



German President makes first visit to Astana



By Malika Orazgaliyeva

ASTANA – Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev and German Federal President Frank-Walter Steinmeier discussed bilateral political, economic, cultural and humanitarian cooperation July 12 in the Akorda presidential residence. It was Steinmeier's first official visit to Kazakhstan as president and was timed to mark

the 25th anniversary of diplomatic ties between the two countries this year. Nazarbayev congratulated Steinmeier on his presidency and noted the long-standing cooperation between Kazakhstan and Germany. "Today, we are at a new level of strategic partnership on a broad spectrum of political and economic relations. I informed President Steinmeier about Kazakhstan's

development, as well as our foreign policy tasks. Germany is our reliable friend and key economic partner. There are more than 900 joint ventures successfully operating in Kazakhstan. To this, the amount of direct German investments is more than \$4 billion," Nazarbayev said. Nazarbayev also touched on bilateral relations in agriculture and transit.

"Presently, the Kazakh side is interested in developing bilateral cooperation within the new programmes," he said. "Productive work of the Inter-governmental Commission and Business Council is of a great importance. Today, more than 20 documents have been signed for a total amount of \$1 billion," Nazarbayev added.

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GDP grows 4.2 percent in first half of 2017

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – Kazakhstan's GDP grew 4.2 percent in the first six months of the year due to the growth of main indicators in industry, construction, agriculture, transportation, warehousing and trade, noted Minister of National Economy Timur Suleimenov at a recent government meeting. "According to preliminary data, in the January-June period of this year Kazakhstan's GDP grew by 4.2 percent. In the January-June period of 2016, growth was 0.1 percent. The positive contribution of goods production to the economy was 2.6 percentage points, production of services – 1.3 percent and food taxes – 0.3 percent," he said. Suleimenov noted the various drivers of the economic growth. "These industries ensured the growth of the short-term economic indicator by 5.8 percent in the first half of the year and a decrease by 0.7 percent in the same period in 2016. Due to the increase in output in the backbone industries, there is an increase of 7.8 percent this year compared to a decline of 1.6 percent in the same period of 2016," he said. Suleimenov added the mining industry demonstrated a high growth rate of 9.4 percent, while

in the same period last year the industry showed a 3.1-percent decrease. The volume of oil production increased by 9.7 percent, iron ore production by 8.5 percent and coal production by 16.5 percent. The Asian Development Bank, which issues the Asian Development Outlook Supplement, reported that, as the largest economy in the Central Asian region, Kazakhstan showed an unexpected economic upswing in the first quarter of 2017. The report specified another figure – Kazakhstan's 3.6-percent GDP growth. Bank experts stated economic indicators have continued to improve at least through May, with industry rising 7.8 percent on increased mining production, which rose 9.2 percent. Mining, manufacturing and trade together contributed 2.1 percentage points to first quarter growth. Rising domestic demand reflected further growth in households' real incomes in the first quarter of 2017 after a strong increase in the last quarter of 2016. The bank predicts GDP growth is now expected to reach 2.6 percent in 2017, up from the 2.4 percent forecast in 2017. Assuming stable domestic demand and increasing exports, economic recovery is likely to continue. The growth forecast for 2018 has been substantially upgraded from 2.2 percent to 2.9 percent.

EXPO 2017 reaches halfway point, welcomes one and half millionth visitor



By Zhazira Dyusseimbekova

ASTANA – Halfway through EXPO 2017, the international exhibition has welcomed one and a half million visitors, according to an expo national company press release. Almost two weeks earlier, on July 11, the exhibition welcomed and identified its one millionth visitor. That visitor was a math teacher from Astana who received gifts and recognition. This time the visitor remains unknown. According to statistics, in the period from July 13 to July 23, the expo was attended by 285,300 people, which is 40,757 visitors a day

on average. During the first days of the exhibition, the number was approximately 23,000 people per day. The total amount of visits since June 10 until July 23 was 1,295,991. That includes the summary attendance of all the exhibition facilities, according to the Astana EXPO 2017 national company's press release. The most visited pavilions are Plaza Africa, Egypt, India, Russia, Turkey, Japan, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Uzbekistan, Thailand and Turkmenistan, reads the statement. The most visited facilities of the exhibition complex are Nur Alem, commercial pavilions, Shell's Children's Lab, Children's Park,

Cirque du Soleil, Amphitheatre, Creative Energy Area and Energy Best Practices Area (EBPA). Nur Alem, which is a main sphere and the Kazakh pavilion, attracts approximately 10,000 people per day, according to the Khabar TV channel. The large spherical building has eight floors and visitors require approximately two to three hours to see everything inside. "More than just a museum, Nur Alem must become an innovation hub of research and culture centre after the exhibition. Digital, multimedia and interactive technologies allow to expand the possibilities of perception of the exposition space, located on the floors of the

museum of the future, where the main types of energy – space, sun, biomass, wind, water and kinetics are demonstrated," reads the expo website. Almost every day, expo celebrates national days of different countries, as well as cultural events and festivals. The most recent national days were those of Greece, Japan, Argentina, Papua New Guinea, Uganda, Singapore and Costa Rica. The expo runs from June 10 to September 10, 2017. A total of 115 countries and 22 international organisations are presenting their achievements and ideas relating to the subject of the exposition, Future Energy.

Astana confirms commitment to OPEC agreement to cut oil production

By Dana Omirgazy

ASTANA – Kazakhstan confirmed July 12 its commitment to agreements between the Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and non-OPEC countries to reduce oil production until April 2018.

"I want to say that Kazakhstan will try to fulfil its obligations on all signed agreements. Our commitments were taken last year and extended at the OPEC and non-OPEC meeting in May. Thanks to these agreements, we sold our oil for export at an average price of \$52 per barrel in the first quarter. Continued on Page A3

Hollywood stars in town for Eurasia Int'l Film Festival



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NATION

WEDNESDAY, JULY 26, 2017

Seventy percent of civil servants support increasing meritocracy

By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – More than 70 percent of Kazakh civil servants support increasing meritocracy in the country’s civil service, Deputy Chair of Kaz akhstan’s Civil Service Affairs and Anti-Corruption Agency Aigul Shaimova told a July 20 briefing, citing an analysis conducted by the agency.

A comprehensive set of reforms aimed at enhancing the country’s civil service is currently well underway, in line with the 100 Concrete Steps programme put forward by Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev in 2015. The first 15 steps of the programme focus on improving civil service.

According to Shaimova, unlike in previous years, those who start their civil service career now have to begin from the lowest position and are entitled to promotions solely based on their merits.

“We are witnessing a threefold growth in the number of civil servants who begin their careers at the bottom – from 2,259 up to 7,706 since the launch of these reforms.



Before 2016, a person was eligible for civil service positions of different levels without any experience right after receiving a diploma. Now there is no such opportunity,” noted Shaimova at the briefing, which was devoted to the progress in implementing the reforms.

The previous approach created opportunities for nepotism and favouritism across civil service bodies, she added. “This, of course, discouraged servants and facilitat-

ed a negative attitude towards career prospects in civil service. The current model solved this problem, because we already see that nepotism has almost been eliminated. Now at least one year of experience in a position is required to get promoted to the next level,” Shaimova explained.

Based on the current rules, every candidate has to go through a three-stage examination, in which they need to demonstrate a good

knowledge of laws, personal skills and competency, as well as pass an interview.

In addition, candidates are eligible to bring independent observers – deputies of all levels, media, and representatives of nongovernmental organisations or the agency – to their interview, which supports transparency and objectivity and excludes the possibility of appointments based on factors other than merit.

Starting a civil service career may not offer a high salary, which sometimes serves as a demotivating factor for public officials, not to mention possibly dragging down productivity. The agency is trying to tackle this problem with a new wage methodology for civil servants.

Unlike the current wage mechanism, which incorporates only experience and position, the new methodology also includes one’s merits and contributions to a particular position.

The pilot new wage methodology project will launch next year in three state bodies: the agency itself, the Ministry of Justice and the Almaty region Akimat (Govern-

nor’s Office). Based on the results and with necessary adjustments, it will later be introduced across the country.

International expert William Aston commended Kazakhstan’s efforts to enhance its civil service system.

“[The] 100 Concrete Steps programme is designed to ensure Kazakhstan’s further comprehensive development and it is noteworthy that the first 15 steps of the programme concentrate on improving the civil service system, because in any country, civil service is at the forefront of implementing all political, economic and social reforms. It is crucial that the government is focused on the principles of meritocracy, transparency and efficiency,” noted Aston.

“I hope that upon implementation of this plan, Kazakhstan’s civil service will become closer to international standards, including [Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development] OECD standards,” added Aston.

So far, 11 steps have been implemented and the remaining four are in progress.

NATIONAL NEWS IN BRIEF

The General Prosecutor’s Office launched a pilot project on e-protocol July 17 in cooperation with the Ministry of Internal Affairs, reported Kapital.kz. The project is in response to the need to provide an Individual Identification Number to draw up a protocol for road traffic rules violations. “Three million fines in the amount of more than 64 billion tenge (US\$196.6 million) were registered, which is 75 percent of all administrative cases last year. The head of state set a task to develop digital technologies. At the first stage, we launched this project on electronic registration of protocols related to traffic violations,” according to the office’s press service.

A plant producing high-voltage transformers with a capacity of 110-220 kilowatts will be launched in the South Kazakhstan region in the second quarter of 2018, according to the regional city administration press service. The facility will be constructed in the Tassay Industrial Zone. “Next year, jobs for 220 people will be provided as we start production. Construction work is underway and everything must be done in a planned manner,” said regional Akim (Governor) Zhanseit Tuimebayev. The project, worth 17.5 billion tenge (US\$53.7 million), is being implemented as part of the Business Roadmap. The plant will produce 120 transformers per year, 50 percent of which will be exported to Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) countries.

The carbon chemical laboratory opened July 15 at the Shubarkol premium coal mine was the result of cooperation between SGS and a large coal mining enterprise in the Nura district of the Karaganda region, according to Kazinform. “This is our first SGS laboratory in Kazakhstan. SGS is a global company that provides services worldwide in the field of coal inspection and certification. This allows the Shubarkol premium mine to increase its customer base and enter the export markets. The certificates will ensure the quantity and quality of the shipped products,” said regional mineral resources department head Alexei Zotov.

The Development Centre for Children with Disabilities, launched as part of the Business Road Map 2020, opened July 21 in Atyrau, reported Kazinform. “Our centre is designed for 20-30 children and serves as a nursery school. Three meals a day will be provided. There is also a massage room. The educational process is of great importance. We want our children to study regular school programmes after the centre and not lag behind their peers,” said centre head Aigerim Saparova.

Karatau PRO, a marble flour manufacturing plant with a capacity of 110,000 tonnes of products per year, was launched July 20 in the Talas district of the Zhambyl region. The 1.9 billion tenge (US\$5.8 million) project was implemented as part of the State Programme for Accelerated Industrial and Innovative Development for 2015-2019. “This is an important event for the social and economic life of our region. Last week, the project on gypsum-binding substances plant modernisation worth 3.9 billion tenge (US\$11.9 million) and a design capacity of 140,000 tonnes was also launched. The project created jobs for 105 people. This will contribute to the economic development of our region and the country as a whole,” said regional Akim (Governor) Karim Kokrekbayev. Thirty-three investment projects with a cost of 123.3 billion tenge (US\$379.2 million) were implemented and approximately 5,000 new jobs were created in the first stage of the region’s Programme for Accelerated Industrial and Innovative Development (PAIID). The second stage is expected to launch 12 investment projects totalling 15.4 billion tenge (US\$47.3 million) and create nearly 1,400 jobs.

Kazakh minister urges citizens to save money for housing

By Zhaniya Urankayeva

ASTANA – Kazakh Minister for Investments and Development Zhenis Kassymbek recently urged the government to encourage citizens to save money to buy housing.

According to the minister, House Construction Savings Bank (HCSB) has 965,000 contracts worth 464 billion tenge (US\$1.4 billion), of which about 25,000 contracts have 30 percent of savings for 118 billion tenge (US\$362.9 million) for the repurchase of housing built by the operators. The operators plan to provide over 19,000 apartments to depositors and those on a waiting list.

“In order to maintain the solvency of the population, we recommend city’s authorities and the HCSB to strengthen work with the population on the culture of housing savings and consider the possibility of attracting state enterprises

and legal entities to stimulate their employees to accumulate funds,” the minister said.

Kassymbek also noted that the Zhambyl, Kyzylorda, Atyrau and Kostanai regions lag behind in term of the number of depositors



Zhenis Kassymbek

with the necessary amount of savings.

Seven thousand apartments were commissioned over the past two years, of which 1,139 apartments were bought out, 907 apartments were transferred by the Baiterek

holding company to tenants, 2,718 apartments are on the vote in the HCSB and 3,185 apartments are at the stage of registration of title documents.

“Over the first six months this year, 47,738 apartments were commissioned. The number of multi-apartment houses increased 33 percent. Almaty, Mangistau and South Kazakhstan regions lead in number of commissioned housing. Pavlodar and North Kazakhstan regions occupy the lowest position,” the minister said.

An increase in housing construction is observed in 14 regions. A significant growth rate of housing construction in comparison with the previous year was recorded in West Kazakhstan, Zhambyl, North Kazakhstan, Kyzylorda and the Mangistau regions and Astana.

A decrease in the rate of housing commissioning was observed in the Almaty and Pavlodar regions.

This year, 33.8 billion tenge (US\$103.9 million) was transferred to the regions for the timely commissioning of housing construction projects. Of them, 29.3 billion tenge (US\$90 million) or 86.6 percent was disbursed. The total envisaged for the current year is 83.4 billion tenge (US\$256.5 million). A low disbursement of funds is observed in Astana, Kyzylorda and Zhambyl regions.

Social, environmental aspects to be included in measuring GDP

By Zhaniya Urankayeva

ASTANA – Minister of National Economy Timur Suleimenov said July 18 that the indicator of gross domestic product is planned to expand with new parameters taking into account the social and environmental aspects in Kazakhstan. The ministry intends to submit the draft of the strategic plan 2020-2025 for public discussion in mid-August. After discussion and finalisation, the plan will be submitted for approval in November.

“We are currently developing a strategic plan 2020-2025. This document will contain not only some aspects about economic development but also about the ecological and social aspects. We plan to develop a matrix of indicators, ranging from life expectancy, infant mortality, GDP, on the basis of which the overall progress of the state will be monitored,” said Suleimenov.

According to the minister, it is difficult and inexpedient to do away with the methodology for calculating GDP as a macroeconomic indicator since international comparison is the key in the field of statistics.

“We plan to include more elements of social, environmental statistics and ratings in the meth-

odology. This rating will be based on what we currently have. We will not introduce something that we cannot follow in the future. Therefore, the introduction will not be difficult; the main thing is to



Timur Suleimenov

choose a set of correct metrics and indicators that will be fundamental in assessing the overall development of the state,” he noted.

Earlier, Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev suggested revising the methodology to calculate the GDP per capita as the traditional GDP creates a false perception of economic prosperity at the plenary session of the 10th Astana Economic Forum in June.

“The GDP indicator has a number of significant flaws. It does not reflect the long-term nature of economic activity and does not show the citizens’ well-being and it does not take into account population stratification by income,” said Nazarbayev.

Medical trains provide treatment for 28,000 residents in regions nationwide

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – The Salamatty Kazakhstan and Densaulyk medical train teams provided medical examinations for approximately 28,000 residents including more than 5,193 children during a 96-day period, Kazakhstan Temir Zholy (KTZ) national railway company’s press service reported July 20.

The medical campaign covered 95 railway stations in the Karaganda, Mangistau, East Kazakhstan, Atyrau, Kyzylorda and Pavlodar regions.

More than 192,390 medical visits were completed. Approximately 157,013 diagnostic procedures and 566 small outpatient surgeries were conducted. Dental services



were provided for 9,949 people and 873 women were examined by mammologists.

“Last week, the Salamatty Ka-

zakhstan medical train completed its mission in the East Kazakhstan region, the longest region in our project. Currently, the team is lo-

cated in the Pavlodar region. The Densaulyk team operates in the Kyzylorda region. Specialists take a daily reception every day without interruption to over a larger number of people with a medical examination,” said KTZ Social Projects Corporate Fund Director Yerbol Kengerbayev.

The projects are being implemented by the KTZ Social Projects Corporate Fund, Samruk Kazyna Trust Social Projects Development Fund, Kazpost, Ministry of Healthcare, and Ministry of Internal Affairs with the participation of regional government bodies.

“Specialists of medical trains have examined more than 300,000 people who reside in 1,052 stations since 2010. Acute and chronic diseases, oncologi-

cal diseases and tuberculosis were identified in the early stages due to this initiative. Improving access to health services and quality of care services for the population is one of the priorities of the state policy,” said Samruk Kazyna Trust Social Project Development Fund Managing Director Lima Dias in an April 11 briefing dedicated to the start of the campaign.

The Salamatty Kazakhstan medical train set off April 11 from the Karagandy station to the towns and villages of the central, northern and eastern regions of Kazakhstan. They will operate until Nov. 6. The Densaulyk medical train set off April 18 from the Almaty-1 station to southern and western regions of Kazakhstan. The trains will operate until Dec. 20.

EURASIA&WORLD

WEDNESDAY, JULY 26, 2017

EXTERNAL NEWS IN BRIEF

Vienna hosted a concert July 11 celebrating 25 years of diplomatic relations between Kazakhstan and Austria. Austrian deputies and business people attended the concert, which featured Kazakh musicians and winners of multiple international competitions Leila Akhmetova and Aida Akhmetova. The guests enjoyed masterpieces of world classics along with the works of Kazakh composer Alibi Abdinurov performed by two Kazakh musicians. Ambassador of Kazakhstan to Austria Kairat Sa-rybai noted the stable and strong relationship between Kazakhstan and Austria and the potential for more bilateral cooperation that the two nations are ready to tap.

Well-known German publisher Verlag Neue Musik has published the notes of 18-year-old Kazakh composer Rakhat-Bi Abdysagin. Despite Abdysagin's young age, he has become the first Kazakh composer to have his works selected for the publisher's prestigious, 60-year-old catalogue, along with works by British, Chinese and Italian composers. Verlag Neue Musik Editor-in-Chief Christoph Tagatz highlighted Abdysagin's ability to combine poetry and passion with structural particularity and accuracy. German guitarist Reinbert Evers also pointed out the professionalism of the young composer, whom many call young Mozart due to his achievements – he wrote his first composition at 12, enrolled in a music conservatory a year later and at 18 received a Master's degree.

Kazakhstan's diplomats presented investment opportunities in Kazakhstan July 12 to their South Korean colleagues and business people. The presentation at the Korea Chamber of Commerce and Industry featured Kazakhstan's potential as a transit hub and its efforts in developing alternative energy sources, in particular bringing alternative energy production up to 50 percent. Korea Environment Institute expert Sang-in Kang confirmed the favourable investment conditions, paying particular attention to bilateral cooperation in agriculture. As part of the event, representatives of the South Korean Road Transport Corporation expressed their readiness to invest in transport development projects in Kazakhstan.

President of the Congress of Deputies of Spain Ana Pastor awarded Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev the Order of Isabella the Catholic on behalf of King Felipe VI of Spain July 17, akorda.kz reports. The order is given in recognition of high royal appreciation. Nazarbayev thanked King Felipe and Pastor for the award, which highlights the trust-based and friendly relations between Kazakhstan and Spain. The official visit of Felipe VI to Kazakhstan and his participation in the opening of EXPO 2017 affirms that, he noted. Nazarbayev expressed Kazakhstan's firm plans to strengthen and expand cooperation with Spain in all spheres.

A number of draft projects of the Astana International Financial Centre (AIFC) were approved at a July 21 meeting of the AIFC Legal Advisory Council in London. AIFC Chairman Kairat Kelimbetov and representatives of leading international law firms participated in the meeting. The gathering also launched the process of selecting potential candidates to be judges at the AIFC financial court, which will be based on English common law and international best practices to ensure transparency and free market principles.

Kazakhstan took part in the July 18 discussions at the Atlantic Council in Washington focusing on the increasingly important role of Central Asia in the international geopolitical arena as well as Kazakhstan's vision on the region's current and future prospects and developments. Kazakh diplomats reported on the country's domestic policies and diplomatic relations with other countries, including the situation in Afghanistan, the Chinese One Belt, One Road initiative and Kazakhstan's institutional reforms. Other participants of the discussion highlighted Kazakhstan's economic development calling it "successful model for other countries," which along with legislative changes allowed for foreign investments to foster the country's growth.

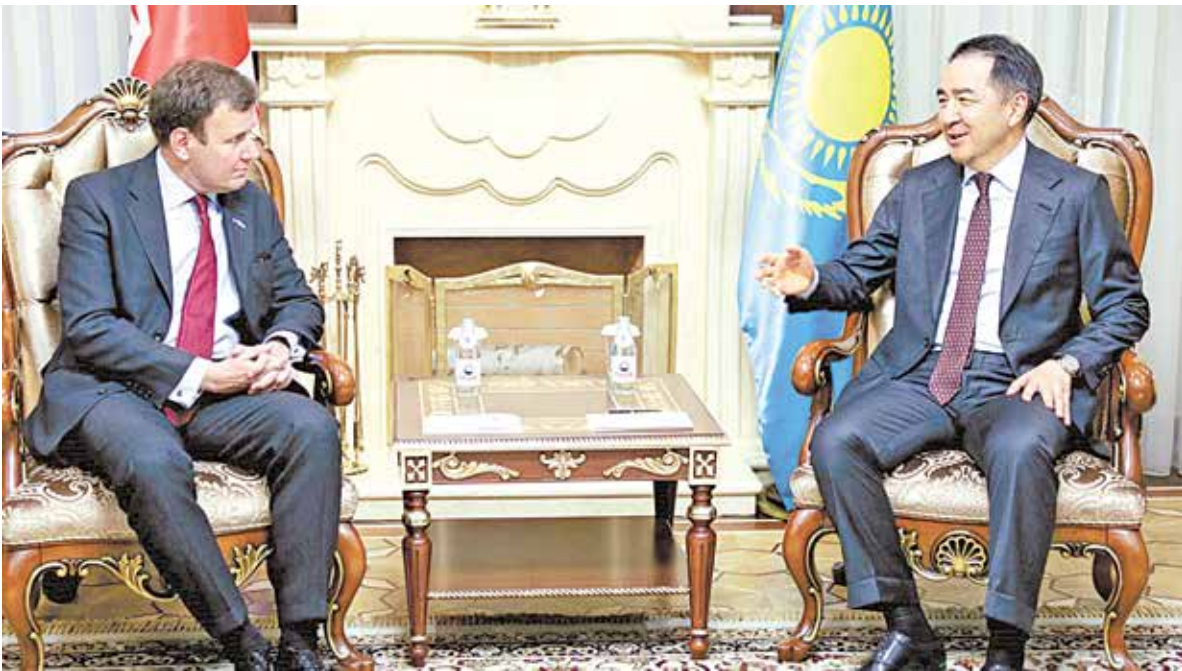
UK eager to boost trade with Kazakhstan, says official

By Dmitry Lee

ASTANA – U.K. Department for International Trade Minister of State for Trade and Investment Greg Hands visited Astana July 18 to meet with government officials, attend EXPO 2017 and host the London Stock Exchange Group Capital Markets conference and technology partnership forum. The session, held at the British pavilion, was organised by the department and Shell.

Hands arrived in the Kazakh capital with the hope of strengthening U.K.–Kazakh business cooperation and promoting the U.K. as the partner of choice for business, education, trade and investment, according to the British Embassy in Kazakhstan.

He noted the U.K. is Kazakhstan's sixth largest foreign investor and with the additional \$1.4 billion available in support for British companies exporting to Kazakhstan and Kazakh buyers of U.K. goods and services, "the U.K. is looking forward to building on the past success in the future," he said in his speech.



"As a longstanding trading partner of Kazakhstan, U.K. businesses can offer unrivalled expertise and innovation in a vast range of sectors which can support our Kazakh partners," he added. "I look forward to working with my colleagues in Kazakhstan to explore the wealth of

opportunity available to both our nations ahead of the next U.K.–Kazakhstan intergovernmental commission."

Innovative technologies are key to developing any sector, said Hands, and the U.K. has been at the "forefront of new discoveries from energy to health."

Kazakhstan already benefits from U.K. companies offering cutting-edge technologies and his government pledges further support.

He added the pavilion is "showcasing the very best of the U.K.'s world-leading creativity and innovation."

During the two-day visit, Hands met his Kazakh counterparts, key partners and senior government officials including Prime Minister Bakytzhan Sagintayev, Minister for Investments and Development Zhenis Kassymbek and Minister of Energy Kanat Bozumbayev, as well as representatives of Kazakh and British businesses.

"The government has helped U.K. companies secure over \$7.8 billion in contracts in Kazakhstan since 2011-2012, with over 50 new partnerships between the U.K. and Kazakh companies including the hugely productive collaboration between Shell and the Kazakh National Agency for Local Content," he said.

The Department for International Trade, responsible for promoting British trade, was created by Prime Minister Theresa May in July 2016 to replace the U.K. Trade and Investment intergovernmental agency. Hands, who previously spent eight years trading and marketing fixed income derivatives in London and New York, was appointed minister on July 15, 2016.

German President makes first visit to Astana

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Steinmeier thanked Nazarbayev on behalf of the German delegation for his invitation to visit Kazakhstan.

"Thank you for the hospitality and warm words both about Germany and me personally. It is my first visit to Kazakhstan in the position of the president. This visit is special because this year marks the 25th anniversary of establishing diplomatic relations between our countries," he said. Steinmeier visited Kazakhstan twice in the

past as German foreign minister.

The two presidents also discussed conflicts in southeast Ukraine and the Middle East.

Steinmeier also noted the participation of German organisations and companies in EXPO 2017.

Prior to the meeting, Steinmeier visited the new building of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Astana. The Church is part of the World Lutheran Federation and most of the parishioners are descendants of Germans deported to Kazakhstan in the 1940s by the Stalin government of the USSR.

The event was a reflection of a comfortable dialogue of cultures and interfaith harmony in Kazakhstan.

Following the bilateral meeting, Nazarbayev and Steinmeier visited exhibits within the German EXPO 2017 national pavilion and toured Kazakhstan's pavilion in the Nur Alem complex.

On July 11, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan held the 15th meeting of the Intergovernmental Commission on Ethnic Germans living in Kazakhstan chaired by Kazakh Deputy Foreign Minister Roman

Vassilenko and Federal Government Commissioner for Matters Related to Ethnic German Resettlers and National Minorities Hartmut Koschik. The commission was established in the 1990s.

Vassilenko told the commission Astana attaches great importance to bilateral cooperation, noting the importance of the matters of ethnic Germans living in Kazakhstan.

Koschik thanked the Kazakh government for supporting the German diaspora and said Germany wants to strengthen ties be-

tween Germans of Kazakhstan and Germany.

The meeting produced a communiqué summarising the results of the meeting and establishing plans for joint work.

Prior to the commission meeting, the German delegation met in the Pavlodar region with representatives of the Association of Public Associations of Germans of Kazakhstan Vozrozhdenie (Revival) and members of the local German community. Vozrozhdenie organises events to support ethnic German youth living in Kazakhstan.

Astana confirms commitment to OPEC agreement to cut oil production



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For comparison, prior to these agreements, Brent crude oil price was \$32 in the first quarter last year," said Kazakh Minister of Energy Kanat Bozumbayev at a July 12 press conference.

Kazakhstan, however, reportedly has not yet made a final decision on whether to extend the original agreement past April 2018, TASS reported July 9, citing Bozumbayev. The ministry denied this information.

"In connection with the latest incorrect publications in some well-known news agencies, the Ministry of Energy of the Republic of Kazakhstan informs that Kazakhstan once again confirms earlier commitments on an agreement to reduce the level of oil production between the OPEC and non-OPEC members. We will continue to adhere to signed commitments taken until April

2018. There were no proposals to extend or change the volume of obligations from partners. Therefore, now, this issue is not considered. Therefore, we kindly ask you to take the information of the ministry unambiguously and without any free interpretation," the ministry's press service stated.

In November 2016, OPEC and non-OPEC countries agreed to cut production by 1.8 million barrels per day from Jan. 1 in an attempt to end a supply glut.

In May, Vienna hosted the OPEC meeting, where member countries agreed to prolong the agreement on the oil reduction for another nine months through March 2018. Other eleven countries that are non-OPEC members, including Kazakhstan, also agreed to extend the output cuts for this period. Bozumbayev attended the meeting representing the interests of Kazakhstan.

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ECONOMY

WEDNESDAY, JULY 26, 2017

EIB provides \$582 million clean energy financing over last five years

By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – The European Investment Bank (EIB) provided more than 500 million euros (US\$582 milliion) in loans to Kazakhstan for its renewable and clean energy initiatives over the last five years, EIB Secretary General Klaus Trömel reported July 24 as he addressed participants of the Future Energy Forum in Astana.

With 25 percent of the lending portfolio allocated to climate and energy projects worldwide, it makes the bank the world’s largest multilateral lender in these sectors.

“In Kazakhstan, with our counterparts, we finance a lot on climate and energy. As part of the overall support to the EU Partnership and across the Eastern Partnership countries, here we are trying to support these activities. I am very glad to report that this excellent cooperation with our host Kazakhstan has allowed us to sign over half a billion of loans and all of those in the area of climate action and environment,” noted Trömel.

The recent 100-million-euro-loan agreement with Kazakhstan signed last week shows EIB readiness for additional cooperation.

Sustainable energy solutions once again top the agenda of the Future Energy Forum, a series of 12 two-day conferences June 29 until Sept. 5 in Astana and bringing leading experts in clean energy from academia, technology, business and finance together to exchange ideas and innovations, promote dialogue and boost investment.

This time, the event focused on sustainable energy solutions for cities and buildings that by far are among the largest energy consumers in the EU.

Opening the forum, head of the EU Delegation to Kazakhstan Ambassador Traian Hristea marked the importance of Astana as the host of the event.

“What could be better venue for Energy Days than Astana? Thanks to the persistence and kind hosting of Kazakhstan, this event makes a significant contribution to the future energy theme. Today’s event is about the synthesis of EXPO 2017 and future energy. There could not be more successful example of sustainable future solutions,” noted Hristea in his opening remarks.

According to him, the forum embodies an important step in strategic cooperation between the EU and Kazakhstan. “This is the format that we use each and every time to prove the EU com-

mitment in pushing forward a strong partnership agenda for co-operation in energy field between the EU and Kazakhstan. This shows that the EU does not only commit but also delivers upon its strategic agenda with Kazakhstan,” added Hristea.

Deputy Director-General for Energy at the European Commission Gerasimos Thomas also pointed out an essential role of Kazakhstan as a strategic partner.

“Kazakhstan is a privileged partner for the EU. It is a major energy supplier for us. It is a contributor to our efforts to diversify our energy sources. Six percent of our oil needs come from Kazakhstan, more than 21 of our uranium needs for the countries that use nuclear power come from Kazakhstan,” added Thomas.

According to him, the forum’s theme is particularly important for the EU now trying to turn “unresponsive and passive” buildings to “highly efficient micro energy hubs,” where buildings consume 40 percent of all energy and produce over 30 percent of all CO2 emissions. In addition, 75 percent of all buildings in the EU countries are energy inefficient.

Thus, leading EU experts in clean energy are working to achieve results in clean energy transition, which offers ways to save energy, including insulating walls, installing solar panels, using environmentally friendly technologies in construction and promoting smart technologies that help reduce energy consumption.

Kazakhstan’s Deputy Energy Minister Gani Sadybekov also reiterated the importance of the forum’s theme at international and local level.

International agreements, including the 2030 United Nations Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Climate Agreement affirm to international recognition that larger efforts are required to contend the adverse consequences that may follow, he said.

According to Sadybekov, energy efficiency and transitioning to green energy are equally essential topics for Kazakhstan.

“Kazakhstan is now implementing several initiatives within its Green Economy Concept. Among its six directions is energy efficiency,” he noted.

“In this regard, Kazakhstan should not miss the opportunity for further comprehensive growth because this is what will help it be ready for global challenges and will ensure the use of full potential of renewable energy sources,” added Sadybekov.

Kazakhstan begins consolidating domestic energy transfer companies

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – The Kazakh Senate recently adopted a law to consolidate energy transmission companies to increase their reliability, according to the press service of the Ministry of Energy.

“The law provides for the consolidation of regional power transmission companies. As a result of the reforms, liberalisation of the electricity market, including the past privatisation processes in the energy sector, many companies providing electricity transmission services were opened in the country,” said Energy Minister Kanat Bozumbayev.

According to the law, “On Amendments and Additions to Some Legislative Acts on Electricity Issues,” at the first stage, the transmission companies should have a process control technological system by January 2018. At the second stage, the companies should have trained and certified

personnel, provide safety equipment, protective overgarments, and individual and collective protection equipment by 2020. Automated systems of commercial accounting, telecommunications systems ensuring their unification with the systems installed by the system operator and the regional electricity grid company should be installed by 2022.

“A working group with the participation of the Atameken National Chamber of Entrepreneurs and all government agencies have developed the qualification requirements to power transmission organisations. These requirements are not easy to perform and their implementation will take up to five years in a temporary order. It also requires a lot of capital investment. Today, there are about 160 regional electricity companies in Kazakhstan and 19 of these including Kazakhstan Electricity Grid Operating Company (KEGOC) meet these requirements. Around 14 small and medium-sized en-

terprises also meet these requirements and 99 companies do not meet the criteria. We should solve this issue. We expect that about 27 companies will have to join those companies that meet these requirements by 2019,” said Bozumbayev.

The authorised body in the sphere of tariffs will take measures against companies that do not meet new requirements by regulating tariffs so that it would not be profitable for these regional electricity companies to function. They will join large companies that fulfil the requirements.

The law also provides for the release of power transmission organisations from corporate income tax and property tax after receiving abandoned electrical grid facilities and lifting the prohibitions provided for by legislation in the field of natural monopolies.

The law also contains a mechanism for transferring abandoned electricity grids through amendments to the law on state property.

National Bank maintains 10.5-percent base rate

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – The National Bank of Kazakhstan will maintain a 10.5-percent base rate with a corridor of +/- 1 percent, the Bank announced recently.

The annual inflation rate matches the bank’s forecast and remains within the target range. Citizens are expected to increasingly take to saving their money in tenge, as the nation’s economy continues to demonstrate recovery.

The inflationary risks are possible because of specific goods, markets and external parameter deviations from the base scenario of economic development. The deceleration trajectory of forecasted inflation in the medium term, however, increases the possibility of lowering the base rate both in the short run and in the upcoming 12-18 months to provide the corresponding real interest base rate with the long-run potential economic growth rate.

The annual inflation in June was 7.5 percent, which continues to remain within the National Bank’s target range of 6-8 percent. The important signs of the descending inflation trend are the lower rate of inflation in the first half of the year (3.7 percent) in comparison to that of the first half of 2016 (4.6 percent). The base inflation indicators have been significantly decelerating since the beginning of the year.

The base inflation rate in June was 6.8 percent compared to 8.9 percent in December. The short-term inflationary risk of the past months has resulted from the situation in specific segments of the food market, but the beginning of the new harvest period has smoothed the negative tendencies of general food price dynamics. The inflationary expectation of the population has remained stable since the beginning of 2017.

The situation with the external commodity market can be characterised as volatile. Oil prices below \$50 per barrel and price increases in world food markets in May-June, mostly as a result of the price rise of dairy and crop products, might lead to increased inflationary pressure.

Depositors’ currency preferences remain stable, as citizens prefer to save their money in national currency. The share of loans in tenge is also on the rise. In addition, the demand for crediting recourses remains stable and is accompanied by the gradual rate decrease.

The Kazakh economy continues to demonstrate recovery and monetary conditions remain neutral. In conditions of excess liquidity, local money market rates remain next to the lowest limit of the interest rate corridor. Due to implementing state programmes aimed at increasing the financial sustainability of the nation’s banking sector, further recovery of its credit- ing activity is expected in the third quarter of the year.

The next decision on the base rate will be announced Aug. 21.



Mangystau, Malaysian partner ink memorandum of understanding to attract more investments

By Zhazira Dyussembekova

ASTANA – The Mangystau region Akimat (regional administration) signed a memorandum of understanding with Malaysian company Reach Energy as part of the Kazakhstan – Malaysia business forum, according to inform.kz.

“The signing of the memorandum is another milestone on the way of the social and economic development of our peoples, taking into account mutual interests. Considering that more than 90 Malaysian government representatives and businessmen are taking part in the expo, we expect more contracts and memorandums to be signed between Kazakh and Malaysian companies,” said Malaysian Deputy Minister of Inter-



national Trade and Industry Haji Ahmad bin Haji Maslan.

Under the agreement, the company will support the region in attracting Malaysian investments for infrastructure projects and the

oil and gas, construction, electric power, water supply and tourism industries, targeting \$500 million-\$1 billion in three years. Conversely, the regional administration will assist the company in

achieving the memorandum goals and protecting the investment.

The document, signed by Mangystau Akim (Governor) Yeraly Togzhanov and Reach Energy Executive Director and CEO Shahul Hamid Mohd Ismail, also provides for exchanging information on the region’s possibilities.

In general, the memorandum will help strengthen information exchange between the countries, which will open new opportunities for Malaysian companies when investing in Mangystau region. At the same time, the regional administration will serve as a single centre for disclosing its investment potential.

Malaysian trade with Kazakhstan totalled \$49.22 million in 2016, a 36.1-percent increase over the previous year’s \$38.81 million.

While much of the focus was on Malaysian funding in Mangystau, hopefully more Kazakh companies also invest in Malaysia, added Maslan.

“To date, eight Malaysian companies have invested in Kazakhstan and certainly these investments have generated wealth for the people, whether in Kazakhstan or Malaysia, including providing jobs,” he said.

Reach Energy has developed 54 oil and gas wells in the region and plans to increase the number to 88 by 2026.

“This field (in Mangystau) itself is 850 square kilometres in size; that’s slightly bigger than Singapore. Lots of opportunities are there and it’s only partially explored in terms of oil and gas. The oil is of very high quality,” said Ismail at the press conference.

ECONOMY NEWS IN BRIEF

The New Customs Code of Kazakhstan will offer a fundamentally new approach to customs regulation, 24.kz reports. The new version prioritises electronic media ahead of paper. That is, declarations can be submitted through the information system of customs authorities. There is also a delay in duties and taxes. The new document expands opportunities for investors. They will be able to pick up the goods on the basis of the application with the subsequent submission of the declaration. This norm will also apply to warehouses, special economic zones and customs processing procedures. “We are introducing electronic declaration. This means that the declaration will be carried out electronically. There is no need to attach any supporting documents. All the necessary information is indicated in the declaration itself. Declaration on paper will remain only in selected cases,” Vice Minister of National Economy Yernar Bakenov said.

The debt the International Bank of Azerbaijan (IBA) owes to the Single Accumulative Pension Fund (SAPF) of Kazakhstan has been transferred to Azerbaijan’s state debt, according to 24.kz. Most creditors of the bankrupt IBA have agreed on a plan whereby their debts will be returned. Now it is necessary to wait for the approval of the Financial Market Control Chamber and the court’s decision on the legality of the scheme. Creditors and the public have long waited for a resolution of the crisis at the IBA, particularly for a solution to the bank’s foreign debts. The IBA has failed to pay interest to its foreign creditors since May, Kazakhstan’s SAPF among them. Through Citibank, SAPF invested \$250 million in the Azerbaijan bank. After three months of negotiations, the bank persuaded its creditors to agree to the plan, under which the state will take on the payment of its debts. The National Bank of Kazakhstan plans to refinance 40,000 mortgage loans before 2027, 24.kz reports. Kazakhstan citizens refinanced mortgage loans worth 112 billion tenge (US\$344.12 million) under a state refinancing programme. The total number of applications received by the National Bank to participate in the programme is about 28,000. According to National Bank head Daniyar Akishev, one of the main ways to protect the interests of the consumer is refinancing mortgage loans. “As of June 15, more than 28,000 applications were submitted to the banks, with 22,322 applications approved for the amount of 135 billion tenge (US\$414.8 million). Until 2027, it is planned to refinance 40,000 loans of borrowers,” Akishev said.

This year, the market for rental housing recorded its most significant decline in the past five years, ranking.kz reports. Prices fell amid a reduction in the financial capacity of Kazakhstan’s citizens. For the first half of this year, the cost of renting comfortable housing in the country decreased 0.1 percent compared to January-June last year. Rent of unequipped housing in Kazakhstan grew only 0.1 percent over the year. For comparison, last year, the rental price of comfortable housing increased 2.7 percent. Between January and May, real monetary incomes of local populations decreased 2.9 percent compared to the same period last year.

The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) invested US\$582.8 million in Kazakhstan’s green energy over the past 5 years, 24.kz reports. According to Deputy Director General in Directorate-General for Energy Gerassimos Thomas, the EU is trying to move away from importing only oil and uranium from Kazakhstan and is focusing on renewable energy sources. “Astana is certainly a new and innovative city. Along with the policy of the government, there is a great prospect for development. However, it is necessary to develop not only Astana, but pay attention to the modernisation of other cities and environmentally friendly solutions during construction. Energy efficiency refers not only to buildings and cities, it can be applied in any field such as agriculture, small and medium-sized businesses or civil society,” he said.

BUSINESS

WEDNESDAY, JULY 26, 2017

BUSINESS NEWS IN BRIEF

Yandex and Uber signed an agreement on combining their businesses into a new company for making on-line taxi orders in Russia, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Belarus, Georgia and Kazakhstan, according to Yandex's press service. According to the agreement, Uber and Yandex will invest \$225 million and \$100 million respectively in the new company. The new company will use Yandex technologies and knowledge in the field of cartographic and navigation services and search engines and Uber's experience in ordering trips. Both companies' existing smartphone applications, Yandex.Taxi and Uber, will still be available to users. At the same time, drivers will switch to a single technological platform, which will increase the number of cars available, reduce wait times and increase the availability of the service.

The Kazakh Invest national company presented 19 Kazakh manufacturing companies during a business forum in Georgia, which immediately led to new agreements, according to the company's press service. "We have reached an agreement to supply Kazakh ice cream to Georgia. The initial volume is four wagons per month. For a domestic manufacturer this is a good guaranteed order. In addition, bio bags will be supplied to Georgian supermarkets. Next year, Georgia will launch a ban on the import and production of plastic bags, so the products offered by our producers aroused great interest from retail chains. The minimum volume of delivery is 500,000 pieces per month," said Kazakh Invest Chairman Maksat Kabashev.

The Regional Investment Centre Ontustik (South) has been providing financial support to entrepreneurs of the South Kazakhstan region for eight years. During that period, 16,240 projects worth 48.8 billion tenge (US\$149.7 million) have been financed, according to the press service of the region. More than 16,000 entrepreneurs received financial support for the creation and promotion of their business. A total of 40,907 new jobs were created. Some 941 projects or 56.3 percent are aimed at the development of cattle breeding, 894 projects worth 1.7 billion tenge (US\$5.2 million) are aimed at raising crops. Farm machinery was leased to farmers for the amount of 128.2 million tenge (US\$394,000).

The construction of an instrument-making plant is planned on the territory of Industrial Park No. 1 as part of Kazakhstan's cooperation with China's One Belt, One Road programme, according to inform.kz. The relevant memorandum was signed by the heads of the Astana Department for Investments and Beijing's DianLianYu Technology. The plant will produce various electric meters, components, communication modules, transformers and other component devices. Investments in this project are estimated at US\$200 million. At the initial stage, it is planned to create about 40 jobs and with the expansion of production the number will increase to 120. The high-tech measuring electrical appliances and software are planned to be used in Astana Smart City.

Akim (Governor) of the North Kazakhstan region Kumar Aksakalov said the region is going to increase processing volumes and export potential at a meeting with Kazakh Prime Minister Bakytzhan Sagintayev, according to inform.kz. Now, meat processing enterprises of the region are loaded at 53 percent, dairy at 87 percent and flour-milling are 33 percent loaded, he said. The work will be done through the Agricultural Products Processing Map. It is planned that by 2020, 64 projects worth 54 billion tenge (US\$165.7 million) will be implemented. This year, the region introduced 24 projects worth 29.7 billion tenge (US\$91.1 million). "We are working on the restoration of the idle enterprises. One of the major projects is the BIOHIM production complex. ... By November this year, the enterprise will produce gluten, starch from wheat. There are no similar productions in the country," said Aksakalov. North Kazakhstan agricultural producers are setting up supplies of meat and milk, he added. The production of their poultry farms is exported to Russia, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, and cooperation is being established with enterprises in China.

Air Astana was built without state subsidies, says airline president

By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – Air Astana, Kazakhstan's national carrier and a leading airline in the Central Asian region, was built without state help, said company president Peter Foster in an interview with RBK Tatarstan.

"The main indicator is the number of aircraft in our fleet. We increased it up to 31 over these years and we have already agreed to have 17 more in the next few years. Our airline is a commercial airline. We do not receive any subsidies or guarantees from the state or shareholders. We have no privileges in the purchase of kerosene or airport taxes. The only state investment in the company was the initial capital 15 years ago. We are convinced that the market sets the rules and an organisation has to have firm principles," he noted.

The company's commitment to



Peter Foster

those principles helped earn a sixth consecutive Skytrax Award at the recent Le Bourget Paris Air Show. Foster compared the airline's success to a real estate purchase due to two common factors – time and location.

"Kazakhstan has a very good strategic location right in the middle between Europe and Asia, between Russia and Southeast Asia. If we look back at the beginning of the airline's activities in 2002 after the collapse in the airline industry

following the events in New York, everything was cheap and costs were minimal. We entered the market on time," he said.

Lack of state subsidies ensures balance in the market as it helps separate business and politics, a critical factor for airlines, he added.

Kazakhstan offers a very small domestic market and therefore companies need to focus on transit traffic, which ensures growth, noted Foster. The new terminal at Astana airport has the potential to become a worldwide hub due to its compliance with global trends and standards as well as its strategic location.

"Flights with a stopover in Astana are the shortest between Europe and Asia. This helps reduce not only time, but also petroleum usage, which eventually decreases the expenses of the airline. More

and more people travelling from Europe to Asia and back choose to fly through Kazakhstan," he said.

Air Astana introduced Stopover Holiday, a programme to attract more transit tourists. Passengers travelling through Kazakhstan to an international destination with more than ten hours between connecting flights can stay in a hotel in Almaty or the capital for a dollar.

"Of course, it costs way more than one dollar for us, because we offer high-class hotels, but we believe attracting transit passengers is the right investment," said Foster.

The company studied airline procedures in Southeast Asia, Singapore and Hong Kong, where stopover programmes have become a common practice, and it has proven to be successful. Nearly 800,000 passengers, or 20 percent of its passenger traffic, choose the capital as a stopover, he said.

Air Astana plans to consolidate its efforts to increase the figure to 30 percent, with the total passenger traffic equalling nine million per year in ten years.

EXPO 2017, taking place in the capital until Sept. 10, is offering additional opportunities for the programme to gain ground. Passengers on international flight to or through the city receive a free ticket to the event.

Air Astana's new routes are also helping to achieve the objective. In addition to 60 international and domestic destinations, the carrier recently initiated an Astana-Delhi flight, resumed Astana-Kiev and plans to launch new routes and increase the frequency of current ones in demand, such as Astana-London.

While the company's emphasis is on the capital, Almaty is no less important.

"Although Astana will be turning into our main hub, we will not decrease our presence in Almaty. Neither do we plan to move our headquarters to Astana, because these are unreasonable spending and additional difficulties for our staff," said Foster.

Switzerland shares financial experience with Kazakhstan

By Zhazira Dyussebekova

ASTANA – Switzerland is ready to share its financial sector and budget management experience, said Swiss Federal Councillor and Federal Department of Finance head Ueli Maurer during his July 11 visit to the Kazakh capital. The agenda also included the One Belt, One Road initiative and matters of the Astana International Financial Centre (AIFC).

Maurer stressed the importance of One Belt, One Road.

"Today, it is one of the main projects and we are ready to support it. Also, Kazakhstan is rich in its natural resources and it is an economically developing country, which plays an important role and

we are ready to cooperate," he said at the press conference.

The initiative affects all Central Asian countries, added Swiss State Secretary for International Financial Matters Jörg Gasser.

"It is a project of China, but it is a global project, and we would like to know more – how Central Asian countries cope with it, how we can assist. We want to know how Kazakhstan deals with the One Belt, One Road initiative," he said.

The delegation is visiting Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan within the 25th anniversary of the Swiss Constituency, a nine-nation voting group including Kazakhstan in the International Monetary Fund and World Bank. The Swiss officials met with the heads of the National Bank and the Kazakh

Ministry of Finance, as well as the AIFC governor.

The two nations have a great opportunity for tight cooperation in the finance sector, noted Gasser. Consultations regarding the AIFC began in 2012 when Swiss specialists came to Kazakhstan to share their experience.

"Kazakhstan plays a central role in the Swiss Constituency geographically, economically and socially and Switzerland has great interest in the members of the constituency," he said.

"We explain how to organise a stock exchange, for example, or how to create budget, or how to control fiscal deficit or how to manage monetary reserves. It is more about the exchange of the information and our experience," he added.

Switzerland has extensive experience and practice in many fields and the financial sector is one of the brightest examples.

"Recently, there has been growth in public debt and non-performing loans of commercial banks in Kazakhstan. That was done by the old or transitional generation; now, a new generation of managers has come to the stage and it seems that some new strategy will be adopted," said Maurer regarding Kazakhstan's banking sector.

He also noted the way Switzerland's debt brake, used to control spending, serves as a role model for many countries. The nation's budget planning and economy are tackled from a scientific approach, taking into account various factors, he said.

"We have the knowledge and experience that we constantly use; we can exchange or share them. Switzerland in the world market is known for its approach to budget management and finance; it's our strength. We have the so-called 'debt brake,' which basically means that the state does not have the right to spend more than it receives. A protective mechanism immediately turns on, for example; it can be a useful experience for you," he added.

The delegation visited EXPO 2017 and Maurer noted he was very impressed by the Kazakh pavilion.

"I think that expo plays a big role for the future of Kazakhstan," he said.

AIFC to develop ecosystem to enable CIS blockchain solutions

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – The Astana International Financial Centre (AIFC) has announced plans to develop a legislative base regulating cryptocurrency transactions for the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) region in conjunction with Deloitte CIS, Waves Platform, Juscutum Law Firm and Kesarev Consulting, according to a July 14 press release.

Collaboration will allow creating the most favourable conditions for ICO (initial coin offering) projects and using the best international practices. An independent legal and regulatory framework based on English common law principles and FinTech Sandbox, a special regulatory regime for innovative projects, are unique advantages for attracting capital to financial projects.

The digital centre aims to become a most favourable FinTech jurisdiction with an open ecosystem and the most progressive regulating framework, according to AIFC Authority CEO Nurlan Kussainov.

"We thank our partners for the support given to our blockchain regulatory development initiative. In the next phase of the project, our working team will be looking at widening the participation to include other industry stakeholders," he said.

Kazakhstan has become the second country in the world, after Japan, which has recognised the need to develop the cryptocurrency market system at the governmental level, noted Kesarev Consulting partner Natalia Sheiko.

"The development of the digital currency market on the basis of the AIFC is the first step towards

creation of a full-fledged ecosystem for the digital economy in Kazakhstan," she said.

Forming a working group will help create the most favourable conditions to develop blockchain technologies.

"There is no greater recognition for a lawyer than to be involved in the development of regulatory rules which were lacking in practice. It is especially valuable that this happens in the ICO industry: new, dynamic and extremely difficult for classical law. We consider this project as a perfect opportunity to create a new jurisdiction, which would be most favourable for crypto projects in the world. We are very pleased with the willingness of AIFC to embrace this new phenomenon; it gives hope for very quick results," said Juscutum head Artem Afyan.

The working group intends to develop the legislation regulating cryptocurrency transaction; establish the ecosystem to use blockchain technology, crypto-assets and blockchain-based projects; design a favourable environment for the country's innovative development to elaborate dialogue among business, citizens and government and improve the investment climate in Kazakhstan to develop and support innovative technologies.

Despite its rapid growth during the last several years, crypto-economics is lacking regulatory mechanisms. The necessary conditions to coordinate the legal framework for blockchain projects and cryptocurrencies are required.

An ecosystem will attract new investors to Kazakhstan and help the country be a new destination in the blockchain field, said Waves Platform founder and CEO Sasha Ivanov.

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EDITORIAL&OPINION

WEDNESDAY, JULY 26, 2017

Getting the balance right on religion

Religious faith has had a hugely positive impact. It helps people make sense of life as well providing comfort at times of distress. Even more importantly, the compassionate values – which the great religions have in common – have shaped for the better our attitude to each other and to society as a whole.

The desire to look after those less fortunate than ourselves is not, of course, restricted to those of faith. But religious beliefs have been and remain a major driver of charitable work as many of the individuals and organisations caring for the victims of humanitarian disasters around the world today underline.

The positive role that religion plays in the lives of billions of people and in strengthening the bonds of community is why a solid and clear relationship between state and religion is essential. We all benefit – whether or not we are religious ourselves – if those with faith have the opportunity to make their full contribution to society.

At the same time, however, we have to recognise that religious belief can be distorted and exploited. It is not something restricted, in any way, to modern times or to one religion. There have been many examples, over the centuries, of the terrible damage caused by the hatred and division unleashed by religious extremism.

But there is also no doubt that warped and violent ideologies based on distortions of religion are among the most serious threats in every continent and region today. We have seen, too, around the world how radical interpretations of religious beliefs are being used to divide communities, foster discrimination and, on occasions, encourage the breaking of the law.

The challenge for all countries is how to strike the balance between nurturing all the good that religious belief brings while protecting ourselves from the way it can be abused to sow division and hatred. Getting the balance right is critical for the long-term stability of societies and the safety of our citizens.

This is particularly important for a country like Kazakhstan. In a region where, sadly, religious extremism has a strong foothold, we pride ourselves on having built a stable, tolerant and moderate society from a diverse population of many different faiths and backgrounds.

The citizens of Kazakhstan may largely be Muslim but the state is secular and those belonging to all the great religions have the same respect and equality before the law. It is a significant part of Kazakhstan's identity and success.

But as we have sadly seen throughout the world, no country, no matter how stable, can afford to relax in the face of religious extremism and terrorism. In recent years, Kazakhstan, too, has been the victim of terrorism rooted in twisted versions of religious extremism, including the deadly attack in Aktobe a year ago. As in many other countries, too, small numbers of our young

people have been attracted by the savage ideologies of groups like Daesh.

On a broader scale, as well, we have seen in some communities more extreme interpretations of religion take hold, which are entirely alien to the history and traditions of the Kazakh people. They threaten the secular nature of our state, damage our children's education and promote damaging gender inequality.

It is to counter this threat – particularly to the young – while protecting the right of the overwhelming peaceful majority to worship freely, or not to worship at all, that Kazakhstan has developed a new framework on the relationship between religion and the state, called the Concept of State Policy in the Religious Sphere for 2017-2020. It is a key strand in helping ensure Kazakhstan continues to have a strong modern identity and stable, cohesive society equipped to meet the challenges and opportunities of the coming decades.

It is a framework that draws heavily on Kazakhstan's national traditions and achievements but also looks at how partners as diverse as America, the European Union, China and Russia have responded to these challenges. It underlines the secular nature of our state – which has been the foundation of our stability – while emphasising the important role that religion plays in our national life and promoting good relations between the 18 faiths followed in our country.

The framework clearly sets out in law respect for religious beliefs and the continued freedom to worship for individuals and the work of over 3,500 faith associations. As Minister for Religious Affairs Nurlan Yermekbayev has said, it is not the role of the government or state to interfere in the internal workings of religions. But it is its responsibility to ensure support is not being given to those preaching hate or division.

Greater transparency over finances will help prevent any misuse of funding to support religious extremism. It must be right as well to prevent religion being used as an excuse to flout the law. We should expect all marriages, for example, to be registered legally by the state. Nor can religion be used as an excuse not to vaccinate children.

The framework sets out how education will be strengthened to counter the appeal of religious extremism and improve the understanding of different faiths. It is ignorance, which provides fertile ground for the religious extremists. Religious values should help unite people not drive them apart which is why it is so important that faith leaders are fully involved in these educational initiatives.

We now have the chance to put the relations between state and religion on a more solid footing. By enhancing freedom of worship while ensuring the tiny majority of extremists do not abuse religious beliefs, we can protect the stability of our country, enhance the safety of our citizens and build a relationship which is true to the character and history of Kazakhstan.

Historical notes about Kazakh-Israeli cooperation

By Israel Mey-Ami

I have served as ambassador of Israel to Kazakhstan twice, in the periods between 1996-2002 and 2008-2012. Thanks to this, I am able to analyse the changes that have taken place in Kazakhstan during this period. I should note that most of them are positive.

The changes include: the new course towards economic diversification, development of transport infrastructure, creation of regional economic unions within the framework of Eurasia, implementation of President Nursultan Nazarbayev's idea of creation of a customs union between Armenia, Belarus, Russia, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. Modernisation also touched the Kazakh economy, development programmes and the institute of democracy. The growth of the country's international influence was symbolised by anti-nuclear international initiatives of Kazakhstan and accession to international organisations. It is also important to note Kazakhstan's non-permanent membership in the UN Security Council in 2017-2018.

In this review, I do not quote the statistical data, but mention only those events that I witnessed as an Israeli diplomat.

The diplomatic relations between Israel and Kazakhstan were established in April 1992. Israel was the seventh country, which established diplomatic relations with Kazakhstan. During my first visit to Kazakhstan, I was impressed by the nature of Almaty and warm and friendly attitude of the Kazakh Foreign Ministry staff. The performance of the vocalists and orchestra of the National Opera impressed me a lot. It was my first contact with Kazakh culture.



After a while, Israel opened its embassy in Almaty. It was a large building in the centre of the city. The two countries' relations developed intensively. In September 1992, Prime Minister of Kazakhstan Sergei Tereshchenko travelled to Israel for the first official visit. He was impressed by the level of development of the Israeli economy, especially in the agriculture sector.

The year 1995 was marked by the first official visit of President Nazarbayev with his wife to Israel. At that time, I served as a referent of the Israeli Foreign Ministry and accompanied Nazarbayev. There were significant agreements in economy, trade, agriculture and healthcare sectors signed.

A year later, Kazakhstan opened its embassy in Israel. It was the first embassy of the Central Asian country in Israel. Byrgany Aitimova headed it. In the course of our joint work, we created strong friendly relations with her. Aitimova contributed a lot to the development of the bilateral cooperation. She still maintains friendly relations with many Israelis.

In 1996, I arrived to Kazakhstan as an ambassador. I was the second Israeli ambassador to Kazakhstan. I remember the ceremony of presenting credentials to Nazarbayev. I managed to talk with the Kazakh President for a long time without

an interpreter. I felt that I was talking with the outstanding leader of the ninth largest country in the world, that used to possess a huge arsenal of nuclear weapons and was home to the Baikonur spaceport.

In September 1999, I took part in the meeting of Foreign Ministers of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA), a prototype of the legal security architecture in the Asian subcontinent. The CICA is important for Israel, because it allows participation in meetings with those countries with which there are no diplomatic relations, such as Iran, Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan, etc.

In 2002, I went back to Israel, but I knew that I would come back. It happened in 2008. My wife and I arrived to the new capital of Kazakhstan Astana.

The peak of diplomatic relations between Israel and Kazakhstan was reached in 2009. Heading a large delegation of ministers and businessmen, Israeli President Shimon Peres arrived to Astana. Despite the severe climate conditions, they were impressed by a beautiful architecture and developed infrastructure. Peres delivered a speech at the third Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions, which was attended by 77 delegations from 35 countries of Europe, Asia, America and the Middle East. The visit resulted in significant increase of mutual trade turnover.

I am sure that friendly relations between our countries will continue to develop and strengthen. I wish current Israeli Ambassador to Kazakhstan Michael Brodsky success in his work.

The author is former Ambassador of Israel to Kazakhstan.

Alash Orda turns 100

The centenary of the Russian Revolution is rightly a major event in the global calendar this year. Tsar Nicholas II's overthrow and the eventual emergence of the Soviet Union was a seismic event not just for Russia itself, but the entire world. The reverberations from this momentous episode continue to be felt around the globe a century later.

Kazakhstan is one of many countries in which the events set in St Petersburg (Petrograd at the time) a hundred years ago have had a huge impact. They have left a lasting impression on many aspects of our national life, the challenges we face and also our opportunities. An analysis of this legacy – both the positive and negative – will be part of the examination of what the Russian Revolution has meant for the world.

But one internationally lesser-known strand of this history is how the toppling of the old order provided the space for a re-awakening of Kazakh identity.

Following completion of Kazakhstan's incorporation into the Russian Empire in 1865, the first class of Kazakh intellectuals who received professional training in modern universities (in Russia) emerged by the early 20th century.

Embroidered in the political upheaval boiling in the empire as early as 1905-1907, when Kazakhs elected their deputies to the first and second convocations of the State Duma, those intellectuals advocated their people's right to live freely on their land and decide their own fate.

When the Tsarism was overthrown in February 1917, Kazakh leaders began organizing as delegated representatives by participating in the First All-Kazakh Congress, which convened July 16-21 in Orenburg. Among the outcomes was a decision in favour of institutionalizing efforts to defend Kazakh interest through a political party. The new party was named Alash, a legendary ancestor of the Kazakh people and thus their second name. As the situation became complicated with Bolsheviks coming to power later that year, the Second All-Kazakh Congress ruled to set up Alash Orda, a national autonomous government.

For almost two years Kazakhstan had its own government, which claimed control of an area broadly similar to our modern country – something which we were not formally to regain for 70 years.

The new polity was short-lived and was soon subsumed into Soviet Russia. But the decision to declare a national government and the support it received among the wider public revealed how Tsarist attempts to sweep away Kazakh culture and identity had failed.

Even after decades of often harsh treatment, the Kazakh spirit was not broken.

We need to be careful, of course, of comparisons between this first fledgling Kazakh state and modern Kazakhstan. The environment in which the Alash Orda government operated was very different, as was its freedom of action. Civil war was raging through the old Russian Empire during this period, with Kazakh territory under the influence of anti-Bolshevik forces who put limits on what could be done.

Yet many of the decisions that needed to be taken and the solutions reached when the First All-Kazakh Congress met a hundred years ago this month have surprising resonance today. The congress and Alash Party which emerged from it had to decide the direction of the country they hoped to establish.


The land of Kazakhstan was already home to people of many different backgrounds and nationalities. An emphasis was put on equal treatment to encourage harmony and building a secular state with religious freedom and tolerance. The Alash programme made clear that "religion should be separated from the state" and went on to add that every religion "should be free and equal." They are principles that remain central to our country today.

So, too, is the importance given to education and to preserving and promoting the Kazakh language. The new state insisted that all schools – whether they were religious-based or set up originally by the Russian administration – would teach Kazakh. It was seen as key to preserving a strong national identity.

Historians of the period also suggest that what enabled the Alash leaders – who were members of a small intelligentsia – to win support from the broader public was their ability to look beyond the past. So, while the nomadic roots and culture of the Kazakh people were seen as important for the country's strong sense of community, turning back the clock was not regarded as an option for a modern country.

Instead, the Alash leadership actively sought to learn from other countries to see how their experiences could be adapted. The aim was to try to mould a distinctive Kazakh model to prepare their country for the future.

In the end they never got the chance to put this vision into practice, as history swept them aside. But the success of Kazakhstan both domestically and internationally over the last 25 years shows how powerful their ideas were. It was why the government was right earlier this year to suggest that the celebration of the 100th anniversary of the Alash movement was about more than our history.



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OPINIONS

WEDNESDAY, JULY 26, 2017

Ukraine and Kazakhstan: 25 years of friendship and cooperation

By Kostyantyn Gryshchenko

July 22, 2017 is a special date in the modern history of Ukrainian-Kazakh relations as it marks the 25th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between our states.

“Time is the most valuable thing a man can spend,” famous ancient Greek scholar Theophrastus once said. We used this resource in full, first to establish and then fill with substance and secure consecutive progress of the relations between our countries. In fact, they did not start with a clean slate. Our peoples had already been intertwined with thousands of ties that have a long and meaningful history.

There are reliable facts that the first Ukrainian settlers, though involuntarily, appeared in Kazakhstan already in the 18th century. The great kobzar (author) Taras Shevchenko, who under the decree of Tsar Nicholas I spent ten years in exile in Kazakhstan, turned into a symbol of spiritual



bipolar, which, on the one hand, greatly complicated international processes, but on the other opened previously unseen opportunities for the newly independent states. Despite going through these challenging processes, when, of course, key foreign policy priorities included securing recognition of one's sovereignty and establishing and developing relations with the world's leading

in the field of space, nuclear energy and many other sectors of the economy. In the late 1990s and in the following decades, when our countries had completed the initial challenging period of the formation of statehood and already embarked on sustainable development paths, we could pay more attention to these and many other issues. A number of joint projects were launched, a free trade zone was formed, etc.

Now a new, completely different stage of cooperation is coming. In the post-Soviet space, major irreversible changes happened. Ukraine is confidently moving on the path of European integration. This is a civilisational choice of the Ukrainian people. Kazakhstan became a member of the Eurasian Economic Union. In parallel, there is an erosion of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) free trade zone, which includes both our countries. These and other factors predetermined the need to adjust the forms of our cooperation.

I know that Kazakhstan is carrying out a large-scale modernisation of the country. The country is implementing political reforms, modernising the economy and renewing its self-identity. Kazakhstan's healthy ambitions to make a technological breakthrough are an area where our countries can find many points of contact. Ukraine is strong in the field of IT, development and implementation of advanced agricultural technologies. Traditionally, we have a developed industrial production, food and light industry. Recently, the world-famous businessman and philanthropist Elon Musk named the Ukrainian space rocket Zenith as the best, after his Falcon. I would like to emphasise that this is an environmentally friendly and very reliable carrier. Unfortunately, its launches from the Baikonur space port, for reasons beyond our control, were stopped. I listed only a small list of industries where we could confidently increase our cooperation.

Undoubtedly, the focus of our attention has always been on the issues of cultural and humanitarian ties. An enormous role here

belongs to almost 400,000 ethnic Ukrainians in Kazakhstan, who not only make a worthy contribution to the development and prosperity of their country, but also serve a living bridge between us. I know that throughout Kazakhstan there are Ukrainian national cultural centres, a newspaper is published in the Ukrainian language, and, within the quota assigned for the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan in Parliament, a deputy who adequately represents the interests of the Ukrainian community was elected.

I would especially like to note close cooperation within the framework of international organisations, including the CIS, the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the UN and others. It is profoundly symbolic that at one time Kazakhstan passed the baton of chairmanship in the OSCE to Ukraine. Kazakhstan's presidency is considered one of the most successful in the history of the Organization. The Ukrainian Chairmanship kept the high standard and made its own significant contribution to the work of the OSCE.

Now Ukraine and Kazakhstan are non-permanent members of the UN Security Council. Our countries have approached this very important mission in the most serious manner. And in this connection, I would like to note the political address of President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev to the UN Security Council with a conceptual vision of ways to achieve global security. They include proposals on nuclear disarmament, countering terrorism, environmental aspects of security, enhancing and adapting the UN system, etc.

Obviously, the achievement of the goals set by Kazakhstan, especially on issues of nuclear disarmament, faces strong resistance of those who do not see in these initiatives the path to peace that is based on mutual trust and cooperation. We see that a number of countries in the world community, contrary to common sense, continue to build up their nuclear arsenal and actively conduct test

explosions. And other countries in so-called “Nuclear Club” are unlikely to voluntarily give up their nuclear capabilities. However, the international movement aimed at achieving a world free of nuclear weapons is gaining momentum.

Ukraine and Kazakhstan have already made their huge historical contribution to the expansion of the non-proliferation regime by voluntarily renouncing their nuclear weapons. Thus, our countries have shown their political maturity, consistency and responsibility to present and future generations.

Our countries have established themselves as some of the most

more. I can assure Kazakhstan has a positive image in the international arena and has established itself as a reliable partner.

Kazakhstan's good reputation in the international community has become a fundamental factor for Astana's choice as an interactive platform for inter-Syrian reconciliation. The country's contributions to the settlement of the recent confrontation between Moscow and Ankara, as well as on Iran's nuclear dossier are well known. All of this is the result of the international respect that President Nazarbayev enjoys and the effective work of Kazakhstan's foreign ministry.

We appreciate the contribution of President Nazarbayev to the search for the most effective approaches to the settlement of the conflict in the southeast of Ukraine and the humanitarian assistance provided to the residents of the affected region.

consistent and active participants in the process of nuclear disarmament. I know that, on Kazakhstan's initiative, August 29 was declared the International Day against Nuclear Tests, and in 2015 the UN General Assembly approved the Universal Declaration on the Achievement of a Nuclear-Weapons-Free World. The Kazakh President's program document known as Manifesto “The World. The 21st Century” is commendable.

Another date that I became aware of is the 25th anniversary of the diplomatic service of the Republic of Kazakhstan, which also occurred in July of this year. First of all, I would like to congratulate my Kazakh colleagues on this anniversary. They have something to be proud of.

This includes Kazakhstan's chairmanship in the OSCE and non-permanent membership in the UN Security Council, the initiative on launching the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia, convening the Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions, holding of EXPO 2017, and many

One of the main achievements of the Kazakh diplomacy, which I would like to focus on, is the legal confirmation of the state borders. The removal of territorial disputes is the most important factor in the security of any country, although, to a deep regret, it does not guarantee the inviolability of borders. For Ukraine, this topic is very painful. Our country is going through challenging times. Therefore, any support is important for us. And we feel this support from Kazakhstan and its people. We appreciate the contribution of President Nazarbayev to the search for the most effective approaches to the settlement of the conflict in the southeast of Ukraine and the humanitarian assistance provided to the residents of the affected region. All this was done sincerely. This is especially valuable. And further strengthens the friendship of our peoples.

The author is a Ukrainian career diplomat who served as his country's Foreign Minister in 2003-2005 and 2010-2012, as well as Deputy Prime Minister in 2012-2014.

The role of EXPO 2017 in forming the country's national brand

By Tatyana Kaukenova

EXPO 2017 gives Kazakhstan a chance to promote its brand in the world and improve the perception of many aspects of the country's development.

EXPO 2017, held this summer in Astana, opens up a lot of opportunities for Kazakhstan: from modernisation of the energy sector to a breakthrough in tourism and from the optimisation of transport infrastructure to the strengthening of international cooperation.

One of the expo's most important achievements, undoubtedly, will be the promotion of Kazakhstan's national brand. Unfortunately, today this aspect of the expo is not given much attention; some pundits discussing “expo effects” often dismiss it as “PR” or diminish it to “raising awareness.” Shaping an integral and attractive image of Kazakhstan is perceived as a kind of secondary effect, the benefit of which does not seem obvious, although now in a world where the quality and nature of goods and services are less connected with the place of their origin, it is not so much the competition of products that comes to the fore, but the competition of reputations.

Nation branding – the importance of the trend

The importance of national branding in the modern world cannot be understated, because it is not just about recognition or positive feedback. It is about building an integral and recognisable reputation of Kazakhstan, designed to become the basis for the nation's



attractiveness to potential investors and tourists, as well as its political and cultural influence.

In the modern world – with its information openness, dynamism and the importance of mutual relations – the value of properly-built national branding is growing every year. As one of the world's leading authorities in national branding, Simon Anholt notes that nowadays the perception of a country has no less significance for its global reputation than assets or real achievements. Realising this, practically all the leading countries of the world include work on the formation and promotion of the national brand to the priorities of their foreign policy.

Today, there are several major ratings of national brands in the world. One of them is the Anholt-GfK National Brand Index, where in 2016 Kazakhstan was included among the selected six states of Central and Eastern Europe. It is the only state in Central Asia and the only post-Soviet state, except Russia, included in the ranking.

The value of EXPO 2017 for national branding

Kazakhstan has been an independent state for only 25 years. As a consequence, worldwide recog-

nition of its culture and history is still relatively

weak. If many states' national branding efforts can rely on the images they have been promoting for centuries, Kazakhstan has to do much more extensive work. In addition to presenting the history and the key foundations of the country's development to the world, Kazakhstan must actively shape modern events that can form the desired image. In these conditions, holding an expo is really akin to a jackpot.

World and international expos are a recognised platform for the presentation of countries. The exhibitions in Shanghai and Milan have notably enhanced the cultural and innovative attractiveness of those countries and cities.

The value of the expo is that the proposed images and perspectives of the host country are transmitted directly to viewers. Taking into account modern technologies, such demonstrations are actively appealing to the imagination and emotions of the audience. And this is very important. Any foreign policy measures, if they do not work with feelings and images, will lose to the bright impressions formed during an event such as expo.

EXPO 2017 for the Kazakhstan brand

For expo visitors, Kazakhstan offers an image of an open, friendly country aimed at innovation, the development of green technologies and the preservation of its unique nature. The situation is that for many, Kazakhstan is now the country whose brand is strongly connected to the expo.

In this regard, we can note that Kazakhstan's temporary visual brand today is the trefoil logo of EXPO 2017. This symbol also advertised the Kazakh pavilion at EXPO 2015 in Milan.

The fact that it reveals Kazakhstan itself not as completely as we would like is less important, because the associations that are related to it during the expo are of greater importance. Now, we are focusing on such strengths of Kazakhstan's brand as an orientation towards development and innovation, a wealth of traditions and uniqueness of culture, an open and peaceful foreign policy and the development of tourism.

In the above-mentioned Anholt-GfK Index, they are evaluated based on a study of the perception of six key areas: export, government, culture, human capital, tourism and attractiveness for investment and immigration. Obviously, expo has serious potential to “pull up” Kazakhstan's positions, at least in such spheres as tourism, culture and people. If you use the potential of the exhibition in the best possible way, then interaction with entrepreneurs will provide an opportunity to disclose Kazakhstan's investment opportunities and show its attractiveness for other foreign specialists.

Astana – a platform of world national branding

This summer, Astana has become a platform of world national branding. The fact that the current exhibition is among the record holders by the number of participants, having hosted 115 coun-

tries, means the success of the work done by

the country's diplomats and the importance of the presence at the expo for the development of many states. Quite a significant number of pavilions are aimed not so much at presenting the achievements of countries in the field of energy, but rather in demonstrating those images that the country would like to broadcast to foreign tourists. This is perfectly normal, as the exhibition of national brands is just as important at the expo as the presentation of thematic exhibits.

The advantage of Kazakhstan is that for all countries, the ability to broadcast images is limited by the place and time; in other words, the territory of the pavilion and the national day. For Kazakhstan, these three months are an opportunity for continuous work with the audience.

Moreover, it is important not to lose sight of the actively-ongoing process to promote the image of Astana: not only for foreign tourists, but also for the residents of Kazakhstan. It is no secret that for many, especially the residents of the old capital of Almaty, the image of the young capital was rich in stereotypes that people did not aspire to part with. Now, Astana shows itself from a new angle, in parallel strengthening the human capital of its inhabitants by becoming accustomed to the most relevant trends in the sphere of green technologies in the urban environment.

Strengthening ties and political capital

Promotion of the brands of countries, carried out in the framework

of public diplomacy, is increasingly based in the modern world on cooperation and not on propaganda. This is not only cooperation between countries, but also interaction with international, regional, commercial and non-governmental structures. Kazakhstan, as part of the preparations for the expo, has made very serious progress in this direction.

Kazakhstan is constantly increasing its foreign policy activity, both regionally and globally. Working in the UN Security Council, being involved in peacemaking activities and strengthening contributions to the work of a number of international organisations increases the political capital of Kazakhstan, but the low awareness of Kazakhstan in many countries complicates the promotion of many projects and initiatives.

The situation today means it is not enough if the initiatives and programmes are sound and relevant. The party promoting it should have sufficient authority and an appropriate reputation to advocate and advance them. The work done by Kazakhstan to attract participants and organise the expo undoubtedly strengthened these resources.

Information in the world is becoming more accessible; therefore, fakes or empty “image materials” practically do not give a real effect. The connections and impressions of living people, easily transferred in the information space, come to the fore. It is very important to promote real projects and most importantly, projects backed by real impressions. Holding the expo is one of such projects.

The author is independent political analyst.

EURASIA&WORLD

WEDNESDAY, JULY 26, 2017

Kazakhstan creates online platform for wholesale trade in Central Asian region



Photo credit: kapital.kz

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – Entrepreneurs from Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) countries will no longer need to travel to China, Kyrgyzstan or Uzbekistan to purchase goods, as Central Asian region trade routes will now converge in Kazakhstan. The National Association of Trade Enterprises together with Kyrgyz colleagues is launching a unique project – the Commodity Distribution System of the Central Asian region with logistics centres in Almaty, Astana and Atyrau. All procedures from order to payment will be made online, according to Kapital.kz.

“Such a wholesale distributor successfully operates in Paris. A number of logistics centres operate there in the 900-hectare territory. They all work online, providing the entire EU (European Union) with necessary products. Manufacturers supply their goods directly to wholesale warehouses. The number of intermediaries is decreasing. Such a system reduces prices, fights the shadow economy and helps enterprises plan their work. Farmers do not run after the government, asking where to put the products, and people do not ask why the agricultural goods are expensive,” said Kyrgyz Association of Markets, Trade and Services President Sergey Ponomaryov.

He added the system will be effective only if it works in both di-

rections, forming the application and proposal portfolios simultaneously. As a result, large trucks will transport one product, unload and reload other products. Ponomaryov is certain the project will help Kazakh producers enter international markets.

Kazakh Association of Trade Enterprises Vice President Zhibek Azhibayeva is a strong supporter of the platform, noting China, Germany, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Serbia, Tajikistan, Turkey and Uzbekistan are interested in the project.

“We plan to open a wholesale distribution centre in Almaty on Aug. 18 (close to Miras market). The centre will be constructed on an 11-hectare territory and start from 30,000 square metres of retail space. The possibilities of the project are unlimited,” she added.

The platform will focus on e-commerce and Ponomaryov provided examples of centres where turnover reaches \$150 billion per year.

“The commodity-producing system that we are offering is unique, especially for landlocked countries. For the first time we will unite business associations, logistics companies, investors and farmers on one site. We give guarantees to all participants. Some will receive money and others will receive goods,” he said.

Experts indicated the arrangements can be made in a year.

CSTO foreign ministers adopt measures to curb IT crime during Minsk meeting

By Malika Orazgaliyeva

ASTANA – The Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) Foreign Ministers Council adopted during its July 17 meeting in Minsk Belarus measures to counter information technology crimes and approved a Kazakh proposal to establish favourable price conditions for the sale of military equipment to partners.

The council also agreed to intensify the activities of its working group on Afghanistan and approved a plan for consultations between CSTO member states on foreign policy and security for the second half of 2017 and first half of 2018. The ministers, including Kazakh Foreign Minister Kairat Abdrakhmanov, also established a list of topics for 2017 joint statements and discussed preparations for the CSTO anniversary summit later this year in Belarus.



Photo credit: mfa.kz

Abdrakhmanov briefed the gathering on Kazakh efforts to counter transnational crime, particularly cyber and information technology crimes, including establishing a Cyber Shield system. The system is an initiative of President Nursultan Nazarbayev.

Abdrakhmanov also urged great-er CSTO cooperation to counter

computer crimes, including increased information and experience sharing is well as intensifying the activities of the CSTO Coordination and Consultation Centre.

The minister also informed about Kazakhstan’s domestic anti-terror efforts and the progress of the Astana Process to seek a peaceful settlement in Syria.

Afghan civil servants trained in public administration as part of Kazakh development assistance

By Malika Orazgaliyeva

ASTANA – The Kazakh Ministry of Foreign Affairs recently hosted a seminar to increase the potential of Afghanistan’s civil servants and representatives of non-governmental organisations as part of Kazakhstan’s evolving official development assistance (ODA) system. The event was supported the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) office in Kazakhstan and the Japanese Agency for International Cooperation.

The Kazakh side presented its experience in public administration, medicine and education to 24 Afghan representatives.

President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev and Prime Minister of Japan Shinzo Abe agreed in 2015 that Japan would fund the project.

The project seeks to strengthen the economic independence of Afghan women. According to the plan, the next seminar will discuss maternal and child health at the beginning of next year.

The lectures were given by Civil Service Regional Hub steering committee chairperson Alikhan Baimenov, Aimak Foundation for Regional Development and Local Self-Government President Aigul Solovyeva, Kazakhstan’s Business Women Association President Raushan Sarsembayeva, as well as the professors from the Nazarbayev University, Academy for Public Administration under the President of Kazakhstan and Eurasian National University.

Earlier, Almaty hosted a seminar, “Improving the productivity and profitability of agribusiness

through teaching innovative technologies of water and energy saving to farmers and agricultural specialists of Central Asian countries” on April 24-28. The seminar was organised by the Kazakh Foreign Ministry, the UNDP office in Kazakhstan and the Embassy of Israel in Kazakhstan.

On Dec. 10, 2014, President Nazarbayev signed a law on Kazakhstan’s Official Development Assistance programme, the first in Central Asian. The law followed a Nov. 3, 2014 agreement signed by then Minister of Foreign Affairs Erlan Idrissov and UNDP repre-

sentative in Kazakhstan Stephen Tull, expressing UNDP support for the programme and noting Kazakhstan’s move from aid recipient to donor.

The ODA office will have a regional focus and help achieve Kazakhstan’s 2050 development goals, noted Idrissov at the time. Kazakhstan joins numerous countries that have created ODA programmes, which have proven to be effective development tools for donor countries.

Kazakhstan has allocated \$350 million in foreign aid in recent years.



Morocco’s first Ambassador to Kazakhstan focuses on political dialogue, economic relations

By Zhazira Dyussembekova

ASTANA – Morocco established its first embassy in Kazakhstan at the end of 2016, almost 25 years after diplomatic relations were first established. Morocco’s first Ambassador to Kazakhstan Abdeljalil Saubry, recently discussed his priorities in an interview with The Astana Times.

“The fact of the opening of the Moroccan Embassy in Kazakhstan shows the potential for the bilateral cooperation is real and Morocco highly appreciates Kazakhstan’s role in the region and in the world. We are sure that Kazakhstan shares the same interest in the development of our relations,” said Saubry.

Kazakhstan and Morocco cooperate closely on political matters and within international organisations but could improve the level of its economic cooperation, noted the ambassador.

“Our political relations are very good. Our goal is to ensure that our remarkable political relations are reflected both economically and culturally, as well as in other areas of common interest. For example, at the moment, trade can be called ‘modest’ and irregular. Hopefully, the situation will improve. Trade turnover between two countries is



Abdeljalil Saubry

about \$170 million, the indicator is not high,” he said.

Morocco mostly imports cereals, cotton and hydrocarbons from Kazakhstan while exporting citrus fruits and seafood.

Ambassador Saubry also addressed other priorities for bilateral relations.

“First of all, my main task is to support the political dialogue, for it to be regular and on a high level,” he outlined.

The second is to enhance economic cooperation in priority areas of common interest for both countries.

“For example, agriculture. Historically, it plays a big role for both countries. Also, the energy sector has real opportunities for coop-

eration between our two countries. Morocco is a leader in the region of Africa in the renewable energy field. Last year, The UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) held its 22nd Conference of the Parties (COP 22) in Marrakesh. We pay great attention to the energy sector, also due to the fact that we do not have traditional fuel sources, such as oil. So we are forced to develop new sources of energy. And Kazakhstan, as we know, pays a lot of attention to that issue. Holding EXPO 2017 also proves that fact. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Kazakhstan on the fact that it was elected to host expo, as well as with an excellent organisation and the right choice of the theme of the Future Energy. I think expo gave an opportunity to host different events, forums, summits. I am glad to be here at that moment. This exhibition also gives Kazakhstan the opportunity to strengthen its wealth, diversity in cultural, tourism and human terms,” said the ambassador.

Another area of joint interest is cooperation in the mining industry and hydrocarbon exploration, in which Kazakhstan has accumulated rich experience, he said.

University cooperation is also important.

Tourism plays a vital role. “For

Morocco, it is the priority sector. Around 10 million tourists visit our country each year. We set the goal to reach 20 million tourists per year by 2020-2025. We have extensive experience in the sector, which we can share with Kazakhstan. Kazakhstan is also open to the world. It has a goal to play a bigger role in the region and tourism is a factor that allows one to open up more to the external world. I think Kazakhstan and Morocco can successfully develop mutually beneficial cooperation in the field of tourism,” stated the official.

“I would like to invite everyone to Morocco. It is rich on many levels, and it has a great climate, cuisine, and history. It has an access to the sea, to the ocean, to the mountains and a desert. We have many things to see. I am sure Kazakh tourists will love it,” said Saubry.

The two countries are divided by thousands of kilometres and are on different continents, but still share commonalities.

“As you know, I have been in Kazakhstan for several months only. However, over this relatively short time, I can already note that Kazakhstan and Morocco both have centuries-old tradition of co-existence of many cultures on one territory. Both countries have a high level of tolerance in many

ways. They both are distinguished by their hospitality and it reflects on everyday life. That common distinctive feature is also reflected on the international level: both our countries promote a culture of dialogue, negotiation, mediation and peaceful resolution of conflicts,” said the ambassador.

“In this regard, I would like to pay tribute to the wise and far-sighted policy of His Excellency President Nursultan Nazarbayev. He really does a lot to maintain a dialogue between religions and cultures, to strengthen values of moderate views and tolerance. Regular holding of the Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions is a vivid confirmation of this,” he added.

Another example of the constant efforts of the Kazakh President, according to the ambassador, is the measures taken at the international level: the organisation of high-level meetings this year to resolve the Syrian crisis under the Astana Process.

“Kazakhstan’s membership in the UN Security Council as a non-permanent member also demonstrates the President’s desire to render significant assistance to the efforts of the international community in resolving conflicts in the world. In this regard, I would like to note Kazakhstan’s signifi-

cant work carried out within this organisation,” stated the official.

The ambassador also noted Morocco can be a valuable partner for Kazakhstan as its interest in Africa increases.

“The African continent is one of our major priorities. The whole world is interested in Africa now. It is an important continent with a huge potential. Our country is second in Africa in terms of attracted investment. Morocco can be an important ally for Kazakhstan in Africa and provide a platform for tripartite cooperation. Morocco can also play the role of a hub, the ‘main gateway’ to Africa due to our experience, a developed port and airport network, as well as the banking insurance system that has been remarkably integrated in African countries,” said the ambassador.

“I would like to take this opportunity to note that it is a great honour for me to be appointed as an ambassador to such an important country as Kazakhstan, to open the Embassy of the Kingdom of Morocco in this friendly country. I am also happy that I arrived at an important moment for Kazakhstan, when it carries out decisive political and economic reforms and we can observe intense political, diplomatic and economic activities, such as the organisation of the expo. This event will allow the country to demonstrate its achievements, as well as the great advancement that Kazakhstan has made in the way of modernisation and development of economic and human potential,” said Ambassador Saubry.

PEOPLE

Taraz student to unveil education system for children with special needs

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Kazakh TV focuses on country's promotion

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SPORTS

Astana Arlans win record third WSB title

B7

The exhibition to be great success, says BIE official



By Dana Omirgazy

ASTANA – EXPO 2017 has only been open five of its 13 weeks, yet based on the early attendance fig-

ures Bureau International des Expositions (BIE) Deputy Secretary General Dimitri Kerkentzes believes the exhibition will rightfully be called a success.

An average of 22,800 guests a day visited the expo in its first week, according to its website, and the event has attracted 1,199,000 tourists from June 10-July 16, with Kazakh-

stan's Nur Alem Sphere recording the leading attendance rate. The number of visitors through Sept. 10 should reach at least two million.

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EXPO 2017 chance to showcase nation's contributions to technology, inventor says

By Galiaskar Seitzhan

Astana, the capital of Kazakhstan, is serving as host this summer for EXPO 2017. Inventors, companies and scientists throughout the world are presenting their research and vision of the way new technologies can change the future. Represented among them are Kazakh nationals, including Blok Shaikenov, who says he has invented a new type of wind generator with increased efficiency. The device is the result of the engineer's 12 years of work. In an interview with The Astana

Times, Shaikenov spoke about how his invention can improve lives.

Your interesting model has an unusual form of blade. What is it called?

We call it a wind wheel with angled blades. I have shared this invention with my junior son, Yerzhan Shaikenov.

A wind turbine is a highly complex device consisting of many components. Why did you specifically choose a wind wheel?

Yes, a wind turbine is almost like a separate electric power station

that includes a number of installations and mechanisms with different functions. There are three main units in it, namely a tower, a nacelle with a generator and other mechanisms inside and a head attached to it with blades. Almost one-third or more of the cost comes from the tower with its installation. The more power you have, the higher the need to raise the nacelle and blades, and the more expensive the foundation. Maintenance of an operating turbine is also expensive.

In recent years, a successful wind turbine design was found which greatly influenced the develop-

ment of wind power and led to a significant reduction in the cost of electricity generated. However, the main mechanism that turns the kinetic energy of the wind flow is the blade. Its design features have been changed many times and have undergone aerodynamic tests. At present, they have already found the shapes, length, width, thickness and curvature of the angle of attack at the edge of the blade which suit the manufacturers in terms of their aerodynamic parameters, although they may differ slightly from one plant to another.

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Smithsonian Institution presents online exhibition of famous Kazakh geographer and ethnographer

By Malika Orazgaliyeva

ASTANA – This year Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev announced a wide-ranging policy "Course towards the future: modernisation of Kazakhstan's identity" outlining steps for modernisation of social norms. As one of its key characteristics, Nazarbayev emphasised "the ability to adopt and learn from the experiences of other people and countries."

One of the related projects in this area is an online exhibition devoted to the scientific expeditions and contributions of great Kazakh geographer and ethnographer Chokan Valikhanov named "Discover Kazakhstan: The Expeditions of Chokan Valikhanov" presented by the Washington-based Smithsonian Institution.

The online space offers archival and published documents and materials. This multi-year project was launched in 2010 in the year

of 175th anniversary of Valikhanov's birth, long before the new identity modernisation policy was proclaimed.

According to the Smithsonian Institute, the study and publication of Valikhanov's scientific explorations are a collaborative effort between the Smithsonian and museums of Kazakhstan. This collaboration derived from a series of exchanges and seminars that began in 2005 with an International Partnership Among Museums grant from the American Association of Museums, awarded to the National Museum of Natural History (Washington) and Abilkhan Kasteev State Museum of Arts (Almaty).

This exhibition has grown out of the longstanding partnership between the Smithsonian and the State Museums of Kazakhstan. In addition to raising awareness of Kazakhstan, it presents to an international audience Valikhanov's expeditionary accounts and scien-

tific accomplishments of the 19th century.

To this day, scholars in the U.S. and Kazakhstan continue to research and publish Valikhanov's original expedition records and collections. This joint effort places within proper historic context the rich collections from the geographer's 19th century expeditions, which focused on his interpretations of the cultural history of the Kazakh people and provides a magnificent overview of Kazakhstan's history.

Valikhanov was born in November 1835 in the Aman-Karagai district within the Kushmurun Fort (presently Kostanai oblast). Chingis Valikhanov, the boy's father, arranged his son's early education, enrolling him in 1842 at age six in a small private school providing a secular education. There he began his studies of Arabic script and foreign languages, including Chagatai.

In 1847, 11-year-old Valikhanov

left Kazakhstan for Omsk, Siberia to enrol in the Cadet Corps. His departure for Omsk marked both the beginning of a new life for Valikhanov and the beginning of his Russian military education and involvement.

Valikhanov graduated from the Omsk Cadet Corps in 1853. He received the rank of Cornet and was assigned to the Sixth Cavalry Regiment of the Siberian Cossack Army.

Two years after graduating from the military academy, Valikhanov began his travels by accompanying Governor-General of Western Siberia Gustav Gasfort to the newly established fortress of Vernoe (presently Almaty).

In 1856, after a group of Kyrgyz nomads was officially incorporated into the Tsar's empire, a diplomatic and geographical expedition embarked to the region of Lake Issyk-Kul, deep in the Kyrgyz frontier.

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Kazakh-Korean cooperation promotes investment climate

By Dmitry Lee

ASTANA – The Korean Association of Kazakhstan held a Kazakh-Korean Cooperation Forum July 20 to demonstrate the country's real potential to foreign investors, help resolve essential issues in doing business in Kazakhstan and mark two important anniversaries, Konstantin Kim, editor-in-chief of the association's Kore Ilbo newspaper, told The Astana Times.

"As you know, this year marks 80 years since Koreans have been living in Kazakhstan. Today, the Korean Association handles different issues both inside the diaspora and beyond. As our President, Nursultan Nazarbayev, says, multiple ethnic groups living in Kazakhstan are the bridging link with the lands of their ancestors. There-

fore, Kazakhstan's multi-ethnicity is our country's advantage."

More than 200 participants arrived for the forum from more than 15 countries. According to Kim, this year, the Korean Association will hold more than 20 national and international events, which are intended to "give thanks to the Kazakhs and the Kazakh land for their acceptance and for letting Korean people become a part of the multi-ethnic country," he said.

"This year is also important for Kazakhstan as it hosts EXPO 2017, which serves as a platform for attracting new foreign investment. As part of the expo, the Korean Association initiated the forum, which served just that purpose," he explained.

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1,200 musicians perform Mahler's Symphony No. 8 at Astana Opera

By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – Approximately 1,200 musicians performing Austrian Gustav Mahler's famous Symphony No. 8 led by Astana Opera chief and world-famous conductor Alan Buribayev made a splash July 21 at the Astana Opera House. After the performance, the audience exploded in applause that lasted for more than 20 minutes.

Symphony No. 8, also known as "A Symphony of Thousands," is regarded as one of the most difficult choral compositions in terms of formal and structural particularities, as well as the astoundingly strong vocal and instrumental efforts required to perform it.

The July 21 concert was particularly unique, as 1,200 musicians appeared on the stage to present the composition, first time in the history since its premiere in 1910.

"Performing such a massive project is a big challenge for musicians. The premiere is a unique event unmatched in the world," noted Buribayev.

Kazakhstan's Minister of Culture and Sports Arystanbek Mukhamediyul and Oscar winning American actor Adrien Brody visiting Astana for the Eurasian Film Festival attended the concert.

"I have never seen something like this in my life. It is incredible.

All musicians were so harmonic in their performance that I do not have words to describe it. This is the greatest art," said Brody.

Leading Astana Opera soloists Saltanat Akhmetova, Zhupar Gabdullina, Aigul Niyazova, Nurlan Bekmukhambetov and Tatyana Vinnitskaya, along with Abai Kazakh State Academic Theatre of Opera and Ballet leading soloists Oksana Davydenko, Oleg Tatamirov and Tair Tazhigulov took part in the concert.

Symphony orchestras and choirs from both operas, the Teatro Carlo Felice, Genoa's grand opera house, and the Kazakh State Symphony Orchestra accompanied the soloists. Leading choirs from all parts of Kazakhstan also arrived in the capital to immerse themselves in the symphonic tones.

Musicians were rehearsing daily for three months to present the composition.

"I rehearse a lot, but before gathering together in a choir and orchestra, I work with each group separately. The idea of unity, fraternity and love, which has always been relevant, is driving this fabulous project," said Buribayev.

According to Abai Kazakh State Academic Theatre orchestra member Nurlan Sagimbayev, significant efforts were made during rehearsals.

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THINGS TO WATCH & PLACES TO GO

GORKY DRAMA THEATRE

July 27 at 7 p.m. A very simple story, spectacle
July 30 at 6 p.m. Master & Margarita, spectacle

'WE' KITCHEN

July 28 at 8 p.m. Nomad, string quartet

ASTANA OPERA

July 30 at 6 p.m. Do you like Brahms, concert
August 1 at 7 p.m. Musical holidays, concert

EXPO SITE

August 2 at 7 p.m. Astana Ballet wind orchestra, concert

Smithsonian Institution presents online exhibition of famous geographer and ethnographer

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It was at this time that Valikh-anov made the premier ethno-graphic documentation of Manas, a monumental oral epic of the Kyr-gyz that Valikhhanov named the “Il-iad of the Steppe” and that is today formally recognised by UNESCO as part of the world’s Intangible Cultural Heritage.

Following the completion of his expedition to Issyk-Kul and Kulja and his return to Omsk, Valkihanov was ordered to report directly to St. Petersburg. He arrived there in 1857 and submitted formal reports to the Russian government. Realising the potential of an officer with innate insight into the geography, customs and languages of the region, the fa-mous explorer Petr Semonov rec-ommended Valikhhanov receive full membership to the Imperial Russian Geographical Society. At the same time, Gasfort suggested to the Min-istry of War and Foreign Affairs that Valikhhanov immediately lead an- other expedition to the remote and fabled Silk Road oasis of Kashgar in Chinese Central Asia, where the Uyghurs had recently begun a series of violent revolts against the Man- chu government.

On June 28, 1858, Valikhhanov began the expedition that would lead him to instant fame through- out Europe and into the pages of history. Serving as a decoy to the geo-political intentions of the mis- sion, Valikhhanov embarked with a caravan of 43 men, 101 camels and 65 horses. Following his successful

passage through the Chinese border without suspicion, the caravan ar- rived in Kashgar in early October 1858. Over the course of a half-year, Valikhhanov took meticulous notes regarding major towns, including maps, the goods in the bazaars, the languages spoken and the customs practiced.

Forced to leave under increased rumours of espionage, Valikhhanov and his caravan left Kashgar and arrived unharmed at Fort Vernoe (presently Almaty) on April 12, 1859. In 1861, Valikhhanov formally published “Sketches of Dzhungar-ia” and “The Condition of Altyshar, or The Six Eastern Cities of the Chinese Province of Nan-Lu (Little Bukhara)” in 1858-1859.

Valikhhanov died in April 1865 at the age of 29. He is known to the world as a “flashing meteor” of Cen- tral Asian scholarship and achieve- ment. His lasting contributions of his ethnographies and explorations continue to strengthen in cultural significance to this very day.

According to the Smithsonian Institute, the online exhibition has been made possible through the support of Chevron Corporation, Air Astana company, Embassy of Kazakhstan in Washington, Embas- sy of the U.S. in Astana and Gen- eral Consulate in Almaty, as well as Kasteev State Museum of Arts.

The project has been organised and carried out by the Smithsoni- an’s Office of Policy and Analysis, headed by Dr. Carole M.P. Neves, with the help of Lance Costello (web manager), Samantha Grau-

berger (programme manager), Wil- liam Bradford Smith and Benjamin A. Wilson (researchers), and with the editorial assistance of Whitney Watriss. Research and content sup- port for the project has been pro- vided by the Smithsonian’s Asian Cultural History Program (ACHP), headed by Dr. Paul Michael Taylor, along with ACHP staff and associ- ates including Jared M. Koller (re- searcher and web developer), Greg- ory P. Shook (programme manager), Christopher Lotis (publications di- rector and project coordinator), and researchers Adam Grode, Robert Pontsioen, Madhuca Krishan and Dr. Amir Jadaibayev of the Kasteev Museum. In addition, Smithsonian staff who have participated in the preparation of the Valikhhanov re- search project includes Paul Taylor, Gregory Shook, Jared Koller, and William Bradford Smith, along with Mikhail Weitz of the National Mu- seum of Natural History’s Informa- tion Technology Office.

The Smithsonian Institution was founded in 1846 with funds from Englishman James Smithson (1765-1829) according to his wishes “un- der the name of the Smithsonian Institution, an establishment for the increase and diffusion of knowledge among men.” Today, the Smith- sonian Institution is the world’s larg- est museum, education and research complex, with 19 museums and the National Zoo. Its goal is to shape the future by preserving the herit- age, discovering new knowledge, and sharing the resources with the world, according to www.si.edu.

Taraz student to unveil education system for children with special needs

By Dana Omirgazy

ASTANA – Fifteen-year-old Taraz resident Isaac Mustopulo, who is committed to helping Kazakh children with special needs receive a full-fledged education, partici- pated in the Human Library under the Perception Change Project, a creative communications initiative of the United Nations Office in Ge- neva. The July 18 event in the Swiss Pavilion at EXPO 2017 focused on climate change, mainstreaming sus- tainability into education, education in emergencies and refugee camps.

Mustopulo was diagnosed at eight months with cerebral palsy and his parents were told their son would have both mental and physical dis- abilities. Despite the doctor’s opin- ion, he finished the eighth grade this spring at a local school, where he excels academically and is actively involved in extracurricular activi- ties. Mustopulo has become an ad- vocate for inclusion and is working on a project that would introduce tutors in public schools for students with special needs.

“I am 15 years old and I have al- ready made some conclusions for myself and today I will tell you about them. Usually, a person’s life goes like this: a baby is born, ever- yone loves him or her. He learns to crawl, walk and talk, first goes to kindergarten, gets first friends or even enemies and learns to com- municate with peers. Then he goes to school, gets new knowledge and skills, learns to defend his interests, argue, learns to win and lose and falls in love. All of the above seem to me to be very important pillars in a person’s life. A person develops, chooses a profession, then creates



Photo credit: inform.kz

Isaac Mustopulo

a family and lives a full and happy life and I am sure that it cannot be otherwise. However, it happens very differently, ...” he said.

The teen talked about his child- hood and challenges he needed to overcome similar to other children with special needs.

“When it was time to go to school, I already had certain communication skills. However, it turned out that the school is not adapted for students who move in a stroller. No teacher was willing to focus on one student and not pay attention to the whole class. The teacher began to come to my house, but that was not enough for me either. My mother and I began to go to school regularly and to do everything that my classmates did,” he said.

As those lessons still did not sat- isfy him, this brave young man now has many extra classes, yet finds the time to lead an active social life, communicate with friends and work. He has participated in many school- age competitions and Olympiads, winning a number of them.

Most children with special needs, however, rarely venture beyond their homes, said Mustopulo. Lack of socialisation leads to tragic conse-

quences, as growing up, the person simply does not know who he or she is and who he or she wants to be- come.

“I know who I want to become. For this, I need to learn a lot and go to the university. However, I realise that no university will be ready to accept me, except for Nazarbayev Univer- sity,” he added.

To help people with disabilities re- ceive an equal education, the young reformer proposes to develop a men- tor-tutor system. The tutor would provide individual educational pro- grammes for students and direct the process of specific education at the school or university.

“I am developing the Indigo Pro- ject, a project that is very significant for me. ... I will make every effort to implement it not only in my city of Taraz, but also throughout the coun- try. Then, hundreds of students with special needs will be able to freely go to schools and universities,” he said.

Mustopulo ended by talking about his enthusiasm for astrophys- ics and a planned meeting with bril- liant scientist Stephen Hawking, who is almost completely paralysed due to early-onset amyotrophic lat- eral sclerosis (ALS).

EXPO 2017 chance to showcase nation’s contributions to technology, inventor says

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Why did you start changing the structure of the blades? How did it all begin?

I first saw wind turbines in Cali- fornia, USA, in March 2005. At the time, my senior son worked in the headquarters of the Chevron Company in San Ramon. He in- vited me to visit America. Two weeks after my arrival, my son took a week-long leave and we went for a tour across the region and on the way back visited famous Yosemite National Park, where ancient se- quoias grow. When we left the mountains on the border with the plain, we stopped in a field where there were a lot of wind turbines and black and white and red cows grazed. We stopped and had some tea.

I was always interested in new machines. I used to find some de- fects in them and designed some- thing in my mind. In our time, everything was heavily regulated; it was terribly hard to implement something and much remained just a pleasant idea.

For a long time I was interested in wind turbines. They had three blades with 120 degrees between them and they rotated slowly. I asked my son how they rotate. He laughed and said “from wind, of course.” He is a lawyer, a humani- ties-minded person, but millions of others would answer the same way. They are right. But I thought differently: what part of the wind flow passes through the blade plat- form and participates in turning the blade? After all, 120 degrees are between the blades and with the distance from the blade roots the space between them widens. Surely in the tip part of the blades most of the wind flows in vain, without exerting any influence on the rotational movements of the wind wheel. Figuratively speak- ing, the wind has gone with the wind! Money goes with the wind as well and no one can be blamed. It seemed to me that the search for a change in the design of the wind wheel would surely be a success. I



Blok Shaikenov

returned to Almaty with this strong opinion.

I am a son of a blacksmith who became the chairperson of a com- munal farm and headed it for 17 years. Blacksmiths are people with a wilful character, for whom some- one else’s opinion has little value. I also share this wilful character and I was sure that I was abso- lutely right, although I knew that hundreds of good engineers were working on the design of blades. I have been holding my opinion for 12 years, getting a lot of bruises from failures and lack of money, until one fine day at 6:30 am in Kapshagai, north of Almaty, I saw that my “angled beauty” was spin- ning faster than its straight prede- cessor.

What were the next steps? Which way led to your ideas?

I gradually began to study spe- cial literature on wind turbines, wind generators, shape, design, configuration of blades, strength of materials and aerodynamics. First, I studied literature in Rus- sian in various libraries and then examined translated materials. In 2008, I left my main job and be- gan to study patents for wind tur- bines and wind generators issued in Kazakhstan, Russia, Germany, Denmark, Spain, France, the U.S. and other countries. I worked on that for three years. I made and created different models, but when I studied many patents, I realised my models were not based on new ideas but already repeated-known analogues. So, I lost two-three

years. These were years of mis- takes.

It was after this that I defined the key directions of my research. There are two types of wind gen- erators, with vertical rotation and with a horizontal axis of rotation. Vertical-axis wind turbines are predominantly ground wind tur- bines, the efficiency of which is 3-5 percent. They do not require wind orientation, but it is impos- sible to create more powerful elec- trical installations on their basis. They can only be used locally in certain settlements. Therefore, I concentrated all my attention on horizontal-axis wind turbines, in particular, on the possibility of changing the design of the blades.

It is not so easy. There are gi- ants that use straight blades. As I said, a lot of engineers work there, so it is very difficult to break the established rules. They face you like rocks and thinking that there are some other forms or possibi- lities looks like raising your hand to something sacred, things estab- lished once and for all.

I intuitively believed that the shape of the blades can be changed. Therefore, I began to create differ- ent forms of blades. I tried to set the angle to the head; there was something else about the axis of rotation. However, another idea suddenly dawned on me: there is a need to fasten a short additional link along the supposed axial line of the blade installation while re- taining the angular position of fas- tening to the link of the long blade.

A number of technical difficul- ties arose. To eliminate them, there was a need to have another short link which is attached to the axial part and the long wing-shaped blade is connected to the end of the last link. So, there was a short part of the blade with an elbow bend, which changed the whole design of the wind wheel. This was the beginning of the invention.

Why do you think the blade design you invented has an advantage over traditional straight blades?

A wind-wheel with blades is a lever. To answer your question, you should recall the law of the lever. All those items that produce movements and perform opera- tions move on the basis of the law of the lever. The classical law of the lever says the torque is equal to the lever arm – the distance be- tween the centre of rotation and the point of application of force. In our case, the centre of rotation is the main axis of the turbine, and the place where the force is ap- plied is the place where the blade is attached to the head of the tur- bine. We drastically changed the design of the blades. In the design of the blades of the wind wheel, an additional link appeared that broke the neat figure of straight blades. Instead of it, an angled blade ap- peared, similar to a hockey stick but with a more powerful force of kinematic transmission of the wind flow.

What are the prospects for the use of your invention in wind en- ergy?

We produced and tested the model using industrial generators. We purchased two small wind tur- bines of 1 kW in Germany. One of them was equipped with our construction’s short component, with an elbow bend between the head and blade; the other one with a straight element of the same length. Recorders were connect- ed to generators of each turbine to show five parameters of the generator’s operation. Then, the recorders were connected to port- able computers. The rotation of the rotors was also recorded by video cameras. The test was held in Kap- shagai over 11 days. The windmill with blades with the elbow bend rotated 0.5-3.5 times faster than those with straight blades, and produced 0.5-3.5 times more elec- tric power. This is an exceptionally high result! With no exaggerations – this is an innovation that contrib- utes to world wind power produc- tion technology.

Now, the cost of electric energy produced by wind power stations is

20-25 percent more expensive com- pared to electric energy produced by thermal power plants. In the mean- time, the lion’s share of the cost is composed of foundation, installa- tion and maintenance expenses.

After the Fukushima disaster, many countries began paying more attention to the development of wind energy. For instance, Ger- many builds wind stations on sea- shores and sea shelf, developing so-called offshore fields. There, these installations create no obsta- cles to other activities, and the state actively supports this initiative, fi- nancing additional expenses.

However, China is a leader in terms of production rates of wind turbines and wind stations. All countries with less advanced wind energy have pivoted to the production of this type of energy. The Earth’s climate warming has already brought many disasters and huge economic damage. That is why this is the most reasonable way to avoid many problems.

The new structure of windmills with angled blades may radically change the production of wind turbines and wind energy in gen- eral. We believe that application of our structure of blades will double the efficiency coefficient of rotors. This allows for the use of more powerful generators and decreasing the weight of the tower, nacelle and other mechanisms and materials. The cost of electric en- ergy produced by wind turbines will decrease profoundly, and this will raise demand for wind energy.

We formalised our inventions with five patents in Kazakhstan, although these need to be rec- ognised in international bodies. Independently of this, individual producers can use our invention and manufacture products us- ing our windmill. In this regard, some legal issues will emerge. No doubt they can be resolved by mutual agreement. Nevertheless, it is better to launch in the country our own production of short blade components with elbow bends, or in joint factories with other coun- tries. In this case, we can re-equip already existing wild turbines and fit them with more powerful gen- erators. Having the same param- eters of tower, nacelle and length of blades, the windmill will gener- ate at least twice as much electric energy.

Actually, wind energy produc-

tion in Kazakhstan really took off only two to three years ago. There are places in the country, as at the Dzungar Gates, the north coast of the Caspian Sea, the Kordai Pass and Sugutin Valley, where strong enough wind blows 220-230 days a year. Currently, wind stations operate at the Kordai Pass, in Ye- rementau [Aqmola Oblast], Chilik and Kapchagai [Almaty Oblast]. We are pleased to offer our inven- tion for tests and application in new wind energy turbines to be used in these regions. We hope that this will boost the development of wind energy in our country.

What are the benefits of dem- onstrating your model at EXPO 2017?

The world has become unified. Kazakhstan is at the centre of its vital transformations. The country is gradually moving from agricul- tural status to industrial. We have everything to accomplish that: rich mineral resources, a diverse natural environment, and the most important is that we have a respon- sive and educated population.

EXPO 2017 is a bright example of these transformations. Astana itself deserves special notice; the city became one of the most beau- tiful capitals of the world only in 19 years. Now, we have a city full of sparkling glass, made with labour and love. The whole ar- chitecture is futuristic, something abstract and conducive to dream- ing. I carefully studied the laced steel reinforcing on the seventh floor of the Nur Alem sphere [Ka- zakhstan’s national pavilion at EXPO 2017]. I am sure that there are thick, twisted tubes inside, but they are so beautifully covered by marvelous material, supposedly made of aluminium or other alloys, that I could not find any flaws on their joints. It means that the con- struction of the expo buildings has brought the culture of construction to the level of art. Ninety percent of tourists visit Paris to go to the Eiffel Tower and to see Mona Lisa in the Louvre. Similarly, I hope people will come to our country to see the EXPO 2017 site.

Nature has provided our country with sufficient energy resources. Nevertheless, the most beautiful part of EXPO 2017 is its motto: developing alternative and renew- able energy to ensure future devel- opment for human civilisation.

CULTURE

WEDNESDAY, JULY 26, 2017

Hollywood stars in town for Eurasia International Film Festival

By Zhazira Dyussembekova

ASTANA – With Hollywood stars like Adrien Brody, Nicolas Cage and John Malkovich in attendance, this year’s Eurasia International Film Festival has attracted quite a bit of attention. The largest film festival in the region, which opened July 22, will run through July 28.

The event, typically held in Almaty, is being hosted in the capital.

Day one started with press conferences featuring Oscar winners Brody and Cage. Malkovich is expected to come for the closing of the festival on July 28.

“I am very happy to be here. I was expecting to come to this prestigious film festival. ... I am happy to support film festivals around the world and I am very grateful for the invitation. I was reminded how many beautiful people live here and how much appreciation there is here not only for my work, but for creativity, music and the arts,” said Brody.

Since arriving a day earlier, he had an opportunity to tour the city. Brody noted he was impressed by



conductor Alan Buribayev’s performance at the Astana Opera, as well as the expo, calling it “spectacular.” Brody even ate national food at the ethno village, adding he tried everything.

The press conference focused mostly on the actor’s hobbies, such as painting, and his experiences, including his performance

as Wladyslaw Szpilman in “The Pianist.”

One of the brightest moments came when Brody announced he would like to make a donation to one of Kazakhstan’s children’s organisations. The details will be discussed at a later date.

Cage noted he would like to take part in projects in the region and

talked about the thrill of being in the capital.

“When we were landing, I saw a spectacular view of Astana. It reminded me of an old science fiction movie I once watched called ‘Things to Come’ by Alexander Korda. A very futuristic city,” he said.

He also talked about his plans,

his upcoming film ‘Mandy,’ past works and independent and commercial films, as well as Coppola family traditions.

Both actors took part in the festival’s opening ceremony, shaking hands with fans and taking selfies as they walked the red carpet.

While Brody left that evening, Cage remained to participate the following day in opening Five Continents, the first International Children’s Film Festival. He met with the special guests – children with limited abilities – and he and Akim (Mayor) Asset Issekeshiev planted trees at the Schoolchildren’s Palace as a symbol of the festival’s birth and growth.

Cage could not leave Kazakhstan without becoming a meme. During the cultural programme, the actor received Kazakh traditional outfit (chapan) as a gift, which he immediately tried on. Cage stood still and emotionless for the photo op and the meme has become the country’s hottest topic with an abundance of humourously photoshopped pictures.

The 13th Eurasia International Film Festival features a record 296 films from all continents, including

101 in the main programme and 12 feature length and 30 short films in the juried competition. The event is accredited by the International Federation of Producers’ Associations and in 2012 was included in the International Film Guide’s list of the world’s 35 leading film festivals.

The Five Continents programme is composed of five films and a panorama of 10 films, including the work of creative groups from nations including Afghanistan, China, Denmark, France, Georgia, India, Iran, Italy, Kazakhstan, Mexico, the Netherlands, Peru, Spain and Tunisia. The films will be evaluated by a special children’s jury consisting of young actors, musicians, poets and athletes.

This year, the organisers also established the Tulpas National Award for films from Kazakhstan, Central Asia and Turkic-speaking countries. Another novelty is the introduction of the Eurasia Film Market for film sellers and buyers from the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), China, India, South Korea and European and American countries.

1,200 musicians perform Mahler’s Symphony No. 8 at Astana Opera

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“In the process of bringing different groups together, of course there are some difficulties related to ‘musical adjustment’. New sounds emerge, because we have never played together, but when we rehearse, everything falls into place. We achieve the intended result,” added Sagimbayev.

“It was a large and beautiful festival of our creative friendship. We want to show that love of classical art lives and thrives in all regions of Kazakhstan. Together, we make a huge symphony, one of the most difficult symphonies in the world. We want to show a high level of arts in our country. The idea of musical fraternity and love to each other is embodied in our rehearsals. This is not merely a music performance, but the moment of biggest human happiness,” added Buribayev.

Buribayev has had a special connection to Mahler’s works since he was a student at the University of Music and Performing Arts in Vienna. He conducted the composer’s Symphony No. 1 for the first time at 20, when he won first prize at the Lovro von Matačić International Competition of Young Conductors in Zagreb. Mahler’s compositions have subsequently become an integral part of Buribayev’s repertoire.



“Symphony No. 8 is one of those compositions that I would take with me to a desert island

and would listen to this incredibly beautiful music constantly. An interesting fact is that the symphony’s premiere in September 1910 in Europe coincided with the expo. It was when the so-called name ‘A Symphony of Thousands’ emerged,” he said.

Yet, this is not the only coincidence the musicians have encountered.

“During EXPO 2015 in Milan, Genoa Theatre and four Astana Opera soloists performed Beethoven’s Symphony No. 9. Two years later, we came to you and performed here within the framework of EXPO 2017. I believe this symbolises the potential of art and music to unity, friendship and fraternity. Our theatres have similar structure. We have close cooperation. Seventy choir and orchestra members and concertmasters arrived to perform this symphony,” noted Italian theatre Art Director Giuseppe Acquaviva.

Astana Opera’s Chotabayev debuts in Graz Opera

By Zhazira Dyussembekova

ASTANA – Principal Soloist of the Astana Opera and Kazakh Honoured Worker Medet Chotabayev recently made his debut as Pollione in Vincenzo Bellini’s opera “Norma” at Austria’s Graz Opera.

“We prepared the production for a month; there was serious musical and staging work. When I arrived for the first time, I was very nervous, had some doubts whether I could manage this new and complicated role. On the other hand, I felt great joy in honing the Bel Canto style, because

this experience gives results that will positively affect other performances. A little later, inspired by the production process, stirred by the musical aura, after working with famous singers, I, myself, opened up, showed my acting skills, and demonstrated good technique. My colleagues gave me a lot of praise,” said Chotabayev, according to the press release.

The premiere of the production was May 6, while the final performance was on June 23.

The artist is also preparing for next season.

“An enormous work was done – I sang every other day, had to con-

stantly keep up the good shape. I would like to note that the opera ‘Norma’ by V. Bellini is one of the pinnacles of the Bel Canto style. Between the performances, I went to Bratislava, where I sang the part of Lensky in Tchaikovsky’s opera ‘Eugene Onegin.’ I started my career from this opera, performed this part in Brazil. Since the audience and management liked me very much, I was invited to sing Alfredo Germont’s part in Verdi’s opera ‘La Traviata’ next season,” he said.

The singer will also perform ‘La Traviata’ with maestro Plácido Domingo in August.

According to the statement, after the performances, musical critics wrote several articles about Chotabayev.

“The young Kazakh singer demonstrated sonorous, voluminous voice and flexible technique,” according to a quote from the newspaper Kronen Zeitung.

Chotabayev has been performing abroad for three months. On July 5 he took part in the opera “Kyz Zhibek,” presented by the Kazakh Ministry of Culture and Sports, which was organised in the open air near the Palace of Peace and Harmony. He performed the part of Tolegen.

Festival of ethnic theatres promotes interaction, mutual cultural enrichment

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – A play called “Is It Easy to Be a Queen?” and staged by the State Korean Theatre of Musical Comedy, won the Best Performance award at the Fourth Festival of Ethnic Theatres held July 8-12 in the capital.

“Scenes from Faust,” produced by the German Drama Theatre, won for Best Director’s Work and “Poor Bride,” an avant-garde karaoke-melodrama, won in the Best Design category, reported Kazinform.

Six plays performed in the various languages of nationalities living in Kazakhstan were presented at the festival, which was held as part of the EXPO 2017 cultural programme.

“We aim to present the skill and mastery of our performers and to demonstrate the development of theatrical art in Kazakhstan for our invited foreign experts. The panel of critics includes David Papava, a British theatre critic and director; Sarah Copley, critic and psychologist; and Rakhima Abduvaliyeva, Chingiz Aitmatov Academy director,” said Kazakhstan Theatres’ Association Deputy Chair Askhat Maemirov.

“This festival is necessary. More than 140 nationalities live in our country and Kazakhstan has become the second home for many ethnic groups. The festival programme is interesting and rich,” said Festival Jury Chairman Talgat Temenov in his opening remarks.

According to the organisers,

the festival is a unique opportunity to see talented actors of different nationalities who live and work in Kazakhstan. Their creative work is of great importance for the preservation of interethnic harmony and social stability.

“We are delighted to present the high level of theatre productions in Kazakhstan. And we want to bring the idea that artists can perform well at the dramatic level in their own language to the British people. For example, if the play is perfectly performed in the Kazakh language, the idea of the play can be very well understood,” said Abduvaliyeva.

The list of performances also included “Hodja Nasreddin in Sairam” in the Uzbek language, “The Bitter Smell of Artemisia” in Uighur and “Nertyukekel” in Kazakh.

Regional Uzbek Drama Theatre Director Ikram Khashimzh-anov said that the Uzbek Drama Theatre is one of the youngest theatres at the festival.

“We will celebrate the 14th anniversary of our theatre. President Nursultan Nazarbayev opened the theatre. We have preserved our culture, language, traditions and customs due to his wise and far-sighted policy,” he added.

The festival is an incentive for actors and directors to contribute to the preservation of the cultural and linguistic diversity of the country, to strengthen interethnic tolerance, to develop mutual enrichment between cultures and to promote intercultural dialogue between the people of Kazakhstan.



Kazakh TV focuses on country’s promotion

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – Kazakh TV, which broadcasts to more than 118 countries, is the nation’s first satellite channel aiming to report about the country and its achievements. Director Andrei Tarakov talked about the network’s history and future plans in an exclusive interview with The Astana Times.

“We are striving to become known abroad and give our audience an opportunity to learn more about Kazakhstan. Contracts were signed with operators of the largest cable networks, TV and Internet companies. Millions of people can watch the channel through cable and hotel networks,” he said.

Kazakh TV was established in the 2000s as Caspionet, which Tarakov described as “a big breakthrough at the time.”

“The creation of such a channel showed the status of the state, because not every country could afford a satellite channel. In general, the concept of satellite broadcasting didn’t exist at the time. There were channels which were aired by satellites. Depending on the demand for the channel, the signal was received by TV and radio companies and news agencies, not just residents of certain countries. Then, the market was clearly structured and niche channels appeared for every taste, about nature and animals, history, culture and others,” he said.

The channel is broadcast to Eu-

rope via satellite platforms such as HotBird 13B, Asia through AsiaSat 5 and North America using Galaxy 19.

“Now, the news at our channel is submitted in the context of global trends and events. That is, the channel covers all international events held in our country or abroad with the participation of our representatives, world premieres of our cultural artists and so on. Fortunately, we already have many sites, such as Astana Opera, where world-class performances are held,” added Tarakov.

Cultural and historical heritage shows about Kazakh customs and traditions unveil forgotten and newly revived rituals. Programmes like Ethnographic Atlas, Kazakh Legends and Modern Nomads tell the people’s stories.

Projects such as Turkic World and Enigma of the Great Steppe show the trace left by Turks in the region’s history and demonstrate interesting facts from the country’s history, archaeology and ethnography.

Fashion Guide and History in Crafts elaborate on the unique craftsmanship passed from generation to generation and the invisible threads that weave imagination and novelties in the Kazakh fashion world.

“We try to create universal programmes that are interesting to absolutely all categories of viewers. Everyone will find something interesting for themselves: for business people, programmes about investment opportunities and for tourists, programmes about different corners of our country,” said Tarakov.

State programme helps employ more than 80,000 people

Staff Report

ASTANA – More than 82,000 people were employed in the first half of 2017 under the third direction of the Productive Employment and Mass Entrepreneurship Development Programme.

As part of the employment assistance, more than 82,000 Kazakh citizens were employed in social workplaces, youth practice and public works in the first half of the year, according to Vice Minister of Labour and Social Protection Birzhan Nurymbetov.

He said 17,901 people were employed for social workplaces, which is 109 percent of the planned indicator. The largest number of 5,710 people found the social jobs in the South Kazakh-

stan region, 806 people were employed in the North Kazakhstan region and in the Kostanai region the number was 860. The smallest numbers were registered in Astana (162 people) and in Almaty (379 people).

Around 12,578 people were sent for youth practice, which is 74 percent of the planned indicator. The biggest number for the youth practice was registered in the South Kazakhstan region (3,709 people) and in Kyzylorda region (925 people). In the North Kazakhstan, 329 people went to a youth practice, while the number in the Karaganda region was 774 people.

And 51,705 people were sent to public works, which is 69.6 percent of the plan.

Kazakhstan has started implementing the Productive Employ-

ment and Mass Entrepreneurship Development Programme this year only. The programme provides mass training and skills development in demanded professions and business basics, creation of conditions for mass entrepreneurship through lending, labour market development via assistance in employment and support for labour mobility. The programme's first direction is to provide technical and vocational education, while the second direction is to provide micro-loans and trainings for 15,000 people in the basics of entrepreneurship.

In April, Kazakh Minister of Labour and Social Protection Tamara Dyuisenovna announced that this year 85.3 billion tenge (US\$261.2 million) was allocated to implement the programme.

Pavlodar hosts photo exhibit about Kazakh soldiers in World War II

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – “Following the Partisan Paths,” an exhibit created by photo reporter Tatyana Alexenko featuring approximately 44 unique World War II photographs, opened July 14 at the Bagayev Memorial House Museum in Pavlodar.

“The exhibition is being held for the first time. Pavlodar is my native city and to me it was important to organise this exhibition here. I plan to make an exhibition in Astana in the future,” said Alexenko in a recent interview with The Astana Times.

The documentary exhibit tells the fate of numerous Kazakh soldiers who fought in Northeast Italy and Slovenia. Many prisoners fled from concentration camps to Yugoslavia, where they became partisans and joined the ranks of the People's Liberation Army. The

Russian battalion was formed with citizens from all the republics of the Soviet Union.

The photographs show battlefields and deaths, monuments and burials, the partisan hospital and the printing house – all serving as reminders of that harsh time.

Alexenko spoke about the exhibit's two-year preparation.

“Initially, I visited all these places with a camera in my hands. I did a lot of research about this period, because there is no information or books about those events. I held consultations with representatives of the Kazakh Consulate in Italy, the Russian Embassy in Slovenia and the Association of Veterans of the People's Liberation Army in Slovenia. I also met with historians and visited various museums,” she said.

Currently residing in Italy, Alexenko is president of GhepArt, a non-profit cultural association, and is a member of the editorial staff of

the Italian magazine “Lo Strillone del Quadrilatero.”

“I initially had a plan, but when I came to a certain place I would find new things or learn new information about the events. For example, I found a partisan hospital and a printing house only when I came to Slovenia. They are not mentioned in the documents. I found a list of partisans in the archive who were at the hospital and there were people from many countries, not only Kazakh soldiers,” she added.

Alexenko previously held personal exhibits in her home city and is now seeking support to organise a photo display in the capital.

“Various artefacts and many monuments from the World War II can be found in Slovenia. To me, this search work was very interesting. I collected information not only about the people of Kazakhstan, but also about other nations, too,” she said.



Government employment, training policies show positive results

Staff Report

ASTANA – One-hundred-seventy-four individuals started their own businesses and 384 loans were granted in the first half of this year as part of the second direction of the Productive Employment and Mass Entrepreneurship Development programme, announced Birzhan Nurymbetov, Vice Minister of Labour and Social Protection at a July 11 press briefing.

“It is planned to issue 5,800 loans for citizens in cities and villages in the second direction of the programme. This year, 384 loans were issued and 45 percent or 174 people of these are involved in start-up projects. This created

more jobs and 224 people got jobs through employment centres,” said Nurymbetov.

Courses in Entrepreneurship for Starting a Business were launched as part of the Bastau-Business project initiated by the Atameken National Chamber of Entrepreneurs. It hopes to attract 15,000 people to this programme this year. At the moment, 4,900 people have been enrolled in the training courses and 4,100 people have completed training.

“In general, the business activity area of projects includes livestock in the amount of 68 percent and services in the amount of 6 percent,” said the vice minister.

As of July 1, 151,700 people were registered as unemployed in the employment agencies. It is

planned to attract 21,300 individuals for technical and vocational educational programmes and 70,300 for the short-term vocational training courses.

“The regional commissions have approved a list of more than 360 educational organisations and courses will be provided as part of the traineeships. For the reporting period, 921 people applied for training courses. The training will be conducted in the most in-demand jobs including plumbing, electricity supply, hotel service management, construction and operation of gas and oil pipelines and gas and oil storage facilities, and many others. As of July 1, 21,127 people have already participated in the short-term training,” he said.



Most popular vocational specialties include cook, seamstress, accountant

Staff Report

ASTANA – Cook, seamstress, accountant, hairdresser, electrician and welder are among Kazakhstan's most popular vocational specialties, according to Vice Minister of Labour and Social Protection Birzhan Nurymbetov. He presented the list at a briefing on the progress in the implementation of the 2017-2021 productive employment and mass entrepreneurship development programme for the first half of the year.

As of July 1, approximately 151,700 individuals were registered with employment agencies as unemployed.

“The regional commissions have approved a list of more than 360 educational organisations and allocated seats for them for the training. For the reporting period, 921 people applied for training. The training will be conducted in the

following currently demanded occupations: plumbing, electricity, hotel services, construction and operation of oil and gas pipelines and storages, to name a few. As of July 1, 21,127 people have already been sent for short-term training,” he said.

In cooperation with the Atameken National Chamber of Entrepreneurs, a short-term vocational training map highlighting regional staffing needs and specialisation was developed in 49 workplaces. A list of training centres at operating enterprises has been approved to conduct training in the following areas: seamstress, pre-school caregiver, waiter, bartender, electrician, mechanic technician, battery lifter, electrician, concrete worker, welder, cook and turner.

During the first quarter, 8,441 enterprises employing more than 630,000 were surveyed to determine the demand for personnel within industries and specialties.

The results indicate the greatest demand for workers this year is expected in microenterprises, which plan an 8.7-percent staffing increase, as well as small enterprises (1.5 percent), large companies (0.9 percent) and medium-sized enterprises (0.8 percent).

In terms of separate sectors, the greatest demand is expected in agriculture (approximately 37,000 people), trade (18,600) and individually provided services (14,900). The numbers for agriculture are related to seasonal work.

Regarding regions, the greatest needs are anticipated in Almaty region (27,500 people) and Almaty (20,700); the smallest in Karaganda (3,300) and West Kazakhstan (4,000).

The greatest occupational demand is for skilled workers (builder, fitter, turner, machine operator), estimated at 32,000 people, as well as highly qualified specialists (30,000).

Lone Atyrau foster home closes, all children find new homes

By Dmitry Lee

ASTANA – The nearly 140 children without parents who have found shelter in the 240-bed Atyrau Sabyr Kazybayev foster home will soon be calling somewhere else “home.”

The facility will be closing its doors Aug. 1. All the youngsters have found new situations, as more and more families are willing to adopt, according to local social service representatives.

“There are many adopters; some of them could be given a medal for such an attitude towards children,” Saniya Mussiyeva, the home's director, told the local media.

“In 2004, a family from the Inder district adopted four kids, the eldest of whom now has his own family, and two girls got married.

The youngest, who was 6 years old when she was adopted, is studying at a university. Some time later the same family adopted two more boys, one of whom is currently in college, the other will go to third grade,” she added.

Thanks to the national database, which lists all foster children, families from any region may adopt.

“This year, six children were adopted by a family from the Almaty region,” said Mussiyeva. “Two more were given to foster families. One girl was adopted by a woman from Kokshetau. We have very good children; they're kind and sympathetic. I myself became attached to them. Although they had all the conditions at the foster home, this will never replace parental warmth for them.”

A portion of the building was

previously occupied by a boarding school-lyceum for gifted children, which has its own classes, hostel, gym and canteen. Beginning next month, the home will become a part of the lyceum.

Local authorities are looking for new employment for the home's staff.

According to a report by Khabar news agency, Kazakhstan had 30,000 orphans in 2016, 8,000 in foster care and others placed with families. The agency noted 80 percent are “social orphans” whose biological parents are living.

Approximately 3,000 children are adopted annually. To adopt a child, families must undergo various social service checks and prove their eligibility by having their own real estate and demonstrating suitable health conditions.



SOCIETY

WEDNESDAY, JULY 26, 2017

Chinese businessperson plans to export Almaty apples to China

Staff Report

ASTANA – Chinese businessperson Jin Xiau Ming intends to supply Almaty Aport apples to China. Although he has never seen Almaty apples, he has repeatedly heard of this famous variety of the fruit.

“I heard that Almaty is known as a city of apples. I was told that an apple here could weigh up to a kilo. I have never seen such apples, but I would like to see the Almaty Aport, try it and export it to China.

If I manage to do that, I am sure the Kazakh product will be popular in China,” noted Jin Xiau Ming.

Aports are very large apples with red skin and average weight of 700-800 grams. Brought from southern Russia ten years after Almaty city, then Verniy, was founded in 1854, it was first planted in the foothills of the Trans-Ili Alatau.

With favourable climate conditions, such as in Almaty, apples subsequently grew so far as to stretch across the city and its suburbs. Therefore, Alma-Ata, which was the name of the city during the

Soviet times and which literally means the grandfather of apple in Kazakh, has been widely associated with apples.

Yet, apple gardens almost disappeared and the Aport variety is now on the verge of extinction. Scientists are trying to revive the giant and tasty apples.

Jin Xiau Ming also noted the popularity of Kazakhstan’s agricultural products in China due to their environmentally friendly and sustainable production technologies.

China is one of the largest importers of Kazakh agricultural

products along with Russia. With 222 million hectares of a cultivable area, or 81 percent of the country’s total area, Kazakhstan offers a range of agricultural products. Among Kazakh exports to China are grain, meat, sunflower, rapeseed oils, vegetables and fruits.

“Most importantly, quality of meat, grain and other products from Kazakhstan is very high. I brought pasta, honey and sweets from your country to my friends and they all praised their taste and quality,” he added.

Jin Xiau Ming currently imports jewellery from China to Kazakhstan.

He established a representative office of his company in Almaty four years ago. Aside from Kazakh apple imports, he also plans to build a storage of foreign products in Almaty.

Doctors to launch pilot programme using AI to treat cancer patients



By Dana Omirgazy

ASTANA – Kazakh Minister of Healthcare Yelzhan Birtanov spoke about using artificial intelligence (AI) to diagnose and treat oncological diseases at a July 11 government meeting.

“Together with the IBM multinational technology company, we plan to launch a pilot project on the use of artificial intelligence in health care, particularly in the field of oncology. The system provides recommendations based on the analysis of data and scientific articles, which allows determining the most optimal methods of treatment for a particular patient. We managed to reach preliminary arrangements. Preparations are now being made for the launch of the project this autumn,” Birtanov said.

During a working visit to the U.S. in the spring, Prime Minister of Kazakhstan Bakytzhan Sagintayev met with IBM management and discussed cooperation.

upload anonymised data from the cancer registry. In the pilot mode, we will observe how the programme will evaluate the actions of local doctors and their methods of diagnosis and treatment based on international protocols. Thanks to information technologies, doctors will have the opportunity to learn more and adjust treatment,” Birtanov explained.

This is not the only programme developed by the ministry, Birtanov added.

“We are also developing a mobile application on patronage nursing for the care of little children. With the Kazakhtelecom company, we are working on projects such as a midmail. kz single postal service, cloud accounting, etc. In the midmail. kz project, we created 80,000 records for doctors so far. It has more than 170,000 visits a day. This service allows doctors to communicate with each other, create groups on various topics,” the minister said.

BIRTANOV: “Thanks to information technologies, doctors will have the opportunity to learn more and adjust treatment.”

tion, Birtanov reiterated. Later, the Kazakh Ministry of Healthcare agreed with the company on the use of artificial intelligence technology in oncology.

These technologies will help doctors make a timely diagnosis and adjust treatment. The IBM development is supposed to study and analyse data on the cases described in the literature and provide background information based on the analysis of scientific articles published in journals.

“In the first stage, we plan to

According to the ministry, 22 information systems function online in Kazakhstan. They are designed to collect statistical information and provide funding for the health sector. To integrate information systems and create a single databank, an integration platform is being implemented within the World Bank project. On the basis of the platform, the patient’s personal cabinet and the doctor’s personal account will be created. The project will be introduced in late 2017.

Doctors, legislatures alarmed that increased number of children falling from loose windows

Staff Report

ASTANA – In connection with the increased cases of children falling from buildings because of windows that give way, doctors recommend changing the design of plastic windows to protect children, the press service of city’s administration reports. In July, young children fell almost every day – 11 children aged 1-4 years fell over 13 days.

“Children are in critical condition, with various bone and traumatic injuries, brain damage and all organs of the abdominal cavity,” Department Head of Pediatric Traumatology Baimakhan Saduov said.

Almost all children who fell out of the windows were in the apartment with adults.



“In some cases, the family is not even aware of what happened until neighbours come and say so,” Saduov said.

For example, a 4-year-old child who visited relatives in Astana fell out of the window of the eighth floor and miraculously survived. A

neighbour found the kid and called an ambulance.

“We need to be more aware of the risks living in high-rise buildings and having an open balcony. I experienced this horror, you will not wish such on an enemy,” the boy’s mother said.

Meantime, doctors believe that it is necessary to toughen the punishment of adults who let the children fall from windows.

“According to our legislation, parents do not bear a special responsibility. However, I think it should be fixed at the legislative level. Adults shall realise their responsibility for neglecting a child. Parents need to keep an eye on their children. This is abnormal when the child falls,” Saduov added.

According to official figures, 18 cases of balcony and windows falling from buildings were registered over six months of 2015 in Astana. There were 23 similar cases for the same period last year. This year between January and June, there were approximately 40 falls registered, 29 of them from windows.

Al Hilal Bank expands services in Kazakhstan

By Zhazira Dyusseimbekova

ASTANA – Abu Dhabi-based Al Hilal Bank is expanding its range of services and launching Islamic banking products for individual customers, according to forbes.kz.

In the medium term, the bank sees great potential to develop Islamic banking in Kazakhstan, particularly in the retail market, said Al Hilal Bank Kazakhstan CEO Gordon Haskins.

“Seven years of successful work with government and corporate clients in various sectors of Kazakhstan’s economy have shown that we are ready for further development and expansion. In this regard, we are striving to establish high standards of Islamic banking in Kazakhstan, to bring the values and advantages of Islamic financial instruments, to make them understandable, simple and, of course,

as a result, to occupy a significant market share,” he added.

Kazakhstan has been consistently working on creating and improving the regulatory framework for Islamic finance since 2008 and is actively participating in developing and implementing that framework in banking and tax legislation, he added. The latest amendment, concerning the issue of Sukuk (financial certificates) and conversion of a traditional bank into an Islamic one, entered into force in November 2015.

With its head office in Almaty, Al Hilal has branches in Astana and Shymkent. Customer service will be available through an online service, according to the statement. Individuals currently have access for profitable investment deposits, card products, settlements and cash services. The investment deposits offered by the bank are a new and unique product for the Kazakh mar-

ket, it added. After the deposit base is built, the bank will start financing the retail sector, including mortgage and commodity financing.

Al Hilal is the first Islamic bank in Kazakhstan and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) created under the 2010 agreement between the governments of Kazakhstan and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). It is a subsidiary of Al Hilal Bank PJSC, one of the fastest growing and progressive Islamic banks in the UAE with 100 percent state participation, according to the statement.

The main difference between Islamic and traditional banking is the former’s activities are built on the principles of Islam (Sharia). The approach is based on partnerships. The resulting profit should be related to investments in production and trade, and all financial transactions are backed by real assets, since the increment of capital

cannot be at the expense of money turnover. The bank’s activities are controlled by the Sharia Council, composed of scientists with international experience and knowledge of Islamic jurisprudence, finance and banking. Islamic banking products are available to everyone regardless of religion.

Islamic finance is one of the core pillars of the Astana International Financial Centre (AIFC) development.

“Starting Jan. 1, 2018, we expect that there will be a lot of applications for Islamic financing licenses. We can say that in the next two years, the Islamic Development Bank plans to invest \$300 million in Kazakhstan through both Islamic institutions and other tools. We, as AIFC, would like to become the so-called ‘window’ for these investments,” said AIFC Governor Kairat Kelimbetov at the Islam Finance News (IFN) CIS forum held earlier this year.

Kazakh-Korean cooperation promotes investment climate, addresses foreign investors’ concerns

Continued from Page B1

The forum, he said, demonstrated Kazakhstan’s investment climate, potential and advantages to foreign investors. Also, no less important, participants stressed that “Kazakhstan is politically stable, which is a pivotal point for foreign investors,” Kim outlined.

“This event gave the chance for foreign investors to see with their own eyes that Kazakhstan has favourable conditions for developing their business.”

As Kim explained, business people from South Korea face a particular challenge of overcoming the huge divide in the workflow and the business model of the two countries. However, he said, “the participants were seeking to find solutions to various problems and foreign investors and partners shared their



experience. This forum was also designed to show the ‘real’ picture of what’s happening in the country

so business people could use their pragmatic judgement and find prospects for themselves.”

As part of the forum, foreign business representatives established a communication platform

for cooperation between foreign and local entrepreneurs. They can constantly share information and implement joint projects now.

Kim went on to give a few examples of successful cooperation between Kazakh and foreign Korean businesses.

“As you well know, many Kazakhs these days travel to South Korea for medical care. It was no surprise that among the most successful examples of cooperation is the healthcare sector. Entrepreneurs are very interested in developing and growing medical tourism in Kazakhstan and the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). Other sectors that were discussed were agriculture, education, logistics and trade.”

Kim believes Kazakhstan has an advantageous location and has

such nearby markets as China and Russia available and is part of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), which boosts the country’s prospects.

“One of the effective tools that the government has worked out lately is the PPP. The programme allows foreign partners enter the Kazakh market and implement joint projects. A number of such projects in the social and medical sectors have been successfully implemented,” Kim said.

According to the editor-in-chief, the Korean Association is putting all efforts into attracting South Korean investors to Kazakhstan as part of the PPP programme and Nazarbayev’s 100 Concrete Steps state programme to foster large-scale reform.

“On top of that, Kazakhstan is undergoing essential political transitions. As you know, some of the powers of the President have been transferred to the Parliament and the government. De-centralisation of presidential powers is one of the many steps towards yet another positive democratic milestone in the development of the country.”

TOURISM&EXPO 2017

WEDNESDAY, JULY 26, 2017

Kazakhstan establishes national tourism development company

Staff Report

ASTANA – The Kazakh government recently launched the Kazakh Tourism National Company to develop the sector and attract investment. “The first task for the company is to promote the tourism potential of Kazakhstan abroad and attract investment. We want to attract investors to the tourism industry. I am sure that many investors are interested in investing their money in the tourism industry of the state, because our country has a unique natural landscape and is safe,” Minister of Culture and Sports Arystanbek Mukhamediyuly said at a government briefing.

The company will also seek to utilise the experience of leading countries in the field of tourism and includes six regional cultural and tourist clusters, which cover all of Kazakhstan.

“Taking into account the specifics of the regions, we focused on the development of new types of tourism for Kazakhstan – sacral, ecological, hunting trophy, cultural and cognitive, medical and sports,” the minister explained. The company will be funded by the national budget through the end of this year and will be expected to be self-funded beginning 2018. In June, the Kazakhstan govern-



ment approved the concept of development of the tourist industry in Kazakhstan until 2023. As part of the so-called economic modernisation 3.0, the tourism field is one of six key priorities, along with fuel and energy, agro-industrial complexes, industrialisation, trade and transport.

Japan Day at EXPO 2017 gives visitors glimpse of Japanese culture, energy conservation efforts



Photo credit: Dmitry Lee

By Dmitry Lee

ASTANA – The EXPO 2017 Japan pavilion gave expo visitors during the July 22 Japan Day a glimpse of Japanese culture.

The event was titled “Become a Samurai of Green Energy” and featured traditional Wagakki music, demonstrated a colourful Osaka parade, dances of geishas and performances of samurais and Osaka’s promotion to host the expo in 2025.

The main feature, according to pavilion representatives, was the performance of popular Japanese singer and actor Tatsuo Kamona – the creator of the song dedicated to the expo and the mass choir of Japanese Global Industrial and Social Progress Research Institute.

The day also included discussions between Kazakh and Japanese delegations. Kazakhstan was represented by Minister for Investment and Innovations Zhenis Kassymbek, while the Japanese delegation was headed by Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry Hiroshige Seko.

Japan has pursued energy-saving technology since the 1970s, according to the data provided at the pavilion. Thanks to the enactment of the Act on the Rational Use of Energy and the efforts of country’s top engineers, “Japan has realised world-class energy efficiency in a wide range of fields.”

One of Japan’s missions at the expo is to share the lessons learned from the 2011 Fukushima nuclear plant accident and continue its quest for peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

“Japan lacks energy resources,” Japan pavilion representatives said when describing the pavilion. “In order to solve the challenges of energy consumption and environmental problems that are increasing along with our economic growth, we have worked on the promotion of energy conservation, the introduction of new energies and the reduction of CO2 emissions with the whole nation involved.”

The slightly more than 960-square-metre pavilion is divided into three sections. The first section takes visitors through the timeline of the country from 1950s to the present day.

“This zone will deepen your interest and understanding of the ‘all-Japan challenge’ up to now toward resolving energy issues-endeavours made possible only in Japan,” the pavilion official statement said.

In the second zone, the guests will witness the prospects of future energy via a short video clip. And the third section is the interactive part of the pavilion where visitors are able to use VR goggles and play games and solve quizzes.

New Alakol Lake airport opens, meant to boost tourism

By Dana Omirgazy

ASTANA – A new airport opened July 21 in Usharal to make Alakol Lake more accessible for tourists. The airport is the latest effort to boost tourism at the lake. “Today is a special historical day for the Almaty region. During the visit to our region in 2014, President Nursultan Nazarbayev set us the task of developing tourism on the lake. In this regard, the region has done a lot of work; the tourist infrastructure is actively developing. New hotel complexes and recreation areas that meet all modern standards are under construction. Now we work on transport and logistics. Today’s opening of the airport is a vivid confirmation to that,” Akim (Governor) of Almaty region Amandyk Batalov said at the opening ceremony.

More than 1 billion tenge (US\$3 million) was spent on the construction of the airport. ASD Group started construction and installation work in 2015, after the regional akimat allocated 4.5 hectares of land. Zhetysu Airline will provide services at the airport. Today, the facility employs 14 people. “Air Company receives Astana-Usharal-Astana flights four times a week and Taldykorgan-Usharal-Taldykorgan three times a week. National and regional budgets provided 177.2 million tenge (US\$543,826),” official representative of regional akimat (administration) Sagynsh Namazshamova explained.

The airport features modern equipment for registration, screening procedure and other necessary measures. Earlier, Minister of Culture and Sports Arystanbek Mukhamediyuly noted that despite the difficulties with logistics, thousands of Kazakhstan citizens come to Alakol Lake every year.

EXPO 2017 to be great success, says BIE official

Continued from Page B1

While Kerkentzes noted it is too early to draw any conclusions, the interim results and efforts of the organisers and government should yield brilliant results, he said in an interview with khabar.kz. “Being a representative of the BIE, everything that was done for the exhibition by the government and organisers is a great success. Everyone tried to convey to the visitors the main idea – what humanity can count on when it comes to the energy of the future,” he said.

The current expo is distinguished from previous events by the extraordinary involvement of the participating countries, he added. Pavilions representing 115 nations are on display, some of which are celebrating their National Days. High-ranking Spanish officials as well as Mazhilis members attended the opening ceremony of the country’s July 16 National Day. With Don Quixote, passionate flamencos and an open-air theatre, guests experienced genuine Spanish atmosphere in the expo town. “We are very pleased to participate in the exhibition in Kazakhstan and contribute to the development of green energy in the world. Diplomatic relations between our countries have been established 25 years ago and I must say it is very fruitful, for which we express our gratitude to President Nursultan Nazarbayev. Participation in the exhibition is also a good chance for Spain to announce its developments,” said Spanish Congress of Deputies Chairperson Ana Pastor.

Korea’s National Day began July 18 with traditional hymns and flag raisings for the sponsoring and host countries. Visitors enjoyed performances by a Korean orchestra and team of professional Taekwondo fighters, who gave a spectacular presentation. The day then segued into the K-Culture Party at Saryarka Cycle Track, with performances by famous South Korean bands B1A4, High-light and AOA and Kazakhstan’s popular Ninety One and Black Dial. The Solomon Islands and Greece marked their National Days July 21, with Kazakh Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Akylbek Karmaldinov and Greek Minister of Economy and Development Dimitri Papadimitriou taking part in the event. The festive programme, featuring cultural and entertainment activities, ended with a parade. Meanwhile, foreign tourists keep arriving in the capital to become part of the big event. “I decided to spend this summer in Kazakhstan, though I haven’t previously been here. Astana is a grandiose and energetic venue this year. As for the pavilions, Nur Alem Sphere is what impressed me the most. I liked the engineering and technical solution of the project,” said St. Petersburg University student Dmitry Nesterenko. He added one of the reasons he came to the expo was the arrival of some of world’s most popular DJs, including Afrojack, Axwell and Steve Aoki. International stars are giving concerts on the expo stage, drawing thousands of local citizens and foreign guests. “I think this is the best summer I have ever had in my life. I am a big fan of all three DJs and it was unbelievable to see them,” he said. Legends of world football will be in the city Aug. 5-6 to participate in the EXPO 2017 Football Cup international tournament. The capital is set to welcome squads from Germany, Italy, Portugal, Russia, its own country and the world team. Football fans will get a chance to see stars including Kevin Kuranyi, Dino Baggio, Marco Delvecchio, Nuno Maniche, Jari Litmanen, Hernan Crespo, Jean-Pierre Papin, Roman Shirokov, Valery Karpin and Aleksander Filimonov. Nesterenko also invited Kazakh citizens to next year’s FIFA World Cup scheduled to take place in Russia.

Senior Nomads travel international neighbourhood, learn valuable lessons

By Zhanna Shayakhmetova

ASTANA – Americans Michael and Debbie Campbell have found the key to a harmonious post-retirement existence. Living a nomadic lifestyle has allowed the couple to travel to more than 200 cities and 67 countries since 2013, including spending the last four months in Africa, the Middle East and Central Asia. “If you dream of casting off your worldly possessions and traveling to your heart’s content, we hope our story will inspire you no matter your age,” they blogged as they headed off to explore the world. The couple received so many emails from people around the world they launched www.seniornomads.com to share their adventures, travel plans and Airbnb experiences. The Campbell’s tale is a widely-covered international story. The Condé Nast magazine “Traveler” named them “the adventurous duo” and the poster couple for the Silicon Valley-based company, according to Business Insider U.K. One of the things that keeps them traveling is the hope their experience will inspire people of their age and motivate young people to encourage their parents to travel and live their dreams. “When you get older, it’s common to get more conservative, to be comfortable with where you are, not to take risks and to settle back into retirement. Some people dream of doing something, but don’t have the courage. We hope that we will encourage them to follow their dream, their own North Star,” said Michael in an interview for this article. Last year, Debbie wrote “Your Keys, Our Home,” a book “to share tales of living full-time in Airbnbs.” It was presented at the annual Airbnb convention gathering 6,000 hosts. “People can learn how we find the house, what we ask the host before we come and then it goes to living in these homes. We talk about what we’ve learned in our journeys. It’s a book that works both for Airbnb hosts and people who would like to travel and would like to use it,” said Debbie. The mere suggestion to start travelling proposed by their daughter turned into a lifestyle. An interest in post-World War II history also became one of the reasons for overseas journeys. “Michael used to say that we are lifelong learners. We are curious in places we visit,” she added. The couple became true nomads when they sold their Seattle, Washington home in 2015. “We’re not on vacation. We are living our lives in other people’s homes as we see the world. In our culture, after people graduate from high school or college they sometimes take a gap year. We’re kind of joking when we refer to this as a gap year for seniors, only we forgot to stop after one year. There’s so much to see and so much to learn in the world. We’ve been to 67 countries and we’ve just getting started,” said Michael. When the couple realised they had visited six or seven post-Soviet states, they had an idea to come to Central Asia.



Photo credit: seniornomads.com

The elderly couple in Cape Town.

their age and motivate young people to encourage their parents to travel and live their dreams. “When you get older, it’s common to get more conservative, to be comfortable with where you are, not to take risks and to settle back into retirement. Some people dream of doing something, but don’t have the courage. We hope that we will encourage them to follow their dream, their own North Star,” said Michael in an interview for this article. Last year, Debbie wrote “Your Keys, Our Home,” a book “to share tales of living full-time in Airbnbs.” It was presented at the annual Airbnb convention gathering 6,000 hosts. “People can learn how we find the house, what we ask the host before we come and then it goes to living in these homes. We talk about what we’ve learned in our journeys. It’s a book that works both for Airbnb hosts and people who would like to travel and would like to use it,” said Debbie. The mere suggestion to start travelling proposed by their daughter turned into a lifestyle. An interest in post-World War II history also became one of the reasons for overseas journeys. “Michael used to say that we are lifelong learners. We are curious in places we visit,” she added. The couple became true nomads when they sold their Seattle, Washington home in 2015. “We’re not on vacation. We are living our lives in other people’s homes as we see the world. In our culture, after people graduate from high school or college they sometimes take a gap year. We’re kind of joking when we refer to this as a gap year for seniors, only we forgot to stop after one year. There’s so much to see and so much to learn in the world. We’ve been to 67 countries and we’ve just getting started,” said Michael. When the couple realised they had visited six or seven post-Soviet states, they had an idea to come to Central Asia.

ganising parks and everything. I find it fascinating to think about what future will be for this country now they have decided to go along this path,” he said. Due to the long visa process the Campbells weren’t able to visit other Central Asia countries, but were delighted to explore these nations’ pavilions. “We liked the American pavilion the best. I think we visited around 14 different country pavilions and the Nur Alem pavilion,” said Michael. The couple also had a chance to attend the Cirque du Soleil performance. “I’m at a loss for words. You forget that you’re looking at human bodies; you’re just watching the actions and then you realise there is a man holding a woman up by one arm and she is standing on his hand. You are so attracted to the action and then you have to stop and think how these people are strong and talented,” said Debbie. As chief travel planner, Michael also shared their ideas for the rest of the summer. “We are going to spend about six weeks in Germany, Austria and Switzerland. We’ve been there before, but we want to go back during good weather and just enjoy the Alps. We are going to visit our daughter and her husband and their three children just outside Paris for a couple of weeks. We going back to Seattle for 10 days at the end of August and then we travel again,” he said.

“Once we knew we were coming to Kazakhstan, we [talked with] friends in Seattle who have been there many times. We met with them and they said that we don’t need a visa,” said Michael. First the travellers visited Almaty, then went to Bishkek in Kyrgyzstan and Astana. “The most interesting and amazing fact we’ve learned about Kazakhstan is how big it is and there are big distances between the cities compared with Europe. We’ve also learned how far east the country is and that’s amazing to me,” said Michael. Debbie enjoyed her visit to the expo as well as seeing the Kazakh national pavilion and its light-show. “I went to the art centre and saw the robots. It’s really interesting. It’s really fascinating – watching robots making art was really interesting and 3D printing making jewellery is incredible,” she added. Michael discovered building a brand new city is a good initiative and Astana is an excellent example. “Maybe that’s a good idea to trying lift up your country by starting fresh, having a chance to make a whole new city, city planners or-

SPORTS

WEDNESDAY, JULY 26, 2017

Kazakh team rider takes fifth in Tour de France

By Anuar Abdrakhmanov

PARIS – Captain of Astana Pro cycling team Fabio Aru finished the world-famous Tour de France race in fifth place overall.

Aru's finish follows a particularly challenging Tour for the Astana team. The race began well with Aru winning the direct stage and capturing the yellow jersey early. However, difficulties quickly mounted for the Astana racers. After one of the early stages, Dario Cataldo and Jakob Fuglsang, who were expected to perform as Aru's

primary support, could not continue the race. Team leader Alexei Lutsenko was also seriously injured and was unable to mount a successful attack near the end of the Tour.

"Basically, I think we did well, taking into account the circumstances. We lost Jakob Fuglsang and Dario Cataldo. However, the guys still worked at the maximum. We took the stage, took the yellow jersey. If it was not for Fuglsang's fall, I think the result would have been different, at least, at the mountain stages. I am glad that Bakhtiyar Kozhatayev noticeably

improved. Alexei Lutsenko, despite the fall, managed to return to the race and fought till the end. We all saw his attacks in the Pyrenees. I think that Kazakh riders are improving. Dmitry Gruzdev coped well with his task. Well, as for Andrei Zeits, we saw him real here. As always, it's nice to look at him, he works and helps the team," said team General Manager Alexander Vinokurov.

Despite the challenges, one high note was that Astana took part for the first time in the Grand Tour, having four riders for Kazakhstan in the lineup. Zeits, Lutsenko,

Gruzdev and Kozhatayev showed the level of Kazakh cycling has reached a new level.

"I think that the results of the last Tour de France were positive for the Kazakh team. When our captain Fabio Aru put on the yellow jersey, everyone thought that the victory was so close. But this is sport. Anything can happen. One of the main minuses was the loss of two of our riders during the competition. This was a real blow to the whole team. Both Fuglsang and Cataldo were great members of the Astana team. It is good that four Kazakhs in the team passed the race till the end. The two of them were in the lead at the last stage in Paris, thus proving that we have a future in cycling," said President of the Cycling Federation of Kazakhstan Darkhan Kaleyev.

This year's Tour finished with the traditional "stage of friendship," when the favourites of the overall standings do not compete. Another tradition of the "stage of friendship" is the sprint finish. Each year there are many who want to break this tradition and deceive the sprinters with a late attack from the main group. Vinokurov once managed to do it. Lutsenko and Gruzdev tried to repeat his achievement at the last stage of the last race, but a few kilometres before the finish the main group caught up with them.

British rider Christopher Froome won Tour de France in the overall standings. This is the fourth yellow jersey in his career. The runner up was Colombian Rigoberto Uran with third place going to Romain Bardet.

Astana Arlans win record third WSB title



By Anuar Abdrakhmanov

ASTANA – In a dramatic comeback, the Astana Arlans defeated the Cuba Domadores 6-5 July 15 to end the World Series Boxing's (WSB) seventh season. With the win, the Arlans earned a record third title to become the league's most decorated team.

The first bout ended well for the hosts with a win by Temirtas Zhusupov (49 kg). Ilyas Suleimenov (56 kg) extended the team's initial lead by defeating Javier Ibanez. The next two bouts ended better for the Cubans, as the visitors levelled the score by defeating Anton Pinchuk and Dilmurat Mizhitov.

Abilkhan Amankul took on Arlen Lopez in the 75 kg category. The fight was tense and close, but the judges decided the Cuban was stronger. In the 81 kg bout, Kazakh boxer Arman Rysbek fought Julio La Cruz, one of the visiting team's most decorated boxers, and the latter's win doubled the Domadores' lead. Astana captain Olzhas Satybayev's (52 kg) loss to Josbani Veitia made the score 5-2 and the visitors needed only one win in the three remaining bouts to claim the triple champion's title.

A glimmer of hope for the hosts came when heavyweight Olzhas Bokayev defeated Yoandris Toirac. The Arlans then managed to level the score in the next two bouts, as Zakir Safiullin and Aslanbek Shymbergen secured confident wins over their opponents.

The 5-5 tie required an additional decisive bout. Olzhas Bainiyazov fought Frank Zaldivar and by decision of the judges, the Kazakh boxer earned the win and the Arlans' record-breaking title.

"It was a special evening of boxing, which will remain in our memory forever. I congratulate

the Kazakh team on the win. Being at a disadvantage, the Arlans managed to reverse the situation and win, showing real will-to-win spirit. Never give up. I also want to thank the Cuban boxers for the excellent fights. The Cubans were also winners today, because they gave the fans a spectacular show," said International Amateur Boxing Association (AIBA) President Wu Ching-kuo.

The final was the fourth for the Arlans in the past seven years. The team was the runner-up in 2011, then became WSB champions in 2013 and 2015 and now in 2017. The Domadores won the title in 2014 and 2016.

The WSB sees the world's best amateur boxers compete in teams without headgear using the AIBA scoring system. According to the WSB website, the establishment 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 to host SCO and CICA International Athletics Marathon

By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – Kazakhstan's capital, Astana, will host Aug. 27 the International Athletics Marathon of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) and the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA). The large-scale race is part of the celebrations of SCO Day at EXPO 2017.

The presentation of the upcoming marathon took place July 10 at the headquarters of the People's Daily, China's largest newspaper, in Beijing. SCO General Secretary Rashid Alimov, CICA Executive Director Gong Jianwei

and Chairman of the Sports and Physical Culture Committee of Kazakhstan's Ministry of Culture and Sports Elsiyar Kanagatov took part in the ceremony.

"EXPO 2017 kicked off June 10 in Kazakhstan's capital, where the SCO pavilion is open along with more than 100 other pavilions. We made a decision to designate Aug. 27 as SCO Day at the expo. With the support of Kazakhstan's government, we decided to mark this day with a mass sport and cultural event – an international marathon. It can unite the energy of Shanghai and sport spirit better than other events. We have no doubt the Astana marathon continues the good tradition laid down by the

first SCO marathon in Kunming," noted Alimov. "We still remember the moments of the SCO marathon on Dec. 17, 2016, in the city of eternal spring, when nearly 16,000 athletes from 23 countries came to the start," added Alimov.

Kanagatov also pointed out the importance of the marathon for the expo and Kazakhstan in general.

"This marathon is organised by the Ministry of Culture and Sports [of Kazakhstan], the International Athletics Federation and the SCO. Our race will have three distances – 42 and 10 kilometres and, symbolic for this year, 2,017 kilometres. I think we will have more than 5,000 participants, including more than 1,000 foreign athletes.

The marathon will contribute to the promotion of our country and demonstrate the development of sports in the country. Most importantly, it is about the image of expo, our country and our capital," informed Kanagatov during the presentation.

The marathon will start at 8 a.m. Aug. 27. The route, which was approved by the International Athletics Federation, goes through the main streets of Astana's left bank.

Online registration for the Astana marathon will open July 15.

Chinese national television plans to broadcast the race live.

The marathon will be held along with the CICA forum scheduled for August in Astana. CICA turns 25 years old later this year.

FC Astana passes first round of UEFA Champions League qualifications, to meet Legia Warsaw

By Anuar Abdrakhmanov

ASTANA – FC Astana, Kazakhstan's Premier League title holders, overcame resistance in two matches with FK Spartaks Jurmala to reach the next qualifying round of the UEFA Champions League.

Few expected the Latvian club could eliminate the Kazakh champions. Through decent performances in the last two seasons, FC Astana has earned some reputation in European football and looked like the clear favourites. As the matches showed, however, the Latvians turned out to be tougher opponents than anticipated.

In the away first game, the Kazakhs dominated much of the time making more than 19 goal attempts, while the hosts rarely disturbed Astana's goalkeeper Alexander Mokin. Patrick Twumasi, the visitors' midfielder, managed to record the match's only goal on a perfect penalty kick.

Although the 1-0 score gave a slight advantage ahead of the

return leg, there were still some reasons for concern. In the second match, the Spartaks showed their grit and revealed many problems of FC Astana's current squad. Early in the match, the Spartaks players created a good scoring opportunity, but Mokin saved the hosts. Astana then had a great chance as well, but Serikzhan Muzhikov's shot hit a bit high over the bar. The Kazakhs gradually gained more control of the ball, yet failed to create really good scoring chances.

Hearing the second half starting whistle, Astana immediately rushed forward with a will to win. Twumasi soon shot into the far corner to open the scoring. The hosts had a few more scoring chances, but failed to make use of them. Shortly before the end of the match the Latvians managed to level the mark, as Edgar Vardanyan tied the game at 1-1 with a long-range shot. The match ended with a draw, which was enough to secure FC Astana's progress to the next qualifying round.

"It is great that we went through.

The match was difficult and now I have many questions for our players. Indeed, we should play better. I always said that there are no easy opponents in the Champions League. Now, we should make the right conclusions from these mistakes. If we go on failing in implementing scoring chances like this, [we will be facing problems] in the future," said FC Astana head coach Stanimir Stoilov.

Kairat Almaty and Irtysh Pavlodar, the two other Kazakh clubs in the European Club competitions, played in the qualifying round of the UEFA Europa League, the second most important level. Both clubs were eliminated after losing by identical scores of 1-1 at home and 2-0 away to Albania's Skenderbeu and Serbia's Crvena Zvezda, respectively.

FC Astana will now play Legia Warsaw, the current Polish champions and one of the Central European nation's most decorated teams. In their previous encounter with a Kazakh club, the Varsoviens eliminated FC Aktobe three years ago,

winning 1-0 away and 2-0 at home.

The Kazakh champions will host

the first game 8 p.m., July 26, at Astana Arena before flying to War-

saw for the return leg scheduled for Aug. 1.



Astana to become most attractive city in Eurasia by 2020, says mayor

By Dana Omirgazy

ASTANA – Urban leaders gathered for the 25th International Assembly of CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States) Capitals and Major Cities July 13-14 to discuss a new programme of sustainable development as a response to global challenges. Akim (Mayor) Asset Issekeshev spoke on the first day about specific plans for the capital.

“In accordance with the United Nations Development Programme, 17 sustainable development goals were outlined. One of them is making cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable, which includes 10 tasks – affordable housing, safe and sustainable transport, sustainable urbanisation, protection of the world’s cultural and natural heritage, population protection, air quality, green areas, links between urban, peri-urban and rural areas, mitigation and adaptation to climate change and constructing sustainable and resilient buildings,” he said.

In terms of access to housing, the capital has already reached the UN level, as rentals exceed 20 million square metres.

“On the transformation of the urban environment, we determined 50 public spaces as centres of urban life – streets, squares, parks and development of pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure. Also, for the equal development of the city, we divided the capital into 129 sectors, each with a population of up to 10,000 people and 34 social standards,” he said.

In terms of security, the city is implementing the country’s first large-scale, public-private partnership video surveillance project. More than 10,000 cameras will be installed on roads, public places and social facilities, all coordinated at a single situation centre.

“To ensure environmental sustainability, city authorities are implementing a number of low-carbon projects, including the transition to low-carbon transport. We plan to expand the river and create artificial lakes on the under-

flooding grounds to mitigate the effects of climate change,” said Issekeshev.

The city is moving toward full gasification, investing 2 billion tenge (US\$6.14 million) to build a natural gas regasification station. A new gas supply source was launched based on innovative LNG (liquefied natural gas) technology, which provides a substantial reduction in emissions compared to coal and diesel fuel.

To develop transport infrastructure, authorities have introduced an intelligent transport system. Measures are underway to increase the attractiveness of public transport.

“By 2020, we intend to make Astana the most attractive and exciting city in the Eurasian space with excellent urban recreational activities and the most professional business destination. Astana should become one of the key centres for holding various forums, summits, business conferences and cultural and sporting events, because the city has a quality and



developed infrastructure for this – airports, train stations, hotels, wide streets and boulevards. We set a goal to increase the number of foreign tourists to one million a year and up to two million people from other cities of Kazakhstan. This means increasing the number of tourists more than three times,” he said.

Forum participants noted the main trends are similar – cities are striving for the use of smart technologies and digitalisation – and ended the session by voicing many proposals and issues to be solved. Issekeshev suggested creating a single information resource to exchange experience, expanding the circle with the inclusion of the CIS countries such as Russia and Belarus, as well as those in Central Asia, the Caucasus, and China and India.

“We came out with the initiative to establish a Council of Mayors of the cities of the SCO (Shanghai Cooperation Organisation) coun-

tries, between Russia, China, India and Central Asia. The objectives of the council are cooperation in the areas of trade, the exchange of technologies in urban development, energy efficiency, renewable energy, smart technologies, development of public transport and e-commerce, university connections and much more. All these goals are in line with the idea of the SCO. The council should become a pragmatic platform, working not from session to session, but as a permanent body,” he said.

Capital authorities earlier amended the city development programme until 2020 aimed at improving the quality of life, building a new model of sustainable growth and transforming Astana into a successful, global smart city. The capital has also developed a master plan through 2025, a document of strategic spatial planning in which each department’s activities are focused on achieving one goal.

Urban planning specialists discuss capital’s development at Astana Urban Forum

By Dana Omirgazy

ASTANA – International experts and city planning specialists and heads of large construction companies discussed urban development and shared international and local expertise at the July 7 First Urban Forum “DNA of the City: Communities. Business. Power” with the participation of Akim (Mayor) of Astana Asset Issekeshev.

Issekeshev opened the first panel discussion devoted to the tools of the city dialogue. The mayor discussed Astana’s plans for sustainable development, in particular introducing international standards for the quality of medical services, eliminating queues in kindergartens, increasing the number of affordable housing, planting one mil-

lion green belt trees and improving public transportation by 2018.

Astana International Financial Centre (AIFC) Governor Kairat Kelimbetov presented large-scale plans for changing the status and role of the city.

“The full political support for the AIFC project is a key instrument to improve the local financial system, human and technological capital and to strengthen Astana’s position in the Eurasian region as a financial and a logistics hub,” he said.

However, city development implies more work. Author of the Astana-2020 Development Strategy and head of Competitiveness Centre Anuar Buranbayev noted that the social, road and communal infrastructure do not keep pace with the growth rates of the city.

Meanwhile, Astana Art Fest Di-

rector Maira Izmailova recalled the role of cultural projects in connecting urban communities.

“Social and cultural projects are the intersection point of various strata of the population, regardless of their financial situation, sphere of activities and beliefs. Therefore, public spaces are needed, both geographically and semantic. Art Fest is a semantic space, for example. The festival creates in the city a unique environment for the development of society at the social, cultural, personal and business levels,” she believes.

Doctor of Architecture Philipp Meuser from Germany presented the experience of European mutual integration of urban spaces and communities at the forum, together with Director of Gehl Architect from Spain Riccardo Marini and

Doctor of Architecture Jakub Szesznyi from Poland.

Astana Urban Centre, Astana Art Fest and city administration presented the Work in Progress Astana joint project designed by Urban Centre specialist Aigerim Ospanova. The project will become a pilot for Astana and, if successfully implemented, can be replicated to non-central areas of the city.

“Astana is becoming a megacity, and like any megalopolis we have accumulated a lot of questions: what is the role of communities in the development of the city, what stable urban economy depends on, how to achieve efficient work of urban transport, etc. We initiated this forum to find answers to these and many other questions with the participation of all interested parties,” Urban Centre Deputy Head Askhat Saduov said.

Experts discuss nuclear rehabilitation, green technologies in nuclear energy

By Yerbolat Uatkhanov

ASTANA – Kazakh radioecology experts and representatives of non-governmental organisations recently discussed the rehabilitation of land at the former Semipalatinsk nuclear test site, the use of green technologies in uranium mining and the operation of Kazakh enterprises in the nuclear industry at the Atomic Energy Kazakhstan pavilion at EXPO 2017.

The event was organised by the Nuclear Society of Kazakhstan. Director of the society Natalya Zhdanova highlighted that the event aimed to encourage honest and objective talk about the work of different organisations and companies in the nuclear field and discuss problems and solutions.

Most pressing were the reports by state and non-state participants on the rehabilitation of Semipalatinsk land and the use of green technologies in the extraction of uranium. Solar batteries and wind turbines, issues of civil society development, the preservation of Kazakhstan’s natural environment and the participation of children in environmental projects were discussed as well.

According to Zhdanova, such frank, first-hand discussions are not common, but very important.

International Ecological Academy President Musagali Duambekov said the round table was very successful.

“A distinctive feature: most of the participants were from non-governmental organisations. We spoke a lot about reality, about facts and about the truth, which NGOs usually do. Energy and the nuclear industry should be developed, but we should not forget about the environment. There was a very good discussion; many expressed their opinions, representatives of state organisations reported about their operation. I hope in the future, this honest mutual understanding will continue, and we will work together,” Duambekov said.

“The event was unusual: it became a platform for public organisations to talk about their projects and problems. This is an interesting approach,” said Yuriy Strilchuk, representing the Kazakhstan Institute of Radiation Safety and Ecology.

He noted such events could be improved by participants asking more questions, to discuss more topics.

“One of our positions: we cover information about the test site, because we want as many people as possible to actually find out what is happening there. ... Unfortunately, radiophobia in Kazakhstan is still at a fairly high level. Therefore, we are ready to discuss anywhere the testing ground, research on it and its rehabilitation. The more people that know about this, the better,” Strilchuk said.

Astana Taxi launches at new Nurly Zhol train station

By Assel Satubaldina

ASTANA – Visitors and residents arriving at a new Nurly Zhol train station in Astana can now use Astana Taxi services

right at the train station to get to any part of the city.

“The taxi service now has 350 cars. I think it is very convenient for passengers because they can order a taxi right at the train station and get to any location in the city. In addition,

the taxi has lots allocated specially for it on the third floor,” noted deputy head of the Nurly Zhol train station Nurlan Amanzholov.

Opened June 1, the Nurly Zhol train station receives nearly 60 percent of trains coming to Astana.

Launched in May after the merging of several taxi companies, Astana Taxi increases the variety of taxi services, which is particularly timely for Astana welcoming greater number of tourists as it is hosting EXPO 2017.

The taxi can be ordered in three ways: through a call centre at 15800, a mobile app or at a taxi stand.

In case a driver and a passenger speak different languages, they can contact a call centre where operators can interpret the talk in five languages.

Similar to taxis in metropolises around the world, all taxicabs have a uniform design.

According to the city administration that runs the taxi service, Astana Taxi strives for a high-quality service, which includes free Wi-Fi, call centre, mobile app and point-on-sale terminal for non-cash payments. In addition, drivers have to go through a number of checks to ensure safety of passengers.

As all licensed taxi in the city, Astana Taxi can drive on a bus lane, which significantly cuts time that passengers spend on the road.

It has also additional parking lots near the train station on the right bank of Astana’s Yessil River, the airport as well as shopping malls.



Photo credit: railways.kz