



President lays out principles for modernisation of nation's identity

By Aigerim Seiseimbayeva

ASTANA – Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev published April 12 a wide-ranging policy article, "Course towards the future: modernisation of Kazakhstan's identity" in national newspapers outlining steps for modernisation of social norms and priorities alongside the political and economic modernisations announced in January.

"I am sure that the large-scale reforms that we launched should be continued with advanced modernisation of nation's conscience. It won't just complement the political and economic modernisation, but will be its core," the article reads.

The three components of national modernisation have one common goal – to enter the world's 30 most-developed countries. In Nazarbayev's opinion, it is impossible to become an advanced country preserving old models of consciousness and thinking. It is important to adapt to new conditions and take the best of what the new era offers.

"That is why I decided to share my vision of how we can take a step towards the future together and change the nation's conscience to become a united nation of strong and responsible people," he wrote.

He singled out several directions where he proposed to modernise the mindset of the nation and its people.

Competitiveness

Society and individuals can succeed only by developing their competitiveness in not only material things, but also in knowledge, intellectual products and quality of human resources.

"That is why each Kazakh and the nation in general should possess a set of qualities fit for the 21st century. Among those qualities are computer literacy, foreign language proficiency and cultural openness," Nazarbayev says.

Pragmatism

This implies knowledge of national and personal resources, their economical use and ability to plan.

"The ability to live rationally with an emphasis on achieving real goals, on education, healthy lifestyle and professional success is the pragmatism in behaviour," the article reads.

Preserving national identity

This means preserving the inner core of national identity while changing only some of its charac-



President Nursultan Nazarbayev met with residents of Astana during an impromptu tour of the city on April 25 following a major meeting devoted to its development and the status of preparations for EXPO 2017. See additional reporting on Page B6.

teristics. This does not mean keeping everything – both the things that drive people into the future and the things that drag them back. The nation has to use its best traditions as prerequisites and important conditions for success. A number of archaic habits should be left behind.

Cult of knowledge

Education should be the number one priority and key value for the nation. Only highly educated people capable of switching professions thanks to an elevated level of education will be able to live successfully in such conditions.

"The cult of education should be universal. And there is a crystal-clear reason for that. Half of existing professions will cease to exist in the upcoming decades because of the technological revolution," Nazarbayev stresses.

Evolutionary, not revolutionary development of Kazakhstan

Kazakhstan has felt the positive and negative impacts from revolutions on its territory over the 20th century and believes evolutionary, rather than revolutionary development, should be a collective and

individual guiding principle. "We must clearly understand the lessons of history. The time of revolutions is not over. And while they have changed greatly in their form and content, our whole recent history says directly and unambiguously: only evolutionary development gives nations a chance for prosperity. Otherwise, we will once again find ourselves in a historical trap," the President said.

Open-mindedness

Open-mindedness means at least three peculiarities of conscience:

- understanding what is going on in the world and in the region;
- being ready for changes that the technological revolution brings;
- being able to adopt others' experience and learn from others.

In this regard, Nazarbayev sets the examples of the two great Asian nations, Japan and China.

The President emphasises that not being open-minded means not being able to see the bigger picture and predict the future.

Specific Projects

In addition to ideological principles, Nazarbayev noted specific projects aimed at implementing those principles.

The first project is to transition

the Kazakh language to the Roman alphabet.

"In December 2012, in my annual state of the nation address to the people of Kazakhstan 'Kazakhstan – 2050', I said that we need to begin switching to the Roman alphabet starting 2025," he said.

By 2025, Kazakhstan will begin using the Roman alphabet in documentation, periodicals, textbooks and other official forms of communication to better accommodate the technological environment, communications, scientific and educational processes, the President wrote.

Nazarbayev tasked the government to elaborate a transition timetable. By the end of 2017, the government is to adopt a single standard version of the new Kazakh alphabet (a task made important by the presence of numerous sounds in the Kazakh language that cannot be simply identified by a single or simple Roman letter). In 2018, training to teach the new alphabet will start, and textbooks will be prepared for secondary schools.

During the adaptation period, the modified Cyrillic alphabet, currently in use, will also be applicable.

The second project is called the "New humanitarian knowledge. One hundred new textbooks in the Kazakh language" project in the social and human sciences.

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Kazakhstan attracts record amount of foreign investment in 2016

By Zhazira Dyussebekova

ASTANA – In 2016, the gross inflow of the foreign direct investments (FDI) in Kazakhstan reached new heights, growing 40 percent compared to 2015 and surpassing the previous record from 2008, according to the National Bank of Kazakhstan.

The record inflow of foreign direct investment in 2016 was the main source of financing of Kazakhstan's balance of payments, according to a statement by the bank.

According to the financial regulator, in 2016 the gross inflow of FDI to Kazakhstan was \$20.6 billion, while in 2015 it was \$14.8 billion.

The gross inflow of FDI has been growing steadily since 2007, but declined by 17 percent in 2013. In 2014, the decrease slowed by 2 percent and in 2015 it fell even more – by 38 percent. So, last year's result was particularly significant.

"One of the components of the FDI inflow was the earnings reinvested by non-residents. And their volume exceeded \$4.9 billion in 2016. With the growth of incomes of joint Kazakhstan enterprises, foreign investors increased the share of their income left in the country to finance the production activity of enterprises," the National Bank noted. In 2015, investors' losses were \$272 million.

During the last year, the participation of investors in capital

of Kazakh enterprises by direct investment increased \$5.1 billion against \$3.8 billion in 2015, which is a 35 percent decrease, according to ranking.kz.

The volume of debts of Kazakh companies to foreign investors is \$10.6 billion, or 5 percent less than in the previous year.

The main recipients of FDI were the mining industry, geological exploration and processing.

The growth of the indicator signals a return of interest from foreign investors, which weakened in 2013-2015 amid the crisis changes in the local economy, according to ranking.kz.

The top four investors include the Netherlands, the United States, Switzerland and France.

According to ranking.kz, last year the Netherlands showed a significant increase in interest in financing projects in Kazakhstan. The gross inflow of related investments increased by almost \$2 billion, or 33 percent. But at the same time, the share of their investments in the structure of FDI decreased to 37 percent from 39 percent.

Direct investors from Switzerland also increased the inflow of funds into the economy of Kazakhstan by \$724 million, their share in the gross volume of investments is 13 percent. Investors from the United States increased the volume of direct investments for the year by \$652 million, but the share of their participation in the economy decreased from 19 percent to 17 percent.

EBRD updates Kazakh strategy to reflect green economy transition

By Dmitry Lee

ASTANA – The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) is updating its Kazakhstan strategy to highlight Kazakhstan's Green Economy Transition as an example for other countries. Energy, resource efficiency and climate change mitigation will remain EBRD's focus for the next four years.

"The priorities of EBRD in Kazakhstan for 2017-21 period reflect a significant increase in investments over the last three years, which have made it the second largest country of operation in 2016," EBRD Director for Kazakhstan Agris Preimanis told The Astana Times.

"The bank plans to continue significant investments in the country in the forthcoming strategy period, as well as to continue providing support to the Government, the National Bank, the Astana International Financial Centre and other stakeholders with the implementation of the key reforms. The EBRD will continue to work hand in hand with the government and private sector in the country on the implementation of third stage of country's modernisation, which will provide a new impetus to reform process in the country," he noted.

"In 2016, we invested more than \$1 billion in Kazakhstan, making it the second largest country of operation. We have worked closely with the government on supporting their reform efforts in areas such as tariffs in regulated sectors, privatisation, green economy and creation of the Astana International Financial Centre (AIFC). The EBRD

is fully committed continuing our close collaboration," he noted.

According to Preimanis, EBRD develops new country strategies regularly, to reflect evolving priorities of the government and the lender.

"The new Kazakhstan Country Strategy is expected to be approved in July 2017 and it will run for a four-year period from 2017 until 2021," he said.

The EBRD will be represented in force during EXPO 2017, the Ministerial Conference, Astana Economic Forum and the Foreign Investors Council, which will be co-chaired by the EBRD President Sir Suma Chakrabarti.

Currently, the EBRD invites "the public to give its views on policies and strategies," commenting on its website that the EBRD management reviews all public comments and advises the board of directors.

"The EBRD takes this consultation into account in shaping its assessments and decisions on policies and strategies, alongside feedback by shareholder governments, clients and other interested parties, and draft policies and strategies may be amended accordingly," the statement quotes, adding that the deadline for comments is May 22.

In the meantime, EBRD notes "significant downside risks" for the country in its draft. Kazakhstan's economic growth has been recovering slowly, the draft says, from 1.2 percent in 2015, compared to 4.3 percent in 2014, reasoning with the "plunge in oil prices, recession in Russia, slowdown in China and weaker domestic demand."

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Prime Minister promotes IT cooperation during U.S. visit

By Malika Orazgaliyeva

ASTANA – Kazakh Prime Minister Bakhytzhon Sagintayev discussed opportunities for cooperation within Kazakhstan's third stage modernisation with leading American innovation companies during an April 11-14 visit to the United States.

During visits to New York and San Francisco, Sagintayev promoted cooperation in IT technologies, engineering, energy, mining, chemical, food and processing, telecommunications, transport, construction and education.

In San Francisco, Sagintayev witnessed the signing of an agreement between Kazakh National Infocommunication Holding Zerde, Almaty's Autonomous Cluster Fund "Park of Innovative Technologies" (ACF PIT) and Global Venture Alliance (GVA) to open an innovation office in Silicon Valley.

The office will facilitate informa-

tion exchange between Kazakhstan and Silicon Valley, help develop Kazakh start-ups in the region and access the latest innovations and companies to develop business and attract investment in Kazakhstan.

Also in San Francisco, the prime minister participated in the Project: Collider technology forum, where he urged innovation companies to participate in Kazakhstan's economic modernisation.

Sagintayev also met during his trip to the United States with representatives of the United States' largest financial institutions, including Citigroup, MasterCard, Berkeley, Morgan Stanley, Black Rock, Goldman Sachs, rating agencies Standard&Poor's (S&P), Moody's and Fitch Group, as well as Greylock Capital Management, American International Group (AIG), Guggenheim International, Alliance Bernstein, Public Capital Advisors and the Business Council of International Understanding (BCIU). The participants discussed the global economy, economic poli-

cy in Kazakhstan and opportunities to implement joint projects, attract investments, finance infrastructure projects and manage assets.

He also met with representatives of leading companies in artificial intelligence, education, financial and mobile technologies, emphasising that Kazakhstan needs to work with advanced companies and global venture funds to modernise its economy.

Sagintayev also discussed cooperation in the development of telecommunications infrastructure and the Astana International Financial Centre (AIFC) with former New York mayors Rudolph Giuliani and Michael Bloomberg.

Following the meeting with Bloomberg, the parties also signed an agreement to open a Bloomberg office and TV channel in Astana.

Sagintayev also discussed efforts to attract new investments and technologies to Kazakhstan with leading U.S. companies, such as I Squared Capital, General Electric, Grace, Robotti & Company

Advisors, AGCO, AES, Black and Veatch and American Industrial Acquisition Corporation.

The prime minister also witnessed the signing of an agreement for launching organic food production with worldwide distributor of fruits Rahal Foods. Agreements on attracting investments into the production of technological equipment in Kazakhstan were reached during meeting with OSI Systems, Pfizer and GE Transportation.

Kazakh representatives also signed a memorandum of understanding between Zerde and Cisco to finance pilot projects on self-service kiosks to deliver public services in remote regions.

A memorandum was also signed following a visit to the IBM Watson West Centre in San Francisco between IBM and ACP PIT to create a laboratory within the start-up hub in Astana to research financial and smart city technologies for urban construction and operation management.

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NATION

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 26, 2017

Kazakhstan's anti-corruption legislation may become model for post-Soviet countries, say experts

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – Transparency International, the leading civil society organisation fighting corruption worldwide, released its Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) at the end of January concerning the level of perceived corruption for 176 countries. Kazakhstan's score improved by one point to 29, moving the nation from 135th to 131st place.

The Kazakh government has paid considerable attention to fighting corruption in contrast to many governments that in the past few years have paid little attention to curbing it, according to Nazarbayev University Graduate School of Public Policy Vice Dean for Academic Affairs Professor Riccardo Pelizzo.

"One of the key messages that Transparency International highlighted in presenting its CPI scores for 2016 was that the number of countries in which corruption had increased from 2015 to 2016 exceeded the number of countries in which the level of corruption had instead declined. Transparency International marked that it was a worrisome result and urged governments to be more committed to curbing corruption," he told The Astana Times.

"Kazakhstan's commitment to fighting corruption is testified by



Riccardo Pelizzo

several of the steps taken by the government of Kazakhstan in recent years. From the moment of gaining independence, Kazakhstan has purposefully and consistently attempted to adopt international standards, mechanisms and institutions to monitor, detect, sanction and deter corruption," he added.

A programme to combat corruption with the application of concrete measures to eliminate the causes and conditions of corruption was implemented in 2001. The anti-corruption measures are included in a number of legislative acts regulating public procurement, taxation, customs, licensing and other areas. Kazakhstan has joined the United Nations Convention against Corruption and is an active member of anti-corruption networks.

Given the country's commitment



Zhuldyz Davletbayeva

to fighting corruption, both the Worldwide Governance Indicators and Global Competitiveness Index acknowledged in 2015 that the level of corruption in Kazakhstan had decreased, while the estimates generated by Transparency International indicated there was no difference in the level from 2012-2015. The result for some commentators was somewhat inconsistent with all the anti-corruption activities the authorities conducted.

"The newly-released 2016 CPI shows, however, that even Transparency International now acknowledges that the level of corruption in Kazakhstan has declined and/or is declining. The decline is not large. Kazakhstan's score increased by one point from 28 to 29. Nonetheless, this small improvement in the CPI score represents a step in the

right direction. It means that Kazakhstan is doing the right thing and that the international community is taking notice that Kazakhstan is on the right track," said Pelizzo.

The 2012-2015 anti-corruption strategy focused on shifting from punishing to preventing corruption, said Zhuldyz Davletbayeva, head of the anti-corruption research scientific centre at the President's Academy of Public Administration. A law "On preventing corruption" has for the first time provided such institutions as preventing corruption, anti-corruption monitoring, corruption risks analysis and forming an anti-corruption culture.

Through implementing large-scale reforms as part of the 100 Concrete Steps, the approaches and nature of the modern anti-corruption legislation have dramatically changed. Kazakh legislation in the field of preventing corruption has become, in fact, a model for post-Soviet countries, experts claim.

The commission on fighting against corruption under the President and the Agency for Civil Service Affairs and Fighting Corruption are essential to effectively applying the anticorruption strategy.

"The anti-corruption national bureau [at the Agency] was created for realisation of powers on the criminal law measures to prevent corruption. It actively prosecutes

corruption-related crimes. For example, the number of individuals prosecuted for mediating a bribe increased by 200 percent in the period 2012-2015 and the number of individuals prosecuted for offering bribes increased by 226 percent in the same time span, while the number of individuals prosecuted for accepting a bribe increased by 132 percent," she said.

Kazakhstan is hoping to reduce the level of corruption even more in 2017. In his annual address to the nation, President Nursultan Nazarbayev noted the need to intensify efforts in identifying and eliminating the causes of corruption. Many anti-corruption efforts will depend on the whole society's active participation. With the growth of social networks and other media resources, growing and comprehensive non-acceptance should be a powerful tool in combating corruption.

"It means that Kazakhstan will continue to implement policies that it has already launched, will have to launch new initiatives and will have a chance to showcase to its citizens and to the international community the results it has achieved so far. Better communication of what Kazakhstan has been able to achieve in the fight against corruption will be essential to changing the level of perceived corruption," said Davletbayeva.

NATIONAL NEWS IN BRIEF

The 27th congress of the World Society of Cardiovascular and Thoracic Surgeons (WSCTS) will be held Sept. 1-3 as part of Astana EXPO 2017, according to the Astana EXPO 2017 national company's press release. "Every year, the WSCTS organising committee selects a location three years ahead for the congress. Kazakhstan is the first country hosting the WSCTS Congress among the post-Soviet countries. The congress will become a large-scale platform, where more than 1,000 professionals from 50 countries gather together," said the statement. Live discussions, master classes and training with the participation of more than 50 leading cardiothoracic surgeons are expected.

A Lithuanian representative office opened April 15 in Aktau, with Marat Ormanov appointed as Lithuanian Honorary Consul in the region, reported Kapital.kz. "The cooperation between Lithuania and the Mangistau region goes in different directions: from cheese supplies to construction materials distribution. There is also a prospect for logistics and tourism development. The opening of the representative office and the appointment of a consul in the Mangistau region will become a reliable bridge in strengthening the commodity-economic and cultural ties between Kazakhstan and Lithuania," said Lithuanian Ambassador to Kazakhstan Vytautas Nauduzas. The trade turnover between the region and Lithuania amounted to \$35 million in 2016.

Eco-Green, a robotic technology for tank cleaning, was developed by KBTU Special Mobile Company, according to Inform.kz. A state grant of four million tenge (US\$12,796) was allocated for the project in 2016. "Cleaning oil storage tanks is one of the main conditions for the reliability of their operation and the use of only high-quality fuel. The proposed technical solution for cleaning tanks provides product storage without losing their quality. The process does not require the use of manual labour, which significantly reduces labour and time costs," said project manager Uzak Zhabasbayev.

A national strategy for attracting investments will be developed by the end of June, according to Kapital.kz. A monitoring system for projects will be also launched. "A strategy will be developed in cooperation with World Bank experts. It aims to provide a comprehensive vision on foreign investment attraction and approval of the procedure for interaction and determination of the target investment sources. Promising industries and niches for attracting investments also will be identified. Membership in the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Committee allows Kazakhstan to introduce advanced OECD standards and attract transnational companies," said investments committee deputy chairperson Yerbol Taszhurekov.

A new rocket drop zone was identified to implement the One World international space project in Kazakhstan, reported Inform.kz. "A number of measures are being taken to divert and open a new drop zone in Kazakhstan to ensure the launch of Soyuz carrier rockets from the Baikonur Cosmodrome and to launch space vehicles as part of the One World project according to the agreements between the aerospace committee and Roscosmos. More than 600 spacecraft will be launched as part of the project," said Baiterek project office director Oleg Balitsky.

Football, volleyball and basketball youth leagues will be created in Shymkent to reduce the delinquency level among youth and develop healthy lifestyle and mass sports initiatives, according to the region's press service. "Sponsors can be attracted to organise competitions among young people. Gifts including travel packages and scholarships will be provided for winners," said Shymkent Akim (Mayor) Gabidulla Abdrakhimov. The city has about 250,000 young people aged 14-29, which is 27 percent of the urban population. An action plan was adopted with three main directions including developing mass sports and supporting youth in educational institutions, crime prevention among young people and preventing unemployment among youth and entrepreneurial development.

Scientists, Academics Discuss President's Aim of Alphabet Switch

By Dana Omirgazy

ASTANA – Leading academic and cultural voices met in Astana to discuss the Kazakh President's goal of shifting written Kazakh from the Cyrillic to the Latin alphabet within 10 years.

President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev set a target for completing the transition to the Latin alphabet by 2025 in an April 12 article published in official daily government newspaper Egemen Kazakhstan.

"The President's foresight and vision of the possibilities, his ability to look beyond the horizon, gives us the prospect of further growth. This is the reformist spirit of our state. The transition from the Cyrillic to Latin alphabet is a gradual, objective and logical step," said Chief Researcher of the Institute of State History Alima Auanassova at the April 15 roundtable on the President's article, "Course towards the future: modernisation of Kazakhstan's identity."

"In Soviet times, during the transition from Latin to Cyrillic, people underwent a very difficult process. Our Kazakh society lost its literacy several times and was re-trained anew. Now many people are concerned with the question of how this transition passes. However, I consider this a necessary step because we must restore our connection with the Turkic people. We are an essential part of the Turkic world. We must convey our history and our culture in Latin records for their better perception," she continued.

Among the Kazakh experts at the discussion at the National Museum of Kazakhstan were academician Orazak Smagulov, Academic Secretary of the National Academic Library Taldybek Nurpeis, Scientific Secretary of the Museum at the Palace of Peace and Accord Amanbek Mukashev and cultural figure Kuandyk Shamakaiuly. They and other representatives of the scientific community reviewed questions related to the article and coming tasks for its implementation.

In the article, the President outlined main directions for modernising the national identity in the 21st century and shared his vision of becoming a nation of intellectually aware and conscious people.

"The world is beginning a new,



Alima Auanassova

largely obscure historical cycle. It is impossible to occupy a place in an advanced group by preserving the previous model of consciousness and mentality. Therefore, it is important to concentrate, change ourselves and take the best of what the new era bears in itself through adaptation to changing conditions," he said.

"The first condition for a new type of modernisation is the preservation of culture and its own national code. Without this, modernisation will turn into an empty sound. However, this does not mean the preservation of everything in the national consciousness. ... The new modernisation should not, as before, look arrogantly at historical experience and traditions. On the contrary, it must make the best traditions a prerequisite, an important condition for the success of modernisation. Without reliance on national-cultural roots, modernisation will hang in the air. I want it to stand firmly on the ground. And this means that we should take into account our history and national traditions," the Kazakh President outlined.

According to the President, major political and economic transformations should be outpaced by the modernisation of national identity. The major reform project announced two years ago assumes large-scale work to be accomplished by every citizen of Kazakhstan, Nazarbayev believes.

The second part of the article consists of specific tasks, including the gradual transition of the Kazakh language to the Latin alphabet, setting goals for the implementation of new projects to support the humanities, translating 100 of the world's best educational books in the Kazakh language, and other cultural and literary programmes.

Security agencies prevented 12 terrorist attacks in recent years

By Kamila Zhumabayeva

ASTANA – Kazakh Special Forces prevented 12 terroristic and violent extremist acts in the nation in the past few years. Since the start of 2017, they have also been able to prevent a single citizen from leaving for overseas to be involved in terrorist activities, said National Security Committee Deputy Chairperson Nurgali Bilisbekov at a government session in the capital, reported Kapital.kz.

He added changes for the better emerged through prophylactic work, re-enforcing tolerant and religious awareness and immunity for ideological radicalism.

Preventive action on religious extremism has been enhanced at educational institutions, awareness-raising activities are being conducted via the E-Islam website, and the Akniat rehabilitation centre, which manages convicted radicals, is also operating.

"Target-focused prophylactics

covered 32.1 percent of non-traditional religious movement adepts in 2016 and 90.7 percent for all years the programme was implemented from 2013-2017. The intentions of 91 Kazakhstan citizens to leave for abroad to take part in armed hostilities alongside international terrorist organisations were rendered abortive and suppressed," said Bilisbekov, according to the news website.

As a consequence of the work conducted, 81 students were returned to Kazakhstan and 177 people were diverted from travelling to theological facilities abroad. Committing terrorist and other violent extremist acts were shut out in the country during the reporting period. In total, 123 radicals were convicted for terrorist and religious-extremist crimes.

The forces were unable to prevent two terrorist acts committed by radicals last year in Aktobe and Almaty, according to Bilisbekov. As a result, conditions have been created to improve the safety of places vulnerable to terrorism.

President lays out principles...

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The project seeks to facilitate comprehensive education in humanitarian sciences. It is to translate the 100 best textbooks of the world into Kazakh and enable youth to learn according to the best world standards. In the 2018-2019 school year, Kazakhstan is to start educating students using these textbooks.

For these purposes, a non-state National Translation Bureau will be created. It is to start its work in summer 2017.

This project will provide a qualitatively different level of training of personnel adapted to global competitiveness. And these people will further become the main conductors of the principles of modernisation of consciousness – openness, pragmatism and competitiveness.

Third, the "Tugan Zher" ("Homeland") programme that will easily be translated into a wider framework of "Tugan El" ("Home Country").

The programme will improve the business, educational and cultural environments of Kazakhstan's regions. It includes conducting a serious study of local lore in the sphere of education, ecology and site improvement, study of regional history, and restoration of cultural and historical monuments and cultural sites of local significance. It is also

about supporting business people, officials and other people who, having moved to other regions, would like to support their region of birth.

The "Tugan Zher" programme will be a basis for national patriotism. Loving one's local community lays the groundwork for love of country, the President wrote.

Fourth, the "Spiritual holy sites of Kazakhstan" programme or "Sacral geography of Kazakhstan" will unite, in the national conscience, the monuments surrounding the Ulytau and the Mausoleum of Khoja Ahmed Yasawi, the ancient monuments of Taraz and many other places.

"It is one of the elements of national identity, that is why, for the first time in a thousand years, we should develop and implement such a project," Nazarbayev stated.

He instructed the government to develop this project within a year and unite three elements in the project while maintaining a dialogue with the public:

- educate every citizen of Kazakhstan on the role and place of this Cultural and Geographical Belt;
- the mass media should be involved in national information projects in this sphere;
- domestic and international cultural tourism should be based on this project.

Fifth, the "Modern Kazakh cul-

The readiness of regional and field offices for response to terrorist threats and minimising and relieving the consequences of terrorism acts advanced from 89.9 percent to 91.7 percent, noted Kapital.kz.

"That being said, implementing the programme showed the need to develop action against religious extremism and terrorism. The analysis shows that the dynamics of citizens' involvement in destructive religious movements is not decreasing. Radicalising the religious population of the country is going on, with counter propaganda of ideological radicalism remaining a problematic area. Young people, students and school pupils are a basic group overtaken by counterpropaganda. The unemployed are a covered share of other categories; the marginal part of society amounts to about 10 percent. There is a need to systematise and make a consistent effort by expository groups to dissuade the core audience susceptible to non-traditional and radical views," he added.

EURASIA&WORLD

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EXTERNAL NEWS IN BRIEF

In a recent interview with EuroNews Belgian economist, Vesalius College Associate Professor Munira Aminova said Kazakhstan is one of the most dynamically developing countries in Central Asia. She attributes this to the rich natural resources such as oil and gas, favourable investment climate, business conditions and stable political situation. Throughout recent years, the country's development has attracted the largest trading partners and investors, she said. "At this stage, the GDP per capita of Kazakhstan is 10 times higher than that of neighbouring countries. Naturally, science, innovation and research have gravitated towards Kazakhstan for the last decade because of investments in this area," she told the media. The biggest investment partner is China, not just for Kazakhstan but for the region in general, according to Aminova.

Businesspeople from Riga are willing to develop trade and economic relations between Kazakhstan and Latvia, reported Kazakh TV. Representatives from areas of expertise such as information technology, pharmaceuticals, tourism and architecture want to hear more about Kazakhstan's investment and export opportunities, especially about the transport and logistics potential. China is another huge potential market for the expansion of business cooperation, as it currently reviews quotas for the supply of Kazakh grain. China is one of the leaders in the volume of food production, but the demand supersedes the supply. Its businesses long for organic food products, which in turn, opens doors for Kazakh suppliers.

Foreign experts recently commended Kazakhstan's development path in an interview with Khabar 24 news agency. UN Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC) Director Jorge Chediek said that "in the last 25 years, Kazakhstan has transformed its economy; it has grown impressively among the fastest growing economies in the world and in addition to that, it succeeded in translating that extraordinary economic growth into improving the quality of life of its population. In addition, Kazakhstan is an example of a country with many peoples, many cultures working together harmoniously and also becoming a big place of peace and stability in the Central Asian region. That example has been recognised by its election to the UN Security Council." Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) representative in Kazakhstan Edwin Lau underlined that Kazakhstan is currently of interest to many countries. "Kazakhstan's experience is being examined worldwide," he added.

Turkish businesses and Kazakh investment plans crossed paths at the Day of Kazakhstan in Turkey, an event organised by Kazakhstan's Consulate General in Turkey and the Kazakh Ministry for Investment and Development. Top managers from the Istanbul Chamber of Commerce and representatives of 50 Turkish companies had the chance to learn about Kazakhstan's investment potential. The heads of Turkish industrial enterprises, who have been successfully working in Kazakhstan for many years, spoke about the privileges available for foreign businesspeople in the Central Asian country.

The premiere of the Kazakh historical drama "A Road to Mother" took place in Rome, reported Kazakh TV. "The feature film by Kazakh director Akan Satayev narrating about the power of a mother's love has moved the Italian audience to tears," said the media. "Torn apart from her son, the protagonist Mariyam had been waiting for him for 30 years. Her son has endured the hard blows of fate. He lived at an orphanage, struggled through the war years, captivity and the Soviet camp, yet there was always hope that the son would finally find the road to the mother."

Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan Sign Strategic Partnership Agreement, Border Accord

By Malika Orazgaliyeva

ASTANA – President of Turkmenistan Gurbanguly Berdimukhamedov and President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev discussed bilateral relations during Berdimukhamedov's April 18-19 state visit to Kazakhstan. His visit corresponded with the 25th anniversary of diplomatic relations between the two countries.

During their meeting at the Akorda presidential residence on April 18, Nazarbayev congratulated Berdimukhamedov on his victory in the recent presidential election in Turkmenistan.

"We highly appreciate your decision to pay one of your first visits after the election to our country. Kazakh and Turkmen people are bound by ties of partnership, neighbourhood and fraternity. For a quarter of a century, our relations have been developing on a foundation of mutual trust and support. Turkmenistan is an important partner and ally of Kazakhstan in the region. Our peoples are brothers and good neighbours to each other," said Nazarbayev.

Nazarbayev noted the development of bilateral cooperation in energy, transit and transport spheres. He also underlined existing prospects in other areas of collaboration.

"Today we are signing the most important agreement concerning the strategic partnership between Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan. This agreement will serve as a ba-



Photo credit: akorda.kz

sis for further effective cooperation between our countries. We are solving all border issues. We will be the only two countries [in Central Asia] that do not have any border issues remaining unresolved," he said. [As things stand now, Kazakhstan have signed agreements on border delimitation with all of its five neighbours, Russia, China, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, and it has now signed agreements on border demarcation with China and Turkmenistan.]

Berdimukhamedov noted that his visit to Kazakhstan is going to strengthen cooperation.

The two presidents discussed issues of regional and international

cooperation, as well as collaboration in cultural, humanitarian and social spheres. According to Berdimukhamedov, the two states are gaining a good reputation in the international arena. They defined their positions on peace, stability and security in the framework of the UN and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), he noted.

Nazarbayev said the Intergovernmental Commission on Economic Cooperation under the chairmanship of the two countries' deputy prime ministers will play a special role in achieving the key tasks of bilateral cooperation.

During the talks, the parties paid

attention to ways to improve the legal framework for cooperation and how to attract businesses to large joint infrastructure projects.

"The launch of the Kazakhstan-Turkmenistan-Iran railway is a historic event in the field of transit and transport cooperation. Kazakh and Turkmen entrepreneurs should use this advantage to strengthen mutual trade turnover," Nazarbayev stressed.

According to Nazarbayev, water and energy issues, as well as activation of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea, were a separate topic of discussion.

"We once again confirmed that the water resources of the trans-boundary rivers of Central Asia are a common asset. The fate of millions of people depends on their reasonable use. This year, Turkmenistan chairs the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea," he said.

The parties signed documents including a joint statement by the two presidents, a treaty on strategic partnership between Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, an agreement on demarcation of the Kazakh-Turkmen state border, an agreement between the two governments on the Kazakh-Turkmen Intergovernmental Commission and agreements on mutual protection of confidential information.

The parties also signed the programme of cooperation between the two countries' Foreign Ministries for 2017-2018, an agreement on establishing twinning relations between Astana and Ashgabat, an

agreement between the two Finance Ministries on cooperation in fighting against legalizing of revenues gained from illegal activities (money laundering) and the financing of terrorism, and an agreement on cooperation between the Kazakhstan National Chamber of Entrepreneurs and the Turkmenistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Following the visit, Nazarbayev awarded Berdimukhamedov the highest award for foreign leaders, the Order of Dostyk (Friendship) of first degree, for his contribution to securing friendship and understanding between the two countries.

Following the official part at the Akorda, Berdimukhamedov personally presented three of his books devoted to the Turkmen breed of horses, the Akhalteke, issued in the Kazakh language for the first time, Kazinform reported.

President of the Kazakh National Olympic Committee Timur Kulibayev initiated the production of these books in Kazakh.

"I am doubly pleased because the presentation of my books coincides with my state visit to your beautiful country. We have been good neighbours and brothers over the centuries. ... Our peoples highly honour racehorses and treat them as family members. We have this in common. There is a saying 'Waking up in the morning, greet your father and then your horse'," Berdimukhamedov said.

In addition, the Turkmen leader was given a tour of the Kazakh National Museum.

EAEU defines macroeconomic policy, establishes temporary free trade zone with Iran

By Aigerim Seisembayeva

ASTANA – Two regional organisations in the economic and security spheres, the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) and the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO), held their top-level meetings April 14 in Bishkek, where key priorities of development and expansion were defined.

Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev attended the meeting of the Supreme Eurasian Economic Council (SEEC) and the informal meeting of the heads of CSTO member states.

The SEEC was also attended by the presidents of Armenia – Serzh Sargsyan, Belarus – Alexander Lukashenko, Kyrgyzstan – Almazbek Atambayev, Russia – Vladimir Putin, as well as Chairperson of the Collegium of the Eurasian Economic Commission (EEC) Tigran Sargsyan.

A report on the implementation of the main directions of international activities of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) in 2015-2016 was presented.

The parties discussed economic cooperation within the EAEU as well as international cooperation

and integration within the Eurasian space.

At the meeting of the council, in which Moldova President Igor Dodon also took part as an invitee, Nazarbayev dwelt on the key aspects of the implementation of the treaty on the EAEU signed three years ago in Astana.

"Contractual and legal frameworks have been established and are regularly being expanded, long- and medium-term priorities of the organisation have been defined. Free movement of goods, services, capital and labour is carried out in practice. Together, we work in the economic sphere, we conduct a coordinated policy in most important sectors of the economy. Contacts are being established with various countries and international organisations," the Kazakh President said.

At the same time, Nazarbayev noted that during its formation, the EAEU had to overcome crisis situations of the global economy and the challenges of a difficult geopolitical situation.

"All of this has affected our organisation's performance, which has significantly decreased in recent years. However, crises are not

eternal and recessions are followed by growth," Nazarbayev said.

The Kazakh President stressed that, despite the difficult conditions, most EAEU member states showed an increase in economic indicators last year.

"Particular optimism is prompted by the statistics of the beginning of 2017. The first months of this year showed the volume of EAEU foreign trade has increased by 37 percent and mutual trade by 38 percent," Nazarbayev concluded.

Also, noting the need to consolidate this positive trend, the head of state singled out priority steps in this direction.

"First, it is important to remove all existing obstacles for EAEU development. Secondly, new trade and economic agreements should be established with international partners to expand sales markets and increase investment. Thirdly, in this difficult period for our economies it is necessary to provide mutual support. Fourthly, the Anti-Crisis Council can become a good tool for overcoming crises," Nazarbayev noted.

He especially noted Kazakhstan's proposals on creating the Council of Ministers of Economy and Finance, as well as the compo-

sition of the heads of central banks of EAEU countries.

"The council will advise the EAEU authorities on financial and economic policies of member states and development of concerted measures to prevent crises. Its work will be aimed at implementing joint activities to ensure economic growth and financial stability. The work of this council will be similar to the activity of the Council for Financial Stability under the G20 and ECOFIN of the European Commission," Nazarbayev said.

The parties also considered the issue of granting EAEU observer status as there is great interest from third countries.

During the meeting, the main guidelines of macroeconomic policy of the EAEU states for 2017-2018 were approved. The document provides for significant measures to improve the macroeconomic situation, stimulate the corporate sector to increase investment, promote non-primary exports.

The meeting also adopted a document on a temporary agreement on the formation of a free trade zone between the EAEU and its member states and Iran.

In addition, the heads of state considered the appeal of the Repub-

lic of Moldova to grant it the status of observer state under the EAEU.

The informal meeting of CSTO member states on the same day was attended by Sargsyan, Lukashenko, Nazarbayev, Atambayev, Putin, Tajik President Emomali Rahmon, as well as acting CSTO Secretary General Valery Semirikov.

Development of the organisation and deepening of cooperation in the security sphere were discussed.

Nazarbayev noted that this year is a jubilee for CSTO member countries. Congratulating the meeting participants on the 25th anniversary of the signing of the treaty, he particularly emphasised its importance in ensuring national and regional security, as well as in strengthening the integrity of participating states.

He also drew attention to expanding the zone of cooperation between the CSTO and other international institutions and organisations in the field of security.

In addition, the members of the organisation considered the possibility of consolidating efforts in the address regional and global challenges.

At the end of the meeting, the heads of participating states appointed Yuri Khachaturov the Secretary General of the CSTO.

SCO foreign ministers prepare for June summit

By Malika Orazgaliyeva

ASTANA – Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) member state foreign ministers met April 21 in Astana to prepare for the June 8-9 meeting of the heads of member states.

The Council of Foreign Ministers (CFM) agreed on a draft agenda for the Council of Heads of State, which would take place in Astana on the eve of the opening of the Astana EXPO 2017 international specialised exhibition. They also agreed on a SCO Astana Declaration draft and a list of documents to be submitted for signature during the heads of state meeting.

They also discussed the upcoming accession to the SCO of India and Pakistan, which is expected to take place during the Astana sum-

mit and to increase the organisation's international influence and credibility. The group also addressed strengthening regional security, fighting terrorism and extremism, combating drug trafficking and developing cooperation within the expanded organisation.

Kazakhstan has chaired the SCO since June 2016 and Kazakh Foreign Minister Kairat Abdrakhmanov reminded the group of the priorities laid out during the previous head of states meeting by Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev, including strengthening regional security, developing economic cooperation, unlocking transit and transport capacity and deepening cultural and humanitarian ties in the context of the SCO Development Strategy 2025.

Addressing his colleagues from

China, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan at a meeting that took place at the Kazakh Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Abdrakhmanov also focused on economic and cultural-humanitarian cooperation within the organisation. He noted that SCO representatives will participate in a number of upcoming events in Kazakhstan, including EXPO 2017, the 11th week of education in Astana, Festival of Arts and the SCO Youth Forum themed Development of Green Economy, Tourism and Sports.

The meeting was also attended by SCO Secretary General Rashid Alimov and Director of the Executive Committee of the SCO Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS SCO) Yevgeniy Sysoyev, among others.

Later in the day, the Kazakh President received the participants of the meeting, including Alimov, Sysoyev, Abdrakhmanov, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, Kyrgyz Foreign Minister Erlan Abdylaliev, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, Tajik Foreign Minister Sirodjidin Aslov, and Uzbek Foreign Minister Abdulaziz Kamilov.

Nazarbayev noted the importance of the ministerial meeting on the threshold of the organisation's summit in Astana.

"As SCO chairman, Kazakhstan attaches great importance to the upcoming summit of the organisation in June in Astana. Our chairmanship is going on in a time of complicated processes in the region and in the world," he said.

Nazarbayev noted a number of issues on the SCO agenda, including increasing efforts to approve the SCO Cooperation Concept on Environmental Protection, sign the SCO Convention on Countering Extremism and adopt the statement on this issue and the anti-drug strategy of the organisation's member countries.

"The economic and cultural-humanitarian cooperation within the SCO is crucial. One more important issue of the upcoming summit's agenda is adoption of a decision on finalising the procedure of accepting India and Pakistan to full-fledged membership in the SCO. The adoption of the Astana Declaration, which will define our future plans is planned too," he noted.

ECONOMY

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Prime Minister promotes IT cooperation during U.S. visit



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Sagintayev also met with Autodesk Vice President David Crane following which a memorandum of cooperation was signed between Autodesk and ACF PIT.

Bridgewest Group Chairperson Massih Tayebi also signed a memorandum of understanding with Kazakhtelecom to cooperate on acquiring equipment to develop

large-scale internet access networks.

A meeting with Managing Partner at Learn Capital Partner Greg Mauro also resulted in a memorandum of cooperation with the Kazakh Ministry of Education and Science's Information and Analytical Centre to develop a pilot project on charter schools.

In California, Sagintayev also met Chairman of the Board of Chevron

John Watson to discuss the situation and the forecasts regarding global oil markets, as well as the expansion of cooperation in oil and gas projects in Kazakhstan, as well as the Future Growth Project (FGP) at Tengiz oil field in the west of the country.

Sagintayev also visited the Tesla Motors' office where he discussed innovative technologies in engineering, electric vehicle production and unmanned vehicle management.

Kazakhstan to increase lamb exports to China

By Dmitry Lee

ASTANA – Kazakh authorities are planning to increase the volume of lamb exported to China by the end of April, said Vice Minister of Agriculture Gulmira Issayeva at a recent government meeting.

"Kazakhstan's bid was shortlisted and the Main Directorate for Quality Supervision, Inspection and Quarantine of China (MDQSIQ) decided to combine two inspection stages into one to reduce licensing procedures. We expect that in the second half of this year we will start real export of lamb," she said.

Authorities have been hoping to start the real export of beef to the Chinese markets for years; however, after an epidemic of foot-and-mouth disease in 2013, all previous efforts resulted in minimal export volumes of meat. Chinese MDQSIQ inspectors will arrive in Kazakhstan at the end of the month.

"Because Kazakhstan has huge potential for the production and supply of organic agricultural products, we agreed that international experts would arrive through the Food and Agriculture Organisation and the Ministry of Agriculture of China to certify our products," noted Issayeva.

"Every year, China spends \$117 billion on food products," said Atameken National Chamber of Entrepreneurs Deputy Chairperson Nurzhan Altayev. "One billion dollars is spent on meat. In addition, the

Chinese are very interested in Kazakh meat products, legumes, beekeeping products and feed production. The Chinese are ready to invest in joint ventures."

The average price for a kilogram of beef in China is 3,100 tenge (US\$10), while in Kazakhstan it is sold at about 1,500 tenge (US\$4.80), according to Kazakh Meat Union President Maksut Baktibayev.

Altayev made it clear the Atameken is willing to support Kazakh agricultural producers "wishing to enter the Chinese markets." A special section, "Export to China," has been created on the organisation's website and social networks solely for that purpose.

In addition, the Kazakh Ministry of Agriculture is planning to simplify the procedure to admit domestic enterprises to the Chinese market. Chinese specialists are currently the only ones permitted to inspect the produce; in the near future, however, the Ministry of Agriculture hopes local experts will be able to do it.

"We will evaluate the whole system of food safety and we hope that in the future, with the veterinary service of China, we can agree that either under the guarantee of our veterinary service or after recognising the results of the audit of our system, we could get the right to certify local produce ourselves so our enterprises would be able to work for export, which is a mechanism that we have with other countries, for example, within the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU)," said Issayeva.

ECONOMY NEWS IN BRIEF

The Kazakh economy grew 3 percent in the first quarter, 24.kz reports. According to Minister of National Economy Timur Suleimenov, increased consumer and industrial activity in key trade partners the European Union, China and Russia prompted the growth. The production, construction, transport and trade sectors also influenced growth, after the decrease of the past year. According to the forecasts of the International Monetary Fund, economic activity will accelerate both in developed and developing countries. The Kazakh economy is expected to grow 2.5 percent by the end of the year.

The state Accounts Committee has published the results of the state audit of budget fund spending, khabar.kz reports. The audit revealed serious financial irregularities and inefficient use of public funds in quasi-public sector organisations. Financial violations reached 1.2 billion tenge (US\$3.84 million) and inefficient use of budget money increased this figure to 2 billion tenge (US\$6.4 million). In particular, violations were revealed in the Kazakh Invest National Company. Last year, more than 190 million tenge (US\$607,620) was spent on the maintenance of its branch offices in a number of foreign countries. However, despite the presence of permanent representatives abroad, travel expenses of the National Company's employees from Kazakhstan exceeded 10 million tenge (US\$31,980.) Violations were also revealed in the activities of the Kazakhstan Industry Development Institute, as well as in the raw materials processing centre and its branches.

Microfinance organisations boost support for rural entrepreneurship, ranking.kz said. Over the first six months of 2016, small businesses were issued microloans for 153 million tenge (US\$489,294). In the third quarter, the number of loans doubled. Between July and September 2016, organisations issued loans worth 150 million tenge (US\$479,700), and in the fourth quarter the figure reached 193 million tenge (US\$617,214). In the second half of 2016, microfinance organisations granted 2.2 times more loans to rural entrepreneurs compared to the January-June period.

Akim (Governor) of Pavlodar Region Bulat Bakauov visited Belarus to meet with Chairman of Minsk Regional Executive Committee Semyon Shapiro and visit several large enterprises, reported the Pavlodar regional akimat (administration) press service. "We intend to share experience and attract more investments during our trip in Belarus. At present, we cooperate in metallurgy, machine building, agriculture and food industry," Bakauov said. "We are buying 20 trams here, and we will conclude a contract for the purchase of five more cars. Our region cooperates with Belarus on buses and elevators. There are entrepreneurs who are ready to consider cooperation in agricultural machinery, particularly for the production of harvesters," he added.

Implementation of economic projects between Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan will be facilitated by the establishment of trading houses and the appointment of trade representatives in both states, Orman Nurbayev, Kazakh ambassador to Turkmenistan, told the Kazakhstanskaya Pravda newspaper. "Having large reserves of hydrocarbon raw materials, both countries do not have direct access to the sea. Obviously, under these conditions only joint coordinated actions can provide our hydrocarbons with access to international markets. Cooperation in the fuel and energy sector is one of the strategic directions, taking into account the huge reserves of resources and the colossal transit and transport potential of both countries. Interaction in this industry has great prospects and requires constant search and laborious work," Nurbayev emphasised.

Regional internal migration launched, more than 630,000 jobs to be created this year

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – The government has identified seven regions to stimulate voluntary migration, said Labour and Social Protection Minister Tamara Duissenova at the April 5 Increasing Labour Market Mobility business forum in Shymkent.

Labour migrants from the Almaty, Mangistau, South Kazakhstan and Zhambyl regions will receive subsidies for relocation and housing rent for one year to move to the Akmola, Atyrau, East, West and North Kazakhstan, Kostanai and Pavlodar regions.



Tamara Duissenova

The Productive Employment and Mass Entrepreneurship Development Programme began in the country this year. It provides a number of measures including mass training and inculcating skills in demanded professions and business basics and creates conditions for mass entrepreneurship through loan services, labour market development assistance in employment and labour mobility support.

"We should clearly know in which sectors and regions new jobs will be created to regulate the labour market. Target indicators for creating jobs on projects implemented as part of the state and industrial programmes were set by the ministry in cooperation with the central state bodies and regions. We also signed relevant memorandums with local governors. More than 630,000 jobs are expected to be created which will serve as a reserve for employment of citizens seeking help from the state," said Duissenova.

A free vocational education will be organised for young people who did not enter educational institu-

tions after graduation. In the programme's first stage, short-term vocational training courses lasting one-six months will be conducted at colleges, Atameken Chamber of Entrepreneurs educational centres and enterprise training centres.

The Damu Fund will allocate loans for programme participants in the cities, while the Agricultural Support Fund and Agrarian Credit Corporation will provide assistance for village and town residents. The amount of loans granted will increase to 8,000 monthly calculated indices (MCIs) up to 18 million tenge (US\$57,474) with a term of up to five years and yearly rate up to 6 percent. Loans with seven-year terms will be granted for livestock and agricultural cooperatives.

A loan guarantee mechanism up to 85 percent for starting entrepreneurs and up to 50 percent for operating ones was introduced at the Agrarian Credit Corporation.

The programme also includes increased targeted support to employ certain categories of citizens including youth, women and those with disabilities, ensure labour mobility increase and labour market infrastructure development.

The ministry also believes the labour movement between sectors will identify professions that will become obsolete due to the introduction of new technologies and industries where new jobs can be created as part of the labour market modernisation.

"The movement of labour resources between the regions is of special importance. We not only give the opportunity to learning the profession for free, but also give a choice to find new jobs, hire employers or start business as part of the state initiative," added Duissenova.

There is also a need to establish and implement joint cooperation between the regions in industry, agriculture, transport and logistics, and trade and services projects.

Memorandums of cooperation regarding labour resources and increasing labour market mobility among the East Kazakhstan, Kostanai, Pavlodar and South Kazakhstan regions were signed as part of the event.

Similar business forums are planned in the near future in the Almaty, Mangistau and Zhambyl regions.

ADB forecasts growth of Kazakh economy

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – The Asian Development Bank (ADB) released its forecast for the economic situation in Kazakhstan for 2017, projecting the country's economic growth will accelerate as a result of state programmes aimed at stimulating consumption and investment.

"The measures taken by the authorities to solve the existing problems in the banking sector are an important step in the right direction," said director of the ADB office in Kazakhstan Giovanni Capannelli, reported Kazinform.

"However, it is necessary to continue working on stress testing and asset quality analysis in accordance with international standards to determine which banks need additional capital and to improve the assessment of non-performing loans," he added.

The bank's experts suggest higher revenues from oil exports will also contribute to the rise. According to the forecast, the growth of

Kazakhstan's gross domestic product will reach 2.4 percent this year and 2.2 percent in 2018. In 2016, the nation's GDP grew 1 percent. Annual inflation is projected at 8 percent this year within the target corridor of the National Bank (6-8 percent). The experts highlight Kazakh authorities adjust the base rate, carry out transactions in the stock market and maintain control over monopoly prices. At the same time, the report notes there are problems in the banking sector which have to be solved.

The report also emphasises that increasing transparency and improving communication will contribute to improving the effectiveness of operation within the banking sector.

Industrial growth in 2017 will reach 2.4 percent, which will be facilitated by significant infrastructure costs and increased production of oil and gas condensate. The volume of oil production is expected to increase by 3.8 percent and reach 81 million tonnes, which will be achieved due to an increase

in production at the Kashagan field and expansion of the Tengiz field. The growth of agriculture in 2017 is projected at 3.5 percent in connection with implementing a new programme of state support for the agricultural and industrial complex.

Kazakhstan became a member of ADB in 1994 and has received more than \$5 billion in sovereign and non-sovereign loans for development projects in agriculture, education, finance, transport, water supply and sanitation. Projects implemented with the assistance of ADB helped the country open transport routes, support social equality and develop knowledge products, private entrepreneurship and cooperation with neighbouring countries.

Headquartered in Manila, ADB aims to reduce poverty in the Asia-Pacific region through inclusive economic and environmentally sustainable growth, as well as regional integration. The bank has 67 member countries, 48 of which are from the region.

EBRD updates Kazakh strategy to reflect green economy transition

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This challenging environment continued into 2016, with the economy contracting from external pressures, the tenge dropping by more than 50 percent after the introduction of a flexible exchange rate regime, high inflation and limited liquidity. Although the situation has stabilised, with growth expected to reach 0.7 percent in 2016 and improve to 2.4 percent in 2017," the draft quotes.

"Kazakhstan has reacted to the difficult economic environment by accelerating structural reforms and fiscal stimulus, both of which are helping to boost growth. The cornerstone of the reform programme are the government's efforts to boost the competitiveness of the economy, attract investment and streamline the regulatory framework to promote competition and make it consistent with the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) best

practices," it continues. "Notwithstanding these efforts, a number of important challenges remain. These include the need to boost private sector competitiveness and generate balanced, sustainable growth that extends beyond Kazakhstan's hydrocarbon resources and increases the country's resilience. Further steps are also needed to reduce the state's still-outsized role in the economy, normalise the banking sector as a financial platform and boost regional connectivity and inclusion and adherence to environmental standards in order to create a more vibrant and competitive private sector, particularly in the non-extractive industries."

The EBRD outlined its strategic orientations in cooperation with the Central Asian country as follows: balancing the roles of the state and private sector; broadening access to finance, strengthening the banking sector and developing local capital markets; enhancing

inter-regional connectivity and international integration; promoting green economy transition.

"Overall, the bank's experience in Kazakhstan over the existing strategy period has demonstrated the value of joint ownership of the reform agenda, with all key parties involved, and the government's strong financial commitment. The bank will also continue its strong engagement in assisting Kazakhstan's transition to a low-carbon economy, including in relation to its Conference of the Parties (COP21) commitments, green legislation and investments in energy efficiency and renewables. While the bank's work in Kazakhstan to date has been a leading example of its new Green Economy Transition approach, energy and resource efficiency and climate change mitigation will continue to be a major focus of its work," the executive summary of the draft strategy concludes.

BUSINESS

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BUSINESS NEWS IN BRIEF

Yandex, the Russian multinational technology company, has opened a sales office in Almaty. Its employees will be engaged in promoting advertising products and helping partners and clients build advertising campaigns, according to the press service of the company. "The Internet advertising market is developing rapidly, formats are changing, new products and technologies are emerging. Working with customers and partners locally, we will help them to more effectively take advantage of different tools and types of advertising, taking into account the specifics of the local market," said office director Artyom Borisov. Initially, the new office will employ five to seven people, but as business increases, staff will expand. In addition to Kazakhstan, Yandex offices are also located in Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Germany, the Netherlands, Turkey, the United States, Switzerland and China.

The problematic Karaganda aviation plant KazAviaSpectr, which has not produced any aircraft for five years, was declared bankrupt, according to KazAgroFinance. It was planned that the plant would produce the agricultural aircraft 'Farmer' for processing fields with chemicals. "By the decision of the Specialised Inter-District Economic Court of the Karaganda Region KazAviaSpectr was declared bankrupt. As part of the bankruptcy procedure, the issue of selling the aircraft factory's property through electronic bidding will be decided," according to the statement. It is possible that the plant could be sold in 2018.

Tengizchevroil, which develops the Tengiz oil field in the Atyrau region, will sign 70 contracts with Kazakh companies worth \$2 billion, according to Kazinform. "Tengizchevroil, which started construction of a third generation plant, works not only with large Kazakh suppliers of goods and services. We are also trying to develop small and medium business. The company held a forum of suppliers for relatively minor work on the expansion project at Tengiz. It was announced at the forum that general contractors should contribute to the development of the region, attracting small local companies to contract work," said Tengizchevroil Public Relations General Manager Rzabek Artygaliyev. After the implementation of the project to build a third generation plant, oil production in Tengiz will increase by 12 million tonnes per year, reaching a level of 39 million tonnes.

In the village of Blagoveshchenka of the North Kazakhstan region, Dynasty Agro Company produces pressed linseed oil, according to Kazinform. An oilseed processing workshop was launched last December. "The equipment at the enterprise was installed recently. Soon the second line will arrive, and we will be able to process at least 20 tonnes per day. We can reach a volume of production of 6,000 to 7,000 tonnes of oil. The demand is big, especially from China. The first company that came to us was ready to sign a contract for 5,000 tonnes of oil," said head of the company Vladimir Kan. He added that negotiations are underway with four more companies. There are no problems with raw materials. In the past year, 26,000 hectares of oil crops were planted in the area.

GE Transportation announced the completion of the acquisition of a 50 percent stake in locomotive building company Lokomotiv Kurastyru Zauyty from the national company Kazakhstan Temir Zholy (KTZ), according to Kapital.kz. "With GE Transportation, we have been successfully cooperating for more than 10 years. Over this time, more than 300 modern Evolution series locomotives have been manufactured, which are widely used on the railways of Kazakhstan and neighbouring countries," said President of KTZ Kanat Alpysbayev, adding that cooperation with GE Transportation will continue to develop. Lokomotiv Kurastyru Zauyty was established in 2009 as a 50-50 joint venture between KTZ and the Russian Transmashholding. The plant produces GE cargo and passenger locomotives of the Evolution series for the railways of Kazakhstan and other countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States.

AIFC to launch its international stock exchange in fall

By Zhazira Dyussebekova

ASTANA – The Astana International Financial Centre (AIFC) is planning to launch the Astana International Exchange (AIX) this fall, which is expected to help create conditions for further economic growth. The initiative was discussed at the international conference "Kazakhstan: tapping international capital markets," held April 12 in the capital.

"Today, Kazakhstan's economy is facing certain difficulties connected to the challenges in the banking sector of the economy. It is a cyclic problem and sooner or later it happens in any country, but, nevertheless, it is a period of 'painful' reforms in that sector. And we realise the need to create an alternative to bank loans. ... In our country, good borrowers are not overburdened with loans and the level of bad debts is really high," said

AIFC Governor Kairat Kelimbetov at the event.

That alternative is the stock market under development in the country. To date, the existing KASE (Kazakhstan Stock Exchange) has not been able to show good results; its capitalisation is only 5 percent to GDP, while, for example, in Eastern European countries the rate is more than 15-20 percent, he added.

AIX will be the main platform for the initial public offering (IPOs) of Kazakhstan's major companies as part of the much-discussed privatisation programme.

"A very good chance for the development of the stock market is the initiative on privatisation of the largest assets of national companies, which are part of the Samruk Kazyna Sovereign Wealth Fund announced by the head of state within the 100 [Concrete] Steps. The programme of their IPOs will begin in 2018 and in 2019-2020 we

will see how the first companies – Air Astana and KazAtomProm – will be privatised... Privatisation in Kazakhstan is needed not to fill the holes in the budget, but to attract investments, to diversify investors and, most importantly, to improve corporate governance," said Kelimbetov.

AIX will function under English law and will open access to a wide investors' base. Its partners, the world's largest exchanges, will be announced in May or June and help launch the most high-tech platform in the region, he added.

Thus far, AIFC has signed memorandums of understanding with the Warsaw, Shanghai and Moscow stock exchanges, as well as NASDAQ, and exchanges in South Korea and Saudi Arabia. A memorandum was also signed with the Japan Securities Dealers Association, Korea Capital Market Institute, Korea Financial Investment Association and other or-

ganisations specialising in Islamic finance.

"The stock exchange will serve as a mechanism for the diversification of the economy by providing access to capital and allowing Kazakh investors to benefit from the economic growth of the country by investing in local major and successful enterprises," according to the AIFC press service.

AIFC is set to create a new infrastructure jointly with its partners in accordance with the world's best standards. It will allow trading in securities, commodities and derivative securities with a full cycle of the business process: the organisation of trading and clearing and registering securities.

The conference was organised jointly with BNY Mellon, FTI Consulting and Kinstellar and brought together representatives of Credit Suisse, KMG D&S, Kazatomprom and experts and analysts in the investment and stock market development fields.

AIFC will assist in attracting investments to the Kazakh economy by creating an attractive environment for investing in financial services, developing the securities market and ensuring its integration with international capital markets.

One of the main features of the new financial centre is the fact that legislation will be based on English common law.

"World experience shows that 85 percent of all the biggest successful global and regional financial centres work in the model of the legal content of English common law. Some can argue which legislation is better – English common or continental, – but we see that basically financial models and financial regulation are oriented towards English common law. The simplest justification for this is that English common law is [based on] a precedent and, in fact, it is the most flexible," said Kelimbetov.

PwC director explains new Kazakh work permit rules for foreign citizens

By Dmitry Lee

ASTANA – Last year, the Kazakh government issued more than 36,000 work permits for foreign nationals, according to the prime minister's official website data. Around one-third, or slightly more than 12,500, were issued to specialists from China and 3,500 to Turkish nationals, while Uzbekistan, the United Kingdom and India were also among the top inquirers.

Some of the changes to the work permit rules, however, have been labelled as controversial.

"The government introduced new work permit rules in June of last year," said PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) legal services director in Kazakhstan Aliya Aralbayeva in an exclusive interview with The Astana Times. "The rules were criticised by the business communities because they removed freedoms for some categories of foreign nationals. For example, foreign executives of branches and representative offices of international companies were exempt in the past from the requirement to apply for work permits, but the June 2016 rules removed such exemptions, meaning that starting Jan. 1, executives were under obligation to have a valid work permit."

Another controversy, she added, was the new requirement for foreign specialists coming under the inter-corporate transfer scheme to pass a Kazakh language test.

"We supported the views of business communities that the language requirement, if introduced, would be viewed as discriminatory and against the Kazakh Constitution's core principles," she said.

In November, a number of business associations and the Kazakhstan Foreign Investors' Council Association started a campaign against the new changes, whereas the Ministry of Healthcare and Social Protection initiated a dialogue with business circles. As a result, the proposals to change rules were introduced and approved the following month.

"Under the new work permit rules which came into effect on Jan. 1 this year, expatriates coming to Kazakhstan for a term exceeding 120 days every calendar year to perform work activities are usually required to apply for work permits and work visas. Foreign employees travelling to Kazakhstan for the purpose of engaging in productive activities will require a work permit even if they come for short periods of time," said Aralbayeva.

"Expatriates travelling to Kazakhstan to work on the basis of a work permit will need a work visa to enter the country. Visa validity will be linked to the work permit. Citizens of Russia, Kyrgyzstan, Armenia and Belarus and member

states of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) are exempt from the requirement to apply for work permits," she added.

One should keep in mind, however, that the government has its own quotas for the number of foreign employees each year.

"The number of foreign employees attracted to Kazakhstan every year should not exceed quotas announced by the government for attracting foreign labour. Companies sponsoring work permit applica-



Aliya Aralbayeva

tions should send applications for quotas for the required number of expatriate employees by August 1 each year. Work permits are issued if there are no suitable candidates for the jobs on the local labour market," she said.

State fees and application process

The state fee is payable in the national currency – tenge – every 12 months and depends on the industry sector and employee category.

"The state fee for work permits will vary from approximately \$1,000 (137 Monthly Calculated Indices (MCIs)) for a specialist role application to approximately \$1,820 (250 MCIs) for executives," said Aralbayeva.

In general, she noted the work permit application is a "time-consuming process and should be planned by the sponsoring company well in advance." The overall process could take up to one and a-half to two months or sometimes even longer, she stressed.

"Work permits will be valid in one region of Kazakhstan. Business trips to other regions will be possible if the total number of days on such trips does not exceed 90 calendar days collectively in one calendar year," she said.

PwC opened an office in Kazakhstan in 1993 and currently has more than 500 staff in two fully operating offices in Almaty, Astana and Atyrau. In the past, the company established offices in Baku (Azerbaijan), Tbilisi (Georgia), Yerevan (Armenia), Bishkek (Kyrgyzstan), Tashkent (Uzbekistan), Ashgabat (Turkmenistan) and Ulaanbaatar (Mongolia).

Chinese company to buy 51 percent of Kazakh automaker AllurGroup

Staff Report

ASTANA – China National Machinery Import and Export Corporation (CMC) held negotiations and signed an agreement on the intention to acquire 51 percent of common shares of Kazakh carmaker AllurGroup.

"The deal has a great importance not only for our enterprise, but for the entire domestic auto industry. A new level of partnership confirms the fact that the Kazakhstan automobile industry is an attractive investment sector and demonstrates a high potential for stable development," said a member of the AllurGroup board of directors Yuri Tskhai.

During the negotiations, it was noted that the AllurGroup, due to the presence of small-scale pro-

duction, welding, painting, a high level of localisation and implemented technologies, is an attractive enterprise for foreign investors and has a high development potential.

"For the Kazakh side, the partnership with the state-owned Chinese company, together with the solution of the financing tasks, will bring a real transfer of modern technologies and introduction of the newest production methods. With the help of the Chinese partner, the Kostanai enterprise can significantly deepen the localisation of production, load and expand production equipment, introduce the latest technologies, improve technological processes, produce modern cars at the facilities of SaryarkaAvtoprom with the lowest expenditure and maximum ef-

ficiency," according to the statement of AllurGroup.

The President of CMC Wang Xusheng said that it is a great honour for the company to become a partner of the leading automobile company of Kazakhstan.

The AllurGroup includes production sites of Agromashholding and SaryarkaAvtoProm and the AllurAuto dealer and distribution network. The sites manufacture the first Kazakh SUVs SsangYong Nomad and Toyota Fortuner, as well as various models of SsangYong, Peugeot, JAC, Hyundai and commercial vehicles from Iveco and JAC.

AllurGroup not only assembles, it is also an official distributor of the brands SsangYong, Peugeot, Iveco and JAC in Kazakhstan. AllurAuto is also the official dealer of Mitsubishi, Suzuki and Ford cars.

Caspi Bitum plant increases efficiency with innovative storage, transport method

By Dana Omirgazy

ASTANA – Aktau bitumen plant has developed an innovative way of storing and transporting bitumen, kazinform.kz reports.

"Viscous road bitumen is packaged in Big Bag disposable transport containers and plastic bags with a capacity of 1,000 and 40 kilogrammes respectively. New technology implies the packing of cold bitumen allowing not only to preserve the quality of material, but also to save on logistics while delivering and storing bitumen. In addition, thanks to the Big Bags, asphalt plants reduce the costs of maintaining bitumen in the molten state in bitumen stores, thus solving energy efficiency issues," said Konstantin Drobyshev, Deputy General Director for Commercial Is-

sues of Caspi Bitum during April 12 visit to the plant by representatives of the Kazakh Ministry of Energy, Roads Committee, KazAutoZhol National Company, local executive agencies and road construction organisations.

According to Drobyshev, the plant produced 111,000 tonnes of road bitumen last year for 400 kilometres of roads (a two-lane highway in the second category). The plant fully covered the country's demand in road bitumen, taking into account the output of other domestic producers.

Today the plant's products are supplied for the construction of the Western Europe-Western China international highway, as well as Shymkent-Kyzylorda, Astana-Pavlodar, Astana-Temirtau and Atyrau-Aktau highways of national significance.

Products of the Aktau bitumen

plant meet national and international standards.

Caspi Bitum plant was built as part of the state programme on accelerated industrial and innovative development for 2010-2014 to meet the needs of the road industry in high-quality road bitumen. It was put into operation in 2013. Bitumen production capacity is 400,000 tonnes of oxidised and about 120,000 tonnes of modified road bitumen.

The first batch of polymer-modified bitumen was produced in October 2015. This kind of road bitumen is obtained by introducing a polymeric component (modifier) into the composition of petroleum road bitumen. Due to the improved characteristics of heat, frost and wear resistance, this bitumen extends the service life of asphalt-concrete coatings by almost two times.



EDITORIALS

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 26, 2017

Education, individuals are the keys to Kazakhstan's continuing success

Investment in our young people has been one of the guiding principles of Kazakhstan since the earliest days of independence. The Bolashak programme, set up as far back as 1993, was, for example, a powerful symbol of our new country's confidence and belief in the power of education as well as our openness to outside ideas.

A society lacking confidence in the future would not have had the courage to send its brightest young people to be educated abroad. Kazakhstan has reaped rich rewards from the thousands of students who have returned to work here after learning at some of the world's best universities.

At the same time, we have seen investment in our home-grown educational institutes along with the imposition of high academic standards and recruitment of top-class staff. The result is that our universities now have a fast-growing reputation and are attracting students not just from Kazakhstan but from neighbouring countries.

But as President Nursultan Nazarbayev said April 12 in his much-discussed opinion "Course towards the future: modernisation of Kazakhstan's identity", if education is to drive Kazakhstan's continued success, it must also be universal. Our ambitions rest on ensuring that all our young people – indeed the entire workforce – have the skills, knowledge and qualities needed to make a positive mark on the 21st Century.

The reasons are clear. We live in an era where the world of work is faster than ever. Industries will disappear or transform. Entire professions will become redundant. Giving people the ability to find a role in the modern economy and to adapt as sectors and professions change will be essential to both individual and national prosperity.

This is one of the major challenges facing all countries not just Kazakhstan. The societies which thrive economically, socially and in terms of global influence, will be those which find and put in place the right answers. It is why the investment that Kazakhstan is making in education – among the highest globally as a share of government spending – is so important.

What was also interesting was that the President saw the solution as education in its widest form. He made clear, of course, just how essential doctors and engineers were to the country's future. But he also

stressed the importance of the humanities and promised to increase support for them in our universities.

As well as those with scientific skills, we need, he said, those "who understand modernity and the future well." His call to translate the most influential texts in this area into Kazakh for pupils to have ready access to them also underlined the roles that schools will play in building this knowledge.

Ensuring the young generation can compete globally is also, of course, behind the new emphasis given to English in schools. And it will be helped as well by the gradual switch to the Latin alphabet for the Kazakh language.

There will, the President said, be nothing sudden about this change. It will follow the evolutionary approach which has served Kazakhstan well in so many areas since independence. But he made clear that, within a decade, he wanted the change to be underway.

Along with computer literacy and knowledge of foreign languages, he put cultural openness at the heart of the Digital Kazakhstan programme. This includes an ambition for our country to be known not just for its rich natural resources and its remarkable success in the foreign policy arena but also for its cultural achievements.

He rightly pointed out the major part that Hollywood and American culture as a whole has played in growing and maintaining its influence and stature in the world. It has been a key factor in the appeal of U.S. soft power.

No country can compete, of course, with the universal attraction of American music or films. But Kazakhstan has been perhaps too shy at promoting the achievements of its artists, entrepreneurs and scientists beyond its borders. It has perhaps too often relied instead on statistics to showcase its progress internationally.

Dry data, no matter how impressive, is not, however as powerful as human stories for communication. By identifying Kazakhs whose personal stories could help give these achievements colour and life, we can more successfully promote Kazakhstan around the world. The initiative will have another benefit. It will also provide clear role models for our own young people to emulate. By raising their ambitions, it will, in turn, create more success stories and faster progress.

Kazakhstan's embrace of diversity helps build national unity

A strong sense of national identity is perhaps the most important resource a country can have. Societies which possess these feelings of pride and belonging can grasp opportunities more easily and, perhaps even more importantly, work together to overcome challenges.

We see this national resilience in action around the world in the face of natural disasters or, all too frequently today, when terrorism strikes. Where there is a clear national identity, societies respond to such outrages calmly and with increased solidarity, which prevents the divisions and fear which are, of course, the aim of the terrorists.

In the past, national identity was perhaps easier to shape. When the global flow of people was much slower and less common, countries were more likely to be made up of those with similar ethnic backgrounds, experiences and language. But that's no longer the case. With widespread migration, the challenge many countries have faced is maintaining or forging a strong sense of national identity from a much more diverse population.

The United States, whose population is overwhelmingly made up of immigrants who moved to build a new life, is a clear example of how this can be achieved. In its own way, Kazakhstan, too, has a huge amount in which to take pride.

From a population made up of a bewildering variety of nationalities and ethnic groupings – many of whom were forced to settle here – a cohesive society has been created in which all, regardless of background, are valued and can make their full contribution. It has enabled our country to plot a distinctive course, both domestically and internationally, over the last 25 years.

It is a sense of national identity deeply rooted in our land, our traditions, shared experiences and values. These links, as President Nursultan Nazarbayev said in his seminal opinion, "Course towards the future: modernisation of Kazakhstan's identity," must be protected and nurtured. It would be reckless to throw them away as they are the foundation on which our success has been built.

But it is also important, as the President added, that we don't fool ourselves into thinking our

national identity should be frozen. With change accelerating in our world, the nations who will be best able to cope and thrive in the decades ahead will be those with the courage to continue changing themselves. This includes taking the steps necessary to strengthen and modernise their national identities by being ready to shed those aspects which are out-of-date and will increasingly act as barriers to progress.

It is why together with programmes already begun to diversify and strengthen our economy and speed up political reform, the President has now set out a clear vision to modernise Kazakhstan's sense of national identity along with concrete steps to help deliver this ambition. It is another sign of the determination to ensure the country is fit and ready to chart its way through what is a globally uncertain era.

It is an identity which, in some ways, will strengthen those connections with our past experience. There is nothing new, for example, about making sure our economy and way of life are sustainable. Living in tune with our environment, husbanding resources for future generations, was what our ancestors did naturally for centuries.

In the past, too, those who lived on land were open to new ideas and influences. Kazakhstan was then, as it is now, a place where cultures and civilisations met. This openness has, of course, also been one of the defining characteristics of modern Kazakhstan in its first 25 years and a major reason for our success.

But it is an approach we can't take for granted. We have to have a willingness to continue to look and respond to what is happening beyond our borders. Unless countries are ready to learn and adapt from what we see, they will find themselves ill-prepared both for global storms which inevitably hit or to take advantage of new opportunities which change brings.

This requires, as we have said before, continued investment in education. It also needs confidence to keep modernising our national identity while preserving what makes our country and people special. It is the definition of a modern patriot and a country which looks to the future with confidence.

Cooperation between Kazakhstan, Qatar to have international impact

There are plenty of differences between Qatar and Kazakhstan as even the briefest glance at a map of the world will show. But despite these big contrasts in size, geography and climate, there are also many surprising similarities which go beyond a shared religion of the majority of their populations.

Both countries, for example, have for centuries been on global trade routes, which has given our peoples an outward outlook. Kazakhstan and Qatar, too, are rich in oil and gas resources, which have helped transform the prosperity of our people. Qatar has the world's third largest reserves of natural gas and is already the biggest exporter of liquid natural gas.

But both countries are already looking towards a post-fossil fuel world. National strategies have already been put in place, backed by major investment, to help diversify our economies. This includes a priority given to investing in the education of our young people.

Our two countries have also been markedly successful in forging our own path in the world. In global terms, we may be relatively young nations but we already are seen to have distinctive voices and to be champions for dialogue and cooperation.

We have worked hard to build strong relations with our neighbours and forge alliances around

the world with countries, big and small. Both nations are also seen as important members of global efforts to counter terrorism and extremism.

Given this shared outlook and values, the strong and growing friendship between the two countries is no surprise. This relationship was cemented by the visit of the Emir of Qatar to Astana in 2014 and of President Nursultan Nazarbayev to Doha in the following year, which led to a new determination to strengthen economic ties and cooperation on foreign policy.

Assessing the progress made in the last two years was high on the agenda when Kazakh Foreign Minister Kairat Abdrakhmanov visited Qatar on April 23. In discussions with the Emir and senior members of the government, both sides were pleased with the increased financial and commercial links between the two countries but also saw plenty of scope to deepen them in the years ahead.

Kazakhstan's ambitious privatisation plans, for example, offer an opportunity for Qatar to increase partnerships. Islamic finance, for which the new Astana International Financial Centre will be a regional base, is clearly another area for cooperation.

With its growing interest in renewable energy and green technology, there is also expected to be considerable interest in Qatar's

contribution to EXPO 2017. It is for the same reason that the Emir was given a personal invitation from President Nazarbayev to participate in the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation's first summit on Science and Technology in Astana in September.

But with tensions increasing across the world, it was understandable that the talks went well beyond bilateral relations. This is particularly relevant now that Kazakhstan has the responsibility of sitting on the United Nations Security Council. The continuing tragedy of Syria – and its impact on the region and beyond – was a major topic of discussion.

Through the Astana Process, Kazakhstan is helping create conditions where dialogue continues and trust is built. There are many barriers to overcome but the goal is to make it easier, step by painful step, to find solutions. Widening participation to include countries, such as Qatar and others from the Arab world, if it can be agreed, might help remove obstacles to progress.

Even a decade ago, it is unlikely many foreign policy experts would have predicted the influence and status of Qatar and Kazakhstan today in the international community. The more this influence is used to build prosperity and promote peace and cooperation, the better for the world.

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OPINIONS

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Kazakhstan's Modernisation 3.0 is to create a completely new, non-commodity economic model, minister says

By Irina Nos

The country has decided on a strategy: we need a new model for economic growth that will ensure global competitiveness; we need to expand the business environment and improve the conditions for mass entrepreneurship; we need to stabilise economic growth for the long term. What will be Kazakhstan's response to external and internal geopolitical and economic challenges? Minister of National Economy Timur Suleimenov spoke about the state of the economy here and now and about how the county intends to achieve its goals.

Mr. Suleimenov, what kind of understanding of trends in the world and the national economy has 2016 brought us? What was the beginning of this year like for us and what can you say about the quality of our economic growth?

Let us start with the second part of your question. The figures characterising the results of the year have been mentioned many times, so I will focus only on the main indicators. Thus, annual inflation in 2016 was 8.5 percent compared to 13.6 percent in 2015. Since early 2016, there has been an improvement in economic activity and the indicators of the real sector of the economy. In January and February 2017, gross domestic product growth was 2.5 percent compared to the corresponding period of 2016.

As for the quality of economic growth, it is ensured by growth in agriculture (by 1.6 percent), industry (by 4.5 percent), construc-



Timur Suleimenov

tion (by 5.3 percent), trade (by 2 percent) and transport (by 3.2 percent). The construction sector continues to grow: the volume of construction work has increased by 5.3 percent due to the implementation of projects through the Nuryl Zhol state programme, the Industrialisation Map and housing development programmes. Investment activity also supports the positive pace of economic growth: according to recent figures, investment volumes in January and February 2017 has increased by 11.3 percent.

As for trends, the shocks on global raw materials markets, like the transition to a new economic reality, are just some signs of rapid and irreversible change in the world. Our economy cannot be unaffected by issues of the global economy and geopolitics that have occurred or are taking place here and now. And the year 2016, as well as the two previous years, was rather complicated for Kazakhstan. We looked for ways to adapt to new external and internal conditions.

Nevertheless, we are not just observers, we see and evaluate the trends of the economy's digitisation and the automation and

robotisation of production. We want to have accelerated development, but we are restrained by high dependence on the raw materials sector and yet-low rates of technological modernisation in most industries, due to insufficiently active involvement of new technologies in production. This also includes the still-wide participation of the state in regulating business processes.

We need to radically improve the institutional and business environment; we need to create conditions comparable to the level of developed countries for the effective development of human capital. All this requires a pragmatic approach. And our choice is the third modernisation of Kazakhstan declared by the head of state in his address to the people of Kazakhstan. We have to create a new model of economic growth in a short period of time.

Kazakhstan's national debt, its absolute and relative value compared to GDP, is also of interest, isn't it? It is especially important in light of the upcoming changes in the institutional and practical implementation of economic innovations. How big is the national debt and why is it growing?

According to the Ministry of Finance, the national debt as of Jan. 1, 2017, amounted to 11.4 trillion tenge (\$36.4 billion), or 25 percent of GDP. And this is a safe level of national debt. The government's debt is 8.9 trillion tenge (\$28.4 billion), 19.4 percent of GDP; the National Bank's debt is 2.5 trillion tenge (\$7.9 billion), or 5.5 percent of GDP; the debt of local execu-

tive bodies is 40.7 billion tenge (\$130 million), or 0.1 percent of GDP.

Compared to early 2016, the national debt increased by 2.4 trillion tenge (\$7.7 billion) – from 9 trillion (\$28.7 billion) to 11.4 trillion (\$36.4 billion), mainly due to an increase in the domestic debt of the National Bank by 252.3 billion tenge (\$805.4 million). This was caused by the implementation of the monetary policy through issuing notes of the National Bank, as well as the development by the government of loans on existing credit lines attracted from international financial organisations (IFOs) and the attraction of government loans from themselves to finance the deficit of the national budget.

The government's debt has increased by 211.6 billion tenge (\$675.5 million) due to the development of loans under existing credit lines attracted from IFOs and the development of the government's loan taken from the World Bank – \$1 billion to finance the deficit of the national budget.

At the same time, liabilities to the International Bank of Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), the European Bank of Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the International Development Bank (IDB) amount to 2.2 trillion tenge (\$7 billion), or 47.8 percent of the total external debt of the government. The next largest part, 46.9 percent, is made up of obligations on Eurobonds (2.2 trillion tenge or \$7 billion) and to governments of other countries (244.8 billion tenge or \$781.5 million), at 5.3 percent.

As a rule, ministers of the financial and economic sector, when answering questions about the external debt of Kazakhstan, sharply differentiate between government debt and the debt of the quasi-public sector. Tell us about the latter – how large is it?

That is an absolutely correct differentiation. In general, the presence of national debt is evidence that the economy is developing: the country borrows from foreign markets for development. As I have said, 25 percent of GDP is a safe level of national debt.

Now, the aggregate debt of the three main entities of the quasi-public sector – the Samruk Kazyna National Welfare Fund and the KazAgro and Baiterek national managing holdings – is 13.3 trillion tenge (\$42.5 billion), or 29.1 percent of GDP, of which the foreign debt is 7.3 trillion (\$23.3 billion), or 15.9 percent of GDP.

Of course, the government has developed and implemented measures aimed at restraining the growth of national debt and the debt of the quasi-public sector. Let me point out that the concept for the formation and use of the National Fund Resources introduces a limit on the amount of government debt and foreign debt of the quasi-public sector, which should not exceed the size of the currency assets of the National Fund. As of Jan. 1, 2017, it accounts for \$61.2 billion, or 44.6 percent of GDP.

In addition, the law on the national budget annually sets limits on the government debt. For example, in 2017, this limit amounts to 11.2 billion tenge (\$35.8 million). The same applies to granting state guarantees and the debt of local executive bodies.

And since the costs of servicing and repayment of the government debt should not exceed 15 percent of the revenues of the national budget, a restriction will be imposed on the borrowing of the quasi-public sector. That is, the holdings will be obliged to coordinate the volume of external and internal borrowings with the government.

The component of the national debt in GDP that you have mentioned – 25 percent – could be considered scanty if we had a clearly diversified economy. We do not have such an economy – is that why it is so difficult for us to see this level of national debt as low?

We are coming to the end of a cycle of high prices for raw materials and, accordingly, ultra-high rental income. The world, as you see, is moving from hydrocarbons to renewable energy sources. In Kazakhstan today, the pace of modernisation of the economy and the development of different technologies, including the use of renewable energy resources, is not high. Therefore, in order to prevent structural changes in the global economy from leading us to significant costs and becoming an obstacle to productivity growth, we will create new industries at the junction of traditional sectors and the services sector. The technological re-equipment of basic industries will increase labour productivity growth by 1.3 times by 2020.

The purpose of implementing the third modernisation in the country is to create a completely new, non-commodity economic model.

National Bank has clear vision of banking sector development

By Meruert Feruzova

This year, the National Bank of Kazakhstan plans to perform an independent assessment of banks' asset quality in the country. Verification of the real situation in this sphere will give the regulator an opportunity to effectively address banks' challenges. National Bank of Kazakhstan Deputy Chairman Oleg Smolyakov discussed these issues in an interview.

How do you assess the quality of Kazakh banks' loan portfolio? Officially, the non-performing loan share indicators have significantly decreased during recent years. Does this statistics reflect the real situation? Some international experts think that the potential share of non-performing loans is quite high.

The banks' portfolio quality is one of the key aspects influencing the future of the state financial market and its participants. As of early March 2017, the non-performing loans level (over 90 days of delay in payment), in accordance with banks' reports, accounted for 7.32 percent or 1.1 trillion tenge; that is 3.8 percent lower than the maximum level set in 2014.

Banks' reports, prepared in accordance with the International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS), provide for quite a significant difference in opinions of banks' managers and auditors referring loans to the non-performing loans category.

In 2015, major macroeconomic shocks took place and had a negative impact on the financial situation and financial solvency of bank borrowers. However, banks seek to delay recognition of losses on loans, including by means of "artificial" restructuring of loans, postponing the payment. Such loans are called "evergreen" in financial circles. As a result, loans, with no payment, are not included in the non-performing category in banks' reports. That is why the National Bank has every reason to consider that, in general, the potential volume of non-performing loans exceeds the current level stated by banks in reports.



Oleg Smolyakov

Thus, the real banks' asset quality requires additional assessment because of the low quality of borrowers' financial situations, use of non-hard collateral, for example, money and property to be received in the future, affiliated companies' certificates of insurance, guarantees of natural persons, etc., as well as non-refundable loans of shareholders' business and concerned persons.

This situation is not specific to Kazakhstan; many regulators face it. In order to solve it, the National Bank, like regulators in other countries, plans to perform an inclusive assessment of asset quality that is usually accompanied by stress tests. An inclusive assessment of banks' asset quality will be conducted this year using a common methodology in order to bring the assessment to a common denominator. In order to ensure fairness and credibility to the assessment, central banks of other countries have attracted independent experts. We will apply a similar approach. The banks' asset quality assessment will be conducted by an external consultant based on the methodology developed in line with international financial reporting standards.

Understanding the scale of potential problems will give us an opportunity to approach the process of introducing the system of structured problem resolution of failed banks widely using the instruments of recapitalisation and restructuring of healthy banks and appropriate rehabilitation of unhealthy ones.

Members of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) mission, who visited Kazakhstan this year,

called on the National Bank to take quite a strong stand regarding "weak" banks. Do you share this approach or are you ready to lend a helping hand to financial institutions in trouble?

President Nursultan Nazarbayev, in his latest annual state-of-the-nation address titled "Third Modernisation of Kazakhstan: Global Competitiveness," set a task for the National Bank to develop a package of measures for the bank sector rehabilitation within the fulfilment of the task aimed at "resetting" the financial sector. In particular, we have a task of accelerating the activities aimed at cleaning banks' balance sheets from bad loans and, if necessary, ensuring recapitalisation of banks by their shareholders.

Following the results of the activities aimed at assessing the asset quality and stress tests, appropriate measures will be undertaken according to the identified problems. First of all, they include requirements of bank recapitalisation on the part of its shareholders to increase bank sustainability. In addition, measures will include procedures of rehabilitation and settlement of problem banks. That is why the National Bank's actions aimed at conducting stress tests provide for the creation of legal and economic conditions for efficient rehabilitation and settlement of problem banks and safest approaches ensuring fast resolution of banks' problems without erosion of credibility to the bank system and with minimum state expenses. Timeliness and awareness in undertaking measures to banks that are not strong enough lets the regulator significantly decrease public costs aimed at ensuring financial stability. The sooner the problem is identified, the easier it is solved and fewer social and economic losses are required.

In general, the National Bank adheres to a position in accordance with which only strong and financially stable banks can operate on the market, those that are able to meet the requirements of the regulator and conduct its activities not disrupting the financial stability of the bank system. Weak

banks should leave the market.

Banks wishing to stay in the bank services market in the face of the volatile economic situation in the country and the world as well as challenges facing the banking sector of Kazakhstan should take appropriate measures – to unite or recapitalise. At the same time, the National Bank supports those banks' initiatives that will ensure stability of the entire bank system. The chosen approach corresponds to the current international practice and received positive feedback from the IMF during recent meetings and discussions on the state of the economy and the banking sector.

Does it mean that we can expect new consolidation processes in the banking sector this year?

I repeat that we support the initiatives launched by individual banks to unite, which will help to increase the capitalisation of banks and improve existing business processes for customer service. At the same time, on our part we are ready to provide necessary support to banks for speedy completion of integration processes aimed at increasing the efficiency of the banking business.

What are the conditions under which the transaction can be concluded between Halyk Bank and Kazkom?

In accordance with legislative requirements, implementation of a potential transaction will be possible only if the rights and legitimate interests of depositors, creditors, other customers and counterparties of banks under contracts, including international obligations, are respected. In order to implement a potential transaction for the purchase of the Kazkommertsbank shares by Halyk Bank, there is a need to conduct a joint independent assessment of the Kazkom assets quality on the part of the National Bank and Halyk Bank. The quantitative parameters of the potential transaction will be determined after obtaining the results of the independent assessment. However, even now we can clearly state

that the basic condition for the possible entry of Halyk Bank into the Kazkom capital is recapitalisation of the financial institution to a level sufficient to ensure its smooth operation.

Earlier it was said that it is planned to involve the Fund for Problem Loans into the potential transaction. What will be its role in this process?

As it is known, a significant part of the Kazkommertsbank credit portfolio (over 50 percent) is represented by the liabilities of the BTA Bank. At the same time, the BTA Bank assets are assets with so-called long-term horizon of cost recovery. As a result, they do not form a sufficient level of financial flows necessary for their maintenance of Kazkommertsbank. Therefore, in order to ensure the financial stability of Kazkommertsbank, it is necessary to separate the assets of the BTA Bank from Kazkommertsbank at the first stage. The Fund for Problem Loans will serve as the operator at this stage. In the future, it is necessary to ensure involvement of these assets in the economic turnover within public-private partnership projects, including regional development programmes.

According to the task set by President Nazarbayev, legislative amendments are being developed in Kazakhstan aimed at introducing risk-based supervision that will allow the regulator to take preventive measures against banks that have not yet violated the norms but are pursuing a risky policy. Please, give us an example of what these anticipatory actions might be.

Yes, indeed, in his latest state-of-the-nation address, President Nazarbayev set a task to work out a package of measures to rehabilitate the banking sector, to ensure a transition from a formalised approach to risk-based supervision.

The National Bank has already started developing a package of measures to rehabilitate the banking sector, within which international principles of the regulatory and supervisory process will be implemented. In particular, it is

planned to strengthen activities on prevention of crisis phenomena, without waiting for the emergence of problems and risk implementation.

At present, we have approved approaches to the introduction of risk-based supervision in accordance with the methodology adopted in the European Union. These approaches provide for the development of a new supervisory model, including the identification of methods for assessing the viability of the business model and its inherent risks, risk management systems and internal control of banks, as well as internal systems for determining capital adequacy and liquidity. Risk-based supervision provides for a complete change in the system of supervisory response measures, in particular the conceptual modification of existing limited impact measures and early response measures, grounds for applying sanctions and enforcement measures. This supervisory model will allow for gradually reducing the degree of banks' exposure to various risks by improving their management systems.

In 2017, the National Bank plans to introduce a common methodology for assessing provisions with appropriate adjustments to the bank's capital (reducing regulatory equity by the difference between regulatory provisions and provisions under the IFRS). In addition, approaches to the assessment of bank transactions with related parties and transactions on preferential terms will be strengthened. The issues of strengthening the responsibility of auditors and appraisers for concealing information about the deterioration of the bank's financial situation, including the ban on carrying out activities in the financial market, will also be considered.

At the same time, at the legislative level, the mandate of the National Bank will be strengthened in terms of carrying out the forced restructuring of the bank's capital structure and simplifying the process of uniting banks.

EURASIA&WORLD

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 26, 2017

Kazakhstan, China to launch China-to-Europe container train route

By Aigerim Seisembayeva

ASTANA – Kazakhstan Temir Zholy national railway company President Kanat Alpysbayev and Director General of China Railways Lu Dongfu signed an agreement April 13 in Beijing to launch a China-to-Europe container train route through Kazakhstan.

The sides also agreed to launch the Astana-Altyntkol high-speed passenger train in May using Tulpar-Talgo LLP railway carriages. This is a project within the EXPO 2017 international exhibition in Astana.

The sides also discussed bilateral rail cooperation within the Nuryl Zhol programme and the Silk Road Economic Belt initiative.

China has developed a five-year plan for the development of inter-



Photo credit: railways.kz

national container transport between China and Europe.

The volume of container shipments from China to Europe

was 104,500 twenty-foot equivalent units (TEUs) in 2016, twice as much as 2015. By 2020, volume is expected to increase to 800,000 TEUs.

Central Asian farmers trained in latest agro-technologies

By Malika Orazgaliyeva

ASTANA – Almaty is hosting April 24-28 an “Improving the productivity and profitability of agribusiness through teaching innovative technologies of water and energy saving to farmers and agricultural specialists of Central Asian countries” seminar.

The seminar is a pilot project of Kazakhstan’s official development

assistance (ODA) system and was organised by the Kazakh Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) office in Kazakhstan and the Israeli Agency for International Cooperation MASHAV for the countries of Central Asia.

The Ushkonyr Knowledge Dissemination Centre in the Almaty Oblast and the People’s Academy of Green Technologies in the Ak-mola region are conducting the

seminar for 26 representatives of the agricultural sector of Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

The seminar topic was chosen because of Central Asia’s potential as an agricultural hub, which requires modern irrigation methods, said Director of the Department for Foreign Economic Policy of the Kazakh Foreign Ministry Olzhas Issabekov.

The participants will be trained

in the latest drip irrigation methods and green water and energy-saving approaches.

Leading Kazakh and Israeli experts are conducting master classes. Israel has applied the latest drip irrigation technology and has experience adapting this solution in arid and semi-arid climatic conditions.

The participants said they hope similar events will be conducted more often to study the development of modern agricultural production.

The seminar will also include a visit to the School of Mining and Geosciences at the Nazarbayev University and Seifullin Kazakh AgroTechnical University, as well as a briefing on the activities of Baiserke-Agro LLP.

Kazakh, Chinese foreign ministries sign 2017-2019 cooperation agreement

By Aigerim Seisembayeva

ASTANA – Kazakh Foreign Minister Kairat Abdrakhmanov and Chinese Foreign Minister China Wang Yi signed a cooperation agreement between their ministries for 2017-2019 during their April 21 meeting in Astana.

They discussed cooperation in politics, trade, the use of transboundary water resources and consular issues. They also stressed the importance of dialogue.

“Our meeting confirms the high level of Kazakh-Chinese cooperation. This year we celebrate the 25th anniversary of the establishment of bilateral diplomatic relations. Over these years, cooperation between our countries has been developing in the direction of steady growth and strengthening. In many respects, this became possible due to regular contacts of the heads of our states,” Abdrakhmanov



said, according to the Kazakh foreign ministry’s press release.

The ministers also discussed preparations for President Nursultan Nazarbayev’s participation in

the May 14-15 One Belt One Road International Forum in Beijing and Chinese President Xi Jinping’s June 7-9 visit to Astana. Both presidents will participate in the June

8-9 Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Summit in Astana.

Wang Yi said he believes bilateral cooperation will continue and that personal friendship, regular contacts and mutual trust between the leaders of the two countries are important.

“Under the leadership of President Nursultan Nazarbayev, the Kazakh people have embarked on the path of sustainable growth and sustainable development, the country is carrying out important reforms and is keeping pace with the times,” the Chinese minister said.

The ministers agreed to meet regularly to discuss Kazakh-Chinese bilateral cooperation and international affairs, including Kazakhstan’s non-permanent membership on the UN Security Council for 2017-2018. They also agreed to develop cooperation within the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA).

Trade with EAEU members grows

Staff Report

Kazakhstan’s trade with its allies within the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) is growing, according to the press service of the Ministry of Energy of Kazakhstan, outlining mineral products as dominant in the structure of the country’s exports.

“In January-February 2017, Kazakh mutual trade with the EAEU member countries was \$2.5 billion, which is 56 percent more than in January-February 2016, including exports of \$742 million (an increase by 42.6 percent), and imports of \$1.8 million (62.2 percent more),” the official press release of the Kazakh Ministry of Energy said.

Kazakhstan’s exports are dominated by mineral products at 38.5 percent of the exports to the EAEU countries; metals and metal products, 34.8 percent; chemical products, 13.3 percent and animal and vegetable products along with easy-to-cook food products, 7.6 percent.

Among the imported goods from the EAEU there are chemicals at 23.0 percent; mineral products, 20.6 percent; machinery and equipment, 19.7 percent; metals and goods made of metal, 12 percent and 9 percent; products made of animals and vegetables and finished food products, 11.8 percent.

According to the official data, the EAEU has an integrated market of some 183 million people and a gross domestic product

of more than \$4 trillion. The EAEU allows a free movement of goods, capital, services and people and provides for common policies in the macroeconomic sphere, transportation, industry and agriculture, energy, foreign trade and investment, customs, technical regulation, competition and antitrust regulations.

There have been talks of introducing a single currency, however, no definitive agreement has been reached. The EAEU has supranational and intergovernmental institutions: the Supreme Eurasian Economic Council (SEEC) is the supreme body consisting of the heads of the member-states. The second level of intergovernmental institutions is represented by the Eurasian Intergovernmental Council consisting of the prime ministers of the member-states.

The EAEU has been seeking ways to play a bigger role in trade with East Asia. EAEU representatives have thus far commenced talks for official trade cooperation with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). EAEU members have also agreed to step up talks to strengthen cooperation with China, including in a format of exchange on goods and services and to set up expert groups to develop preferential trade regimes with Israel and India. It already has a free trade agreement with Vietnam.

The EAEU member states are Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic and Russia.

Central Asian hub for countering global threats to open

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – The Central Asian Regional Hub for Countering Global Threats will be established in the capital within the Academy of Law Enforcement Agencies under the Prosecutor General’s Office. The plan was announced April 11 at the meeting in Vienna between Prosecutor General Zhakip Assanov and United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) Executive Director Yury Fedotov.

A memorandum of understanding was signed between the Kazakh Prosecutor General’s Office and the UN, according to the office’s press service.

“It is an important event for us. This will help the Central Asian countries to increase their potential in combating the challenges, security and stability that stem from terrorism, violent extremism and transnational organised crime. We are grateful to Kazakhstan for its support and we will work in cooperation in this direction,” said Fedotov, according to the press release.

The regional hub will become a location where law enforcement and special bodies will take part in trainings and learn the world’s best practices and advanced technologies to counter five global threats – extremism and terrorism, illicit drug, weapon and human trafficking, cybercrime and corruption.

“This hub will become a single platform in Central Asia. The law enforcement and special authorities from Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Pakistan and Uzbekistan will learn the best world practices and technologies to counter major global threats,” said Assanov.

The UN and Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) headquarters in Vienna are ready to send their leading experts to the regional hub to share experience. The hub aims to become a major international research and development centre for joint re-

search with law enforcement agencies of Central Asian countries.

During his stay in Vienna, Assanov also met with OSCE Secretary General Lamberto Zannier to discuss the main directions of cooperation as part of the Central Asian regional hub. Kazakhstan cooperates with the OSCE on all the most important aspects of strengthening international security in the sphere

FEDOTOV:
“This will help the Central Asian countries to increase their potential in combating the challenges, security and stability that stem from terrorism, violent extremism and transnational organised crime.”

of combating the challenges and threats of our time, said Assanov.

“We need to unite joint efforts in the fight against violent extremism and terrorism, drug trafficking, corruption and money laundering. The academy’s initiative to create a hub is timely and relevant. We support this initiative. We must attract the best experience of the international expert community,” added Zannier.

Assanov also held talks with International Anti-Corruption Academy Dean Martin Kreutner. The parties noted the common goals and tasks facing their respective institutions and expressed interest in establishing mutually-beneficial cooperation.

UNODC, with 21 regional offices in 150 countries, is a global leader in combating illicit drug, weapon and human trafficking, organised crime and international terrorism.

Kazakhstan calls for global reduction in military spending

By Aigerim Seisembayeva

ASTANA – Kazakhstan renewed its call for a cut in global military spending on the Global Day of Action on Military Spending (GDAMS) in an April 24 statement published by the country’s Foreign Ministry.

The aim of the GDAMS 10-day campaign that started April 18 is to push governments to invest money in health, education, employment and climate change rather than militaries.

The statement starts with an affirmation that the world has entered a new and troubling era, with tensions and conflicts, suspicions and competition increasing between major powers. This, in turn, is leading to a new arms race and a greater use of force to defend national interests and expand spheres of influence.

Kazakhstan, therefore, supports such international initiatives as the GDAMS, saying that they are more important than ever. Launched in 2011, its aim is to encourage countries to reduce military spending, which, according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), reached \$1.7 trillion in 2015.

“Since independence 25 years ago, Kazakhstan has championed the cause of peace, co-operation and disarmament. Our own devastating experiences led us to give up voluntarily the world’s fourth biggest nuclear arsenal and shut down the Semipalatinsk test site. President Nazarbayev has urged the international community to make building ‘a world without nuclear weapons the main goal of mankind in the 21st century,’” the statement reads.

In his manifesto “The World. The

21st Century,” Nazarbayev also called for measures to eliminate the use of force as a means of settling disputes. Reducing military expenditure from its present high levels would be a step towards this goal and would help ease tensions and the dangerous competition between military blocks.

Kazakhstan also believes that a reduction in military budgets could release funds to tackle hunger and extreme poverty and build a fairer, more prosperous and stable world. These are the aims of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which were agreed to by the international community in 2015.

The lessons from their predecessors – the Millennium Development Goals – underline the critical importance of extra funding to deliver transformational change. It is why at

the UN General Assembly in 2015 President Nursultan Nazarbayev called for each country to divert one percent of military spending to help achieve the SDGs by their 2030 target.

“Even if this initiative does not yet enjoy the support of some governments, at the same time, there is growing awareness among the population of many states that military intervention worsens rather than solves problems,” the statement says.

Kazakhstan believes that by eliminating nuclear weapons and transferring even a small part of military budgets of all countries, the world could find significant additional resources to support sustainable development. This would, according to the statement, improve the prospects for security and peace around the world and reduce the need for military spending.

Nation&Capital

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PEOPLE

U.S. filmmaker chronicles Kazakh eagle hunters in Mongolia

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CULTURE

Japanese Oki Dub Aino Band to perform at Almaty's music festival

B3

SPORTS

More than 13,000 run in Almaty international charity marathon

B7

New Astana railway station set to open June 1



By Dana Omirgazy

ASTANA – Astana is set to open a new railway station ahead of the EXPO 2017 international specialised exhibition, to be called Nuryl Zhol. The facility will open June 1, Kazakhstan Temir Zholy press service reports.

The project is divided into two stages ensuring the integration of the Astana railway junction and the construction of a railway station complex. The former implies the development of infrastructure to provide the passage of increasing freight and passenger traffic.

“Advanced innovative technologies available in the construction industry were used at a new railway station. Thus, the railway overpass equipped with noise protection screens allowed to provide the passage of trains to the new railway station, without disturbing the existing and planned transport arteries of the city,” noted the report.

With a capacity of more than 35,000 passengers per day, the new station will significantly relieve the load from the existing station of Astana, which welcomes up to 18,000 passengers per day.

International experts from Buro Happold, British professional services firm providing engineering consultancy, Tabanioglu Architects, an architectural firm based in Istanbul, and a team from Germany designed and implemented technical solutions to locate the station on the concourse above the railway tracks.

“This is a kind of know-how of the modern way to build the station buildings. The ‘Station bridge’ almost everywhere have replaced the station of a ‘shore’ type due to greater efficiency, compactness and more rational use of a space,” said the report.

The new station is located closer to the Astana business centre, which will significantly reduce the

burden of vehicle movement and accelerate traffic.

To ensure the safety of passengers with limited physical abilities, the facility with an area of more than 120,000 square metres will feature tactile paths, an information board with the use of the Braille and special cash desks.

In addition to the main waiting room, there will be hotel rooms, storage rooms, mother-and-child rooms, medical offices, food courts, restaurants, indoor and outdoor parking for more than 1,500 vehicles and much more services that meet the best world standards.

“The building will be equipped with energy-saving elevators, escalators and ground heat exchangers, which pre-heat the air coming from the street in the winter and cools the air in the summer. A multi-zone air conditioning system distributes cold and heat from one external unit directly to several internal ones ensuring energy efficiency,” according to the report.

Rainwater harvesting and rain-water recycling systems have been designed for the cleaning of facades and irrigation of adjacent territories.

For the convenience of passengers, modern queue management systems, electronic ticket sales and internet access are provided.

To ensure a high level of protection against threats in emergencies, security staff will carry out a wide range of anti-terrorist activities. Facility will be equipped with passenger screening, video surveillance and access control systems. Security staff will operate inside and outside the facility to ensure 24-hour monitoring.

The new station will provide more than 1,300 people with jobs.

General construction will be completed May 15 and during the next two weeks all tests of engineering communications, intelligent train control system as well as passenger services will be carried out.

Crowdfunding in Kazakhstan – finally a reality?

By Zhazira Dyussebekova

ASTANA – Crowdfunding has become a usual thing to people in developed countries. Kickstarter was launched in 2009 and today is one of the most famous crowdfunding platforms in the world, along with Indiegogo and GoFundMe. Russian analogue Boomstarter began in 2012 and has managed to reach IPO level. Kazakhstan is just starting to show interest in crowdsourcing, with two platforms founded last year.

Several companies attempted to conquer the country’s crowdfunding pedestal prior to 2016, but their attempts failed. The nation’s users received Startuper.kz, Starticket.kz, i6.kz, Gostart.kz, Asar.ainvest.kz without much enthusiasm.

While the situation with the platforms was quiet uncertain, local start-ups and talented people were able to collect funds through

foreign platforms. For example, the funds for Kanat Beisekeyev’s documentary “Bala,” about Kazakh adoptees in the United States, were raised on a foreign platform. Would he have been able to raise the money in Kazakhstan? Maybe, but it would have taken far longer.

The biggest challenge for Kazakh crowdfunding platforms is a lack of awareness and small audience. The attempts continue, however, and this time seem to be more successful.

Baribirge.kz

“Baribirge.kz began its work on Aug. 1, 2016 and in this short time we have already managed to attract more than 4 million tenge (US\$12,000) for various social and creative projects,” said Anna Tadzhimuratova, general director of El-Mirador, the company that founded the website.

Continued on Page B2

High water remains in regions across Kazakhstan as some residents return home

By Kamila Zhumabayeva

ASTANA – For the past several days, Kazakhstan has been struggling to control floods and high water in several regions. Some 2,000 homes have been flooded across the country, Kazakhstan’s minister of internal affairs informed during governmental session.

“Life-sustaining activity was disturbed in 52 populated places in the Karaganda, Akmola, North Kazakhstan, Kostanai, Pavlodar, Aktobe and East Kazakhstan regions, where 1,949 houses were flooded... A severe situation was observed in the Akmola region, where 893 houses in 26 populated places were flooded and 2,418 people were evacuated,” Minister of Internal Affairs Kalmukhanbet Kassymov said, today.kz reported.

A second flood wave hit Aktobe, where a large body of water reached suburban villages. On April 16, an emergency situation was declared in the city due to high water. According to the Committee of Emergencies of the Kazakh Ministry of Internal Affairs, more than 500 country houses were flooded as of April 17 and 1,361 residents had to quickly pack their bags and evacuate to safety.

It was previously reported that hundreds of police and emergency staff in Aktobe were working around the clock in flood zones to safeguard public peace and the safety of residents and to prevent looting.

The Atbasar area of the Akmola region is also suffering after a protective dam built only last year collapsed, causing 269 houses to be flooded as of April 17, today.kz wrote. The region is still waiting for floodwaters to recede.

Earlier, the anti-flood headquarters of West Kazakhstan region conducted an aerial visual inspection of flood-prone areas of the Ural River. Complete ice clearance and the filling of the floodplains of the Ural River were observed during the visual inspection, Tengrinews.kz reported.

According to analysis conducted, minor flooding in populated places and highways happened due to a large inflow of flood and melt-water into reservoirs in the Akmola, Karaganda and Zhambyl regions, and an urgent increase of water removal became necessary. All rescue units are operating on high alert. Temporary gauging stations were installed by subdivisions of the Internal Affairs Ministry along with akimats (city administrations).

A local emergency situation was declared on April 17 in three areas of Karaganda region as activities of daily living were disturbed in populated places in the Bukhar Zhyrau, Karkaralinsk and Abai districts, according to the press service of Karaganda region akimat.

The press service of the Committee of Emergencies recently announced that a noticeable decrease in water level and water removing from reservoirs was observed in flooded areas of Karaganda region. The committee noted all designated water areas are under control while non-stop observation of water levels in populated places is continuing.

Two hundred and sixty seven people who were evacuated from Kyzylzhar Village of Bukhar-Zhyrau district have returned back to their homes.

People also began to return to their homes in Kostanai region after floodwaters were gone.

Earlier, President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev during a meeting with Kassymov tasked the government with restoring normalcy to flooded regions.

The akim (governor) of North Kazakhstan region said the cost of houses that were fully destroyed would be compensated to residents. In addition, volunteers across Kazakhstan are arranging action to collect aid for fellow countrymen who are victims of flooding. Kazakhstan’s senators have also decided to help residents by transferring a day’s earnings to flood victims.

Kyzylorda volunteers cultivate concern for others, present inclusive theatre production

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – A Kyzylorda volunteer organisation held a charity concert April 21 as part of the social programme to help rehabilitate and socialise individuals with physical challenges. The inclusive theatre and wheelchair dance troupe presented its debut performance.

“We decided to arrange a concert to support our unique projects – the inclusive theatre and wheelchair partner dancing. Our performers have problems with transportation. They do not have the opportunity to get to a specialised bus. So, they proposed an idea to organise a concert and use the funds collected to purchase a minivan. Soloists of the special dance project have already taken part in other events. Their performance created a fu-

re at a youth ball recently,” organisation head Olga Chebakova told The Astana Times.

The group, called Kyzylorda Volunteers, was launched in January 2015 when local enthusiasts decided to unite and create a like-minded community.

“There was no such thing as volunteering in our city. No one understood what it meant, what should be done. I had a volunteering experience as I helped the organisations at various events and worked with public funds. We decided to work purposefully in this direction and therefore we opened our own organisation. United Nations volunteer Nikita Shabayev from Astana came to us at the end of 2015. We collaborated for a year. I am grateful for getting to know him. He consulted with us on various issues,” she said.

The organisation does not work

in one specific direction and tries to help everyone. Earlier, they addressed different social groups with a proposal to help them. Now, people come to them directly for assistance.

Chebakova, an entrepreneur who owns a printing company, noted the main goal is to attract people’s attention.

“We visited a rural foster house and held several events there. We conducted master classes and trainings with children. Our activities made society pay attention to this centre. Then, other organisations started to offer their help in organising other activities. We visited the children’s and adult rehabilitation centres and an oncology hospital. The activities with the physically challenged are of special importance for us,” she said.

The volunteers conduct all their activities without the support of the akimat (local executive body)

or sponsors, working instead with partners from public funds and associations. All the projects are widely covered by local media.

Four coordinators initially developed plans and organised activities. Now, the main team consists of 10-15 people of various age categories, a project head, coordinator and consultant.

“When we have an event, the coordinator conducts meetings, then notifies volunteers about the project. We also invite other participants through social networks such as Vkontakte and Facebook. People fill out the questionnaire and automatically receive the newsletter about the event. After the event, we also provide photo and video reports,” she said.

Chebakova feels helping someone is a path of spiritual purification, making life’s challenges seem more bearable.

“I never thought I would be a volunteer. Now, the volunteering takes most of my time; on the contrary, I work when I have spare time. When I began to communicate with people with disabilities, my personal problems faded into the background. We forget how to enjoy life and simple things in our daily routine. We are obsessed with our problems and do not notice people who need help and attention. I see a sense of respect, gratitude and joy in people’s eyes and it is really inspiring,” she said.

The attitude towards the volunteer movement in Kyzylorda has changed. People have become more interested and ready to help.

“We would like to promote volunteering in schools next year. We plan to conduct trainings in this direction. I plan to make a project on voluntary groups. Volunteers have a completely different world view. Volunteering leads to success. Young philanthropists find a good job and new hobbies easily,” she said.



THINGS TO WATCH & PLACES TO GO

HILTON GARDEN INN

April 29 at 9 a.m. Networking Lab

RAMADA PLAZA

April 29 at 7 p.m. Flowers Ball

ASTANA OPERA

April 30 at 6 p.m. Music of Latin America
May 4 at 7 p.m. Mozart, You Are God...

ASTANA CONGRESS HALL

May 6 at 7:30 p.m. Yerlan Kokeyev and K7 Band

PEOPLE

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 26, 2017

U.S. filmmaker chronicles Kazakh eagle hunters in Mongolia

By Dana Omirgazy

ASTANA – A stunning video named “Nomads of Mongolia” describing the life of Kazakh eagle hunters in Western Mongolia shot by U.S. filmmaker Brandon Li has been amazing YouTube and Vimeo viewers over the past few months. The former MTV producer and current global nomad took some time from his schedule to give an exclusive interview to The Astana Times.

“I was drawn to the Kazakh nomads because I wanted to capture a part of the world that still lives traditionally in a unique and visually compelling way. Cultures like theirs are rapidly dying out around the world, so my goal was to create a vibrant short film that conveys the spirit of their lifestyle while their traditions are still being practiced,” Li said.

The filmmaker spent several weeks in a unique and picturesque place in Mongolia, home of the Kazakh ethnic group. Kazakh people living there have rich traditions that are still being practiced today. “I filmed in Bayan-Ölgii, in Sagsai and the Altai Mountains. I was simply awed by how strong these people are to survive under such harsh living condi-



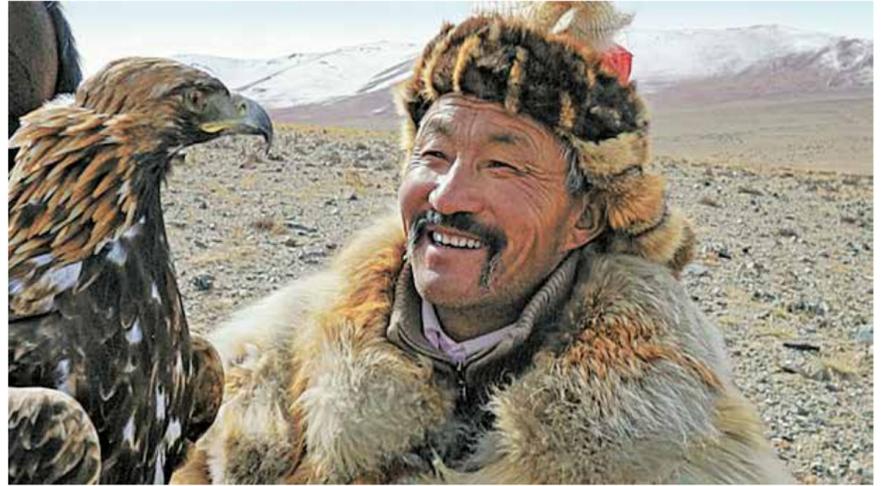
Brandon Li

tions. Every aspect of their life requires strength, from milking a camel to herding yaks. I was also impressed by the dedication required to train eagles for years in order to utilise them for hunting. I am glad the hunters eventually release the eagles back into the wild so the birds can breed. I also enjoyed experiencing the activities they do for fun like wrestling and horseracing. It was good to see a lighter side to their lives,” he added.

Since ancient times hunting with eagles has been not only the practice of trapping animals, but also art and entertainment. It has not lost its importance to this day.

Today, enthusiasts in Kazakhstan, Germany, Japan, Italy, Spain, Pakistan, England, the United Arab Emirates, Hungary and many other countries practice eagle hunting. On Nov. 16, 2010 UNESCO recognised falconry as a living human heritage.

“I held an eagle but I did not dare try to eagle hunt. The birds are so large and powerful – it takes a brave person to tame an animal like that. I watched three eagle hunters go out and hunt, though. I was fascinated to see the strategies they use to catch prey. Eagle hunting is a complicated and dangerous practice that requires strength, intelligence and a mutual trust



between hunter and eagle,” Li explained.

Li has made 42 videos so far. His works are triggering great interest and inspiring more people to travel and experience different cultures.

“I was born and raised in the U.S. and have been a nomad for about four years. I spend almost all my time outside the U.S., traveling for work and pleasure. So far, I have visited

about 35 countries. Filmmaking has been my main form of self-expression for most of my life, whether I was making home videos as a child, studying in film school, or directing commercials and films as an adult. Traveling is my main source of inspiration so I am always looking for opportunities to have an adventure and make a film about it. I have made films about India, Japan, Hong Kong, Spain, France,

Greece, Dubai, Oman and many other places. I always try to focus on the lives of the local people, portraying them in a way that is respectful and accurate while also being visually beautiful. Next, I will be shooting in Mexico and Central America for a short film, and who knows after that. The fun part about my life is that another adventure is always just around the corner,” he said.

Secret weapons of Uzbek businesswomen

By Dmitry Lee

ASTANA – Uzbekistan’s mostly male-dominated entrepreneurial arena is slowly being populated by women. According to the Uzbek statistics committee, the number of businesswomen in small and private entrepreneurship grew 1.6 times in the past decade – more than 40 percent are

successful managers and directors of small businesses.

The Astana Times wanted to learn what drives women entrepreneurs and how they manage to succeed in the modern economic environment.

Dilfuza Zaitullayeva, 25, is the owner of Uzbek Tours, a small travel agency. She was born and raised in Tashkent.

“Women are more often than not getting into politics and business around the world. Our main weapon to thrive in business is of course being tactful, flexible, having good organisational skills and listening – something men often don’t do,” she said, smiling.

“To have a successful small business, one needs a tempered character, patience. When I opened

my company three years ago, there were times when I thought to myself that there was no way to further it; that’s it the dead end and now I need to shut it down. In these times, now I just sleep on it and when I wake up I always find the way out,” she added.

Zaitullayeva’s success is also motivated by her love of what she does.

“I realised that it is something I liked doing. We started with outbound tourism, but as you know, Uzbekistan is rich in its own culture and history and now we do both inbound and outbound tourism. But I really enjoy doing this and this passion helps me thrive,” she said.

A graduate of the English linguistics faculty of Uzbek State University, Zaitullayeva uses all the theoretical skills she acquired on the job.

“Of course, you have to understand that it’s not always like that – you just like something and open a business and you will be good at it. You need basic skills or at least to have an understanding of what you’re doing. In my case, I speak English and Spanish fluently that I majored in, so for me it was easy to communicate with tourists and foreign clients,” she noted.

Starting one’s own company these days in Uzbekistan is easy, she claims.

“Opening a business is very simple: you pick a name for your company, provide state authorities with all the documents they require and in about 10-15 business days you’re a business lady. Then, depending on your type of activity, you need to obtain the license – here it might take up to six months to obtain one, in our case in the tourism and hospitality sector,” Zaitullayeva explained.

“These days, seeing female entrepreneurs is a normal thing; there are more and more of us each day. This means that our economy is doing well; the middle class is growing and I think it is a good sign,” said Zaitullayeva.

She dreams of teaching young girls how to open their own businesses in the future, as she believes it is something that should be taught in public schools.

“I am grateful to my teachers for everything they taught me, but I never used biology or geometry or algebra in my adulthood. I wish I had learned a little bit about business management, the procedures and what to expect, etc. I want to thank the Association of Business Women of Uzbekistan, Tadbirkor Aiyol, for helping me find my path when I most needed it and all my relatives who believed in me from the very beginning,” she said.

Zaitullayeva realises Uzbek Tours is still a small company with a moderate income. She is planning on expanding and reaching out to Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, however, and is looking for business partners.

“I want the people who are thinking about opening a business to draw a map of what needs to be done, where they see themselves and plan each detail carefully. And most importantly, so the business will not only bring financial stability, but also pleasure,” she said.



Study trip brings Dutch students to learn about people, EXPO

By Kamila Zhumabayeva

ASTANA – Fifty geography students from the Netherlands’ Utrecht University visited Kazakhstan for their annual study trip. The Astana Times learned how they were enjoying the good old hospitality, friendliness and kindness of the Kazakh people.

“We are geography students from the Netherlands on our study trip here. We do this every year, chose a country to visit and go. We have a day programme, visit museums and the university. In the evening, we can go out and dance a little bit,” said Chiara Fakkel of the group during the visit to a national museum in the capital.

“We see a country we have never seen before. Kazakhstan is very big; we cannot relate to it, our country is very small. People are very nice, open, very welcoming and everyone is willing to help us. We met a girl who was helping us with everything when we were here in February,” she added.

The study group was invited April 13 to the capital’s KazGUU University, where Dutch Ambassador in Kazakhstan Dirk Jan Kop and Kazakh Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Roman Vassilenko gave a lecture.

They made friends with other students at KazGUU who helped them when they needed a taxi or translating when they went out together. The Dutch students also met people in Almaty who want to visit the Netherlands. Fakkel noted she felt good about meeting new people and making new friends.

“I think it is really good for our country to have an expo exhibition. Sustainability is really important. I think it [the exhibition] will attract a lot of people. At first, one may not want to visit because he or she doesn’t know Kazakhstan, but now people may consider having a look and find it nice,” she added.

While in the capital, many students went to Khan Shatyr; others walked across the city eating local food. All have different interests, so they made a small book with highlights where students can choose places they want to visit. Some would like to have a seat somewhere, while others like to explore the city and walk around, according to Fakkel.

Student Dionne Melskens, a board member of a Dutch study association, organised the trip.

“Every year we organise a study trip. This year we wanted to do a really big one and we thought Kazakhstan may be nice, because you

don’t know a lot about it and it’s a big and a fascinating country. This is why we chose Kazakhstan,” she said.

She noted the students heard a lot about the expo and are being advised to visit it. Melskens believes coordinating such an event is good for Kazakhstan, because people will know more about the country and its activities.

“People here are very sweet. Most don’t speak English a lot and as good, but they try to help us with phones and other things anyway. They are very nice and helpful,” she said.

The students met two people during their winter reconnaissance visit who helped them find a good place to go out and eat.

“They helped us when we had language troubles, sharing their phone numbers with us. Everybody is really friendly and we have made a lot of friends; it is very easy to make friends over here,” she added.

Melskens does not have a lot of free time during the busy moments of the programme because of preparations, but she enjoys going for a walk on the streets, looking at buildings and observing how people live when she is in cities she has never visited before.

The group has already been to

Borovoe and was preparing to leave for Shymkent, Turkistan. They will then have a five-day stay in Almaty, where they plan to spend some time at Medeu Skating Rink and hiking in the mountains.

“The weather in January was very cold and freezing, -20 degrees or something... The snow was all over in Borovoe. It is funny to see

the temperature change rapidly within months,” she noted.

“We are here to see the country because we don’t know much about Kazakhstan and know we are learning a lot now. It is really nice; I like it. The buildings and architecture are amazing and a little futuristic here. I have never seen such buildings before. It is very

different from what I am used to,” said student Ruben Scholtes.

“People are super friendly, sharing and curious about things. I talked to students at KazGUU University about football; we went out together, it was great. I have their phone numbers now, so they will call me when they are in the Netherlands,” he said, smiling.



CULTURE

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 26, 2017

Japanese Oki Dub Ainu Band to perform at Almaty's music festival

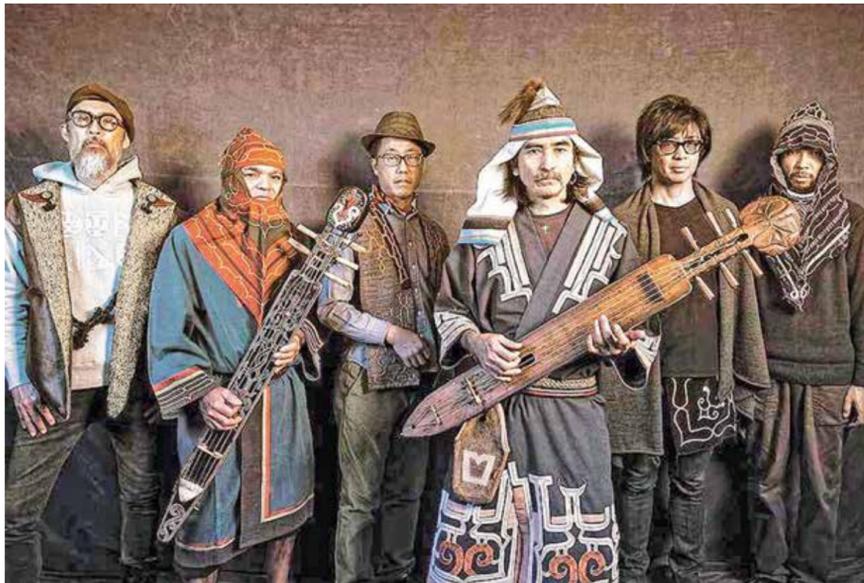
By Kamila Zhumabayeva

ASTANA – As the May 20-21 Spirit of Tengri 2017 contemporary ethnic music festival in Almaty gets closer, one of its most anticipated guest performers, the Japanese Oki Dub Ainu Band, and Ainu music and culture, is coming into sharper focus.

"I bumped into the Kazakhstan team in the elevator at the 2017 Sapporo Asian Winter Games. They whispered 'shaman,' because I was wearing an Ainu costume for the opening concert. I am not shaman, but a tonkori man. Tonkori is a kind of harp handed by Sakhalin Ainu," Ainu musician, artist and lead band member Oki Kano (known professionally as OKI) told The Astana Times.

Ainu are the indigenous people of Japan and Russia and the music is a tradition of its namesake people. A tonkori is an Ainu stringed instrument which Kano uses in performances.

Kano mixes traditional Ainu music with reggae, dub and other



worldwide genres. He also plays guitar and traditional Ainu percussion instruments.

"Some tonkori rhythm reminds

me of the sound of riding a horse. Ainu didn't have a horse culture like the Mongols, but the roots of the tonkori sound originated from

somewhere in central Asia," he said.

"The Mongol Empire invaded Sakhalin. The Ainu won the war

once; I mean the Mongolian military was good at horseback riding. Finally, the Ainu lost the war and concluded a trade treaty with the Empire. We, the Ainu people, got a lot of cultural influence from central Asia through trade," he added.

According to various sources, oral Ainu culture has numerous genres. Light-hearted ballads on daily affairs and rituals are accompanied by traditional Ainu instruments and yukar (mimicry), a form of rhythmic epic poetry supported by light percussion.

The contents of these ballads were "an important source of understanding daily life as well as various traditions and habits of the Ainu people," said Kano, and are significant in protecting its cultural identity today, as seen by his efforts.

His band plays traditional Ainu songs in an electric style that mixes dub rhythms with the tonkori. During live concerts, he either plays with the band or sings and plays the instrument in a solo acoustic act.

Kano is from Kanagawa Prefec-

ture, located on the largest island in Japan. He studied industrial arts at Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music. Kano moved to New York in 1987, where he worked as a special effects artist on film productions, returning to Japan in 1992, according to the band's website.

Kano often performs in Japan, but has also participated in several folk music festivals in other countries. His band was recently on tour in Australia. In 2006, he released the album Kila & Oki with the Irish band of the same name. His earlier solo albums include collaborations with the female Ainu singing group Marewrew.

The band is preparing for its visit to Almaty and performance in the festival.

"No fussing and fighting. Music makes the world go round. Oki Dub Ainu Band will rock the Spirit of Tengri festival with heavy drum and bass sound, plus deep echo and reverb DUB WISE! Let's share the special time together and dance with wicked Ainu rhythm. Don't miss it!" said Kano.

Crowdfunding in Kazakhstan – finally a reality?

Continued from Page B1

The platform's first successful project was raising funds to record an album of the Lampy (Lamps) Orchestra. It collected the biggest amount – 1.211 million tenge (US\$3,570) and 70 people pledged. Another big project was printing a book of Kazakh tales by author Yury Serbryansky, which received the President's Diploma from the Association of Publishers, Printers and Booksellers of Kazakhstan and was nominated for "The best publication for children and youth in two languages" by the Director of the National Library of Kazakhstan. The project was supported by 69 participants.

"At the moment, there are eight

more than money from the projects they support.

"The idea is that by participating in various projects, a user can receive something unique as a reward. For example, in the project to raise funds for the recording of the album of Lampy Orchestra, as a reward it was possible to visit the group's rehearsal. We attended this rehearsal together with those users who chose this reward and it was unforgettable! The rehearsal turned into the live performance with casual communication and a huge number of positive emotions," said Tadzhimuratova.

Users who supported the ASAR project received gifts of wool products made by grandmothers with love and gratitude to those who supported them.

came to us and said she wanted to create clothes in Nomad style for the European concept store. Earlier, she showed her line in Moscow and attracted lots of attention from the European public. So, she thought why not popularise Kazakhstan through clothes? So, we decided to add her project on the platform," said Utegenova.

Recently, the website launched fundraising for the informational poster "Snakes of Kazakhstan." The goal is to collect 460,000 tenge (US\$1,475).

"Many people have no idea what kind of snakes we have in our country and which of them are poisonous. In Almaty near the mountains there are lots of snakes and when people see them, they take rocks or a stick and exterminate them. With that money, the author wants to print posters and distribute them to all of Kazakhstan's schools. Famous Russian scientist Nikolai Drozdov wrote a letter to the authors and invited them to the Kremlin," she added.

She shared her opinion on why previous platforms were unsuccessful.

"We work with start-ups. We have to be professionals in our field. I think the main reason previous attempts to create crowdfunding websites failed was because they were start-ups, too. They faced a lack of knowledge in legislation, marketing, promotion and funding. A lot of such factors affected them, I think. It is not just about creating the website. To manage a crowdfunding platform, there should be a group of specialists," she said.

The team behind start-time.kz was engaged in charity projects before crowdfunding.

"So, we kind of digitalised our work. We had our base of specialists and we were ready. We are also managed by an investor who can invest in some of the projects. We are not a start-up," said Utegenova.

The number of people who know about crowdfunding is small and the nation needs to create an environment where start-ups can develop, she added.

"Well, there are people who know what the crowdfunding is, but ordinary people, they have no idea. We say it is similar to the ancient Kazakh tradition called Asar. In the past, friends, neighbours and relatives built yurts together and the recipient should cook a tasty lunch and make a good atmosphere. So, crowdfunding is pretty much the same. If we awake this Asar tradition in people, crowdfunding will find its place under the sun. Moreover, it helps avoid bureaucracy. If a person has an idea and dreams about it and if people help him, who knows, maybe he will be a major businessman in the future and raise the economy," noted Utegenova.

Kazakhfilm to complete filming of "Mir Mechty" in May

Staff Report

ASTANA – A feature film named "Mir Mechty" ("The World Of Dreams") produced by the Aimanov Kazakhfilm studio by an order from Kazakh Ministry of Culture and Sports will complete filming in May, the press service of Kazakhfilm informs.kinokiy.com

"One of my friends who lives in Saint Petersburg told me that there is a writer named Daniyar Sugralinov in Kazakhstan and that I have to meet him. But I didn't give much thought to it back then," Sharipov shared.

"I got acquainted with his work by chance and we met each other

only during summer of the last year. We did not plan to make a film out of this book. We kept the main motive and tried to present it in a more cinematographic way," he said.

A feature film tells the story of a man who tries to change his life. The plot of the film is based on a book of Kazakh writer Daniyar Sugralinov named "Kirpichi 2.0" ("Building Blocks 2.0").

Farkhat Sharipov is known for films like the 2010 drama "Skaz o Rozovom Zaitse" ("Tale of a Pink Hare"), the 2013 comedy "Inoplanetyane ni pri Chem" ("Not the Fault of Aliens") and "Akzhol."

The film will be shot in Almaty.

Among young candidates, Dulyga Akmoloda was confirmed for the main role. Yerzhan Tusupov, Gulzhamal Kazakhbayeva, Assel Kaliyeva and other actors will participate in the film as well.

"Before filming began, the director was preparing us for quite a long time. We rehearsed every scene with him. The main character is close to my heart because he is simple. I myself did not encounter such situations the main hero faced but I know people who did," Akmoloda shared.

Post production, editing, colour correction and dubbing on "Mir Mechty" will begin shortly after May with a wide release planned by the end of the year.



Anna Tadzhimuratova

ongoing projects on our site and we have successfully implemented six projects already, including two commercial projects and four socially-oriented ones," said Tadzhimuratova.

"As for our platform baribirge.kz, we have no special secret. Before our launch, we thought through the strategy and worked through all stages of launch and development. Now step by step, we realise what we have planned; we accumulate experience," she added.

Many still do not understand the concept of crowdfunding.

"And statistics confirm this. Despite the fact that we have registered more than 1,200 users, only part of them regularly participate in the projects. A lot of people are interested in what it is and how it works, but they just observe," she noted.

The reason, perhaps, is that users still feel some kind of fear about something new and incomprehensible.

"Most likely, this is due to the fact that the history of crowdfunding in Kazakhstan is very short and people do not fully understand what it is that is interesting for project participants," said Tadzhimuratova.

She stressed users get much



Aziza Utegenova

"These are the emotions that you cannot just go and buy in the store. And most importantly, all the participants receive not only great gratitude from the authors of the projects, but also a sense of their involvement in interesting, important and good deeds," she added.

"Crowdfunding gave a start to a lot of interesting projects around the world and helped to realise a large number of important and useful ideas. We believe that crowdfunding will develop in Kazakhstan and the result that we have seen in such a short period of our work is a confirmation of that. As they say, the best way to predict the future is to create it," said Tadzhimuratova.

Start-time.kz

"The platform was launched in November 2016. At the moment, 10 projects are registered on the website and three of them completed the fundraising," said start-time.kz project director Aziza Utegenova.

The largest amount collected was 1,141,363 tenge (US\$3,360) for a Kazakh brand of knitted clothes.

"In my opinion, that was a very interesting and patriotic project. The author, Diana Utemisova,

Astana Opera House presents new concert format

Staff Report

ASTANA – The "Fantastic" symphony and concert featuring Italian oboist Gianfranco Bortolotta premiered April 15 at the Astana Opera House.

First oboe at the La Scala Opera House, the Royal Theatre of Turin and the Roman Opera, Bortolotta performed a Richard Strauss concert for oboe and orchestra with the Astana Opera symphonic orchestra in the first part of the programme.

The "Fantastic" symphony was presented in the second part of the programme. A composition titled "An episode in the Life of an Art-

ist in Five Parts" is one of the most popular works written by great French romantic composer Hector Berlioz. The symphony is considered to be autobiographical as the composer was inspired by his love for Irish actress Harriet Smithson.

The symphony consists of five parts including "Reveries – Passions," "A Ball," "Scene in the Fields," "March to the Scaffold," "Dream of the Night of the Sabbath."

"Berlioz's works were definitely ahead of his time. Many composers used a stunning phantasmagoria in the plot, interesting musical findings, formulas, genre synthesis, which can be found in his works

later," according to a release from the theatre.

Conductor Abzal Mukhitdinov said that this symphony has something theatrical in its essence and is an example of how vivid pictures and images can be created by music.

"This music excites the imagination. And it's a real revelation for many people. It is an unusual music format. For example, in the third part we hear how the oboe sounds from the auditorium. There is a transformation of the beloved woman theme in the finale part. The waltz that sounded at the ball is transformed into the wild dance of witches," said Mukhitdinov.



WEDNESDAY, APRIL 26, 2017

Kazakhstan seeks to improve civil service through international partnerships

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – The Civil Service Development global and regional trends review highlighting civil service development and reform in North America, Europe, Southeast Asia, the Caucasus and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) countries throughout the past 25 years was highly commended by experts at an April 12 Partnership for Civil Service Excellence conference in the capital.

A unique summary, consisting of the theoretical framework and applied expertise of leading scholars and practitioners was prepared by the Astana Civil Service Hub and aims to become a useful source leading to further improvements of civil service systems, said Civil Service Regional Hub steering committee chairperson Alikhan Baimenov.

“Today’s era of globalisation and development of information and communication technologies set new requirements to the quality of civil service systems. Citizens turn to be well informed about solutions in other countries... The state bodies tend to function in a quasi-competitive environ-



Civil Service Regional Hub steering committee chairperson Alikhan Baimenov.

ment. This stimulates the search of the adequate responses to these challenges. The United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) has started developing a set of internationally-recognised principles of responsible and effective governance and the regional hub is involved in this process,” he said.

Five new countries including Bhutan, Estonia, Indonesia, Lithuania and Palestine joined the hub. The number of international experts currently includes more than 90 individuals. The UN Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC) recognised the hub’s multi-faceted regional initiatives and invited it to present at the 2016

Global South-South Development Expo.

“Another good example is the ever-growing cooperation with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), which recently hosted the delegates from the hub’s participating countries at its headquarters to facilitate the dialogue in the field of civil service reforms. The hub is advancing its relations with professional associations from all over the world,” he said.

Baimenov also noted the key role of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The hub’s institutional and financial support is ensured by the agreement between the Kazakh government and UNDP, which will be extended for a three-year period.

The hub has become an important platform for advancing civil service excellence not only in the CIS region but beyond, said UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative in Kazakhstan Norimasa Shimomura.

“The hub has become an excellent example of close and fruitful cooperation between UNDP and the Kazakh government which fosters knowledge development, knowledge sharing and peer-to-

peer learning and joint research activities between participating countries. It enables the consolidation of knowledge and best practices in the field of governance and serves as an efficient platform for their dissemination. The hub’s activities contribute to the transformative changes taking place in its participating countries,” he said.

“The hub’s activities support Kazakhstan’s development priorities and encompass the five institutional reforms and the Plan of Nation 100 Concrete Steps. The regional hub assisted the Civil Service Agency in this country over the past year in undertaking reforms related to the new pay scales of civil servants and their new competency framework. We hope that this support will trigger the necessary changes in Kazakh civil service and public administration to the benefit of the people of this country,” he added.

The hub is one of the shining examples of highly productive and successful cooperation between the Kazakh government and the UN, noted Kazakh Deputy Foreign Minister Yerzhan Ashikbayev.

“The hub promotes one of the national strategy’s most important goals – creation of the professional

civil service as part of an effective government machinery responsive to the needs of citizens. This is a universal agenda for any government in any country. The hub has helped the Kazakh government and governments of participating countries to build capacity, forge partnerships and adopt best practices and innovations from all over the world with the view to develop a culture of operational excellence,” he said.

Ashikbayev stressed more input is expected from the hub on such issues as partnership with the private sector, civil society and the media as Kazakhstan embarks on a new pace of its modernisation agenda in line with priorities put forward by President Nursultan Nazarbayev.

UNOSSC Secretary-General Envoy Jorge Chediek expressed the organisation’s readiness “to scaling up their work with the Astana hub with a view toward increasing capacities of the hub to address the needs of countries in the region and beyond.”

“I came to sign an agreement and confirm our commitment and to deepen our partnership with the Astana centre,” he said.

OECD representative Edwin Lau noted the meeting was an opportunity to better understand the types of practices that can help countries to develop and also develop indicators that are appropriate both for OECD and developing countries.

“The work on indicators is par-

ticularly critical, because OECD countries bring quite a bit of experience in terms of methodology in data collection. We believe that having good statistics is important not just for the capacity of the country, but also for evidence-based decision making. We are pleased to be working with the hub to develop indicators on strategic human resource management for Kazakhstan,” he said.

ASHIKBAYEV:
“The hub promotes one of the national strategy’s most important goals – creation of the professional civil service as part of an effective government machinery responsive to the needs of citizens.”

Participants from 40 countries considered the pressing issues and challenges faced by regional nations in the civil service sphere and the roles of partnership and the hub in its solution. The heads of the authorised state bodies of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Estonia, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia and Ukraine took part in the discussions.

Power station’s heat allows unique fish farm in Karaganda



Almas Taubayev

By Kamila Zhumabayeva

ASTANA – Natur Produkt farm has been culturing rainbow trout at the Topar Lake 40 kilometres from Karaganda since last year. Close proximity to Karaganda GRES 2 power station creates unique conditions for fish culturists, Forbes.kz reports.

Thermal release from the power station’s refrigeration allows maintaining the temperature that does not go below 17 degrees at a one-hectare big pond and without any expenses.

The power station’s work method proposes a year-round drain of warm and clean water from turbine refrigeration into the lake. A portion of water gets into a pond via sluices set up inside a drainage way. This is how a practically tropic climate is being maintained, the news report said.

Even when the temperature outside drops to a freezing minus 30 degrees below zero, water maintains 12 degrees plus temperature due to the pond channel. These hothouse conditions combine the advantages of surface and enclosed body of water. Fish grows all year round in an artificial reservoir while its living conditions are no different than natural ones. A fresh wind blowing over a pond while enriching water with oxygen is especially important.

“Winds here are strong to the extent where a pontoon blow off from water surface and tore a steel-wire rope. On the other hand

fish can breathe easily and freely. This is as important for development as feeding quality. That is why we move them out to the lake when it becomes hot in summer. We turn aerating contrivance on for additional air incorporation with oxygen if water temperature rises above 18 degrees,” Head of Natur Produkt Almas Taubayev says, according to Forbes.kz.

The fish are hand fed. There are also long-term plans to automate feeding. In the meantime, the 18-member staff of the farm enjoy feeding the fish.

“It is a great pleasure to walk around and feed the fish. Any kinds of stress go away when you see how they become liven up and gambol in water,” the director notes.

The first batch has now grown to 40 centimetres in length and weighs 1.5 kilogrammes. Local processors have slowly begun to process the batch. The weight starting 1.5 kilogrammes to 5 kilogrammes is usually considered as marketable, the news website writes.

The farm plans to start selling live fish in May. For costumers to access the freshest product, fish-bowls will be available in Karaganda’s retail store chains.

The farm plans to produce 50 tonnes of trout this year and reach 100 tonnes next year. During the first stage, Natur Produkt intends to limit supply only to Karaganda and perhaps Astana and go further when they have their own production facility.

WorldSkills Kazakhstan regional contest winners determined in Taldykorgan

By Dmitry Lee

ASTANA – A regional practical stage of the two-day contest for professional skills was held recently at the Taldykorgan College of Service and Technology and the College of Industrial Industry and New Technologies. The contest included students in such specialties as welding, cooking, hairdressing, modeling and clothing design.

“In the conditions of building an innovative economy and modernisation of vocational education, this contest is becoming especially relevant,” said Chairperson of the Regional Council of the Atameken National Chamber of Entrepreneurs of the Almaty region Rimma Salykova.

“One of the priority directions of the development of the country’s vocational education in recent years is improvement of the conditions to identify the talented and gifted working youth. We think that the heroes of today’s time should be young people, the representatives of the working profession. Because our business lacks simple workers, professionals in their field,” she stressed.

Some 44 students had to perform various competitive tasks to show proficiency in their areas of expertise.

Almaty region Deputy Akim (governor) Zhaksylyk Omar noted that the competitions of professional skills should be held more often and on a large scale.

“The Almaty region is one of the largest regions in Kazakhstan with more than 70 vocational-technical colleges. Forty-four students are participating today in the contest but taking into account our capabilities, the number of participants should be even greater. We should try to show ourselves at the national and international championships and get representatives of

our region inside the national team of Kazakhstan,” he said during the awarding ceremony.

Experts at the regional contest had the chance to award all the participants and winners of the contest with certificates. The winner of the Grand Prix of the competition in cooking was a student from the Almaty Regional College of Innovative Technologies in the Field of Service and Nutrition Yerassyl Argyzbek; the winner in the category welding technology was Igor Kim from Bastobinsk Service College; the

winner in clothing and modeling was Gulzhan Kabitolla from the Kapshagai Multi-Disciplinary College and the winner of the hairdressing art category, Taldykorgan College of Service and Technology student Madina Babova.

The event was organised by the Education Department of the Almaty Oblast (region) and the Atameken National Chamber of Entrepreneurs.

All the winners will advance to the national contest WorldSkills Kazakhstan.



Photo credit: Atameken National Chamber of Entrepreneurs

Aktobe teacher establishes ostrich farm

By Zhubanysh Baigurinov

ASTANA – A teacher of physical education from the Aktobe region breeds African ostriches in his back yard.

Sailaubek Matayev brought 20 exotic chicks in the summer of last year from the Samara region of Russia. Together, with his brother they took a loan under the Road Map of Employment Programme. Each bird cost 68,000 tenge (US\$218).

Everyone has been predicting that birds will not survive the harsh winter. But the brothers did not leave their idea and provided the nestlings with proper care. There were losses due to the lack of previous experience, but, fortunately, insignificant. As a result, the chicks not only survived, but also got stronger. Now their height is around 1.6 metres.

“They still have to grow. They will be only one year old soon, most importantly, the winter is over, and

they have already adapted to our climatic conditions,” said Matayev.

He says he is doing everything to prevent their death. In this period you need to be patient, he adds. One more year is needed for them

to produce their first eggs. This African breed is recognised as the best in terms of egg-laying and also considered a long-liver. The entrepreneur believes his expenses should pay off.

In addition to their meat and eggs, their feathers and skin also have a good price. The siblings from the rural district believe an ostrich farm is a very real and profitable project.

But Matayev does not hide that there are complications. He buys the food for the birds at the market and it is not cheap. He does not complain, but he hopes for additional state subsidies to expand production.

The farmer plans to buy a dozen ostriches and 30-40 quails. He has appealed to local authorities to provide land for the expansion of a subsidiary farm. He believes that it would be a good idea to establish an exotic ostrich park near the village in natural conditions, especially since the Bulak rural district is located near the international route and is included in the tourist route of the region. It is located around 50 kilometres from Aktobe.



SOCIETY

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 26, 2017

Clothing donation project brings warmth, hope to those in need

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – Almaty residents can donate clothes and items to the Teplo (Warmth) charity boxes to help people in emergencies. There are currently five collection points located at Esentai Square, Dostyk Plaza Mall, Mega Alma-Ata Mall, On Clinic hospital and Pita Green healthy food restaurant.

The social and charitable project, aimed at organising contributions for distribution to those in difficult situations, was launched Jan. 15 by Sinai Private Charitable Foundation. The mission is to provide all types of clothes for people in need. The project, launched on permanent basis, also provides jobs as targeted assistance for individuals with physical challenges.

Items are distributed through social service centres for children and adolescents left without guardians, trust funds and organisations working with vulnerable citizens.

“Our team consists of six people. We have no sponsors and public figures. The project is supported by me independently. We



are delighted to provide support for more than 50 families since the project's launch,” project head Timur, who preferred to be known only by his first name, told The Astana Times.

The venture started with installing donation boxes.

“We needed a durable and sealed box with an anti-vandal mechanism inside and a beautiful exterior design. Many companies

offered us cooperation, but the KazHydroMash Company proposed the most suitable option for us. The second stage was the search for storage. There was a lot of selection criteria, as we needed

a building that would be comfortable for the physically challenged who are involved in the sorting process. It should also be bright and located in the centre with all communication facilities and an entrance for unloading and loading trucks,” he added.

There was also a need to establish working processes and consider all stages, including unloading items, delivery to storage, further sorting and subsequent chemical cleaning.

“Clean things are sent to people only after all these procedures. Good logistics and powerful industrial washing machines with a large load of clothing are needed for the harmonious work of the whole mechanism. We cooperate with the Daas Kazakhstan Company in terms of logistics. Tricycles of this company are used to unload our boxes. Laundry is also a key point. We decided to cooperate with the IC Pro Company. The equipment surpassed all our expectations; in addition to washing and disinfecting, it dries clothes and disinfects again in the final stage, treating with dry steam. In the end, the item becomes like a new one,” he said.

Timur also spoke about communicating the effort to the media.

“The project is quite new in our country and at the moment, it attracts the attention of print media and TV channels,” he said. “We made social videos that are distributed in social networks to draw the attention of the Kazakh people to the importance of helping people from vulnerable segments of the population. Everyone has moments in life when he or she needs some help and support. People's participation will save lives, their care will give hope. Care unites people.”

Collecting clothes led to the idea of organising Teplo Express, the logistics company that provides services to deliver and transport various goods. In a case when the customer has unwanted clothing and items in good condition, he or she can donate them to the service for future distribution.

“Daas Kazakhstan helped us with the organisation of Teplo Express. We work to develop awareness and humanity. We are able to achieve this together, as every good deed is a small step for a person and a significant step for all mankind,” he said.

Fondy Global enters Kazakh market

By Zhazira Dyussebekova

ASTANA – International online merchant service provider Fondy Global has entered the Kazakh market. The local partner company bought its franchise at the end of last month.

“We received several requests for cooperation from Kazakhstan.



CEO of Fondy Global Andrey Voronin

In addition, we very positively assess the dynamics of the growth of the e-commerce market in the short and medium term. Thus, relying on these factors at the beginning of this year, we decided to start working with one of the partners with whom we already had joint projects. The peculiarity of our business model in Kazakhstan is that we usually cooperate in such formats as an affiliate programme or white label, but in this case we decided to try the franchise model,” said Fondy Global CEO Andrey Voronin, reported Kapital.kz.

According to company representatives, the Kazakh e-commerce market is the most promising in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). The average check in 2016 compared to 2015 increased 31 percent, while in Russia and Ukraine the growth was only 6 percent and in Belarus it decreased 5 percent.

“The active growth of the e-commerce market in Kazakhstan entails the emergence of needs in both new technological and financial solutions. First of all, the advantages of Fondy are high technology and reliability of payment technologies. In 2016, our customers on average grew 1.5-2 times faster than their country's market thanks to the active use of our know-how and this tells us that we are on the right track. Fondy will also provide assistance to online entrepreneurs of Kazakhstan in the integration into the international

markets of Europe and Asia,” said Voronin.

Fondy has offices in the Czech Republic, Latvia, Russia, Slovakia, Ukraine and the United Kingdom.

The local e-commerce market is expected to grow rapidly, said Voronin.

“In Kazakhstan, only 11-12 percent of users make purchases on-

line, despite the significant amount of card issuance and a wide range of other payment methods, such as electronic wallets and transfers. Also, the share of e-commerce in the retail structure is only about 1 percent, while, for example, in Germany it is about 12 percent and in the United Kingdom it is 15 percent. Therefore, we expect an active growth of the audience of Internet buyers in Kazakhstan in the coming years. I think that your e-commerce market can grow four-five times from the current in the next three-five years,” he added.

The financial technology industry has been developing dynamically in Kazakhstan over the last two-three years.

“We plan to actively involve the players of the fintech market, including those who previously worked only in offline mode,” said Voronin.

Fondy Global is working for the third year in the CIS market.

“Within this business model, the partner is responsible for registering a legal entity and buying a domain name, negotiating with banks for further contracting for the organisation of processing, ensuring organisational work (attracting customers, signing contracts, opening accounts) and marketing. In their turn, our experts provide a technical platform, integrate with banks, set up financial processes in the back-office for settlements with customers and support clients,” said Fondy Global CIO Maxim Kozenko.

Modern micro district to be built in Taraz

By Dana Omirgazy

ASTANA – Young families and couples in Taraz will now be able to purchase an apartment in a new residential area with modern infrastructure. The Zhambyl region administration had a look at a master plan and micro district miniature.

“The residential complex should appear at the entrance to the regional centre from the

A new residential area to be located on a 100-hectare parcel will become one of the attractive residential spots for young people, according to National Association of Construction Industry chief Mukhit Azerbayev.

north, along the Western Europe – Western China international highway. The Taraz city master plan adopted until 2025 includes almost 6,000 hectares of land in the surrounding areas, expanding the city in the northwestern direction, including the coastal part of the Talas River and creating a recreational zone,” according to the city administration's report.

New micro districts with new modern high-rise buildings will occupy 462 hectares of land. Architects have detailed design projects, while engineering infrastructure projects are still being developed.

A new residential area to be located on a 100-hectare parcel will become one of the attractive residential spots for young people, according to National Association of Construction Industry chief Mukhit Azerbayev. Housing with yards will be isolated from transit pedestrian flows and public transport. Commercial infrastructure facilities, such as banks, pharmacies, fitness centres and shops, will be located on the first floors of buildings. The design is intended to create a waterfront with rest areas along the Talas River.

“The eastern entrance to Taraz will be decorated with two nine-storey multifunctional buildings with offices, hotel and restaurants. Shopping and entertainment centres and big-box stores, as well as a supermarket, will be available on the flanks of the residential area. Walking areas and green lawns will appear in the centre. There is a proposal to place a stele symbolising the aspirations

of generations to the future, development and progress. At the same time, it will serve as the basis for the hinged screw structure of the junction bridge pedestrian walkway. The upper level will be designed for recreational use and the lower one for bicycle riders, which will ensure security,” said Azerbayev.

The designers have offered to organise a park zone, which will be decorated by the Wedding Palace. The builders will construct two schools for 1,200 students and three pre-schools for 250 children and an additional 177 spots for pre-schoolers will be placed on the ground floors of the residential buildings. The micro district is positioned as a centre for living, leisure and recreation for young people.

“There are plans to build 355,000 square metres of housing with 5,460 apartments in 49 houses. The district is designed for 15,600 people. In addition to residential buildings and ed-

ucational institutions, residents will be provided with a number of medical facilities, including rehabilitation and diagnostic centres, an oncological dispensary and polyclinic,” said the report.

Zhambyl region Akim (Governor) Karim Kokrekbayev has instructed to clarify some of the details and make changes and additions to the project. In addition, he proposed creating a technical council to coordinate comments and work on refinements and proposals. In general, the project received a positive evaluation.

As expected, the ambitious micro district will give the regional centre a new architectural look while solving the problems of population growth and traffic flow.

During the years of Kazakh independence, multi-storey micro districts with the symbolic names Astana and Baiterek have appeared in Taraz. The residential areas have appropriate infrastructure and social facilities.



Prosecutor's office launches website to assess doctors' performance

Staff Report

ASTANA – The Almaty prosecutor's office has launched almatymed.kz to allow local residents to assess the work of polyclinics and their medical staff, 24.kz reports.

“The new website was developed to increase the availability of relevant and useful information about the healthcare system and legal rights in Almaty, as well as to provide feedback in the form of a response, complaint, rating, e-mail, photo or

video materials,” according to project initiators.

Anyone will be able to express gratitude or leave a complaint to medical institutions and doctors, which will be used to determine their performance rating. Future patients will have an opportunity to choose a suitable specialist online.

As noted, the main difference from social networks is that a new website is a kind of database. All reviews will be concentrated on one page, hospitals will be able to receive feedback, and the prosecu-

tor's office will respond quickly to violations in the health sector. Last year, about 500 complaints about the city's medical organisations were received from the citizens. This was twice as much as the previous year.

“The more such problems arise, the more people will leave Kazakhstan and seek medical assistance abroad, leaving money there. Therefore, as a human rights agency, taking into account all these problems and negatives, we initiated the introduction of an information system, which will work

for the benefit of society improving healthcare system development,” Almaty Deputy Prosecutor Zhandos Umiraliyev said.

In turn, executive director of the Almaty Clinics Association Rassul Dyussenov also shared his opinion on this matter.

“I think that we will not get any short-term results in the next 2-3 months. However, I think we will see adequate ratings of medical organisations and specialists within a year. We will get an appropriate assessment of their work based on feedback,” Dyussenov said.

TOURISM&EXPO 2017

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 26, 2017

President praises EXPO preparations



By Aiman Turebekova

ASTANA – Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev praised preparations for EXPO 2017 during an April 21 visit to the Expo site.

“Official opening of the exhibition will take place on June 9. The readiness of EXPO 2017 is at a final stage. The excellent holding of the exhibition will demonstrate to the world the community achievements of an independent Kazakhstan,” said Nazarbayev at the meeting on

socio-economic development of Astana and preparation for the exhibition attended by Astana Akim (Mayor) Asset Issekeshev, Chairperson of the Astana EXPO 2017 national company Akhmetzhan Yessimov, Kazakh Minister of Energy Kanat Bozumbayev and Minister of Internal Affairs Kalmykhanbet Kassymov, among others.

The President emphasised that Astana should become one of the best cities in the world, convenient and comfortable for living. In this regard, Nazarbayev gave in-

structions to further develop the capital.

“It is necessary to introduce modern digital technologies in all areas of urban management. The government should define Astana as the main platform for the introduction of digital technologies,” the head of state said.

According to his instructions, the International Technopark of IT startups will be launched on the expo site. Nazarbayev also instructed to develop the city following the example of Dubai, Hong Kong and Singapore and to create

on its base a financial and business hub on the scale of the Eurasian space.

“There are 2,700 foreign companies working in Astana. They invested about \$3.2 billion in the city’s economy. At the same time, the existing opportunities are not fully used. The potential of the special economic zone of Astana is involved weakly. The further development of the capital must take into account the urbanisation processes. By 2030, its population may grow by another one million people. This puts the city’s task of ensuring productive employment through the creation of new permanent jobs,” Nazarbayev said.

The President also pointed out that Astana has a significant potential to become a tourist centre and instructed the government together with mayors to develop the capital’s tourism. Nazarbayev also emphasised the need to create roadside services for tourists who arrive by car.

The head of state also focused on the preparation process of cultural and mass events in the days of the exhibition, the safety of guests and residents of the capital and the level of preparedness of volunteers to meet visitors.

EXPO 2017 will take place in Astana from June 10 through September 10, 2017.

South Korea to showcase latest energy technology at EXPO



President and CEO of Korea Trade-Investment Promotion Agency Jaehong Kim (R) with Astana EXPO 2017 Chairman Akhmetzhan Yessimov.

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – President and Chief Executive Officer of the Korea Trade-Investment Promotion Agency (KOTRA) Jaehong Kim and Astana EXPO 2017 national company Chairman Akhmetzhan Yessimov agreed to cooperate on the event during an April 19 visit to the expo site. Kim visited the site to check on construction of the Korean pavilion.

“The Korean pavilion at Astana EXPO 2017 will be a memorable place for visitors and they will have an opportunity to experience the latest Korean technologies and culture with the accompaniment of the Energy Seed,” said the KOTRA president and CEO.

Astana EXPO 2017 is the first international exhibition hosted by a Commonwealth of Independent

States (CIS) country. It will be held June 10 to Sept. 10 under the theme Future Energy. One-hundred-and-fifteen countries have confirmed their participation and are expected to showcase the latest in energy technology. Korea is expected to have one of the largest pavilions under the theme of Future Energy, Smart Life.

The main concept of the Korean pavilion follows a timeline of how one becomes an energy-efficient citizen by developing new renewable energy technology, constructed closely by the Energy Seed, the core source of all energy. South Korea will also promote Korean culture through K-Wave performances and events.

The Korean pavilion is expected to enhance relations and energy-related industry relationships with CIS countries, known for their abundant natural resources.

Saka stone houses in Central Kazakhstan shed light on Kazakh nomadic culture, archaeologist says

By Malika Orazgaliyeva

ASTANA – The study of the settlements of the Saka, also referred to as Scythians, ancient tribes that lived in what is now modern-day Kazakhstan, is one of the main tasks for Kazakh archaeologists seeking to fill in the blank spots of the region’s history.

Excavations in Central Kazakhstan have determined that ancient tribes made stone dwellings in the region more than 2,500 years ago.

According to Arman Beisenov, head of the department of primitive archaeology of the Alkey Margulan Institute of Archaeology, the studies of stone dwellings became possible through the qualitative improvement of archaeology in Kazakhstan not so long ago.

Since Kazakhstan’s independence, archaeologists have been grappling with the task of studying an ancient history. The programme “Madeni Mura” (Cultural Heritage) gave a powerful impetus to archaeology in the country, and the series of discoveries of mounds filled with golden artefacts raised the questions of who made those amazing artefacts, and where?

This interest led to the discovery in Central Kazakhstan of more than 50 places with remnants of stone buildings used for residential and household purposes in the



Arman Beisenov

Saka era. The main materials were obtained in the Karaganda region and neighbouring regions.

“The findings came from the time of the Saka culture; it is approximately the eighth to fifth century B.C. A comparison with materials from North Kazakhstan, Zhetysay, and Mountain Altai regions, gave an additional and convincing vector of evidence. In addition, we received radiocarbon dates from several foreign centres in St. Petersburg, Kiev and Belfast. There is no doubt that the Sakas lived in Central Kazakhstan,” Beisenov said in an interview with Kazakhstanskaya Pravda newspaper.

In Beisenov’s words, the known Saka houses were rectangular, reached about 10 to 15 metres in

length and were 8 to 10 metres wide. It is supposed that the houses were two metres in height, but with their massive walls of more than a metre in width, internal space would have been quite limited.

The Sakas used the technique of the Andronovo era of filling gaps between two rows of large slabs with small stones and earth. Half a century ago, Margulan and other Kazakh anthropologists noted the use of this technique in houses from the Bronze Age. Andronovo masonry, a stable construction tradition, was used after the Sakas, too.

The area of the studied dwellings is about 50 to 70 square metres, according to Beisenov. The residences were inhabited by 10 to 12 people and most of the settlements have up to three buildings. It turns out that small communities of closely related families lived in the settlements, a hypothesis confirmed by ethnographic materials.

The archaeological finds show that more than 2,500 years ago, the way of life of different peoples in Central Kazakhstan was very similar to the Kazakh one for centuries afterwards. The clan consisted of small communities. In winter, they lived in wintertime settlements, and in summer, they went to river valleys, living nomadically in folded yurts.

The Kazakh anthropologist said that the foundation of the economy

of the ancients was cattle breeding. The findings from the elite Saka mounds of Taldy-2, Karashoky and Sherubai show that people there mastered metallurgy and metalworking well. In excavated settlements in the Yedirei and Karakuy mountains, there have been found numerous fragments of stone hoes and grain growers, which indicate the development of agriculture. These people are thought to have occupied an ancient social stratum known to Kazakhs as “zhatak” (re-cement, immovable). In the winter, Kazakh zhataks stayed with their families in their houses, while other residents went to zhailau (pastures) to let their cattle graze. The zhatak’s duties included guarding, refurbishing houses and cultivating fields with wheat and millet near the settlement. After the return of the community, everybody went harvesting.

“Our studies of settlements and dwellings of Central Kazakhstan are aimed at the future. Just a week ago, our colleagues from the Royal University of Belfast in the United Kingdom told me about the progress in analysing materials found in Central Kazakhstan. The results of the studies of the samples of bone tissue of people buried in Taldy-2, Akbeit and other mounds proved that their diet included millet. As you can see, the most interesting things are ahead,” Beisenov said.



Kazakhstan improves four slots in WEF’s Index

By Zhazira Dyusseimbekova

ASTANA – Kazakhstan improved its position by four spots to 81st in the latest World Economic Forum’s (WEF) Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Index.

The index is published biannually and compares 136 economies on factors and policies enabling sustainable travel and tourism development, which contributes to the development and competitiveness of a country, according to the WEF report.

The index is based on the four sub-indices, 14 categories and individual indicators.

The top 10 countries in this year’s index are Spain, France, Germany, Japan, the United Kingdom, the United States, Australia, Italy, Canada and Switzerland respectively.

Approximately 4,559,500 people visit Kazakhstan annually and spend an average of \$336, according to the report. Kazakhstan’s travel and tourism industry GDP is approximately \$3 billion, which is 1.6 percent of the total GDP. Approximately 150,585 people are employed in the industry, which is 1.7 percent.

The index ranks Kazakhstan sixth in health and hygiene, the country’s highest ranking in the index. Kazakhstan’s low HIV-positive population and absence of malaria contributed to the high-ranking in that category.

Kazakhstan’s second-best ranking, 8th, was in price competitiveness. That category examines ticket taxes and airport charges, hotel prices, purchasing power parity and fuel prices level.

The WEF ranks Kazakhstan’s business environment 36th in the world. Out of many indices in that

category, Kazakhstan showed good results in time required to receive construction permits, costs to start a business and tax rates.

Kazakhstan’s information and communications technologies (ICT) readiness was ranked 52nd with safety and security 58th. Human resources and the labour market ranked 47th.

The three worst results were reached in international openness at 113th, environmental sustainability at 99th and tourist service infrastructure at 97th.

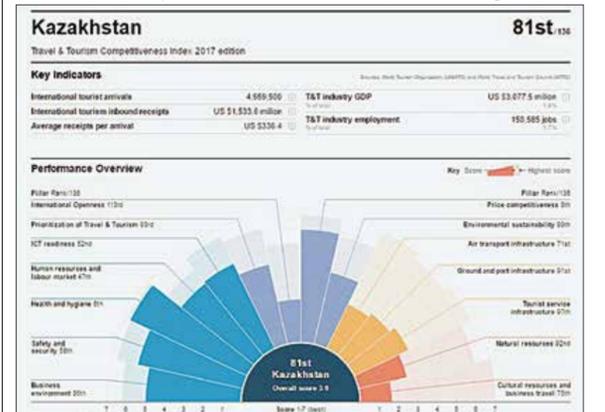
International openness included visa requirements, openness of bilateral air service agreements and the number of regional trade agreements in force.

Environmental sustainability was assessed poorly mainly due to low indicators in environment treaty ratification and baseline water stress.

The report shows that within the tourist service infrastructure pillar, quality of tourist infrastructure and the presence of major car rental companies dragged it down.

In the Eurasian region, Kazakhstan is in fourth place after Russia (43rd in the global rank), Georgia (70) and Azerbaijan (71). The country is followed by Armenia (84), Tajikistan (107) and the Kyrgyz Republic (115).

“The Eurasian sub-region [the report refers to the whole region as Europe and Eurasia] faces issues relating to international openness and transport infrastructure. Yet this sub-region boasts more qualified and efficient human resources while, at the same time, providing more price competitive options, thanks to lower hotel prices and fuel costs,” stated the report.



SPORTS

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 26, 2017

More than 13,000 run in Almaty international charity marathon



By Anuar Abdrakhmanov

ASTANA – An international charity marathon took place April 23 in Almaty.

During the last several years, the event has become a landmark not only of Almaty, but of Kazakhstan as well. This large Central Asian sporting event, eagerly awaited by thousands, has become an annual holiday promoting an active lifestyle, health and charity.

More than 13,000 individuals registered and received bib numbers, while about 15,000 people in total ran through the streets of the city. Participants passed 3 km (children aged 10-14), 10 km, 21.1

km (half marathon), 42.2 (marathon), 10 km (Nordic walking) and a team relay marathon of 42 kilometres, 195 metres.

“This is one of the biggest sporting events in Central Asia. We see that every year it is gaining momentum. We not only do sports, but we also help children with the money that was raised today. More than 500,000 Almaty residents do sports today and about 1,000 sporting events are held in our city. As the President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev said, ‘only a healthy nation can be competitive, so I wish everyone success and to feel a unified sports spirit,’” said Almaty Akim (Mayor) Bauyrzhan Baibek in his remarks before the start of the marathon.

Various people ran through the streets, including company managers, students, show business stars and even professional athletes, such as 2012 Olympic champion Alexander Vinokourov.

The finish line and awards ceremony took place at Central Stadium. Nikolai Grigorov and Polina Repina won the marathon and received cash prizes of 350,000 tenge (US\$ 1,123). Amir Baitukanov from Ust-Kamenogorsk and Aidyn Kasen from the capital claimed second and third place, respectively, in the men’s marathon. Alyona Uvarova, of Almaty, came in second and Mariya Kireyeva, of Semey, took third in the women’s event. All participants were awarded memorable

finisher medals and the winners received medals, certificates of merit and gifts from partners.

“This is the sixth time our city gathered lovers of a healthy lifestyle at the start of the Almaty Marathon, which has a significant impact on the city’s sports tourism. Every year, people are becoming more interested in mass sports events. The marathon has become one of the most anticipated annual sports and charity events. This year, the funds received from the entry fees will be sent to six specialised institutions, in which 1,500 children with serious illnesses study and receive treatment,” said marathon director Saltanat Kazymbayeva.

BI Marathon set for May 28 in Astana’s Triathlon Park

By Kamila Zhumabayeva

ASTANA – The annual BI Marathon is planned for May 28 in the capital’s Triathlon Park, and 300 people have already registered for the event.

“This year the location of the marathon is changing to Astana’s Triathlon Park, which the BI Group company gave to the capital [as a gift] for its 18th anniversary [in 2016]. We are confident that in the coming years, the new place will be important for physically active residents and guests of the capital city,” Gaukhar Kerimova, BI Group’s public relations director, told The Astana Times.

The park, located in the centre of the city on the right bank of the Yessil River, is a specialised area for running, bicycle racing enthusiasts and all those who make exercise part of a healthy lifestyle.

The annual marathon is growing in popularity and this year’s event has already attracted more participants than last year. Two hundred guests and about 2,500 BI Group personnel joined last year’s run – fewer than the 300 that have so far registered for the event in May, according to the race’s website, www.bi-marathon.kz.

“We have set the limit to 3,000 people based on the experience of past marathons, but we are sure that this year will have more people interested in this event,” Kerimova said.

Terms of the marathon have not changed from last year. Runners can take part in races of a variety of distances, from 1.5 kilometres to 42.195 kilometres.

The organisers hope this year will have more team races, Kerimova noted. The event includes the Ekiden team race for six participants.

“Our marathon has a happy

goal: to help children with special needs who are being treated within medical and social programmes of the BI-Zhuldyzai fund,” she explained.

Over nearly two years, about 2,000 children have undergone rehabilitation at the fund’s medical centre, and 300 of them had surgeries done by foreign specialists whom the fund regularly brings to Astana.

Over nearly two years, about 2,000 children have undergone rehabilitation at the fund’s medical centre, and 300 of them had surgeries done by foreign specialists whom the fund regularly brings to Astana. Thirty-one children aged four to 12 who had been confined to wheelchairs have been able to take their first steps due to treatment they received through the fund, Kerimova said.

Those who want to join but feel intimidated can take advantage of free training sessions the company offers.

“We would also like to point out the training sessions held along with company paid coaches every weekday morning and evening at three parks in Astana. Full information and registration are available at the bi-marathon.kz website. Join us and run towards victory along with us!” she said.

Astana Arlans win WSB group stage, reach playoffs

By Anuar Abdrakhmanov

ASTANA – The Astana Arlans team of Kazakhstan earned a hard-fought 3-2 win over the China Dragons in the final match of the World Series of Boxing (WSB) group stage.

The match, contested in China, started poorly for the Arlans. Anvar Muzaparov of the 52 kg category lost to Chinese boxer Guo Zhang. Then Zakir Safiullin levelled the score. The 2015 Asian championship’s silver medallist turned out to be stronger than China’s Sen Wang.

However, the home team took the lead in the next bout. One of last season’s best boxers Aslanbek Shymbergenov failed

to defeat Richabige Hurichabilige.

In the two remaining fights, Kazakh boxers showed grit and clinched a victory. First, Arman Rysbek won over Lida Wang, knocking him out in the first round. In the super heavy category, current champion of Kazakhstan Olzhas Bukayev defeated Zhibao Wang by a technical knockout in the fourth round.

Thus, with five wins from six matches, the Astana Arlans claimed first place in Group C and went through to the playoffs.

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 Amateur Boxing

Association (AIBA). According to the WSB website, the appearance 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 the AIBA. All WSB boxers are also registered with AIBA and all referees and officials working 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 in five three-minute rounds and five bouts per match.

The Astana Arlans club was founded in 2010. In the very first season the club’s boxers proved themselves as one of the strongest teams in the world. The team is a two-time WSB champion. It won the third season in 2012-2013 and the fifth season in 2014 -2015.

Kazakhstan’s national futsal team reaches UEFA Euro Futsal 2018

By Anuar Abdrakhmanov

ASTANA – Kazakhstan’s national futsal team made it through the April 8 and 11 qualifying round of the European Championship in Almaty.

Team Kazakhstan competed in the Almaty Arena Stadium against teams from Denmark, Czechia and Macedonia to secure a berth in the championship of the continent branded UEFA Euro Futsal.

Team Kazakhstan, the previous European Championship’s bronze medallist, was a favourite in this quartet. However, at the press conference preceding the tournament, the team coach made it clear his team should not underestimate the opponents.

“We have a very interesting group. Look at the teams that got here, there are no obvious outsiders. All of them can claim first or second place. I do not think the team of Kazakhstan is the favourite of the group. Every match will be difficult for us,” said Kazakh national team head coach Jose Alesio.



The tournament kicked off with a Kazakhstan versus Macedonia match. The two teams started off slow, but soon Leo of the Kazakh national team stepped up. First, Leo, considered one of team Kazakhstan’s

leaders caught the Macedonian goalkeeper off guard by a near corner goal after a throw-in. Then, this Kazakh player who plays for Sporting, in a quick counter-attack, brought the ball to the al-

most empty net in front of Serik Zhamankulov, who just had to do anything but miss. The final 3-0 score for the national team of Kazakhstan was earned by Albert Akbalikov in the 33rd minute.

In the next match, Kazakhstan competed against team Denmark. A lot was clear in this match by the end of the first half as well. By this time, the home team were leading 4-0, and after the break they secured the win. Dinmukhambet Suleimenov also got a chance to distinguish himself in the last seconds, making the final score 5-0. The team’s goalkeeper Igita also made several spectacular saves during the second half, after which the audience chanted his name for a long time.

The final game was played between Kazakhstan and the Czech Republic, which, like Kazakhstan, had two wins from the first two games at the tournament. Thus, this match determined which team would take first place in Group F and get through to the European Championship, and which one would have to compete in the play-offs to get to the Championship.

Kazakh players, supported by the fans, took a confident win. As early as the first half, the well-placed shots by Mikhail Pershin

and Douglas brought the home team to the top. The Czechs made more attacks in the second half, but the goalkeeper of Kazakhstan’s national team played well. During the last minutes of the match, Douglas, taking advantage of the Czech team’s mistake, tackled the ball and hit the empty net. Thus, he secured the score 3-0 for the national team of Kazakhstan.

“We knew the match would be very tough, so we prepared hard for it. Any team wants to show their best play. I would like to praise my players for their professionalism. The guys analysed the tactics of the opponents all day, and I’m doubly pleased. We did an excellent job. I would also like to thank our fans for the great atmosphere, for their support to the team in every match,” said Alesio.

For the second time in its history, team Kazakhstan will take part in the Europe’s main tournament. The tournament will include 12 teams and will be played Jan. 30 to Feb. 10, 2018 in the capital of Slovenia, Ljubljana.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 26, 2017

Astana improves services, enhances security to welcome EXPO 2017 visitors

By Dana Omirgazy

ASTANA – In anticipation of the EXPO 2017 international specialised exhibition, the city administration is taking a holistic approach to preparing for the country's main event in a decade. The capital's municipal enterprises and businesses are completing preparatory works to provide a safe and positive experience for tourists and citizens during the informative and recreational event.

"Construction of all infrastructure facilities for EXPO is nearing completion and will finish by June 1. We have detailed construction schedule requirements for roads, infrastructure and additional substations. The new passenger terminal at Astana International Airport will open June 1 and the new rail-



Malika Bekturova

way station will be ready May 25. New hostels and 16 more hotels will provide an additional 1,500 beds by June 1. So, all construction work continues in accordance with the approved schedules and we have no doubt that they will be completed," said Deputy Akim

(Mayor) Malika Bekturova in an interview for this story.

Given the scale of the upcoming event, the city's administration is strengthening security measures by installing more video surveillance systems and conducting stress tests with relevant agencies in all directions: mass gatherings of people, power outages, water shutdowns and peak loads.

"We are now implementing a project on video surveillance that has several components. The first one implies installation of new surveillance cameras, visual fixation equipment in public places and parks, at intersections and along streets and highways. The second component is the integration of existing cameras; surveillance systems at residential areas and places of mass gatherings of people such as frequently visited

shopping malls and other places are connected to the situational centre that is already operating. This centre coordinates the work of emergency services, the national security committee, fire safety, ambulance, department of internal affairs and other municipal services of the city. There is also a call centre for all potential emergencies. In addition, algorithms for responding to a particular situation have been developed. We are now cooperating together with the EXPO 2017 National Company to work out various non-standard situations. We will be training during April and May," said Bekturova.

"We are also working with the owners of public catering facilities, cafes and restaurants. Businesses began preparing in advance for this event. There is a programme 'Recommended by EXPO 2017' fea-

turing many participants. That is, today there is a menu in three languages. In general, personnel have been undergoing special training; some of the staff members speak one or more foreign languages. We also conduct trainings with the sanitary and epidemiological service on a permanent basis focusing on sanitary rules and regulations," she added.

New hostels and 16 more hotels will provide an additional 1,500 beds by June 1.

These trainings are constantly enabling businesses to thoroughly prepare for the EXPO. In addition, a cultural tour guide programme was launched to offer services for foreign visitors.

"By the beginning of June, Astana guides will complete training and will receive certificates of official guides. We will post their photos with contact details and

describe in what languages this or that guide provides tours on the Smart Astana app and Astana Guide app. This is an opportunity for all tourists to choose guides that know reliable facts about Astana and contact them," she said.

Additional bus routes for EXPO facilities will also be introduced to smooth the traffic flow, tackle congestion and offer convenient transport service to the passengers.

"There will be shuttle buses; it is a bus service intended primarily to shuttle passengers between two fixed points. In general, the traffic schedule will be revised taking into account the burden on the EXPO district. Additionally, we are testing a single taxi service that will already be operating in May. A single tariff for taxi service will be applied for the convenience of residents and guests of Astana," said Bekturova.

A single reservation system is also being introduced for hostels, dormitories and other accommodations. Foreign tourists and guests will be able to book a room and make contacts at information kiosks at the railway stations, airport and the city's shopping malls.

Almaty, Astana children's camps offer healthy activities

By Kamila Zhumabayeva

ASTANA – Summer is almost around the corner and it is time for the holidays all children anticipate. The Astana Times has compiled a list of the best children's camps near Almaty and the capital city.

Located in picturesque forests of the Borovoye resort area on the shores of Katarkol Lake, Kontinent children's therapeutic centre offers a swimming pool, extensive educational programmes and many kinds of leisure and outdoor activities for children from seven to 15 years old.

"A multifaceted programme will not bore anyone. It has games and competitions, walks to the forest and a lakeside, excursions, disco, sports activities, swimming and a stage performance that will energise children for the whole

next study year," Pandaland.kz writes.

The Baldauren camp is a national educational and recreational centre that operates all year round and welcomes nearly 300 children every couple of weeks and every 20 days during a study year.

Children will enjoy modern living and study conditions here. All rooms are well equipped and have shower units with massage inside.

Five times a day, meals and healthy activities, such as massage, gala camera (a room where one breezes in salts), therapy tanks and medicinal baths, saunas and cocktails are offered, according to the website.

School children aged eight to 15 years old are welcome. The Kazakh Ministry of Education and Science distributes holiday packages for this camp.

The Baldauren camp was

awarded the European Quality award in 2009 in Oxford city. The camp is located in the town of Schuchinsk in the Burabai region.

The Hilton children's camp invites all children to develop their English language skills. Children will find their own group according to age and language level.

Kids will be offered a video library that contains dozens of English language feature films and cartoons. Apart from language courses, children play interesting games, sing traditional and modern English language songs, make mini plays and other various activities. Shows, carnivals, parodies and costume balls are also held.

Located 20 minutes from the intersection of Navoi and Al-Farabi streets (Almaty), on spacious land with clean mountain air, the Chamberlain Country Club and

Camp is an active and interesting place for children to spend their summer holidays.

A daily training programme includes hands-on and theoretical lessons. The programme incorporates natural horsemanship and agility methods.

The children here stay in a freshly built complex in a new building and spacious rooms with mountain views. A horse barn, an outdoor training arena and more is available for horse riding activities, according to almata.kz.

The programme of this camp also has football and volleyball training, an indoor swimming pool, various workshops, a concert, a bonfire and other sports and recreation activities.

Ak Bastau is another children's recreational camp located in Almaty's Karagaily micro district, 23 Makatayev Street.



Spending time in fresh air daily, playing football, volleyball, basketball, tennis, receiving therapeutic and recreational treatments, sitting in an air salt room and meeting new friends will

make the child's stay pleasant and enhance their health, according to the website.

This camp also serves goat's milk that is considered an "elixir of life."

Astana Piano Passion Festival Kicks Off

By Zhazira Dyussebekova

ASTANA – The fourth Astana Piano Passion Festival, an international festival of classical music and competition for young pianists, officially opened in Astana April 22. Young talents from different countries will be competing over the next few days for the right to participate in other international festivals and to win cash prizes.

The closing ceremony is to be held April 28.

"Our competition has become very popular all over the world. I am very glad that the applications were record-breaking: from 28 countries. For us, this is a big family; this is not a competition. Of course, there is a contest. But this is a festival, it has an amazing atmosphere, and I always have such anticipation. It means a lot," said People's Artist of Russia Denis Matsuev, who is art director of the festival and also a member of the jury, according to 24.kz.

This year, more than 140 participants applied for the competition. The competition is becoming more internationally representative, and for the first time competitors

from 13 countries will perform in the semi-final round, the festival's press service announced.

The contest aims to support young talents. The total prize fund of the competition is \$60,000. Winners of special prizes from Matsuev will take part in the international festivals Crescendo and Stars at Lake Baikal, as well as in the Ancey Classic in France. Astana Piano Passion winners will give concerts with the Moscow Philharmonic, at events planned for EXPO 2017 and at next year's Piano Passion. Traditionally, a special prize is also given for the performance of works by a Kazakh composer.

Performances are assessed by an international jury. The event is organised by the Ministry of Culture and Sports, the akimat (city administration) of Astana and the public foundation Accordi di Astana with the support of the Moscow Philharmonic Society and Matsuev himself.

This year, the battles of the young talented pianists can be witnessed in real time. The official website of the festival, astana-app.kz, is broadcasting all the competition stages live online. Organisers

hope this will help ensure the transparency of the contest.

This year's festival opened with a concert by the Astana Opera orchestra conducted by Abzal Mukhitdinov. The orchestra performed Yerkagali Rakhmadiyev's "Kudasha-duman." The winner from last year, Simon Karakulidi of Russia, performed Sergei Prokofiev's concert for piano with orchestra No.1, which was conducted by Yerzhan Dautov.

Kazakh Vice-Minister of Culture and Sport Aktoty Raimkulova welcomed participants to the competition and announced that this year there will be a special prize from the ministry.

Also during the opening ceremony Rachmaninoff's "Piano Concerto No. 3" was performed by Matsuev with the symphony orchestra of Astana Opera.

During the festival, Astana hosts auditions for semi-finalists and master classes of the best musicians and teachers.

The final performances of pianists will be held April 26 to 27. The closing ceremony on April 28 will be held at the Astana Ballet Theatre.

Winners of the highest awards of the competition will perform in the closing ceremony, which will also feature an original performance of George Gershwin's famous "Rhapsody in Blue" by Matsuev. Musicians from Moscow Andrei Ivanov on the double bass and Alexander Zinger on the drums will improvise onstage along with the maestro.



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