last year, a Kazakh team Com-Pote 2016 won the opportunity to visit the Silicon Valley with the mobile app Aktivnyi Almatinet (Proactive Almaty Resident). The app allows the local government to gather the most up-to-date, real-time information on infrastructure and urban planning challenges that need addressing by engaging the users to give feedback and building a strong sense of community among city residents.

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WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 22, 2017

Astana Opera well received during two-day St. Petersburg tour

By Kamila Zhumabayeva

ASTANA – Astana Opera recently held a well-received two-day tour in Mariinsky-2, the second stage of Mariinsky theatre in Saint Petersburg, Russia, where Kazakh artists performed Notre Dame de Paris ballet.

The Saint Petersburg audience rewarded the Kazakh artists with full houses with all tickets for the performances sold out, according to the press service of Astana Opera. The tour was held under the umbrella of the upcoming EXPO 2017 exhibition.

“I have really good impressions from this play. I am glad that the Astana Opera theatre visited us, watching this amazing play in an amazing performance is a great pleasure. The troupe is in a very good shape, great dancing, and they are emotional,” Olga Moiseyeva, an honoured Russian artist and a ballet teacher, shared, inform.kz reported.

Notre Dame de Paris is a ballet by French choreographer Roland Petit and is based on Victor Hugo's novel The Hunchback of Notre Dame. Moiseyeva worked a lot during the period when Petit conducted staging this play himself at Mariinsky Theatre.

“I have something to compare with. ... We had a very interesting but a concise play; there were many mass scenes here that weren't at



Photo credit: inform.kz

Mariinsky. Performers of Quasimodo and Esmeralda as well as the young artists won a great success from the Petersburg's audience. Performers of Phoebus and Frollo

were also great. ... Ballet music is very complex but the orchestra and conductor were amazing, this also means a lot,” she added.

Symphonic Orchestra of Mariinsky Theatre worked together with the Production's Conductor Arman Urazgaliyev. It is a masterpiece of French choreography that remains relevant to this day, which is evidenced by the audience for this production.

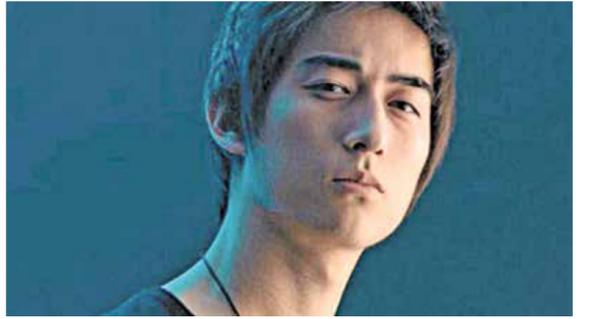
“Irreproachable and delicate taste, inexhaustible imagination and thirst for innovation from creators – avant-garde composer Maurice Jarre, a recognised ballet classic of the 20th century Roland Petit, one of the greatest fashion couturiers of all times Yves Saint Laurent and renowned theatre designer Rene Allio were a basis for creation of this miracle – a true ‘gem’ of neoclassicism,” the theatre's press office wrote.

Bakhtiyar Adamzhan who is a Grand Prix winner and laureate in numerous international competitions performed as Quasimodo. Aigerim Beketayeva played Esmeralda on the first day of the tour. Laureates of international competitions Olzhas Tarlanov played Phoebus and Gaziz Ryskulov performed Frollo's part.

During the second day, Kazakhstan's Honoured Art Worker Rustem Seitbekov played Quasimodo while Kazakhstan's Honoured Art Worker Madina Basbayeva was Esmeralda. Laureate of international competitions Arman Urazov played Phoebus, while Frollo was performed by Serik Nakyspekov.

Kazakh DJ signs contract with Armin Van Buuren

By Dmitry Lee



ASTANA – While singer Dimash Kudaibergen is rocking stages in the East, Kazakh DJ Farleon, also known as Sultan Karimov, signed a contract with the world-famous Dutch record label Armada Music in the West.

Kazakhstan's mass media have been buzzing about Kudaibergen's success in the Chinese television song contest Singer 2017, otherwise known as I Am a Singer, where he is the heavy favourite. Kudaibergen's charisma and natural talent helped him conquer the hearts of the Chinese audience in just one day. But he is not alone, making strides in the music world from Kazakhstan these days. DJ Farleon from the North Kazakhstan region is also climbing the charts in Europe.

Armada Music was established by world's renowned DJ Armin Van Buuren and his friends. Van Buuren won the best DJ of the Planet award in 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010 and 2012 according to DJ Mag.

“We signed a contract with the label for one song,” said Temirlan Dautkaliyev, Farleon's project manager. “The Dutch will help in promoting the track. The contract stipulates the copy rights and the distribution of potential income. Sultan is a very talented musician, and I am pretty sure that he has a big future waiting for him.”

According to Dautletkaliyev, the track release is scheduled for March this year at the sub-label of Armada Music – Showland. The track will also be featured in one

of the best Russian compilations – Swanky Tunes for Miami Music Week 2017.

As per earlier reports by ten-grinews.kz, Karimov started cooperation with another Dutch, world-famous label – Spinning Records. This label recorded such famous artists as Avicii, Calvin Harris, Tiesto, DJ SNAKE, Martin Garrix, Kaskade, Martin Solveig and many others.

In October 2016, Karimov's track “Fever,” was released under the label of the famous DJ Don Diablo and made it into the main playlist of electronic dance music in electroNOW at the streamline service Spotify.

The artist's manager said the new contract has many advantages. Spotify pays from \$6,000 to \$8,000 for each million plays.

“The sale of singles is not the main source of income for singers in the west – they get most of the earnings from appearances, however, the fee depends on the artist's popularity, and then the effect of the label is very important,” Dautletkaliyev explained.

Karimov was born and raised in the North Kazakhstan region. He liked the music from early childhood. His fortune was found for the first time in 2012, when he released his debut mini-album Milenium. As a result, he entered the top five releases of the week on the American version of the portal about electronic music, Beatport. After that a few of his tracks and remixes gained popularity in SoundCloud.

Third IMAX theatre opens in Kazakhstan

By Kamila Zhumabayeva

ASTANA – Kazakhstan's third IMAX theatre has opened in Astana's Sary-Arka Shopping Centre as part of the Kinopark cinema chain.

The new theatre is IMAX's third collaboration with Kinopark, and it won't be the last, senior vice-president of IMAX business development in the region John Schreiner said in a press release from the Kinopark 8 IMAX of Sary-Arka Shopping Centre.

“The region has good potential with relation to film distribution as a whole and therefore with a good

platform at hand we are ready to review projects in Kazakhstan's other cities too,” he said.

Up to 30 films are released into Kazakhstan's IMAX venues each year. At present, IMAX's share of fees amounts to more than 15 percent from Kinopark's general box office. The company expects that the flow of visitors to Sary-Arka will increase up to 25 percent when the IMAX screen opens.

“We see a big future for this format. I am sure that the brand new movie hall will create additional serious traffic for the shopping centre, as happened with Keruen shopping centre, where the flow

of visitors increased by a quarter,” said Zhanna Nalayeva, head of projects for the Kinopark chain. The increased foot traffic will help not only the food court, but the mall's shops, she said.

Opening IMAX venues in the country's regions and building a laser hall with a screen more than 18 metres tall are some of the plans the Kinopark Company and IMAX Corporation are creating together.

IMAX Corporation specialises in motion-picture technologies and large-format motion-picture presentations. Collaborating with museums and education institutions is an essential part of the corporation's activity.

More than 450 million people have been entertained in IMAX theatres since 1970, according to imax.com. As of September 2016, there were more than 1,100 IMAX theatres in more than 70 countries, with 92 of them in educational institutions around the world.

Kinopark is a leading cinema chain with eight movie theatres in Kazakhstan's four cities. The overall number of theatre halls amounts to 54 while auditorium seats are 8,136 in total, the press release stated.

Kinopark uses IMAX, Dolby Atmos technology in its cinemas.

Kazakh stuntmen to star in new Russian historical film

By Lyazzat Shatayeva

ASTANA – Members of Kazakhstan's famous Nomad Stunts will star in the Russian historical film “Tobol.” The acrobats recently visited the city of Tobolsk to see the set and scenery.

The movie will narrate the events that occurred under the rule of Peter the Great, according to producer Oleg Urushev. Filming will start in March with a brawl scene involving 300 people.

The plot is based on the conflict between Tobolsk governor Matvei Gagarin and Dzhungar khan Tsewang Rabtan, said stunt group founder and leader Zhaidarbek Kunguzhinov. The khan maintained vigorous diplomatic and trade relations with Russia, which, however, were complicated by the conflict of 1714-1715. The stuntmen will play Dzhungar characters.

“Both Kazakh and Russian stuntmen will work together on the film. Our team is responsible for the equestrian stunts, fight and fencing scenes. Additionally, the Nomad Stunts will act as stand-ins for Russian actors. We will fall from heights, burn in fire and fly away from blasts. In general, there will be much work to do. Just like we did for the films ‘Viking’ and ‘Kolovrat,’ our Kazakh group will be completely responsible for the battle scenes, including the pyrotechnics, explosions and rigging,” Kunguzhinov told the Kazakhstanskaya Pravda newspaper.

The team is currently preparing for the shoot, developing new stunts and fighting scenes. For increased efficiency on set, the group films every new stunt and sends the footage to the directors for their opinion and approval.

“This greatly simplifies the process of shooting a stunt on the set, and, in addition, it increases the performance quality,” said Kunguzhinov.

“Tobol” will be directed by Igor Zaitsev, known for his work in films such as “Kanikuly Strogo Rezhima” (“High Security Vacation”) and TV series “Velikaya” (“The Great”), “Yesenin,” and “Chkalov.” He will visit Almaty in the end of February to meet the Nomad Stunts.

“We will discuss every stunt in detail, to understand what we should work on more. Developing a stunt is work from scratch, because we cannot repeat the same tricks. It is important to undertake the preparations correctly and have a clear goal. For example, for Sergey Bodrov's film ‘Mongol,’ a horse rider had to simultaneously take out two swords from behind his back. No one had done this before. The director really liked the piece and it matched the entire movie scene. Since the release of the film, the stunt has become somewhat a classic,” Kunguzhinov said.

The stunt group is also preparing special protection for the acrobats and warm bedding for the horses so they do not fall on the

hard, icy ground during the harsh Siberian winter.

“Filming will take place in extreme cold and mostly at night when the temperature drops even

lower. In general, the project will be challenging and thus very interesting. We will try to do our job perfectly,” said Kunguzhinov.

Founded in 2003, Nomad

Stunts is known worldwide. The Kazakh team has starred in the American drama web television series “Marco Polo,” Kazakh epics “Nomad” and “Myn Bala”

(“Thousand Young Warriors”), American 3D fantasy action film “47 Ronin” and Russian dark fantasy action film “Day Watch” directed by Timur Bekmambetov.



Photo credit: Nomad Stunts

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 22, 2017

Modernisation at Pavlodar oil chemistry refinery nears completion

By Sergei Gorbunov

PAVLODAR – Kazakhstan's oil industry is set to mark a significant milestone during the first half of 2017 when a wide-scale modernisation of the Pavlodar Oil Chemistry Refinery is scheduled to be completed.

The modernisation of tools on renewed areas of the complex – a unit of high-octane number component of oil recovery and splitting its hydrotreated cut into light and heavy naphtha is near completion.

A sulphur production site is being renewed too. General construction, mainly concrete works are also near the finish line. It is possible that all of the projects will be completed ahead of schedule.

The modernisation will increase the facility's oil refining capacity to 7.5 million tonnes per year, which is 24 percent higher than the current output.

The development of high-octane European standard gasolines will double in comparison to 2014. Diesel oil will increase to 5,630 tonnes per year, or 34 percent higher than in 2014, while aircraft

fuel will increase for more than two times.

In general, the output of light oil products will more than double compared to current production. The release of 80 RON low octane gasoline will be completely terminated. At that, the depth of oil refining will increase to nearly 90 percent.

Today, the Pavlodar Oil Chemistry Refinery supplies domestic market with up to 60 percent of total volume of light oil products. So Euro-4 and Euro-5 standard products, that are to be released in the spring, will be a substantial contribution to the country's economy.

Furthermore, implementing the Modernisation of Pavlodar Oil Chemistry Refinery, LLP project will provide Kazakhstan's domestic market with quality petroleum products compliant with the requirements of ecological K4 and K5 grades, reduce harmful effect on the environment due to introducing new technologies, enhance control automation and promote the rational use of natural resources.

In addition, petroleum products will have less sulphur, benzene and other unwanted components.



Photo credit: Valeriya Bugayeva

Ministry of Justice and World Bank to strengthen forensic services

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – A project to strengthen forensic capacity was launched in October by the Ministry of Justice and the World Bank. Introduced at an international convention in December, the project will operate for two years and has already begun to identify a number of areas for improvement.

"We are concentrating on key performance indicators at the lab level, legislature and regulation at the systemic level and enhancing skills at the individual expert level," said project leader Yuri Bikaev in a Feb. 16 interview.

"Tying it all together and proposing a new model in just two years may be challenging, but we are rather excited by this tremendous opportunity," he added.

Forensic science has been a subject of many debates in the recent past, especially after the United States began conducting a number of groundbreaking studies in 2009. Much debate centred on the scientific aspects themselves, often questioning the validity of conclusions and documenting how it affected the lives of people throughout the justice system. The need for reform and more systemic approaches were evident, but some components were still missing to facilitate cardinal change.

Kazakh forensic services have recently undergone significant change. Minister of Justice Marat Beketayev emphasised further development of the nation's justice system requires improving many different institutions, including forensic expertise.

The minister added the transition of forensic medicine from the purview of the Ministry of Healthcare to the Ministry of Justice was completed in July, placing forensic expertise run by the state under one roof. The Centre of Forensic Expertise and Centre of Forensic Medicine are currently being merged to create one entity.

"I had discussions with many international experts and practitioners in search of best practices, latest strategies and lessons learned. A number of prominent experts praised the logic of combining the two centres to seek better governance and efficiency," said Bikaev.

While improved governance and more efficient operations systems and procedures are the pro-

ject's key priorities, addressing forensic expertise across its select types and at the level of individual



Yuri Bikaev

experts is a special task in itself.

"We are planning to train more than 200 forensic experts overseas," said Saule Zhakseleikova, the training component's deputy project leader and coordinator. "It will be a significant undertaking which, according to the overall agreement, will require involvement of project partners such as PricewaterhouseCoopers to assist with planning and logistics and we are paying special attention to identifying forensic expertise globally to suit the needs and demands of Kazakhstan."

Project partners King's College London, a leading British university which has been conducting forensic research since the 1970s, and Key Forensic Services, a top private forensic provider in the UK, are expected to host groups of Kazakh experts.

KAZGUU University, the lead consultant to the Ministry of Justice on the project, is also supported by Astana Garant Consulting to assist with key performance indicators and QPA Strategies for international expertise.

The project pays particular attention to supporting further development of private sector providers of forensic expertise. One option is to create a chamber of private forensic experts to foster growth.

"British and American experiences are of course of interest and relevance, with New Zealand's approach worth special attention," said Bikaev. "But we have to be very careful in suggesting something which is truly most suitable to Kazakhstan given its unique conditions and dynamics. The project aims to achieve just that."

Kazakh Armed Forces sergeants receive vocational training

By Kamila Zhumabayeva

ASTANA – More than 40 sergeants from Kazakhstan's Armed Forces are attending month-long vocational training at the Defence Ministry's cadet corps, the press service of the ministry reports.

These 40 sergeants are among 500 expected to receive training. During the training, the sergeants must elevate their skill level, become more efficient and supplement military and practical know-how throughout positions they are holding.

This year, the sergeant training includes a new advanced programme covering topics, such as the history of creating and developing the sergeant corps, leadership, consulting and training procedures, explained Temirbek Khalykov, a master sergeant of Armed Forces, head of Department on working with non-commissioned officers of the Armed Forces' general staff,

according to the ministry's press service.

"A programme of instruction is designed for a multifaceted development of the sergeant corps. Amidst professionalising the army, this is one of the priority directions of further development of the country's Armed Forces as a whole," the statement says.

The coursework is a form of professional training for military personnel. Seven levels from basic level to courses for sergeants of troops, squadrons, divisions, staff headquarters, depot complexes and regiments are specified for non-commissioned officers in the Armed Forces.

The training is held at training depots and military bases of the Cadet Corps of the country's defence ministry.

Field firing training is meant to improve field craft and cohesion of subdivisions under simulated battlefield conditions, according to the press service.

Under instructions from Kazakh Minister of Defence Col. Gen. Saken Zhasuzakov teams to control and observe the progress of the training were sent off to all area commands.

The best methodologists of military troops for conducting field firing created an environment catered to shooting with all kinds of weapons both at land and air targets, sep-

arate targets as individual defence, port firing of fighting vehicles and armoured trucks, firing in the dark using night vision sight and grenade throwing.

When the field fire training is held, most of the focus goes to correcting tactics, proficient weapon use in combat, firing direction and strict compliance with security procedures.



Suicide games raising concerns in Kazakhstan

By Kamila Zhumabayeva

ASTANA – A rash of suicide games on social media has recently caused panic among parents and raised alarm throughout the nation.

Authorities have blocked access to content posted by so-called death groups on social networks such as VKontakte. Experts are also calling on Kazakh citizens to check their children's phones to protect them from games such as Siniy kit ("a blue whale"), Tikhiy dom ("a quiet house"), More kitov ("a sea/a bunch of whales") and Razbudi menya v 4:20 ("wake me up 4.20 am").

"From the beginning of the year, 63 cases of children's involvement in online death communities have been recorded by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and 15 children were wounded in different ways..." said Minister Kalmukhanbet Kassymov during the Feb. 13 Mazhilis (lower house of Parliament) governmental hour, reported Vlast.kz.

He added 44 criminal cases were filed last year after 16 children died due to death groups.

The alleged death groups supposedly led Galina Sibiryakova, a 19-year-old from Karaganda, to commit suicide. She was found deceased Feb. 7 by her parents.

The family claimed the teenager used her phone to stay in constant contact with someone on Skype, reported 31.kz.

In another instance, a seventh grader from Temirtau jumped from a five-storey building Jan. 29 to allegedly save his parents. The incident presumably had a similar origin.

According to general data, the suicide wave began in 2015 in Russia, where local media reported about secret communities for teens that invited them to participate in a dangerous game. In each case, the players must complete 50 tasks, beginning with cutting a vein and using a blade to draw an image of a blue whale on their hand. Suicide is the last mandatory task and if not completed, the game creators

threaten to "deal" with the player's family.

One social media user shared the results after he courageously took part in a game.

"I became curious about how this works and why people commit suicide after 50 days. My friend and me created two fake accounts on VKontakte and were both reached by a person for each one of us. Different people were giving tasks every day. The first one was to 'scribble' a blue whale on our hand," which the user said they did with the help of Photoshop, reported Tengrinews.kz.

"We had to choose either 'to hang ourselves' or 'to jump' on the 50th day. Death is the end of the game. I then replied that I was scared and received a link. The

'404 not found' message appeared after I followed the link. After 10 minutes he wrote 'If you don't end your life, I will kill your loved ones' to me, wrote my address and apartment number and I realised how they do it," he continued in his message.

He called upon others to spread the post in the hope of preventing possible tragedies. He is confident while many might have refused the final offer, the gamers know where the child lives once the link has been followed.

"Here is my example: 'If you do not kill yourself we will help you to do it. You entered the game, there is no way back. You live in an apartment on this certain street. We are keeping an eye on you. Either it is you or your entire family. If you love – take action'. No one has even a slightest suspicion that the sick person lives in a completely different town," he added, according to the news agency.

About 300 "a sea of whales" communities and 450 "quiet house" groups have been discovered on VKontakte, noted Today.kz. In a specialised monitoring, the East Kazakhstan region prosecutor's office revealed a group named Tipichniy semsk ("Typical semsk") on VKontakte whose content might have promoted suicide.



WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 22, 2017

Slow living enthusiast promotes idea in Kazakhstan, few takers so far

By Kamila Zhumabayeva

ASTANA – In our fast-paced, high-tech daily life, people tend to forget what really matters. “Kinfolk” magazine reminds us of some eternal values and the need to take time to enjoy the little things.

Founded in 2011, “Kinfolk” is a Copenhagen-based, independent publication that explores ways for readers to simplify their lives, cultivate community and spend more time with family and friends. The magazine is international and its content is not geographically tied to a certain country.

Slow living in no way means leaving your responsibilities behind, being a couch potato or smoking bamboo. It promotes correctly prioritising and enjoying life.

“It is about understanding your nature, so that you could live with the tempo and priorities that suit only you. There is no universal format to it,” entrepreneur, Kinfolk online kiosk founder and slow living movement enthusiast Nastia Goncharova told The Astana Times in a recent interview.

The magazine focuses on the artistic side of life, she noted, as the content is accompanied by the lives of creative people, pretty photos, interesting experiments, recipes and inspiring stories.

A studio in Taganrog, Russia received the right to translate “Kinfolk” into Russian and issued the edition for 18 months. Working in partnership, Goncharova initially served as a distributor. Due to financial reasons, however, the publishing house refused to continue the translation and the version is no longer available.

Although the Russian magazine was half the price of the global edition, it was still expensive (3,500 tenge – US\$10.70) for the Kazakh market. People were fearful of sending money to strangers



Nastia Goncharova

at an unknown bank account, so Goncharova opened an Internet kiosk for transparency and for customers to have a clear understanding of the process and products. She also founded an online Kinfolk community.

“I don’t think slow living is one of the movements that will take over the world, but in fact by arranging small gatherings or leading Kinfolk’s Facebook page, although sluggishly, discussions still take place,” she said.

“It is obvious that those who had a corporate life for a long time most often reach a peak where they feel burned out; they are out of inspiration and life is in autopilot mode. Many begin wondering what is going wrong; they have money, career, status but not quality of life because of too many responsibilities, things moving forward too fast, too much technologically and so on. They begin talking, looking for books about self-development, sharing advice and eventually decide how to slow things down for themselves a little,” she added.

Slow living is not as popular in

Kazakhstan as it is in Europe. The movement seems to appeal more to intellectuals and those who overcame a crucial moment or crisis and who now opt for a less hectic life. The magazine interests them, as reading it allows them to reflect on the articles. Those who live peacefully and with no significant responsibilities do not have such problems, said Goncharova.

“The most interesting thing that is seen from the original ‘Kinfolk’ magazine is that the very notion of slow living transforms dynamically. The way it was so timid five years ago, the ‘let’s slow down a little and look around’ concept has gone far forwards now,” she added.

Slow living is not about doing things at an unhurried pace; it is about the need to finding one’s own harmony, whether that is food, friends’ gatherings or striving to take more time for what is dear.

Goncharova believes interest in the slow living movement exists in Kazakhstan, but is certainly a niche audience. It is for people who work and travel a lot and



Photo credit: Nastia Goncharova

think about the quality of life, those in constant search of a creative way to navigate life.

About 150 copies of the Russian issue published every three months used to sell out across Kazakhstan. Some issues even needed reordering.

Since last summer, Goncharova has been offering only the original English language edition. The cost is 7,500 tenge (about US\$23), quite a significant price for many people.

“Despite many young people in Kazakhstan studying abroad or having work experience with foreign companies, they lack reading skills. They all like to flip through, but nobody delves into its written content. Apart from aesthetic looks and dramatic pictures, this magazine has interesting writing and topics. Very few buy the English language magazine, 10 people per season at most,” she added.

Goncharova offers the magazine in Bookla, a small shop in Almaty that sells vinyl music and publications in English. “Kinfolk” updated its website and most of the content is offered on kinfolk.com. Readers can then subscribe if they like the format.

“Plenty of English language literature on the slow living movement is available nowadays. TED speakers have presented their speech on this topic many times,” she said.

Free training programme introduced to reduce skilled labour shortage, improve social climate among youth

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – More than 20,000 young people have the opportunity to get free vocational and technical education as part of the Productive Employment and Large Scale Entrepreneurship programme.

The project, approved by the government Dec. 26, was launched Jan. 1 by the Ministry of Education and Science. Financing totalling 118.8 billion tenge (US\$365.2 million) has been provided by the state, according to the ministry’s press release.

Forecasts indicate 40 percent of Kazakh students will obtain a blue collar job by 2021 and the proportion of unskilled labour will decrease to 20 percent. The unemployment is also expected to be reduced to 4.8 percent.

“We need to change our society and young people’s opinion about colleges. College is a complex of training and production processes with technology-equipped classrooms, workshops and laboratories that collaborate with leading manufacturers. The ministry implements large scale projects for equipping the colleges with material resources. The academic staff also use the practice-oriented teaching and learning methods,” Technical and Vocational Education Department head Nasymzhan Ospanova told The Astana Times.

Study ranges from one month to three and a-half years, with day and evening classes and distance learning. There is also a workplace education programme.

“It is important for young people to enter the colleges to obtain professional qualifications that will give them the opportunity to earn



money and to find a good job. Colleges use the best learning experience. The students learn practical working skills from specialists in production,” she said.

Approximately 106,500 people will be attracted to the trainings from 2017-2021, with an annual reception of 21,000 applicants. In addition, 214,000 individuals will be involved in short-term training. The total programme will involve 320,500 people. A participant will be able to receive up to three qualifications as a stone dresser or tiler-bricklayer and continue his or her education to obtain the professional qualifications of middle managers as a technician-builder.

The ministry has been developing educational programmes focusing on the best international practices that include the ability to develop up to three related qualifications for the educational credit system. This will allow specialists to be in demand in the labour market and continue their studies after any period of time, if necessary.

The socially-vulnerable groups, including high school graduates not enrolled in educational institutions, members of low-income families, foster children, children from large families, orphans and those deprived of parental care and persons with disabilities living in minor’s adaptation centres, are the priority.

Students will be provided with scholarships in the four monthly calculated index (MCI), or 9,076 tenge (US\$28), hot meals, travel expenses for the entire period of study and accommodation costs of five MCI per month, or 11,345 tenge (US\$35) for short-term training.

Those who are unemployed, regardless of registration at the population employment centres, self-employed and young people under the age of 29 also can take part in the short-term vocational training. The programme will be held one to six months on a dual basis at colleges, training centres and military-technical schools.

Individuals from remote areas can also get a free professional education studying at the mobile training centres established in five pilot areas, including the Akmola, Aktobe, East Kazakhstan, Kostanai and Mangistau regions.

The required documents include a copy of one’s identity card, educational documents (a certificate or diploma), health certificate and, if available, a certificate confirming social status.

Employment centres will cooperate to find jobs for those who complete the training. The working group consisting of representatives from local education, employment and youth organisations and law enforcement will carry out explanatory campaigns and search for candidates at rural and urban local administrations beginning in March.

Regional commissions are set to make a list of colleges, professions and occupations. Regional education departments will sign an agreement on training with the colleges according to the commission’s results. Colleges with a license for educational activity and a three-year experience in the field of technical and vocational education are permitted to take part in the project.

Training in the technical, agricultural, technological and service sectors will be conducted by a modular programme with a two-level training model. The length of training depends on the chosen specialty.

The educational institutions, regional Chamber of Entrepreneurs and local administrations will provide all the necessary information.

New app makes learning Kazakh language easier

By Kamila Zhumabayeva

ASTANA – A new app has been launched to make learning the Kazakh language, as well as facts about the country and its history, easier and fun.

The app was developed by Intellection Studio headed by London School of Economics and Political Sciences graduate Bakytzhan Baizhikenov. The Qazaq App for iOS and Android is designed as a game and so far has 3,500 registered users and 5,000 downloads.

“It is like a journey of a batyr [an honorific term that means ‘hero’] along the cities of Kazakhstan that can be recognised by their famous sites. Every city presents itself as a chapter of a lesson. By passing through a chapter, batyr conquers Kazakhstan, city after city,” Baizhikenov explained in an interview with The Astana Times.

Each chapter has three subchapters, which have several lessons. Each of those lessons has words and phrases in the Kazakh language dedicated to a certain topic, such as basics, family, home, nature, pets, food and others.

Apart from translation, every word comes with a picture that helps to visually remember a word, making the learning process easier and more interesting. A voice transcription (spelling) allows users to learn punctuation, according to Baizhikenov.

After every lesson learnt, a user is awarded with boursaks (fried dough) as scores. Users can compete with each other by boursak scores.

Interaction, a patriotic interface and the sounds of dombras play-



Bakytzhan Baizhikenov

after lessons are learnt are additional features that make this application different from others. Kazakh proverbs are available in the Russian language as well.

“The app is easy to use thanks to its intuitive and minimalistic design. You will get to know new words, listen to their spelling and back it all up with the help of a test that a user needs to do after every lesson,” Baizhikenov added.

A language selection became available within the app, following recent updates. Foreigners will also now be able to learn Kazakh with Qazaq App through the English.

Qazaq App has users of different age range from all cities but mostly from Almaty.

“We are planning to develop a complete online service for learning the Kazakh language. Qazaq App is a first step on a path to a great and important goal for us, which is increasing the amount of people who are fluent in the Kazakh language,” Baizhikenov mentioned in an earlier interview, according to the Facebook page of the Activ Mobile Phone Company.

TOURISM&EXPO 2017

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 22, 2017

Officials discuss developing nomadic tourism, other challenges at tourism conference



By Dana Omirgazy

ASTANA – Tourism officials discussed ways to boost domestic tourism, including promoting nomadic tourism, environmental tourism and working in conjunction with the government, during a Feb. 1 tourism development meeting.

“These two types of tourism (nomadic and environmental tourism) need more support from the state, although they are among the most popular and promising trends in the world. I believe that we need to develop this sphere through the introduction of our national features,” Kazakh Tourist Association director Rashida Shaikenova said at the meeting, inform.kz reports.

“Introduction of amendments and additions to the legislation in the sphere of tourism is the most important task at the moment for the country. The President pointed on the need to create business opportunities for development dur-

ing his latest address. Given designated tasks, I believe that today we need to work on the tourism law,” Shaikenova stressed.

Marat Igalı, director of the Tourism Industry Department spoke about the potential, priorities and constraints of tourism development in Kazakhstan. According to him, only four regions of Kazakhstan have tourism administration.

“The cluster programme of tourism development in Kazakhstan contains six clusters, including Mangistau – Caspian Gates Kenderli, Revival of the Silk Road initiative in the South Kazakhstan region, Free Cultural Zone in Almaty, the Pearl of Altai in the Eastern Kazakhstan, Shchuchinsk-Burabai resort area and Astana – Heart of Eurasia. I want to emphasise that the cluster programme is closely linked with the Cultural Policy Concept of Kazakhstan developed by the Ministry of Culture and Sports,” Igalı said.

Minister of Culture and Sports Arystanbek Mukhamediyuly, who

will take over the responsibilities over promoting tourism from the Ministry for Investment and Development, focused on the need for a balanced approach to the development of tourism in Kazakhstan, improvement of tourist attractiveness in the eyes of foreign and domestic travellers, as well as increased training for tourism industry staff.

“It is necessary to amend the Tourism Industry Development Concept of Kazakhstan with the participation of Kazakhstan’s leading specialists and experts in the field of tourism. We need to ensure the government regulation of the industry and support in promoting our country as a tourism destination,” Mukhamediyuly concluded.

According to the Jan. 25 presidential decree, the Ministry for Investment and Development of Kazakhstan was reorganised with the transfer of its functions and powers in the field of tourism activities to the Ministry of Culture and Sports of Kazakhstan

EXPO 2017 construction site impresses US experts

Staff Report

ASTANA – A U.S. State Department official praised the progress of EXPO 2017 preparations after a recent visit to the expo site, according to the Astana EXPO 2017 national company.

“We looked at the international exhibition pavilions and I saw a huge amount of work carried out by the organisers. I am very impressed. At the same time, we are witnessing a great interest among the international community towards EXPO 2017. Therefore, we will make every effort to worthily represent our country, one of the technological leaders in the world, at EXPO 2017,” Acting Assistant Secretary for South and Central Asian Affairs of the U.S. Department of State William Todd said, according to a company press release.

Todd arrived in Astana to discuss preparations for the event with Chair of Astana EXPO 2017 Akhmetzhan Yessimov. Over the past year, management of the company held 150 formal events, including 36 meetings with foreign delegations headed by high officials. At present, 115 countries



and 18 international organisations have confirmed their participation in the exhibition dedicated to Future Energy. Thus, according to the number of participating countries, EXPO 2017 has become one of the most successful in the history of exhibitions.

The international specialised exhibition will take place June 10 to Sept. 10 in the capital of Kazakhstan and is expected to receive than five million visits.

To date, 19 countries and one international organisation have

started working on their pavilions at the EXPO site.

“We have transferred 20 international pavilions to EXPO 2017 participants, including 19 countries, such as Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, China, the Czech Republic, France, Germany, Japan, Jordan, Hungary, South Korea, Malaysia, Monaco, Qatar, Russia, Singapore, Turkey, the UAE, and Vietnam, as well as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO),” Astana EXPO 2017 company said.

Fifteen countries to present cuisines at EXPO 2017

Staff report

ASTANA – Fifteen countries are getting ready to present their national cuisine at EXPO 2017 with more than 10,000 square metres of the exhibition area to be allotted for commercial catering facilities.

Daulet Yerimbayev, director of the Astana EXPO 2017 commercialisation department announced interim results on competition among catering renters, according to the company’s press service.

“The organisation of restaurant service on such large-scale events is a key and necessary aspect. It is important that services meet the expectations of different customer groups, starting with the top officials and delegates of member countries, ending with the residents and guests of the capital. To date, approximately 15 countries, including Italy, Germany and Poland are planning to organise the catering facilities offering their national cuisine,” Yerimbayev pointed out.

According to report, 40 catering facilities will occupy at least 10,000 square metres of the exhibition area.

“Restaurants, bars and coffee

shops will welcome EXPO 2017 guests on the ground floor in the commercial pavilion. The first floor will feature fast-food outlets similar to shopping malls. Catering facilities will offer services available to all social strata of the population and income levels,” said the report.

“We have announced the competition at the end of 2016. Business sector is largely involved in the process. On a competitive basis, we have determined 71 percent of renters. In rigorous selection of renters, we paid particular attention to the

quality of service, experience in the market and pricing policy. Companies and business sector are welcome to the participation in the contest and further cooperation. This is a great chance for our domestic producers to demonstrate their capabilities,” Yerimbayev reiterated.

According to the national company, 115 countries and 18 international organisations have officially confirmed their participation in the international specialised exhibition dedicated to the theme of Future Energy. EXPO 2017 will last from June 10 to Sept. 10.



EXPO 2017 to offer more than 3,000 cultural events

By Aiman Turebekova

ASTANA – Minister of Culture and Sport of Kazakhstan Arystanbek Mukhamediyuly has announced that the cultural programme of

EXPO 2017 in Astana will consist of more than 3,000 events.

“Over three months from June 10 to Sept. 10, Kazakhstan and its capital will be the subjects of world attention. Several million

participants and visitors are expected to visit Astana this summer. Thus, the Ministry of Culture and Sport, the akimat (mayor’s office) of Astana city and the Astana EXPO 2017 national company are

working on the implementation of a comprehensive programme of more than 3,000 events,” said Mukhamediyuly.

Twenty tents and 13 sectors of the expo will showcase the diver-

sity of Kazakh national culture, art and sport. The programme will launch with the beginning of EXPO 2017 at the territory of Kazanat hippodrome, Mukhamediyuly said.

Artists from well-known theatres from around the world will also perform for expo visitors, the minister reported. Italy’s La Scala theatre, sponsored by Italian oil and gas company Eni, will make a stop in Astana, as will Russia’s Mariinsky Theatre.

The Swiss company Rolex has become a sponsor of Plácido Domingo’s Operalia, an international young vocalists’ competition, which will give a final performance at Astana Opera.

China’s famous Terracotta Army soldiers will be on display at the National Museum of Kazakhstan, Egypt will bring a collection of archaeological objects from ancient Egypt, the State Hermitage Museum and the Association of the Museums of France and others will also be creating exhibits, Mukhamediyuly said.

Open-air performances of “Don Quixote,” “Aida” and the Kazakh classic “Kyz Zhibek” will

be staged. Kazakhstan’s guests will be able to see Kazakh musicals including “Astana,” “Love Poem,” “Dostar Serti” and others, and a symphonic orchestra of 800 musicians from Novosibirsk, the Mikhailovsky Opera and local companies will perform the Eighth Symphony of Austrian composer Gustav Mahler.

The Eurasia Dance Festival, which will highlight global ballet stars, and a theatre festival dedicated to the 80th anniversary of local artist Asanali Ashimov, will be held during the expo, and a competition among singers of the Turkic world will be held in Barys Arena.

Mukhamediyuly also noted that a number of major sporting events will be held during the expo. “In terms of the sport programme, there will be five world championships, two Asian championships, the Kazakhstan President’s Football Cup, the President’s Challenger Cup of Tennis, the Silk Road 2017 international rally, the 55th anniversary of the International Convention of the World Boxing Council and an evening of professional boxing,” concluded the minister.



SPORTS

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 22, 2017

Astana Arlans beat Russian Patriots, Uzbek Tigers in WSB kickoff

By Anuar Abdrakhmanov

ASTANA - The Astana Arlans, the two-time World Series Boxing (WSB) winner, has started the franchise's new season with two impressive victories – 3-2 over the Russian Patriots in Moscow and 4-1 at home in Taldyqorghon over the Uzbek Tigers.

In the match, Temirtas Zhusupov (up to 49 kg) lost to his Russian opponent Bator Sagaluyev in the opening bout. Next, 2014 Asian Games champion Ilyas Suleimenov (up to 56 kg) evened the score, defeating Artem Khotenov by unanimous decision. Radmir Abdurakhmanov (up to 64 kg) beat Dilmurat Mizhitov to bring the Russian team forward again.

Astana's Abilkhan Amankul fought against Radzhab Radzhabov in the up to 75-kg weight category. The Kazakh boxer won the bout, knocking out his opponent in the fourth round. The fight in the 91-kg weight category was decisive. Anton Pinchuk took an uneasy win over Ilya Kvasnikov, bringing the Arlans its first win of the season.

"It is always nice to return with a remarkable win. This fight was quite tough. We had to work hard to win. There were many tactical moments during the fight where I had to show grit. Character, strength and experience helped to win," said Pinchuk.



After the match, Astana Arlans general manager Serik Sapiyev was clearly pleased with his team's result.

"Of course, I am happy that everything went well and the match ended with our win. Each of our fighters showed good boxing tonight, as each sought to win his bout. Some of them lacked luck, some lacked skills to win. However, despite two

failures I am very pleased with the result, as we secured a victory over a [strong] Russian team. We have ambitious goals in the new season and we must try as best we can to achieve them and prove the high level of the Kazakh boxing school once again," he said.

A week later, the Arlans earned a win over Uzbek Tigers. Last season, the Kazakh and Uzbek teams

met twice and exchanged wins with the same 4-1 score. Unlike the Kazakh team, the beginning of the new season was not successful for Uzbek squad, who lost to the Chinese Dragons in the away match.

After their defeat in China, the Uzbek team's coaching staff brought the fighting strength to the Taldyqorghon match – three of the five boxers won medals at last year's Rio Summer Olympics. The home

team put out proven fighters led by new captain Olzhas Sattybayev.

Lightweight (up to 52 kg) category boxers Sattybayev and Abrorzhon Kodirov opened the match. Sattybayev has not participated in WSB for almost a year and obviously missed the format. The Arlans' new captain controlled the bout with confidence and after five rounds won by the judges' unanimous decision.

In the 60-kg category, the Arlans were represented by Zakir Safiullin, who fought 2016 Olympic medallist Murodzhon Akhmadaliyev. The Kazakh boxer had an advantage and his final win was never in doubt.

The third bout of the evening turned out to be the most emotional one. Aslanbek Shymbergenov (up to 69 kg) took quite an uneasy win over 2016 Olympic silver medallist Shakhram Giyassov.

In the 81-kg category bout, Nurdaulet Zharmanov fought against Bektimir Melikuziyev. The competitors were quite equal, but the judges gave the victory to Melikuziyev, who thus scored the team's first win.

Heavyweights (over 91 kilograms) Kamshybek Konkabayev and Bakhodir Zhalolov closed the match. Konkabayev took a confident win over Zhalolov, setting the final 4-1 score.

The WSB is a league that sees the world's best amateur boxers competing in teams without headgear and using the scoring system of the International Boxing Association (AIBA). According to the WSB website, the origin of the league "reunited the broader boxing world and its grassroots amateur foundation by providing

a bridge between Olympic Boxing and a future professional programme within the AIBA family."

WSB is wholly owned by AIBA. All WSB boxers are also registered with AIBA and all referees and officials working at WSB matches are specifically certified for the competition. Franchises have a national identity and are formed by national federations. Teams are allowed a quota of overseas boxers: a maximum of eight in total and no more than three of the same nationality.

Teams compete in the ten AIBA standard weight categories. The regular season takes the form of a league phase, with the teams facing each other home and away in alternating weight categories. The top teams continue to the playoff stages.

Teams representing franchises across the globe compete in a league format leading to playoffs and a final. The boxers compete without vests or headgear in five three-minute rounds and five bouts per match.

This year, WSB includes three geographically-based groups each with four teams. The Arlans are in the Asia group with the Russian Patriots, Uzbek Tigers and China Dragons. The other groups are Americas and Europe and Middle East and Africa. The first two teams from the groups and two best-ranked third teams will reach the playoffs.

In WSB's six seasons, the Astana Arlans won the league in 2012-2013 and 2014-2015 and were the runners-up in the inaugural 2010-2011 season. Last year, the team lost to the British Lionhearts in the semifinals.

Boxer Zhanat Zhakiyanov wins WBA (Super), IBO world champion titles



Zhanat Zhakiyanov (L)

By Anuar Abdrakhmanov

ASTANA – Kazakh professional boxer Zhanat Zhakiyanov recently claimed the World Boxing Association (WBA) title of Undisputed Champion and the International Boxing Organization (IBO) title of world champion in bantamweight by defeating American Rau'shee Warren in Toledo, Ohio (USA).

The fight's favourite ahead of the bout was Warren who held the two titles contested on the night. The Kazakh boxer, who had had a year-and-a-half break, was viewed as a clear underdog.

The beginning of the bout was promising for the American. He knocked down Zhakiyanov twice as early as the first round. However, it did not break down the Kazakh boxer, and he went on, giving his opponent heavy blows into head and body.

The 33-year-old native of Petropavlovsk, North Kazakhstan, continued to dominate in the following rounds, providing one attack after another. Warren had little choice but to try to cover up.

Zhakiyanov's advantage could be felt in every round. The two boxers fought for the win until the very last seconds of the bout.

Following the final whistle, Zhakiyanov was granted a victory by a split decision.

"We all believed in Zhanat. We know that he is very persistent and hard-working, and the only doubt was his [physical] condition. His opponent was very strong. We all were rooting for Zhanat and knew he would do his best to win. So, we are happy it all ended well," said the Vice President of Kazakhstan's Professional Boxing Federation and the 1980 Moscow Olympics silver medallist Viktor Demyanenko.

"The beginning of the bout was quite surprising to me. I missed a knockdown, and when the referee counted, I looked at Warren and saw him smiling and shaking his head, as if he was saying, 'Got you!' ... It made me angry and motivated me greatly. After all, I trained so hard and so long for this match, so I could not allow losing in the first round. I decided I would fight till the end, and then whatever happens, happens... I would like to thank fans for their support once again. I felt it during the bout. This is the biggest win of my life [so far]. I would like to dedicate it to my country," Zhakiyanov said after the fight.

Barys Astana to play Traktor Chelyabinsk in first round of Gagarin Cup

By Ilyas Omarov

ASTANA – HC Barys finished fifth in the regular season of the Eastern Conference of the Continental Hockey League (KHL) and progressed to the Gagarin Cup playoffs for the eighth time. The previous season was the only season the Kazakh club failed to make the playoffs.

Barys won 90 points and will now meet HC Traktor Chelyabinsk in the first round. Pundits estimate that the ties between Barys and Traktor will be among the most unpredictable in the playoffs.

The teams have faced each other 25 times within the KHL. Traktor won 13 of those and Barys won 12. Curiously, the teams play better as visitors rather than hosts with Traktor winning seven out of 12 and Barys claiming seven out of 13 away matches against each other. Last season, the regular championship confirmed the trend as each team won its away tie with a score of 4:3.

Astana and Chelyabinsk already played each other in playoffs once in the 2012/2013 season. Barys first led the series 2:0 after the initial away ties (4:3 OT,

5:3) but then lost three times in a row (1:3, 2:3, 3:6). In the third home match, HC Barys found the strength to tie the series with a 4:2 victory. Nevertheless, the Astana club lost the decider in Chelyabinsk. Following the hard-won victory, Traktor passed two more rounds and reached the Gagarin Cup finals where it was stopped by HC Dynamo Moscow.

The two inaugural matches of the series will be contested in Chelyabinsk on Feb. 22 and 24 while the return games in Astana are scheduled for Feb. 26 and 28.

Pro boxer Firuza Sharipova fights her way to top

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – Firuza Sharipova will hold a master class Feb. 23 at the Floyd Mayweather Boxing Academy in Zhukovka. A native of Taraz, she is the first Kazakh woman in the professional ring and has been named the sexiest athlete in the country, according to Vesti.kz.

The multiple Kazakh boxing champion and Asian continental tournament winner is in Moscow training for a title fight to be held this spring in the same city. The date and the opponent have not yet been reported.

"Training in Moscow takes place perfectly. Now, we are at the stage of general physical preparation. I want to fight with strong opponents and do everything for it; I train hard and keep regular hours. I want to learn from them and gain experience. Recently, there was an offer to fight with Deanha Hobbs, the number eight ranked boxer from Australia. Currently, we are thinking about it and considering other options," Sharipova told The Astana Times.

Sharipova knocked out Serb boxer Milena Matovic in the third round of her last fight in Almaty. She has

had three fights with a record of two wins and one defeat.

"My main goal and top priority is to become the first world champion from Kazakhstan in professional boxing. So, first of all we are focused on the sport. My championship match is scheduled for the spring and I have already started to prepare for it," she said.

"Of course, I would like to play in a movie. This question is on the agenda now, too. For example, my participation in a cameo role in the popular television series 'Game of Thrones' as well as filming in several full-length feature films are still under consideration," she added.

Before Sharipova began her boxing career, she was engaged in cycling and water polo.

"The most important thing for all athletes is to follow the workout plan. Emotions from winning are so attractive when you give it your all and surpass yourself. I lost my first amateur boxing against Gulzhaina Ubiniyazova at the age of 11. Back then, I started boxing in February and I already participated in a competition in three months. I was upset because of the defeat and even cried. My mother came to support me. Later, I won a match against her," she said.

Sharipova's first pro fight against Sofya Ochigava, the Olympic silver medal winner, was held May 21, 2016.

"I think this match was spectacular. I'm not going to stop and have ambitions to become the first Kazakh world champion in professional boxing. I have trainings which last five-six hours a day depending on what I need to do. I maintain a healthy diet. Harmful products including carbonated drinks, fast food and sweets are completely eliminated from my diet. My manager Sergey Zavileysky pays great attention to this," she said.

Sharipova fights in the second super featherweight division with a weight up to 58.967 kilograms and trains with Sergey Kubyshev at the academy on Rublevo-Uspensky Highway.

"Boxing is my life. I have been engaged in it exactly for half of my life. I am very pleased that people find me beautiful. Boxing teaches self-defence, discipline, endurance, reaction and improves the body and health. Every person can be engaged in this sport and it is not necessary to go to a professional level. I recommend to all to go in for sports and lead a healthy lifestyle," she said.

Kazakh athletes placed fourth following three days at Asian Winter Games in Japan

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On Feb. 20, the second day when medals were contested, Kazakh cross-country skier Yelena Kolomnina claimed silver in the 1.4 km individual sprint classical race. Speed skaters and short track skaters were close to climbing the podium but ultimately failed to do so. Also, the women's ice hockey national team and men's curling teams have started their performances in Sapporo.

The following day, the team

won its first gold. Cross-country skier Rinat Mukhin triumphed in the men's 15-kilometers race in free style. His teammate Kolomnina climbed the podium of the women's 10-kilometers race, in free style too. Speed skater Denis Kuzin won silver in the men's 1,000-meters race.

Following day three, Kazakhstan is ranked fourth in the informal medal ranking, following Japan (eight gold, eight silver, and seven bronze medals), South Korea (six gold, seven silver, and sev-

en bronze medals) and China (five gold, three silver, and five bronze medals).

Team Kazakhstan's premiere at a Winter Asiad took place in 1996 in Harbin. Over the period of the nation's independence, Kazakh athletes have won 69 gold, 51 silver and 44 bronze medals, which is 164 in total. At the VII Winter Asian Games in 2011 in Astana and Almaty, team Kazakhstan took first place in the team standings, winning 32 gold, 21 silver and 17 bronze medals.

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 22, 2017

French photographer builds supernatural Astana, calls it “Utopia of the 21st Century”



By Lyazzat Shatayeva

ASTANA – Famous French photographer Jean-Francois Rauzier has created his own supernatural dreamlike Astana. The “Hyper Astana” photo exhibition featuring his latest works is open at the Palace of Peace and Harmony until Feb. 12.

Rauzier has transformed the city according to his vision, adding magic and grandeur to the modern architecture. Working in some ways like an artist, he has made a

collection of artworks depicting all the famous attractions presented in an epic postmodern style.

“My first emotional shock was triggered by the city’s futuristic buildings. Astana is the utopia of the 21st century in the middle of the steppe,” the photographer said.

Inspired by the unusual mixture of Eastern and Western architecture, Rauzier took 80,000 photos or 5,000-10,000 pictures of every building to be able to produce the collection. Using digital technology, Rauzier cut, moved and

re-constructed the buildings and created new and fantastic urban landscapes.

The collection is part of his animal series. The images feature exotic animals in the most unexpected places, such as a deer grazing in the Akorda, a giraffe climbing up the Astana Library or an elephant passing by the Palace of Independence, creating an illusion of the world after people.

The photos rarely depict people, except for mysterious man wearing a raincoat and hat with his



hands tied behind his back. The image reminds of the photographer himself, who has escaped into a dream.

Rauzier started photography when he was 14. He had to wait for more than thirty years for digital technology to develop to be able to re-create his visions in a photograph.

Rauzier created a “hyperphoto” in 2012 inspired by hyperrealism, a genre of painting resembling a high-resolution photograph. His hyperphoto helps the artist to deal

with reality and build an imaginary world where he feels more comfortable. He combines both infinitely large and infinitely small elements in a single image, creating new space and time. The artist also questions common human perceptions of science, progress, utopia, culture, oppression and liberty.

“I think the artist’s mission is to channel new ideas into the world. In some missionary book, I read a quote that said that every person has a role to play: someone nurtures, someone heals, but the most

important role is given to the artist. He has the privilege of seeing a small piece of heaven which he can channel here, on Earth,” Rauzier told the sputnik.kz.

The Paris-based photographer is internationally acclaimed. His artworks, whimsical photographs and baroque masterpieces have been exhibited in almost every major art venue in Paris, London, New York, Moscow, Los Angeles, Cannes, Istanbul, Brussels, Barcelona, Washington, Hong Kong and Singapore, among others.

Innovative liquefied natural gas station opens in the capital

By Botagoz Baltabayeva

ASTANA – An opening ceremony of up-to-date Turan liquefied natural gas station and its initial

has been started. I hope that all our planned projects will be implemented and we will be able to solve all ecological problems and emissions reduction in Astana,” said Astana Akim (Mayor)

The opening ceremony was also attended by Vice-President for Innovation of Nazarbayev University Kanat Baigarin, Director of Global Gas Regasification Panaiot Saulidi as well

Ust-Kamenogorsk and Kokshetau as well.

“More than 2 billion tenge (US\$6.3 million) was invested in the project. We plan to invest 20 billion tenge (US\$63

million) more to significantly increase productivity of the gas supply in the next four years,” said Saulidi.

The starting point for the creation of this project was a speech by

Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev about general gasification, which was subsequently supported by a resolution and approved within the general scheme of Kazakhstan gasification.



start-up of natural gas was held recently in Astana. Nearby Nazarbayev University became the first user of the gas station.

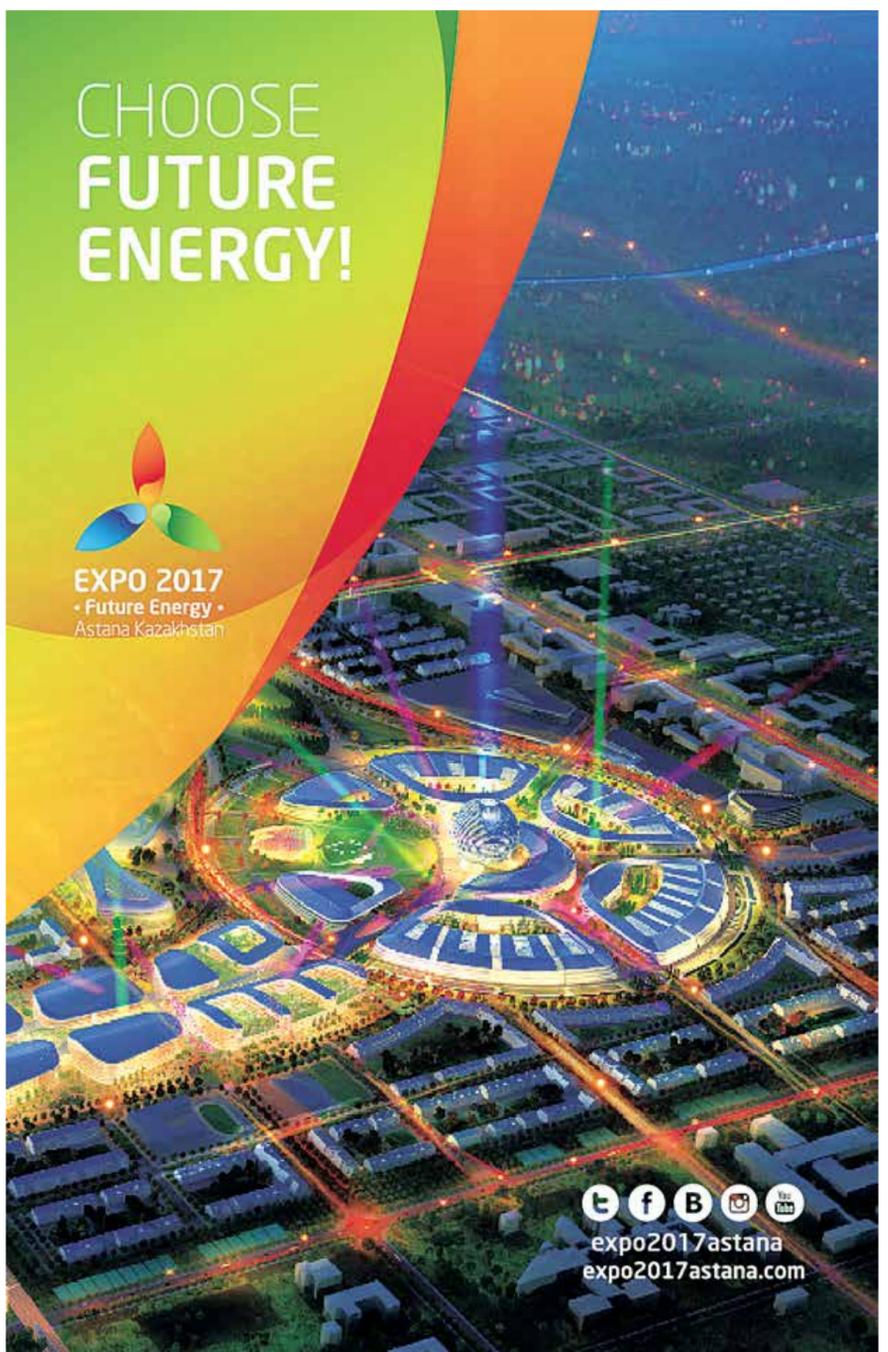
“Today is a remarkable day for Astana. The whole country is under the gasification process by order of the head of state. Today, a new gas supply based on an innovative LNG technology

Asset Issekeshov at the opening ceremony.

The first station of liquefied natural gas re-gasification with 25 gigacalorie per hour capacity was constructed and put into operation under the ASTANA LNG 2020 project by Global Gas Group. According to the founders, the station has the capacity to heat more than half a million square metres.

as representatives of Russian Gazprom export and Gazprom Transgas Ekaterinburg.

The station is only the first stage of tubeless gasification of the north-eastern regions of Kazakhstan. It is planned to prepare Astana to connect to the main gas pipeline by 2021. The plan includes gasification of Pavlodar,



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