



President proposes international currency, climate solutions at AEF



By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev said during a June 16 plenary session of the 10th Astana Economic Forum that the forum is being held at a historically crucial moment for the Eurasian space.

“A new global player with a market capacity of 3 billion people was created with India and Pakistan’s joining the Shanghai Coop-

eration Organisation (SCO). The SCO countries’ participation in the development of the New Silk Road programme creates a new economic sub-region. United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres noted that ‘the organisation is an important foundation of today’s world order’ and inclusive development is the most powerful tool for preserving peace. Inclusive and sustainable development is in the focus of today’s forum,” Nazarbayev said in his remarks.

The head of state said the unprecedented speed of changing the modern world and the advent of an era of new discoveries and scientific and technical solutions radically transform the nature of economic growth and life. But global economic policy does not fully meet modern challenges, including a critical level of environmental pollution and growing imbalances in global energy consumption.

“A gradual transition to a new

economic model is needed. It should be based on clean energy, joint efforts and collective responsibility, taking into account the interests of the whole world,” he said.

The President suggested revising the methodology to calculate per capita gross domestic product as it is one of the important aspects of the development of the world economy.

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Solutions to war in Syria discussed at EAMF

By Zhazira Dyussebekova

ASTANA – Representatives of different sides in the Syrian crisis were joined by Kazakh Foreign Minister Kairat Abdrakhmanov to discuss the ongoing conflict in Syria and the role of the Astana Process during a panel session at the annual Eurasian Media Forum in Kazakhstan’s capital June 24.

The war in Syria is “a terrible disaster for its people, region and on a global scale,” Abdrakhmanov said in opening the panel, adding that Kazakhstan and its President, Nursultan Nazarbayev, are doing everything they can to help find a peaceful solution.

“The whole process started when two esteemed presidents – Russia’s [Vladimir] Putin and Turkey’s [Recep Tayyip] Erdogan approached President Nazarbayev with the request to consider the possibility of the capital of Kazakhstan, Astana, hosting a meeting between the Syrian government and armed opposition groups, those who joined the renowned ceasefire agreement of 2016,” said Abdrakhmanov, recalling the history of the Astana Process.

Nazarbayev immediately agreed to provide a platform for the meeting under the auspices of three guarantor states.

“We consider the Astana Process to be complementary to the Geneva one. We support the leading role of the United Nations and the special representative of this organisation and its Secretary General to lead the Geneva Process to find a political solution,” he added.

Now is the time to take some real action on ground, said the minister. “The creation of four de-escalation zones in Syria proved to be so far the only viable [action] leading to the peaceful settlement of the situation in Syria. And I hope very much that all observers including the United States will pay attention to that achievement within the Astana Process. Of course, much depends on the guarantor states,” he said.

Later that day, in a briefing with the media, Abdrakhmanov announced that Kazakhstan and a group of like-minded countries are pursuing a Code of Conduct during Antiterrorist Operations to be adopted at the UN.

Two years ago, in remarks at the UN General Assembly in September 2015, Nazarbayev offered to create a global antiterrorist coalition under the auspices of the United Nations to combat transnational terrorism and extremism. This initiative included the creation of uniform definitions for a number of terms.

“In the case of Syria, you see that, unfortunately, all the terrorist forces have concentrated here, which is really hindering the search for a political settlement to this crisis. In the Code, in addition to trying to determine a common denominator, let’s say, by uniting the efforts of all parties that are really interested in combating international terrorism and extremism, we will also try to make a step towards ensuring that during the antiterrorist operations, all countries rely on one common position. As soon as the UN experts and Security Council members approve the text of this document, it will be presented to the world community,” he stated.

The foreign minister also denied recent press reports about Kazakhstan negotiating to send its troops to Syria. “We are not conducting any official negotiations regarding sending our armed services to Syria,” he said.

Former President of Turkey Abdullah Gül, who also participated in the panel, emphasised that “it is a shame for all of us, for human-

ity, to see the thousands of killings, millions of refugees and destruction of all the beautiful cities.”

According to him, if conflicts like this are not prevented, it is “inevitable” that power vacuums will be left in the region, “which create radical movements and terrorist groups.”

He added that Kurds and Turks are friends and relatives, brothers and sisters, not enemies to each other, and that it is Turkey’s responsibility, as a neighbour, to contribute to the solution of the conflict. “Neighbours are responsible for creating a secure place for all Syrians, Arabs and Kurds. They should be happy, safe and equal citizens of Syria,” he said.

Director of the Institute for Middle East Strategic Studies Kayhan Barzegar from Iran commented that the way Russia and Iran “are trying to accelerate the political solution is showing how much they would like to manage this crisis.”

Ultimately, the fight in Syria is against terrorism, he said. “Syria might not be connected to Iran by border, but it is to Iraq. It goes to the national security context.”

Iran would accept a collective compromise, Barzegar said. “That is why I think negotiations in Astana are a positive step, because it is focusing on the subject. It is not in the context of traditional geopolitical rivalry between states,” he noted, adding that the main focus should be on the integrity of Syria. Political representative of Free Syrian Army Salim Hudaifiah said the crisis has been complicated by many factors.

“One of them is a conflict of interest between regime friends and opposition friends, especially large, powerful countries, such as the United States, Russia. They all try to achieve their interests around the world, not only in the Middle East. At the same time, there is a conflict of interest between friends of parties, between Iran and Rus-



Senator Dariga Nazarbayeva, head of the EAMF organising committee.

sia, the U.S., Turkey, Saudi Arabia,” he stated.

Talking about the main enemies of the Free Syrian Army at the moment, Hudaifiah stressed that both ISIS and the Syrian government forces are their enemies, adding that their army has taken over 5,000 square kilometres.

Journalist from Syria Alaa Ebrahim echoed that the main priority should be combating terror. “The problem, when it comes to the Syrian conflict, is that everyone, including regional, international powers, organisations, say they want a political solution, but at the same time they continue to support and work for a military one,” he said.

According to the journalist, “many organisations and governments want to change the regime in Syria. They send money and weapons and they allow fighters in the country.”

“And now we end up with a situation in which Syria has become a haven for terrorists,” he stated.

Foreign Investors Council discusses future energy in Astana

By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – The 30th plenary session of the Foreign Investors Council under the President of Kazakhstan took place June 22 in Astana, bringing nearly 300 participants to the capital, including top executives of world’s leading companies in various fields.

Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev chaired the session devoted this year to Future Energy, which coincides with the main theme of the much-anticipated EXPO 2017 that opened its doors in early June.

“This year marks the 19th anniversary of the council. Our meetings have turned into a good tradition over these years. We have done a great job. You provided an enormous help to Kazakhstan in building our economy and carrying out reforms, which we are now implementing,” Nazarbayev said during his opening speech.

He also welcomed new members of the council. “It is natural that

the council is changing steadily. Before proceeding to the agenda, I would like to introduce new members of the council. They are the Asian Development Bank’s Vice-President for Private Sector and Co-financing Operations Diwakar Gupta and Marubeni’s Regional CEO for Europe, Africa and CIS Naoya Iwashita. They replaced their colleagues who retired. There are also new members from the Kazakh side,” Nazarbayev noted.

With Future Energy being on top of the meeting’s agenda, participants discussed the implementation of previous meeting’s recommendations and challenges that world economies are facing today on their path to clean energy.

President of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) Sir Suma Chakrabarti stressed Kazakhstan’s active role in contributing to international efforts in the field of future energy. “Kazakhstan and EBRD are writing a new chapter of this story almost every day,” he added.

Being the largest investor in re-

new energy across 37 countries with the volume of investments in this area equalling \$1.9 billion in Kazakhstan, the EBRD and Kazakhstan recently agreed on basic terms of the agreement on a wind power plant in South Kazakhstan region and doubled the size of Burnoe solar power plant in Zhambyl region.

Special attention was paid to the digitalisation of economy and industrial processes, which could help world economies decrease operation costs and increase productivity. “For the first time in history, digital technologies can provide us with a unified picture of the entire energy chain from energy generation to its supply and consumption,” said General Electric Oil & Gas President Lorenzo Simonelli.

He outlined GE’s cooperation with Kazakh companies, such as Air Astana, Tengizchevroil and Kazakhstan Temir Zholy, in digitalisation of their operations.

“Rich resources, human capital and modern industries help us see

Kazakhstan’s enormous potential in the use of these innovations. That is why GE actively supports Kazakhstan’s vision of Industrial Internet driving future growth of Kazakhstan, which was put forward by President Nazarbayev,” said Simonelli.

German Gref, CEO of Russia’s largest commercial lender, Sberbank, also asserted the importance of keeping up with emerging trends in global economy, among which is digitalisation.

“Those who fail to stick to the digitalisation trend today will be late tomorrow and it will cost much for large structures and states. Kazakhstan needs to pay attention to several specific trends. First, digitalisation of public services. Kazakhstan is able to achieve that in short time creating a competitive state by cutting number of officials, bureaucracy and time needed to provide a service. Introducing artificial intelligence in all state sectors will help fulfilling this objective,” he said.

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Economy grows 4.1% in five months, minister says

By Aigerim Seisembayeva

ASTANA – Kazakh GDP grew 4.1 percent in January-May compared to the same period in 2016, said Minister of National Economy Timur Suleimenov during a June 13 government meeting.

Over the same period, inflation was 3.3 percent. Inflation in annual

terms dropped to 7.5 percent compared to 16.7 percent in May 2016. Monthly inflation in May this year was 0.5 percent.

According to Suleimenov, the volume of investments in fixed assets increased 5.2 percent, with 5.5 percent growth in January-April and 3.1 percent growth in January-March. The growth is explained by the implementation

of industrial, innovative and infrastructure projects within the Nurlu Zhol (Bright Path) state programme and the State Programme of Accelerated Industrial and Innovative Development (SPAIID).

In January-April 2017, significant growth in investments was observed in agriculture up 26.3 percent up to 47.2 billion tenge (US\$150 million)

and real estate transactions up 13.5 percent up to 251.8 billion tenge (US\$796 million).

Average nominal income of the population in January-April 2017 was 308,400 tenge (\$975) and increased 8.2 percent in nominal terms compared to the corresponding period in 2016, a real increase of 0.5 percent.

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NATION

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 28, 2017

Kazakhstan conducts first stage of nuclear fusion reactor physical launch

By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – National Nuclear Centre of Kazakhstan completed June 9 the first stage of physical launch of Kazakh Tokamak for Material Testing (KTM), a nuclear fusion reactor developed jointly with Russia and at the instruction of Kazakhstan President Nursultan Nazarbayev.

“One of the main issues important for building future thermonuclear reactors has been the creation and testing of structural materials. This problem will be solved with the launch of Kazakh Tokamak for Material Testing,” said General Secretary of the National Nuclear Centre of Kazakhstan Erlan Batyrbekov.

The event took place in Kurchatov in eastern Kazakhstan, the same place where in the



1950s a group of Soviet scientists produced the first tokamaks.

“The Kazakh-made Tokamak will serve as a platform for mate-

rial testing at heat equal to 20 megawatts per a square metre, which meets the parameters of energy load for future thermonuclear reactors,” Batyrbekov added.

Unlike nuclear fission reactors widespread across the world, nuclear fusion reactors produce energy by fusing atoms. However, it has long been a difficult task for scientists to achieve the generation of energy through nuclear fusion, the same mechanism going on in the Sun, yet hard to achieve at earth conditions.

In accordance with the adopted programme of physical launch of the KTM, the goal of the physical launch phase is to debug and check the working capacity of KTM systems. This stage entails adjustment of the initial phase of the plasma discharge scenario – formation of necessary conditions inside a vacuum camera of KTM with following break-down.

The work involved experts from the National Nuclear Centre of Kazakhstan, thermonuclear research unit of the National Research Cen-

tre’s Kurchatov Institute and State Research Centre of the Russian Federation Troitsk Institute for Innovation and Fusion Research. Following the launch, the National Nuclear Centre of Kazakhstan and Kurchatov Institute signed a protocol stating that the main goals of the first stage of physical launch of KTM were achieved.

In the meantime, the work is underway, and KTM is scheduled to be commissioned by the end of 2017.

According to Batyrbekov, the research potential of KTM will address numerous engineering and scientific issues. Indeed, in the next two years, the facility will turn into a platform for joint research under the programme of cooperation of Commonwealth of Independent States countries in the peaceful use of atomic energy until 2020 called Cooperation Atom-CIS.

NATIONAL NEWS IN BRIEF

The Kazakh government adopted a resolution June 20 to rename Astana International Airport as Nursultan Nazarbayev International Airport. “A decision to name Astana Airport in honour of Nursultan Nazarbayev was made on the eve of the 20th anniversary of the capital. The head of state’s decision to move the capital to Astana was of strategic importance. International forums that have a direct impact on global politics are held in the city. Unique buildings in Astana that have no analogues were constructed at the President’s instructions. Infrastructure facilities are in special focus. The airport has a new image that is fully consistent with the status of the capital after its reconstruction,” said Senate Chair Kassym-Jomart Tokayev in a statement released by the Senate press service.

Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev signed the law “On amendments and additions to some legislative acts on social wellbeing issues” aimed at improving the social security system. Pension payments and childbirth allowances will be increased beginning July 1. The minimum pension is expected to be 40,950 tenge (US\$127) and childbirth allowances will increase 20 percent. The maximum amount of income accepted for assigning pensions by age will be raised from 41 to 46 monthly calculated indices (MCI). Compulsory contributions to employee pensions will be introduced in 2020. The MCI is currently 2,269 tenge (US\$7).

Almaty city authorities announced plans for free entry into Ile-Alatau National Park and improve its infrastructure in the near future, according to Vlast.kz. The individual entry fee is currently 226 tenge (US\$0.70) and 200 tenge (US\$0.60) for cleaning and protection. “The budget allocations will be provided for free entry,” said Almaty Tourism and External Relations Department deputy head Sagynbek Bekmagambetov. Fifteen million tenge (US\$46,485) will be allocated for redevelopment, including an information board, signpost installation and renovating bridges and benches. Updating mountain trails will be completed by August.

Civil Service Affairs and Anti-Corruption Agency seek to fight quasi-public sector procurement corruption

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – The imperfection of the legislative base contributes to the growth of corruption in quasi-public sector procurement, said Civil Service Affairs and Anti-Corruption Agency Deputy Chairperson Alik Shpekbayev at a June 12 roundtable on legislative regulation of quasi-public sector procurement.

The number of corruption offenses in public procurement in quasi-public sector companies has increased 1.5 times this year in comparison to the previous year. One hundred and thirty seven offenses were registered in 2016 and



Alik Shpekbayev

51 offences have been recorded since the beginning of this year, reported Kapital.kz.

The main problem is that only individuals performing administrative functions are subject to corruption offenses, according to the criminal code and the law on combating corruption.

A number of measures to eliminate corruption in quasi-public sector procurement were announced at the meeting.

“There is a proposal to revise the approach to procurement in the quasi-public sector, to develop a separate law and to introduce modern electronic procurement mechanisms to exclude corruption risks in this area. There is a need to take into consideration the introduction of a centralised procurement system in the quasi-public sector ensuring transparency in decision-making according to world experience. This experience is widespread in Denmark, South Korea, the U.S. and the U.K.,” said Shpekbayev.

A need also exists to introduce appropriate changes in criminal and administrative legislation in terms of expanding the range of subjects of corruption offenses. The norms of the legislative acts should be disseminated adequately in terms of discussion, approval, registration, introduction and publication of internal documents. Anti-corruption expertise should also be conducted.

“This directly influences the public’s attitude. Citizens must know what documents and normative acts are adopted in the joint stock companies,” he said.

It is important to audit all internal documents of national holdings and companies that regulate the

expenditure of public funds and allocations and to create a special working group consisting of representatives of interested state bodies. The institution of public control at all stages of managing the activities of companies in the quasi-public sector should also be introduced.

“We propose rotating employees every two years, taking into account the fact that the procurement sector has high corruption risks. This is also an international practice,” he said.

Taking measures to conduct an external analysis of corruption risks, as provided by the law on anti-corruption in the companies in the quasi-public sector, is also necessary.

International experts discuss sustainable energy, economic development at Astana Economic Forum

By Zhazira Dyussebekova

ASTANA – More than 4,000 participants from 100 countries gathered June 15-16 in Astana for the 10th annual Astana Economic Forum. The forum focused primarily on renewable energy and green economy under the theme “New Energy – New Economy” as well as discussions of sustainable economic growth, world trade and infrastructure.

The forum was held at the start of EXPO 2017, which features a theme of Future Energy.

“It is significant that we are gathering for the 10th time. This year our forum coincided with the expo. During this time, our forum has earned authority, has become a constructive platform for discussing topical issues. I am sure the Astana forum will help all its participants to find answers to the challenges of our time,” said Kazakh Prime Minister Bakytzhan Sagintayev at a session titled Kazakhstan – Systematic Country Diagnostic.

The Kazakh government aims to increase the country’s economy development rate to 5.5 percent, he said. This is one of the main tasks of the third modernisation.

“Step-by-step we should reach a growth rate of 5.5 percent by 2021. It is a difficult situation, but we can say that we have adapted to the price of raw materials that we have. Other sectors of the economy are already beginning to work and rise. The economy is changing, new fields, professions are emerging, as well as new challenges and opportunities. And, therefore, today Kazakhstan faces an ambitious task to consolidate the achieved successes and develop in a new global reality. To be in the



Bakytzhan Sagintayev

wake of new growth points is the task of the third modernisation of the country,” said Sagintayev.

To reach the goal, the government works in five areas, such as accelerated technological modernisation of the economy, improving the business environment, macroeconomic stability, ensuring productive employment and improving the quality of human capital.

Along with this, eight directions of the country’s development have been identified, the prime minister said, including the fuel and energy complex, the basic sectors of the economy, the agro-industrial complex, transport and logistics, tourism, trade, education and health.

“Target indicators have been defined for each direction and each minister knows their goals and in what year we should achieve them,” he added.

This year is the 25th anniversary of cooperation between Kazakhstan and the World Bank. At the mentioned session, the bank presented a systematic country diagnostic (SCD), which covers the preliminary findings relating to the main pathways to reduce poverty and boost shared prosperity

in Kazakhstan. Participants also discussed the impact of the global trends on the Kazakh economy by the view of international financial organisations.

During those years, World Bank has supported the implementation of 45 projects worth \$8 billion. Nearly 1,300 kilometres of the roads were built and modernised in the country. Also, the ecological situation at the Aral Sea region has been improved. The SCD conducted by the World Bank helps the government get an objective assessment, identify opportunities and risks, problem nodes and get recommendations for their resolution, according to the prime minister’s statement.

At the same session, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) called on Kazakhstan to deepen its reform efforts.

“According to our latest forecast, Kazakhstan’s economy will grow by 3.5 percent in 2018 and 2.4 percent in 2017. But to make sure that growth happens and exceeds forecasts, continuing reform efforts are crucial,” said EBRD Director for Kazakhstan Agris Preimanis. [On June 16, President Nursultan Nazarbayev, speaking at the AEF plenary session, announced that Kazakhstan’s economy grew 4 percent in the first five months of 2017.]

He added that as the external economic environment is improving, the country needs to make another push for structural reform, creating a competitive, green and inclusive economy.

Within the AEF, Fourth International Transport and Logistic Business Forum titled New Silk Way took place as well. The participants discussed world trends and their impact on transcontinental

routes, multimodal transport, new segments of the market and Eurasian transit corridors.

This year’s key speakers presented their views at the session called Globalisation: a Future Full of Uncertainties. Author of the bestsellers “Black Swan” and “Confessions of an Economic Hit Man” Nassim Taleb and Economic Adviser to the President of Russia Sergei Glazьев, as well as Chairperson of JP Morgan Chase International Jacob Frenkel talked about global economic outlook amid uncertainties and sustainable growth.

At the session Building Institutional Environment for Sustainable Growth, a comprehensive country review (Multidimensional Country Review, or MDCR) and Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development’s (OECD) updated overview of Kazakhstan’s investment policy with the recommendations were presented.

“There will always be a competition for investments, and our task is always to be the first in this fight. Therefore, we highly appreciate these recommendations, and their high-quality implementation is very important in the process of strengthening the economy of Kazakhstan. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the Secretariat and the OECD partners for the contribution to improving the investment climate in Kazakhstan, for useful recommendations and fruitful work,” said Kazakh Vice Minister for Investments and Development Yerlan Khairov at the session.

One of the AEF’s events was dedicated to the Samruk Kazyna Sovereign Wealth Fund’s privatisation programme, including the upcoming IPO of Kazatomprom, Kazakhstan Temir Zholy and Air Astana.

Among the outcomes of the forum was an announcement by the Central Asia Transport Logistics Partnership, which unites more than 40 public and private transport and logistics companies of the region, of an action plan to strengthen regional transport and transit in the region to spur sustainable economic growth. The plan focuses on policy and legislative changes and workforce development that contribute to the improvement of regional transport corridors and transit connections to encourage better trade and investment.

Also within the forum, Astana International Financial Centre (AIFC) and MasterCard agreed to jointly implement innovative payment technologies and develop Kazakhstan’s non-cash economy.

As AIFC Governor Kairat Kelimbetov noted, the parties will develop the infrastructure of the financial centre, including modern payment technologies.

“I think it is very important for today’s discussion to allow us to realise the commitments that the Kazakh government made at the Paris conference. And it seems to me that everyone in Kazakhstan at the level of both the government and local administration understand that the theme of expo, which we are hosting now, the topic of Future Energy, is, indeed, a very important topic, and that we need a long-term strategy, a vision and an action plan. And I believe that as part of this activity, as the AIFC together with the EBRD, we have created a very outstanding team of experts who are now helping us to develop a master plan and concept papers on the creation of a green financial system in Kazakhstan,” said Kelimbetov.

The Museum for All, the first interactive exhibition adapted for people with visual impairments, opened at Almaty’s Abilkhan Kasteev Museum, according to Khabar.kz. It features 24 artefacts, 12 of which are duplicated as tactile models. The museum’s exhibits were specially altered for tactile perception, such as copies of paintings by famous Kazakh artists reproduced as bas-relief and providing all descriptions in a special Braille font. “Audio description of the pictures in three languages is the most interesting thing. Visitors can use audio or guided tours,” said Arzhan Public Fund head Kassiet Omarova. The fund aims to make art accessible to those who are physically challenged. More than 150 people created the display in two and a-half months and the exhibit is scheduled to open in the capital.

Four specialised sports grounds were opened in Kyzylorda, reported the Kazakhstan Street Workout Federation press service. The National Olympic Committee implemented the project. “Such areas are in great demand among residents, not only among professional athletes. On average, about 2,000 young people visit sports grounds in a month,” said federation president Damir Muminov. Twenty types of gymnastics equipment, including horizontal bars and street-wrestling bars, are located in an area measuring more than 500 square metres. A bar team held an exhibition performance and open training session. As part of the initiative, 21 sports grounds were opened last year in Aktau, Aktobe, Almaty, Astana, Shymkent and Zhanaozen.

EURASIA&WORLD

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 28, 2017

EXTERNAL NEWS IN BRIEF

Kazakhstan and China have signed 22 agreements worth approximately \$7 billion, Khabar Agency reports. According to head of the Samruk Kazyna National Welfare Fund Umirzak Shukkeyev, these projects are mostly aimed at the development of renewable energy. The sides also want to launch an enterprise for the production of methanol and ammonia, as well as a plant for caustic soda production. Samruk Kazyna's Co-Managing Director Yerzhan Tutkushev noted that some 20 commercial agreements were signed. Five of the agreements transferred through Samruk Kazyna are valued at \$4.5 billion. "If the projects are implemented in accordance with the schedules, 11,000 new jobs will be created during construction of these facilities and about 5,000 jobs during their operation," he said.

The international specialised exhibition EXPO 2017 in Astana is in the focus of international mass media, Kazakh TV reports. The media cites the American Forbes magazine, which published the article "With World Expo 2017, Kazakhstan Takes another Step onto the Global Stage." The article goes on to explain that the expo will most likely be the turning point in the young nation's history and support its development of renewable energy. An Indonesian publication, the Jakarta Post, wrote about the role of the expo in the development of renewable energy sources on a global scale, Kazakh TV writes. The article says the technologies showcased in the expo can be applied in different countries. A reporter with Turkey's TRT was impressed by the opening ceremony. The Italian newspaper Affari Italiani's article says that Kazakhstan is rich in traditional sources of energy, but the forward thinking country is developing renewables. Belgian newspaper the Brussels Express notes that 2017 will definitely become a benchmark in Kazakhstan's history. In addition to everything else happening in the country, Kazakhstan became a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council in January.

Samruk Kazyna National WKazakhstan has become the 48th country joining the Declaration on International Investments and Multinational Enterprises of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and Associated Member of the OECD Investment Committee, Kapital business agency reports. By committing itself to the declaration and joining the committee, Kazakhstan intends to ensure fair and transparent conditions for international investments. It also reaffirms Kazakhstan's efforts to encourage investments that foster a positive contribution to economic and social development as well as environmental protection. As a party to the declaration, Kazakhstan will participate in investment policy discussions between OECD member states for adapting best international practices to regulate and attract investments and work with OECD experts to design better investment policies.

Kazakhstan's trade turnover with member states of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) exceeded \$5 billion between January and April 2017, Finprom analytical agency reports. This indicator is 40 percent more than in the same period of 2016. In four months, exports of Kazakh goods in EAEU countries grew 38 percent, reaching \$1.6 billion, while imports increased 41 percent up to \$3.5 billion. An increase in Kazakh-Russian trade turnover accounts for the overall growth of trade between EAEU states, as Russia remains Kazakhstan's largest trade partner in the union. Among key exports in Kazakhstan are iron ore and concentrates as well as coal, whereas in terms of imports, oil and oil products prevail.

Switzerland ready to assist Central Asian countries with water management

By Malika Orazgaliyeva

ASTANA – Kazakh Foreign Minister Kairat Abdrakhmanov and Swiss Head of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs Didier Burkhalter discussed bilateral cooperation and took part June 19 in an international conference on water resources management in Central Asia in Astana.

During the meeting, Abdrakhmanov noted the high level of bilateral political and economic partnership and said Switzerland is one of Kazakhstan's largest trade and investment partners. Bilateral trade in 2016 was \$2.8 billion.

Regarding the cooperation in the framework of the United Nations,



Didier Burkhalter

Abdrakhmanov also emphasised the relevance of President Nursultan Nazarbayev's initiatives, including allocating 1 percent of the countries' defence budgets to

sustainable development, organising a high-level international conference on reaffirming the principles of international law, creating a global anti-terrorist network and forming a single list of terrorist organisations.

Burkhalter noted the role of Kazakhstan in the international arena, stressing the country's contribution for a peaceful settlement of the situation in Syria within the framework of the Astana Process.

He also said Switzerland is ready to cooperate on a range of regional issues, including management of Central Asia's water resources.

Earlier in the day, the two ministers addressed the third international conference, "Water World in Central Asia: Agenda for 2030

– Water Security and Mutually Beneficial Growth." Experts from Central Asia and Switzerland attended.

Abdrakhmanov said Central Asia presents a united front on many regional and global issues.

"We can see the positive dynamics of a dialogue on development of water issues in the region. We welcome the involvement of Switzerland, which has significant experience in this sphere," he said.

The water deficit is considered one of the top ten global challenges. Therefore, Kazakhstan's main objectives include providing water resources to the population and industry using water-saving technologies, improving the efficiency of water resources management and

guaranteeing the safety of water ecological systems.

Burkhalter noted that the drains of many European rivers start in Switzerland and said Switzerland is ready to share its water management experience with Central Asian countries.

"We intend to analyse the process, intensify the political dialogue and assist in solving water issues in the region," he added.

Switzerland participated in previous water management conferences involving Central Asia in November 2014 in Basel and September 2016 in Almaty.

While in Astana, Burkhalter also visited the Swiss pavilion, which uses Flower Power as its slogan, as well as toured a number of pavilions of Central Asian nations.

Eurasian Media Forum discusses media's role in a changing world

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – More than 600 delegates from 60 countries gathered June 22-24 near the site of EXPO 2017 for the 14th Eurasian Media Forum (EAMF) to discuss the media's role in a turbulent world.

"When the world undergoes dramatic changes, the demand for dialogue platforms inevitably increases. The media should become the leaders of this process and concentrate efforts on uniting nations and countries, rather than erect new barriers. The world has entered an era of the new information environment, and we must do everything to encourage partnership and knowledge sharing," said Kazakh State Secretary Gulshara Abdykalikova in opening remarks as she read out the welcoming address from President Nursultan Nazarbayev.

Nazarbayev noted the forum has become known over its 15-year history as a place to discuss media and global issues.

"Readiness for the upcoming social and technological changes is the determining factor for sustainable development. The green economy as a key direction of

changes in the technological order is consonant with the theme of the exhibition in Astana," Abdykalikova said.

In her opening speech, EAMF Organising Committee Chair Dargina Nazarbayeva said the society is in a condition of political instability and technological revolution. The forum aims to help the media community find answers to issues about the future and professional ethics.

"The present period is an era of uncertainty and fear, an era of uncontrolled freedom. Is this true? Globalisation was associated with progress. Now globalisation frightens people and, as a result, they oppose the globalisation with the ideas of radicalism, nationalism and the rejection of integration processes," she said.

The terrorist attacks and the civil war in the Middle East dramatically increased flows of refugees that have become a heavy burden for many European countries.

"There are two crucial values without which human life is simply inconceivable. One is security and the other is freedom," Nazarbayeva said citing Zygmund Bauman.

"They are both necessary. Se-

curity without freedom is slavery. Freedom without security is complete chaos where you are lost, abandoned, you don't know what to do. The question is what the modern generation will choose," she said.

"We cannot build a new balanced world based only on narrow-minded ideologies, negative stereotypes and pessimism. We should raise a new generation of strong people and the past tragedies won't be obstacle to moving forward," she said.

Reporters, Nazarbayeva noted, should take some semblance of the Hippocratic Oath and be guided by the most important principle of healing, "Do no harm," just like medical experts.

British television journalist Nik Gowing, who moderated the first panel session under the title "Changes in the world order: building bridges or walls?" said that many things have happened since last year's meeting, including the U.K.'s vote to leave the European Union, the presidency of Donald Trump, fake news phenomenon and how one incident became a threat to the United States' largest airline.

"These are massive challenges

and existential threats not just in geopolitics but also in the corporate sector as well. The walls and bridges are moving significantly," he said.

Former European Commission President José Manuel Barroso outlined general trends against globalisation and spoke about Brexit consequences, new approaches of Trump's policy, the United States withdrawal from the Paris Agreement and China as a stable partner in global interaction in his speech.

"Globalisation is happening today and it is done by science, technology, information, communication. The reality is that there is not one country that is controlling globalisation. Some time ago some people were making suggestions that globalisation is some form of americanisation of the world. This is simply not true... When there are very strong winds of globalisation people tend to close themselves, to try to retreat and there's isolation, protectionism, nativism, phobia," he said.

Barroso said that if people want to succeed, they have to invite their children to be open and to embrace the great opportunities of globalisation. "And this is our simple message we should try to

give. Of course, we have negative effects from financial instability to international terrorism. They require a more cooperative, global approach," he added.

Former Turkish President Abdullah Gül said that today inequality and populism lead to conflict. World leaders should prefer values such as democracy and the rule of law otherwise problems grow and trends become serious.

"Sense of collectivism is disappearing. I see in the future we might face more problems and the world is not ready to challenge, to tackle, to handle these problems," he said.

Delegates also discussed the green economy concept, sustainability in the era of crises and steps towards global leadership in world markets and how information flow changed the world.

A series of masterclasses on media-related subjects were conducted by experts, including Newseum Vice Chair Shelby Coffey, Financial Times special representative David Applefield, former head of political press for David Cameron Giles Kenningham, Bloomberg Media Group Global Director Todd Baer and others as part of the forum.

Kazakhstan, WB are strong partners, says WB official

By Zhazira Dyussebekova

ASTANA – Kazakhstan and the World Bank (WB) are celebrating a partnership anniversary this year, for in the last 25 years the financial institution has funded 45 projects totalling \$8 billion. Within the June 15-16 Astana Economic Forum (AEF), WB's Vice President for Europe and Central Asia Cyril Muller gave an exclusive interview to The Astana Times highlighting some of the aspects of cooperation, as well as sharing his view of the country.

The bank recently announced preparation of a new partnership strategy with Kazakhstan for 2018-2022, although the focus areas have not been finalized. Under consideration are economic management, a stronger role of the private sector in production opportunities of economic integration and connectivity, as well as human capital.

"Because now we are only starting to translate what we presented today [systematic country diagnostic of Kazakhstan, presented at AEF's session]. It has four areas that we consider constraints, areas that need to be focused on for prosperity in the future. I would expect the four identified areas will become the key drivers of our future programme. That's what I discussed with Prime Minister [Bakytzhan] Sagintayev and we agreed that, indeed, those areas



Cyril Muller

could form a solid basis for our future programme," said Muller.

Reviewing the history of the projects, the largest number of loans was provided within the first five years of the partnership, when the WB funded 14 projects worth \$1.18 billion. Since 2013, eight projects valued at \$1.51 billion have been implemented.

"I think when we look back at the partnership between Kazakhstan and the World Bank, for me what stands out the most is not the individual projects, but more the fact that the World Bank and Kazakhstan became very strong partners and that partnership led to building trust between us. I think the main contribution the World Bank did was to support Kazakhstan in trying to find its own way forward, its own path for development and prosperity," said Muller.

He recalled the initial period beginning in 1992.

"So, when you look back now it is very impressive. I was a young World Bank staffer in the early 1990s and I was one of the first people to visit Kazakhstan after the fall of the Soviet Union. I do remember how people lived then and how the country had to be invented from nothing. In our partnership, I am most impressed by what the country has achieved. I am happy that we have contributed, but we did small contributions. Overall, that is what I am most impressed by now," he added.

The WB needed to do two things to assist the new nation.

"One was to help Kazakhstan put in place institutions and policies that help economic growth and help it to be shared with the whole population. The second thing we have done, I think that is important in Kazakhstan, is funding individual projects that make material difference to people," said Muller, recalling projects such as the Syr Darya River and Northern Aral Sea Control, forest protection and reforestation and southwest roads.

Those loans were good investments, he noted, adding every time he visits he is very pleased by the fact that the country's infrastructure has improved.

"While we fund physical infrastructure, we also try to build the capacity of people. So, we have done projects in education and health. For instance, one of the

projects was to help professionals in the health sector increase and improve their skills. What has been best is Kazakhstan's ability to develop as a nation and we were able to support that and put in a little bit of support by helping these institutions to develop, then finance some of the key infrastructure and building capital of people," he said.

Muller also spoke on the issue of reducing the nation's dependence on natural resources while capitalising in a modern economy on the ability for people to connect and integrate with others.

"When you have a source of wealth like oil or minerals, this will enable you to invest more broadly in making a country stronger over time. Because if you just use these for consumption it is good, you will consume more; but then at the end of the day, the wealth of the nation is about what the nation can really produce over time and how productive people are. So, the question is how you going to move. Use the opportunity of the oil to build a good infrastructure in the country, to improve it, but more importantly making sure the human capital [improves]. Because Kazakh people are very smart and in the future it is the economy that will matter the most – the ability of people to connect and use their capital," he said.

"I trust in those investments in human capital and if people are given a chance to actually use that capital, then Kazakhstan will grow in the future and be a prosperous nation," he added.

Talk has been circulating around the fact that many of the investments were used to improve the nation's transport corridors.

"People think that Kazakhstan will be a big transit country. Yes, maybe it will be a transit country, but that should not be the objective. It should be that this infrastructure means that Kazakhstan is integrated into trade channels, into supply chains that go east, west, north and south. Once we have that, it will be a real sign of success. It means that, for instance, if you have agricultural exports to China, that it can join in immediately in these very well organised corridors for trade and economic activity," said Muller.

Speaking about the region, he noted the Central Asian countries share a common background and history, but every nation has chosen its own path.

"Kazakhstan from the early days has realised that it needed to be connected to all the countries and it saw itself as a country that wants to play a positive role in the region in linking, for instance, China to Europe, linking Russia, linking South Asia. From the first day, Kazakhstan was the country that was seeing that the world economy is changing and it is changing very quickly and the country needed to be flexible and adaptable," he added.

Many challenges, however, are shared across the region.

"Some of the early challenges still remain. For example, the issue of water and how to divide and use it better continues to be a real challenge in the region. Also the issue of the energy, which is also the theme of the expo. These remain extremely high energy intensive economies and I think that it is very good that the theme of the expo is energy," said Muller.

ECONOMY

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 28, 2017

President proposes international currency, climate solutions at AEF

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"It is necessary to put on the international agenda the issue of developing new methods for calculating indicators that measure the wealth of countries and the welfare of their citizens. The GDP indicator has a number of significant flaws. It does not reflect the long-term nature of economic activity. It does not take into account the damage to the environment, including the depletion of natural resources. And it does not reflect the quality of life in a particular country. GDP per capita does not show the citizens' well-being and it does not take into account population stratification by income," said Nazarbayev.

The traditional GDP creates a false perception of economic prosperity.

"I believe that an updated methodology for calculating GDP can be adopted on the basis of green GDP and indices such as the Human Development Index and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Better Life Index. It should adequately reflect the needs for balanced development of countries," he said.

Transformation of the world financial architecture should also be considered.

"It's time to consider the introduction of the global payment unit. This will save the world from currency wars, speculation, avoid distortions in trade relations and reduce volatility in the markets. The currency should have a simple transparent mechanism of emission, subject to its consumers. A payment unit of account can be created in the form of a cryptocurrency taking into account digitalisation and block-chain development," he said.

The introduction of a global currency is possible by creating a pool of central banks, for example, the Special Committee at the United Nations (UN), he added.

President Nazarbayev also proposed to create a unified information system for greenhouse gas emission accounting to cover the countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia.

"Kazakhstan is the first country in the Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia that launched the greenhouse gas emissions trading scheme. We developed and adopted the appropriate regulatory

base and we are ready to share our experience in this area," he said.

The head of state noted economic growth should be based on clean energy development and environment preservation. In the context of the ecological future of the planet, the concept of a nuclear weapons-free world is of great importance.

"Kazakhstan is a leader in the struggle for a world free of nuclear weapons. We are the first and the only country that closed the nuclear test site and abandoned its nuclear arsenal. We will continue these activities and encourage everyone to support us. By this we reaffirm our commitment to the global cooperation and peace," he added.

This annual platform facilitates the transfer of knowledge and speeds up the process of making strategic decisions, said JP Morgan Chase International Chairperson Jacob Frenkel who moderated the session.

"Kazakhstan's development strategy is well known, well appreciated, well recognised by the global community. By the year 2050, it is expected to be among the world top 30 developed coun-

tries. And the third modernisation of Kazakhstan will be the right force to achieve it... It is enough just to look around the development of Astana and to recall what it was then and what it is now, to appreciate how can one reach high with vision, determination, commitment and with a sense of leadership," he said.

Nazarbayev also met with the Nobel Prize laureates and top-level experts at the Akorda presidential residence.

"Meetings with experts are important and always interesting. Especially when important changes take place in the world," he said. "Kazakhstan is in the centre of world attention regarding the development of new technologies due to EXPO 2017. The world around us is revolutionising with the technology development. We considered such futuristic technologies as electric vehicles, unmanned vehicles, nanotechnologies and new types of energy. Now this is reality."

Nazarbayev said it is important to consolidate efforts to solve global problems.

"The U.S. withdrawal from the Paris agreement and the situation

around Qatar complicates sustainable development. Environmental problems, processes of de-globalisation, migration flows, and paternalism in different countries hamper trade, mutual relations and integration," he said.

Global challenges in leadership, integration of the transit and water potentials of Greater Eurasia, corporate governance as a factor of investment attractiveness, world energy system were also on the forum's agenda.

The model and roadmap for the country's green financial system development workshop was initiated by the Astana International Financial Centre (AIFC). Participants spoke about the role of financial centres in green finance development, the conditions for investing in the green economy of Kazakhstan and considered the best world practices for introducing green finance.

More than 2,500 delegates, including politicians, Nobel laureates, chief financial officers of Fortune Global 500 companies, scientists and economists took part in the 20 panel sessions, round tables and conferences at the forum.

ECONOMY NEWS IN BRIEF

The World Bank is set to invest \$3.5 billion in a number of large projects in Kazakhstan over the next two years, particularly in education, roads and social health insurance, representative of the international financial organisation Ato Brown said at a meeting with Kazakh State Secretary Gulshara Abdykalikova, 24.kz reports. Abdykalikova noted that the bank had supported the development of a number of industries over 25 years of cooperation. During this time, 46 projects worth more than \$8 billion were implemented. "Kazakhstan has great prospects for the future. And the World Bank is ready to support the country in its priority areas. In particular, we are implementing projects in the field of energy efficiency improvement worth \$24 million. Projects in health care, innovations and agriculture have already been financed. We will assist the country in the future," Brown said.

The Netherlands has invested more than \$70 billion in Kazakhstan, said Vice Minister for Investments and Development Yerlan Khairov at the Kazakhstan-Netherlands business council, khabar.kz reports. The Netherlands maintains a leading position among international investors. At present, 950 joint ventures operate in Kazakhstan's oil and gas sector, with the cooperation of the KazMunayGas National Company with the Anglo-Dutch company Shell just one example. "The Kingdom of the Netherlands is a power with strong historical traditions of business. This is the main hub for the oil and gas industry. As a representative of the oil and gas industry I am aware of how the Netherlands works in the oil and gas industry. Therefore, this is a very good example for us and our cooperation with Shell is a vivid example of the way to develop cooperation in all directions," Daniyar Berlibayev, KazMunayGas executive vice-president for transport, refining and marketing said.

The National Bank is completing the banking sector recovery programme, according to khabar.kz. The programme assumes the bank's support in providing resources in exchange for proportional participation of shareholders, said National Bank Chairman Daniyar Akishev at the June 19 joint session of Parliament. "Indeed, over the past one and a half years, the situation in the banking sector has changed significantly. I would like to note that it has changed for the better. Liquidity appeared in the banks. Naturally, liquidity does not immediately flow into lending, as there is a problem in the banking sector, which, most likely, was not solved in previous years, after those crises of 2008 and 2009. The loan portfolio banks had then did not generate cash flows that could service all liabilities of banks. Accordingly, the banks did not fully reflect the objective situation in their reports," Akishev said.

Kazakh families are spending more money on food, ranking.kz reports. According to the results of the first quarter, the share of expenses for food in the total consumer expenditures of households was 45.9 percent compared to 44.4 percent in January-March of the previous year. Kazakh families tend to spend mostly on meat and meat products. This year, meat costs rose to 15.3 percent compared to 14.6 percent in the first quarter of 2016. Kazakh citizens have also increased meat consumption 0.5 percent to 18.2 kilograms per capita.

In May, official retail sales reached 724.8 billion tenge (US\$2.2 billion), 12.8 percent more than the previous month. The largest monthly growth in retail volumes was registered in the Aktobe region (27.3 percent growth), Astana (24.9 percent increase) and the Mangistau region (18.9 percent growth). Another trend is that private traders are gradually being squeezed out of the market by trading enterprises: in May, such enterprises occupied 56.2 percent of retail trade, against 55.1 percent a year earlier. However, since April, private traders have slightly increased their market share, from 43.5 percent last month to 43.9 percent in May. With the arrival of the warm season and a fresh harvest, private traders have begun work.

Foreign Investors Council discusses future energy in Astana

Continued from Page A1

Gupta also highlighted Kazakhstan's active efforts in transition to green economy, which is stipu-

lated in the Green Economy Concept adopted by Kazakhstan in 2013. "Kazakhstan has a potential to become a green financial centre for the entire Central Asian region.

ADB is ready to work with Kazakhstan in developing solutions to promote green economy," he noted.

"Our priority is an accelerated

modernisation of economy. This is what I discussed in my address (to the people of Kazakhstan). We need to develop new industries using innovations and digi-

tal technologies," Nazarbayev said.

He also suggested the topic for the council's next session "Accelerated Modernisation," which was approved unanimously.

Established in 1998, the Foreign Investors Council aims to stimulate greater cooperation and interaction between Kazakhstan and foreign investors by serving as a platform for dialogue and providing favourable investment conditions.

Economy grows...

Continued from Page A1

Unemployment rate reached 4.9 percent in April 2017.

Suleimenov said that in January-May, there was a positive dynamic in industry (growth of 7.8 percent), construction (5.1 percent), transport (3.7 percent), agriculture (2.7 percent) and trade (2.6 percent).

Industrial production volume in January-May 2017 increased 7.8 percent. The growth was significantly affected by the extraction of coal and lignite, oil, metal ore, refined petroleum production and the metallurgical industry.

In mining and quarrying, production increased 9.2 percent due

to an increase in coal and lignite production of 18.4 percent, natural gas of 10.2 percent, non-ferrous metals of 11.7 percent, oil of 9.5 percent and iron ore of 8.6 percent.

In manufacturing, the increase was 6.8 percent due to growth in pharmaceutical production by 36.8 percent, textile production

by 29.2 percent, food products by 8.3 percent, refining by 7.2 percent and metallurgy by eight percent. Furniture production grew by eight percent, paper and paper products by 5.6 percent, and non-metallic mineral products by 4.5 percent.

In the regions, industrial production growth was observed in 13

regions; a decrease took place in three regions. The highest industry growth rates were indicated in oil-rich Atyrau (18.6 percent) and West Kazakhstan (14.9 percent) regions. The largest decline was recorded in the Kyzylorda region (2.9 percent).

Gross agricultural output growth reached 2.7 percent due to an increase in livestock production of 2.8 percent.

The volume of construction work increased 5.1 percent.

EBRD to continue supporting Kazakhstan in economic endeavours, says EBRD official

By Dmitry Lee

ASTANA – The Kazakh capital is ready to host the June 22 annual Foreign Investors Council (FIC), chaired by President Nursultan Nazarbayev and co-chaired by the president of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), Sir Suma Chakrabarti.

The city has enjoyed the spotlight in early to mid-June as it hosted the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) summit and the Astana Economic Forum and launched the long-awaited EXPO 2017. Multiple international delegations are coming over for yet another no-less-important event.

FIC's 30th session since its founding in 1998 and the expo's theme Future Energy very much underline the priorities the organisation has set for the country, said EBRD's head for Kazakhstan Agris Preimanis in an exclusive interview with The Astana Times in the run-up to the meeting.

"If you think of EBRD's strategy and our priorities for the country, we fit very well. We want to continue developing the green economy, investing in renewable projects. Indeed, the current theme of the expo, 'Future Energy', is very close to EBRD. We are going to continue working in infrastructure and logistics, which is something that will help to connect the country even



Agris Preimanis

more and take advantage of the initiatives such as the One Belt One Road (OBOR). The work will have a particular emphasis on developing opportunities for women, and youth the regions."

Future energy will top the council's agenda, where the EBRD will play one of the key roles. The topic was chosen for a reason, said Preimanis, as every year the council seeks solutions to existing critical issues in the country's development.

"I am personally a part of the Operating Committee of FIC. I have seen all the materials and I am looking forward to having those discussions. This year we have many foreign speakers and there are some excellent ideas being brought forward. The range of topics starts from the renewable energy, green financing and how to approach that, the greening of the Silk Road, and using new technology to make the Silk Road project greener," he said.

EBRD's President Sir Suma Chakrabarti is to attend the event along with Ben van Beurden, CEO of Shell, Lorenzo Simonelli, President of General Electric Oil&Gas, Tim Gitzel, CEO of Cameco, to name a few.

Since its formation, the council has addressed a wide range of Kazakhstan issues including improving the legal regime for foreign investment, improving the judicial system, optimising the taxation system, attracting foreign labour and improving the investment image.

The FIC includes 35 heads of large transnational foreign companies and international organisations. During the sessions, the companies will provide their recommendations to the council.

"On top of that, the council will address topics of nuclear energy, emissions trading and how they can provide the right incentives to the country's companies. This will be an opportunity for the president of Kazakhstan to listen to these esteemed speakers and get a sense, first of all, of what is the current global thinking, but then also how it applies to Kazakhstan. Therefore, I think it will be a relevant event," said Preimanis.

"When one thinks of the FIC, it's important not to forget that the plenary session is just a culmination of the work done by the FIC," he continued. "The working groups meet regularly throughout the year; there is regular

interaction with the government and many issues are resolved through the FIC outside the theme of a particular plenary session."

Preimanis believes Kazakhstan is "on a pivotal point in history, whereas, as a result of the One Belt, One Road initiative and other initiatives, the country can become much more integrated and connected regionally and globally."

Integration would bring more opportunities and more competition to the country, he noted.

"On the other hand, there are still challenges within the country in terms of some regions, including socio-economic difficulties. It means that the country needs to continue accelerating efforts to take advantage of the opportunities brought by better connectivity," he said.

Preimanis underlined the work on improving the opportunities for women and youth to make the country more inclusive, particularly in the regions, is another pivotal point for EBRD.

"We have a very successful programme, in that where we channel the financing is to the women who manage businesses whilst at the same time providing advice and aid to them to build capacity and technical know-how. The mentoring programme is the part of that which allows them to connect and learn from successful Kazakh businesspeople through the networking events that we also organise," he said.

BUSINESS

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 28, 2017

BUSINESS NEWS IN BRIEF

Zerde-Keramika, which produces ceramic granite in the South Kazakhstan region, plans to increase output by launching a second line in the near future, reported Kapital.kz. The new items will boost production volume from 2 million to 4.5 million square metres. The company's high-quality products are in demand and there are plans to expand the range. Zerde-Keramika, currently the only such company in Kazakhstan, has a 30 percent export share. Forty percent of its raw materials are produced locally, with the balance imported, according to the statement.

Russian company Metal Profil will allocate \$10 million to construct a new sandwich panel factory in Kazakhstan, according to Kapital.kz. The company invested \$12 million in 2008 to launch the first Kazakh plant producing roofing and façade systems. "While working in Kazakhstan, we exported our products to Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan and now our company head, considering the good investment climate and the conditions for seeing business in this country, decided to invest in the construction of a new factory for the production of sandwich panels with 70 jobs. This product will be produced both for the domestic market and for export. We plan to import equipment for the new plant from Italy and state support measures help us here," said the company's Kazakh branch director Andrey Maslennikov. The products are to be exported to markets in Afghanistan, Iran, Mongolia, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

The South Kazakhstan region plans to produce up to 50 tonnes of silk fibre per year, according to Kapital.kz. Entrepreneur Sultan Bakirov said he has studied the production for six years and has now started cultivating the silkworm. He initially plans to receive 110 kilogrammes of silk fibre and when the project is fully implemented, increase the amount to 40-50 tonnes of raw materials within a year. In the world market, the cost of one kilogramme of silk fibre is \$30-\$40. Silk production is dynamically developing in China and Japan, while Uzbekistan is the leader among the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).

Russian manufacturer NeftProm-Snab is planning to operate a fiberglass pipe plant in the Kyzylorda region with an annual capacity of 120,000 metres of pipe, reported lsm.kz. The main consumers of the Kazakh products will be the region's oil companies, as the sale price of the finished products will be lower than that of direct competitors, according to company director Kazbek Kuanyshbayev. The statement noted 90 percent of fiberglass pipes come to the Kazakh market from abroad, mainly from China and Russia. A 95 million tenge (US\$289,000) loan will be used to purchase production equipment for pipes for the engineering, oil and gas and construction industries, it added.

Kazakh Khaoma vodka appeared in The Millionaires' Club, the top global rating on Drinks International's report on the largest selling spirits brands. The product is recognised as one of the leaders of the worldwide beverage market in its category, according to the most authoritative representatives of the industry. The club's members are beverage manufacturers which sell more than one million cases of their products each year (one case is equal to nine litres). Inclusion in this rating confirms the high status of the manufacturer and the quality of its products. The rating annually includes nearly 200 international brands and Khaoma has been included since 2012. This year, it entered the top of the fastest growing brands, showing an increase of 8 percent due to premium quality at an affordable price, according to Forbes.kz. In Kazakhstan, Khaoma is a record holder and occupies 38 percent of the market. For more than 20 years, the brand has received in excess of 50 prestigious awards at different competitions of the world, including gold at the ProdExpo 2017.

US, Kazakh business circles gather in Astana for US-Kazakh business forum

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – Twenty-five U.S. companies and representatives of Kazakh state bodies, national companies and local business representatives gathered in Astana June 14 for the U.S. – Kazakhstan business forum.

The event aimed to attract U.S. companies to priority sectors, including car assembly industry, health, construction, agriculture and light industry.

About 500 companies in various sectors of the economy with the U.S. participation operate in Kazakhstan, Minister for Investments and Development of Kazakhstan Zhenis Kassymbek told the gathering.

Peter Tichansky, President of the New York-based Business Council for International Understanding (BCIU) noted that the objective of the event was to bring together business leaders from Kazakhstan, multinational corporations and members of the government to identify ways companies can intensify their engagement with the government.

"In some cases, companies are looking for permits, advice on



Peter Tichansky

how to interpret regulation. It's essential for business-government dialogue to continue. And this is our first roundtable here in Astana. The Kazakh embassy in Washington very well presented the role their country's playing as an elected member of the UN Security Council, which reminds us of the mature, very serious role that the government is playing on the global stage," Tichansky told The Astana Times.

The BCIU is a non-profit made up of 200 companies that encourages dialogue between business and political leaders in different countries.

"The most important thing we can do is to get companies to come to Kazakhstan. There were no announcements made about new investment. By their presence, the companies here are looking for the next step. The country had a strong representation today by the gov-

ernment, particularly during such a busy time in Astana. We are honoured that the government showed such an interest," he said.

Favourable conditions for attracting investments are created in the country, said Kassymbek. There are 10 special economic zones (SEZs) and about 20 industrial zones each with a different sectoral focus. SEZ participants are also provided with a package of benefits and simplification of licensing procedures.

"Kazakhstan is a member of the Eurasian Economic Union. This is a single market without customs borders with a capacity of more than 180 million people and a foreign trade turnover of about \$1 trillion. We are located in close proximity to China, the world's biggest economy," he added.

Three state programmes are being implemented: the Nurlu Zhol to develop transport, logistics, industrial and energy infrastructure, the Nurlu Zher Housing Construction initiative and the Industrial and Innovative Development Programme 2020 to produce export-oriented products. State support measures are provided, including

subsidising the interest rate on loans, providing services, investment and tax preferences.

Astana International Financial Centre (AIFC) Governor Kairat Kelimbetov called on the U.S. business community to participate in the upcoming initial public offering of the largest Kazakhstan's companies on the AIFC stock exchange (AIX). The Shanghai Stock Exchange and the Nasdaq Stock Market are already listed as AIFC partners.

"We are currently negotiating with one of the largest European national exchanges to be our partner. This is the first stage of partnership of the international exchange centre. Invitation of global investment banks and global funds are the next stage. We will announce the first results by the end of the year," he said.

Since Kazakhstan gained its independence, the U.S., as one of the main investors, has invested about \$27 billion in the economy. Trade turnover with the U.S. was \$1.88 billion last year.

The American Chamber of Commerce contributes to the business and investment climate in Kazakhstan. The Ministry of Investments and Development holds meetings with the chamber to discuss a wide range of issues on labour and tax legislation every two months.

It was also planned to hold bilateral negotiations between business representatives of the two countries as part of the forum.

Minister recaps foreign investments, new subsoil code, transport potential

By Zhazira Dyussebekova

ASTANA – A recap of the previous year's work, including attracting foreign investments, a



Minister Zhenis Kassymbek (L) presents his agency's report and plans at a June 12 meeting in Astana.

new subsoil code and improving the nation's transport and logistics potential were the main talking points of a June 12 presentation by Kazakh Minister for Investments and Development Zhenis Kassymbek, according to Kapital.kz. The meeting with the population was held in the capital.

Gross inflow of direct foreign investments increased 40 percent last year to \$20.6 billion. Consequently, the nation is considering various ways to insure outside interest continues.

"As a result of last year, we received about 5,500 requests through the single-window system and we have provided about 8,000 public services. The investment ombudsman has received more than 50 new applications from foreign and domestic investors. We have put forth more efforts to attract investment at the external level. In particular, special advisors for attracting investments in 10 priority countries have been identified. At the regional level, councils for attracting investments under the mayors of the regions were created. Now, on instructions of the head of state, there is a process to reform the system of attracting investments. The ministry faces a

number of current tasks. Until the end of June, a national strategy for attracting investments will be developed. For this work, we attracted experts from the World Bank. Today, we are negotiating

to implement two more pilot projects this year, said the minister.

Speaking about the country's transport and logistics progress, Kassymbek said the volume of services in the transport sphere grew by 3.8 percent in 2016. Transit and container shipments from China-Europe-China increased more than twofold to 104,500 containers, calculated as twenty foot equivalent units (TEUs), compared to 47,000 TEUs in 2015.

Construction of the infrastructure facilities for the dry port of the Khorgos-Eastern Gate special economic zone was completed in October. Work is also underway to build transport and logistics centres in various regions and terminals in the ports of Lianyungang in China and Klaipeda in Lithuania.

"Work is continuing to increase container traffic to two million containers by 2020. In 2017, a double increase in the number of containers is expected. In the direction of China-Europe-China, we see a growth of almost 2.6 times for the first four months [of this year]. The share of domestic freighters in the internal market in 2016 increased to 46 percent. We believe at least 50 percent of the international transportation should be carried out by Kazakh carriers," said Kassymbek.

The number of transit air passengers increased from 250,000 to 478,000 in 2016 and is expected to reach 600,000 this year. The main flows are through Kazakhstan and from Asia and Europe.

"By 2020, there are plans to open new flights from Astana and Almaty. Just recently, flights to Warsaw from Astana were launched and Chinese air carriers started to fly from Beijing to Astana. Now, taking into account the flights that Air Astana is making, flights from Almaty and Astana to Beijing are almost daily. Daily flights depart to London and the imminent plans are Budapest and Helsinki. In July, the Astana-Delhi launch is planned," he added.

Within the Nurlu Zhol programme, 920 kilometres of significant highways involving about 75,000 workers were completed in 2016. Fifteen new projects totalling 3,200 kilometres are expected to be started this year. In total, work will be conducted on nearly 4,400 kilometres of roads by approximately 100,000 individuals.

Number of foreign companies increases 25%

Staff Report

ASTANA – The number of foreign businesses operating in Kazakhstan increased 25 percent in the last year to 3,400, according to finprom.kz.

With the number of all businesses increasing 7 percent, the share of foreign companies increased from 5.9 percent to 6.9 percent over the last year.

"According to analysts, the growth of foreign companies accelerated inflows of foreign investment into the country's economy. In 2016, gross inflow of foreign direct investment (FDI) increased 40 percent reaching \$20.6 billion. Investments growth followed by a downturn in 2015, when inflows of FDI weakened to minimal volumes since 2006," the report said.

Number of foreign companies in trade increased 24 percent or by 1,300 enterprises, reaching 6,700 ventures, as of April.

Meanwhile, number of trade enterprises, with full or partial foreign participation, decreased by 155 units between April 2015 and April 2016.

In addition, foreign business in services and construction grew by 464 and 423 enterprises respectively over the past year.

Until September, the government is developing an investment strategy for Kazakhstan. One of the main roles in attracting financial resources to the country's economy is to be given to the Astana International Financial Centre (AIFC). It is positioned as a financial hub for the countries of Central Asia, the Caucasus, Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), Middle East, Western China, Mongolia and Europe. The centre will be located on the territory of EXPO 2017.

AIFC will run on a special legal regime based on the English common law governing relations between the AIFC participants and interested parties.

Kazakhstan to reduce tax inspections

Staff Report

ASTANA – The Kazakh government will reduce the number of tax inspections 37.5 percent in 2017, Minister of Finance Bakhyt Sultanov said during a June 19 joint session of both houses of Parliament.

"The implementation of the 2016 budget was aimed at reviving the economy through stimulating entrepreneurship and creating jobs. The economy grew 1 percent by increasing the volume of services provided in the transport sector, increasing output in agriculture, construction, including housing construction. The budget revenues reached 7.7 trillion tenge (US\$23.96 billion). This is 1.5 trillion tenge (US\$4.6 billion) more compared to 2015. Of these, transfers account for 30 percent," Sultanov said.

According to the minister, measures are planned this year to grow and develop the economy.

"For the effectiveness of this work, we must create favourable conditions for business, while maintaining a high tax return. Increase in tax revenues will take

place amid the reduction in tax inspections. For example, this year the inspections will be reduced 37.5 percent. In addition, the draft Tax Code provides for the exclusion of 56 percent of regulations for inspection. As a result, 14 norms will remain instead of current 32 ones," Sultanov said.

Horizontal monitoring is being introduced in tax audits based on the principles of trust, transparency and mutually beneficial cooperation, the minister said.

"In addition, it is planned to revise tax preferences in order to reduce the number of ineffective benefits. As part of the legislation humanisation, it is envisaged to make appropriate amendments to the code 'On Administrative Offences.' The most important thing is the reduction in the volume of administrative fines and the widespread use of the institution of prevention instead of punishment," the minister added.

Earlier, Sultanov reported that the budget funds, undisputed by one state agency, would be transferred to others.

EDITORIAL & OPINION

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 28, 2017

EXPO 2017 opens to success, offers path to the future

With EXPO now under way, there are clear signs of lessons from the past decades underpinning the objectives of this event. Hosting EXPO has, for instance, enabled our government to particularly focus on infrastructural progress, the improvement of education and the promotion of Kazakhstan's culture to international audiences in time to mark its transition to a third stage of modernisation.

In our country's development roadmap, known as the Kazakhstan 2050 Strategy, President Nursultan Nazarbayev outlined key areas, which would serve to aid our accession to the world's top 30 economies. One of these was developing infrastructure and transport under the Nurly Zhol programme, to facilitate Kazakhstan's role at the heart of the New Silk Road initiative. Hosting EXPO 2017 in our capital has permitted our government to focus on supporting the needs of the event's foreign and domestic visitors by establishing new facilities, ensuring Astana's prospective role as a regional hub for finance and investment.

The impressive results of this programme include the creation of the new Nurly Zhol railway station in Astana, which expects a passenger flow of 12 million people a year and the addition of a new terminal to our capital's airport. Long after expo finishes, these initiatives will continue to benefit our country by establishing new transport routes, attracting visitors and creating hundreds of new jobs. It's no surprise, therefore, that our President has already described these new facilities as the "new pride of Astana."

Yet it is not only our capital that has benefited from EXPO 2017. President Nazarbayev made a point in his opening speech of inviting everyone to visit all of Kazakhstan for the amazing nature as well as the historical heritage that we have to offer. The expo has also brought together Kazakhs from all corners of our country to appreciate our united progression.

Another focal point for EXPO 2017 has been its beneficial effect upon the younger generations. The exposition aims to inspire children from all

around Kazakhstan to play a role in developing these futuristic technologies by immersing them in the research at the forefront of science worldwide. The French pavilion's main exhibition of a new Peugeot project, for example, is highly commendable for engaging with children to interest them in the fascinating design of electric cars.

This focus of EXPO 2017 on the future pioneers of Kazakhstan builds upon a range of initiatives, which provide the resources for children to excel. For instance, Kazakhstan's Minister for Education and Science Yerlan Sagadiyev, recently announced that 93 percent of final-year students who achieve consistent top marks receive the prestigious Altyr Belgii recognition, which allows them to attend any university in Kazakhstan with all of their tuition subsidised by the government.

Schemes such as this reaffirm our commitment to supporting education, and our country is already seeing results. Only last year did the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study rank Kazakh students eight out of 57 developed countries for their education in the sciences.

EXPO 2017 has also brought Kazakhstan's existing strengths and values to the attention of the international community. The attendance of our opening ceremony by prominent world leaders, such as President of China Xi Jinping, President of Russia Vladimir Putin, and King Felipe VI of Spain, as well as UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres, goes to show the magnitude and importance of EXPO 2017 on the global agenda.

In this regard, it is astonishing to consider how far Kazakhstan has come in the 25 years of its independence and the confidence with which it has done so. This has only been possible due to the assured leadership of President Nazarbayev and our government's willingness to learn from its mistakes. Although we can be sure of more lessons to learn from the event's proceedings, the first few weeks have been testament to the painstaking work of the organisers whose collective efforts are to thank for what has been an unforgettable opening to a momentous event.

Modernisation of social and cultural spheres: global experiences and Kazakhstan

By Yuri Bulukhtayev

Systemic modernisation implies a whole range of economic, cultural, social, political and other transformations aimed at integrating a nation into the progressive course of global development. Though it is obvious that this objective is hard to reach, Kazakhstan has every chance to implement a successful modernisation effort, since it has strong scientific, technical and economic capacity, a rich cultural heritage made up by people and significant natural resources.

In modern circumstances, it is becoming evident that in the modernisation course, the strategy of Kazakhstan's renewal should be aimed at being proactive, focusing on the future rather than today in terms of world science and technology, social and cultural progress and political structure. In this context, of particular importance is the message of President Nursultan Nazarbayev's address titled "Course towards the Future: Modernisation of Kazakhstan's Identity" – which is that large-scale transformations in the country are impossible unless public consciousness changes.

Having a population with an open mind plays a special role in the structure of public consciousness. In his article, the Kazakh President emphasises one of its key characteristics – "the ability to adopt and learn from the experiences of other people and countries. The two great Asian nations of Japan and China are the best examples of this approach. Being open to the best practices is the key to success and one of the characteristics of an open mind."

Let us refer to the international experience of modernisation.

In the late 20th century, in East and South-East Asia, it became evident that a number of regional states (China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore) started developing not within the paradigm of Westernisation, but chose the way of a reinterpretation of national tradition. In the modernisation process, they made quite a conscious choice in



favour of a national rather than a universal (i.e. Western) one. Most of Asia-Pacific countries have adopted an official course of building an "epoch of culture" as a phenomenon of modern civilisation, and this path led them to a well-deserved success.

The experience of modernisation in Japan is also characterised by an internal mechanism with a moral core. Its foundation was laid back in ancient times. History shows that the key principles of Japanese culture are based on respect, honour, calm and positive attitude to all things in existence, on pragmatism and full responsibility. The inner set up that represents a combination of traditions, customs and moral principles is based on Shinto. There are also traces of Confucianism. These both directions have a common essence – service to society. This aspect is the main accelerator of such fast growth of Japan. It was mixed with the Western progress. This extraordinary powerful symbiosis was synthesised and systematised. This is the driver of qualitative growth of Japan.

The modernisation theory faced an interesting paradox: the more open "the Asia's Dragons" were to the world, the bigger role traditional Confucian-Buddhist values played in their political culture vis-a-vis universal pillars of the modernisation theory. Successful modernisation practice based on reinterpretation of national traditions in Asia-Pacific countries facilitated drastic reconsideration of the basics of the very modernisation theory. First elaborations into the neo-modernisation theory emerged.

As a less positive experience, we can consider the modernisation of a number of Latin American and Muslim countries that chose the path of Westernising. In particular, within the process of their modernisation, societies in Argentina, Mexico, Brazil, Algeria, Egypt, Sudan, Tunisia and Pakistan cracked in their reaction to the destruction of traditional order and invasion of Western values. At the same time, an acute conflict of values took place in many Islamic countries, which often led to civil wars.

Modern comparative studies in the modernisation field prove that when political actions are not sanctioned by national culture and not perceived as "native," they can provoke a powerful mass protest movement in society, aspirations to destruct, wipe out political innovations and return to traditional political order. After years of modernisation development, the world started talking about "re-Islamisation" of the Middle East, "hinduisation" of India, "returning to Asia" of China and Japan.

The modernisation experience showed that fundamental Western concepts of individualism, freedom, separation of religion and state, equality, human rights and liberalism found little support in Islamic, Confucian, Japanese, Buddhist, and Hindu cultures. Propagating such ideas caused a hostile reaction against "human rights imperialism" and led to the strengthening of the primordial values of native culture. A comparative study of the importance of 100 values in different countries of the world conducted by some Western scholars has shown that "values of paramount importance in the West are much less important in the rest of the world." Samuel Huntington was one of the first Western researchers to write about the advantages of traditionalism in the field of modernisation: "Not only modern societies include many traditional elements, but also traditional societies, in turn, often have features that are usually considered modern. Tradition should be stud-

ied. Moreover, modernisation can strengthen tradition."

The main problem of the neo-modernisation theory was the search for new factors that ensure the dynamics of constructive political actions in modernisation processes, which required a further revision of the theory. To replace the discredited concept of forced modernisation, the provisions came that are aimed at protection, preservation, revival and support of social and cultural diversity, pluralism of life styles and patterns, providing them with freedom of existence and development.

The contemporary concept of neo-modernisation, along with the idea of secular organisation of social life, includes recognition of the importance of religion and mythology in the spiritual sphere, respect for the charisma of traditional leadership, veneration of the elders' authority in politics, and the use of the idea of collectivist cohesion of society. Traditional values of kinship, family, the factors of group identification and solidarity significance have been fully rehabilitated.

Thus, it is the national, rather than the universal, that today becomes the main driving force of modernisation processes. We cannot count on the efficiency of modernisation based solely on the indicators of economic growth. It is equally important for the stabilisation of social development to form new values of the community that would not contradict the old traditional order, but develop them in a new direction.

That is why President Nazarbayev, in his conceptual article, urged to improve society by modernising the identity of its citizens, preserving all the best in behavioural and cultural aspects that have accumulated within the centuries-old traditions of the Kazakhs and the history of many peoples living in Kazakhstan.

The author is Chief Research Fellow of the Kazakhstan Institute of Strategic Research (KazISS) under the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Doctor of Political Science.

After a quarter-century, Kazakhstan's foreign service has much to be proud of

By Akmaral Arystanbekova

Since the dawn of independence, consistency, predictability and the multi-vector character of Kazakhstan's foreign policy under the leadership of its first President, Nursultan Nazarbaev, have been its unique features, strength and the reason for its success.

In the era of globalisation, interdependence, interconnectedness and the emergence of a multi-polar world, adherence to the multi-vector principle is dictated by the very nature of international relations. More so for Kazakhstan, a multi-ethnic and multi-faith nation strategically located in the heart of Eurasia.

It is quite symbolic that the 25th anniversary of the diplomatic service coincides with Kazakhstan's tenure as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council. For someone like myself who served as the newly independent country's first Permanent Representative to the organisation, this indeed represents a historic milestone.

Back then, Kazakhstan faced the daunting task of ensuring its speedy integration into the international community and a full entry into the world political and economic arena.

Having joined the United Na-



tions on March 2, 1992, our country had two specific tasks to complete. First, we had to expeditiously establish cooperation with the United Nations' various funds and programmes to be able to qualify for their assistance in resolving our most urgent economic, social and environmental problems. Secondly, as one of the newest member states of the United Nations, Kazakhstan had to learn on the spot how to participate in and contribute to the solution of pressing international issues on the General Assembly's agenda.

Guided by the principled line of our fledgling foreign policy, I had to forge stances on a myriad of issues on the UN General Assembly agenda. The active participation,

proactive diplomacy and hard work of Kazakh diplomats working at the foreign ministry in Almaty and at the mission in New York manifested in an early pay-off. Kazakhstan quickly earned the right and a truly unique opportunity to fully engage in all international affairs, while protecting our national interests and creating favourable conditions for the country's development. From a novice in international relations, we emerged as an active and respected member of this most important organisation in the world.

President Nazarbayev's historic decision to turn the country into a nuclear weapon-free independent state earned Kazakhstan much of the international community's early respect. Kazakhstan's unwavering stance on nuclear testing and proliferation was first pronounced from the high rostrum of the United Nations even before the country became independent. It was in October 1990 when in my very first address to the United Nations in my capacity as the Foreign Minister of the then Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic and on behalf of the Kazakh people, I called upon the UN member states to immediately halt nuclear testing and shut down all nuclear test sites.

All of my statements as permanent representative reiterated Ka-

zakhstan's firm commitment to the disarmament process and the principle of nuclear non-proliferation while being backed by our concrete, practical actions.

I was also fortunate to be personally involved in the drafting of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, a historic document Kazakhstan was among the first countries to sign. Later in 1998, at the 53rd Session of the UN General Assembly, I was trusted by member states to join the leadership of the first Committee on Disarmament and International Security, and I served as its chairperson for almost a year.

In the era of globalised and increasingly digitalised world, the nature and the role of diplomacy, some would argue, are changing. Today's diplomacy is facing a wealth of new challenges of trans-boundary nature. Moreover, the advancement of new information and communications technologies made some pundits question the need to maintain diplomatic missions abroad. Indeed, while remaining the same in its essence, diplomacy today has to seek for and employ new forms and tools to complement traditional activities. The rapidly changing contours of international relations and world politics call for the increased importance of public diplomacy, network diplomacy, summit

diplomacy, and the need to build lasting relations with non-state actors of international interaction.

This, in turn, puts additional pressure upon diplomats and particularly for ambassadors, whose work is becoming less visible but demanding a higher level of education, competency, professionalism and ability to find common ground not only with fellow diplomats but also with civil society, which in today's world is empowered to influence the international agenda. In other words, a modern diplomat and especially an ambassador must learn how to wield influence through his or her own "soft power," or, in other words, muster the art of convincing and establishing trust.

Female diplomats representing different nations and cultures make an invaluable contribution to international affairs and the work of the United Nations, in particular. I was lucky to have known and worked with many outstanding women diplomats, true professionals in their field.

Noteworthy is the fact that over the past 25 years among Kazakhstan's six permanent representatives to the UN there have been two other women – Madina Jarbusynova and Byrganym Aitimova, – who have worked hard to solidify and enhance our cooperation with the UN.

I am encouraged by the fact that women have slowly but surely made their way to high leadership positions in the Foreign Ministry of Kazakhstan.

As the foreign service of Kazakhstan marks its 25th anniversary on July 2, it owes a debt of gratitude to the work and courage of the previous generation of its diplomats, who in early 1990s laid the foundation for a successful 21st century Kazakh diplomacy.

Over the past quarter century, the country's diplomatic service has turned into a professional and effective instrument of implementing our foreign policy. It has successfully solved the tasks of protecting our national interests in the international arena, strengthened our security and created favourable external conditions for a progressive economic and democratic development and the well-being of the nation.

As Kazakhstan enters the next, a more mature stage of development of its foreign service, I invariably say to the new generation of diplomats: there is only one way to succeed in your profession, and it is by continuously striving to know and learn new things and better yourself. By following this path, you will combine a unique practical experience backed by sound theoretical knowledge about diplomacy, which I believe is both an art and a science.

The author is Ambassador-at-Large of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan and the country's first Permanent Representative to the United Nations.

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Surge in diplomacy, action in mediation

By Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu

The fourth edition of the Istanbul Conference on Mediation will take place on June 30 with the theme of "Surge in Diplomacy, Action in Mediation." Experts, diplomats, practitioners and scholars from around the world will explore ways and means to promote mediation as a prominent conflict prevention and resolution method.

The profile of mediation has been rising globally since Turkey and Finland led the way at the United Nations through the "Mediation for Peace" initiative. The initiative culminated in the establishment of the Group of Friends of Mediation. The Group now has 53 members, including 48 states and 5 international organizations. There has also been substantial improvement in international capacity for preventive diplomacy and



mediation within the UN, regional and sub-regional organizations and civil society.

The Group has become the leading platform at the UN to promote mediation. It has initiated the adoption of four UN General Assembly Resolutions, which lay the ground for the development of the normative and conceptual framework of mediation. The Group has also contributed to

the 2012 "United Nations Guidance for Effective Mediation," a fundamental document for those who practice and study mediation worldwide.

UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres has expressed his willingness to further develop UN's mediation support capacity. His efforts are most commendable. We call on all UN member states to support UN Secretary General Guterres' broad vision and efforts to prevent and solve today's conflicts.

Turkey has been doing her part. Turkey is situated next to a vast region where acute active and frozen conflicts persist. Prevention and peaceful resolution of conflicts is a central feature of Turkey's enterprising and humanitarian foreign policy. Turkey undertakes various efforts in a wide geography from Africa to the Middle East, the Balkans and the Caucasus. She sees peacemaking in a humanitar-

ian-development nexus. This year, Turkey has again become the most generous nation in the world in terms of per capita humanitarian assistance.

Turkey has been hosting the Istanbul Conferences on Mediation since 2012. These landmark conferences are designed to bring together numerous practitioners and scholars in the field of conflict prevention and mediation activities. The aim of these conferences is to promote synergies between theory and practice and help increase scope, reach and effectiveness of the international

community's mediation efforts. I must pay tribute to the efforts of mediators engaging daily in conflicts worldwide.

This year the Conference will explore how mediation methodology and practice can take better account of the needs of the day. In this regard, two questions in par-

ticular would be scrutinized. One is the potential of mediation in all stages of a conflict continuum, namely from prevention to resolution and all the way to peace agreement implementation. The second key question would be the models for greater employment of mediation as a preventive tool in contexts where political, ethnic, religious biases create an environment of hostility.

The latter is especially pertinent since we have come to sadly witness extreme tendencies in various forms of political, social and religious animosities. The rise in attacks in Europe against Muslims and migrants is a case in point. Prevention is key. However, prevention would be possible only when societies recognize and learn to respect differences and engage in genuine dialogue and interaction. I believe that mediators who are well-equipped

with the cultural codes of conduct in a given conflict situation can reach remarkable success. For that, we need to train more mediators including at youth while encouraging more women mediators and equip them with the right tools.

Our challenges to make peace the overwhelming reality on a global level are immense. However, we should be able to see the opportunities within those challenges. The readiness and willingness of the international community to build capacity in peaceful resolution of conflicts including mediation must be a priority. As we prepare to welcome participants of the Fourth Istanbul Mediation Conference, I call on the international community to take action in mediation.

The author is Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey.

U.S.-Kazakhstan relations: a case for people-to-people diplomacy

By Richard E. Hoagland

If you ask American ambassadors what resources and program they cannot do without, almost every single one will answer, "Our exchange programmes that provide people-to-people experiences".

Encouraging people-to-people programmes is an important part of diplomacy for any country, and certainly for the United States. That is because diplomacy is not just about providing visas for travellers, not just about passing messages from government to government: it is also about building enduring links between two nations. And, ultimately, that is what is most important because it allows two nations to have a strong foundation for collaboration, even when their government relations might go through rough patches.

On the U.S. side, these include educational and cultural exchange programmes and, probably most important, U.S. Department of



State International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP) that identifies younger and mid-level experts in their fields and provides them with an intense programme in the United States to meet and develop enduring relationships with their counterparts. IVLP participants have become leaders in their fields later in life, and a good number have become heads of government and heads of state in their home countries.

I know that Kazakhstan thoroughly understands this concept and has made it a fundamental part of its own government policy from

the beginning of its independence. I am referring to the Bolashak Programme that has played a terribly important role in setting Kazakhstan apart from its neighbours and that has played a central role in putting Kazakhstan on the world stage.

Long-time Kazakhstan watchers must certainly recall that at independence President Nazarbayev said that if Kazakhstan is to be truly independent, it will need a new generation that thinks differently from the past. To implement that broad vision, he created Bolashak. I am very grateful that the government of Kazakhstan chose the United States as one of the principle venues for educating its young people to become the future leaders of their newly independent nation.

Today, throughout Kazakhstan, one can walk into almost any government and private-sector office, and meet young Kazakhs who understand the world in a way that allows them to do the daily business of life that consistently moves

their nation forward. That is a huge achievement, and I sincerely salute President Nazarbayev for his far-reaching vision.

There is another, slightly different perspective to the importance of the people-to-people exchanges. As diplomats, yes, we do spend time passing messages between our governments, working together for mutual goals, and actually getting things done that matter. But we can only do that effectively if we have already built solid relationships of trust and respect with our mutual counterparts.

There are two examples of people-to-people relationships between Kazakhs and Americans that came to fruition during my tenure as U.S. Ambassador to Kazakhstan that have actually led to a better world.

The first example I would cite is our scientific and technical experts working together to create the Central Reference Laboratory in Almaty that is playing a crucial role to ensure that biological

pathogens are securely contained so that they can never be used as weapons of mass destruction. This took many years of working together and slowly building trust with each other, but both Kazakhstan and the United States got it accomplished. This is indeed an enormously successful scientific programme that has truly important humanitarian goals.

The second example of our experts working together is even more important – the clean-up of the Soviet-era BN-350 nuclear reactor on the Caspian coast that eventually led to permanently securing, locking down on the remote steppe outside Kurchatov, enough plutonium and highly-enriched uranium that could have made 775 nuclear weapons. Related to this is the collaboration of our experts to clean up the former nuclear-weapons test site at Degelen Mountain to prevent the contaminated remnants of Soviet-era nuclear tests from falling into terrorists hands.

Neither of these hugely impor-

tant projects could have been accomplished without the trust that builds slowly, day to day, as a result of people-to-people relationships.

As Kazakhstan marks a quarter-century anniversary of its foreign service, I am pleased to join in the celebrations. In my tenure in Astana and career at the State Department, I have seen the dedication of its diplomats and their commitment to the aims and values of the country's foreign policy.

To the new generation of diplomats in both countries, I say this: people-to-people relationships are the absolute core of diplomacy. It's not documents and talking points that get things done. In the end, the only thing that matters is people-to-people relationships.

The author is former U.S. Ambassador to Kazakhstan who currently serves as U.S. Co-Chair of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe's Minsk Group for Nagorno-Karabakh.

Developers, software and cyber security specialists, IT managers in shortage, expert says

By Kira Ivanova

ASTANA – The Digital Kazakhstan state programme is available for every Kazakh citizen who has a computer with Internet access. A professional presentation and the draft programme can be found on the Zerde National Information and Communication Holding website. Since the holding manages its implementation, The Astana Times spoke with its former chair of the board Assel Zhiyenbayeva, who answered a number of questions regarding the chosen topic as a skilled IT professional.

What is the status of the Digital Kazakhstan programme?

The digital topic is relevant and not only because the rapid development of technology is one of the key challenges for business and state in any country. For our country, digitalisation can become a real platform for maintaining competitiveness in the future. That is why the accelerated technological modernisation of the country was a number one priority in the January State of the Nation Address of President Nursultan Nazarbayev. At the moment, the concept of Digital Kazakhstan is ready and the draft has been preliminarily agreed upon by all state authorities; it means we are consistently moving in the given direction.

Nevertheless, when the talk is about creating and developing high-tech digital infrastructure in the country, isn't it taking it too lightly that the majority of villagers (40-45 percent of the country's population) perceive the Internet



Assel Zhiyenbayeva

almost only as a way of quick exchange of messages via e-mail or messengers?

It is only partially true. The high-speed Internet will provide an opportunity to render high-quality health care and education services to people who live in remote areas; moreover, it will become an electronic trading platform. People will be able to sell goods and services online and distances will no longer be a barrier to the provision of services.

The Alibaba platform in China, which has connected international buyers with small and medium-sized businesses, is a striking example. The business, which 15 years ago was located in an apartment, contributed to the creation of 100 million jobs and a 10 million army of entrepreneurs! Today, Alibaba controls 80 percent of the Chinese e-commerce market and generates 2 percent of the GDP.

Digitalisation as a world trend also inspires domestic business to create similar analogues. Kazakhstan has a developed agribusiness and the objective set by the state – increase in the gross output of

agricultural products by 30 percent – is based on the idea of a consistent digital transformation of the industry.

Yes, indeed, digital technology became available to villagers through mobile phones and applications. However, digitalisation is making villagers master their IT skills more and more. If you want to trade, go to an online fair! Here, you can sell your goods and buy what you need on the farm.

A drip irrigation system, for example, which is managed from one centre, will facilitate the cooperation of villagers, leading to the consolidation of farms. In turn, a large farm constitutes a great opportunity for the development of agricultural producers, labour productivity growth and cheaper products for the end user. With regard to our mentality, we can say that we "harness our horses slowly but drive them fast." That is, life itself will motivate villagers to be braver in mastering IT technologies.

A villager should be familiar with the computer even to open a small poultry house, as the incubation process is fully automated and everything is regulated at the push of a button. And if a project is planned with a full production cycle from breeding to processing, one cannot do without strong IT skills!

For this reason, the programme also includes online platforms in public service centres and Kazpost so that our citizens can access basic IT skills.

There has been talk about broadband Internet access in villages and auls for several years, but where is the result? The pro-

gramme indicators also show when it is fully implemented, only 81 percent of the population is expected to use the Internet and the corresponding percent of digital literacy is similar. Why is that the case; why will every citizen not be able to use the Internet?

Today, in the most active segment of the population, the age group between 6 and 74, about 77 percent of the population has access to the Internet. When it comes to 81 percent, this is an increase in the number of Internet users for this age group. The state, business and households are definitely interested in having 100 percent coverage as soon as possible. Economic digitisation will help to accelerate the population's involvement in the Internet.

Who will finance the programme and related projects?

Related projects will be financed through public-private partnership or through the informatisation service model. PPP financing is regulated by the Law On Public-Private Partnership. The service model we are talking about implies a centralised approach to informatisation based on the provision of information and communication services to state authorities. Such services are provided by the IC infrastructure operator with the involvement of IT companies. Details are available on our website zerde.gov.kz.

"Human capital development" is the phrase that came into this report, but not into people's lives. Kazakhstan still does not have adequate distant schooling and high school online education, there are no electronic textbooks, it is impossible to receive additional

knowledge using digitalisation and there are no catalogues of video lectures, since there is no video lectures database. What is your position on this matter?

You raise a very relevant topic. Today the whole world actively discusses the issue of education, its quality and the development paradigm. The long-term world trend is the promotion of mass education based on its accessibility. This trend sets the main parameters of the future education and becomes the development driver of additional alternative education in Kazakhstan.

This year, the WikiBilim Public Foundation with the support of Kazakh universities has launched the Open University of Kazakhstan project (analogue of the well-known Coursera). The educational platform offers free access to online courses from leading university teachers in the country.

In fact, this project is a greenfield project, where all the content is Kazakh. More than 80 percent of the courses are taught in the state language. Anyone can freely study through the online courses housed on the platform when and where it suits him or her. This project is purely social, not commercial. We are discussing with WikiBilim the possibility of implementing a project to increase the digital literacy of the population.

Needless to say that today distance education in Kazakhstan is imperfect, but there are positive aspects. Distant learning has been practiced for more than one year. Both public and private universities provide online learning tools for students from other regions. Some universities provide the op-

portunity to receive a double degree, one of which can be obtained through distance learning. Distant education graduates receive state-recognised diplomas without any indication of the mode of study (distant/extramural.) However, only people who already have a degree in secondary vocational or higher education can study in the university by distant learning.

Why does the nation need to improve the skills of specialists in information and communication technology if it can attract super professionals who could work in remote access mode?

Let me repeat myself. In the January state of the nation address, the head of state defined the number one priority – accelerated technological modernisation of the economy. And economic transformation is directly related to IT-technology.

Yes, our economy has long been experiencing a labour shortage, but this applies not only to Kazakhstan. The U.S. economy alone will have up to 50,000 vacancies for IT professionals each year. According to the global study 2016 Manpower Talent Shortage Survey attended by 42,000 employers from 43 countries, IT specialists are the second highly demanded professionals. We are in severe shortage of developers, software specialists, architects, data and cyber security experts, IT leaders and managers. This means that we cannot and should not rely on the external market to attract specialists!

Labour shortage has a negative side as well: the lack of competition among specialists in any industry leads to a decrease in competition, and, therefore, to a decrease in labour productivity of specialists in demand. Therefore, until we solve the problem of "nurturing" our own talents for the IT industry and streamline it, this issue will be a serious obstacle for the development of business and production in the country.

EURASIA&WORLD

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 28, 2017

Kazakh, Hungarian FMs discuss co-op

By Malika Orazgaliyeva

ASTANA – Kazakh Foreign Minister Kairat Abdrakhmanov and Hungarian Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade Peter Szijarto discussed bilateral relations and international issues June 26 in Astana.

Abdrakhmanov noted the 25th anniversary of diplomatic relations, mentioning the high level of bilateral contact and saying the two countries have historical roots beyond their political and economic relations.

The sides focused on the priority of economic diplomacy as well as cooperation within the Kazakh-Hungarian Strategic Council.

Abdrakhmanov and Szijarto also noted the need to utilise the Kazakh-Hungarian Intergovernmental Commission for Economic Cooperation, the Kazakh-Hungarian Business Council and the Hungarian Trade House in Astana.

“We need to use our strategic partnership to develop trade and

economic cooperation. The necessary legal framework has already been created. We also look forward to cooperation within the framework of Hungary’s foreign economic strategy, Eastern Opening,” Abdrakhmanov said.

Kazakhstan traditionally views Hungary as a reliable ally in Central and Eastern Europe, it was noted.

“The priority areas in our relations are agriculture, the energy sector, pharmaceuticals, transport and logistics, innovations and tourism. The June 8 opening of a direct air route between Astana and Budapest will intensify contacts between business people and deepen the partnership in the tourist sphere,” Abdrakhmanov said.

“Another important area is educational cooperation. For example, Hungarian universities increased the number of grants for Kazakh students from 45 up to 200,” he added.

Abdrakhmanov thanked the Hungarian side for participating in EXPO 2017.



Szijarto said Hungary considers Kazakhstan a strong factor of stability in the region.

“On July 1, Hungary begins its (tenure as chair of the) Visegrad Group, which is a political alliance of four Central European states including the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Poland. We look forward to close cooperation with Central Asia, which is currently demonstrating dynamic growth and development,” Szijarto said.

New unified tariff to increase Kazakh-Kyrgyz railway cargo

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – Kazakhstan’s Mazhilis (lower chamber of Parliament) recently approved the ratification of an agreement between the Kazakh and Kyrgyz governments allowing Kyrgyz transporters to transfer through Kazakhstan to Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) states with unified tariffs accepted by the members of the union. The move is expected to increase transportation value.

“The signed agreement preliminarily applied since Jan. 10 provides pre-scheduled use of the EAEU

standards between the two countries. It concerns mutual access to railway transportation services and infrastructure for Kazakh and Kyrgyz consumers in equal terms as well as equal entrance to infrastructure facilities for railway transporters,” said Minister for Investment and Development Zhenis Kassymbek while presenting the bill.

Kassymbek said common tariffs have already saved domestic cargo transporters more than \$100 million. It is expected the law will not only positively affect the Kyrgyz exporters, but increase the volume of cargo transportation through Kazakhstan.

He said the Kyrgyz side was not

ready to use these conditions two years ago because of domestic legislation that did not meet with the requirements. Other participants of the EAEU have already been using unified tariffs since 2014.

Therefore, new tariff will not affect the economic efficiency of Kazakhstan railways and operation, and transportation expenses will be much lower.

“Previously, we had domestic, export and import tariffs. The domestic tariff was lower, export and import tariffs were higher. Tariffs became identical after the unification. In general, tariffs have decreased for exporters and import-

ers. In our opinion, Kazakhstan has received sufficient benefits from the introduction of unified tariffs because we transport goods to Russia in large quantities,” Kassymbek explained.

He also said the Kazakh railway won’t experience losses, because the Kyrgyz side had to receive these tariffs two years ago.

Mazhilis Deputy Alexander Suslov noted transportation volumes have already increased.

“The volume of cargo transportation between the two countries increased by 14 percent in comparison with the same period last year already,” the minister said.

New Silk Way Business Forum discusses developing Eurasian transcontinental routes

By Malika Orazgaliyeva

ASTANA – Regional business leaders discussed developing transport and logistic systems on Eurasian transcontinental routes during the June 15 New Silk Way international transport and logistics business forum in Astana. The gathering was part of the 10th Astana Economic Forum.

Participants discussed global economic trends, European and Asian markets in terms of the development of transcontinental routes, improvement of the efficiency of multimodal transport, the role of interstate cooperation on development of international transport corridors, and the application of innovative solutions to regional transport and logistics infrastructure.

“Kazakhstan is actively working to integrate the transport network into the Eurasian transport system and making a significant contribution to its development,” Mamin said.

According to the report, the development of modernisation of the transport and logistics infrastructure of the trans-Kazakhstan routes are done as part of the Nurlu Zhol and Plan of the Nation 100 concrete steps programmes.

“The railroads, highways and air routes laying across the territory of Kazakhstan form effective transcontinental corridors from Asia to Russia, Europe, Central Asia, the Caucasus and the Persian Gulf,” Mamin said, adding that in a short period of time East-West container traffic has increased, cargo flows have been reoriented and the new routes have been opened.

Mamin noted the World Eco-

MAMIN: “Kazakhstan is actively working to integrate the transport network into the Eurasian transport system and making a significant contribution to its development.”

Kazakh First Deputy Prime Minister Askar Mamin, Foreign Minister Kairat Abdrakhmanov, Minister for Investments and Development Zhenis Kassymbek, top managers of transport and logistics companies of China, the United Arab Emirates, Russia, Iran, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Lithuania, Moldova, Ukraine, Poland, as well as representatives of banking and expert circles attended the event.

Forum ranks Kazakhstan 26th out of 136 countries in quality of railroad infrastructure.

The event also included presentations by Chief Executive Officer of DP World Sultan Ahmed Bin Sulayem, CEO of Azerbaijan Railways Javid Qurbanov, CEO of Georgian Railways Mamuka Bakhtadze, Mayor of Chengdu sub-provincial city Luo Qiang, First Vice President of Russian Railways Alexander Misharin and others.

Kazakhstan donates \$300,000 to UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy

By Malika Orazgaliyeva

ASTANA – Kazakhstan is slated to make a targeted contribution of \$300,000 to the United Nations Trust Fund for Combating Terrorism. The funds will be used to implement the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, particularly the third phase of the project concerned with Central Asia. Kazakhstan will become the first country in the region to donate to the programme, providing more than 10 percent of the financing for the project.

The announcement was made by

Kazakh Deputy Foreign Minister Yerzhan Ashikbayev, who headed the nation’s delegation to New York to attend the UN Security Council regular meeting. The session focused on implementing UN Security Council Resolution 2253, Threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts, adopted on Dec. 17, 2015.

In his speech, Ashikbayev condemned the activities of international terrorist organisations and called for active and concerted action by the world community aimed at preventing acts of terror and bringing their organisers to justice. In this connection, he un-

derlined the importance of Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev’s initiative about creating a Global Anti-Terrorist Coalition (Network) under UN auspices announced at the General Assembly’s 70th session.

Ashikbayev confirmed Kazakhstan’s continued commitment to multilateral cooperation to prevent violent extremism and terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, in accordance with Nazarbayev’s proposals in the sphere of strengthening international peace and security.

“We are sure that the fight against this evil must be carried out jointly by all UN member states in

accordance with the key principles of the organisation,” he said. “We consider this contribution as part of our common response to the current security challenges in Central Asia.”

UN Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force and UN Counter-Terrorism Centre Director Jehangir Khan expressed gratitude for Astana’s decision and stressed the timeliness of the government’s support.

“Kazakhstan plays an important role in preventing violent extremism at the regional and global levels. This country, through significant and concrete steps, confirms its leadership in promoting inter-

cultural dialogue and harmony in the modern world,” he said.

The delegation also participated in the inaugural UN Ocean Conference held June 5-9 at its headquarters. The event was devoted to one of the goals of sustainable development, preserving and ensuring the wise use of the oceans, seas and their resources.

In his speech, Ashikbayev drew the audience’s attention to the problems of the Aral Sea and Caspian Sea. He noted only collective measures can help to reduce the consequences of the ecological catastrophe in the former, which affects not only

Central Asia, but also the whole world.

Ashikbayev also attended the “Maintenance of International Peace and Security – Preventive diplomacy and transboundary waters” debate chaired by Bolivian President Evo Morales. Ashikbayev noted Astana attaches great importance to the issues of water security, which is one of the priorities of Kazakhstan’s programme in the UN Security Council. He also briefed participants on regional transboundary water cooperation in Central Asia, stressing the need for close coordination of the efforts of neighbouring countries in the area.

ICRC ready to cooperate with SCO member states, top official says

By Chris Stanton

ASTANA – The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is ready to cooperate with Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) member states with the recent monumental signing of joint memoranda of understanding. ICRC Vice President Christine Beerli related her many years of personal insight into the direction the Red Cross Movement is moving and what lies ahead.

“In Kazakhstan, one of the common themes that we have and are working on together is an ultimate path to a nuclear ban treaty. But also in Kazakhstan we have a healthy partnership with the Ministry of Defence in the field of training,” she said in an exclusive interview with The Astana Times.

In partnership with the Ministry of Defence, the ICRC conducts joint drills alongside local soldiers to prepare them for peacekeeping operations in hot spots around the world under the direction of NATO.

“We also have a Red Crescent within Kazakhstan and we work together on numerous projects in



Christine Beerli

various fields of need. We have a steady line of communication that goes back and forth that adheres to the needs of Kazakhstan citizens,” she said.

Beerli spoke about her mission in regards to the SCO meeting held in the capital, Kazakhstan and the overall significance of the signing the memorandum of understanding.

“It is quite vital to have a good dialogue and close exchanges between quite a lot of entities, as well as regional organisations. The SCO is a very influential organisation and India and Pakistan will soon join as full members, which will cover about 43 percent of the popu-

lation of the world. It is a win-win situation for all of us, because it will open a dialogue for us to reach out to these countries more than ever before and that in turn allows us to respect and adhere to international humanitarian law, which is the main basis of our work,” she said speaking on the eve of the June 9 SCO summit where India and Pakistan did join as full members.

Beerli is convinced if the law was respected and upheld in all internal or international conflicts, the resulting situation would be much less difficult and traumatic for the civilian population caught in the crossfire. When one has the opportunity for a platform to sign an agreement of this stature and bring such knowledge to the world, one must do everything in his or her power to make it happen.

“It is my fourth time here so far, because we were and still are active representatives of the nuclear ban treaty meetings. This has been a topic of interest between us and Kazakhstan, but also in regards to the ICRC as well as for the whole worldwide Red Cross movement,” she said.

She added the organisation has

high hopes the United Nations General Assembly will discuss the treaty and that it will be signed in July.

“Our doctors have witnessed the devastating effects of these weapons, because our doctors were on site in 1945 and since then we have worked toward a nuclear ban treaty,” she said referring to the U.S. nuclear bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Beerli noted the organisation is active in many parts of the world, with medical stations for injured civilians with on-call surgeons at the central areas of operation.

“If we look a bit around the world, we see quite a lot of hot points at the moment. The ICRC is working in all of the big conflict zones around the world. Our biggest operation last year and the next two years will be both in Iraq and Syria and we are operating together with our Syrian Red Cross partners for inside help as well as our Iraqi Red Cross partners to give us the additional intel we need,” she said.

She added ICRC’s second biggest operation is in South Sudan along with the horn of Africa. The area is on the edge of famine not

just because of internal conflict, but also because of natural disasters that have brought critical devastation.

“One operation that I have to mention that is very close to my heart would be Yemen. It is such a brutal situation for the civilian population to endure. The medical facilities in a certain sense are crumbling down. Unfortunately, only 35 percent are in working mode at the moment. Cholera is one of the main infections that is affecting the population and children are more susceptible,” she added.

Beerli also went into detail about the way technology plays a vital role in aiding the civilian population to get the help it needs as quickly as possible through a simple app that can be downloaded onto smart phones.

“We are very convinced that we have to be ahead of the technological curve, because it helps us to bring the best and most up to date information we can without physically being at the site of the devastation,” she said.

“For example, Aleppo, Syria is a great example in a certain sense, because we used an old traditional out-

let of helping citizens to find clean water with the use of a modern tech tool. We geotagged all of the fountains that you can find throughout the city and then afterward we made an application that gives civilians assistance to locate their exact GPS coordinates,” she added.

Beerli emphasised the importance of the technology due to more and more war-torn areas that are quickly seeping into urban regions, which in turn brings power outages and stagnates once fully-operational water pipes. With the app, residents are able to find the closest clean water fountain within their vicinity.

“We are currently working with a corporate partner on smart grids; imagine this smart grid is connected to a big battery via solar panels. The electricity is stored in the solar panels, which in turn flows to the smart grid. Its benefits are that we are able to distribute the power evenly. It is only working in pilot mode for now, but the whole idea behind it is that in the future, we want to be able to have our surgical team work in remote areas which would not have been possible before,” she said.

Nation&Capital

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 28, 2017

PEOPLE

Nazarbayev opens World Kurultai of Kazakhs in Astana

B2

CULTURE

Nomad Way international festival shares nomadic culture through live music

B3

SPORTS

FC Astana to start UEFA Champions League qualification in Latvia

B7

EXPO 2017 picks up momentum as national days draw enthusiastic crowds



National days of countries participating in EXPO 2017, complete with theatrical performances, concerts and parades, draw fans to the exhibition site on a daily basis. For expanded coverage of the expo see Section C, as well as the editorial on A6.

Young man overcomes tragedy, gets inspired to help people with disabilities

By Kamila Zhumbabayeva

ASTANA – A car accident left 19-year-old Yeldos Bayalysbayev disabled years ago. He had a neck bone fracture, paralysis of limbs and a bedridden life. At least that was what doctors told him. But persistence, family support and care not only got Bayalysbayev up on his feet again but also inspired others like him to do the same at a rehabilitation centre he built and has been successfully running.

“Motivation happens when you make your ideas come to life and it helps people, makes their life easier. When I see happy looks on their faces, this is the strongest motivation for me and I want to work even more,” Bayalysbayev said in an interview for this story.

After years of daily trainings, he was able to sit down, then crawl on all fours and finally get up and walk small distances with help. Bayalysbayev held strong and optimistic in spite of difficult and traumatic moments.

“When Yeldos sat down in a wheelchair, we believed we had a real chance he will be able to walk. We were convinced that exercises give efficient results. We took all seating furniture out of the living room and placed paral-

lel bars and bolsters. We started teaching him to crawl but this wasn't easy. Two and half hours went to make it from one side of a room to another. He would start over and go on until late night,” Bayalysbayev's parents said in an interview on 365info.kz.

Bayalysbayev decided he wants to help others get up on their feet and opened a sports rehabilitation centre for people with disabilities. Back then Akim (Mayor) of Taldykorgan Yermek Alpysov supported this idea and allotted more than 300 square metres of premises for this purpose.

“I took part in the Business Road Map 2020 programme and won a three million tenge (US\$9,582) grant. We produced rehabilitation exercise equipment, but they are copies of Swedish rehab training equipment. All training devices were handmade,” Bayalysbayev said.

“At our Asar Centre for people with special needs, we try to make everybody get up on their feet and become independent. Thanks to special training equipment that we made in three years, more than 280 people from the entire Kazakhstan have gone through rehabilitation at our centre,” he noted.

Continued on Page B2

E-government app offers 83 services

Staff Report

ASTANA – Kazakhstan's electronic government mobile app

offers 83 services to its citizens, announced Deputy Minister of Information and Communication Kairat Balykbayev at a June 15 session of the 10th Astana Eco-

nomics Forum devoted to the digitalisation of world economies.

“It is necessary to note that the Global E-Government Forum named Kazakhstan's e-govern-

ment mobile app the best one in the one-stop shop nomination in terms of provision of public services,” he said.

Continued on Page B4

French connection: Kazakhstan's modern history captured by French journalist

By Dmitry Lee

ASTANA – A book by French independent journalist Lise Barcellini highlighting Kazakhstan's prominent figures and published by a private French publisher is intended to serve as a connection to the Francophone world and break some clichés.

Barcellini moved to Kazakhstan two years ago with her husband from France, and had to quit her job for the relocation. However, having been a journalist at France's top television channels, she refused to just kill time in the steppe country with manicure sessions. She wanted to make her time in Kazakhstan as useful as possible, she said.

The result was her book, “Kazakhstan, Young Nation Between China, Russia and Europe.”

“I wanted to find a way to meet the [local] people, not just to mingle with the foreigners,” said Barcellini in an exclusive interview with The Astana Times. “I was a journalist before, so I decided to do something to use my skills. I found this way to talk about Kazakhstan. I found a publisher in France and did my research here and met with the people.”

The book of 41 interviews tells a modern tale of a young nation: 41 people, voices and stories.

The people she interviewed for the book reveal the country's



Lise Barcellini (L) and Karipbek Kuyukov.

human, ethnic, historic and geographic diversity and include such prominent figures as Olzhas Suleimenov, poet, diplomat and leader of the Nevada-Semipalatinsk international anti-nuclear movement; Toktar Aubakirov, the country's first astronaut; Dossym Satpayev, a political analyst; Rashid Nugmanov, film director and producer; Karipbek Kuyukov, honorary ambassador of the ATOM Project and anti-nuclear testing advocate, and many others. Some interviews were anonymous.

During the presentation of the book in Astana, Barcellini noted that back in her native country, Kazakhstan is still mostly associated with the 2006 feature “Borat:

Cultural Learnings of America for Make Benefit Glorious Nation of Kazakhstan,” which is a complete misrepresentation of the country, she believes.

In her book she takes a new approach and sheds light not only on the country's natural resources but also on its human resources.

Barcellini says she tried to stay as neutral as possible while writing the book.

“I have no sponsors, I have no links with the French embassy here, I am not linked with Kazakhstan's embassy in France, I don't want any political support in any case, no companies or money. I was not paid, but this book was published by a private company

called Atelier Henry Dougier, to which I am very grateful. So I didn't earn anything by doing this, but I also didn't lose anything.”

Barcellini is going back to France after her mission is done in Kazakhstan and will return to being a television reporter.

“I am a journalist because I love meeting people. Television is meeting people, connecting with them but not writing. Writing a book, on the contrary, is harder as you have to sit down, reflect and write your thoughts down. It's a very different type of work and was completely new for me. I really liked it so maybe in the future I will write more books,” she said in conclusion.

ATOM Project Honorary Ambassador Karipbek Kuyukov, who had travelled to the capital from Karaganda just for the presentation, following the presentation said: “[Barcellini] wrote a book about people that she believes were meant to be in it. The fact that she thought of me when selecting candidates means a lot to me. I am very thankful to her for this gesture. Many French people will read this book and discover Kazakhstan's prominent figures like Olzhas Suleimenov and Toktar Aubakirov – all these people are the heroes of Kazakhstan and played a crucial role in the establishment of our independence.”

Sanofi healthcare products spread in Kazakh households

By Dmitry Lee

ASTANA – Sanofi, one of the world's five largest pharmaceutical companies, is celebrating its 20th anniversary in Kazakhstan this year. In an exclusive interview with The Astana Times, Central Asia General Manager Ranga Welaratne took a resolute stand for company's highest-quality product.

“I would rather lose my entire business than lose the value of my company!” he said.

French-based Sanofi is a life-science company represented in

more than 100 countries and employing more than 100,000 individuals. Sanofi Central Asia has a staff of more than 250 in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

“Everything you see made by Sanofi is highly ethical and highly compliant,” he said. “This year, we celebrate 20 years since Sanofi came to Kazakhstan.”

The healthcare firm is considered the leader in emerging Central Asian markets. Its mission is to bring innovation to patients across the globe, he added.

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THINGS TO WATCH & PLACES TO GO

PARK INN BY RADISSON

June 29 at 7 p.m. Presentation of JUST cosmetics

ASTANA STATE CIRCUS

July 2-6 at 4 p.m. Echo of Asia, int'l festival

ASTANA BALLET

July 5 at 7 p.m. Black Burka, ballet and show
July 6 at 7 p.m. Romeo and Juliette, ballet

ASTANA OPERA

June 29 at 7 p.m. World Ballet, superstars gala
July 3-4 at 7 p.m. 10th Turkic music festival
July 6 at 6 p.m. “Happy Birthday, Dear Capital!” Gala Concert dedicated to the Capital's Day

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 28, 2017

Nazarbayev opens World Kurultai of Kazakhs in Astana

By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – Kazakhstan President Nursultan Nazarbayev opened June 23 the fifth World Kurultai of Kazakhs in Astana, which takes place in the capital within the framework of EXPO 2017. Nearly 850 delegates and guests, including 350 ethnic Kazakhs from 39 countries, arrived in Astana to take part.

“I want to address Kazakhs from the rostrum with lines from a poem – every Kazakh is the one and only for me. I send my warmest greetings to our compatriots living abroad,” Nazarbayev said in his opening remarks.

He noted that every Kazakh contributes to the development of Kazakhstan regardless of where they live.

Established in 1992 and taking place every five years, the general



idea behind the creation of Kurultai, which means congregation in Kazakh, is to unite Kazakhs all over the world, promote Kazakh

culture and traditions as they can be subject to assimilation and let Kazakhs know that they are welcome in their historical homeland.

Eighty percent of all delegates this year are taking part in the Kurultai for the first time. Unlike previous years, this time the organisers put the focus on Kazakh youth residing in foreign countries – 60 percent of delegates are young people not older than 35, who succeeded in various fields abroad.

The delegates will focus on issues related to the funding of Kazakh cultural centres abroad, various forms of assistance to Kazakh diasporas and measures to encourage young Kazakhs from abroad to study in Kazakhstan.

According to Nazarbayev, one of the many ways to unite Kazakhs is to accelerate the introduction of the Latin alphabet. “Transition of the Kazakh language to Latin alphabet is a step closer to greater integration in global science and education system and to our spiritual unity. On the post-Soviet space,

we use Cyrillic, our compatriots in China use the Arabic script and our brothers in the West use Latin. When we speak to each other, it is one language, but when it comes to reading, we have three different languages. We cannot understand each other. We become estranged,” Nazarbayev noted, as reported by Kazinform news agency.

With the potential of the Latin alphabet to unite Kazakhs around the world, Nazarbayev believes the transition can occur earlier than 2025 initially announced in his state-of-the-nation address in 2012. “I believe it is not difficult, because our children learn English since the first grade. All schools have English language classes, which use the Latin alphabet. The young generation will have no problem with that. We will not have any problems either,” Nazarbayev added.

Initially scheduled for 2016, Kurultai was postponed to coincide with a major international event now taking place in Astana – EXPO 2017, – as delegates expressed their interest in attending the exhibition.

As part of their visit, delegates will visit pavilions at the expo, Astana’s sights and attractions and Ethnic Village complex, which brings visitors closer to the Kazakh culture and traditions. They will also take part in round tables and seminars organized by the country’s ministries.

Approximately one million ethnic Kazakhs have returned to Kazakhstan since the country gained its independence in 1991. Last year, Kazakhstan simplified citizenship application procedures for ethnic Kazakhs, which increased the number of Kazakh families returning to Kazakhstan eight times.

Young man overcomes tragedy, gets inspired to help people with disabilities

Continued from Page B1

Colossal results took place within this period of time, according to Bayalyshbayev. Fifty-five attendees stood up and began walking with the help of a walking frame, 50 learned crawling, 60 to 70 people were able to work with training machines on their own.

Apart from improving their health, many were developing their creative skills too.

“We began arranging performances. While during trainings, we had our own team formed and we began performing on concerts. Turned out, our centre had many talents, someone can sing well, another person composes poems and some can dance. We even have our own KVN [comedy and game show] team and they had already placed high on a regional level and are at a national level now,” Bayalyshbayev states.

He has been involved with swimming from early childhood. Bayalyshbayev was travelling to Lake Alakol every year after his trauma as he believes the lake and its famous curative mud have health benefits; salty waters are good for joints and musculoskeletal system recovery and water rich with minerals has a whole Mendeleev periodic table in it.

“Having visited the lake I noticed one can rarely meet people with disabilities resting on the shore and I fell to thinking ‘what is the matter?’ The issue was that there wasn’t an access to

the shore. Platforms are needed for people on wheelchairs to get around with ease. Many boarding houses for tourists are available there but not one of them fits people with disabilities,” Bayalyshbayev said.

He had an idea at that moment to make it more accessible and have a specialised boarding house. To make that happen, Bayalyshbayev prepared a business plan and applied for the Startup Bolashak contest. He landed 2nd place after beating thousands of

other contestants and made his plan come to life.

“Not just people with disabilities used this platform but also retired people. All were thankful,” the young man mentioned.

One of the biggest wins was a grant contract for \$82,818 at an international contest in 2017. The money went to purchasing advanced training equipment for rehabilitation from Italy, Poland, Germany, the U.S. and China. This, according to the entrepreneur, moved the rehabilitation

process up to a new level and quality.

“My motto is one does not need to wait when someone will do it but take matters in own hands, solve this problem and help the government to contribute to society! Many opportunities are available now to realise your idea. There are grants, contests and so on. Only don’t sit still at one place or take pot luck especially at a young age but work on your goals!” Bayalyshbayev added.



Photo credit: Shingoliz

Sanofi healthcare products spread in Kazakh households

Continued from Page B1

“Sanofi has been growing its business in this part of the world [in the past 55 years] and such consumer healthcare products as No Spa (equivalent to Drotaverine), Essentiale Forte and Maa-lox are household items in Kazakhstan produced by Sanofi that every Kazakh citizen knows,” said Welaratne.

The company supplies consumer healthcare or non-prescription products to Kazakhstan, as well as vaccines and medicine for diabetes and cardiovascular and rare diseases.

“This is also possible due to Kazakhstan’s healthcare system, as the government funds certain therapeutic areas for the population, for example diabetes products. Insulins as well as vaccines are bought by the government and distributed through proper channels to patients,” he said.

Every Kazakh citizen has come in contact and is aware of these widely-used products by the time they are adolescents, as each child is vaccinated by Sanofi products at birth.

“The children’s vaccines are as safe as they can be,” Welaratne stressed. “My children get the same vaccine. These vaccines used in Kazakhstan are the same vaccines used in Australia, France and Germany. No matter the location, Sanofi products are exactly the same everywhere. I want to be very clear on this point – Sanofi quality standards and compliance undergo the strictest regulations, including transportation. From the time it is manufactured to the time it is vaccinated, the product is temperature-controlled.”

The company wants to establish good relations with Kazakh authorities and the population.

“[With this in mind] I feel like asking – ‘How can we help?’ This is the [meaning] of our existence. So, today we are trying to work with the Ministry of Healthcare and Social Protection and other authorities to try to build a partnership that will enable us to bring our high-quality products at a very affordable price and these are not easy things to do,” he said.

Although Welaratne has travelled extensively, he admitted knowing little about this part of the world until assuming the post in Kazakhstan.

“I didn’t have many impressions about [the country], to be honest, before coming to Kazakhstan. I read a couple of books before coming. I was pleasantly surprised about Central Asia and what I observed since being here, in particular about the people and culture,” he said.

Welaratne and his family arrived in Kazakhstan in January 2016. The people, he noted, were his biggest eye-opener.

“Before coming to Kazakhstan, I read a book called ‘Why Russians



Ranga Welaratne

don’t Smile’ and when I came here in the middle of the winter it was very cold and I did find people who weren’t really smiley. But once you get to know the people, you realise they’re very family-oriented and very warm people beyond the surface,” he said.

A native of Sri Lanka, Welaratne studied in Australia and graduated from an engineering and business school (MBA) there. He joined Sanofi in the country as a consultant and six months later was offered a full-time job.

“Sanofi had the qualities I was looking for in a company,” he said. “It’s a multi-national company with fundamentals like understanding and serving the patients and in an ethical way.”

Kazakhstan is Welaratne’s seventh Sanofi assignment. He joined the company in 2004 and had held various posts in Australia, Belgium, China, France, South Korea and the Netherlands. Commenting from experience, he noted policies in emerging markets can sometimes be a challenge for companies like Sanofi.

“The policies tend to change quickly and this is not only about Kazakhstan and this can be challenging. The funding mechanisms are not defined sometimes and pharmaceutical reforms are happening quite often, so one needs to be able to adapt the business to these challenges. There are opportunities on the other hand, being in an emerging market you get both opportunities and challenges,” he said.

“In the countries like Kazakhstan, the ecosystem in the pharmaceutical market is not mature yet but developing at a fast pace for in the past few years. Multi-national companies have been here only in the past 15 to 20 years, as opposed to such countries as the U.S. or France that have had these companies for over 150 years, so the ecosystem there is quite mature,” he added.

Welaratne noted the company is preparing for the June 28 international conference on modern approaches to managing socially-significant diseases. The conference is being coordinated with the support of the Kazakh Ministry of Healthcare, the French Embassy in Kazakhstan and Sanofi. The organisers are expecting experts from Russia, the International Diabetes Federation and the World Health Organisation.

NU Career Centre assists graduates in landing a job

By Dana Omirgazy

ASTANA – Nazarbayev University (NU) held its third graduation ceremony last month, awarding 728 bachelor’s and master’s degrees and for the first time presenting nine PhDs.

With sheepskins in hand, what are the students’ next steps?

According to statistics from 2015-2016 provided by the NU Career and Advising Centre, 54.3 percent of alumni took jobs after graduation and 36.4 percent continued their studies. For the former, the centre is facilitating employment in the modern competitive labour market, both local and international, said Centre Director Yevgeniya Kim.

“The centre launched its activities in 2012 to ensure comprehensive support for students and graduates in planning their careers. We are providing unbiased and updated information about the current labour market and develop-



Evgeniya Kim

ing graduates’ professional skills in cooperation with NU employer partners. We work with alumni and help the NU Alumni Association to develop an understanding of how important it is to maintain interest and involve alumni in the life of the university,” she told The Astana Times. Last year, the centre benefited significantly by implementing CAC CareerNet, a career management system.

“Both students and alumni have gained access to the personal webpage to look at employment and internship listings, register for work-

shops and trainings and schedule appointments with career advisors and campus recruiters. They can also upload resumes into a searchable database, which our employers can then use to recruit applicants,” she added.

This year, the centre also started a career advising programme with sessions available to students and alumni.

“We encourage the students to use self-assessment tools to examine their values, personality, interests and abilities, and then, based on the results, discuss possible options to find the most suitable careers. Our career advisors help with resume critique, job search techniques and preparation for necessary interviews, especially for fresh graduates once they enter the job market,” said Kim.

The centre intends to continue sharing its experience during the annual Eurasian Higher Education Leaders’ Forum (EHEL) hosted by NU, aimed at bringing together experts in education to create a platform for an interac-

tive dialogue on the challenges of the modern world. This year, the centre focused on ways to enhance graduate employability through creating employer relations.

“Certainly, employers tend to want things to be done their way when it comes to competencies, skills and attitudes toward work issues, while universities expect students to develop and exercise critical judgement. Here comes an important role of the centre to create a ‘win-win’ situation. The days where the mission of the career centre was ‘placement’ are gone. Likewise, universities are focusing more on career education to teach students how to manage and take responsibility for their career paths. We look at our services to students as providing resources, opportunities for networking and, most importantly, insight to help in determining and pursuing their career aspirations. The students feel safe and confident in the driver’s seat while navigating their career future,” said Kim.

CULTURE

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 28, 2017

Nomad Way international festival shares nomadic culture through live music

By Dana Omirgazy

ASTANA – The June 11-15 first international Festival of Nomadic Peoples at the recently launched Ethno Aul near the city's hippodrome has helped share elements of nomadic culture, tengrinews.kz reports.

Kazakh bands Tigran, Hapanasasa and singer NAsia, as well as the Abbas band from Uzbekistan and the Argymak band from Bashkortostan performed ethnic folk-rock to introduce the audience to the freedom-loving culture of nomads.

Vice Minister of Culture and Sport Aktoty Raimkulova believes that Nomad Way will become a favourite festival of local people.

"The festival brings together most amazing bands of different directions – ethno, rock, jazz, etc. We are very pleased to welcome guests from different countries of our commonwealth, from the (Shanghai Cooperation Organisation) countries, as well as from European countries. ... With a



great pleasure, we will present our national (musicians) who are the

brightest representatives of ethnic music today. I think this festival

will become a favourite holiday destination for Astana residents

and guests. I believe they will receive a lot of positive impressions and emotions from visiting Nomad Way," she noted before the event.

"The Nomad Way Festival is one of the brands of the Spirit of Tengri project. Nomad Way was born thanks to cooperation with the Ministry of Culture and Sport. I would like to express gratitude to Minister Arystanbek Muhamediuly. ... The legacy of nomadic culture, especially the musical heritage, is one of the undisclosed terra incognita for the whole planet. Our task is to make this richness of folklore creativity the property of the whole planet," Alash Media Group Chief Executive Officer and the chief organiser of the event Battyr Kazybayev said.

"These bands are very popular; they are recognisable in their countries. Therefore, there will be literally a burst of stunning musical art. Live sound, live performance and energy. You will plunge into a rich world of stunning sounds, amazing philosophy, which is the legacy of our great steppe," Kazybayev added.

Nomad Way gathers artists and bands from different countries of the Silk Road. DJ Nariman Isenov, Tigran, Aldaspan and Magic of Nomads bands, as well as duet of Yedil Khusainov and Satzhan Project represented Kazakhstan. Argymak and Zaman bands performed at the festival site from Bashkortostan. Namgar and Shono teams represented Russia's Buryatia region. In addition, the festival featured Nordic Namgar team. Hungarian Tilla Torok's Band also performed at the event.

Gulzada team took part in the festival from Kyrgyzstan, Abbas band represented Uzbekistan, Avesto group came from Tajikistan. Turkey was represented by Baba Zula. The Turkic peoples of Russia represented five regions at once: Talgat Khasenov performed from Tatarstan, Chyltys Tannagasheva represented Gornaya Shoria, Bolot Bairyshev and Alexey Chichakov were from Altai, Ayarkhaan was from Yakutia, and Radik Tyulush and Chalama performed on behalf of Tuva.

Jackie Chan enjoyed his trip to Astana

Staff Report

Actor, producer and director Jackie Chan did not ask for a payment nor a rider for his visit to Astana, said Kazakhstan broadcasting station chairperson Yerlan Karin.

Karin said that the plans only included Chan's participation in the opening of the festival of Chinese cinema. However, Chan went on to meet with people, held a press conference and was a talk-show guest over the course of half a day.

"What's more surprising is that his arrival in Astana did not cost us anything! He flew on a private plane, with friends, no one paid him any fees, and he did not give us his rider. Even refused to be met in a luxury car but asked for an ordinary minivan to travel around the city with friends. Local Astana

restaurateurs were so happy to see their idol that even for dinners we did not have to pay anything. It was planned that he would stay in Kazakhstan for a couple of days, but because of the tight schedule it turned out to be only half a day," Karin wrote in his Instagram.

According to Karin, the only expenses incurred by the Kazakh side were souvenirs and tickets for EXPO 2017.

"Jackie is an amazing, very modest, good-natured, sincere and cheerful person. He didn't turn anyone away from a joint photo,

joked and laughed," said Karin. "He liked it in our country and he promised to come again soon for a longer time to work in joint projects. We are looking forward to that."

Chan visited Astana for the opening of the festival of Chinese cinema. At a press conference, he said that he wanted to come to Kazakhstan for a longer time, especially after he saw pictures of beautiful places in Kazakhstan. He is planning to shoot a film in Kazakhstan. He also shared his impressions about singer Dimash Kudaibergenov.

At the festival, Chan sang a song in his native language and was joined on stage by Kudaibergenov. The two first met in China when the Kazakh singer participated in the contest "I'm a Singer."



Akan Satayev's film named Best Feature Film at New York Eurasian Film Festival

By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – "Road to Mother" directed by Akan Satayev won the Best Feature Film award at

its power that helped young man Ilyas to withstand numerous life challenges far from home. The film captures one of the most difficult and tragic periods in Kazakhstan's history – collectivisa-



Astana Opera ballet artists stand out in international competition in New York

By Dana Omirgazy

ASTANA – Astana Opera theatre artists gained a double victory at the June 5-10 Valentina Kozlova International Ballet Competition (VKIBC) in New York, according to the theatre's press service.

Principal Dancer of the Astana Opera ballet Bakhtiyar Adamzhan became the first winner of the Grand Prix in the Classical Dance category in the history of the competition. Another soloist of Astana Opera ballet Serik Nakyspekov won a bronze medal.

Honorary chairperson of the authoritative jury was choreographer Mikko Nissinen (Finland) and chairperson of the judges was ballet master and People's Artist of Russia Andris Liepa.

"It was a very tough competition. There were serious competitors from Korea, Japan, the U.S., Brazil, France and Canada. I presented four classical variations and one modern dance. For my final performance, I presented a brilliant Diana and Actaeon variation from the Esmeralda ballet by C. Pugni. I would like to express my gratitude for the support to our state, including the Ministry of Culture and Sports and the Foundation of the First President of Kazakhstan. Having the opportunity to represent our art abroad, we are implementing the tasks that the President has set for us: to promote modern Kazakh culture in the world," Adamzhan said.

Following the competition, the artist was invited to participate in

gala concerts at prestigious world stages.

Nakyspekov presented a modern dance in his own production, which was praised by the jury members.

"I was a little nervous before the first round, but it passed as soon as I went onstage. This was not my first visit to New York, it is a city of great opportunities, but, being there, I really missed Astana and my native theatre. In addition to the modern dance, I presented James' variation from the La Sylphide ballet, a variation from the Le Corsaire ballet and debuted with the variation from the Talisman ballet," Nakyspekov said.

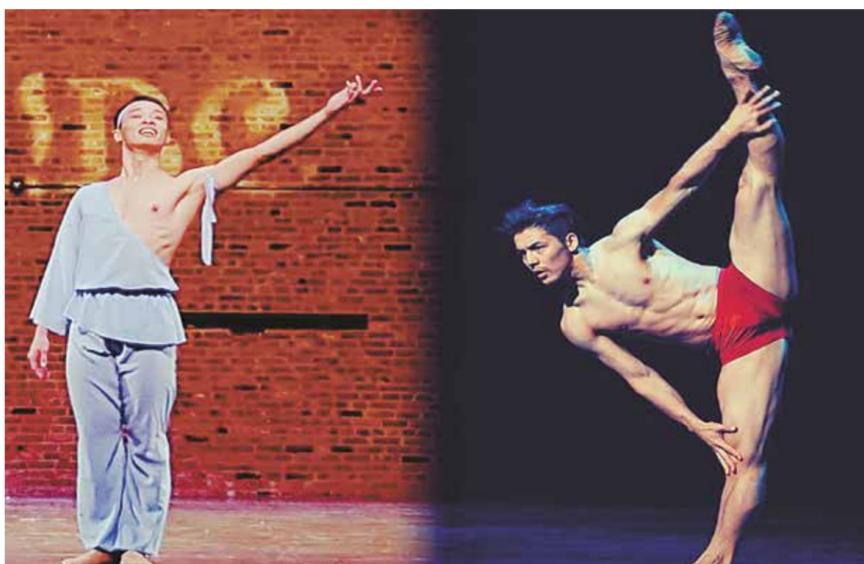
Now, Adamzhan and Nakyspekov have started preparing for the challenging contest featuring 200 participants in

mark the 90th anniversary of outstanding contemporary choreographer, artistic director of competition Yuri Grigorovich.

ADAMZHAN: "It was a very tough competition. There were serious competitors from Korea, Japan, the U.S., Brazil, France and Canada."

Moscow. The International Ballet Competition and Contest of Choreographers is one of the most prestigious ballet shows in the world. This major event will

The international competition precedes the Year of Russian ballet and the 200th birth anniversary of great ballet master Marius Petipa.



the June 16-18 fifth New York Eurasian Film Festival. The competition brought together 33 films from 18 countries.

"I am pleased to announce that our film "Road to Mother" was named best feature film at New York Eurasian Film Festival," Satayev wrote on his personal Instagram page.

The film's general producer Aliya Nazarbayeva, the youngest daughter of Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev, also received Eurasian Women in Cinema award and Altnai Nogerbek playing one of leading female roles won Best Actress award.

The New York Eurasian Film Festival seeks to promote and strengthen cultural cooperation and interaction between the U.S. and the region. Every year it brings short films, feature films and documentaries from Eurasia to New York.

"Road to Mother" premiered in non-competitive section of the Moscow International Film Festival in June 2016 with Kazakhstan's premiere taking place in Almaty in September.

The picture tells the story of a mother's unconditional love and

tion, famine, World War II and post war years, which took the lives of millions of young people and destroyed the lives of many more.

The film's plot is based on the story that Satayev once heard from his parents, theatre actors who toured across the country in 1980s.

Filming started in 2015 and took place in Kazakhstan, Belarus and Azerbaijan.

"Road to Mother" has already received several international and national awards. It won the grand prize at the Eurasian Bridge Film Festival in Yalta and Tulpar prize from the National Academy of Motion Picture Arts at the Almaty International Film Festival. It received critical acclaim at the Moscow International Film Festival.

Akan Satayev is a prominent Kazakh director. He directed several successful films. Among them are the historical film "Zhauzhurek Myn Bala" ("Thousand Young Warriors") and one of the highest-grossing films in the history of the Kazakh cinema "Reketir" ("Racketeer").

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 28, 2017

Polish delegation meets State Secretary, opens exhibition



By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – A delegation from Poland is on a three-day visit to Kazakhstan to visit EXPO 2017 and celebrate the June 17 Day of Poles. Headed by Deputy Senate Marshal Maria Koc, the delegation met with Kazakh State Secretary Gulshara Abdykalikova June 15 and unveiled the exhibition dedicated to Polish army commander Gen. Wladyslaw Anders.

The delegation consists of members of the Polish parliament including Secretary of State and Prime Minister's Plenipotentiary for International Dialogue Anna Maria Anders, the daughter of the general who is regarded as hero in modern Poland credited with saving more than one hundred thousands of Poles during World War II.

"The purpose of my visit is primarily to attend the expo. In our pavilion, we want to present Poland as a rapidly growing country that devotes significant attention to innovations. Economic ties are growing, but we need to strengthen cooperation in this field," said Koc, as quoted by khabar.kz.

"We are here to support Poland at the expo. We are here also to develop closer relations between Kazakhstan and Poland," added Anders.

During the meeting, the sides discussed bilateral ties between the nations and prospects for further

political, economic, cultural and humanitarian cooperation.

Abdykalikova stressed the contribution of the 32,000 Polish diaspora in developing Kazakhstan's socio-political and economic sectors. She expressed gratitude to her colleagues for their participation in EXPO 2017 marking the importance of Polish achievements in the field of alternative energy. Abdykalikova also congratulated the country on its selection as a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council for 2018-2019, where it will sit together with Kazakhstan during one year.

The same day as part of the visit, Anders opened the exhibition in the Alzhir memorial complex devoted to her father's army and victims of political repression and totalitarianism. He was a former NKVD prisoner and commanded the nation's forces during World War II.

"We are at this exhibition to speak about the history of the Polish people who are here. There are many Poles here (in Kazakhstan)," she said.

The exhibition marks the 75th anniversary of Anders Army initiated by the signing of the Sikorski-Maysky agreement in 1941 between the Soviet Union and the Polish government in exile in the U.K.

The fate of Polish people who fell victim to Soviet and German occupation beginning in 1939 is

captured on the walls of the exhibit. Many Poles named enemies of the state were deported to labour camps in the most remote parts of the Soviet Union, including ALZHIR, where Polish women, mothers, sisters or wives of enemies of the state, were sentenced to five-eight years. Thousands were brutally killed in the Katyn massacre carried out by NKVD in 1940.

Many Polish people, including officers and civilians throughout the Soviet Union, joined Anders Army as their only hope to escape death in concentration camps. The army saved the lives of more than 120,000 people.

"Last year we came across the idea of representing a piece of history, the history of my father's army, Gen. Anders Army, that was formed in the Soviet Union and then came out through Siberia, the Middle East, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan and finally ended up in the battle of Monte Cassino in Italy. It is important to promote the history of my father, but also I feel that for many years that part of history was neglected," said Anders.

The collection of photos and information presented in the exhibition is the result of the hard work of leading Polish historical and archival organisations, including the Archive of New Acts, Central Military Archives, Institute of Poland, General Sikorski Museum in London, Polish Army Museum and National Digital Archives.

E-gov app offers 83 services

Continued from Page B1

Balykbayev said Kazakhstan has the infrastructure necessary for e-government in the offering of more than 700 types of services in electronic format and through the e-government portal.

All licences in Kazakhstan have been issued only in electronic format since 2012, he said.

Balykbayev also said the number of public services offered through the Centres for Public Services (so called TSONs) grows annually. The centres provided more than 26 million services in 2016.

Kazakhstan's citizens have three options to receive public services – the electronic government portal, Centres for Public Services and Government for Citizens State Corporation.

With the idea of electronic government initially announced by President Nursultan Nazarbayev, the electronic government portal was established in 2006 with registered users now equalling six million. Among many benefits of electronic government, including mobility and time, it also contributes to fighting corruption, as it eliminates personal interaction be-

tween service provider and service recipient.

The country's efforts in improving its electronic government system fostered Kazakhstan's high performance in international rankings. For instance, Kazakhstan was ranked 33th among 193 countries in the United Nations E-Government Survey 2016.

It also held 39th position among 139 countries in the World Economic Forum's Networked Readiness Index 2016 that assesses how countries use communication and technologies to foster competitiveness of their economies.

ASTANA TOWER Business Center awarded BREEAM In-Use Excellent rating

Astana Tower Ishletme LLP announces that the ASTANA TOWER Business Center has obtained a BREEAM In-Use certification applied to existing non-residential buildings. The first A class office building met high international technical standards to achieve the highest BREEAM ratings: "Very Good" in Asset (performance characteristics of the building) and "Excellent" in Building Management (practices related to the operation of the building).

BREEAM In-Use assessment assists the improvement of the ex-

isting buildings and its operational efficiency. The ASTANA TOWER Business Center prior to receiving the certification, introduced a comprehensive environmentally friendly policy for the building's operation.

Tenants and visitors of the business center enjoy the most favourable working conditions: a thermal comfort, air quality, natural lighting and high safety standards. The second floor of the building offers a convenient multifunctional space for social interaction. A convenient parking area and six bus stops are

within a walking distance from the business center.

Zhanar Yseneeva, General Director of Astana Tower Ishletme LLP said, "Creating comfortable conditions for tenants is one of our priorities in building management. However, the environmental efficiency – energy saving and technologies reducing the environmental impact – is no less vital. We have introduced the advanced technologies that allowed us to meet high environmental standards and obtain certification."

Kazakh-built high-speed electric locomotives to be exported to Belarus

Staff Report

ASTANA – The Kazakh Invest National Company announced plans to export 20 passenger electric locomotives to Belarus at the recent meeting of the Trade Mission of Kazakh Producers in Minsk. The event was held with the participation of Belarusian Chamber of Commerce and Industry and export contracts worth \$20 million were signed.

"We are currently working on the electrification of the railways in Belarus and we are interested in Kazakhstan's electric locomotives," said Belarusian Railways Chief Engineer Valeriy Shubadarev.

Ten domestic manufacturers of

food products, construction materials, machine-building, metallurgical, chemical products and more than 70 Belarusian companies took part in the forum.

"We discussed issues of delivering Kazakhstan's passenger electric locomotives to Belarus and we plan to export 20 KZ4AT passenger electric locomotives for the needs of the Belarusian Railways," said Deputy Director General of Electric Locomotive Manufacturing Plant Andrei Yershov.

Management of KazAzot and Temir-Service, Kazakhstan agrochemical producers also met with Belarusian Deputy Minister of Agriculture and Food Vladimir Grakun as part of the business forum. Following the negotiations, it

was agreed that Kazakh companies will be included in the register of fertilizer suppliers for the needs of agricultural producers of Belarus.

Kazakhstan will also supply the food products for the Vitalyur, the largest Belarusian supermarket chain.

The KZ4AT, a high-speed electric locomotive at a top speed of up to 200 km/h had its initial track test in July 2016. The new single-section multifunctional locomotive was developed by Alstom, a French multinational company, and has the widest range of operation in the world. The convenient conditions, including climate control, seat heating, floor heating, microwave, refrigerator, toilet and other services are provided in the cab for the driver and assistant.



National Bank chief lays out plans to improve banking sector

By Zhaniya Urankayeva

ASTANA – The National Bank of Kazakhstan (NB) recently announced the conditions for the shareholders on the mandatory injection of funds into the capital. This was stated during the joint session of the Chambers of the Parliament by NB Chairman Daniyar Akishev.

According to Akishev, to find out the real situation within the banks, it is planned to assess the quality of their assets.

"The problem arises in the fact that the shareholders of the bank must make significant injections into the capital, the NB understands that at present there are not enough opportunities for a single infusion of significant amounts of funds in the economy both from shareholders and other

owners of the bank," said Akishev.

Akishev also voiced the scheme of activity proposed by the NB, according to which the bank is completing the preparation of a programme for improving the banking sector.

"The scheme assumes the support of banks from the side of NB for the provision of resources but on a mandatory basis in exchange for the proportional participation of shareholders. That is, if the state gives money, shareholders commit themselves for a specific period of time and put a proportional amount in the form of investments in the capital. Currently, these periods are being discussed," Akishev added.

According to the scheme, the banks will receive a significant inflow of capital in the next few years. They will be able to solve

those problems and write off the loans that they have accumulated and recognise the losses that they may not have shown. By the end of the year, it is planned to implement a programme, according to which banks that have identified the loss and provide capital, will meet all international criteria.

"After that we can count on improving the ratings of banks and their financial condition. This is the exact banking sector that will perform the task set by the NB and the government," concluded Akishev.

On March 2, President Nursultan Nazarbayev signed a decree on the allocation of money from the national fund for the improvement of the banking sector and decided to allocate a targeted transfer to the national budget for 2017 of 1.9 trillion tenge (US \$5.8 billion) for the recovery of the banking sector.

Kazakhstan continues with green energy investments

By Chris Stanton

ASTANA – Kazakhstan has continued investments in renewable energy sources and will to expand these volumes as it moves forward.

So far, the investment share does not exceed 1 percent, according to an alternative energy study completed by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe and the International Energy Agency. The study was conducted in 17 nations, where experts observed a significant drop in investments.

Authorities in the renewable energy field consider subsidising the energy industry as one of the factors hampering the development of alternative energy sources in Kazakhstan. Arfour Zervos, chairperson of the Energy Policy Network for

Renewable Energy, summarised the report as it relates to the country.

"One of the main goals of this report is to identify gaps in the regions. It is very important to have data that will form the basis of renewable energy and energy efficiency efforts in the region. Lack of investment in the development of renewable energy is among the negative aspects. Subsidies for electricity persist in the regions. This complicates the development of renewable energy sources. Low oil prices also inhibit the situation," he said.

Renewable energy production volumes will grow three times compared to current indicators, according to Kazakhstan's Ministry of Energy. In three years, more than 100 alternative energy facilities will operate in the country compared to the 50 currently in

use. The facilities will include 23 wind energy plants, 17 solar power stations and 13 hydroelectric power stations, as well as several plants producing biogas, an alternative energy source.

According to the numbers, special focus is currently being placed on wind power facilities, which is largely due to the unique natural conditions of the country's regions. For example, the average annual wind speed reaches nine metres per second in the capital and Fort-Shevchenko, on the territory of the Dzungarian Gate and Shelek Corridor. The areas, which measure approximately 50,000 square kilometres or 2 percent of the country's total area, can produce a trillion kilowatt-hours per year, which significantly exceeds the nation's energy needs.

SOCIETY

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 28, 2017

Surgicorps conduct free life-changing surgeries in Kazakhstan

By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – Doctors from the U.S.-based Surgicorps International conducted 72 free reconstructive surgeries during its May 19-25 mission in Astana.

American plastic surgeons together with local surgeons from the Maternity and Childhood Care National Centre treated children with severe congenital facial malformations, such as cleft lip and palate and burn scars.

Students from Nazarbayev University School of Medicine (NU-SOM) headed by Massimo Pignatelli took part in the operations as volunteers. They also served as interpreters between Surgicorps team and local doctors.

"I believe that this is a unique chance to be in a surgery room with one of the best surgeons and professionals and watch how their knowledge, skills and passion to work changes the lives of people," NU-SOM student Dias Argandykov said.



Photo credit: kz.nasembassy.gov

Sophomore medical student Yekaterina Khamzina also shared her interest in this programme. "To work with Surgicorps International is an excellent opportunity to learn from some of the most committed doctors in the U.S. An opportunity to observe surgeries

and assist the team in the surgery room makes it a valuable experience. It is also a great chance to help and apply my knowledge in practice," she added.

The main mission was Surgicorps' third trip to Kazakhstan after their two introductory trips

in October 2016 and March 2017, during which they identified significant demand in reconstructive surgeries and compiled the list of children scheduled for the operations.

Headed by Surgicorps founder Jack Demos, 12 doctors served

the needs of Kazakh patients including Tara Burns, Melinda Handler, Betty Hearne, David Kim, Guy Leone, Aamir Siddiqui, James Terman and Anna Wooten. The group included surgeons, anesthesiologists, therapists, paramedics, nurses, surgical assistants, physiotherapists and pathologists.

This unique project initiated by the Asyl Bala Foundation with the help of the International Assistance Group and Surgicorps team seeks to exchange experience and knowledge between local surgeons and U.S. colleagues as well as decrease the disability rate among children in Kazakhstan.

Surgicorps International is a non-profit organisation founded by Jack Demos in 1994. The idea to establish medical missions came to him during his first medical mission trip to the Philippines. The team strives to provide free reconstructive surgeries to people in need in developing countries who are unable to access treat-

ment due to either poor medical conditions in a country or financial obstacles.

Each mission gathers 15-35 doctors as well as non-medical volunteers, young people who plan to become doctors. They assist the team in coordinating schedule, helping patients in pre- and post-operation periods as well as recording the entire trip in form of photos or blogs. Teams normally change, because needs in various specialties and medical equipment vary across destinations.

The mission is supported by various donations, yet doctors who volunteered are fully responsible for their expenses. Each trip costs \$40,000 – \$90,000, depending on the amount of equipment required for each country.

Surgicorps surgeons have conducted more than 5,000 life-changing surgeries in 20 countries since 1994. This year they have been to Bhutan, Kazakhstan and plan to visit Guatemala, Zambia and Vietnam.

Kieli Kazakhstan expedition to country's sacred places takes off

By Chris Stanton

ASTANA – The Kieli Kazakhstan (Sacred Kazakhstan) trip to the steppe country's sacred places began from Nazarbayev University June 10. University Vice President Kanat Baigarin and General Director of the Kazakh Research Institute of Culture Andrey Khazbulatov gave a parting address to the 25 expedition participants.

"This is the first expedition along this route, but then there will be a long lasting and in-depth itinerary. The ministry determined a list of 500 major and more than 1,000 minor sacred objects. Our main aim is to continue regular expeditions. Then we will create an electronic portal, where all cultural and historical places are thoroughly described with a 3D survey of the places and maps of the journey. Anyone who wishes, Kazakh or foreign tourist, could use the internet to see the map," said Khazbulatov.

Scientists and historians, including art historians from the Sacred Kazakhstan Scientific Centre, which organised the expedition, and specialists from the Kazakhstan National Geographic Qazaq Geography Society are taking part in the journey. They are measuring the



Photo credit: e-history.kz

scale of the monuments they find to compile a list of sacred places. As a result, an atlas of holy places of Kazakhstan will be created.

Participants will travel 15 days to the Caspian via Ulytau, in Central Kazakhstan, visiting sacred places of this region, famous for being the burial places of the descendants of Genghis Khan, including his oldest son Juchi Khan. They will continue their journey to the Zhuban Ana mausoleum, the Terekty sanctuary, the Bolgan-Ana tomb, the Korkyt-Ata complex, the Kesken Kuyuk-Kala settlement, Kam-bash Lake, Tassay Well, Akmysh, Sherkala, Shapak-Ata, Kenty Baba, the Sultan-Ape valleys and the Beket-Ata and Meshitbai-Aulie necropolises.

According to Khazbulatov, the project will undoubtedly improve tourist infrastructure in these regions.

The first destination of the expedition was the historical and archaeological complex Terekty. There, participants visited Neolithic settlements, cave paintings of the Bronze Age and barrows and mазars (mausoleums) of the 18th and 19th centuries.

"There is a legend that one weary traveller reached this place. He was thirsty and powerless from the scorching sun. God pitied him. The stone slabs shifted, forming a shadow, and a stream of light began to beam from there. This place became an object of pilgrimage, where thousands of people now pray and make wishes," said Al'tynai Birmukhanova, a researcher with the National Museum of Kazakhstan.

Academician Alkey Margulan was the first to record the Terekty-Aulieu petroglyphs during the

Central Kazakhstan archaeological expedition in the 1950s, according to Birmukhanova.

"Historically, these places are important spiritual relics of our homeland. We want to study them and provide the widest coverage in the media in order to make every citizen of Kazakhstan know the history and culture of these objects. Many of these monuments are in poor condition; some have no roads or infrastructure. Our task is also to evaluate the tourist potential of these sites," reported Qazaq Geography.

The study of the sacred places of Kazakhstan was one of the tasks formulated by President Nursultan Nazarbayev in his "Modernisation of Kazakhstan's Identity" programme unveiled last April.

Scientists are conducting a large-scale expedition to find out which places citizens consider sacred, in order to further develop the sacred geography of the country.

"The status of something sacred is not given by the state. It is determined by the people. If they consider this place holy, it will be sacred, regardless of orders and decisions. We need to find out why the people consider a certain place sacred and visit it," explained Director of the Sacred Kazakhstan Scientific Centre Berik Abdygaliuly.

Forum presents President's model of national unity

Staff Report

ASTANA – The model of public accord and nationwide unity of led by President Nursultan Nazarbayev was presented at the forum of the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan (APK) called Energy of Peace and Harmony within EXPO 2017, according to the press service of Akorda presidential residence.

"The Constitution of our country guarantees and protects the equality of rights of all citizens regardless of race, nationality, religion or social status," said State Secretary of Kazakhstan Gulshara Abdykalikova at the event, emphasising that Kazakhstan has more than 100 ethnicities and 18 faiths living in peace.

The forum gathered the Deputy Chairperson and head of the APK Secretariat Darkhan Mynbai, members of the Mazhilis (lower house) of the Parliament, members of the assembly, representatives of state bodies, diplomatic corps, ethno-cultural associations, foreign guests of expo, scientific intelligentsia, masters of folk and applied art.

The events took place at the National Museum of Kazakhstan, where a detailed presentation of the Kazakhstan model of public accord and national unity is presented for the period of the expo.

Abdykalikova noted Kazakhstan's model has become a recognised standard of a balanced policy in the integration of a multi-ethnic society. She also said the energy of peace and harmony is the cleanest, most noble energy on the planet.

Forum participants also visited the exhibition of special editions of mass media of ethno-cultural associations, as well as viewed the products of masters of folk and applied art and attended master classes on national Kazakh cuisine.

The Secretary of State and guests of the presentation took part in the opening ceremony of the Alley of Peace and Accord of the Assembly of Kazakhstan on the territory of the Expo Park.

"Let everyone who passes along the Alley of Peace and Harmony take away a piece of warmth of hospitable and benevolent Kazakhstan land," added Abdykalikova.

EU, Central Asia ministers of education to expand cooperation

By Dmitry Lee

ASTANA – The Astana Declaration was signed June 23 at the second meeting of European Union (EU) and Central Asia ministers of education at the capital's Rixos President Hotel in Astana. The declaration intends to expand educational cooperation between the EU and Central Asian countries.

Kazakhstan has made progress implementing the national system of qualifications in the self-certification process of the National Qualifications Framework and is nearing completion for comparability with the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education area. The Professional Teacher Standard was adopted this month, which provides a framework to determine the professional competencies of educators for each skill level.

Delegations included representatives from the European Commission, EU and Central Asia ministers of education, senior officials, the European External Action Service (EEAS), rectors of European and Central Asian higher education institutions as well as Kazakh Minister of Education and Science Erlan Sagadiyev, Deputy Foreign Minister Roman Vassilenko and



Ambassador and EU Special Representative for Central Asia Peter Burian.

In his keynote remarks, Sagadiyev outlined Kazakhstan's priorities for educational reform.

"We need to make formalised education available to much greater amount of people. All the kids from 3 to 6 year olds are to go through pre-schooling. Today, they're 85 percent, showing an increase of about 6 percent from last year," he said.

He also said kids need to start formal schooling earlier than the current six or seven years of age as it is today.

"[It has to start] at the age of five or six with the introduction

of 0 grade, which starts this year in a limited scope, but is planned by September 2019 on a national scale. So, it will be a 12-year schooling program from zero to 11."

"We had 20,000 kids per year leaving after the ninth grade (about 6-7 percent) that neither went to the 10th grade of school nor went to college," he said.

Sagadiyev believes Kazakhstan can become a true educational hub in Central Asia. "We see academic mobility on an exponential rise. We see a number of parents willing to send their kids to study abroad rising dramatically. We don't believe it will stop in a globalised world."

"In parallel, we would love to help our Central Asian partners benefit from educational cooperation in any way we can. As one step, we propose to establish the Central Asian Bureau of the Bologna Process in Kazakhstan. The creation of such a bureau will promote the exchange of experiences between our countries and the European Union, will bring closer education systems of Central Asia," he stressed.

"Central Asia has rich natural and human resources, transport potential and a favourable geographical position," Vassilenko said in his welcoming remarks. "In this regard, it is in our common interest to preserve the politically stable, economically sustainable and safe development of the Central Asian region."

According to Vassilenko, such meetings can initiate broad international dialogues and improve the national education system and pave access to quality education.

"In our opinion, the realisation of the idea of creating a joint 'incubator of educational products and services,' could be promising. It should unite talents and ideas as well as use the potential of existing educational products to improve educational systems in our countries," he said.

Kazakhstan can also offer international partners experience implementing the Bolashak international educational programme.

"Some 12,000 Kazakh students were able to use this programme to study in some of the best universities in the world. The cluster of Nazarbayev University and the network of intellectual schools in Kazakhstan could also interest our international and regional partners," he said.

Vassilenko believes it is important to include the "concepts of cultural tolerance and adherence to peaceful dialogue" in the educational programmes of primary and secondary schools around the world.

"We are convinced that this will allow us to form a generation of a new humanistic thinking, which is critically important for the future of mankind, given the aggravation of crises and conflicts in many parts of the world today," he stressed.

In his turn, Burian noted that a few days ago the EU reconfirmed Central Asia is a significant partner for the EU in its Council Conclusions updating the EU Central Asia Strategy adopted 10 years ago.

"The EU reaffirmed its commitment to develop a strong and durable relationship, based on joint

ownership and aimed at fostering peaceful, prosperous, sustainable and stable socio-economic development of the Central Asia region in line with the recently adopted EU Global Strategy and the joint commitment to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)," he said.

"We have also witnessed over the last years in Europe and in Central Asia what damage the exclusion and consecutive radicalisation among the younger population bring," he went on saying. "I believe we all agree that education plays a critical role in forming a person, his world views and in preparing him for a quality adult life as an integral part of a broader society. With this in mind it can be surely said that investing in education we are investing in the security and stability of our societies."

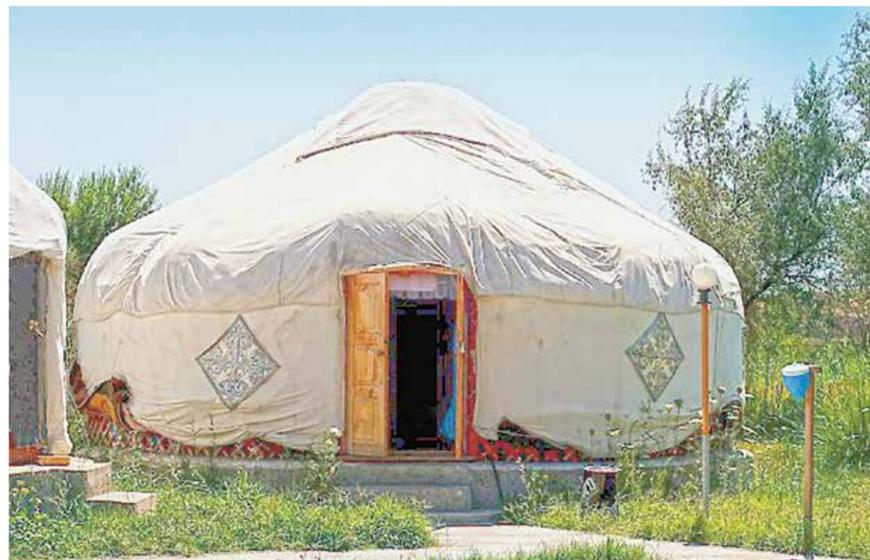
He noted officials in Brussels and in European capitals "see Central Asia as a major gateway between Europe and Asia representing a young and growing market with significant potential for investment and trade, infrastructure and people-to-people contacts."

Vassilenko added that to unleash this potential should be the guiding principle for future cooperation. "I believe the cooperation on education is a corner-stone in this endeavour."

NATION&CAPITAL
TOURISM

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 28, 2017

Daytrip from Astana: Borovoye summer highlights



By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – The period of EXPO 2017 coincides with peak holiday season in Kazakhstan. In Astana, for most of the population, that will mean trips to Borovoye.

Borovoye, a village built around a lake of the same name, is Astana's closest getaway destination and probably its most visited. The area is a lovely getaway both for those who like to simply relax and look at great views on their vacations and for people who need to burn off energy swimming, hiking or otherwise actively engaged in their surroundings.

“Tour operators have developed seven tourist packages that cover more than 30 routes in the Shchuchinsk-Borovoye resort zone and the Korgalzhyn nature reserve,” said head of the Tourism Department of Akmola region Shynarbek Batyrkhanov.

Tour packages include an excursion to the best sites in Borovoye, including historical sites like Abylai Khan meadow with its famous granite throne. Kazakhstan's strangely delicious national fermented milk product, kumis, is sold at the tour stops for 600 tenge (\$2), as are other dishes like boursaks (fried doughnuts), as well as souvenirs.

Another historical site nearby is Zhailau ethnographical village.

Zhailau recreates the life of nomadic peoples who lived in yurts (nomadic mobile felt houses) and raised stock. The open-air tour offers one-hour horse rides far from the city bustle.

Lake Borovoye is only one of several lakes close to the village, but it is considered the most beautiful and distinguished by its size. Located 70 kilometres from the city of Kokshetau, the blue waters of the lake are extremely popular among locals and foreign tourists.

Burabai National Park, the zone of mountains that surrounds Lake Borovoye, is perhaps Borovoye's major destination. The mountains that ring the lakes offer fun for hikers and climbers.

A stunning panorama of Borovoye and Big Chebachie Lakes, Zhumbaktas Rock and Okzhetpes Mountain opens from Bolekau Mountain at a height of 147 metres. Those who travel by car can park their vehicles in specially designated parking lots. Climbing Okzhetpes Mountain, with a height of more than 300 metres, requires special equipment. The highest mountain in Borovoye, 947-metre Kokshetau Mountain, however, is walkable. It takes about four to five hours to go to the top and back.

Summer in Borovoye is not as hot as in other places in the country because of the nearby water and the mountains that provide shade and protection from the wind.

The lakeside offers a variety of accommodations with numerous hotels in all price ranges, spas and rest houses. The soft mountain climate, clean air and curative mud make relaxing here not only pleasant but also beneficial for one's health, locals believe. There are also hostels and houses and apartments for rent. One-day accommodation cost starts from 10,000 tenge (US\$31), but usually not higher than 35,000 tenge (US\$110) for two people, according to booking.com.

Guides advise staying at the Kokshetau, Zhekebatyr or Dostyk hotels, all of which have modern rooms, saunas, swimming pools, bars and cafes, cosy restaurants and parking facilities.

Borovoye is also the one of the country's main gaming area. Cash Ville Casino is located in Borovoye's Rixos Hotel. Cash Ville is one of the biggest and most luxurious casinos in Central Asia, according to boora.info, promising to provide European-level service. It has 50 gaming tables, where visitors can play American roulette, black jack, baccarat and the most popular forms of poker. The hotel provides discounts for casino visitors.

You can get to Borovoye by car, bus or minibus and electric train. The journey takes three or four hours. Buses and route taxis leave from the Saparzhai-Astana bus station.

Kazakh TV launches series exploring secret beautiful places

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – The culture, history and nature of Kazakhstan remain a mystery for tourists and even some of its inhabitants. Kazakh TV has prepared five expedition shows which visit the most beautiful, unexplained and unexplored places in the nation.

Interest in tourism is growing – people understand what an interesting world this is and they want to see it in every detail.

Outdoor Kazakhstan (Outdoor KZ) invites them to become acquainted with the country's most representative natural landscape zones. Historians, scientists, popular artists and famous sportsmen will take part in the show, providing educational and useful information for tourists and lovers of open-air activities. The first episode is dedicated to 8,000 kilometres of roads and hundreds of natural, historic and cultural sites in the Mangystau region.

Another show, Unknown Kazakhstan, explores the most distant points of the nation where

no one has ever travelled. The places are unknown and the crew

feels obliged to tell the world about their existence. Scientists

and historians will talk about and cameras will show hidden places,

discovering interesting and mysterious facts. The Ustyurt Plateau, Kok-kol Lake, Barsa-Kelmes Island, the site where a giant meteorite fell, Osakarovka village and other miracles will be shown.

For those interested in picturesque and natural areas, the network will broadcast Kazakhstan's Wildlife Sanctuaries. The documentary series tells about the development of ecological tourism and the kind of work conducted by national park staffs to attract visitors. The philosophy of ecotourism is simple – do not leave anything except tracks in the sand or snow, kill nothing except your time and take nothing except for photographs.

The country's flora and fauna are diverse and require protection in the right way. Kazakhstan's Wildlife Sanctuaries reports about environmental affairs and recommends visiting national parks any time of the year.

The nation is one of a small number that has preserved the beauty of wildlife almost untouched and Spirit of the Wild arranged photo hunting of pres-

ently endemic and endangered species. Biologist Yuri Alekseyev talks about amazing wildlife and the fragile, handsome and unexplored animal world and plant kingdom.

The network has also announced Time Puzzle TV aimed at historic Kazakh riddles and mysteries, sacred places and legendary personalities. The show's founders, who studied materials from the national archive, interview eyewitnesses to the events, historians and experts in various fields to get their comments. During the filming, the group climbs high into the mountains, passes through thick forests, crosses the snow-covered steppes and travels to distant settlements.

One of the saddest episodes centres on “Dudarai,” the incredibly touching story of the love of a young Kazakh man for a Russian lady told in a treasured popular song. The search for the author became an exciting, but difficult test for the film crew, which had to go around several cities and even travel through a snowstorm in the Akmola steppe.



Finnair launches direct Helsinki-Astana flights

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – Finnair launched June 19 direct Helsinki-Astana-Helsinki flights. The flights will be Mondays and Fridays on modern Airbus 319 airliners.

The new flights initiate a partnership between the Astana airport and the national carrier of Finland – Finnair and are the result of cooperation between the countries, Astana airport and Finnair. The flights are expected to promote tourism flows in both directions and increase Finnish visitation to EXPO 2017.

Finnair became the 22nd client airline of the Astana airport, renamed Nursultan Nazarbayev International Airport by the Kazakh Government on June 21, offering regular flights to the capital. The airline's route network covers Europe, Asia and North America. Passengers from Astana will be

able to take advantage of a transfer at the airport in Helsinki within the same terminal.

It is planned that the Astana-Helsinki direct flights will be replaced by Almaty-Helsinki after Aug. 10.

The Astana Airport implemented the project of building a new passenger terminal. The uniqueness of the project is in the landing bridges, which contain two mobile approaches for landing. When servicing aircraft, two gates will be used simultaneously. Thus, one bridge can serve two aircraft simultaneously, regardless of arrival or departure.

Finnair is the only Scandinavian airline, having four stars in the Skytrax rating. The airline received the World Airline award and has been a leader for the last seven years as the best airline in Northern Europe. Finnair is a member of Oneworld alliance of leading airlines of the world.



WEDNESDAY, JUNE 28, 2017

FC Astana to start UEFA Champions League qualification in Latvia

By Anuar Abdrakhmanov

ASTANA – Kazakhstan's football clubs are set to start qualification rounds in the UEFA Champions League and the UEFA Europa League in July. The four teams representing the nation last week learned who their opponents at the initial stages of the European Cups would be.

Three-time winners of Kazakhstan's Premier League FC Astana will start their road towards the UEFA Champions League with two matches against Latvian champions FK Spartaks Jurmala. Taking into account the capital city club's solid experience in European Cups in recent years – they have played twice at the prestigious tournaments' group stages – they look like strong favourites in this pairing. However, FC Astana head coach Stanimir Stoilov has warned his players against underestimating the opponents.

"Spartaks are serious competi-



tors; they won the Latvian championship last year. They have

experienced players, some of them [now or previously] parts of

their country's national team. As I always say, [whether the draw

was favourable to you] can be assessed only after the matches end. If we win over Spartaks, then we can say we were lucky. The Champions League has no easy-to-beat teams; we should never underestimate the opponent. We even have a good example. Last year we played Lithuanian Zalgiris. Many thought that we had already made it to the next round, but the game was very hard, and only a goal at the very last minute saved us then," he explained.

The first leg will be played July 12 in Latvia; the return match in Astana will take place July 18.

The three other Kazakh clubs, FC Kairat Almaty, FC Irtysh Pavlodar and FC Ordabasy Shymkent, will start their Europa League campaigns in the first qualifying round.

Kairat will be playing Atlantas Klaipeda. The Lithuanian side has experience playing Kazakh opponents, as they were eliminated 0:3 at the hands of Karaganda's Shakhter in 2014.

"We understand these will be important matches for us. Of course, we will train hard and stay focused as much as possible, because we have a clear task ahead of us [to progress in the tournament]. We respect all teams and will be very serious [in our approach]," said Kakhaber Tskhadadze, FC Kairat's coach.

Irtysh will play FC Dunav Ruse from Bulgaria.

"Our opponents are not the team you would try to avoid. They have no celebrity players, but it is a very strong team with a good young coach. The confrontation is likely to be tough. Of course, we will try our best to win. However, it will be difficult, because it is a good strong team," Irtysh's head coach Dimitar Dimitrov said of his team's challenger.

Ordabasy will challenge Bosnian side Siroki Brijeg. The Balkan team previously played Irtysh in 2013 and eliminated them 4:3 on aggregate, giving Shymkent a chance to enact revenge on behalf of Kazakh clubs.

WSB final match to take place July 15 at Kazakhstan Arena in Astana

By Anuar Abdrakhmanov

ASTANA – The Astana Arlans and Cuba Domadores, the two most decorated teams in the series, will contest July 15 for the World Series of Boxing (WSB) championship's title. The final match of the seventh season will be hosted in Kazakhstan Arena, on Astana's Right Bank, during EXPO 2017 and welcome fans from throughout the world.

The contest will also have a new format, with bouts in all 10 weight categories to be held in one day.

"This summer, Astana has become a gem of cultural events and this fact played a role in choosing the venue for the WSB finals. The brand of 'Astana' promotes the image of the capital and Kazakhstan in the world of sports and this explains the decision to hold the final match of the WSB with the participation of our boxers in Astana. Of course, we should thank the WSB for entrusting us with becoming the organisers of the final match," said Astana Presidential Professional Sports Club Executive Director Amanbek Kulchikov.

"During preparation for the finals, we negotiated with the Kazakhstan Boxing Federation and the Uzbek Tigers and China Dragons. These franchises feature some of the strongest representatives of amateur boxing and Kazakh boxers lost only once in an away match with the Tigers. In the semifinals, the Arlans beat the British

work, because we were united by one goal of developing boxing in Kazakhstan and a worthy image of the country. We worked well with these organisations and I am sure that the WSB final in Astana will be held at a high level," he said.

According to Arlans' head coach Nurlan Akurpekov, the team is planning to involve boxers from the national team. The line-up will be decided later.

"We were quickly going to our goal and now we are in the finals. The guys did a great job. They gave it their all and met the expectations. We have an important fight ahead. We have been waiting and training hard for it. The Cubans are no doubt worthy opponents and we shouldn't underestimate them. However, our athletes proved in regular matches that they have a strong will to win and they are ready to show it again in the final match in Astana," he said.

The Astana Arlans have made it to the WSB finals four times and became the absolute leader of this season's regular matches. In their Asia geographic group, the Arlans were in the so-called "group of death," which includes Russia's Patriot Boxing Team, the Uzbek Tigers and China Dragons. These franchises feature some of the strongest representatives of amateur boxing and Kazakh boxers lost only once in an away match with the Tigers. In the semifinals, the Arlans beat the British

Lionhearts, while the Domadores defeated the Colombia Heroicos. Now, the two strongest teams will meet in the finals.

WSB is a league where the world's best amateur boxers compete in teams without headgear and use 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 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.

Astana club hires new coach with NBA experience

By Anuar Abdrakhmanov

ASTANA – Kostas Flevarakis has been hired as the new coach of BC Astana, Kazakhstan's premier basketball team.

He will replace Greek compatriot Ilias Papatheodorou, who guided the team to the national championship and VTB United League playoffs in the 2016-2017 season. The Kazakh club delivered a decent overall performance during the season and dropped out of the VTB League only after losing to CSKA Moscow, one of the best clubs in European basketball.

Papatheodorou is leaving his post for family reasons.

Flevarakis began his career in 1995 as a coach with the Greek club PAOK, which won the Greek Cup three years later. He also led AEK, another major Greek club, before becoming an assistant coach with the NBA's Milwaukee Bucks during the 2001 summer league. Flevarakis later worked as a scout with the NBA's Denver Nuggets. Last season, he coached the Rethymno Cretan Kings, a club competing in Greece's top-tier basketball league.

BC Astana's management signed a one-year contract with the new coach.

"The past season was successful for us, as we won the national championship, made it to the VTB League playoffs and finally opened our children's academy. The whole team did a good job. I am pleased with the current management of the club, the general

manager and the young executive director. These people are eager to develop basketball and are really working on achieving the club's goals and objectives. I would especially like to thank the team's former head coach Ilias Papatheodorou for the work he did, for the results and fruits the team achieved with him. Unfortunately, Ilias had to return home for family reasons, which is why we announced the appointment of Flevarakis," said Astana Presidential Professional Sports Club

manager of BC Astana, noted the club is paying special attention to training a new generation of Kazakh players. The plan is being executed by investing efforts in the club's children's academy to develop a stronger home-grown professional cadre.

"I was very much looking forward to the opening of this academy and I am pleased that the academy now actively works and is in demand among a great number of children. I am grateful to the Astana Presidential Club for their



Kostas Flevarakis

Executive Director Amanbek Kulchikov.

"We set the bar high for the team and the renewed line-up, which is to win the national championship, reach the VTB League playoffs, develop the academy and strengthen the image of BC Astana," he added.

Valery Tikhonenko, a member of the USSR team that won the basketball tournament at the 1988 Seoul Olympics and is now gen-

eral manager of BC Astana, noted the club is paying special attention to training a new generation of Kazakh players. The plan is being executed by investing efforts in the club's children's academy to develop a stronger home-grown professional cadre.

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WEDNESDAY, JUNE 28, 2017

Hermitage collection of arms to be presented in Astana

By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – Astana residents and visitors will have the opportunity to explore the country's rich history of arms when the Hermitage collection of arms opens July 3 at the National Museum of Kazakhstan.

The event is organised within the framework of EXPO 2017 and will last until the end of the exhibition Sept. 10.

Its goal is to demonstrate the stages of development of weapons and arms art, showcase items created by masters from the past and introduce numerous forms and types of arms.

The exhibition will familiarise visitors with unique arms and weapons dating back to 15th-19th centuries, which for many years were kept in the Hermitage in Saint Petersburg.

Guests will be able to explore

nearly 70 pieces of Eastern and Western warfare brought from Turkey, Iran, India, Japan, France, Italy, Germany and Spain.

Although these items have no practical use today, the exhibition provides an opportunity to assess the contribution of arms craftsmen in the development of arts and crafts and to demonstrate their technical perfection and rich creativity.

Initially based on the private collection of Russian Emperor Nicholas I, the Hermitage collection of arms has now more than 15,000 items of Russian, Western European and Oriental warfare dating from the Middle Ages to the 20th century.

Tickets for the exhibition are available for purchase at 1,000 tenge (US\$3.2) online or at the National Museum. Entrance ticket to the museum, which costs 500 tenge (US\$1.6), is also required.



Photo credit: kazpravda.kz

Astana offers audio tours



Staff Report

ASTANA – Free walking tours with a help of audio guide were recently launched at the Nurzhol Boulevard and the embankment of the Yessil River, according to the Astana administration's press service. Audio tours about the main sights of the capital are available in six languages.

According to the Deputy Director of Astana Convention Bureau Askar Adambekov, two walking tours with audio guides have been launched in Astana. The first route is at Nurzhol Boulevard, which includes 30 sites, and the second one is on the embankment of the Yessil River close to the Central Park with 15 sites.

Users can become acquainted with the main attractions using audio guides in Kazakh, Russian, English, Chinese, German and Turkish languages. They can get an audio tour and a map guide for 500 tenge (US\$1.5) as a deposit in special tents near the Khan Shatyr shopping centre, in front of Baiterek monument and on the embankment of the Yessil River. The user's deposit is returned at the end of the route.

"This year we integrated the audio guided walking tours with the help of the Izi.Travel international

announcers, editors and studio managers prepared the audio guided walking tours.

Another sightseeing activity prepared for tourists is the trip on the Hop-on, Hop-off double-decker buses. Buses are equipped with

The route includes Duman entertainment centre, Khan Shatyr Entertainment Centre, Mangilik Yel Arch, Mega Silk Way Shopping Mall, National Museum of Kazakhstan and Baiterek monument.

network, which provides walking tours for a number of states. We will no longer issue audio guides at the second stage of the project," explained Adambekov.

The main difference of Izi.Travel is users do not need to purchase audio guides for the deposit. Everyone who wants to use the mobile application can visit the Izi.Travel's website and listen to information about the sights of the capital.

Professional guides, historians,

audio guides in six available languages, including Kazakh, Russian, English, Chinese, Turkish and German.

The starting and ending point of the route is a place in front of the Duman entertainment centre along the Kurgaldzhin Highway. The route includes Duman entertainment centre, Khan Shatyr Entertainment Centre, Mangilik Yel Arch, Mega Silk Way Shopping Mall, National Museum of Kazakhstan and Baiterek monument.

How to Use Astana's Rental Bikes

By Zhazira Dyussebekova

ASTANA – Warmer weather has finally returned, and bikes are once again available for rent at stations around the capital. Here's how to access them.

At the moment there are two ways to rent bikes: by card and by SMS.

To rent a bike using a card, first visit velobike.kz and register. The subscription fee for the season is 10,000 tenge (US\$32). Students, pensioners and people with limited abilities pay a much reduced fee of 5,000 tenge (US\$16).

The plastic card you will need to access the bike costs 1,000 tenge (US\$3), and you're required to keep a minimum balance of 500 tenge (US\$1.50).

After registration, you'll have to visit one of Velobike's sales departments, located on the second floor of the Keruen City Shopping centre or the third floor of the 7th Continent Business Centre, to pay

the fee and pick up your card. Residents will need to present identity cards and non-residents will have to show their passports.

Once you have a user card, you can use any bicycle station. The first half hour of your rental is free; from 31 minutes to one hour the fee is 100 tenge (US\$0.30), from one hour to two hours it is 250 tenge (US\$0.75), and from two to three hours it's 500 tenge (US\$1.50). After three hours, every hour is charged at 1,000 tenge (US\$3). The wheels of the bike are blocked after 24 hours.

More detail and information about fines is available on velobike.kz.

To use the system via SMS, clients should register on the website, then enter their banking card number and pay the chosen rate. The subscription fee is 500 tenge (US\$1.50) for one day, 800 tenge (US\$2.50) for two days, 1,000 tenge (US\$3) for three days and 1,500 tenge (US\$5) for seven days. The deposit is 37,500 tenge

(US\$120), but deposits will be returned after the balance or rental period is finished. Rental prices are the same as for the card.

After your payment is received, a message is sent to your mobile phone that will allow you to rent a bike.

With the first half hour free, users who take bikes from one station to another in fewer than thirty minutes can ride without paying anything.

Smartphone applications that show bicycle station locations and the number of bikes there are available.

Last year, the number of bicycle stations was increased to 150 with more than 1,800 bicycles in use. Most stations are located within 300-500 metres from each other.

Astana Bike is a project that was implemented by the Samruk Kazyna Sovereign Wealth Fund with the support of the Astana city administration. The project is part of the city's effort to provide affordable and environmentally friendly transportation.



New street named after Tatar Queen unveiled in Astana

Staff Report

ASTANA – President of Russia's Republic of Tatarstan Rustam Minnikhanov and Astana Akim (Mayor) Assel Issekeshiev participated in the June 12 opening ceremony of the street named after Kazan Khanate's Queen Sujumbike in Astana.

The new street is in cottage town in Family Village and is the second street named after a representative of Tatars in the city. There is also a street named after the Tatar poet, Hero of the Soviet Union, Mussa Jalil in the Saryarka district.

"Today we have become even closer. We are fraternal peoples. The opening of this street is a historical event for us. We have a beautiful street named after Nursultan Nazarbayev in our capital. In that way, each step is the

rapprochement of our peoples. We appreciate that and thank Kazakh President (Nursultan Nazarbayev), Assel Issekeshiev and everyone who made the decision to open the street named after Queen Sujumbike," said the President of Tatarstan.

He congratulated all Kazakh citizens on the opening of EXPO 2017 and wished it success.

The soul of the Tatar people is reflected in the image of Queen Sujumbike and the Turkic world as well, according to Minnikhanov.

"We are glad that she became the unifying symbol of Tatarstan and Kazakhstan," he said.

Issekeshiev highlighted that this year marks the 13th anniversary of economic and cultural collaboration between the capitals of the two states, saying, "I hope that today's event will serve the further development and strengthen-



ing of fraternal relations between Astana and Kazan."

Queen Sujumbike is the national hero of Tatarstan. Her name is associated with the Sujumbike Tower. She was the daughter of Nogai nobleman Yusuf bak and the wife of Kazan khans, as well as served as regent of Kazan during the minority of her son from 1549 until 1551.

Poet and scholar Zhanat Askerbekkyzy and Sharban Beisenova, the winner of Alash international literature prize, honoured worker of culture and member of the Writers Union of Kazakhstan are the initiators of the street opening.

Kazakh Honoured Worker Kamil Mullashev, who is also People's Artist of Tatarstan, State Prize Laureate of Kazakhstan and Tatarstan, made the Queen's sculpture, which was presented at the opening ceremony.

EXPO 2017 SPECIAL

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 28, 2017

More than 300,000 people have attended EXPO in two weeks, numbers keep growing



British volunteers pose at the presentation of their country's pavilion on June 26.

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – More than 300,000 people have visited EXPO 2017 since its opening, said Astana EXPO 2017 National Company Chairperson Akhmetzhan Yessimov at a June 23 media forum.

“The exhibition is of great interest. The number of entrances to the expo facilities [including the same visitors] exceeded two million people. We will easily achieve the indicators of 2 million people and 5 million visits adopted in the registration dossier of the exhibition if a good dynamics remains,” he said.

In a week, 3,000 articles about the expo were published, including more than 700 stories in media worldwide, he said.

“The opening ceremony was broadcasted for free by 385 local and foreign TV and Internet channels. Live streaming was performed

in Austria, Belarus, Czech Republic, China, Germany, Poland, Russia, Spain, the U.K., Ukraine and other countries. Approximately 270,000 users watched the broadcast via YouTube and on the website of the exhibition. And these

figures are growing every day,” Yessimov added.

The exhibition was preceded by a large-scale promotion in the international arena.

“Road shows and expo caravans were used for the first time as

marketing promotion tools with a wide geography and mass coverage. The potential global audience amounted to 1.5 billion people. We expect to reach 2.5 billion people by the end of the year,” he said.

The Kazakh national pavilion



BMW i8, an eco mobile at the German pavilion.



Visitors browse at the Malaysian pavilion.



Allur Group showcases eco vehicles.

with an area of 5,000 square metres, located on the ground floor of the giant eight-storey sphere, called Nur Alem, is considered to be one of the most visited pavilions. Two zones of the facility introduce guests to the history and traditions of Kazakhstan and demonstrate the achievements of Kazakhstan scientists in the energy sector.

Approximately 281 cultural and business and 50 protocol events with the participation of the heads of state, ministers and commissioners of international pavilions were held in a two week period.

The Congress Centre located near the exhibition area hosted the opening ceremony. It also became the main venue for the Ministerial Conference and the Eighth International Forum on Energy for Sustainable Development June 11-14. More than 1,500 delegates took part in multilateral dialogues, discussion sessions and seminars devoted to implementation of the Sustainable Development Agenda up to 2030.

The Astana Economic Forum

(AEF) was one of the key events in the first week of EXPO 2017 that attracted more 5,000 participants to debate issues regarding new energy and new economy June 15-16.

The World Scientific and Engineering Congress titled “Energy of the Future: Innovative Scenarios and Methods of Their Implementation” was June 19-20.

The 30th plenary session of the Foreign Investors Council under the President of Kazakhstan took place at the newly built Hilton Hotel just outside of expo site June 22.

The 14th Eurasian Media Forum (EAMF) gathered influential experts in media and recognized professionals in various fields June 22-24.

The exclusive REFLEKT show performed by the world-famous Cirque du Soleil, the Great Gatsby ballet directed by Dwight Rhoden, the most in-demand contemporary dance choreographer and Bastau live show featuring Kazakhstan's new singing star Dimash Kudaibergen became the most anticipated and sold out cultural events as part of the expo.

Kazakh ethno village opens doors to EXPO tourists

By Chris Stanton

ASTANA – EXPO 2017 guests will have a unique opportunity to explore the ancient culture of nomadic civilisation, as Ethno Auy! (which stands for Ethno Village), an unusual cultural complex, has opened in the capital's suburbs. Organisers intend for the space to acquaint visitors

with the rich history, art, traditions, rituals and national cuisine of the Kazakh people and experience how nomads went about their day.

“This is the place where any visitor of the expo can come and get an idea about what our culture is really about. We certainly have tried to prepare the project from all sides. It included such issues, for instance, as communication, water and light.

It was another difficulty that we solved successfully,” said Kazakh Deputy Minister of Culture and Sports Aktoty Raimkulova.

Every day, guests can enjoy a rich programme of events – a plethora of festivals of Kazakh music and theatrical art, master classes by artisans and equestrian sports. Traditional games, such as audaryspak, kokpar, baiga and kyzkuu, will be demonstrated. Tourists can

not only watch the presentations, but also be involved in contests.

“The Ministry of Culture and Sports plans to hold around 20 international sports competitions, including national sports and competitions,” said ministry's Sport Committee chairperson Yelsiyar Kanagatov.

The 2,000-square metre Ethno Village has several sectors where visitors can explore traditional hunting with birds and hounds or

immerse themselves in Kazakh applied art during workshops where they can take part in creating their very own masterpieces.

“I use various techniques in my work. I am using a wet felting technique for this painting and there is a mixed technique as well that I use. It is called nanofelt when the wool rolls along with silk. There is a dry felting technique which I also tend to

try from time to time. When the painting dries, I finish it by dry felting,” said decorative art master Anel Alibai.

Once the expo ends, Ethno Village will continue its work as a seasonal national and cultural centre. The brightest national events will take place annually and organisers are convinced the spot will turn into the city's favourite among locals and guests.



EXPO 2017 SPECIAL

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 28, 2017

GE highlights emerging trends and technologies at EXPO

By Yerbolat Uatkhonov

ASTANA – General Electric (GE), one of the global sponsors of the United States pavilion at EXPO 2017, hosted the June 21 forum Moving Forward, Fueling the Future. The session focused on emerging trends and technologies in the energy and transportation industries, including the digital revolution that is radically reshaping the industrial world.

GE also inked several agreements with Kazakh Temir Zholy (KTZ) on digital cooperation and with Eni S.p.A. on partnering on renewable energy. The document joining the two companies and the Kazakh Ministry of Energy outlined evaluating the possibility of building a 50MW wind farm and other projects.

“GE’s long-standing relationship with Kazakhstan Temir Zholy is a testament to our commitment and innovation within the rail space,” said GE Transportation President and CEO Jamie Miller.

“We are excited to expand our relationship and are confident in the value our digital solutions provide and excited to bring the most advanced digital rail solu-



tions to the CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States) region,” she added.

More than 100 top officials, senior business executives and global leaders came together for an interactive discussion on the transportation industry, focusing on Kazakhstan as an important trade hub between Europe and Asia. The experts highlighted the critical importance of digital tech-

nologies in transforming the rail industry.

The agreement with KTZ will implement GE Transportation’s digital solutions, including Trip Optimiser and Smart Intermodal Terminal, to lower fuel costs, enhance power distribution and increase terminal productivity.

Senior business and government leaders discussed the country’s oil and gas sector and noted its criti-

cal role in ensuring Eurasian energy security and the potential for a new virtual pipeline and LNG (Liquefied Natural Gas) technology to better leverage Kazakhstan’s abundant gas resources to support sustainable development.

“Rich in resources and a key trade corridor, Kazakhstan and the broader Central Asia region are hugely important to the global oil and gas industry,” said GE Oil

& Gas President and CEO Lorenzo Simonelli.

“This is the perfect place for a global discussion and we welcome the opportunity to continue collaborating with our partners in the region,” he added.

The company had the opportunity to show the interactive electricity value network to more than 20,000 visitors to the pavilion in the past two weeks. The display focuses on the growing importance of renewables in the global energy mix.

After the forum, the guests were invited to Lokomotiv Kurastyru Zauyty (LKZ), a GE joint venture in the capital that manufactures high-efficiency, heavy-haul Evolution-series locomotives customised for the CIS market. To date, the facility has produced 300 TE33A locomotives, dozens of which have been exported to neighbouring Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Ukraine.

“GE has been contributing to infrastructure development in Central Asia for 70 years. We’re happy to be supporting Kazakhstan as the host of EXPO 2017 by providing a platform for open dialogue with our local partners about some of the most press-

ing challenges in the industrial world. Together, we’re taking concrete steps to reboot industrial productivity and help support the region’s long-term growth,” said GE Vice President Ron Pollett.

The announcements reaffirm GE’s long-term commitment to help some of Kazakhstan’s most challenging energy and transportation projects, as well as supporting the country as it embarks on the journey of digital transformation laid out in a 2017 address by Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev to harness the power of the Industrial Internet as an engine to accelerate growth.

GE is major digital industrial company, transforming industry with software-defined machines and solutions that are connected, responsive and predictive. The company is organised around a global exchange of knowledge, where each business shares and accesses the same technology, markets, structure and intellect. Each invention further fuels innovation and application across our industrial sectors. With people, services, technology and scale, GE delivers better outcomes for customers by speaking the language of industry, according to the company website.

American gives impressions of EXPO and personal ideas behind power of blogging

By Chris Stanton

ASTANA – What is this trend known as blogging? What is its main aim compared to how corporate journalists write on a day-to-day base? Are they the independent media or a little bit more?

Some say bloggers are simply writers who have a yearning for uncensored self-expression of their surroundings, as well as a personal, unadulterated opinion on any given topic that sparks their mind.

The Astana Times chatted with blogger Izabel Trizlova, a native of the United States and seasoned world traveler. She shared her ideas about what it is to be a blogger

and why she decided to volunteer for EXPO 2017.

“First of all, I had the rare opportunity to work for the USA pavilion at the expo and overall I had a general interest in Kazakhstan,” she said.

Before coming to Kazakhstan, Trizlova knew the geographic location of the country but little about its culture. Everything changed when she learned she was accepted into the volunteer programme.

“First, coming here I didn’t know what to expect in regards to the country, in addition to the tasks I would be doing here and how the people would accept me as a foreigner. And to my pleasant surprise, everyone here has been so cordial; I really felt true Kazakh hospitality

and it is hard to believe that I have these great moments so quickly because this is just the beginning of my journey here,” she said.

Trizlova spoke about her impression of blogging.

“Being a blogger has a lot to do with expressing one’s overall writing about their experience that has happened to them or shaped their character. In turn, we can share these events with other people around the world. The ultimate possibility is that we can be the facilitators that can inspire people with our words and which can reach the hearts of people,” she said.

“I haven’t had so many experiences so far, because I haven’t yet got to venture out of the expo because of the sheer amount of work I have to do around our pavilion. But I can tell you that I have had the unique opportunity to talk to locals and head over to other foreign pavilions. There have been some memorable engagements with them and I have had some really good close connections in

such a close knit social atmosphere that we built here,” she added.

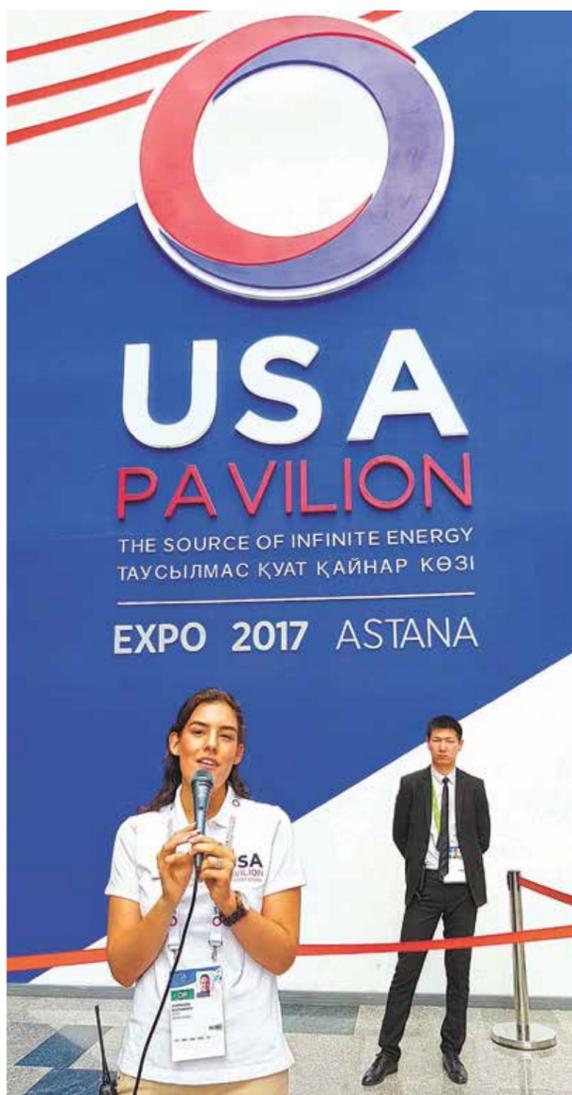
Trizlova noted why she chose to spend her summer far from home.

“My mission statement is to get as much as I can out of this experience,

learn about the expo, discover the true meaning behind the Kazakh culture and venture out to see many different cities and places which will open up my cultural pallet even more,” she said.

Even though Trizlova has been

working at the USA pavilion each day, Kazakh citizens are more than happy to give her daily inspiration on what kind of steps she can take on her personal blog journey within the Land of the Great Steppe to make it the most rewarding.



DISCOVER KAZAKHSTAN WITH A NEW APP

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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>

EXPO 2017 SPECIAL

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 28, 2017

Monaco pavilion “Mirroring the Future” astonishes crowds



By Dmitry Lee

ASTANA – Monaco’s 3-million-euro pavilion “Mirroring the Future” leaves EXPO 2017 visitors in awe as it goes in sync with Principality establishments, marine world icons and its theme. “The central installation is composed of blades that oscillate like a wave,” according to pavilion guides. “This structure, never yet realised, reflects the projection of a film about the very close relationship between the principality and the marine environment. Thus, the visitor can totally immerse himself or herself and undertake a trip full of emotions. The

music and sound design will underline the rhythms of breathing, with pauses that will create greater suspense and gradually becoming more and more musical. The sound effect becomes a melodious tune, so that together with the pictures a world of its own is created.” The concept was inspired by a quote from H.S.H. Prince Albert II of Monaco and is imprinted on the walls in the hall. “For a long time, I have dreamt of a country which would function as a model in all respects. A country which would be a source of models: a model for life, a model for development, a model

for wellbeing, a model for peace. [...] I am therefore convinced that Monaco can become, in its own way, a major power, combining a vision of the world that is focused on progress and wellbeing with the implementation of measures to protect the environment,” it notes. The pavilion mirrors the intellectual reflection and actions implemented in the country in terms of ecological awareness and behaviour. The exhibit is Monaco’s reflection on the Mediterranean Sea and an intellectual reflection concerning the “duality between man and nature.” After a short film, the audience

is invited to explore the principality’s seashores and cities using 360 Oculus virtual reality goggles. The length of the four optional tours depends on the buildings and sites one wants to visit. There is a city tour that includes the palace, Casino Square, inside the casino and Hermitage Hotel; nature tour to the Princess Antoinette Park, exotic garden, observatory cave and Japanese garden; sea tour inside and outside the oceanographic museum, Port Hercule and Grimaldi Forum and the sky tour with Larvotto Beach, Fontvieille Marina, Fontvieille and the Monte Carlo Country Club. Next up are Monaco’s future

offshore urbanisation project to be built by 2025 and the green lab with an interactive screen. The latter tells about Monaco’s initiatives and plans in the green energy sector. The pavilion also includes a solar bike assembled by high school students at Monaco’s Technical and Hospitality School. The project was sponsored by Kazakh biker and 2012 Olympic Champion Alexandre Vinokourov. “Built with ecological materials such as bamboo, this resort resonates with the theme of ‘Mirroring the Future’ by presenting the involvement and awareness of the young generation of the principal-

ity around issues like green energy for our future,” it notes. At the end of the pavilion, visitors will have the chance to purchase national souvenirs and have snacks and sweets. The 60-person staff is expecting to host nearly 250,000 guests. The current expo theme is very important for Monaco, as the country decided to use up to 40 percent of renewable energy obtained only from neighbouring states, according to pavilion deputy commissioner Alexandre Bocquillon. He believes the event will have a great impact on developing advanced technologies.

Finnish President unveils national pavilion in Astana



By Aigerim Seisembayeva

ASTANA – President of Finland Sauli Niinistö visited Astana June 20 for meeting Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev and to jointly open Finland’s pavilion at EXPO 2017. The opening ceremony coincided with the celebration of Finland’s national day at the expo and the 100th anniversary of Finland’s independence. The two heads of state visited the exhibits within the Finnish national pavilion and toured Kazakhstan’s

pavilion in the Nur Alem complex in the heart of the expo. They also held bilateral talks at the Congress Centre of the exhibition complex. Nazarbayev thanked Niinistö for his visit and his participation in the Finnish pavilion’s opening, and highlighted the high level of relations between the two countries. “Our relations can be called exemplary. We meet with you repeatedly at various global venues. Finland supported us in choosing the venue for EXPO 2017, as well as obtaining the status of a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council. Kazakhstan also supports

Finland in the international arena at all times,” he said. Emphasising the importance of developing bilateral relations, Nazarbayev expressed interest in strengthening cooperation in areas such as industry, pharmaceuticals, information technologies, education and medicine. Niinistö thanked Nazarbayev for the meeting and noted Kazakhstan’s role in resolving pressing global and regional issues. “I’m always interested in your opinion on not only bilateral relations, but also on global issues. Today, virtually the whole world is

watching the negotiation processes held in Kazakhstan. In particular, these include the Syrian talks at the Astana site,” he said. He also thanked Nazarbayev for his personal visit to the Finnish national pavilion and invited him to pay a visit to Finland. At a press conference following the opening ceremony, Niinistö also commented on the presence and development of Finnish businesses in Kazakhstan. “We have a long-term relationship; our diplomatic relations are celebrating their 25th anniversary this year. We have many common

projects in business and during my official visit a couple of years ago, I had a business delegation with me and some of these companies were able to develop their business in Kazakhstan,” he said. “In the near future we are planning to launch an Astana-Helsinki direct flight. We are also the only European country that has the same railway standards as Kazakhstan, and this provides additional opportunities for logistics and Finland’s participation in the New Silk Road,” Niinistö concluded. One of the best known symbols of Finland, Santa Claus, also ar-

rived in Astana to participate in the national day at the expo. Joulu-pukki (Santa’s Finnish name) came from his home region of Lapland to experience the +30°C heat, greet the guests of the Finnish pavilion and even present gifts. Finland is considered the current world champion in ecology. It is recognised as the greenest country on the planet. Approximately 50 Finnish companies submitted applications to participate in the Future Energy expo in Astana. Many of them are already implementing the new technologies in the energy sphere in their home country and succeeding.

Part of Chinese Terracotta Warrior Army on display at National Museum of Kazakhstan

By Chris Stanton

ASTANA – Astana visitors and residents have the opportunity to see a part of a unique historical monument that originates from the Chinese Qin dynasty. Four statues of the world-known Terracotta Army are being exhibited until Sept. 10 at the National Museum of Kazakhstan. The statues are among more than 80

items on display, including weapons, household items, gold and silver jewellery. “This exhibition is being conducted between the Ministry of Culture and Sports of Kazakhstan, and Chinese Ministry of Culture within the framework of the bilateral memorandum. The exhibition is unique for its authentic exhibits dating from two hundred years before our era,” said Ministry of Culture and Sports Com-

mittee representative Kuanyshbek Mukhangaliyev. The Terracotta Army was built and designed by the order of the Chinese emperor in the third century BC. The statues were to accompany the ruler in the spirit world as protectors. Each of the 8,000 statues is a work of art with its own unique features. The archaeological discovery is included in the UNESCO World Heritage List. “For us, for the Chinese, it’s like

a bridge between the past and the future. Our young people learn about the ancient history of China through it. I would like that Kazakh citizens have the opportunity to see such amazing historical artefacts too,” said Exhibition Curator Shan Shin Shun. China and Kazakhstan are also negotiating to display Kazakh relics in China, including the legendary Golden Man.



EXPO 2017 SPECIAL

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 28, 2017

Human muscle power generates energy in Austrian pavilion



By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – EXPO 2017 guests are welcome to test their muscle power as a source of energy at the Austrian pavilion, according to the exhibition press service. The nation has prepared an amusing programme where visitors can explore its path to clean energy.

The Austrian power machine is the soul of the pavilion, where various technologies and mechanisms allow guests to use their muscles to generate energy through all forms of activity. Whatever they choose to do will supply the pavilion with energy – mind, soul and muscular power combine to make the pavilion breathe. The concept is that

2000-2015. We hope to represent our country with dignity at the exhibition in Astana and showcase all of its strengths. Our participation is aimed at the future and we want to be noticed,” said Austrian Minister for Science, Research and Economy Harald Mahrer, according to a press release.

The pavilion was officially opened June 14 by Austrian Vice-Minister Science, Research and Economy Bernadette Gierlinger and Kazakh Deputy Foreign Minister Roman Vassilenko during a festive ceremony complete with a live performance of the world famous St. Florian Boys Choir.

With an area of 870 square metres, the pavilion is hard not to

tant event of the year in the field of renewable energy, its effective use and best green technologies and environmental sustainability,” stated the press service.

One of main goals is also to turn Austria into the European hub for a modern-day Silk Way, noted Mahrer.

“Besides, the international exhibition is a chance for Austria to project itself as a strong economy and trade partner in the framework of the Chinese project aimed at reviving the ancient Silk Way,” said Austrian Federal Economic Chamber Vice President and national expo commissioner Richard Schenz.

Austria is among the recognised world leaders in renewable energy. Nearly one in 20 workplaces is related to green energy, which significantly helps reduce energy, water and raw material consumption and minimise pollution and the amount of waste.

Schenz also believes in Austria’s leading role in renewable energy.

“The expo must become a platform for a bright demonstration of Austrian capabilities in the future energy theme and give an opportunity to new players to get familiar with Astana and Kazakhstan,” he added.

Austrian companies also took part in the construction of expo venues. The sphere, the main pavilion for the event, was built using 380 solar panels produced by Amstetten-based solar energy equipment producer Erte Solar. Evolute, a high tech company based in Vienna, completed the calculations for the geometric complex facades, while Tiroler Rohre supplied 1.5 kilometres of high-strength iron pipes to provide the water supply system for Expo City.

During the opening, Gierlinger, Vassilenko, Schenz and the rest of the group were able to ride bicycles together to produce energy in a common effort.



people will make a step closer to forming a conscious attitude towards energy.

“The economic sun now rises in the East; this is what the numbers show. Austria has managed to increase exports to Asian and Central Asian regions by 200 percent from

notice. A team of architects from BWM Architekten divided the venue into several creative and unique zones, each representing a particular renewable energy source.

“There is no doubt that EXPO 2017 in Astana is the most impor-



Astana parks offer EXPO 2017 shows for visitors



By Dana Omirgazy

ASTANA – Parks become attractive places in the summer where people can spend an hour or two or even a whole day with family or friends. The capital’s green and picturesque open spaces are perfect for those looking for some peace and quiet in the city.

The metropolitan parks will become even more beautiful and modern this year with the addition of events devoted to EXPO 2017.

Huge and centrally located, Stolichniy (Capital) Park is the best place for family recreation. It not only features beautiful architecture and landscape, but also quite a bit of entertainment for children and adults. The park is divided into six sections: a waterside, central alley, composition of four rock shelters with a mosaic interior, fountain and area of Olympians. Stolichniy offers plenty of things to do and activities to enjoy.

Arai Park is a delightful place adjacent to the Yessil River. Thanks to beautiful natural landscapes and sculptures, the area has become something more than just a spot to relax from a bustling city. Visitors can find yurts of different sizes, horse herds and ethnic details of Kazakh culture.

Zheruyik Park, another of the city’s picturesque spots, allows visitors to rest in the cool shade of its trees and freshness of its grass. Located along Bauyrzhan Momyshuly Avenue at the intersection with Magzhan Zhumabayev Avenue, it features a monument honouring the 28 Panfilov Guardsmen. Convenient driveways and parking lots, proximity to residential areas, magnificent nature, picturesque views and the availability of necessary infrastructure make this place an attractive spot for a variety of family leisure activities.

Far from walking paths, one can have a picnic under the trees. The

park is also a great place to play active games.

The park near the Palace of Peace and Harmony is another of the capital’s green islands. It is the perfect spot for romantic walks, relaxing with a picnic and watching a fascinating view of the city decorated at night with colourful lights.

This summer, park visitors will witness entertainment programmes devoted to EXPO 2017. The exhibition’s theme of future energy will be reflected in the design of the pavilions and park areas. Fans of robots and street dances, for example, will enjoy a show with a futuristic production featuring dancing artists in LED suits. A variety of performances will be held every day until Sept. 10.

The capital has 10 parks with an area of 401,290 hectares, four boulevards measuring 30 hectares and 90 squares totalling 131,940 hectares.

UN Under Secretary-General: EXPO invites creative thinking and a search for new ideas

By Dana Omirgazy

ASTANA – EXPO 2017 is bringing people from all around the world to Astana, connecting them through dialogue while focusing the world’s attention on the enormous opportunities in moving to sustainable energy.

The international event highlights the reality that this is a global effort and countries must work together to share ideas and solve these challenges, United Nations Under-Secretary General and Executive Secretary of Economic and Social Commission for Asia and Pacific (ESCAP) Dr. Shamshad Akhtar said in a recent interview with The Astana Times.

“For the last few years Kazakhstan has done intensive preparatory work which has now culminated in the successful hosting of the expo,” Akhtar said. “The beautiful buildings at the expo site showcase incredible architecture. The spherical Kazakhstan pavilion at the centre of the expo is breath-taking. The expo space, through its architecture, provides the perfect environment to start thinking about the energy of the future. It invites creative thinking and a search for new ideas.”

“It is encouraging to see so many countries and international organisations sharing innovative solutions to promoting sustainable energy, offering a futuristic vision of energy at the expo. There is a strong sense of positive energy from the participants, be they leaders in government, from the private sector or international organisations. The many innovative technologies and projects presented here on future energy remind us that we can change the future for the better by continuing to in-



Shamshad Akhtar

novate and supporting these technologies with the right policies,” she explained.

The ESCAP booth at the UN Pavilion presents information on the UN’s Sustainable Development Goal 7 (SDG7) on sustainable energy and work in support of its implementation being carried out across the Asia-Pacific. Part of this booth is an interactive presentation of the Asia Pacific Energy Portal. This is a web-based information platform designed to increase the accessibility and use of ESCAP’s regional energy information. It supports research and analysis and informs decision-making and policy actions. It is a unique analytical tool, which allows rapid access to the three main areas: data, policy and infrastructure, Akhtar explained.

Akhtar arrived in Astana to participate in the June 11 Meeting of the Challenge of Sustainable Energy Ministerial Conference and drew attention to some outcomes of the event.

“Following the Ministerial Statement, there are number of areas where the Regional Commissions could develop joint projects. These include sharing good practices on the development of national sustainable energy strategies and action plans to align with future ener-

gy needs and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, along with dialogues on technology, policy and lessons learned from different countries and regions,” Akhtar told the paper.

“One of the outcomes of the Ministerial Conference on Sustainable Energy convened at the expo was to establish a Green Technology and Investment Centre in Kazakhstan. The centre offers good prospects for joint activities among member countries and international organisations. ESCAP has a sub-regional office for North and Central Asia located in Almaty, which is well placed to coordinate ESCAP-Kazakhstan cooperation on areas related to sustainable energy development,” she added.

ESCAP is the regional development arm of the United Nations for the Asia-Pacific region. ESCAP provides a forum for its member states to promote regional cooperation to achieve inclusive and sustainable economic and social development.

Sustainable energy is a very important component of this. ESCAP is promoting collective action on energy access, energy efficiency, renewable energy and transboundary energy connectivity, Akhtar said.

“We are also working to deepen regional economic cooperation and integration by improving transport, energy and ICT [information and communications technologies] connectivity while addressing barriers to trade and financial cooperation. This process can contribute enormously to the sustainable development agenda,” Akhtar said, adding that ESCAP provides a very effective platform to bring countries together to work collectively on the challenge of sustainable energy.