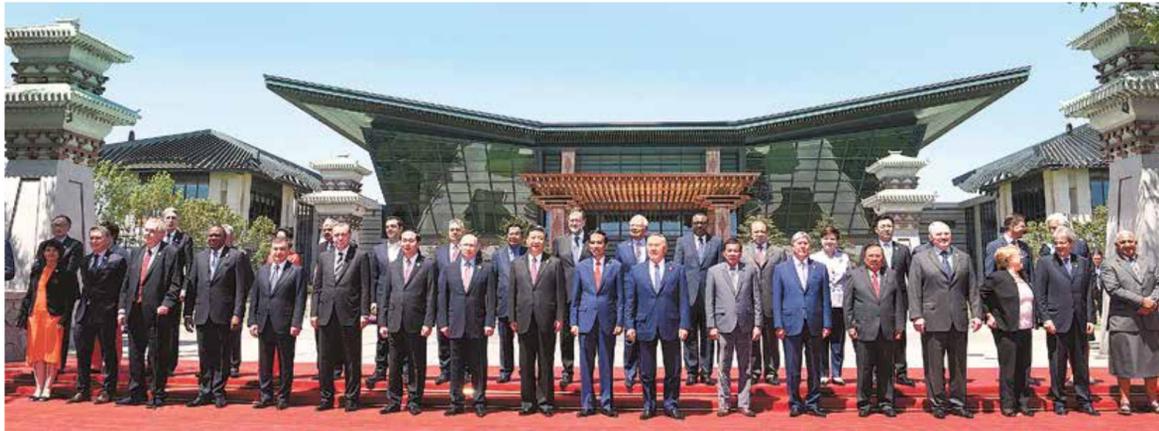




Kazakh President attends One Belt, One Road forum, meets with leaders in China



By Malika Orazgaliyeva

ASTANA – President Nursultan Nazarbayev attended the One Belt, One Road International Cooperation Forum and met with Chinese President Xi Jinping and other high leaders May 14-15 in Beijing.

The forum was meant to develop trends along the Great Silk Road and new mechanisms for economic cooperation, to stimulate the economic progress of the states involved, to strengthen cultural ties between different civilisations, and to promote peace and sustainable development.

Speaking to the participants, Nazarbayev called Xi's idea to restore the ancient Silk Road in Eurasia in a modern format a timely response to the increased political, economic and humanitarian crises in the world.

"Paternalism and application of politically motivated sanctions have worsened economic activity and the lives of millions of people. As a result, the world economy and trade have declined. In these conditions, the world needs a new

driver to stimulate international cooperation," he said.

According to Nazarbayev, the global trade project allows to form a new geo-economic paradigm, the successful implementation of which will benefit countries with a total population of 4.4 billion people.

"The proclaimed approach 'stability through joint development' is an attractive form of international cooperation reflecting the economic interests of dozens of countries. Now, when certain contours of the Silk Road are visible, a joint strategic coordination of this macro regional cooperation is necessary. In addition, the implementation of the Silk Road initiative allows to position the whole regions in a new way, including Central Asia in a global context," Nazarbayev noted.

Nazarbayev stressed that Central Asia has regained its strategic importance and has become the main bridge between the world's largest markets.

He noted the important role of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) in this connection.

"The idea of creating a single

economic space of Greater Eurasia acquired a new meaning. The Silk Road Economic Belt can advantageously link the platforms of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) and the European Union into a single regional prosperity area," Nazarbayev said.

The Kazakh leader proposed steps to implement the Chinese initiative.

"In order to effectively develop the growing transit potential of the Silk Road Economic Belt it is necessary to consistently facilitate the passage of commodity flows through improvement of the level of services and removing administrative barriers. Kazakhstan takes concrete steps in this area. It requires expertise and appropriate funding. I believe the Asian Bank of Infrastructure Investments needs to actively finance such programmes," he informed.

He stressed the importance of developing agricultural cooperation to ensure food security of the countries located along the new Silk Road.

Nazarbayev also suggested concentrating on closer cooperation in

the sphere of innovative scientific and technological development.

"I would like to draw your attention to the initiative of Kazakh scientists to establish an International Academy of Sciences of the Silk Road. At the same time, it is important not to miss complex environmental issues, including the problem of rational management of water resources of inter-continental transboundary rivers, which can be transport arteries," he said.

Nazarbayev noted the importance of mutual trust between the involved countries, as well as their readiness for equal and comprehensive cooperation for the successful development of the Belt and Road initiative.

At the meeting with Xi, Nazarbayev noted that the forum will be one of the main highlights of the year all over the world.

"In my view, your speech today has been extremely thoughtful and answered many questions of cooperation between countries. One Belt, One Road is a new paradigm, a scheme of cooperation at a new level," he noted.

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APK will assist in modernisation, says Nazarbayev

By Malika Orazgaliyeva

ASTANA – Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev told the 25th session of the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan (APK) that the assembly will be instrumental in achieving the country's modernisation.

Nazarbayev told the assembly during an April 25 gathering at the Palace of Peace and Harmony that the assembly will be involved in modernisation programmes, including "Tugan Zher" (Homeland), "100 New Individuals of Kazakhstan," and "Modern Kazakh Culture in the Global World." Nazarbayev also mentioned the "New Humanitarian Knowledge. 100 New Textbooks in the Kazakh

Parliament, heads of central executive bodies, political parties, religious organisations, nongovernmental organisations, representatives of the diplomatic corps and representatives of science, art and the media. The theme of the meeting was "Stability, Unity, Consent Are the Basis of Modernisation."

Nazarbayev, who chairs the Assembly, signed appointments of the two new deputies and directed the APK to create a multimedia website in 2018 and an interactive historical map "The People of Kazakhstan." He also called on representatives of the business, art and scientific community to participate in the "Tugan Zher" (Homeland) programme to assist citizens in villages.



Photo credit: akordak.kz

Language" programme, which is meant to improve the country's level of education.

"This year, the forefront of all our work is occupied by the systematic modernisation. We have already launched the economic and political modernisation. Now, we proceed to the modernisation of public consciousness, which is written in my article 'Course towards the future: modernisation of Kazakhstan's identity,'" Nazarbayev said.

More than 1,500 people attended, including APK representatives from all regions, chairpersons of national and regional ethnic and cultural associations, deputies of

Nazarbayev also drew attention to the global risks the country and society face.

"The citizens should know that peace and stability do not develop on their own. The state firmly keeps its hand on the pulse of interethnic and interdenominational processes. All the state bodies and APK conduct daily painstaking work to strengthen national unity," Nazarbayev noted.

Participants also adopted an appeal underlining that modernisation of Kazakhstan's identity is a natural and necessary step in the country's development.

A gala concert was held after the meeting.

Latest Astana process talks establish de-escalation zones in war-torn Syria

By Dmitry Lee and Galiaskar Seitshan

ASTANA – The fourth round of the Astana Process talks on Syria on May 3-4 ended with the signing of a document envisaging the creation of four "de-escalation zones" on the ground where no military activity would be allowed, including by "aerial assets," thus effectively introducing no-fly areas and adequate conditions for humanitarian access would be created.

The memorandum on that was signed by Russia, Turkey and Iran, the so called guarantor states to the ceasefire regime enacted by another agreement from Dec. 30, 2016. The parties also agreed to meet again in Astana in mid-July, which will be preceded by a technical meeting of military experts two weeks prior in Ankara.

The meeting was the latest in a series of talks among sides to the conflict in Syria. The talks have become known as the Astana Process and are meant to create conditions for the success in the more comprehensive peace talks in Geneva on the overall political settlement of the Syrian conflict.

Almaty-based political analyst Adil Kaukenov in an interview with the Kazinform national news agency on the eve of the talks noted that just getting the parties to the table in the wake of recent events should be considered a success.

"It was very difficult to get the



participants of the armed opposition to participate in the fourth round of negotiations. This was a serious breakthrough for both Kazakh diplomacy and all parties interested in resolving the conflict ... especially, given the fact that there were bombings by the U.S. and attacks by Russian aviation on the armed opposition, the situation is heating up," he said.

Indeed, the very fact that the meeting took place despite the series of disruptive events that could undermine any talks, including the chemical attack in Khan Sheikhun, the subsequent U.S. strike on Syr-

ian Air Force base in Shayrat and the bombings of buses with refugees in Aleppo, was surprising to some.

The two-day meeting in Astana gathered delegations of the government of Syria and the Syrian armed opposition, Russia, Turkey, and Iran, as well as senior diplomats from the United States, Jordan and the United Nations. The meeting included the highest level of representation from all the rounds held so far in the Kazakh capital since January.

The results of intensive, and at times heated, discussions were an-

nounced to the media at a plenary session at Astana's Rixos Hotel on May 4 by Kazakh Foreign Minister Kairat Abdrakhmanov. He was quick to highlight that the "Astana Process, which was launched with the direct participation and full support of President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev, has become an important negotiating platform, meaningfully complementing the Geneva format."

The Astana Process is meant "to stop the bloodshed in Syria by maintaining and strengthening the regime of cessation of hostilities," Abdrakhmanov explained earlier. "Geneva, according to the Kazakhstan's position, is the main venue for negotiations of the Syrian settlement under the UN auspices, where the political part of the agenda is discussed."

Abdrakhmanov noted the success of the previous Astana process talks.

"Thanks to the ceasefire agreement signed in December 2016 as well as the three high-level talks in Astana, the level of violence in Syria has significantly decreased since January 2017 compared to the previous situation," he said. "It is important to understand that the success of the Geneva Process is intertwined with the results of the negotiations in the Kazakh capital. In this regard, we attach utmost importance to compliance with ceasefire agreements by conflicting parties and their enforcement by guarantor-states."

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EU Ambassador in Astana talks about Rome declaration, Brexit and Cooperation Agreement

By Zhazira Dyussebekova

ASTANA – Diplomatic ties between Kazakhstan and the European Union (EU) were established in 1993. Today, the EU is one of the country's main political and economic partners. Ambassador Traian Hristea, head of the EU Delegation to Kazakhstan, answered questions regarding the recently-adopted Rome Declaration, as well as the Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (EPCA) and mutual work in civil service development in an interview with The Astana Times.

The 60th anniversary of the Treaties of Rome was celebrated this year. What does it mean for the future of Europe in light of the Rome Declaration adopted March 25 and Great Britain's expected exit from the EU?

The Rome Treaties anniversary is the opportunity to reaffirm our commitment to the values and objectives on which the European project is founded and to take pragmatic and ambitious steps forward. The world is going through a time of great uncertainty, the global balance of power is shifting and the foundations of a rules-based international order are too often being questioned. The EU will be an increasingly vital power to preserve and strengthen the global order.

We, Europeans, have an interest in peace and stability in the world, including Central Asia. We are already the first investor and aid donor worldwide and we are getting more and more engaged in security. Likewise, Kazakhstan has an interest in maintaining peace and security and this responsibility increases as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council.

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NATION

WEDNESDAY, MAY 17, 2017

Family upbringing is key to preventing youth radicalisation, says top Kazakh official

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – State bodies and civil society institutions should strengthen efforts to modernise public awareness with an emphasis on zero tolerance for any activities related to radical manifestations, especially in the sphere of religious relations, said Kazakh State Secretary Gulshara Abdykalikova. She made the comments at the conference on the role of women's organisations in preventing religious extremism among youth, held April 21 in Almaty.

Abdykalikova, whose job responsibilities include chairing numerous important inter-departmental commissions, such as on citizenship, state awards, state symbols, and fighting corruption among others, noted President Nursultan Nazarbayev set the task of preventing religious extremism propaganda and called for the active involvement of the non-governmental sector and religious associations in implementing the goals of the presidential policy article "Course towards the future: modernisation of Kazakhstan's identity."

"Today, there are four million young people in Kazakhstan. Ac-



Gulshara Abdykalikova

According to the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Civil Society, 79.6 percent of young people hold religious beliefs and the share actively practising their religion is 9.9 percent. Youth is the most vulnerable group all over the world which can be easily influenced by destructive organisations. It is important for families to start working with their children from early childhood. The head of state

adopted the concept of family and gender policy in Kazakhstan up to 2030, which defines long-term priorities for the development of human capital through the formation of an effective gender policy," she said.

The internet significantly influences the radicalisation process. In Kazakhstan, more than 100,000 facts spreading terrorism and extremism ideas were found and

neutralised in local segments in the first quarter of the year, the State Secretary noted. Last year, 315 cases of crimes containing signs of extremism and terrorism were registered and 12 extremist acts were prevented in the first six months due to the well-coordinated work of law enforcement bodies.

Preventive work has been systematically conducted among various sections of the population. Approximately 32 percent of followers of non-traditional religious trends are included in targeted prevention activities.

Ninety-one individuals were prevented from travelling abroad to fight with armed groups, and 123 people were convicted for terrorist and religious-extremist crimes as part of implementing the Counter Religious Extremism and Terrorism programme for 2013-2017.

All of these trends mean preventing religious extremism among the youth is of great importance.

"It is necessary to concentrate efforts on the following tasks. First, the state bodies along with civil society institutions should strengthen work on modernising the nation's identity with an accent on zero tolerance towards

any actions connected to radical manifestations, especially in the religious sphere. Secondly, opinion leaders should be involved in promoting national traditions, family values and spiritual revival. Thirdly, women's non-governmental organisations (NGOs) should conduct targeted and individual work to prevent adherence of women to non-traditional religious movements. Fourthly, there is a need to increase the number of female theologians who are able to take part in the work on preventing religious extremism. And fifthly, regional commissions under the akimats on women's affairs and family and demographic policy should actively cooperate," said Abdykalikova.

Since 2013, the National Commission for Women and Family and Demographic Policy has implemented the Women and Religion project in 10 regions in cooperation with their religious affairs bodies. The forums and conferences are held in the regions as part of the project.

Abdykalikova noted effective state policy in the field of combating religious extremism is the country's main task in terms of growing challenges and global threats.

NATIONAL NEWS IN BRIEF

Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev signed a bill on reforming the system of financing the country's sports, reported *tengrinews.kz*. According to the new bill, football clubs will be prohibited from paying funds from the state budget to foreign players. The bill also provides a mechanism to ensure that more funding is allocated to prioritised sports. The Ministry of Culture and Sports wants to achieve this effect by introducing rankings. The new model of sports financing is expected to provide objective and effective financing at the national and regional levels in sports where Kazakh athletes achieve good international results. When allocating budget funds by type, the following criteria will also be taken into account: the national and cultural tradition of the sport, availability of personnel potential and material, technical base and the ratio of the sport's characteristics to the region's climatic conditions.

The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) forecasts a 2.4 percent economic growth for Kazakhstan in 2017, reported the bank's press service. EBRD noted the exchange rate has stabilised and inflation decreased from 17.7 percent in July 2016 to 7.7 percent in March of this year. The bank added the Kazakh government has allocated \$6.5 billion to support banks facing insolvency risks and a possible merger of several banks is being considered. According to EBRD, 2018 will see an increase to 3.5 percent driven by accelerated production at the Kashagan oil field, boosting oil exports and higher foreign direct investment from China and other countries. The bank also noted large state support programmes, backed by significant fiscal buffers, will continue to drive growth. Inflation is expected to remain within the 6-8 percent set this year by Kazakh National Bank and decline further in subsequent years.

In the weeks preceding Astana EXPO 2017, the akimat (city administration) has announced a new work schedule for certain businesses in the hope of avoiding traffic jams and unloading some of the capital's busiest streets. "We plan to introduce the transition of the metropolitan residents to a new timetable from June 1," said Bekmyrza Igenberdinov, head of Astana's passenger transport department. The city will keep the schedule after the international exposition, but for now the new system will only be used in the capital, although Igenberdinov didn't rule out the possibility of Almaty switching to the system once it is working effectively. Earlier, city Akim (Mayor) Asset Issekeshiev mentioned the akimat was planning to ban trucks on certain roads from 6 a.m.-11 p.m. "The time for schools will remain the same – 8 a.m., the business hours for ministries and other central government agencies is to be pushed to 8.30 a.m. and universities and colleges and banks will start at 10 a.m.," he said.

The first Kazakh Qazaq Air pilots have started operating Bombardier Q400 NextGen aircraft, reported *today.kz*. The airline management has always wanted to recruit local pilots, it noted, and the selection of experienced Kazakh pilots flying other types of aircraft was initiated in fall 2015. The pilots were sent for retraining to the leading international flight training centres in Europe the following year. After passing several retraining courses in April, two Kazakh pilots were granted admission for independent flights as second pilots onboard Qazaq Air and one local pilot became the first Kazakh commander of a Bombardier Q400 NextGen. Another 13 pilots completed their studies in the commissioning programme and upon conclusion will also start flying independently as the airline's second pilots.

Centre of Cultures and Religions strengthens interfaith harmony, patriotism

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – Twenty foreign and five Kazakh participants representing leaders of world and traditional religions and international organisations dealing with issues in the field will get together in the Kazakh capital May 18 for the 16th session of the Secretariat of the Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions.

The Astana Times interviewed International Centre of Cultures and Religions head Aidar Abuov to learn about the meeting's agenda and the centre's activities.

"Promoting the dialogue of civilisations and religions is not an abstract mission, but an urgent need to improve the international situation that has entered a period of in-

stability. The Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions is widely acknowledged by the world community as an effective dialogue platform," he said.

A number of organisational and conceptual issues related to the sixth congress, scheduled for 2018, including the agenda of the third meeting of the Council of Religious Leaders and the date and place for the congress and 17th secretariat meetings, will be discussed as part of the session. Nominees for the Astana International Award for contribution to the interreligious dialogue and the congress' Medal of Honour will also be considered.

"Ethnic harmony and multi-vector foreign policy have contributed to the country's stability and development over the years of independ-

ence. Our country is recognised by the entire world community for its consistent and balanced strategy. I would like to emphasise that today Kazakhstan's foreign policy positively affects the country's image in the global arena," he said.

The International Centre of Cultures and Religions, established at President Nursultan Nazarbayev's initiative, was announced at the second congress in 2006. The head of state set a task for the centre to become an intellectual laboratory for peace, harmony and justice and to consider and advance proposals to the global agenda. The centre is designated as a working structure under the auspices of the congress to expand dialogue among representatives of different cultures and religions and involve individuals from secular and religious media, youth

and women's associations and academic and creative communities.

"The provisions in the recent presidential policy article 'Course towards the future: modernisation of Kazakhstan's identity' do not only cover the political, economic and strategic layers of our society, but also spiritual ones. The policy is aimed at determining the vector of development of our country. The head of state outlined the key areas of modernisation of Kazakhstan's identity," said Abuov.

The centre's activities will continue to be aimed at promoting the unique Kazakh experience of strengthening interfaith harmony and interreligious dialogue at the international level and facilitating similar effective interaction among international organisations, national bodies and societal institutions, he added.

Authorities in Karaganda region using all available tools to battle corruption

By Dmitry Lee

ASTANA – Last year, Kazakhstan was ranked 131st of 176 countries in Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index. This, among many other factors, prompted government officials to develop various tools to battle the low rating in the hope of promoting a transparent Kazakhstan open to foreign businesses.

The country has been struggling with ongoing corruption issues since gaining independence. The nation has never achieved a ranking higher than 105th (2010); in 2008 it was ranked 145th, in 2012 – 133rd and in 2014 – 126th.

"Kazakhstan's Anti-Corruption Strategy 2015-2025 has laid the beginning of a new era of the state in the eradication of corruption," Karaganda region Civil Service Affairs and Anti-Corruption Agency head Zhandos Sarsenov told The Astana Times in an exclusive interview.

According to data provided by the department, since January 1, 2016, 59 new laws have entered into force in Kazakhstan designated to provide an integrated approach to eliminate corruption risks. The use of exclusively pu-



Zhandos Sarsenov

litive measures is involved, he noted.

"Realising the tasks set by the head of state, according to the anti-corruption strategy, new anti-corruption tools have been created, such as the anti-corruption monitoring, analysis and identification of corruption risks, as well as anti-corruption culture formation. These aspects contribute to the creation of a set of preventive measures that exclude the possibility of the emergence of prerequisites for corruption," he said.

The regional department is currently using all available tools to fully implement the anti-corruption policy.

"The priority activity of the department is the prevention of corruption-related offenses. The increase of legal literacy and the elimination of legal nihilism are among the main directions in preventive activities. The department carries out active explanatory works, which cover not only civil servants, but citizens as well. And we can say that the involvement of civil society is gaining increasing importance, because without the support of citizens in this challenging matter we will get nowhere. Accordingly, together with non-governmental organisations, public associations, representatives of the business community, religious associations, work collectives, students, schoolchildren, their parents and teachers, various events are held, starting with lectures and seminars and ending with joint plans and actions," said Sarsenov.

He added the department is developing various information materials both on paper and audio-visual, such as video clips on anti-corruption topics that are broadcast and advertised on large screens in public places.

"We are trying to notify and warn citizens everywhere – at work, on

the streets and at home, because the law also provides liability for the provision of any benefits to officials. Citizens should know and understand that only by joint efforts we will be able to achieve the needed results. For instance, when receiving receipts for utility bills any citizen will also be able to notice our information booklets," he said.

Anti-corruption mobile groups have also been formed in the region with the aim of increasing "legal literacy of people through visiting places of mass gatherings where we can give interpretation of the legislation and even accept their public appeals on various issues. Such mobile groups have been deployed all over the country," he noted.

"Coordination of public society and governmental bodies is also very important in reaching common goals. This was repeatedly mentioned by the head of state in his addresses to the nation, that much in the fight against corruption will depend on active participation of the whole society. With the development of social networks and other media resources, general rejection must become a powerful tool in the fight against corruption," added Sarsenov.

Selecting competent and professional specialists in the ranks of civil servants is also an important issue.

"In Karaganda, we are implementing the one of a kind project in the country titled 'The First Step' to attract the best graduates of higher educational institutions to civil service. It is also essential to work with the younger generation, where their upbringing in the spirit of Kazakhstani patriotism and exclusion of corruption is the consequential issue as well. In order to do that, the department staff conducts various activities with school and preschool students. For example, we conduct annual competitions of pictures and different projects among pupils and students on anti-corruption themes where winners can be invited to a victory ceremony afterwards," he said.

According to Kazakhstan's Strategy 2050, the state should enter the top 30 developed countries by then. Implementing the anti-corruption strategy is not solely the current generation's responsibility.

"The responsibility is also on today's youth – the future generation, and what the future generation will become depends only on today's actions," said Sarsenov.

EURASIA&WORLD

WEDNESDAY, MAY 17, 2017

EXTERNAL NEWS IN BRIEF

The number of joint foreign ventures and enterprises in Kazakhstan is on the rise, Khabar 24 news agency reports. An Atyrau concrete plant with an output of 200 metric tonnes per day is one such joint company with the United States. According to a plant manager, the plant was built with an eye to the future expansion of the Tengiz field. A joint Kazakh-French plant that produces new generation radar equipment has opened in the Almaty region recently as well. The stations with a 500-kilometer range for reconnaissance and airspace control are in use in Germany, Canada and Finland. Recently, NATO purchased 10 sets at once. One of the radar systems made in Kazakhstan has been in use in Astana for three years. Another will be launched in Karaganda in the near future. In total, the plant will produce four stations a year.

Executive Director of the Eastern Committee of the German Economy Michael Harms believes that the Astana International Financial Centre (AIFC) will play a key role in attracting foreign investments to the Kazakh economy, Kazakh TV reports. "The Kazakh President pays great attention to the digitalisation of the economy, modernisation of industry and introduction of new technologies," he said. "We discuss these topics in Germany and in Europe and we believe this is very important. Also an important signal for us is the improvement of conditions for entrepreneurs. I welcome the establishment of the AIFC. Investments of German entrepreneurs in Kazakhstan can be much greater. For us, it is very important to support investors and stable business conditions. I think we should work harder to create more joint projects," he noted.

Kazakhstan's investment potential has been presented in neighbouring Kyrgyzstan at a joint business forum, Khabar 24 reports. Kazakhstan presented some 30 companies from the following industries: food, construction materials, pharmaceuticals and chemical products. According to media statements, there are more than 500 Kyrgyz companies operating in Kazakhstan and about the same number of Kazakh companies operating in Kyrgyzstan. Participants of the business forum sealed deals worth almost \$12 million. Exports of Kyrgyz food products to Kazakhstan have also increased by 27 percent, local media report.

Kazakhstan and France are expanding trade and economic cooperation, Kazakh TV reports. "Among the priorities are construction industry, manufacturing, digital technologies and consulting services." Participants in the recent Kazakh-French Business Council had a chance to review business cooperation prospects in the capital. Representatives of Kazakhstan's National Chamber of Entrepreneurs, who were also present, said France is third by volume in terms of direct investment in Kazakhstan, with about \$11.5 billion in invested funds in the past 10 years. There are nearly 130 French companies operating in Kazakhstan. Trade turnover between the two countries exceeded \$1 billion last year.

Kazakhstan-born Korean artist Mikhail Pak recently held an exhibition in South Korea. He exhibited about 30 paintings in the gallery Insa-dong in the cultural district in the Korean capital, Seoul. The artist showcased Korean and Kazakh landscapes and nature in his works. Pak lived in Kazakhstan for 20 years, and those years were crucial for him, he explained. He learned to paint in his native city of Almaty, he said, and to this day his paintings reflect Almaty streets and alleys and the former capital's vibe. This year, Kazakhstan and South Korea are celebrating the 25th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations. The Asia Cultural Centre is organising a series of exhibitions of Kazakh artists and poets to mark the event in Kazakhstan and South Korea.

Kazakh FM discusses cooperation with US, British and UN officials in New York

By Malika Orazgaliyeva

ASTANA – The UN Security Council under the American chairmanship held ministerial level thematic debates on the theme of non-proliferation/DPRK in New York April 28. The Kazakh delegation was headed by Foreign Minister Kairat Abdrakhmanov, who also held a number of bilateral talks with his foreign counterparts.

The debate participants expressed a serious concern over the risk of military escalation in Northeast Asia. It was noted that the DPRK is the only country in the world that conducted nuclear weapon tests in this century. The participants called on the international community to "not succumb to provocations of North Korea" and to "not let miscalculations and misunderstandings" lead to global consequences.

According to U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, the U.S. cannot indifferently watch the growth of threats from the DPRK. He called on the participants to strengthen all possible measures of economic and diplomatic pressure on North Korea, including by imposing economic sanctions and limiting diplomatic and trade relations with Pyongyang.

"At the same time, the U.S. does not exclude a military solution to the problem," Tillerson noted.

France and the United Kingdom also advocated a significant expansion of restrictive measures against the DPRK, to influence Pyongyang to abandon its nuclear programme.

At the same time, Russia and China warned the world community that military options are absolutely unacceptable and fraught with catastrophic consequences for both the Korean peninsula and the Northeast Asia region as a whole. In this regard, China has



L-R: Kairat Abdrakhmanov and António Guterres.

proposed its two-track formula for resolving the problem, which includes a set of measures aimed at denuclearisation and a parallel peace process. Russia supported China's proposal, as well as advocated the resumption of the six-party talks.

The non-permanent members of the council voiced concern over the continuation of the DPRK nuclear tests, in spite of the repeated demands of the Security Council to stop these actions.

Addressing the participants, Abdrakhmanov noted that disarmament, non-proliferation and nuclear security are among the main priorities of Kazakhstan's foreign policy. In his words, the decision of Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev to renounce the world's fourth largest nuclear arsenal in the early 1990s can prove that the choice in favour of a nuclear weapons-free status is the

only sure guarantee for preserving regional and global security.

Abdrakhmanov expressed serious concern over the deterioration of the situation on the Korean Peninsula in light of DPRK's missile tests that violate all relevant UN Security Council resolutions.

"Kazakhstan supports the members of the Security Council in the intention to resume six-party talks or apply other political and diplomatic measures for the early peaceful resolution of the current critical situation," he said.

The debates were attended by the foreign ministers of the member countries, including Fumio Kishida of Japan, Mankeur Ndiaye of Senegal, Wan Yi of China, Boris Johnson of Great Britain, Workneh Gebeyehu of Ethiopia, Deputy Ministers of Sweden Annika Söder and Italy Benedetto Della Vedova.

Later in the day, Abdrakhmanov met with Tillerson, Johnson and

UN Secretary-General António Guterres.

According to the Kazakh Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Abdrakhmanov and Tillerson discussed implementing the Kazakh-American strategic partnership and expanding trade and economic cooperation as agreed during an earlier telephone conversation between the two presidents, Nursultan Nazarbayev and Donald Trump.

"Kazakhstan attaches a special importance to the development of a comprehensive strategic partnership with the U.S. and intends to work closely with the new administration," Abdrakhmanov said.

The sides discussed international issues, including the situations in Syria, Afghanistan, North Korea, as well as the Iranian nuclear programme. Abdrakhmanov stressed Kazakhstan's readiness to contribute to global and regional security.

The foreign minister also urged

the U.S. to continue supporting the Astana Process, a mechanism to bring peace to Syria, and to participate as an observer to the process. [It was later announced that the U.S. is sending Acting Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs Stuart Jones for the May 3-4 talks in Astana.]

Abdrakhmanov noted the International Atomic Energy Agency's Low Enriched Uranium Bank in Kazakhstan will open Aug. 29 and, given the U.S. government's and the Nuclear Threat Initiative's support for the bank, invited U.S. representatives to participate.

Tillerson noted Nazarbayev's historic decision to renounce the world's fourth largest nuclear arsenal, which indicated a desire to join the international community as a peaceful partner.

The two also discussed the United States' participation in EXPO 2017 and Tillerson acknowledged the friendly long-standing relations between the countries.

At the meeting between Abdrakhmanov and Johnson, the parties discussed bilateral cooperation, noting Great Britain is one of the six largest investors in Kazakhstan's economy, Johnson expressed an interest in the upcoming Kazakh-British business forum with the participation of business leaders from both countries.

Abdrakhmanov briefed Johnson on the progress of the Astana Process and the British Foreign Secretary agreed a peaceful resolution is urgently needed in Syria.

At the meeting with Guterres, Abdrakhmanov emphasised the importance of the UN Secretariat's support of Nazarbayev's initiatives voiced at the 70th session of the UN General Assembly.

The parties discussed international security and Guterres said the Astana Process has opened the way for the progress in the Geneva talks.

The two also discussed Kazakhstan's proposal to establish a UN international hub in Almaty. Guterres also confirmed his participation in the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Summit and opening of EXPO 2017 in Astana on June 8-9.

Kazakh President attends One Belt, One Road forum, meets with leaders in China

Continued from Page A1

"The Belt covers more than 60 countries, which is 45 percent of the world's population. Bilateral and multilateral cooperation between Kazakhstan and China can serve as an example for other countries," Nazarbayev added.

In addition, the parties discussed ensuring regional and cyber security, as well as international issues.

According to the Akorda press service, Xi thanked Nazarbayev for Kazakhstan's contribution to the Syrian conflict settlement.

He also noted the success of the Nuryl Zhol Programme, as well as underlined the relevance of Kazakhstan's initiative the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA).

The Chinese leader confirmed his readiness to take part in the up-

coming SCO summit and opening ceremony of EXPO 2017 in Astana next month.

On the sidelines of the forum, Nazarbayev also held meetings with foreign leaders, including President of Russia Vladimir Putin, President of Turkey Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, President of Belarus Alexander Lukashenko, President of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev, Chinese Premier of

the State Council Li Keqiang, Prime Minister of Pakistan Nawaz Sharif, Prime Minister of Malaysia Najib Razak, Prime Minister of Spain Mariano Rajoy and Chairman of the World Economic Forum (WEF) Klaus Schwab.

Nazarbayev also had a conversation with the UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres, who also confirmed his participation in the SCO summit.

The Belt and Road initiative, which aims to expand trade links between Asia, Africa, Europe and beyond, was first unveiled in 2013.

According to bbc.com, Xi has pledged \$124 billion in the One Belt, One Road project. In Xi's words, trade is the important engine of economic development.

Part of the massive funding boost, which is aimed at strengthening China's links with its trading partners, includes \$9 billion in aid to developing countries and international institutions that form part of the Belt and Road project.

Leaders from 29 countries, and officials from around 130 countries, attended the two-day forum.

Latest Astana process talks establish de-escalation zones in war-torn Syria

Continued from Page A1

He went on to urge all parties to refrain from "hardline rhetoric" and "unilateral hasty military steps," adding "the more we spend on peace the less we spend on war."

The minister also stressed the increased relevance of the talks in light of the abovementioned escalations in Syria. "In this situation, the significance of the Astana Process has increased even more," he said, adding that the high level of representation of guarantor states and all the stakeholders was encouraging.

Abdrakhmanov's remarks were followed by the ceremony of signing by the heads of the Russian, Turkish, and Iranian delegations of the memorandum creating de-escalation zones in Syria. The document's content described it as aimed at "ending violence, preserving the unity and territorial integrity of the country, and finding a political solution" to the six-year old conflict, one of the bloodiest worldwide since World War II.

The document named four "de-escalation zones," which are the

Idlib province and parts of the provinces of Latakia, Hama and Aleppo, the area north of Homs, Eastern Ghouta, and the provinces of Daraa and Al Quneitra in southern Syria. There, the "use of any kind of weapons, including aerial, will be forbidden." Also, humanitarian aid and medicines are to be provided and steps taken to restore basic infrastructure facilities for the needs of the civil population, thus creating conditions for the safe return of refugees.

The delegates discussed establishing a working group on the exchange of detainees and reviewed a related draft document.

The participants of the meeting also thanked President Nazarbayev and the Kazakh government for hosting the Astana Process meetings.

Following the signing ceremony, some delegations hosted their own press conference to give their interpretations of the meeting's outcomes.

According to a press release from the host country's foreign ministry, "Kazakhstan regards the results of the fourth international meeting on Syria in Astana as another substan-

tial step towards peace in Syria, calls on all parties to implement all agreements, and confirms its readiness to continue contributing to international efforts to find various ways for a political settlement of the Syrian conflict, including as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council." Kazakhstan is a member of the UN Security Council for 2017-2018.

The UN Secretary General's Special Envoy for Syria Staffan de Mistura was also upbeat about the meeting's outcomes.

"Today in Astana I think we have been able to witness an important, promising, positive step in the right direction in the process of de-escalation of the conflict," he said.

According to him, the ceasefire dating from Dec. 30, 2016, has been facing a lot of difficulties but "has been holding more or less."

"This initiative today is actually a step in the right direction because it is pushing for a concrete de-escalation in addition to the ceasefire in four areas," de Mistura urged. "De-escalation obviously must be followed by humanitarian access. This is part of the memo-

andum," the statement from Guterres' spokesperson read.

The U.S. Department of State in Washington, DC also issued a statement following the talks expressing hope that this arrangement "can contribute to a de-escalation of violence, end the suffering of the Syrian people, and set the stage for a political settlement of the conflict."

"We look forward to continuing our dialogue with the Russian Federation on efforts that responsibly end the Syria conflict. We continue to strongly support the UN-led process in Geneva, under the stewardship of Staffan de Mistura, as the centre of international efforts to bring about a negotiated settlement," the State Department said.

Giving his view on the meeting's results, Director of the Eurasian Council for Foreign Affairs Zhanbolat Ussenov told The Astana Times that the talks have boosted Kazakhstan's credibility on the international stage.

"For Kazakhstan, the Astana Process is yet another element of its grand strategy to position itself as an efficient international broker and mediator," Ussenov said. "With the fourth meeting now behind us, it is quite clear that Kazakhstan's capital city is cementing its position as an international negotiation venue, Geneva of the East, if you will."

ECONOMY

WEDNESDAY, MAY 17, 2017

Government explains new foreign investment strategy, creation of Kazakh Invest national company

By Aigerim Seisembayeva

ASTANA – Kazakh Prime Minister Bakytzhan Sagintayev and other top officials presented April 27 the outlines of the draft National Investment Attraction and Retention Strategy and the recently created Kazakh Invest national company as part of efforts to further attract foreign capital.

“Today, we are ready to present our vision of the solution to the task set by the President. Kazakh Invest has been formed on the basis of the old KAZNEX Invest with its complete restructuring. I was appointed the chairperson of the Board of Directors of the company. We deliberately raised its status to the level of a prime minister in order to stress the importance of our priorities in investment policy,” Sagintayev said during an April 27 briefing for the diplomatic corps at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the strategy and company, noting both are still under development.

Sagintayev told the gathering, which included ambassadors and top diplomats from around 60 countries as well as international organisations, the strategy and company are an attempt to reload Kazakhstan’s approach to attracting foreign investment to maintain the lead in this sphere and increase non-oil investment. He said the new strategy and company would also assist investors operating in the regions.

Head of the Vienna Office of the Investment Climate Practice Group of the World Bank Group’s Trade and Competitiveness Global Practice Ivan Nimac presented



L-R: First Deputy Prime Minister Askar Mamin, Prime Minister Bakytzhan Sagintayev and Minister for Investments and Development Zhenis Kassymbek at the April 27 briefing at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

the draft of the National Investment Attraction and Retention Strategy.

The strategy is a roadmap to diversify the share of investments with high added value focused on increasing efficiency, he said.

“The types of investments must be changed to facilitate the process of economic diversification. They should be focused not only on raw materials or natural resources, they should move towards other types of investments: qualitative and quantitative. We are looking for more effective investments to ensure economic growth and modernisation,” Nimac said.

Nimac said the strategy’s goals would be achieved by attracting new types of investments, increasing the benefits of existing foreign direct investments, conducting strategic privatisation and using

more widely public-private partnerships (PPPs).

Kazakh Minister for Investments and Development Zhenis Kassymbek said the new strategy will be developed by the end of June and focus on defining priority investment industries and developing an Investment Project Map, identifying target companies and international investment funds and improving the investment environment, investment attracting mechanisms and financial instruments.

The strategy was developed with the help of World Bank experts and incorporates recommendations from the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, said Sagintayev.

Chairperson of the Board of Kazakh Invest Maksat Kabashev and Kassymbek briefed the diplomats on the company’s goals, tasks and

interaction with state bodies and investors.

“Kazakh Invest is not only a new name; it is the emergence of a whole new paradigm. Our focus is on investors. We find new investors, but we don’t forget about the existing ones. We know what they want and we want them to work in Kazakhstan. The main principle of Kazakh Invest is to help, without hindering,” Kabashev said. “This means moving to a more efficient, rational and business-oriented form of attracting investment to the country.”

Kazakh Invest will operate on a “one-stop shop” and will accompany investors through the entirety of their projects, from pitching them opportunities, to preparing investment proposals to the implementation and functioning of the business, Kassymbek said.

The company has offices abroad and in all Kazakh regions. The board of directors headed by the prime minister also includes heads of ministries and top-level foreign consultants.

“To date, nineteen sectors have been created in the regions to provide services to investors. In the regions, representatives of Kazakh Invest will be given the status of external advisors to akims (governors and mayors) of the regions and cities of Astana and Almaty,” Kassymbek added.

Kassymbek said a monitoring system will also be introduced allowing investors to monitor online the progress of the services they receive.

Kassymbek also updated the diplomatic corps on measures that have already been carried out, including simplification of licensing procedures reducing required permits, encouraging public-private partnerships, establishing free economic zones, adopting a new law on arbitration and appointing an investment ombudsman.

These measures have resulted in foreign investment in 2016 of \$20.6 billion, which is a 40 percent increase over 2015. Kazakhstan currently ranks 35th on the World Bank’s (WB) Doing Business Index.

Kassymbek also praised the activities of organisations such as the Council of Foreign Investors under the President, the Council for Improving the Investment Climate under the Government, the Kazakhstan Foreign Investors Council Association, the European Business Association of Kazakhstan and the Investment Ombudsman Institute.

ECONOMY NEWS IN BRIEF

Food products prices increased 3.8 percent during the last four months, as non-food products and paid services each grew 2.1 percent, reported 24.kz. Since the beginning of the year, increases have been seen in the price of potatoes (35.5 percent), fresh vegetables (18.8 percent), mutton (8.8 percent), beef (7.3 percent), butter (5.4 percent), canned milk (4.3 percent) and confectionery products (3.6 percent). Decreases were seen in the price for eggs (11.3 percent), sugar (5.9 percent), buckwheat (5.7 percent) and sunflower oil (4.4 percent). Car prices hiked 3.7 percent, prices for glass and ceramics grew 2.8 percent and those for textiles and pharmaceutical products rose by 2.3 percent. Personal goods, newspapers, books and stationery, furniture and household goods grew 1.9 percent, washing and cleaning products 1.8 percent and household appliances 1.4 percent. Liquefied gas in cylinders went up 5.8 percent, gasoline 5.5 percent and diesel fuel 2.2 percent.

Kazakh Ambassador to Tajikistan Nurlan Seitimov met with Tajik Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Haqodod Mahmudsharif Mahmud, reported inform.kz. According to the Tajik Agency for Statistics, the volume of mutual trade between the countries in the first quarter was \$192.9 million, an increase of 38.3 percent compared to the same period the previous year. The sides noted cultural and humanitarian ties between the countries are developing fruitfully. Dushanbe, the nation’s capital, is set to hold the Days of Education, when 30 Kazakh universities will present activities and conduct testing for Tajik youth to acquire their educations at the institutions.

The mortgage loan portfolio of second-tier banks increased 1.5 percent from January-March, reaching 998.4 billion tenge (US\$3.15 billion), according to ranking.kz. For the same period in 2016, the mortgage portfolio fell 3.3 percent to 871.1 billion tenge (US\$2.75 billion.) In general, over the year the volume of mortgage loans increased 14.6 percent or 127.3 billion tenge (US\$401.37 million,) of which 56.6 billion tenge (US\$178 million) fell on House Construction Savings Bank. In Astana, the bank’s mortgage portfolio increased 4.2 percent to 216.4 billion tenge (US\$682 million.)

South Kazakhstan region is set to develop a cluster for a poultry complex to grow turkeys, reported 24.kz. The complex is expected to include peasant farms, enterprises engaged in producing mixed foders and cooperatives specialising in fattening and processing poultry meat. Twenty-five fattening houses will be built on 50 hectares and a functioning poultry complex will supply them with turkeys and mixed foders and provide veterinary services. In general, the farms plan to produce up to 10,000 tonnes of poultry meat a year. A new settlement will be built for workers in the new high-tech production.

According to the forecast by European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) specialists, Kazakhstan’s gross domestic product (GDP) growth in 2018 will be 3.5 percent, reported 24.kz. The nation’s economy is recovering after a slowdown caused by external shocks, noted bank head Agris Preimanis, and because the country has adopted reforms. As for economic growth this year, the bank confirmed its previous forecast of 2.4 percent. EBRD staff believes the economy will resume its growth in all regions this year and in 2018 due to higher oil prices and Russia’s recovery from the economic recession. The average GDP growth in Central and South-Eastern Europe countries and the Baltic States will be 3 percent. The figure will be 3.4 percent for Russia, while in Central Asian countries, the average GDP growth will reach 4.6 percent, according to the forecast for next year.

Fitch Ratings affirms Kazakhstan’s BBB rating

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – Fitch Ratings has confirmed Kazakhstan’s Long-Term Foreign- and Local-Currency Issuer Default Ratings (IDR), evaluating it at BBB with stable outlooks. The issue ratings on the state’s senior unsecured foreign-currency bonds have also been confirmed at BBB and the Short-Term Foreign- and Local-Currency IDRs have been affirmed at F2.

The Kazakh economy is gradually adjusting to the large oil price drop of recent years. Experts report that exchange rate flexibility, financial reforms, restructuring of the state’s banking sector and fiscal stimulus help the economy.

The rating agency considers the IDR balance reflects strong public and external balance sheets, which are supported by a substantial sovereign net foreign asset position and large government savings. Fitch Ratings experts emphasise the nation’s high commodity dependence, weak banking sector and weak governance indicators and a volatile macroeconomic performance in comparison with BBB peers.

The Kazakh economy is gradually adjusting to the large oil price drop of recent years. Experts report that exchange rate flexibility, financial reforms, restructuring of the state’s banking sector and fiscal stimulus help the economy.

Fitch Ratings forecasts the Kazakh government will have a defi-

cit of up to 7.7 percent of GDP this year. In 2016, the number was 5 percent due to the recapitalisation of Kazkommertsbank, the country’s largest bank. The recapitalisation is considered to be a part of a process that should see Kazkommertsbank acquired by Halyk Bank, the nation’s second-largest bank.

The Kazakh government will decrease the budget deficit in 2018-2019, finishing the Nurlu Zhol national programme and reforming the tax code. Deficit reduction will be supported by increasing oil prices, according to the report.

Kazakhstan’s fiscal balance sheet is very strong, showing assets in the National Fund of 45.8 percent of GDP at end of 2016. At the same time, the net government debt was only 22.3 percent of GDP compared with a peer median of 33.1 percent.

The report indicates the country’s commodity dependence is high and lower oil prices led the current account deficit to 6.4 percent of GDP in 2016. The government boosts non-oil exports, but hasn’t yet benefited from exchange rate depreciation.

External balance sheet metrics are very strong. Net external debt was 22.9 percent of GDP at the end of 2016. Fitch Ratings forecasts that net external debt will reach a maximum at the end of 2017 and decline to 20 percent of GDP at the end of 2018.

Macro-financial risks have declined and the inflation targeting regime is gaining credibility. Fitch Ratings experts consider the Kazakh banking sector is very weak and highlight government work on financial sector restructuring and support for Kazkommertsbank.

Real GDP growth was 1 percent in 2016 and 1.2 percent in 2015. Fitch Ratings expects real GDP growth up to 2.2 percent this year due to oil output increase.

Kazakhstan’s top mark was BBB+. Fitch Ratings based its report on the following Brent crude prices: an average of \$52.50 per barrel in 2017 and \$55 per barrel in 2018.

Nazarbayev signs law defining borrower protections

By Kamila Zhumabayeva

ASTANA – President Nursultan Nazarbayev signed May 6 a debt collection act and related amendments regulating how collection agencies can pursue borrowers and other elements related to debt collection.

“The draft law focuses on protecting the rights of borrowers. ... The law defines the rights and obligations of all parties down to a time when a debt collector is allowed to contact a debtor and the type of primary information he or she is to be given,” Anatoliy Glukhov, head of the association of micro lenders said during the draft law consideration at the Mazhilis, Tengrinews.kz reported.

Earlier it was reported that deputies of the Mazhilis (lower chamber of Parliament) approved amendments to the debt collection act during the second reading.

According to these amendments, debt collectors can now interact with debtors only from 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. during workdays and are not allowed to contact them during weekends and holidays.

In a similar vein, a provision was made to prohibit a lender from charging a late debt payment fee during the period of debt recovery from debt collection agency as well as prohibit demanding compensation accrued on specified period.

Mandatory fixation of an interaction with debtors by a debt collection agency through the use of

audio and video equipment will also be introduced.

It is not allowed for two debt collection agencies to perform debt-collecting pertaining to one open amount.

The legislation seeks to increase efficiency and safety in the work on debt collection, protection of debtors’ rights and interests from illegal actions by debt collection agencies, regulating debt collection and increasing its transparency.

As announced at the Mazhilis, the work on the document has been done in close cooperation with the deputies, drafters and general public. The standings of both creditors and borrowers were taken into consideration in the draft law.

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Sincerely,
Roman Vassilenko
Editor-in-Chief
The Astana Times

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BUSINESS

WEDNESDAY, MAY 17, 2017

BUSINESS NEWS IN BRIEF

The South Kazakhstan region will export Karakul lambs to Italy, according to the region's akimat (city administration) press service. Baiyrkum-Agro enterprise, located in the rural district of the same name, started breeding the sheep. To date, the farm has 2,000 sheep and by the end of the year the company plans to bring the number to 20,000. Baiyrkum-Agro earlier received 35 million tenge (US\$110,600) in state subsidy, according to the statement. Kumkent and Karakur, production cooperatives located in the Suzak district, are also engaged in breeding Karakul sheep in South Kazakhstan. Last year, they sold one-year-old lambs to the United Arab Emirates.

Volvo Cars announced plans to increase sales in Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan, according to RNS news agency. The company's Russian division has announced a tender to find partners for opening dealer and service centres in 11 regions in Russia and Kazakhstan. The first centres may appear in 2017 in Astana, Almaty and Shymkent, Kazakh cities with populations of more than 800,000. Applications for participation in the tender will be accepted until June 30.

A Granit-Thales Electronics plant producing new-generation radar equipment was opened in the Almaty region, according to the Kazakh Ministry of Defence and Aerospace Industry. "Such a project is being implemented for the first time in Central Asia to meet the needs of the Kazakh army, as well as the states of this region. With its implementation, there are plans to achieve more than 70 percent of the level of localisation by providing production stations with nodes, units, communication equipment and special automotive equipment produced in the territory of the republic. More than 150 jobs have been created at Granit-Thales Electronics," noted the statement.

The profit level in the Kazakh banking sector is decreasing, according to ranking.kz. For January-March, the total profit of Kazakh banks amounted to 82.4 billion tenge (US\$260.9 million), 14.1 percent less than for the same period in 2016. In the first quarter of 2017, Halyk Bank earned the largest profit in the amount of 34.9 billion tenge (US\$110.5 million), which is 42.4 percent of the total profit of all second-tier banks. Last year's leader Kazkom was second with a profit of 6.9 billion tenge (US\$21.8 million), followed by Citibank with a profit of 6.6 billion tenge (US\$20.9 million).

Shardara district of the South Kazakhstan region has launched a fish factory, the fourth such enterprise in the district started as part of the State Programme of Accelerated Industrial and Innovative Development, according to the South Kazakhstan administration press service. The Ontustik plant is capable of producing 600 tonnes of fish products a year and the company plans to further expand its production and start growing fish. The plant currently produces fillets, frozen and smoked fish, which will be exported to markets in European countries. The three existing plants processed about 4,000 tonnes of fish last year and produced products worth 3.2 billion tenge (US\$10.1 million).

The Development Bank of Kazakhstan intends to finance 12 major projects in 2017, said Chairperson of the Board Bolat Zhamishev during a press conference. "A portfolio of projects, which are likely to be financed, has been identified for the current year. Why they are likely is because the financing of the projects is the joint work of the borrower and the bank. Nevertheless, we believe that this year a decision will be taken on 12 potential projects within the State Programme of Accelerated Industrial and Innovative Development. They are now in the bank at various stages of consideration. The total cost is 760 billion tenge (US\$2.4 billion) and the requested amount of financing is 312 billion tenge (US\$987 million). The projects are in the industries of engineering, chemical industry, petrochemicals, metallurgy and production of building materials," said Zhamishev.

Kazakhstan's open investment policy, EXPO attract foreign investors to do business

By Dmitry Lee

ASTANA – Kazakhstan's efforts to draw foreign investors have marked the country as the "foreign investors' haven" in Central Asia. For U.K.-based Aggreko, a supplier of temporary power generation equipment and temperature control equipment, this was one of the main reasons to enter the local market.

"Aggreko provides flexible mobile scalable power, industrial cooling and heating to a various range of customers, the key industries being utilities, oil and gas and mining, where we have extensive experience globally and quite a number of success stories in Eurasia," said Aggreko Eurasia general manager for Central Asia Dominique Rachez in an interview with The Astana Times. "We started to operate in Kazakhstan in 2009 and later on in 2014 opened a branch in Astana. Kazakhstan is a strategic region for Central Asia operations. We have representatives in Astana, Atyrau, Tengiz, Karachaganak, Almaty and Karaganda."

"There are two reasons for this. First, it is the enormous potential



Dominique Rachez

of the Kazakhstan and Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) markets. Kazakhstan has steadily been the leader in the Central Asia investment appeal rankings. The European institutions are optimistic about its investment development," he added.

There are positive changes in the power industry, he noted.

"We are very optimistic about the implementation of smart energy and smart grid solutions and the Ministry of Energy's plans to increase the share of renewable energy up to 3 percent by 2020 and to 10 percent by 2030. The Ag-

greko portfolio includes not only conventional energy sources. We are introducing a new technology to the market: hybrid solar diesel power," he said.

The second reason is that local presence is paramount in delivering successful business in the region.

"Being present in the area means being closer to the customers, checking the pulse of their growth and responding to their changing needs in a fast and efficient manner. The professional level and the level of education of our Kazakh employees is very high, which helps us grow local expertise and gives us confidence that we are providing services of the highest standard to our customers. Our Kazakh partners and suppliers help us stay competitive in the market. We combine local presence with our global experience in order to support local communities, which is the mission of Aggreko," said Rachez.

Establishing an office in the Kazakh capital was a logical development of the company's operation in the country, "which we are willing to expand in terms of local content base: suppliers, employees and fleet," he said.

The solutions which the com-

pany provides help solve power supply issues.

"Be it lack of capacity for production expansion, unreliable main power source or an isolated area with no access to a grid – our main goal is to ensure growth of our customers' businesses by providing a reliable power infrastructure without capital expenditure. We help businesses start production early and give them the flexibility to scale the required capacity per their business requirements. Our business model is rental and therefore fleet availability is our strong advantage – we can promptly mobilise required capacity wherever the customers require it," he said.

"The Aggreko business philosophy is 'nomadic' by nature. Our equipment is designed for mobility, fast commissioning and operation in harsh climates with huge temperature swings just like in Kazakhstan. It is also the way we work and think: we often rotate our personnel along with the equipment, which can spend from six months to a year in one geographic area delivering power to an oil and gas site and later on be used at an industrial plant, a mining site or an event in another geographic

area, be it the Middle East, Africa, Eurasia, Latin or North America or Asia. We are used to promptly reacting to any changes and to offering mutually-beneficial, ad hoc solutions here and now," he added.

Aggreko has found its niche in the upcoming EXPO 2017, which starts June 9.

"Aggreko is one of the sponsors of the U.K. pavilion at Astana EXPO 2017. We are very excited that this year the key topic of EXPO is future energy. We will present new ways of making better use of natural resources with our flare for power solutions, new generation gas engines, heavy fuel oil (HFO) based generators, combined wind-diesel technology and solar-diesel hybrids, as well as bridging power, grid balancing for regions like South Kazakhstan and industrial cooling and heating solutions," said Rachez.

He highlighted Kazakhstan's importance for doing business in the region.

"Kazakhstan is a great place to do business. It has an incredible potential for Aggreko and we can offer solutions beneficial to the local communities and businesses," he said.

Country's biggest automobile holding celebrates 25th anniversary

By Zhazira Dyussebekova

ASTANA – Bipek Avto-Azia Avto, Kazakhstan's largest automobile holding, celebrated its 25th anniversary in April. During the quarter century, the company went from a modest AvtoVAZ dealer to the auto-retail leader and has even launched the new direction of country's machine-building industry.

In 25 years, the holding invested \$353 million in the industry's development. The Ust-Kamenogorsk plant assembles three-quarters of the nation's car industry production and 930,000 Kazakh residents are Azia Avto customers. In the same period, its dealer branches have sold in excess of 475,000 new cars, more than 120,000 of which came from the Azia Avto assembly line. The holding successfully entered the Russian market, proceeding to export to China and the countries of Central Asia, according to the holding's press service.

About 800 cars will cross the border into China during the second quarter and the company expects to export 3,500 cars this year, according to Azia Avto President Yerik Sagymbayev.

"The importance of developing foreign markets was emphasised by President Nazarbayev in his [state-of-the-nation] address. The government is tasked with doubling non-oil exports by 2025. I am confident that our work will make a significant contribution to the achievement of this goal," he said.

Pilot lots of LADA cars were also shipped to Turkmenistan and Kyrgyzstan in 2016 and earlier this year, the holding launched its export to the United Arab Emirates and China. The undertaking is the first successful venture into the Chinese market by the Kazakh automobile industry.

Bipek Avto-Azia Avto is the first and to date the only industry representative which has entered the Eurasian Economic Union market. Branches for LADA sale and maintenance are open in 13 regions of the Siberian and Ural Federal Districts of the Russian Federation.

The company began in 1992 by supplying LADA cars to Kazakhstan. Gradually, it expanded its geography and developed branches, with the network currently covering 19 Kazakh cities. The holding's partners are the leaders of the global automotive industry, such as Renault-Nissan-AvtoVAZ, Volkswagen AG, General Motors and KIA Motors.

In the late 1990s, Azia Avto shareholders created their own car production, an enterprise quickly complet-

ed. The Ust-Kamenogorsk assembly line began operation in 2002 and the first model, the LADA 4x4 off-roader, became the most in-demand four-wheel drive model in the nation. Its appearance on the market proved that the country had the necessary potential to develop the car industry.

In 2005, the European concern Skoda Auto became the plant's technological partner and in June 2007 Nazarbayev officially opened the Chevrolet car production. Three years later, the Korean concern KIA Motors, the world's fourth largest manufacturer, joined the list of Azia Avto partners.

The Ust-Kamenogorsk plant manufactures more than three dozen models of four brands – Skoda, Chevrolet, LADA and KIA. In late 2016, the facility started production of six new LADA models and early this year, an updated version of the popular KIA Cerato sedan and KIA Sportage crossover came off the assembly line. By the end of the year, there are plans to launch six new and renewed car models, according to the company.

Azia Avto follows global innovative trends and has become the first and only company in Kazakhstan to launch the Connected Car Project. Owners of Ust-Kamenogorsk plant cars will soon be able to remotely control their personal vehicles using a smartphone, according to the press release. The telematics system, which will be installed in domestic cars, will allow drivers to remotely monitor the vehicle's technical condition, start or stop the engine, open the trunk, see the status of the car doors, its inside and outside temperature, signal, monitor speed and perform many other commands.

An area of 523 hectares, equivalent to the size of 745 football fields, has been allocated for the construction of future facilities on the territory of Ust-Kamenogorsk. The site will house a production complex with a total area of 262,000 square metres, where the holding plans to create a complex of enterprises on welding, painting and car assembly, as well as produce auto components with the capacity of 120,000 units per year.

With access to the projected capacity, the new facility will create 12,000 new jobs and increase the country's GDP by more than \$1 billion, said Azia Avto Kazakhstan general director Yerzhan Mandiyev. More than half of the output will be exported to Central Asian countries, Mongolia and the countries of the Caucasus. Azia Avto has invested more than \$60 million of its own funds to build the largest export-ori-

ented production in the non-extractive sector.

"Today, the construction of the engineering infrastructure is being completed at the site of Azia Avto Kazakhstan. Construction of the power, water, and heat supply, sewerage and roadway is 80 per-

cent complete. The railway project passes state expertise. In addition, work is underway to build the foundations of production workshops. In 25 years, we have come a long way from idea to embodiment. We have new goals ahead, a new level of our development. The appearance

of an automobile plant in the East Kazakhstan region will give impetus to infrastructure and housing construction – it will become the largest point of immigration activity and social development within the city of Ust-Kamenogorsk for the entire post-Soviet period," he said.

FROM THE HEART OF EURASIA

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EDITORIAL & OPINION

WEDNESDAY, MAY 17, 2017

Kazakh military is strong, dedicated to peace

Every year, Victory Day on May 9 marks the moment when we celebrate the end of the Second World War and commemorate those who gave their lives. Kazakhstan sent many of its sons and daughters to fight on the front lines of World War II and many others worked hard to supply food and ammunition in the common effort against the enemy. The victory came at a huge price for those that defended their homeland. Kazakhstan lost approximately 410,000 of its citizens, who fought the Nazis as part of the Soviet Red Army. Their sacrifice is remembered forever through the eternal flame that burns at the Park of 28 Panfilov Guardsmen in Almaty.

The tragedy of World War II is a reminder that every nation, no matter how peaceful, needs to have a strong military that can protect its land and people. This is especially the case at a time when our world is facing many challenges, including global terrorism.

This year Kazakhstan is marking the 25th anniversary of the establishment of its Armed Forces. As stated in our Constitution, since 1992 they have been tasked with guaranteeing the preservation of the independence and sovereignty of the state and the integrity of its land.

Despite being a young and peaceful nation, Kazakhstan has not been reluctant to develop a proficient and powerful military. According to the 2017 Global Firepower list, Kazakhstan holds the 53rd position out of 127 countries. Of course, we hope to never need to deploy the military forces we have established, but it is a testament to the great work our armed forces and the Ministry of Defence have done since our independence.

In tandem, Kazakhstan has been consistently committed to dialogue, partnership and peace ever since our independence. As well as Kazakhstan's tireless efforts to promote a world free from nuclear weapons, the country has also contributed to the resolution of regional and global conflicts, including in Syria and Ukraine. Our military exists purely for peaceful purposes. Indeed, Kazakhstan's strong defence capabilities have enabled it to contribute to United Nations' peacekeeping missions in Haiti, Western Sahara, Ivory Coast and Liberia.

It is important to remember that keeping peace is only possible through international cooperation. The ongoing crisis in Syria and the fight against terrorism

have demonstrated that, only by working together, can conflicts be resolved peacefully. For this reason, Kazakhstan has continued to push for closer global cooperation on major international issues. This is why Kazakhstan has good relations with all of its neighbours, as well as with the European Union and the United States. These relations translate into important partnerships in defence as well. For instance, Kazakhstan is a member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO). Since its establishment in 2001, the SCO has been working towards maintaining peace, stability and safety in the region, as well as promoting the development of economic and humanitarian cooperation. Kazakhstan currently holds the SCO presidency and will host its next summit in June.

Looking further afield, Kazakhstan also aims to establish defence cooperation with states and organisations beyond its region. For this reason, Kazakhstan has been closely cooperating with NATO on security and other defence-related issues. Kazakhstan has designated a motorised infantry battalion called KAZBAT for potential deployment in NATO-led peace support operations, under UN Security Council mandates. Kazakhstan has also been cooperating with NATO in the fight against terrorism through the Partnership Action Plan on Terrorism (PAP-T). This involves sharing information and analysis with NATO, enhancing national counter-terrorist capabilities and improving border security. The country has also been participating for a number of years in the multinational training exercise Steppe Eagle, which has played an important role in the development of Kazakhstan's Armed Forces and its peacekeeping potential.

As Kazakhstan celebrates the 25th anniversary of its Armed Forces, we can be certain that the future of the country's defence is clear. Kazakhstan's military has all the attributes and possibilities to play an important role in contribution to peace and security at home and around the world. But it will also be important to build on the level of cooperation that has been established between our armed forces and other defence organisations. Through international collaboration, as well as joint military exercises and initiatives, Kazakhstan and its armed forces will be able to more effectively strengthen regional and global security in order to keep our citizens safe.

Government proceeds with privatising state property, says vice minister

By Irina Nos

Let us accept as a given: no state will give up its role in a market economy. Even guided by the idea of encouraging entrepreneurship, even going for large-scale privatisation to define small and medium-sized owners. Even though the scale of state enterprise becomes smaller, it will remain a structural element of the economy. We asked Kazakh Vice Minister of Finance Berik Sholpankulov about the sale of state property, monitoring the process and interim and expected results of privatisation in the country.

What is the exact number of entities the government initially planned to privatise? How many are state owned and how many belong to the quasi-public sector?

Let me remind you that the comprehensive privatisation plan until 2016 was adopted in March 2014. The second wave of privatisation began. The lists of properties subject to privatisation included 831 entities owned by the state and the quasi-public sector. Over two years of the above plan, more than 30 percent of entities were sold and some were either liquidated or reorganised. The lists of entities subject to privatisation required updating and on December 30, 2015, the 2016-2020 Comprehensive Privatisation Plan, developed on the basis of the previous one but including an updated list of entities, was adopted.

The current lists include 782 entities, 61 of which are state owned, 368 are in communal ownership and 353 belong to the quasi-public sector. That is, the share of state property in the general list of entities subject to privatisation is 55 percent; the quasi-public sector owns 45 percent.

Why is the annual inventory conducted and how does it affect updating the list of entities subject to privatisation?

The President set the task to reduce the state's share in the economy to 15 percent of the GDP, to the level of the countries of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). Now, there is a decree in force of the Kazakh Government which defines the types of activities carried out in the public sector. They are introduced taking into account the Yellow Pages principles providing for the reduction of state participation in economic sectors, in which there is at least one competitor from among private business entities. Thus, privatisation is one of the ways to limit the state's role in one or another economic sector. And the annual inventory helps to analyse the need for state participation in any field of activity. Consequently, it identifies additional entities that can and should be privatised.

How many additional entities are included? Are there properties excluded from the privatisation list; if so, for what reasons?

At the end of 2016, an inventory of subordinate organisations was carried out and 102 state-owned organisations were additionally included in the Comprehensive Privatisation Plan. There are entities excluded from the Comprehensive Privatisation Plan. These are regional media, health resorts and certain strategic entities of the quasi-public sector. The reasons are as follows. For instance, regional media are excluded in order to ensure information security and preserve the influence of the state on information policy at the regional level. Health resorts subordinate to the



Berik Sholpankulov

Kazakh Ministry of Internal Affairs are excluded in order to preserve the guaranteed right of law enforcement officers to medical and health resort services, since such right is prescribed in the Law On Law Enforcement Service.

Certain strategic entities of the quasi-public sector are excluded due to objective reasons of a sectoral nature. For example, Aktau Plastics Plant LLP (AZPM) is excluded from the list of entities subject to privatisation for the purpose of selling it to Caspiy Social and Entrepreneurial Corporation. The Akimat of Mangistau oblast plans to create a PPP-based industrial zone there. Food Contract Corporation is excluded in order to provide the country with food grain and preserve the regulatory impact on the grain market.

What about the top 65 entities owned by the state and the quasi-public sector planned for sale in 2017? Is the share of Atyrau Refinery LLP assets for sale identified, and what about other privatised entities?

As of today, there are 64 top entities as -Food Contract Corporation, as indicated above, is excluded from the list of entities subject to privatisation. Their sale terms are as follows: 29 entities in 2017, 21 entities in 2018 and 14 entities in 2019-2020.

Twelve of the top entities are state owned. The work on eight of them will be carried out this year. First, the shares and methods of their transfer to a competitive environment reviewed and approved by the State Commission for Economic Modernisation have already been determined. Second, relevant resolutions of the government have been drafted and submitted to the Prime Minister's Office. Third, the necessary documents are being developed to select an independent valuation consultant.

The top four state-owned entities are planned to be sold in 2018 due to their industry specificity.

The methods and shares of sales for the top 21 entities of the quasi-public sector planned to be sold this year have also been agreed by the State Commission for Economic Modernisation. Their pre-sale preparation is being conducted.

Atyrau Refinery is planned for sale by 2020; therefore, the sale of the share of its assets will be considered later.

Who exercises general control over the receipt of funds from the sale of privatised entities; is it only the Ministry of Finance?

Control is exercised by the sellers themselves. The Kazakh Ministry of Finance controls the receipt of funds from the sale of privatised entities owned by the state.

Regarding the valuation of entities and sales support: earlier, you were thinking of attracting the Big Four. What is the situation today?

The Law On State Property stipulates that the valuation of top-level privatised entities (with a book value of five billion tenge) is carried out by independent consultants in accordance with in-

ternational valuation standards. Independent consultants are legal entities, including foreign ones or their associations, participants in valuation and investment activities and financial consulting, attracted by the seller to assess the market value of the privatised property and support the transaction for privatised properties.

Now, the Ministry of Finance is developing the necessary documentation to select an independent consultant to assess top-level state-owned entities planned for sale this year. The valuation of other privatised entities is carried out in accordance with the Law On Valuation Activities.

How many entities subject to privatisation are sold in Kazakhstan? What are some important ones?

During the second wave of privatisation, since 2014, 442 entities have been sold in total, including 29 state-owned entities, 215 municipal ones and 198 entities of the quasi-public sector. These are the figures as of April 10. There have been 198 entities sold under the 2016-2020 Comprehensive Privatisation Plan. Eighteen of them are owned by the state, 95 are municipal ones and 85 are entities of the quasi-public sector.

As for important entities sold, each one performed its role in the economy and the fact that it is going to be privatised does not diminish its business attractiveness. State-owned entities to be sold include the Kazakh Medical University of Continuing Education JSC, with a selling price of 1.6 billion tenge (US\$5 million), as well as the National Prosthetic and Orthopedic Center JSC, with a selling price of 2.4 billion tenge (US\$7.6 million).

As for entities of communal ownership, they include Bus Depot No 1 LLP in Pavlodar for 1.2 billion tenge (US\$3.8 million) and the Global Ecological Group Almaty LLP for 409 million tenge (US\$1.3 million).

In the quasi-public sector there are Lokomotiv Kurastyru Zauyty JSC with a selling price of 15.7 billion tenge (US\$49.7 million) and Transtelecom JSC, a subsidiary of the Samruk Kazyna National Welfare Fund, for 9 billion tenge (US\$28.5 million).

How much have the sales brought to Kazakhstan's budget? Is this amount comparable with the book value and the estimated value of the entities sold?

The price of the entities sold for the entire period of the second wave of privatisation was 125 billion tenge (US\$396 million). This is a good amount. Eleven billion tenge (US\$34.9 million) was received from the sale of state owned entities, 19 billion tenge (US\$60.2 million) from communal ownership entities and 95 billion tenge (US\$300.9 million) from quasi-public sector entities. The book value of the entities sold is about 111 billion tenge (US\$351.7 million); the estimated value is 122 billion tenge (US\$386.5 million). As you can see, the total selling price of the privatised property exceeds their book value and estimated value. At the same time, if we consider each privatised entity separately, the situation will be different. The selling price of some entities is much higher than their book value and estimated value; the selling price of others may be below the book value or the estimated value. Everything depends on the entity's area of activity, its value on the market and the demand. In any case, it is the market that dictates the selling price.

The full version of this interview is available online.

Astana Process talks offer glimmer of hope for Syria

Ending the conflict in Syria has proved to be stubbornly difficult. The lack of trust between opposing sides has led to unbearable suffering for the people of Syria. In April, the United Nations and the Arab League Envoy to Syria announced that more than 400,000 people have died in this brutal civil war, making it the deadliest conflict of the 21st century.

The people of Syria have been left with almost no optimism that one day their lives can return back to normality. A tiny glimmer of hope has been resurrected, however, following the fourth high-level international meeting on Syria May 3-4 in the capital of Kazakhstan within the framework of what came to be known as the Astana Process.

The previous three rounds of talks in Astana helped facilitate dialogue between conflicting parties, which contributed to stopping the bloodshed in Syria. Unfortunately, the situation in Syria has significantly deteriorated in recent weeks. It was absolutely essential that all sides came to the negotiating table and worked out a way to deescalate the situation.

Expectations were low for the fourth round of talks, especially after the tragic events in Khan Sheikhoun in Idlib and the U.S. strikes that followed. However, hopes of a breakthrough were raised following the confirmation that all the main actors, including the representatives of the Syrian government, armed Syrian opposition and the guarantor states - Russia, Turkey and Iran - would attend.

The significance of these talks was further raised when it was announced that UN Special Envoy for Syria, Staffan de Mistura, Nauaf Oufi Tel, political adviser to Jordan's Foreign Minister, as well as Stuart Jones, Acting U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs, also agreed to attend the negotiations as observers. This was the highest level of attendance within the Astana Process to date.

The two-day talks were indeed turbulent. The chances of success drifted further away when the Syrian armed opposition briefly suspended its participation at the end of the first day. The breakthrough came on the last day of the discussions, when the guarantor states signed a memorandum on creating de-escalation zones in Syria, giving the population some respite from a long and brutal war.

The establishment of the zones, aimed at reducing tensions, will be set up in four areas, namely in the Idlib province and some neighbouring territories (Latakia, Hama and Aleppo) to the north of Homs, East

Ghouta and some provinces in southern Syria (Daraa and Al Quneitra).

The significance of this agreement should not be underestimated. After six years of the ongoing conflict, it was difficult to foresee a path towards peace. The establishment of the de-escalation areas is another step towards an end to the civil war.

Of course, nothing should be taken for granted. There is still a lot of work to be done to ensure that the agreement is implemented on the ground and that all sides comply with it. It should nevertheless be welcome news that all military activity, including flights of aircraft, will be banned in the designated zones. This will allow for the restoration of infrastructure, humanitarian aid delivery and essential services, as well as the return of refugees.

Undoubtedly, it will take many more meetings before an agreement can be found to end the Syrian war. All eyes will now turn to Geneva, where the next round of talks will be held before the end of May. Unlike previous negotiations within the framework of the Geneva Process, there is now some optimism that further breakthroughs can be achieved. It is most welcome news that the talks in Astana have played a crucial role in complementing and facilitating the Geneva Process. From the very beginning, this was one of the main objectives of the Astana Process.

The next round of Syria peace talks in Astana have been scheduled for mid-July. It will be important to build on the success of the previous rounds, which demonstrated that Kazakhstan's capital continues to provide an important platform to work towards finding a political solution to the Syrian crisis. Kazakhstan's impartial stance and its role as a mediator have ensured that all sides are able to have open discussions on a neutral territory - an important factor in ensuring the success of the talks.

The people of Syria deserve to have hope that their country will soon witness peace and stability. It is the responsibility of the international community to make sure that this hope becomes reality as soon as possible. Nobody should jump too far ahead and assume that the agreement on the de-escalation zones is a sure sign the conflict will end. However, it is now crucial to use this momentum to strive towards stopping all violence in Syria. Kazakhstan will certainly continue to contribute to international efforts to achieve this objective. With the right political commitment and desire, the Syrian war will reach its final end.

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Financial sector repair needed to spur growth in the Caucasus and Central Asia

By Juha Kähkönen

While the Caucasus and Central Asia (CCA) is facing a somewhat better external environment, prospects for growth remain subdued relative to historical standards, and risks remain tilted to the downside.

A comprehensive set of reforms is needed to help unleash the region's growth potential and address the legacy of past shocks. A strong financial sector is essential to this much-needed economic transformation. However, the slowdown in economic activity and currency depreciations against the dollar since 2014 have added stress to many of the region's already overburdened, highly-dollarized financial sectors, leaving them too weak to support a strong recovery. Without urgent financial sector repair, further pressures on fiscal accounts could



emerge and the economic transformation could be derailed.

Financial sector distress has manifested itself across the CCA in many ways. Since mid-2014, the decline in commodity prices and a slowdown in key trading partners' growth have made it more difficult for borrowers to service their debt. This has been especially true for foreign currency loans where currency depreciation has also added

to the debt-servicing cost. Consequently, overdue loans have increased, eroding the reserves banks set aside for difficult times. This has reduced their capital further – with many already undercapitalized by international standards. In addition, limited supervisory independence has, in some cases, impeded the resolution of deep-rooted problems, including poor lending practices. These vulnerabilities are holding back credit growth and reducing confidence in banks.

Country authorities have taken steps to address these pressures, including through increases in minimum capital requirements, injections of capital, mergers and closures of problem banks, and the strengthening of supervisory laws and regulations. But more remains to be done. A careful sequencing of reforms is needed, starting with a proper identification of bad

loans and capital needs. Second, timely intervention of weak banks is essential to minimise the risk

A careful sequencing of reforms is needed, starting with a proper identification of bad loans and capital needs. Second, timely intervention of weak banks is essential to minimise the risk of vulnerabilities spreading further.

of vulnerabilities spreading further through the broader financial

system. Any government support should be provided under strict conditions – for example, funds should be channelled only to viable banks with adequate guarantees – that help minimise costs to the public sector. Third, liquidation of bad assets, and openness to private investment in the sector should be pursued transparently, with the goal of promoting competition. Finally, regulators must continue to strengthen lending practices, develop and implement crisis management frameworks, and fully enforce prudential regulations.

Financial sector repairs will complement the CCA's on-going fiscal, monetary, and structural reforms in various ways. Fiscal consolidation is needed to address the wider fiscal deficits and higher debt generated by the earlier (and appropriate) increases in public spending to support growth. But this should strike a balance between supporting economic activity in the short term and ensuring sustainability in the long term, while prioritising productive investments and protecting the poor. A strong financial sector will help this process by not only reducing potential fiscal

pressures, but also supporting a successful debt-management strategy. On monetary policy, further improvements to existing frameworks are needed to fully reap the benefits of increased exchange rate flexibility. These should focus on fostering policy credibility, which requires developing clear communication practices and ensuring central bank independence. In this context, a solid and reliable financial sector will contribute to the de-dollarisation process, which is necessary for the effectiveness of monetary policy. On the structural front, weaker financial sectors that are incapable of supporting the real economy jeopardise the completion of reforms that promote the much-needed economic transformation away from commodities and remittances.

The CCA countries should take decisive action to fix their banks. A healthy financial sector will help unleash the region's economic potential and raise living standards.

The author is Deputy Director of the Middle East and Central Asia Department of the International Monetary Fund.

Priorities of transition of Kazakhstan's economy to low carbon development

By Bakhyt Yessekina

A new climate treaty for the countries participating in the process, including for Kazakhstan, is a universal strategy in addressing issues in the field of climate change and ensuring the sustainability of the national economy.

The prospect of a new agreement for economically weaker and vulnerable countries is connected to the possibility of obtaining substantial financial support both for adaptation to the negative effects and effects of nature, and for the transition to low-carbon development through the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and the decarbonisation of national economies.

For the most developed and rich countries, the agreement should allow them to optimise their financial and technological role in global efforts. For less developed countries, but with a large carbon potential, such as China, Brazil, Turkey, the financial component of the agreement is secondary, since international assistance will be relatively small or roughly equal to their assistance to weaker states. These countries depend significantly on the global trend for low-carbon development and, to a large extent, form it, especially China. If we are talking about the countries of the Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA) region, then for the countries of the Caucasus and Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, the agreement should become a powerful factor of international support, and for Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan it should help to integrate into global investment processes and stimulate deep modernisation of the structure of the economy.

Kazakhstan has sufficient potential for introducing new technologies in the field of emission reduction.

First, the planning of the development of energy and economy, taking into account the likely changes of 2020-2040. In many cases, this leads to a wait-and-see attitude in approving international and national projects, which, if the current situation continues, would be profitable.

Secondly, the implementation of the "price of carbon" (fees for emissions of greenhouse gases in either a stimulant or a burden) that is carried out or expected in the future, which shifts the competitiveness of various projects and trade



flows. This is clearly demonstrated by the results of bilateral meetings of major emitters (China, the United States, the European Union and India).

Thirdly, a total trend on the choice of low-carbon solutions, if planning for 20-30 years of profitability, they are equal or not significantly more expensive than traditional ones. This is clearly confirmed when concluding partnerships and choosing investment options in almost all countries of the world, in public and private companies, in all sectors of the economy.

As already noted, at COP-21, each country presented its national commitments, which are a kind of launch in the policy of transition to low-carbon development and decarbonisation of the economy. At the Paris summit, the government delegation voiced Kazakhstan's contribution to the retention of the growth rates of global climate change – reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 in the amount of 15 percent of the 1990 level as unconditional and 25 percent as a conditional target.

To achieve these goals in the field of reducing greenhouse gas emissions, the government has to carry out systematic work on deep modernisation of the industrial sector and adaptation of all sectors of the economy, including energy, mining, forestry, housing, utilities, transport, construction and other sectors, to the existing climate change.

Without implementation of pilot projects to develop breakthrough low-carbon technologies in the next decade, it will be virtually impossible to contain the growth of the global average temperature by more than 20 °C. Today, a wide range of technologies exist in the world that successfully use a wide range of technologies to ensure economic growth while reducing emissions and improving the quality of the environment.

According to calculations carried out by international and national experts in substantiating Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs), Kazakhstan has sufficient potential for introducing new technologies in the field of emission reduction. First, it is about human capital: an able-bodied, educated population (according to the latest UN report, 70

percent of the total number). Secondly, the developed scientific and technical potential. Thirdly, alternative energy is actively developing in the country.

The potential of non-traditional renewable energy sources (RES) in Kazakhstan is 2 trillion kWh/year. Technically possible for use in the production of electricity, the potential is significantly higher than electricity consumption in the country and is about 337 billion kWh/year. Meanwhile, wind energy accounts for 322 billion kWh/year, solar energy – 4 billion kWh/year, small hydropower plants – 11 billion kWh/year. The technical potential of wind power alone in Kazakhstan exceeds by many times the consumption of all fuel and energy resources of the country.

The implementation of projects on the development of renewable energy will lead to a decrease in the volume of construction of new generating capacities using coal with a capacity of about 200 MW, and, accordingly, to a decrease in the prospect for CO2 emissions by at least one million tonnes per year. Here it should be noted that the main factor in the transition to a low-carbon economy is a reduction in the consumption/combustion of mineral fuel containing carbon. Based on the analysis of expert forecasts, it is revealed that dependence on mineral fuels (especially long-term contracts) will decrease significantly in the next 10-15 years; oil, gas, coal prices will be low and will not provide recovery of many energy projects, meanwhile the activity of companies supplying renewable energy technologies will increase dramatically.

Thus, the development of generating capacities based on renewable energy sources can be the most effective measure to reduce CO2 emissions in the electricity sector. This is one of the effective mechanisms for the transition to a green low-carbon economy in Kazakhstan.

The priority direction of achieving national INDCs is also the development of carbon trading. The practice of developed countries shows that the economic effect of carbon regulation reaches today hundreds of billions of U.S. dollars, including saving on the administration of the environmental system, energy saving, employment, improvement of quality of the environment and, in general, ensuring the sustainability of the national economy. This is an effective mechanism to stimulate measures to reduce emissions and attract green investment.

Kazakhstan has a significant carbon potential, which must be used in accordance with international standards for carbon financing. In 2013, the national carbon market was created. Today, the Ministry

of Energy and the Parliament of the Republic of Kazakhstan are working to improve the regulatory acts governing the national market for trade in greenhouse gas emissions. Meanwhile, there is still a lot of expert work to determine the economic effect of the functioning of the national system of trade in quotas and the transition to the benchmark method in the quota process.

The next direction in achieving national goals to reduce greenhouse gas emissions is to increase energy efficiency and energy saving in all sectors of the national economy. In this direction, it is necessary to improve energy efficiency standards and their implementation and subsidy programmes for enterprises implementing energy-efficient and energy-saving technologies.

The first step is the development of energy efficiency programmes in industrial companies. Activities in this area should include measures to improve the energy efficiency of buildings by electrification of the relevant processes and gasification of the heating system, the transfer of vehicles from internal combustion engines to electric, to encourage the transition from personal to public transport.

Forests of the country have a large potential for reducing the amount of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. The absorption of CO2 by the forests gives the republic an additional 10 percent for national contributions to reduce emissions. In terms of physical volume, Kazakhstan occupies one of the leading places in the world in terms of forest resources. Meanwhile, relatively low specific volumes allow carrying out measures to increase this volume.

The implementation of national commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions requires strengthening and developing cooperation with international organisations and global foundations – the World Bank, the European Union, OSCE, UNDP, Green Climate Fund, among others – to exchange and transfer knowledge, transfer low-carbon technologies and achieve new goals in the joint struggle to mitigate the effects of global climate change.

It is also necessary to develop ties and strengthen cooperation within the framework of regional organisations. In this regard, the potential of cooperation within the framework of the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) should be used based on the similarity of economic potential and planning systems.

In general, the transition to low-carbon development and decarbonisation of the national economy of Kazakhstan assumes the adoption of cardinal measures in the following areas:

* Improving the institutional

framework (developing measures and policies for adapting the economic sectors to climate change, improving legislation in the field of greenhouse gas emissions regulation, etc.);

* Increasing energy efficiency and introducing new technologies (introduction of low-carbon technologies in all sectors of the national economy, energy efficiency of buildings, transition to energy-saving products, alternative fuels);

* Developing renewable energy sources;

* Capacity building (enhancing the competencies of national experts and civil society in low-carbon development, developing cooperation with international organisations and global funds).

Today, work is under way to make additions to the approved action plan for limiting/reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 2030, which should essentially become a plan to achieve INDCs.

Kazakhstan's accession to the global climate agreement should be viewed as a new opportunity to modernise and diversify not only the energy sector but also another basic sector of the national economy.

As noted above, at the end of 2015 Kazakhstan submitted to the UNFCCC Secretariat a commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 15-25 percent by 2030 from the level of 1990. According to a special study conducted by the Climate Action Tracker (CAT) Consortium, the obligations stated by Kazakhstan can be attributed to a moderate group. (As explained in more detail in the recent book by Green Academy "Strategy of transition of the Republic of Kazakhstan to low carbon development in globalisation.")

This group includes the obligations of countries such as China, United States, the EU, Brazil, India, Mexico, Norway, Peru, and Switzerland. In accordance with a law on ratification of the Paris Agreement experts and scientists and business structures have started exploring ways of implementing assumed obligations, to overcome possible risks, which, in turn, will require adoption of cardinal measures for the modernisation of all sectors of the national economy.

The fourth meeting of the Council on the transition to a green economy under the President of Kazakhstan, held in July 2016 in Astana with the participation of other government members, scientists, business structures, international organisations and NGOs was devoted to the discussion of

these measures and mechanisms for the implementation of the new climate agreement. According to the participants of this meeting, in order to fulfil the declared commitments in the field of greenhouse gas emission reduction, it is necessary to develop an integral strategy for transition to low-carbon development, which provides for comprehensive measures to increase energy efficiency in all sectors of the economy of Kazakhstan, the development of renewable energy sources and the improvement of the national emission trading system (ETS).

Research conducted by Scientific Research and Education Centre Green Academy together with Institute of Economics and Samruk Energy shows that the most effective technological solutions that ensure economic growth and reduce emissions include: transition to low-carbon or carbon-free fuels; decarbonisation of electricity production; electrification of the economy and individual industries (transport, construction); increasing the efficiency of production and consumption of energy; application of technologies for carbon capture and disposal; use of bio-fuel and other RES. A special role is assigned to the task of preserving and increasing the potential for CO2 absorption in forestry and land use.

Well thought-out ETS, whose action is currently suspended due to the amendments to the environmental code, can also bring significant additional economic and socio-environmental benefits. Among such advantages one can highlight the increase in the efficiency of resource use, clean air, ensuring energy security and creating jobs. Linking of two or more systems, including country, creates a larger carbon market that provides more opportunities (potentially more affordable) to reduce emissions. When ETS are connected, emission permits can be used in both systems.

Currently, there are 19 ETS in the world, of which the largest are the U.S., European and South Korean systems. In 2017-2018, the launch of the national ETS of China and the Russian Federation is expected. Already today, countries and regions where emissions trading systems are represented, make up 40 percent of world GDP, which makes emissions trading a key tool in combating climate change.

To summarise, Kazakhstan's accession to the global climate agreement should be viewed as a new opportunity to modernise and diversify not only the energy sector but also another basic sector of the national economy. Only the transition to low carbon development will allow our country entering the club of competitive countries and ensuring stability and improving the quality of life of present and future generations.

The author is a Member of the Green Council under the President of Kazakhstan and Director of the Green Academy, PhD, Professor of Economics.

EURASIA&WORLD

WEDNESDAY, MAY 17, 2017

Kazakh-Uzbek ties strengthen amidst frequent presidential contacts



By Aigerim Seisembayeva

ASTANA – Relations between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan received another boost when the two countries' leaders met April 29 in Saryagash, a small Kazakh town famous for its healing mineral waters located a mere 23 kilometres away from the Uzbek capital.

The meeting between Kazakh

President Nursultan Nazarbayev and his Uzbek counterpart, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, took place slightly more than a month since the latter's state visit to Astana during the Nauryz celebrations in March, which resulted in around 80 commercial contracts worth one billion dollars. They earlier met in Samarkand in September 2016 when Nazarbayev visited

Kazakhstan's southern neighbour to pay respects to the deceased former President, Islam Karimov.

"The first quarter of this year saw an increase in business activity in various sectors of the economy. It primarily concerns transport and logistics, the auto industry and regional cooperation. Trade turnover over the first three months of 2017 increased by 37 percent,"

Nazarbayev told Mirziyoyev during their meeting in south Kazakhstan, according to the Akorda press service.

"Since my visit in March this year, we adopted the roadmap for all areas of joint activities. Meetings at the level of ministers and regional leaders have become more frequent," Mirziyoyev said.

Mirziyoyev thanked Nazarbayev for assisting with oil transportation from Russia and both presidents said they look forward to further cooperation in all areas.

The two presidents also visited Caspian Food LLP where they got acquainted with the activities of the enterprise in the field of viticulture and winemaking.

A renowned regional expert and chairperson of the Board of the Kazakhstan national television and radio company Erlan Karin noted on his Facebook page importance of increasingly frequent personal contacts between the two leaders.

"For experts, such a frequency is a positive sign of the intensification of regional cooperation. Indeed, it is encouraging that regional leaders demonstrate serious intentions in building up bilateral contacts," he said.

Container train from London to Yiwu makes first trip through Kazakhstan



Staff Report

The first container train from London to Yiwu passed through the territory of Kazakhstan, according to the press service of Kazakhstan Temir Zholy (KTZ) National Company.

The train departed from DP World London Gateway terminal in London to a large logistics centre of China – Yiwu city. Subsidiary of Kazakhstan Temir Zholy National Company, KTZ Express, operates the train across the territory of the Commonwealth of Independent States.

The route of the train passed through Channel Tunnel, France, Belgium, Germany, Poland, Belarus, Russia, Kazakhstan and China.

"The possibilities of Kazakhstan's transport and logistics infrastructure allows shippers to create a multimodal route that reduces the time of freight delivery by half.

Transporting freight via sea takes approximately 36 to 38 days," Executive Director of KTZ Express Europe Region Karl Gheysen said.

Freight trains travelling between China and Europe make trade and economic ties stronger; create opportunities for developing surface transport between China and Western Europe via the territory of Kazakhstan. This contributes to implementing the Kazakh Nurly

Zhol programme and the Chinese initiative One Belt, One Road.

Prior to sending off the container train to China, British Minister of State for Trade and Investment Greg Hands emphasised that a new

The first train with consumer goods arrived from China to London in January. Now a train that consists of 32 containers loaded with British made goods has travelled the route with a length of some 12,000 kilometres to its destination in less than 20 days.

path that connects Europe and China may serve as a new driving force for a globalised United Kingdom.

The first train with consumer goods arrived from China to London in January. Now a train that consists of 32 containers loaded with British made goods has travelled the route with a length of some 12,000 kilometres to its destination in less than 20 days.

COSCO Shipping to invest in Khorgos-Eastern Gate free economic zone

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – The world's largest marine and logistics operator COSCO Shipping plans to invest in the development of Khorgos-Eastern Gate Special Economic Zone (SEZ) located on the border between Kazakhstan and China.

Kazakhstan Temir Zholy (KTZ) signed on May 15 an investment agreement with COSCO Shipping Corporation and Lianyungang port on the joint development of the Khorgos-Eastern Gate SEZ at One Belt, One Road International

Cooperation Forum in Beijing on May 15.

Chinese investors will jointly purchase 49 percent of shares of Khorgos Gateway dry port, part of KTZ operations. Attraction of strategic partners in international logistics market will give an additional impetus to the development of the Khorgos-Eastern Gate and the creation of a large regional hub for the consolidation and distribution of cargo flows between Asia and Europe.

Khorgos-Eastern Gate will become part of the architecture of global logistics services provided by COSCO Shipping and will

ensure the integration of Kazakhstan's transit corridors into the international logistics network.

The signed agreement will contribute to the further development of cooperation between Kazakhstan and China in transport and logistics fields under Kazakh Nurly Zhol and Chinese Silk Road Economic Belt programmes.

Kazakh First Deputy Prime Minister Askar Mamin, Kazakh Minister for Investment and Development Zhenis Kassymbek and Kazakh Foreign Minister Kairat Abdrakhmanov attended the signing ceremony.

COSCO Shipping is the world's largest maritime operator and provider of logistics services. The corporation has more than 1,100 ships with a total capacity of over 1.6 million containers. It operates more than 300 international and domestic sea routes, connecting 254 seaports in 79 countries.

The port of Lianyungang is the largest sea harbour of China in the Yellow Sea, which is included in the 30 largest ports of the world with a handling capacity of more than 200 million tonnes and 5 million containers per year.

EU Ambassador in Astana talks about Rome declaration, Brexit and Cooperation Agreement

Continued from Page A1

Regarding Brexit, without a doubt we will have to pursue the exit negotiations with the U.K. The EU will continue to be the biggest market and the second largest economy in the world. The EU is and will remain an indispensable partner everywhere. And let me add one more thing. As a committed European, I have always thought that the EU is not just a single market, but is also values, things we care about, things which are our European identity. Even after Brexit, the U.K. will remain part of that Europe as repeatedly underlined by Prime Minister Theresa May and we will continue to closely cooperate with our British partners in order to promote these values.

The 27 member states reaffirmed the strong determination to continue the European integration process. We celebrated the 60th anniversary of the Rome Treaties with this very clear idea in mind. We will continue to increase cooperation and integration in the fields of defence, economy and foreign policy. The EU is and will continue to be a strong, cooperative and reliable power.

May 1 marks one year since the beginning of the provisional implementation of the EPCA. What has this meant for relations?

Being a so-called "second generation" agreement, the EPCA provides a modern, comprehensive and dynamic framework for



Traian Hristea

cooperation and Kazakhstan is the only country in Central Asia with which such agreement was signed.

The provisional implementation of the main articles of the EPCA will already allow us to benefit from the new legal framework. The EPCA enhances political dialogue and concrete cooperation in some 29 key policy areas, including economic and financial cooperation, energy, transport, environment and climate change, employment and social affairs, culture, education and research. In all those areas we already see the use of this new agreement.

What are your priorities in terms of advancing commercial and political ties?

The agreement is very timely, as it reflects the current trends in bilateral cooperation. As you know, the EU has become – and remains

– the main trade and investment partner of Kazakhstan. In 2016, more than a third (39 percent) of Kazakhstan's foreign trade was with EU countries and over half of total foreign direct investment (FDI) stock in Kazakhstan is EU investment.

The benefits for Kazakhstan's business and ultimately for its citizens are expected to be a boost for EU-Kazakhstan trade and economic relations and for the country's economic diversification, as well as to its investment climate. The advantages are better protection of consumers, more business opportunities for small and medium enterprises, stimulating employment, more efficient use of energy and the development of renewable energy sources, reliable business environment, agriculture and rural development.

Amongst the areas that go beyond those already covered by Kazakhstan's commitments towards the World Trade Organisation (WTO) are the ones addressing trade in services, facilitating the establishment and operation of companies, freeing capital movements, opening up government procurement and protecting intellectual property rights, as well as sanitary and phytosanitary standards.

Since the start of EPCA's provisional implementation, the scope of bilateral cooperation meetings is expanding. Recently, Astana hosted the first EU-Kazakhstan Cooperation and Trade Commit-

tee and Subcommittee on Customs meetings under the new EPCA.

I'd also like to mention the recent meeting of the Parliamentary Cooperation Committee (PCC) on April 27 in Brussels. The committee agenda has focused on further strengthening of parliamentary cooperation between the two sides. By the way, the EPCA has been ratified by the Parliament of Kazakhstan and is pending ratification by the EU side, which according to EU procedures will take some time, as it needs to be ratified in all 28 member states and by the European Parliament. The EPCA

HRISTEA: "Kazakhstan is well in advance in this process and the new model of civil service, which started to function in 2013, is rooted on three basic principles, namely accountability to society, transparency and meritocracy."

has already been ratified by some EU member states and we hope the ratification process will be speeded up.

Kazakhstan and the EU have been cooperating in many areas, including civil service. What are the main highlights of the partnership in terms of its development?

So far, the EU has provided assistance to the government of Kazakhstan in reforming its civil service through the 4.6 million euros project called Civil Service

Reform and Modernisation of the Government of Kazakhstan.

During the project, the EU facilitated a world class civil service system based on the best international practices and adapted to the needs of the country.

I'd like to emphasise that Kazakhstan is well in advance in this process and the new model of civil service, which started to function in 2013, is rooted on three basic principles, namely accountability to society, transparency and meritocracy.

These achievements were reached due to an open and fruit-

ful cooperation with the partners and main beneficiaries: the then Ministry of Civil Service Affairs, the National Centre for Civil Service Staff Management and the Academy for Public Administration under the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan. Starting with the top of civil service, a new "A" administrative corps of senior civil service was established. In addition, a comprehensive modernisation programme is now in place to devise a perfor-

mance-related appraisal mechanism, transparent and competitive recruitment procedures and a merit-based career for all civil servants.

I am happy to see at its recent annual meeting that the Astana Regional Hub for Civil Service continues to implement and further expand the initial work we have started with our Kazakh and international partners.

What were the specific accomplishments of the project?

As specific achievements, it's worth highlighting the essential contribution of the project to the preparation of specific legislation in the field such as the new civil service law and the new anti-corruption law, the development of new IT instruments for increasing the efficiency of civil servants such as the E-Kyzmet system for the management of human resources and the elaboration of the strategy for the Academy of Public Administration by 2020. These steps provided the ground for the successful integration of this body in the global academic community.

The expertise and assistance provided by the project permitted the academy to enhance its academic programmes and eventually attracted civil servants from Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Tajikistan. In total, more than 3,000 civil servants in Kazakhstan have been trained during the project.

The project also facilitated the establishment of the Regional Hub on Civil Service in Astana and strengthened the capacity of the Academy of Public Administration to adopt more up-to-date teaching methods and approaches to better train civil servants and enhance their professional competence.

Nation&Capital

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Cooperation, peaceful resolution key for the future, says activist

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Kazakh stunt men nominated for Taurus World Stunt Awards

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Kazakh boxing team member wins gold at Asian Championships

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Military parade commemorates Fatherland Defenders' Day, Victory Day marked

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – Kazakhstan held the largest military parade in the nation's history in Astana's Independence Square May 7 to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the establishment of the country's Armed Forces. The celebration was part of Defender of the Fatherland Day in the lead up to the May 9 Victory Day.

"Dear participants of the parade, I congratulate all who serve on the 25th anniversary of the Armed Forces of our country... We have no enemies in any part of the world. We are building friendly and trust-based relations along the entire perimeter with our neighbours. We are friends with them, we remember the wise covenant that a peace agreement is more valuable than hundred victories," Kazakhstan President Nursultan Nazarbayev said at the opening ceremony of the military parade.

The parade featured a record number of participants, including more than 5,000 servicemen, about 300 units of military machinery and 70 military jets, airplanes and helicopters. Modern military hardware and air power, along with helicopters manufactured in Kazakhstan were displayed.

President Nazarbayev noted that the Kazakh Armed Forces, along with the entire country, are modernising.

Kazakh military jets flew over Astana displaying the anniversary



number 25 and other symbols.

The Kazakh President also noted the upcoming Victory Day, saying, "Dear compatriots, the date of the birth of the troops coincides with the Day of Defender of the Fatherland and gives start to the celebration of the Great Victory Day. We are immensely grateful to all the heroes of that terrible war that overcame fascism at the cost of their efforts. Your feat will always live in the hearts of descendants."

He also mentioned modern-day threats, saying the country must continue its tradition of facing all challenges.

"The fundamentally new direction of the whole block is the fight against terrorism. Kazakhstan should keep up with the times and fight back any threat," the President said.

On May 9, celebrated in Kazakhstan and other former constituent republics of the Soviet Union as Victory Day, the Kazakh President laid flowers at the Otan Qorgaushylar (Defenders of the Fatherland) monument in Astana.

"War veterans laid the path to our happiness, independence and today's clear blue skies. Today, laying the flowers to the Otan Qor-

gaushylar monument we are expressing our feelings of great admiration for the heroism and hard labour of our people on the battlefields and on the home front," Nazarbayev said addressing the large audience of people gathered on the occasion.

Noting that World War II was the bloodiest in the history of mankind, the Kazakh President also spoke of the contribution of the Kazakhs to defeating the Nazism: "Out of the six million people living in the republic at that time, 20 percent went to frontlines. Half of them never came back."

San Mir Astana company grows organic apples under Agrobusiness – 2020 programme

By Kamila Zhumbabayeva

ASTANA – Astana-based private company San Mir Astana grows organic apples as part of the Agrobusiness – 2020 programme to develop the agro-industrial complex in the country.

Initiated by the company's business consultant Yermek Beisembayev, a memorandum with a Hungarian company Holland Alma Kft was signed in 2015 to plant apple tree gardens in southern Kazakhstan, not far from Almaty.

"Generally, the company's line of work is housing and the utilities sector. An organic apple orchard start is one of our new activities. It is the first in Kazakhstan of such scale; 20 hectares of soil was reclaimed. Five kinds of apple species are being grown and 80 percent of seedlings were planted as of now. We are waiting for a first crop this year," Beisembayev shared with The Astana Times.

Both extensive and intensive methods are applied in planting the apple orchards. Apart from regional apple kinds, new varieties distinguished in resistance to weather conditions and harvest volume are being developed. An

ecologically clean product is the main principle, according to company information.

"Our territory allows us to plan developing the famous Aport apple plants in future. Another advantage is when a land plot is located 900 metres above sea level, practically 70 percent of all basic pests die because it is not a comfortable environment for them," Beisembayev stressed.

According to him, this is the main problem when it comes to growing a bio garden because there is a need to fight parasites with the help of chemicals, for example.

"Therefore, a natural parasites control and soil fertilisation goes on an area of our garden. Cultivation, processing methods, everything is natural," he said.

San Mir Astana cooperates with Nestle and other companies that produce food for children. As part of the memorandum, Beisembayev noted that Japan is their main partner in terms of selling and product control while their planting stock is supplied from Hungary.

Up to 45 hectares of land is planned to be developed and up to 100 people to be provided with jobs by 2020, the company states.

Huawei Academy opens in Almaty to support local ICT education

By Dana Omirgazy

ASTANA – Huawei recently opened the first in Kazakhstan Huawei Authorised Information and Network Academy (HAINA) in Almaty based on the Kazakh-British Technical University (KBTU), according to the company's press service.

The HAINA project will be a platform to train specialists in information and communication technologies (ICT) and telecommunications spheres. The laboratory is equipped with the latest teaching technologies. The equipment and software were provided within the framework of the memorandum signed between Huawei and KBTU. The audience can seat 15 students. Two instructors from KBTU were selected as instructors of the HAINA academy.

"A global leader of ICT solutions opened this academy, it is a great event. I think this is a big step towards the development of modern technology among our youth," said KBTU student Olzhas Suleimen.



The HAINA programme includes HCNA (Huawei Certified Network Associate Routing and Switching) and HCNP certifications (Huawei Certified Network Professional,) as well as one for the network security. The students who graduate from the HAINA programme are encouraged to attain Huawei Certification in support of a career in the IT industry.

More than 100 students attended the presentation and watched videos about Huawei's activities in Kazakhstan and abroad, the devices offered by the company, the process of hiring employees, as well as internship conditions in the global IT giant.

Huawei is a leading global manufacturer of information technology and telecommunications. Huawei delivers its prod-

ucts and solutions to governments and enterprises in more than 170 countries, including 45 largest telecommunications operators, 12 leading oil and gas companies in the world, five global banks, and more than 160 electric power enterprises. One third of the world's population uses Huawei products and solutions. Huawei is ranked 285th on the Global Fortune 500 based on its revenue in 2013. In 2014, the company's revenue reached approximately \$46.5 billion, according to the company's website.

In Kazakhstan, the company has been represented since 1998 providing more than 400 jobs and training over 200 qualified IT personnel. The company's activities cover all three business groups of the corporation. Huawei Carrier cooperates with Kazakh telecommunication operators, as Huawei Consumer provides consumers with the latest user devices. In addition, Huawei Enterprise provides corporate customers with IT equipment and solutions for optimising work processes.

Kazakh businessperson creates clothing brand on French Riviera

By Zhazira Dyussebekova

ASTANA – Almaty businessperson Madi Syptayev decided to change his life in 2011 by moving to France with his wife and three children. He later launched his own clothing brand with a marine motif and has ambitious plans to find his place in the market.

"In 2015, I registered the Marino MAD1 trademark and started a business in France. Marino means 'of the sea,' but here it already became sort of a nickname. The first collection went on sale in the summer of 2016," Syptayev told The Astana Times in a recent interview.

The line incorporates a marine

style into sportswear for everyday life.

"Today our assortment is textile products, such as T-shirts, polos, shirts, dresses, jackets and trousers, as well as accessories, including hats, leather belts and jewelry," he added.

The average price of an item is 100 euros (US\$109) and the main market is currently the Riviera – the South of France and Italy's Ligurian coast. The company's office and store are located in Port Marina Baie Des Anges in the town of Villeneuve-Loubet, near Nice. Pieces are also distributed through shops in coastal cities like Cannes, Nice, Saint-Tropez and San Remo.

Continued on Page B2

Kazakh scientist creates unique catalyst for oil

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – PhD and Senior Lecturer of the Kazakh National Research Technical University (KazNITU) and the Kazakh-British Technical University (KBTU) Khadichakhan Rafikova has discovered a greener form of rhodium-iridium catalysts for oil refining.

"Today, we have a task to find a new efficient catalyst for petrochemical and organic synthesis processes in Kazakhstan that meet the requirements of green chemistry. I clearly understood the task of obtaining this type of catalyst. Despite the difficulties, it was possible to synthesise the catalysts,



as well as to check their catalytic activity in hydrogenation processes. Highly qualified teachers and administrative staff of KBTU helped me in this issue. Professor of Research and Education Centre of KBTU Aleksei Zazybin and foreign scientific director Hamdi Te-

mel (of Dicle University, Turkey) and his research team took part in the research," Rafikova said.

The creation of rhodium-iridium catalysts based on phosphorus-containing ionic liquids is an absolutely new direction in the science of Kazakhstan, she said.

The development and catalytic tests took two years. Based on the results of this study, three innovative patents were obtained and four articles in high-ranking international magazines were published. Also on this topic, Rafikova won a grant for a trip to one of the leading U.S. universities, the University of Alabama, from the CRDF Global non-profit organisation, which promotes the development of international scientific and tech-

nical cooperation. The grants were awarded to 10 most promising scientists in Kazakhstan.

The team of researchers hasn't presented the results of the research to oil companies and it is too early to implement them into oil production.

"The process of hydrogenation is one of the most important in petrochemicals. I think such companies as TengizChevrOil, Karachaganak Petroleum Operating BV may be interested in our catalysts," she said.

The scientist plans to continue with the research.

"I would like to bring the results of Kazakhstan's petrochemical research to the international level," Rafikova said.

THINGS TO WATCH & PLACES TO GO

ASTANA OPERA

- May 17 at 7 p.m. Kyz Zhibek, Opera
- May 19 at 7 p.m. Folk & Classic, Concert
- May 20 at 6 p.m. Manon, Ballet
- May 26 at 7 p.m. Classical Music, Concert
- May 26 at 7:30 p.m. Contrasts / Serenade, Ballet
- May 30 at 7 p.m. Austrian Music, Concert

PALACE OF PEACE AND RECONCILIATION

- May 18 at 6:30 p.m. They Feel, Photography Exhibition
- May 29 at 7 p.m. Jazz Music, Concert

PEOPLE

WEDNESDAY, MAY 17, 2017

Cooperation and peaceful resolution is the key for the future, says anti-nuclear activist

By Dana Omirgazy

ASTANA – Tore Naerland, president of Bike for Peace Norway (BFP), has been nominated for the Kazakhstan Peace Prize for a Nuclear Weapons Free World and Global Security, the nation's equivalent of the Nobel Peace Prize. He has been fighting for peace, disarmament and democracy on the planet and promoting peace by organising biking and cultural tours in various countries since 1978 and has inspired many to join his ideas.

Naerland has been motivated to work for peace by the efforts of Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr., Aung San Suu Kyi, Kamenu Fujiwara from Hiroshima, The ATOM Project Honorary Ambassador Karipbek Kuyukov and ordinary people around the globe.

"I am honoured to be nominated

for the Kazakhstan Peace Prize! A delightful thing. It is the most important thing that people support me, because I have been an activist against nuclear weapons for 40 years," he said in an interview for this story.

Moscow-Oslo-New York-Washington, DC, which in 1983 became the first international bike ride on nuclear weapons between the Soviet Union and the United States, is among his peace initiatives throughout the world during the last four decades. Naerland encouraged people from the two superpowers to bike together to show the world that cooperation and peaceful resolution is the key for the future.

Around the World in 80 Days in 1994 and the Moscow-Bergen-Beijing-Almaty bike ride with the slogan "Support the victims of Semipalatinsk, Nevada and Chernobyl" in 1999 are two of

Naerland's other commitments to promote a planet without nuclear weapons.

"The world uses too much money for producing nukes. The nuclear states should talk more to each other. They are able to find good solutions, like banning," he noted.

Naerland is inspired by Kazakhstan led by President Nursultan Nazarbayev and his action to rid the country of all nuclear weapons. This is a great message to the nine countries that are known to possess nuclear weapons, he noted.

"This was a brave decision and a decision that we still applaud today and the main reason why we say 'Look at Kazakhstan.' Kazakhstan has proven that it is possible to make a brave decision for the sake of humanity, they have proven that security does not depend on a country's nuclear arsenal and they have proven that peace is far more valuable than the capacity to de-

stroy our planet," Naerland said in his book "Bike Away the Nuclear Bombs."

As part of its 20th anniversary in 2011, BFP, in cooperation with the Kazakh embassy in Oslo and local authorities in Kazakhstan, organised a peace ride through the nation. The team started in Semey (former Semipalatinsk) on Aug. 6 (the day of the Hiroshima bomb), covering 2,500 kilometres and ending in Astana Aug. 29 on the International Day against Nuclear Tests.

In the spring of 2015, Naerland and BFP together with Mayors for Peace and The ATOM Project organised a Washington, DC-New York peace ride. During the trip, the group talked about the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons in various venues, including schools, universities, baseball games, the UN and at a peace rally in New York.

Since the start in 1978, with a



Tore Naerland

peace ride joining Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland, Naerland and BFP has organised projects for peace, democracy and nuclear disarmament in more than 100 countries worldwide. He has released 10 books in relation to global peace building, has held

many posts in the Norwegian and international media and conducts lectures for schools, clubs and associations in Norway and other countries.

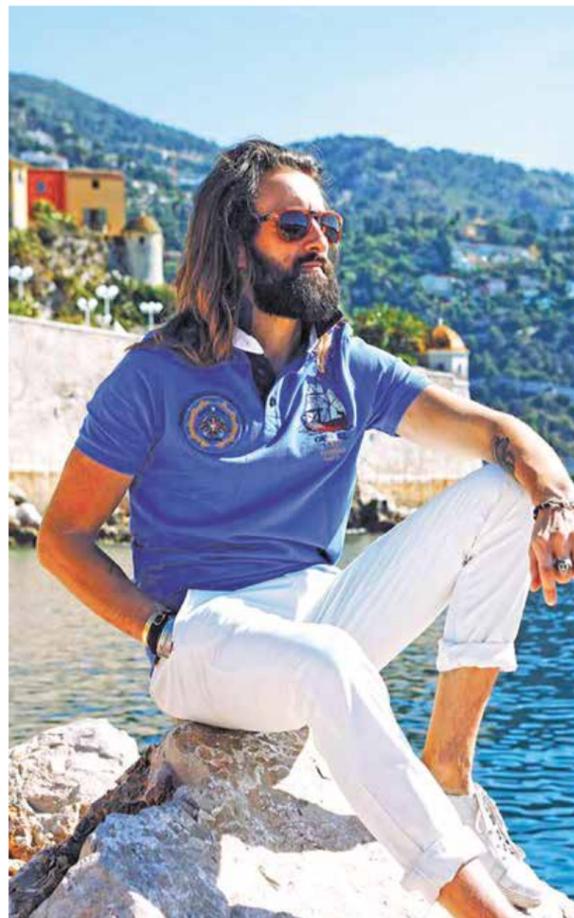
In August, Naerland is planning to organise the Bishkek-Almaty-Karaganda-Astana bike ride.

Kazakh businessperson creates clothing brand on French Riviera

Continued from Page B1

Marino MADI is available in Kazakhstan as well, including in Saks Fifth Avenue in Almaty and Keruen Mall in the capital. Patriotic feelings inspired Syptayev to make a small collection for his homeland, though not everything is in a marine style. Russian cus-

tomers can buy Marino MADI clothing in Fashion Marine stores. "Sketches and the idea of the items belong to me, then the graphic designer makes them in an electronic form for the stage of production," he said, adding textile items are currently produced in Portugal, while leather goods and accessories are made in Italy.



tomers can buy Marino MADI clothing in Fashion Marine stores.

"I started with menswear and we have now launched lines for women and children. We intend to expand the line up to a full look. That means expanding to the production of shoes, accessories and outerwear for all," added Syptayev.

This month, the brand is launching an online shop with delivery from France. He admits the odds of supporting businesses in two countries.

"The creation, construction and

so on. There is high competition, very high in almost any sector of the economy, and even more in the fashion industry. But the pros are a way larger market and are the stability of the economy, currency and business as a consequence," he said.

In the near future, the company plans to present the spring collection with the recently-added women's and children's lines and open its own stores in Nice or Cannes. The line is also seeking to find a way into the French department store Galeries Lafayette and expand the geography of distributors in the country and Italy.

In the next five to ten years, the company has set its sights on opening its own and franchise stores in Europe, Asia and America.

Kazakh dancer instructs salsa classes, finds her rhythm in Toronto

By Dana Omirgazy

ASTANA – Aktobe-born and raised, Gulsaya Tuleu has been teaching, choreographing and performing lively and exciting salsa for years at Baila Society (BASo) in dynamic and multicultural Toronto. One of the most graceful dance forms, salsa inspires millions of people worldwide with the flexibility of its movements and energetic music.

"Throughout my childhood, I performed and competed in belly dance, cultural dances and Latin ballroom. I won my first competition at the age of nine. When I was 16, I won a scholarship that allowed me to go abroad to the U.S. as an exchange student. I found opportunities to dance in musical productions and on sports dance teams during high school and after graduation, I attended Santa Monica College in Los Angeles with a double major in dance and business. This was when I was introduced to a wide range of dance styles such as contemporary, hip-hop, jazz, tap, African, Cuban and salsa. I first fell in love with salsa music when I took a beginner sal-

sa class. This inspired me to audition for my first salsa performance class, where I performed LA-style salsa," said Tuleu in an interview with The Astana Times.

During her second year, Tuleu sprained her ankle and could no longer continue dance training or the dream of becoming a professional dancer. This was devastating for the young woman and she decided to continue her studies at Baruch College in New York City.

"After graduating from college, I returned to my most intense passion – salsa. While in LA, I was introduced to the social dance aspect of salsa dancing which I loved the most. It was through social dancing that I met Ahtoy Juliana, the artistic director of BASo New York. Soon after our meeting, she invited me to join the dance company and the rest is history!" added Tuleu.

As a principal dancer with the world-renowned dance company, Tuleu was able to travel, teach and perform in major cities such as New York, Los Angeles, Singapore, Tokyo, Dubai, Istanbul and Vancouver.

"I came to Toronto in 2010 for a personal visit and was invited to be a guest instructor at a local dance

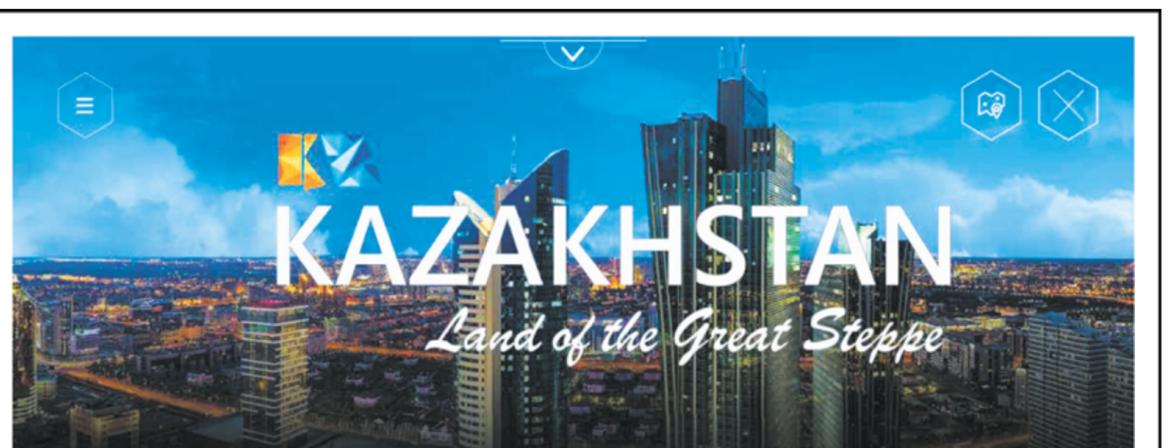
school. A couple of years later, I came back to establish BASo Canada – the New York-style 'on 2' salsa school and performance dance company based in Toronto. I am happy to have made that decision, as I have met wonderful people these last few years doing what I love the most!" she noted.

"What inspires me to choreograph first and foremost is salsa music. Sometimes I would hear a specific song, fall in love with its beauty and already visualise a theme to it and create the choreography in my mind. My musical background since childhood has strongly contributed to my deep appreciation of the complexity of salsa songs. In my choreographies, I tend to accentuate the instrument beats that dominate over others or resonate with me the most. I choreograph ladies styling routines on my own and the process usually takes about 12 hours. For partner work pieces, I often turn to my colleagues in New York, especially to my dear friend and mentor Ahtoy Juliana from BASo NY. Most recently I collaborated with David Zepeda, a six-time Salsa World Champion, who helped us choreograph a

routine that will be showcased in fall 2017," she added.

Salsa has many health advantages, as it improves balance, strength, flexibility and stamina. The dance also enables a person to instantly connect with others around the world and is also an amazing platform to build lifelong friendships. There are no language barriers, for on the dance floor everyone "speaks" the same language, said Tuleu.

"Dancing is my true passion, so it does not feel like work most of the time. It is immensely rewarding and inspiring to me on many levels to see lives transform. Aside from the artistic aspirations, that is what gives me perpetual impetus to work harder. Finally, salsa dancing brings a vibrant social life, which includes lots of traveling to salsa congresses, watching performances by other professionals and taking dance workshops. Being a student again is the best feeling, as it opens up unlimited possibilities, gives you a new perspective on everything you know and intensifies your passion for this dance. Growth in general is an essence of being alive," she added.



Google play

DISCOVER KAZAKHSTAN WITH A NEW APP



App Store

A unique digital product – "Kazakhstan – Land of the Great Steppe" – is one-of-a-kind high quality interactive application, presenting multimedia on the most representative geographic, political, touristic, historical, economic facts about Kazakhstan. It contains hundreds of high quality unique photographs, videos, 3D objects, panoramic tours, interactive charts, and innovative maps. It should be of interest to anyone who wants to learn about the world's ninth largest country, including tourists, students, and business people. Available in English, Russian, and Kazakh.

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

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

WEDNESDAY, MAY 17, 2017

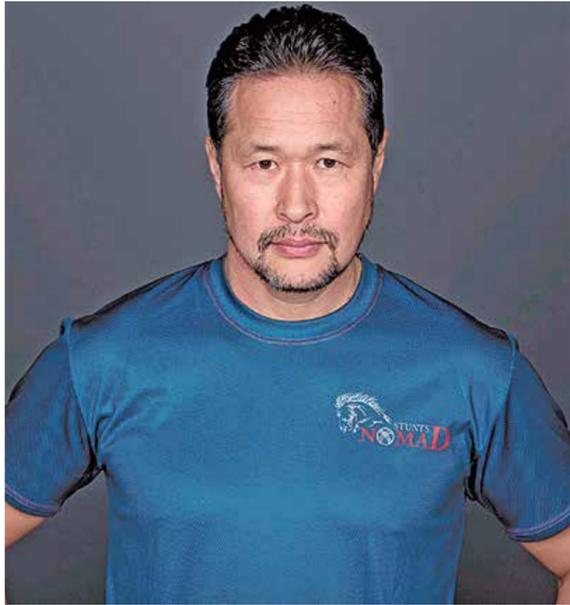
Kazakh stunt men nominated for Taurus World Stunt Awards

By Kamila Zhumabayeva

ASTANA – Stunt coordinator Zhaidarbek Kunguzhinov and his team Nomad Stunts have been nominated for the Taurus World Stunt Awards for coordinating and performing stunts in the 2016 Russian historic film “Viking.”

“We came up with a few new stunts for the film – a burning wheel hitting a man, a fall of two horses, an altered version of fencing and combustion. On a related note, some 30 percent of the action scenes did not make it to the final version of the film, but as the film’s director noted, the stunts will make it to the ‘Viking’ series that will be based on the film,” he said, according to the news report.

The stunt coordinators for “Hacksaw Ridge,” “Doctor Strange,” “Captain America: Civil War,” “Allegiant” and a dozen more action films released in 2016 are among the candidates for the prize and the Kazakh stunt team is included with the nominees for the first time. The award ceremony was held May 13 at the Paramount Pictures studio in Los Angeles.



Zhaidarbek Kunguzhinov

“We applied in January for us to be short-listed. The agreement and approval process of our application went on for several months.

To be honest we began worrying, as the nominees in the other categories were all selected already. But today we found out that ‘Vi-

king’ was nominated. We are surely very happy, but are even more nervous now as we wait for May 13 when the winners are to be announced,” added Kunguzhinov.

The Taurus World Stunt Awards is a yearly ceremony held in Los Angeles that honours the world’s best stunt professionals for extraordinary performances in feature films.

“Selected and voted by the members of the Taurus World Stunt Academy, who are all in the stunt industry themselves, the winners are not only recognised for their contribution to the film industry, but also honoured by their own peer group, the academy members,” according to its website, taurusworldstuntawards.com.

The Taurus World Stunt Academy, launched in January 2001, has a current worldwide membership of 1,500 and is strongly supported by the stunt community.

The awards are given for best fight, best rigging stunt, best high altitude stunts, best work with a vehicle, best specialty stunt, hardest hit, best stunt coordinator and/or second unit director, best overall stunt by a stunt woman and best action in a foreign film.

Kazakh cultural centre in Argentina unites Central Asia and Latin America



Gustavo Gutierrez and Irina Vagner.

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – Irina Vagner, founder of Centro Kazajo, the Kazakh cultural centre in Rosario, Argentina, has announced plans to take part in next year’s Festival of Nations. The annual event, with the participation of three million people, is widely celebrated in the city.

“It is one of the most important events in the country. Since our centre’s activities are aimed at popularising the Kazakh culture, we have the opportunity to participate in this festival next year. We take part in all cultural events and exhibitions held in Argentina. Local people are very interested in the culture of other countries. We need to create a dance group to perform Kazakh dances,” she said in an interview for this story.

The sole Kazakh cultural centre in South America was established in November 2014. This year, Vagner came to Kazakhstan to participate in the 25th session of the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan.

“I was invited by the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan. I spoke about our cultural centre and its activities. I feel grateful to Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev for his contribution to the development of Kazakh cultural centres throughout the world. The peaceful initiatives of the head of state are especially important today. I also want Kazakh people to know about Centro Kazajo and this event is a great opportunity to tell them about our activities,” she said.

The flag dedicated to the 25th anniversary of Kazakhstan’s independence was raised Dec. 16 at the National Flag Memorial in Rosario.

“This is one of the most important monuments in Argentina, because Rosario is known as the cradle of the Argentine flag. The monument is located on the place where the Argentinean flag was first raised more than 200 years ago. This event was our great achievement. Now, the national flag of Kazakhstan is displayed in the National Monument to the Flag museum. It will be raised every

year in honour of Independence Day of our country,” she said.

Vagner, who had not visited her native Almaty for 17 years, noted the city has changed significantly.

“I was pleasantly surprised by what I saw. We also were delighted to explore and visit Astana. Our trip was fruitful, as we held many important meetings. For example, I met with the head of the Saltanat ensemble and they promised to come to us and teach us Kazakh dances. The only problem is to find the dance costumes,” she said.

Vagner also has begun negotiations on a project to make Rosario and Almaty twin cities.

“We have a project to open a hall in the form of a yurt at the centre and give this hall the name of the First President of Kazakhstan. It will be possible to show films about our country and organise a museum of Kazakh culture, customs and traditions. The project will help us in the further promotion of cultural activities of the centre and contribute to the popularisation of the culture of Kazakhstan in Argentina,” she said.

Vagner’s husband, Gustavo Gutierrez, studied a lot about Kazakhstan when the couple was in Argentina.

“When I came here, I saw places which I already knew or my wife told me about. I was really impressed. We are glad to visit the country. We feel at home here, because many people know about our work and they are so friendly. They push us to do more for Kazakhstan. They try to help us in our activities and this is important for us, because we have a big group in Argentina working just for the idea, for the spirit of what Kazakhstan is,” he said.

Gutierrez added Rosario is a cultural capital of Argentina and cultural ties with Kazakhstan are especially important for the city.

“We both work at the centre. Irina is teaching Russian and I’m teaching physics, but our centre is more cultural. We want to realise our projects and also open a dance course and present films there. I believe that Irina’s participation in the assembly is a big step for our centre’s development,” he said.

New York-based streaming platform Filmatique releases Nariman Turebayev’s “Adventure”

By Kamila Zhumabayeva

ASTANA – Filmatique.com, a New York-based online streaming platform, released Kazakh filmmaker Nariman Turebayev’s FIPRESCI (International Federation of Film Critics) prize-winning film “Adventure.” Ursula Grisham, who is responsible for the website’s acquisitions and content, shared her impressions of the film with The Astana Times.

“Nariman Turebayev’s ‘Adventure’ is a singular portrait of a night-time security guard that transports audiences into the nocturnal landscape of contemporary Almaty. Many filmmakers have adapted Dostoyevsky’s ‘White Nights’ to the screen, such as Bresson and Visconti. However, Turebayev has both managed to preserve the source material’s enduring topic of urban loneliness and ennui and update the story to include universal elements of modern life such as the atomising nature of capitalism,” she said.

While some government-sponsored cinematic works such as “Nomad” (2005), focusing on



Nariman Turebayev

a proud nomadic history, “The Gift to Stalin” (2008), showing the challenging era of Stalinist Kazakhstan, or “Kelin” (2009), centring on a philosophical interpretation of a pre-Islamic Kazakh world, “Adventure” “reminds us that identity and citizenship are comprised of the everyday struggles of ordinary people,” according to an essay by Dr. Rico Isaacs for Filmatique.

A still from Adventure film. Photo credit: pascalaramonda.com

The film’s main character is Marat and his life demonstrates how “identity and nationhood can be encountered in the ordinariness

of the everyday, in the small seemingly insignificant moments of existence, in the quiet emotional and psychological reflection of personal journeys of transition to new states of being,” it adds.

“Marat’s isolation in the bustling city – his quietness, solitude and loneliness – evoke the everyday struggles of ordinary people. In this way, Turebayev captures the reality of day-to-day life in Almaty: bus journeys, cleaning shoes, shopping at the supermarket, drinking tea, work and sleep,” wrote Isaacs.

Filmatique is a collective specialising in the curation and digital distribution of contemporary world cinema, art-house and festival films. Its mission is to expand and inform audiences of “films representing communities rarely depicted in commercial cinema,” notes the website.

A still from Adventure film. Photo credit: pascalaramonda.com

Grisham explained why “Adventure” was chosen for streaming on the platform and commented on the feedback.

“Filmatique’s mission is to promote diverse cinema by releas-

ing films that portray ways of life historically underrepresented in mainstream media. ‘Adventure’ is a perfect example – while U.S. audiences can certainly connect with the protagonist’s journey, most of them are unlikely to be acquainted with Almaty or ways of life inside modern-day Kazakhstan,” she noted. “‘Adventure’ is performing well on the platform and we have received positive feedback from both audiences and academics,” she added.

“‘Adventure’ is performing well on the platform and we have received positive feedback from both audiences and academics,” she added.

Turebayev is a Kazakh screenwriter, editor and director. His first feature film, “Little Men” (2003), premiered at the Chicago, Locarno, Tallinn Black Nights and Thessaloniki film festivals. His second work “Sunny Days” (2011) also premiered at Locarno, where it won Best Film.

“Adventure” premiered at the Karlovy Vary, Turin and Eurasia International in Almaty film festivals, where it won the FIPRESCI Prize, noted filmatique.com.

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WEDNESDAY, MAY 17, 2017

NU to host conference on good governance, diversification in resource-dependent countries

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – The Nazarbayev University Graduate School of Public Policy (NU GSPP) has announced plans to hold “The Good Governance and Economic Diversification in Resource Rich Economies” conference Aug. 17-19 in the capital, according to the school’s press release.

The event with several panel sessions and notable speakers is expected to attract about 50 participants.

“Central Asian and post-Soviet state good governance and economic diversification are the main agenda of the event. The purpose of the conference is to provide attendees of academic and professional political communities with quality educational and networking opportunities focused on Central Asian and post-Soviet state good governance and economic diversification,” noted the release.

Investigation, research and analysis on various Central Asian issues and post-Soviet state good

governance and economic diversification have been pursued at large institutions in China, Europe, Japan, Russia, the U.S. and other locations.

Issues on public management, political economy of natural resources, reforms in the post-Soviet states, public policy education in Central Asia, security in Central Asia and civil society and public sphere will be discussed. The conference will provide background for future research and networking opportunities for students.

The local organising committee includes NU Vice Dean for Academic Affairs and Associate Professor and conference chair Riccardo Pelizzo, GSPP Dean and local chair Weng Tat Hui, GSPP Professor Colin Knox and other faculty members.

Conference registration is free to all participants and submission using the on-line form at the school website, www.gspp.nu.edu.kz, was open until May 5. The detailed conference programme and schedule will be available on the website in June.

GSPP regularly conducts guest lectures with government officials and practitioners, employees at international organisations and business structures and NU students and faculty.

NU GSPP is one of the newest and most modern public policy schools in Central Asia. It conducts Master’s and PhD programmes as well as professional development courses for government administrators, international organisation employees and business structures.

The school offers a two-year Master in Public Policy and launched its second degree programme, Master in Public Administration, in 2015. It incorporates scientific research into practices that, when combined, may place it amongst the most innovative and progressive Master’s programmes in the Central Asian region. The programmes are developed in a strategic partnership with the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy at the National University of Singapore.

Foreign experts address biodiversity needs in Almaty

By Dmitry Lee

ASTANA – The current global financial needs for biodiversity management are \$150-440 billion per year, while expenditures are estimated at \$52 billion, said Biodiversity Finance Initiative (BIOFIN) senior technical advisor Dr. David Meyers addressing a crowd April 25 at the BIOFIN regional workshop in Almaty.

“This significant finance gap underpins the need to find new approaches to tackle the finance challenge with broad participation of governments, the private sector and other stakeholders,” he said.

Biodiversity provides enormous value to world societies and economies such as clean water, climate regulation, flood prevention, recreation, food, fuel and fibre, yet nature’s services are at a severe risk.

“Kazakhstan and many countries in Central Asia are only just now learning about how to use the economic valuation of biodiversity and ecosystem services to inform government policy, regulations and

financing tools,” Dr. Meyers said in an interview with The Astana Times.

“The integration of economics and fiscal policy into government and private sector operations is essential to align interests so that the economy and the environment can prosper. Many of the services provided by nature are seen as free and requiring little effort to maintain, but unless there is adequate protection, sustainable use and financing, these ‘free’ services and the natural ecosystems that provide them are lost and substantial extra financing is needed to maintain or replace these services. In fact, natural ecosystems provide enormous value for the people and economy of Kazakhstan and through BIOFIN and related initiatives, the government is beginning to put in place legislation and policy to integrate this value into private and public decisions,” he said.

“BIOFIN’s work with the government of Kazakhstan has found that 86 percent of current expenditure for biodiversity comes from the national and local budgets of Kazakhstan. We now have a great opportunity to find

solutions that tap into other sources, including the private sector, as well as solutions that realign and better deliver public funds to protect these important species and ecosystems in this country,” he added.

The Kazakh government is being supported by BIOFIN, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and partners to improve biodiversity financing through a range of means. The conference on private sector engagement in biodiversity finance brought together large industrial companies, government agencies and NGO partners to discuss improved private sector engagement in biodiversity management and finance.

“A catalogue of potential projects that were identified and prioritised in the National Biodiversity Concept and Action Plan has been presented in a publication for potential private sector donation and investment. Additional actions include the revision of laws and regulations on environmental management to include the concept of ‘ecosystem services,’ which are the goods and services provided by nature to people. At the same time, BIOFIN is supporting the government to develop reforms that support the early stage private sector initiatives through subsidies and by providing access to credit to support part of the costs in sustainable forestry, fishery, organic agriculture production and ecotourism. BIOFIN is also developing pilot projects that explore ‘payments for ecosystem services,’ forest product sustainability and other innovative finance solutions,” said Meyers.

UNDP, jointly with the Kazakh Ministry of Agriculture, is assisting the government in preparing clear economic justification to increase investments in sustainable and equitable management and protection and restoration of biodiversity and ecosystems.

Radar station production plant starts operation in Kazakhstan



Staff Report

ASTANA – The Granit-Thales Electronics plant, a joint Kazakh-French venture, has started production of the new generation Ground Master 400 radar equipment in Kazakhstan. The project is being implemented for the first time in the Central Asian region and will meet all state requirements.

“The station is constantly on duty, operating day and night. It showed itself as really good equipment, overlapping almost half of the central region,” said military expert and air defence forces senior engineer Tair Rakhimzhanov.

The first radar station prototype, produced in Kazakhstan in 2014 and tested for three years, has been guarding the capital for the same amount of time. The Ministry of Defence has plans that domestic radar stations will be able to place the entire country under their protection in the near future. The

second station will be delivered to Karaganda this year.

In total, the plant will produce four radars per year. New stations will be installed in West Kazakhstan to protect the Caspian region and Almaty. The stations, with a maximum range reaching 500 kilometres, have a market price of approximately \$22 million.

Kazakhstan is one of nine countries which received the French

the nation’s requirements, but also for export.

“A good understanding of this system and improving it is the way to enter the world market. The creation of other locators with medium, short range for border guards will give us prospects in the future,” said Granit-Thales Electronics deputy general director Marat Amanzholov.

Ground Master 400 uses digi-

RAKHIMZHANOV: “The station is constantly on duty, operating day and night. It showed itself as really good equipment, overlapping almost half of the central region.”

technology for radar station production. The Ground Master 400 is used in Germany, Canada and Finland. Recently, the North Atlantic Alliance received 10 French stations.

The Officials at the Kazakh Ministry of Defence see great potential in the systems to not only to cover

tal beam-forming technology. Thales, its developer, combines the expertise of 64,000 employees and operations in 56 countries, which has made the company a key player in guarding vital infrastructure and protecting the national security interests of dozens of countries.

Second STEM and Art Festival takes place in Atyrau

By Serzhan Bekturov

ASTANA – It is unlikely that there will be a person who challenges the generally accepted truth that “the youth is our future.” Since each of us wants to see Kazakhstan in the ranks of the world’s most competitive countries in the near future, the country’s development vector is aimed at innovative education of Kazakhstan’s youth. Organisers of the second STEM and Art Festival, or STEAM Fest, held in Atyrau on April 30 as part of the Zangar educational project, did not stand aside.

Increasing the interest of children and youth in studying STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths) which is of great importance in the 21st century, and demonstrating STEM’s capabilities in art development became the main goals of the STEAM Festival organized by the International Youth Foundation in cooperation with Chevron, the Akimat of Atyrau region and local partner organisations. At the same time, the slogan of the festival, “Build a



city with your family!”, calling on children and their parents to spend time in an interesting and useful way, contributed to the fact that the fest became a truly family event.

“We tried to diversify the content of the festival to make it interesting for all guests. While the targeted audience of the Zangar project is local youth aged from 10 to 22 years old, we organise STEM festivals for the whole family. Through such events, we aim to promote

STEM education and show that STEM is not difficult and that basic exercises can be done at home, which can be a pleasant and useful pastime for the whole family,” explained Assem Satmukhambetova, Director of the Representative Office of the International Youth Foundation in Kazakhstan.

The results of the STEAM participants’ activities were reflected in the construction of the Zangar-City, a shared project presented by

“smart” houses, houses with thermal insulation, eco-landscape and wind generators. The youngsters were enabled to implement all these ideas as they master knowledge and skills in engineering design, robotics and programming under the guidance of experienced trainers and volunteers. Acquiring the basics of engineering, younger children helped to decorate the city-project with “Skewer structures”, bridges and various 3D objects.

“I really liked the STEAM Fest, as I contributed to the construction of Zangar-City. It is wonderful when you can build a house, various structures, and create a game on the computer yourself. This experience was very useful for me. Working in a team with other guys, I found new friends here. We would like this festival to be continued in the future,” shared his thoughts Azamat Khismetolayev, 12.

The Dino Museum project located within the Zangar-City deserved a special attention. The fascinating work on the creation of the museum exhibits helped the

children master the fundamental knowledge of 3D modelling. Meanwhile, what has become a custom of Zangar Festivals is the robotics competitions organised among participants of eight robotics clubs of the Zangar project. Such a variety of STEM activities has become possible with the help of Bolashak Engineering and Sumato Batys, local partners of the International Youth Foundation.

A key feature of the second Festival was that through interactive workshops, such as 3D Printing in Art and STEM in Jewellery, participants were given the opportunity to look at Art from the point of view of natural sciences. This allowed them to see the relationship between the two domains not connected with each other at first glance. It is noteworthy that the 3D Printing in Art seminar was held by first Zangar graduates, including Kairali Ashigaliyev, Alibek Yerzhanov and Yelisey Chalov who assembled a 3D printer using Fab Lab Atyrau’s technical potential. The youth could also see the STEM capacity for art devel-

opment in the presented installations prepared by Zangar project’s participants, and including those developed under the guidance of the representatives of Sariyev Atyrau Regional Museum of Fine and Decorative Applied Arts. The art direction was also presented by master classes organized by Art-Lab and a pottery master Aisulu Sanat.

Supporting the interest of their children in STEM-education, parents highly appreciated the importance of the event. Gulmira Gazizkyzy, who visited the STEAM Fest with her daughter, said: “My daughter learned computer programmes, and based on that she was able to make some products herself. STEM is important for the future and, hence, it is very important to promote it among our youth. As a parent I would like such events to be held more often.”

Parent support and successful mini-projects of young participants of the Festival gives hope for further active involvement of Atyrau youth in STEM-education. The construction of Zangar-City has surpassed expectations.

SOCIETY

WEDNESDAY, MAY 17, 2017

Kazatomprom, KazNU establish centre for uranium industry professionals

By Kamila Zhumabayeva

ASTANA – Kazatomprom, the country's national atomic company, and Kanysh Satpayev Kazakh National University (KazNU) have established a scientific and educational nuclear centre where high-skilled professionals will be trained for the uranium industry.

The industry lacked sufficient personnel in the 1990s because young people were not willing to study technical fields, while the few new grads in the discipline lacked proficient knowledge. The problem is gradually being resolved, however, as several Kazakh higher learning institutions, including KazNU, are now preparing specialists, reported Kapital.kz.



"Establishing an international scientific and educational centre for the nuclear industry within this

university means that now personnel training for the uranium industry will enter a higher level," said

Kazatomprom's Chief Director for production and nuclear fuel cycle Baurzhan Ibrayev, according to the report.

The centre will have master's programmes and short-term certified courses. The former include geology and uranium deposit exploration, mining practices, uranium metallurgy and its compounds, rare earth metals metallurgy, power engineering and other important areas of study.

Master's programmes will be conducted this year in geology, metallurgy and industrial process automation. Up to 10 specialists will be trained in each area.

The synergy of scientific, educational and industrial activity is key to the programmes. The centre will partner with Kazatomprom,

Areva, Katco (a joint venture between Kazatomprom and Areva) and other industrial giants, as well as Converdyn, Honeywell and Verbulak, according to Kapital.kz. Kazakhstan Nuclear University, Kazatomprom's corporate university, will also be an educational affiliate.

The centre will conduct scientific research as well as design and complete experimental work in nuclear science and industry. Teaching will be in English more than 60 percent of the time. All master's programme students will undergo prolonged industry training at Kazatomprom and through internships abroad.

"The industry is transforming. We are reviewing the company's positions on the global market; demand for personnel will be growing and

requirements for competitiveness, knowledge and skills will be toughening. We need personnel who comply with the highest international criteria. We plan to solve this task locally in Kazakhstan and with the involvement of our higher education institutions," said Kazakhstan Nuclear University Rector Miras Kassymov, according to the news report.

The centre will be training personnel particularly for Kazatomprom. Students from foreign countries can also study there, as it will train personnel for the peaceful use of atomic energy.

"We will be applying dual learning methods; our grads will arrive at the enterprise as prepared specialists and can be involved in the extraction process straight away," he added.

Kazakhstan develops road safety plan, fatalities decline

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – The Ministry of Internal Affairs has developed a national concept for road safety until 2020 to reduce accidents and increase enforcement.

"Your recommendations are important for us and we used them for the development of the National concept of road safety in the country until 2020. Now it is being coordinated with state bodies. Its main goal is to increase the level of protection of road users from road accidents," Minister of Internal Affairs Kalmukhanbet Kassymov said April 28 during a government hour in the Senate of Parliament.

The number of accidents has decreased in recent years despite an increase in the number of cars on the road, according to government statistics.

In 2015-2016, there was a significant reduction in the number of accidents, fatalities and injuries. That trend continues this year with a 13.2 percent decrease in accidents, 27.2 percent decrease in fatalities and a 10.4 percent decrease in accident-related injuries so far. These positive trends followed a sharp increase in 2013, including a 65 percent increase in the number of accidents.

"The reduction of the main accident rates was achieved in recent years primarily due to the tight-

ening of administrative practice, thanks to the Law on Road Traffic, adopted in 2014," Kassymov said.

This year, police have logged approximately 3.5 million traffic violations. Some 35,000 drunken drivers have been detained, almost 49,000 drivers have had their licenses suspended and 5,000 violators have been charged with administrative arrest. And approximately 182,000 pedestrians were cited for violations with a 20 percent decrease in accidents caused by pedestrians.

"Undoubtedly, this practice of the police disciplining road users with strict measures of administrative coercion have not exhausted itself," the minister said.

Almaty police to use Instagram to search for the missing

Staff Report

Almaty police has decided to conduct constant live broadcasts on Instagram to help search for missing persons.

The Instagram account Rozysk_kz ("search" in Russian) has provided the assistance to implement the initiative. The city's Department of Internal Affairs has been closely interacting with the group's moderator for a while, noted the department's press service.

The first live broadcast took place 7 p.m., May 2, when a senior detective, a lieutenant colonel for especially important cases in the city's Department of Internal Affairs Criminal Police Department, gave instructions on what to do if a family member, for instance, is missing.

"The first experience showed that subscribers are active during the broadcast and actively ask questions. The timing of the dialogue in the studio was 25 minutes with 708 viewers. It is difficult to gather such an audience overnight; this would require very expensive resources and the possibilities of the Internet in this case have confirmed its consistency and effectiveness. We believe it makes perfect sense to hold more live broadcasts. On verbal agreement with the creator, the account will be provided to the police for 30 minutes every Tuesday and Friday beginning at 7 p.m. We are considering using such means of communication in the long run as one of the best tools for a con-

structive dialogue, while the topics will vary and will be relevant, and further, there are plans to use the Instagram platforms of other no less popular account holders," said Lieutenant Colonel Saltanat Azirbek, an official representative of the department of internal affairs.

Rozysk_kz was created solely to help people find their loved ones and relatives who have gone missing.

"Since the goals and objectives of the group meet with the police department's [goals], namely through search and prevention, I am very happy to provide an

information platform for the Almaty Department of Internal Affairs. I think this will increase trust among citizens with the representatives of law enforcement and, most importantly, it will be a unique platform for dialogue between representatives of law enforcement agencies and the public. Society can receive reliable information from the officials. We intend to conduct this joint work on a permanent basis. I sincerely believe that by joint efforts we can help people and provide legal advice on certain issues," said the moderator of the account.

Health insurance classes to be added to medical school curriculums

By Zhaniya Urankayeva

ASTANA – Kazakh medical schools and colleges will begin in the next academic year to teach courses on healthcare issues and policies, Kazakhstan Yelzhan Birtanov announced May 3.

Birtanov said preparations to introduce the courses have been in the works for some time.

"A working group has been working on the introduction of these issues to this day: basic training programmes, bachelor's and master's programmes in general medicine and public health. Since the autumn of last year, we also have developed special refresher

courses specifically to introduce the insurance policy programme. About 160,000 medical workers are to be trained and about 60 percent have been covered by now," the minister said.

The announcement came amid questions from Mazhilis (lower house of Parliament) member Gulnar Bizhanova and Mazhilis Speaker Nurlan Nigmatulin.

"The law on compulsory health insurance was signed in 2015. Why haven't the health insurance issues been included in the curricula of medical schools and colleges so far? When will this question be corrected?" Bizhanova asked the head of the health ministry during the hearing on the new bill that will further solidify

the system of compulsory health insurance.

Nigmatulin also told the minister he felt it was important for medical professionals to be trained in health insurance issues from the beginning of their education.

The announcement follows the recent approval of Kazakhstan's mandatory health insurance law which goes into effect January 2018. The lower house of parliament also approved May 3 amendments to the country's health insurance law in first reading, clarifying contributions to the social medical insurance fund, the list of persons for which contributions to the fund come from the state as well as the list of payers of contributions to the fund.

World-renowned musicians to perform at May 26-29 Keshteri festival

By Zhazira Dyussebekova

ASTANA – Astana will host the Astana Keshteri music festival for the sixth time May 26-29 at three venues, reported Tengrinews.kz.

According to the organisers, this is one of the most important cultural events in the country. Its main goal is to allow the widest audience to get to know the masterpieces of world art. Therefore, tickets for concerts are always distributed free of charge. Their distribution will start May 16 at the Organ Hall of Kazakh National University, 33 Pobedy Avenue. The contact number is 87786114798.

The festival will present the audience four evenings with the participation of recognised music masters from around the world,

including performers of classical, popular and variety music.

The evening of classical music will be May 26 at 7 p.m. at the Astana Opera, where one of the brightest cello players of the younger generation Alexander Ramm and the Honoured Artist of Russia Natalia Trull (piano) will perform. The Symphony Orchestra will also perform, conducted by the Honoured Worker of Kazakhstan Abzal Mukhitdinov.

On May 27, the Organ Hall of Kazakh National University of Arts will host an evening of chamber-vocal music at 7 p.m. The leading soloist of the capital's opera Maira Mukhamedkyzy, Honoured Art Worker of Kazakhstan Timur Urmanchev (piano) and other musicians will perform that day.

Martin Sander (Germany), professor of organ at the Hochschule für Musik (University of Music) Detmold and at the University of Music in Basel, who is also a jury member in international competitions will be performing at the same venue on May 28 at 7 p.m.

The jazz evening will take place in the Palace of Peace and Harmony on May 29 at 7 p.m. A legend of world jazz, five-time Grammy winner Randy Brecker and Kazakh jazz band conducted by Aleksandr Belyakov will perform. Deborah Davis from the United States will sing.

The festival is held on the initiative and under the patronage of Dariga Nazarbayeva, who heads the board of trustees of the Degdar Humanitarian Fund.



Online platform to facilitate job exchange functions

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – An electronic labour exchange, a free unified database providing labour market information, will be launched in September, said Vice Minister of Labour and Social Protection Birzhan Nurymbetov at an April 21 Central Communications Service briefing.

The exchange will be designed on the basis of Enbek.kz, a currently-functioning portal, he said. Human Resources Development Centre specialists have developed a new functionality for the platform and improved the existing portal. Information will be collected from employment centres, job seekers, enterprises, organisations and recruiting companies involved in finding personnel.

A personal account registration to minimise administrative barriers and automate reporting will be provided for certain interested parties. The exchange will integrate government agency databases to obtain complete information about applicants and employees.

"We started creating an electronic

labour exchange to simplify the job employment process as part of the goals defined in the presidential policy article 'Course towards the future: modernisation of Kazakhstan's identity.' The creation of this online platform implies a shift from traditional labour mediation to independent recruitment of vacancies and personnel. The Human Resources Development Centre will in fact serve as an HR-service and, at the same time, it will be free of charge. The electronic labour exchange should be the easiest and habitual way to find and provide work," he said.

The plan also includes modernising employment centres. New standards for providing services and transforming the centres from state institutions into state-owned public enterprises will be introduced. Equipping centres with new computers, installing software packages that provide access to all ministry and reference database information systems and introducing electronic queues will be implemented.

The E-Halyk information system, which ensures citizens' employment, determines accurate population numbers, monitors

internal and external migration, keeps records of citizens belonging to socially-vulnerable categories, unemployed and self-employed and updates all state information systems data to ensure universal declaration of citizens' incomes.

"We are implementing the E-Halyk system primarily to address employment issues. It will contain data on all persons who have a job, receive social benefits and are unemployed or self-employed. The system allows residents living in rural areas to register as unemployed in their place of residence and they will not have to go to the employment centre of the population. They will also be provided with all necessary information on what state support measures they can expect," said Nurymbetov.

More than 80,000 people have participated in the productive employment and mass entrepreneurship development programme, 31,000 of whom have found permanent jobs. Short-term courses have started as part of 91 special projects and more than 260 microloans have been issued to start business expansion.

TOURISM&EXPO 2017

WEDNESDAY, MAY 17, 2017

Garage Museum of Contemporary Art, Grand Palais Paris to display at EXPO 2017

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – The Garage Museum of Contemporary Art and Grand Palais Museum will present exhibitions and public programmes June 10 – Sept.10 at the Astana Contemporary Art Centre as part of EXPO 2017, according to the press service of the Astana EXPO 2017 national company.

“We aim to attract people to our art centre and then they will be interested to visit our museums. Visitors will have opportunity to attend the exhibitions from early morning until late at night. We believe that the art centre becomes a great attraction, which will be interesting to every visitor both old and young,” said Astana EXPO 2017 Content and Event Organi-



Photo credit: Ibrat

sation Department head Marat Omarov at an April 18 press briefing.

The Artists & Robots exhibition organised by the National Museums of France and the Grand Palais

in cooperation with Garage’s space will be also held.

Seventeen artists from 13 countries will bring their robots and create their unique art works in front of the audience. The department team

is currently negotiating the possibility of leaving the exhibits created by robots in the country. The robots will be delivered at the end of May.

“Artificial intelligence will perform as an artist. This exhibition is a big challenge because nobody did it before. This is the art of our time. Art is ahead of events,” said Omarov.

An exhibition and an open library with books on contemporary art, architecture and design will be presented in cooperation with the Garage Museum on the ground floor of the art centre. It also includes a family workshop zone and an auditorium hosting lectures and discussions devoted to the art market, contemporary curating, and publishing. More than 300 screenings of films devoted to contemporary art, including films cre-

ated by young Kazakh filmmakers and producers are scheduled. Films will be shown with the Kazakh, English or Russian subtitles.

All projects and events will be accessible for visitors with disabilities.

“Taking part in international and regional projects is part of Garage’s long-term development strategy and we could not miss an international event as important as the EXPO. This year’s theme is Future Energy and that’s the kind of energy we produce at Garage every day – we are delighted to be able to share it with our visitors in

Astana,” said Garage Director Anton Belov.

The Garage Museum organised a survey of leisure and cultural activities accessible for people with disabilities in Kazakhstan. The survey has allowed it to build connections with charities and specialised institutions in the country and initiate a dialogue on access to culture for the disabled in Almaty and Astana. This project will result in a series of seminars for the staff of cultural institutions designed to help them develop and promote programmes for visitors with disabilities, based on an analysis of attitudes towards disability in the former Soviet countries.

All projects and events will be accessible for visitors with disabilities. Sign language tours will be available for deaf and hard of hearing visitors. Visitors with developmental disabilities and learning difficulties will be offered extra learning materials and visual aids.

Installation and preparatory works are still underway at the art centre construction site.

Turkish Atlas Global launches Astana to Istanbul flights

By Malika Orazgaliyeva

ASTANA – Turkish air carrier Atlas Global (former Atlasjet) launched April 28 direct Astana to Istanbul flights. The flights will be carried out twice a week on Tuesday and Friday by Airbus 320 at 6:30 a.m. Flight duration is about five hours. The first two months the tickets prices will start at \$280.

Atlas Global joins two other airlines offering Astana to Istanbul flights. One is carried out by



Photo credit: abctv.kz

Turkish Airlines on Boeing 737 on Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Saturday, and Sunday at 3:25 a.m. And another is carried out by Air Astana on Airbus 320 on Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, Saturday at 6:50 p.m.

According to Vice President of Atlas Global for the Commonwealth of Independent States Orhan Sanjar, the company plans to increase Astana-Istanbul flights from two to four times a week.

“Kazakhstan and Turkey will conduct talks on increasing the

regularity of the flights up to four times a week. We hope that during EXPO 2017 we will be carrying out four flights weekly,” he told abctv.kz.

According to Sanjar, the Airbus 320 is designed to carry 164 passengers, with 156 seats in economy class and eight seats in business class.

“However, in case of more customers, we also have three other types of airplanes, including Airbus 319 (134 seats), Airbus 320 (164 seats), Airbus 321 (210 seats),” he informed.

In addition, the company has an opportunity to carry out freight traffic on its passenger ships.

“Each passenger plane is able to transport five tonnes of cargo. We already transported from Antalya to Astana many flowers on March 8,” Sanjar added.

In total, Atlas Global operates 19 scheduled flights a week between Turkey and Kazakhstan, with 10 direct Kazakhstan to Antalya flights and nine direct Kazakhstan to Istanbul flights, including departures from Almaty, Karaganda, Aktau, Shymkent.

Entertainment, cultural events to be presented around Astana during EXPO 2017

Staff Report

ASTANA – The Astana akimat (city administration) will present free and paid cultural and entertainment events throughout the city during EXPO 2017.

Events will include international festivals and exhibitions, concerts by local and international stars, classical and folk music performances, theatrical premieres, circus performances, festivities on the square near the Baiterek monument, on the City Square and at local parks. Jazz, electronic, pop, and rock music will be performed as well as an international street dance festival.

“Organisers are preparing events that could show and reveal the bright Kazakh culture to EXPO 2017 guests. Astana is set to host the Astanaga Tartu concert of traditional Kazakh

music, Mushaira national contest of poets, Shashu international folk dance festival, Serper festival of folk orchestra and Kymyz Muryndyk holiday of Kazakh traditional drink, Astana Arkau festival of Turkic music, Sahnad-an salem international theatre festival dedicated to Azerbaijan Mambetov and many other cultural events,” according to the akimat’s press service.

In addition to the capital’s artists, teams of ethnocultural associations and ensembles from different regions of Kazakhstan will perform.

The Astana akimat will also present for the first time the Astana Dauysy international music festival and Chinese Kung Fu show and Russian showman Alexander Maslyakov will host the July 1 Summer Cup comedy competition featuring previous champions.

National singers Alibek Dnishev, Seken Turysbek, Altynbek Korazbayev and the MuzArt Kazakh band as well as comedian Tursynbek Kabatov will also perform.

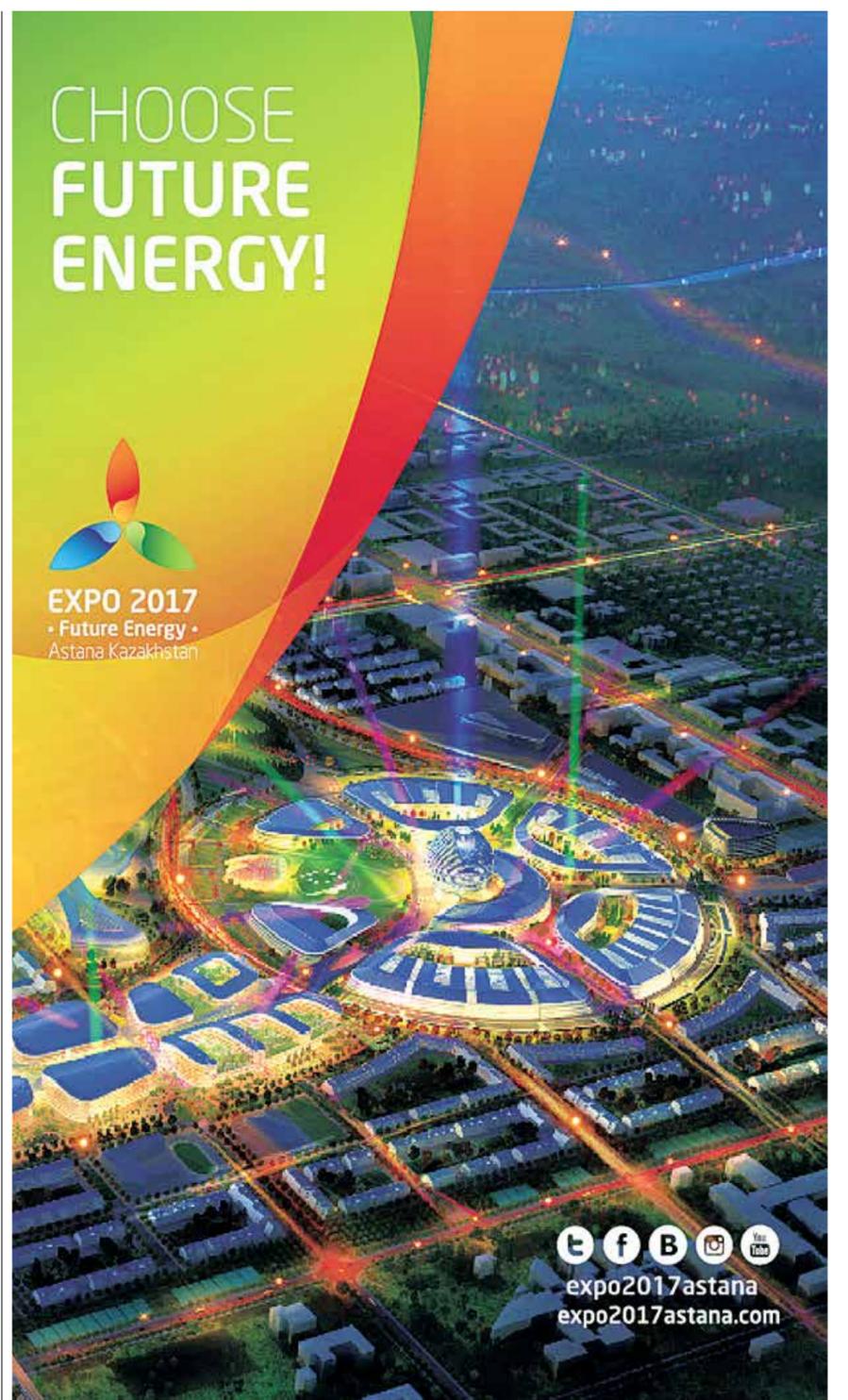
Some of the programmes will be in open areas. For example, Nurly Zhol (formerly Water-Green) Boulevard will feature the Astana Art Festival, which has become a platform for self-expression and creative ideas. Family events will be held at city parks each weekend and the banks of the Yessil River host laser shows and Yessil Keshteri concerts.

Dumandy Saryarka cultural events will also be held in nine suburban areas around Astana.

Tickets can be purchased at www.koncertyastany.kz and at ticket offices throughout the city. Details for the events will be posted at www.astana.gov.kz and www.astanaday.kz.



Photo credit: world-countries.net

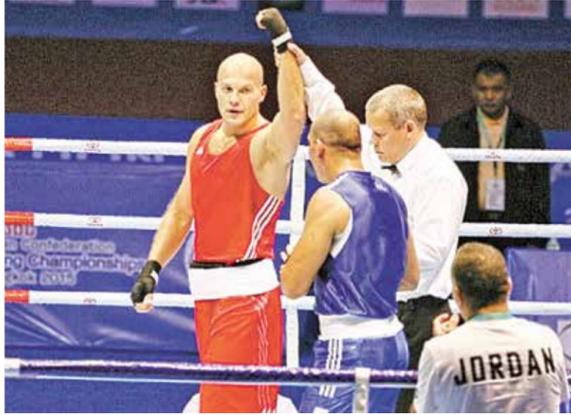


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SPORTS

WEDNESDAY, MAY 17, 2017

Kazakh boxing team member wins gold at Asian Championships



By Anuar Abdrakhmanov

ASTANA – Kazakh national boxing team member Vasily Levit recently won individual gold at the Asian Boxing Championships in Tashkent, becoming Kazakhstan's first three-time winner of the event. "It was not easy. This is the Asian Championship, a high-level competition, and it took a lot of effort to win. Thank God it worked out well. Now my goal is to win

the World Championship, which will be held in Germany. I would especially like to thank all the Kazakh fans for their support, for their messages I have been receiving so far. It's much easier to compete at competitions and win with such support," said Levit, a silver medalist at the Rio Olympics. All of Kazakhstan's national team boxers individually made the quarterfinals and four reached the final round and placed second.

Ablaikhan Zhussupov lost to Shakhram Giyasov (Uzbekistan), Kamshybek Konkabayev (91+) lost to Bakhodir Jalolov (Uzbekistan) and Erik Alzhanov lost to Bektemir Melikuziyev, also of Uzbekistan.

LEVIT: "This is the Asian Championship, a high-level competition, and it took a lot of effort to win. Now my goal is to win the World Championship, which will be held in Germany."

In all, Kazakh team members won one gold by Levit, three silver medals by Zhussupov, Alzhanov and Konkabayev, and four bronze medals by Bekdaulet Ibragimov, Abilkan Amankul, Kairat Yeralityev and Azamat Isakulov.

Except for Yerzhan Zhomart in the 49-kg weight category, all Kazakh boxers won bids to the World Championship. Kazakhstan will be represented at the world championships in the fall in Hamburg, Germany in nine weight categories.

As a team at the Asian Championships, Kazakhstan fought a team from Uzbekistan, which ultimately won the team competition. Uzbekistan won nine gold medals, setting a new record.

"We must admit Uzbekistan has a strong team. They succeeded at the Olympics and kept their lineup. They have a good young generation of boxers that make up a good team. We had a strong team at the London and Rio Olympics, which we trained for a long time to bring to a higher level, and now the situation is similar for Uzbekistan. But Kazakhstan also has its reserves, a new team. In a year or two, we will see who is the strongest. We will watch, analyse and work to prepare a strong team that will be ready to fight for the highest places in the international arena," said Kazakhstan head coach Myrzagalai Aitzhanov.

Astana Arlans Beat Russia's Patriot Boxing Team in First WSB Quarterfinal Match



By Anuar Abdrakhmanov

ASTANA – The Astana Arlans boxing team defeated Russia's Patriot Boxing Team in the first match of the World Series of Boxing (WSB) quarterfinals. The match took place in Kemerovo, Russia, and ended with a 3-2 score for team Kazakhstan.

The match started poorly for the Arlans ("Wolves" in Kazakh). In the lightest weight category, 2013 Asian champion Temirtas Zhussupov lost to Russia's Bator Sagaluyev, 0-3. However, Ilyas Suleimenov at 56 kg drew the Arlans level with a victory over Maxim Chernyshev. The fight in the 64 kg category was particularly interesting and tense, as Dilmurat Mizhitov defeated Alexei Mazur, giving the visitors a lead. Saparbay Aidarov at 75 kg had a hard time beating Andrei Kovalchuk, but he brought Kazakhstan the win in the match. Fans still anticipated with interest the heavyweight bout, in which one of the Kazakh club's leaders, Anton Pinchuk, took on Russia's Ilya Kvasnikov. The confrontation ended in a shocking upset, as Kvasnikov beat Pinchuk with a technical knockout in the second round, avenging his February defeat at the hands of the same Kazakh boxer. Despite the final defeat, the match ended in a 3-2 victory for the visitors.

"The opponents were well prepared for the match, and every fight was tough. All our boxers fought to the end and put every effort into winning their bouts. What happened to Anton Pinchuk is unfortunate, but it happens in boxing, when one sharp blow decides everything. We will explore our mistakes and try to correct them. The main thing is that we won the away match, which is never easy. Now we just need to finish what we started. I think that at home, with the support of our fans, we are capable of winning the sec-

ond match too," said Astana Arlans' head coach Nurlan Akurpekov.

The return match of these teams in the current quarterfinals will be held in Karaganda May 20.

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."

AIBA wholly owns WSB. All WSB boxers are 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 10 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. With two titles apiece, Arlans and Cuba's Domadores lead the league in titles won.

Kairat futsal club wins bronze at UEFA Cup for the third time

By Anuar Abdrakhmanov

ASTANA – The Kairat futsal club placed third in the 2016-2017 UEFA Cup's Final Four, the third time the Almaty club has won bronze medals in the tournament.

The club previously claimed European futsal's most prestigious trophy twice, in away finals in 2013 and 2015. The decisive UEFA Cup matches were held in Almaty this year and many assumed that with the local fans' support, Kairat would win the tournament. That, however, was not the case.

In the semifinal, Kairat competed against Inter Movistar of Spain. The Spanish club's player Portuguese Ricardinho is considered the world's main futsal star and currently the most-technically skilled player. Indeed, he became one of the match's heroes.

The match had quite a lot of highlights and the teams showed the fans an exciting game. Kairat went ahead twice thanks to Cabreuva and Igor, but the visiting team levelled both times due to Ricardinho. Ninety seconds before the end of the second half, Inter's captain Ortiz passed the ball,

which hit Higuaita's head and went into the net. Kairat's final attack failed to help the team. The Spanish club took a 3-2 win and went through to the final, where it competed against Sporting Lisbon.

"The guys got a bit exhausted at the end. Inter looked less tired. At the end of the second half, our guys started to lose focus. This was the reason why they missed the goal at the end of the match and eventually lost. It's frustrating. Of course, Ricardinho's personal skills came into play. He levelled the score, which affected the course of the game. However, at the score of 1-0 for our team, we had some scoring chances. We had to take them. If the score was 2-0, it would have been easier for us," said Kairat team captain Dimukhambet Suleimenov.

As a result, Kairat was relegated to playing for third place against Russia's Gazprom-Yugra, which lost to Sporting in the other semifinal.

This match saw 10 goals scored. The Russian team scored the first three in a row, then Kairat twice missed a one-goal advantage. The winner was decided in the penalty shootout. Kairat's goalkeeper saved

the shot by Dmitry Lyskov and at the decisive moment, Douglas scored a goal, bringing the Almaty club a win and the bronze medal.

"I would like to thank our fans. Their support was so amazing that I wanted to become a player once again to feel it. Since we lost to Inter in the semis, it was very difficult this time. We looked better in the match against the Spanish club. In the match against Yugra, we started to play after the starting ten minutes. We were still worried after the Friday's defeat

and we were disappointed. I want to congratulate my players, who played like warriors and deserved the win," said Kairat head coach Cacau.

In the decisive match, Inter easily defeated the Portuguese Sporting, scoring seven goals and missing nil. Ricardinho, who scored a brace, was recognised as the final tournament's best player. The win was the fourth in the history of Inter's participation in the UEFA Cup, the best result for all European teams.



Photo credit: afkairat.kz

Kazakh law enforcement officials win world hand-to-hand combat championship division, team places second

By Kamila Zhumbabayeva

ASTANA – The Kazakh hand-to-hand combat team, consisting of law enforcement officials, placed second in the April 21-24 World Hand-to-Hand Combat Championship in Moscow.

Kazakhstan's national team included five police officers and members of the State Security Service and National Security Committee.

In addition to the second place team finish, five law enforcement officers out of 10 winners placed among the top three runners-up, the press service of Ministry of Internal Affairs reported.

Inspecting Officer of Special Training Management of Almaty's Internal Affairs Department Sagyn Kazbek placed first in the 55 kilogrammes category. Detective of police administration of the Akmola region's Internal Affairs Department Rakhmetulla Satyvaldiyev won in the 65 kilogrammes category. Representatives of Kazakhstan's



State Security Service from Astana Olzhas Abzaliev (up to 90 kilogrammes) and Daniyar Ustembayev (90 kilogrammes and above) who represents the State Security Service in Almaty won in their categories.

Inspecting Officer of the Special Rapid Response Team of Almaty's Internal Affairs Department Ulan Mukashev (in 60 kilogrammes category) and another employee of a governmental organisation in

Almaty Kymbat Akhmet (in 50 kilogrammes category) won silver medals, the press service stated.

Ilyas Mukhamadiyev who is an employee of Kazakhstan's National Security Committee from Astana

won silver in the 85 kilogrammes category. Another employee of the National Security Committee Nazarbek Zabiye placed 3rd in the 70 kilogrammes category.

Representative of the Hand-To-

Hand Fighting Sport Federation of the Akmola region Alina Ashimova (45 kilogrammes category) and inspecting officer of the Special Rapid Response Team of the Akmola region's Internal Affairs Department Roza Iskarenova (55 kilogrammes category) won bronze medals.

Representatives of the Aktobe region's Hand-To-Hand Fighting Federation Gulbanu Shokparova (in the up to 60 kilogrammes category), Anzhelika Mukhamedyanova from Astana (up to 65 kilogrammes) and Meruert Tkebayeva (up to 70 kilogrammes category) won bronze medals, Tengrinews.kz wrote.

"A colleague of the Correctional System Committee department in Almaty Kymbat Akhmet won a silver medal, having crashed the resistance of strong combatants from the U.S., Uzbekistan and Russia," the press service of the Correctional System Committee of Kazakhstan's Internal Affairs Ministry noted.

Photo credit: Press service of Kazakhstan's Ministry of Internal Affairs

CAPITAL

WEDNESDAY, MAY 17, 2017

Astana launches tri-lingual electronic library at bus stop

By Dmitry Lee

ASTANA – The first electronic library in the capital has been installed at the Khan Shatyr bus stop, said Akim (Mayor) Asset Issekeshev in a May 1 Facebook post. Books can be downloaded via the QR code in three languages: Kazakh, Russian and English.

“We wish Astana residents would read more. Happy holidays!” he said congratulating his subscribers on Kazakhstan’s Unity Day.

The project is being implemented jointly with the e-learning data base company Bilim Media Group (BMG), based in Almaty. BMG, which develops and disseminates educational content as well as materials related to technology and

services, provides materials for state organisations, IT companies, media structures and leading educational institutions.

Through BMG’s application kitap.kz, available at both the App Store and Google’s Play Market, one can simply use any QR reader to scan the code from a photo and download any book available at the bus stop stand.

Capital resident Akylbek Ashirov, 33, approves of the new concept.

“Reading culture was strongly promoted in schools in the Soviet times – it was considered whoever reads a lot is smart and vice-versa. These days, unfortunately, people are used to seeing and not reading, like watching films and cartoons is more interesting. So, something like this should be promoted again.

I am for such initiatives of our city administration,” he said.

Ashirov also appreciates the convenience of the app and the ability to download information “on the spot.”

“The new generation needs to broaden their views on life and know the Kazakh heroes, poets, writers and philosophers like Abai Kunanbayev, Saken Seifullin, Beimbet Mailin and others and not just think that these are street names,” he said.

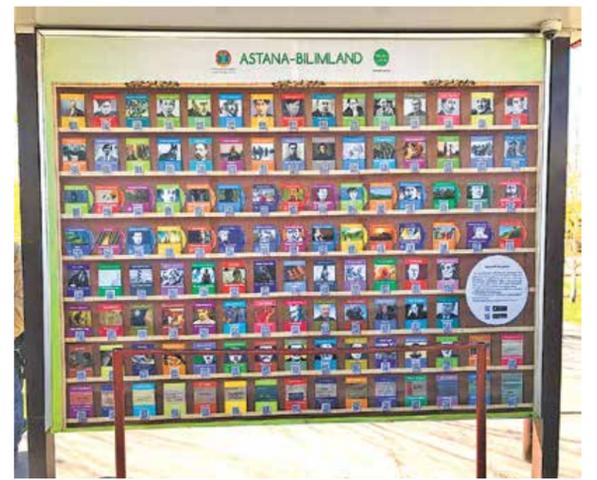
“I also think this is good for our guests from abroad, as there are books in English and it shows our culture, we are educated and we like to read. Maybe next time the akimat could add more books about Kazakhstan that would also describe our country, the vast steppes and

beautiful nature in the south. This is something for them to think over,” he added.

Student Aida Mukhambetova, however, believes such initiatives are obsolete.

“I have all my books downloaded onto my phone already; they’re available online. I see no point of scanning the picture through a QR code just to get online from the source while standing at a bus stop; it just doesn’t make sense to me. I would, however, read the information about the book and then find it online if interested, so these books should be short stories for people to just be entertained while on the bus and not some novels,” she said.

The first electronic library was introduced in Ust-Kamenogorsk in 2015.



Pianos for public use installed around city



Staff Report

ASTANA – A creative project under the name Street Piano was launched here for the first time by the Astana socio-entrepreneurial corporation, according to the press service of city’s akimat (administration).

The creators of the project say that from now on the public can perform their favourite musical compositions under the open sky.

“The main goal of the project is to create a positive impression of the cultural life for tourists and draw the attention of foreign brand

ambassadors,” said Deputy Chairperson of the Board of Astana Corporation Bauyrzhan Kankin, who also inspired the project.

Currently, the creators of Street Piano have installed two instruments in the capital, one in the underground passage near the Khan Shatyr Entertainment Centre. The second one is near the Keruen Shopping Mall.

“It was a personal desire to do something useful for the city, so that it would be interesting for tourists, so they can tell about it when they return home, that there is a street piano in Astana made

for people. And this project was implemented in order to raise the consciousness of people, to make them closer to culture and music, and also to improve the mood of the capital with beautiful melodies that pianists will play. That also might be a testing ground for those who do not have a piano at their homes but want to play and open up their talents,” said Kankin.

According to the creator, the project is non-profit. Kankin has been thinking about this idea for a long time. He is a graduate of the music school and decided to make a contribution to the development of Astana. In his opinion, such a musical attribute for the capital will make the residents kinder and warmer, and the city will become more beautiful.

In order to avoid any unlawful actions or acts of vandalism, the territory of the musical instrument is monitored with CCTV cameras around the clock.

“Such musical instruments can be found on the streets of many developed countries, where they became an integral part of cultural life and won the hearts of millions of music lovers,” states the press release of city administration.

Couple creates business to foster child development

By Dana Omirgazy

ASTANA – Married Astana couple Amir and Zulfiya Zhan-tassov have created the “Smart Monkey” kit to foster child development for children up to 10 years old.

“My wife Zulfiya and I came up with this idea in the U.S. during our studies at university. Upon arrival in Kazakhstan, we decided to implement it. Our kits help parents to develop children at home. Now, in the age of information technology, children sit all day in front of the screens of TVs, computers, phones or tablets. According to statistics, a child spends about six hours a day in front of the screens. Usually parents do not have time to study at home with a child, and in such cases, our kits are a great help,” Zhan-tassov told The Astana Times.

“Smart Monkey” offers different themes every month. For example, in April, children explored space. In May they can study animals, and in June, they will go on a trip to world countries. Parents can subscribe to the service and receive a kit with a new theme at home, as it used to be with the Murzilka, a popular Soviet illustrated magazine, Zhan-tassov noted.

“We started our project in our apartment in March 2016. We worked as developers, designers, sellers and couriers simultaneously. Every evening we came home from work and created our kits until late at night, and during the next day, I delivered them to customers. A few months later, we were able to find first small investments, open an office in Astana and hire employees,” he said.

The project was recognised as the best start-up project at the ABC Quick Start Acceleration Programme at Nazarbayev University, where Zhan-tassovs won a \$10,000 grant. In addition, they

won some other business competitions. Now they are planning to open a second office in Almaty.

“Our kits are available in four variations for children from six months to 10 years. Each kit offers parents and children interesting books and encyclopaedias, educational toys and games, creative tasks, musical instruments, craft sets, scientific experiments and much more. The entire contents of the kits are aimed at the development of children. We do not offer boring dolls or toy cars. Everything is carefully selected from thousands of different toys and tasks. We pay great attention to safety. Therefore, we work only with those suppliers who have the appropriate certificates. In the meantime, we produce about 30 percent of the content ourselves,” he explained.

“Initially, our kits were only in the Russian language. Since February, we were first to start

producing development kits in the Kazakh language, which have no analogues in Kazakhstan. We replace books in the Kazakh, translating all instructions and assignments. Almost in all our kits, we feature materials to study the English language. We strive to ensure that each set includes three languages: Kazakh, Russian and English, regardless of the kit language,” he continued.

According to Zhan-tassov, his company often sponsors various children’s events. Recently, they were the official sponsor of the Kazakhstan Junior Chess Championship. In addition, they organised a charity campaign donating one percent of the earnings for the treatment of a child.

“There are plans to provide employment for people with limited abilities. I hope in the future, when we have thousands of orders a month, we will be able to implement this idea,” he said.



Astana to begin light rail system construction in May



Staff Report

ASTANA – The city administration will start construction on a \$1.8 billion light rail transport system (LRT) in Astana at the end of May.

“A consortium of Chinese companies will build the LRT in accordance with the signed agreement. No changes (have been made) and preparatory work is currently under way. We are committed to fulfilling contractual obligations indicated in the contract,” said Astana Deputy Mayor Sergei Khoroshun.

The situation with the construction of light rail transport was also explained at Astana LRT company. A representative of the company

confirmed that Kazakhstan is ready for the project. The ground metro can appear in the capital in two years. This term is specified in the contract. Today, the project is estimated at \$1.8 billion. However, the final amount will be announced based on the results of the development of design estimates.

Light rail transport construction in Astana was planned to launch 6 years ago. But the terms often changed. According to the plan of local authorities, the ground metro will connect the main objects of the capital. The total length of the Astana LRT will be more than 20 kilometres. Kazakhstan borrowed money from China for the construction of the LRT. All contractors are from China as well. The

funds were taken by Kazakhstan for 20 years at 2.5 percent per annum.

It is planned that the Astana LRT will connect the international airport, the expo area, Nazarbayev University, Abu Dhabi Plaza and the House of Ministries and will terminate at the new railway station. It will have 18 closed stations and a capacity of 150,000 people a day.

The transport system of Kazakh capital is being updated. The update includes the development of public transport and information technology systems to enhance traffic management. Priority in transport will be given to pedestrians, public transport users and cyclists and only then to drivers to correspond to international trends.

Taxi companies form single association, large unified service

Staff Report

ASTANA – Astana’s taxi companies have formed into a single association called Astana Taxi and will now have a uniform taxi design, tariffs and point-of-sale for card payments.

Hundred of car keys were handed over to taxi companies, such as Taxi Zhebe under the Zhebe brand and Autotrans Hozu (Eco taxi), according to the press service of the capital’s city administration.

“The lowest fare from Eco or Zhebe taxi operators was 750 tenge (US\$2.37) before, it will be 500 tenge (US\$1.58) now,” Deputy Akim (Mayor) of Astana Malika

Bekturova said. The project addresses safety and convenience for residents and visitors of the capital by increasing the amount of a legal carrier vehicle, according to the press service.

Getting 200 more cars ready and launch is currently underway as part of the project. More taxi vehicles are to be obtained prior to the opening of EXPO 2017, including 300 new cars and 300 units from working taxi companies. All participants of this programme have a signed agreement with Astana’s city administration, where terms for drivers’ training, abidance by all statutory regulations for a car’s appearance, technical condition and single fares rates are shown.

Cars are assembled in Kazakhstan, in accordance with an official instruction of the head of state for supporting the domestic automotive industry and creating a single taxi service in Astana, Almaty and other regions.

The press service of the akimat noted that the project’s second stage and additional services will be implemented in Astana by September. Additional 300 taxi cars will begin their work and free Wi-Fi will be provided for passengers inside cabs.

The new taxi service will also offer a single call centre, a convenient mobile app, Astana Taxi, and taximeter inside every taxi vehicle.